



# “WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT?” - ANVUR’S WORKSHOP

---

**HCÉRES – HIGH COUNCIL FOR THE EVALUATION OF RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

Maria Bonnafous-Boucher  
Department for European and International Affairs

**January 2022**



# NATIONAL CONTEXT

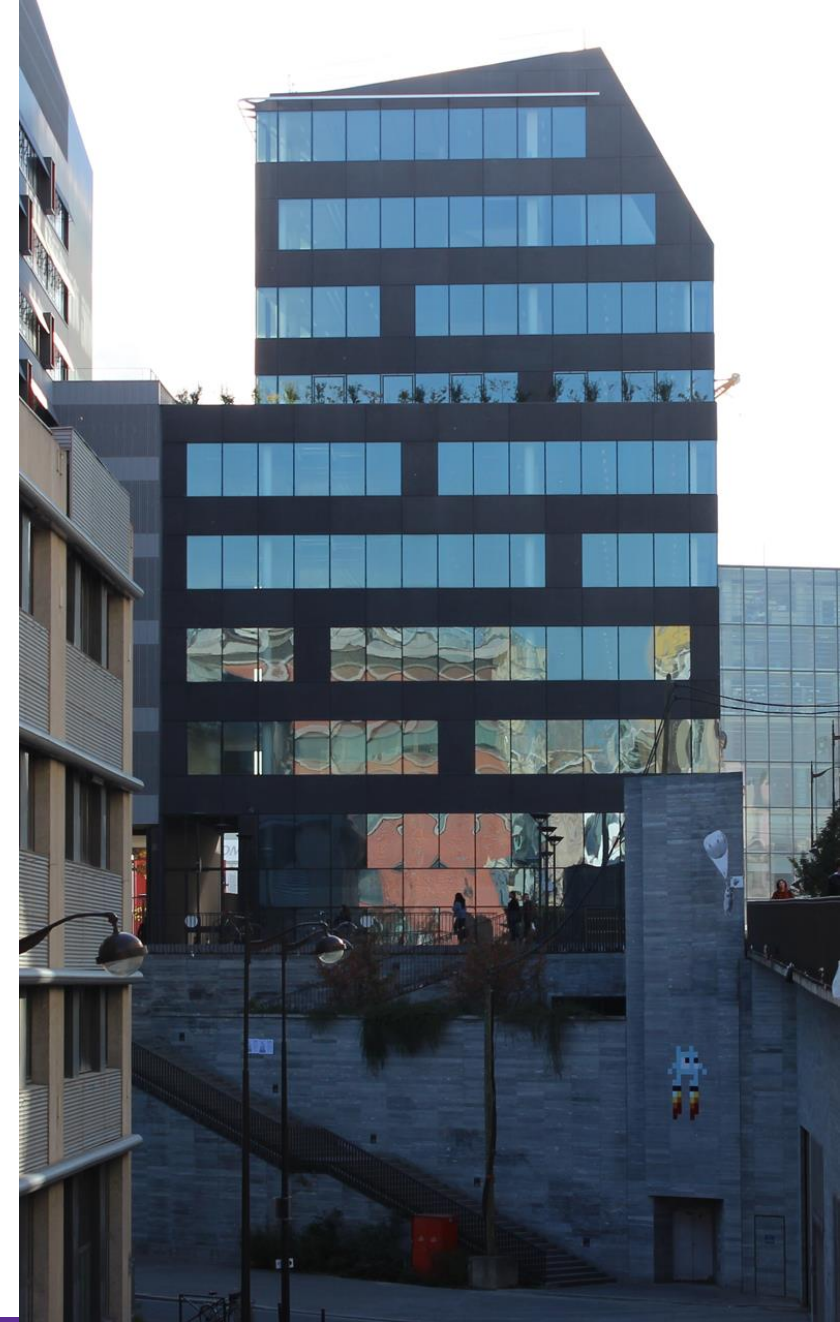
## BRIEF PRESENTATION OF HCÉRES

- **Independent Public Authority**, non-profit organisation, with a public service mission
- **Created by law in 2006** (AERES), 2013 (Hcéres), modified by the last research law in 2020
- **Based in Paris**
- **Evaluates higher education** (programmes and HEIs) **and research** (research units and research performing organisations)

## WHAT IS IT MEANT BY SOCIAL IMPACT, THIRD MISSION... IN THE CONTEXT IN WHICH YOU OPERATE?

**In France, the law gives the 6 following missions to HE ([article L123-3](#)):**

- Initial and continuing education throughout life;
- Scientific and technological research, dissemination and valorisation of its results for the benefit of society;
- Guidance, social promotion and professional integration;
- The dissemination of humanistic culture, in particular through the development of humanities and social sciences, and of scientific, technical and industrial culture;
- Participation in the construction of the European Higher Education and Research Area;
- International cooperation.



# MISSIONS AND OBJECTIVES

**IS THE ASSESSMENT PART OF THE AGENCY'S INSTITUTIONAL MISSION?  
IS IT CARRIED ON AN "EXPERIMENTAL"/VOLUNTARY BASIS?**

**Hcéres evaluates public HEIs as well as private HEIs with a public service mission every 5 years but we do not carry out thematic evaluations specifically dedicated to HEIs' third mission.**

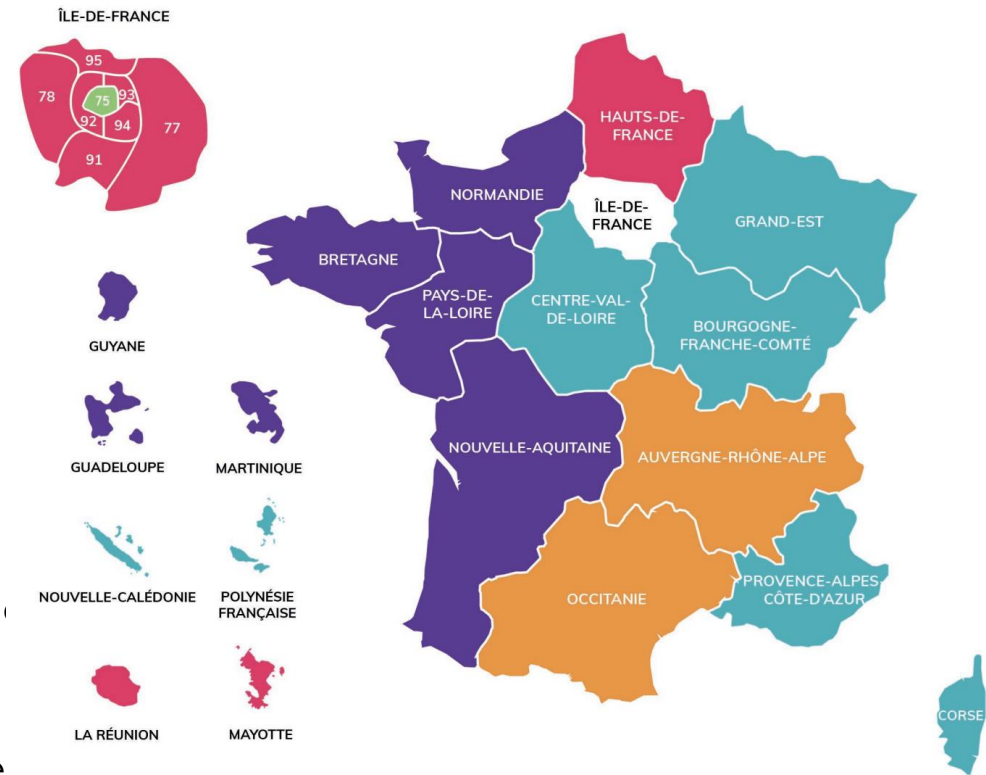
- Holistic approach to institutional evaluation
- Institutional framework takes into account universities' activities in terms of **social impact and community engagement**

## FOR WHAT PURPOSES IS IT USED?

All our evaluations have two main purposes that are aligned with the ESG:

- **Ongoing enhancement:** we seek to support HEIs in their missions through a fair, transparent, and peer-based evaluation process, including recommendations for enhancement
- **Accountability:** since all public HEIs and private HEIs with a public service mission receive funds from the government, they sign a contract with the ministry in which they set key objectives to achieve, based on Hcéres' evaluation reports.

Round A   Round C   Round E  
Round B   Round D



# MISSIONS AND OBJECTIVES (2)

## WHAT DOES THE ASSESSMENT AIM AT? (IMPACT / KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER/ SUSTAINABILITY...)

The second domain of our [institutional standards and guidelines](#) is dedicated to **research assessment and the impact and embeddedness of research in society**.

*Standard 11. In its policy of innovation and inclusion of science in society, the institution defines structuring guidelines.*

- *The institution conducts a policy of developing its expertise activities, particularly in response to the needs of its territory and in support of public policies, while respecting the requirements of scientific integrity and ethics.*
- *The institution develops and implements participatory science projects that include knowledge sharing.*
- *The institution implements a policy of cultural and scientific mediation and dissemination of knowledge to targeted audiences, in collaboration with the actors in its territory. This policy includes a mediation training component.*

Our [standards and guidelines for research-performing organisations](#) also address social impact considerations. Here is an example of **how the research-performing organisations should inform and support the policy-making process**:

*Standard 14: The organisation carries out scientific expertise activities in support of public policies implemented by the State or local authorities - or by European or international public bodies.*

- *The organisation is able to assess qualitatively and quantitatively its activities in the field of scientific expertise in support of public policies. It identifies the major contributions and the main successes achieved during the reference period and assesses their impact.*
- *It mobilises its academic partners to contribute expertise in support of public policies.*

# HCÉRES PROCEDURES

## WHICH METHODS AND TOOLS ARE EMPLOYED IN THE ASSESSMENT?

- **Peer review** : the expert panel meet with diverse stakeholders, including representatives of local authorities, regional centres for students (CROUS), and acceleration and technology transfer companies (SATT)
- **Science and Technology Observatory's studies:**
  - Produces knowledge on research and innovation activities in France and around the world.
  - Evaluates research technology transfer activities.
  - Relies on <https://www.altmetric.com/> to measure the social impact of a publication

## WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE ASSESSMENT? WHICH IS THE ASSESSORS' BACKGROUND?

Four types of experts:

- Experts with an **academic profile**: scientific expertise in one or more disciplines and experience in the governing bodies of their HEI;
  - **Socio-economic** expert: technical expertise in one or more professional fields ;
  - **Administrative** expert: expertise in the administration of a HEI, public service or public institution;
  - **Student expert**: experience in an institutional council or in a student association.
- One of the aforementioned types of experts should be from a foreign country and is also designated as an **international expert**.
- All experts attend a training session before the evaluation.



# HCÉRES PROCEDURES (2)

## WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT LEVEL?

- Integrated evaluation process => evaluate the **institutional** level and incorporate **programme and research unit evaluations** in it.
- We look at social impact and community engagement in our institutional evaluations as well as in research evaluation (research units and **research performing organisations**)

## IN WHICH PHASE IS HCÉRES?

- Implementation phase
- We regularly review and update our methodology and evaluation processes

## IF ALREADY OPERATIONAL, HOW IS THE ASSESSMENT PRACTICALLY CONDUCTED?



# FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

## HOW IS THE ASSESSMENT PERCEIVED AND UNDERSTOOD BY THE TARGET INSTITUTIONS?

- Consultation with the higher education and research community every year, before each round of evaluation
- Although they **sometimes find the evaluation process burdensome**, the output and **added-value** of our evaluations are no longer questioned.

## WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS AND CRITICAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

- No clear blueprint for our evaluation of universities' social impact at the moment
- The standards were recently revised so need to see how they work in practice on several rounds of evaluations before setting new objectives

## WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE/ REALISTIC/ HELPFUL TO DEFINE A COMMON (EVEN THOUGH NOT NORMATIVE) FRAMEWORK?

- At the moment, no need to develop a whole framework solely focusing on the social impact because Hcéres prefers to adopt a **holistic approach to evaluation**
- We carry out thematic research evaluations, focusing on a specific disciplinary field in which we look at the social impact, among other things
  - The **last mathematic synthesis** underlined the fact that maths has a major impact on economic growth and industry in France.





[hceres.com](https://www.hceres.com)

 [@Hceres\\_](https://twitter.com/Hceres_)

 [Hcéres](https://www.youtube.com/Hceres)