



## [Focus Article] Enhancing R&I ecosystems in the Western Balkans through RRI. Aligning Technological Innovation with Social Values.

With this focus article we would like to introduce you to the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) while including information about what RRI entails and why it exists. In addition, we intend to shine a light also on a number of RRI good practices in the Western Balkans and present to you the WBC-RRI.NET project in focus.

### What is RRI and what does it aim for? What does RRI entail?

RRI's rationale is that science and technology have the power to transform the future, that they are socially, ethically and politically entangled and that they can have potentially far-reaching, uncertain and unpredictable social consequences.

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) combines several processes and framework conditions for excellent research and important for the development of regional research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems. The objective is to focus on the relationship between research, innovation and society: RRI must involve the public, take into account gender issues, promote scientific and ethical education, and thus create a governance model for science.

The issues RRI prioritizes, in brief:

- : Ethical frameworks for R&I activities are important to ensure research integrity and ethical acceptability of scientific and technological developments.
- **Gender Equality:** Gender-aware policies and processes in R&I integrate the gender perspective in research content and research activities.
- **Public Engagement:** Participation in collaborative and multi-stakeholder R&I processes is on the agenda.
- **Science Education:** Training the next generation of researchers and innovators and increase scientific knowledge and literacy.
- **Open Access:** Open access and open science ensure access to scientific knowledge and transparency.
- : R&I governance processes shall generally be made more reflexive and anticipatory, promoting shared responsibilities.

[These six features](#) are embedded in a discussion which fosters anticipation, inclusion, reflexion and responsiveness in R&I activities.



The stakeholders are encouraged to explore possible or unintended effects of the research and innovation process in relation to the societal goals, to consider the different perspectives of individuals and in particular citizens, to reflect on the contexts and framework conditions and to remain open to change and new directions.

Another important aspect is the pro-active involvement and participation of the so-called “quadruple helix” actors, i.e. broadly speaking stakeholders from 1) academia, 2) business, 3) government and 4) civil society sectors.

## What is done about RRI in the Western Balkans : the WBC-RRI.NET project

An optimal example of involvement of all these actors is represented by a project, which fosters the application of RRI at the territorial level in five Western Balkan Research and Innovation (R&I) ecosystems and promotes a multi-level governance framework for steering R&I in the region.

The European Commission funds a project through the Horizon 2020 programme that aims to foster this approach and focus areas in the Western Balkans: “[Embedding RRI in Western Balkan Countries: Enhancement of Self-Sustaining R&I Ecosystems](#)”, or [WBC-RRI.NET](#) as it is abbreviated. The project develops a set of activities in five different [territories](#): Province of Vojvodina (Serbia), Kune-Vain-Tale ecosystem (Albania), Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), [Montenegro](#) and the Skopje planning region (North Macedonia).

In our [interview](#), Project Coordinator Goran Stojanovic from the University of Novi Sad explains the use of RRI, its impact and the next steps in the project. The project also mapped the relevant stakeholders in the region. For more information about the mapping process refer to this [interview](#) with Maria Michali, project member from Greece.

In the territories, [five RRI ‘anchor’ initiatives](#) are developed and implemented, specific interventions focusing on specific domains and on specific RRI themes, adjusted to the respective priorities in the respective local system, e.g. of Smart Specialisation Strategies. In order to design these initiatives, a [series of co-creation workshops](#) has been held.

With a perspective on the whole region of the Western Balkans, the project fosters cooperation in the focus areas through the creation of working groups. The working groups are open for new members and promote dialogue, create cooperation opportunities and support the wider dissemination of the RRI concepts in the region.

1. If you want to join one of the working groups, [this survey](#) be filled.
2. One of the key actions is to share "good practices from the region" on RRI and this will be fed also based on the submission to the WBC-RRI.NET "[Call for Good Practices](#)" with a focus on all RRI key issues (Gender and ethics, public engagement and science education, open science and open access).

A [collection of good practices](#) is already online! Use this opportunity to submit your good practices and share the call and submission with your networks. The call is continuously open.

[Find more projects working on RRI and partnering with WBC-RRI.NET here!](#)

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