Summary Report of the French National Workshop

Held on February 24, 2017, at CEA-Saclay

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1/ Executive summary

The French national RRI-Practice workshop started with a presentation of the project and a discussion of the RRI framework based on the texts of the European Commission and on the deliverables of the RRI-Tools H2020 project. It continued with presentations by the representatives of several major French research organizations. The workshop ended with a round table involving the French National Contact Point (NCP) for the European Commission Horizon 2020 Science with and for Society program.

It emerged during the workshop that the notion of RRI was not particularly widespread in the research community. Research organizations and NGOs working on science & society use the global RRI framework in European projects but barely or never employ this term in their policy documents. However, a big number of various initiatives exist concerning each of the RRI keys. This supplies rich content to RRI in French research organizations.

The top-down and bottom-up strategies in developing RRI were discussed with a special focus on the latter, key-based approach. Each research organization focused on one or two strong points, while the entire workshop covered all five keys. Best practices in education, ethics, open access, gender, and public engagement have been identified, with an abundant supply of examples particularly on the first topic.

It has been agreed that a strong and proactive policy would require clear measurable indicators; the readiness of French research organizations for taking up such structured policy is, however, open to debate. Since their current structure is better adopted to the development of each RRI key separately, fostering RRI as an organizational governance framework may meet a number of obstacles.

2/ Program and Participants

Seminar programme February 24 2017			
10:00-10:15	Presentation of participants		
10:20-10:40	Notion of RRI: 5 keys and 4 dimensions. RRI-Practice project objectives		
10:40	M. Leduc	CNRS	Ethics
11:00	A. Pépin	CNRS	Gender
11:20	O. Hologne	INRA	Open access
11:40	J-B Merilhou-Goudard	INRA	Public engagement
12:00	E. Hirsch	Paris-Saclay	Ethics, public engagement
14:00	L. Chicoineau	CCSTI Grenoble	Public engagement
14:20	F. Papillon	CEA	Education
14:40	N. Sciardis	CEA	Education
15:00	C. Edery-Guirado	CNES	Education
15:20	M. Dauchet	CERNA	Ethics
15:40	P. Guitton	INRIA	Public engagement, gender
16:00	C. Kirchner	INRIA	Ethics, open access
16:20-17:00	Round table		
	with Anne-Sophie Gallou, NCP H2020 "Science with and for society"		
	and Jean-Gabriel Ganascia, president of COMETS (CNRS)		

3/ Comments on participation

The workshop hosted representatives from several major French research organizations and some NGOs working in the science & society sector (see list above). Most people contacted for participating in the workshop quickly agreed to attend; we take it as a sign of significant interest to the concept of RRI, even if this concept does not appear in the official science policy documents of the French government. The term “responsibility” is mainly discussed in the UNESCO context of social responsibility. Many research organizations are at the stage of discovery and exploration of RRI and are willing to learn more about this EC concept.

The workshop brought together representatives of research organizations working in vastly different scientific disciplines. Most of them are in charge of specific RRI keys in their organizations. The latter range from all-encompassing research organizations with tens of thousands of researchers (e.g., CNRS) to smaller, monodisciplinary organizations (e.g., INRA for agricultural science or INRIA for computer science). The research disciplines covered by participating organizations respond to all major societal challenges (climate change, energy, food and agriculture, information technology, robotics, big data, health and medicine, space exploration, etc.)

Participants from the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (Inserm) could not attend the workshop; they will be interviewed at a later stage of the RRI-Practice project in May 2017. Other participating research organizations, incl. CEA and CNRS, actively collaborate with Inserm, so we expect that their view of RRI will propagate through common labs and research projects.

The Ministry of Research wasn't present despite being invited. However, the presence of the French NCP for the H2020 Science with and for Society program ensured certain visibility at the official level. Also participated the author of a recent French governmental report on citizen science, who supplied updated data on science & society initiatives across the country and internationally.

Geographically, participants came from several major science hubs in France: Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lille, Grenoble, and the larger Paris region. Most participating research organizations have campuses in multiple regions across the country and apply their RRI policy in all of them. We have also respected gender equality among workshop participants.

4/Understanding of responsibility and RRI

The French national RRI-Practice workshop started with a presentation of the project and a discussion of the RRI framework based on the texts of the European Commission and on the deliverables of the RRI-Tools H2020 project. We did not aim at giving a fixed definition of RRI but rather at demonstrating the variety of approaches and definitions. We underlined the political & conceptual and the practical aspects of the RRI framework. RRI dimensions were presented but were not found by the participants less clear and less concrete than RRI keys.

All participants agreed that the notion of researchers' responsibility was important. Rather than attacking its meaning upfront, we structured the workshop along the five RRI keys. This bottom-up approach allowed us to collect information on RRI implementation in research organizations even if the term RRI is not in use in their official policy documents. This approach proved fruitful as different research organizations supplied rich content covering all keys. For every organization, one or two keys proved to be real strengths, while other might not be so well-developed. Some keys form a part of French legislative and regulatory frameworks, e.g., gender equality is a condition in governmental contracts with scientific organizations imposed by law. Hence the existence of concrete indicators on gender and the possibility to measure them over years. It has also been noted that the public engagement key applies mostly to NGOs working on science & society; its relevance to research organization is smaller.

RRI is almost never dealt with as a framework in French research organizations. Their current structure is better adopted to the development of each RRI key separately, and fostering RRI as an organizational governance framework may meet a number of organizational obstacles. For instance, HR departments deal with gender issues, while special units exist for educational programs. Ethical questions are treated via ethics committees or dedicated ethics research centers. Open access is typically an issue for librarians and active scientists. The diversity of reference points for different RRI keys renders difficult a uniform approach to RRI governance. It is likely that in this situation a contextual, key-specific approach will yield better results.

Integrity was particularly high on the agenda of research organizations. The French government has just published a national report on the integrity of scientists (end of 2016) and created a National Office for Research Integrity (March 2017).

The notion of responsibility is mainly debated in the context of UNESCO 1974 recommendation on the social responsibility of science. A recent report on the issue to the French Parliament mentions RRI but is clearly placed in the line of social responsibility. It might be necessary to develop a consistent approach accommodating both of these concepts.

As such, the concept of researcher's responsibility is often met with surprise or even rejection, since the novelty of the RRI framework seems to imply in certain audiences that scientists haven't been responsible before the advent of this notion. It takes a lot of effort to prove the contrary to such interlocutors. Accusations of relativism are also not infrequent. Clearly, the concept of RRI would gain from not being presented as new

or revolutionary but put in context of the existing work on RRI keys and social responsibility of science as developed since the 1970s.

5/ Reflections on the workshop process

How easy was it to recruit people?

Quite easy. Representatives of research organizations were willing to participate with no exceptions. The only difficulty concerned the invitation of a government representative. The Ministry of Research did not respond to our invitation.

How easy was the conversation; was there a degree of conflict to the discussions? To what extent did the facilitator have to steer the discussion with specific questions (in contrast to an easy flow of discussion)?

We worked on a very strict schedule due to the number of participants and the imperative to give each of them an equal speaking time. The discussions were rich but, alas, too short, producing certain frustration among workshop participants. This debate must clearly be continued.

The discussion was open, constructive, and honest. One participant questioned the intent and the scope of the RRI-Practice project: if RRI is to be limited to research institutions, doesn't it contradict the values of inclusiveness and openness which RRI takes as dimensions? This participant argued that RRI cannot but go beyond established organizations. However, the workshop showed that within research organizations RRI is a relevant concept with a rich supply of relevant content according to each of the RRI keys.

Did the participants seem interested in the project's results?

The participants were interested in following future developments of the RRI-Practice project. Since every organization had shown particular strength on one or several RRI keys, a complementary approach bringing together the experience of the entire French research community was clearly seen as helpful and important for fostering all RRI keys in all organizations.

6/ Annex

Summary of findings (3 slides)

General drivers

- RRI activities included in researchers' evaluation
- H2020 requirements
- Societal demand

General barriers

- Feeling of being accused: "Do you mean we weren't responsible before RRI?"
- Fear of relativism
- Fear to lose research autonomy
- "RRI washing"

Overview of RRI keys

Key	Overview	Drivers	Barriers
Ethics	Committees (general reflection and operational). Ethics discussion spaces.	Integrity is a hot issue. Active debate in media.	Ethics committees do not reach out to ground-level researchers.
Education	Dedicated units in some organizations. Reaching hundreds of thousands of students per year.	Huge demand from schools, particularly at local level. Requested by Government.	Getting into Ministry curricula. Insufficient funding or researchers' worktime.
Public engagement	Bio and ICT research organizations more active. Science museums superseded by co-construction of knowledge.	Use of electronic media. Vertical model obsolete. Mistrust of institutions. Expertise questioned.	Which publics are representative? Which are lobbying groups?
Open access	Policies developed in ICT and bio research organizations	Ethics of publication behind paywalls.	Intellectual property. Giving out one's data for free.
Gender	Dedicated officers or units. Control of language in official documents.	Policies required by law in all research organizations.	No formal requirements during hiring.

Some examples of best practices (non-representative selection)

Ethics	Education	Public engagement	Open access	Gender
INRIA	CEA	CCSTI Grenoble	INRA	CNRS
CERNA (Allistene) ethics committee for general reflection. COERLE operational ethics committee. A network of ethics scientific/legal correspondents.	Total 100 000 people per year, including 25000 teachers. Coordination with regional educational boards and Ministry. Methodological materials for teachers. Dedicated lab equipped for high-school students.	Living Lab for open innovation Art and Science initiatives	Prodinra open access depository. Official INRA open access policy. Researchers evaluated only on publications openly available in prodinra.	'Mission pour la place des femmes' since 2001. Label "HR Excellence in Research."