

**Report**  
**RRI National Workshop Germany**  
**Karlsruhe, Feb 17, 2017**

**Executive summary**

The workshop was successful in its participation level and insightful for the state-of-art. The participants came from various organisations, representing the research landscape in Germany including large scale research funding and conducting organisations, as well as representatives of policy organisations and civil society. Several participants knew each other from previous projects or workshops allowing for an open and productive atmosphere.

Overall consensus was that research and science should be oriented towards societal needs and assessed along societal goals; this perspective defines the term “responsibility” that is a much discussed and a highly contentious term in the German research context. The inclusion of various stakeholders within the research process as well as exchanges among key actors were seen as essential to develop and ensure responsible research. Regarding RRI, participants with experience in EU projects were familiar with the term and its implications while the other participants did not know the term. The consensus was that RRI is not well defined and yet the RRI keys provided a straightforward and useful orientation. During the workshop, it became clear that wider changes to the research system in Germany are needed in order to implement RRI as an actual practice.

**Introduction**

*Date and location of workshop*

February 17, 2017 at Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS), Karlsruhe.

*Participant list with affiliations*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Beilmann, Christian	Research Field Key Technologies Representative at Helmholtz Association (Research Funding/Conducting Organization)
Decker, Michael	Head of division II "Informatics, Economics, and Society" at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Research Center)
Grunwald, Armin	Head of Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS); Head of the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag (TAB) (Research Institute; Policy Advice)
Hahn, Julia	Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)

Hennen, Leonhard	Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Kulakov, Pavel	Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Ladikas, Miltos	Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Lange, Rainer	Head of Research Policy Department at the Council of Science and Humanities (Research Policy Advice)
Lindner, Ralf	Coordinator for Technology Assessment and Governance at Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI (Research Institute)
Ober, Steffi	Head of NGO "Forschungswende"
Scherz, Constanze	Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Schraudner, Martina	Head of Fraunhofer Center for Responsible Research and Innovation at Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO (Research Institute)

*Comments on participation based on national structures (e.g. why this NGO, policy, other group participation; what is missing, etc.)*

The group at the national workshop in Karlsruhe was made up of stakeholders from different levels of research funding and conducting organizations, including specific research institutes, as well as from civil society. This enabled discussion on a more general level but also highlighted perspectives of specific organizations. Next to the detailed presentation of larger scale research organizations the participants discussed decision making on a collective scale and how policy advice can be part of it. Missing were representatives of the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the German Association of Engineers (VDI) that will be interviewed in the near future.

### **Understanding of responsibility and RRI**

*How is responsibility in research and innovation framed by the participants? Is there broad consensus on what is responsibility in science and innovation or did the participants' views differ considerably? How did this differ between different actors?*

From the beginning, there was consensus that researchers and research organisations have certain responsibilities regarding society. Mainly this revolved around the need of research and science to communicate and interact with society, with the goal of bringing the aims of science and those of society closer together. This was mentioned several times in the context of mission statements of the individual organisations that reflect the importance of feedback from society and contextualize their research as reflecting societal needs. The current research practice was nevertheless criticized, as it frames the discussions mainly around problems and focuses on negative challenges instead on a positive concept of responsibility.

Yet overall, the discussions showed at least two different understandings of responsibility. First, responsibility was perceived as being responsible towards society and also as a critique of research without limits or boundaries. This implies that the responsibility of research is about pursuing the aims of society and ensuring this by a constant exchange with societal actors. Second, responsibility was about how research is conducted in order to ensure a certain standard and progress. This understanding was seen in contrast (or to a certain degree opposed) to the demands for more responsibility towards society, a point that was highlighted several times by the representative of the research funding organization.

*Is the term RRI used at all? How?*

The term was known mainly from EU projects. In these cases, the participants had dealt with RRI many times in the context of projects and workshops. The participants without prior experience in such projects were not familiar with the term.

Overall RRI is not regarded as having much intrinsic or additional value, it is rather understood as an artificial concept. The concept can be related to many already widely discussed and established practices (e.g. ethics, public engagement, gender equality, etc.) for which RRI now serves as an umbrella term. In the discussions during the workshop RRI was used either as a term for the five RRI Keys (as per the EC-understanding) or as a new term overlapping with the already well-established concept of "Sustainability".

*Are the ideas and concepts that underpin RRI used by participants? If so, what terms are used? In what way is this context specific?*

The concepts behind RRI were all are well known by the participants. In this sense, there was an agreement that RRI is already being implemented without having been labelled in this way. This was seen as particularly true regarding the themes of Public Engagement, Ethics and Gender. As a means to highlight this point, the topic of "Gender Equality" was discussed as an example. In this case, the German Government has already initiated a number of laws ensuring Gender mainstreaming and setting concrete goals on gender equality. This in turn creates an obligation for most RRI-relevant organisations to develop initiatives or establish programmes on Gender, ensuring that this is approached on a systematic basis. This is an example of a specific RRI aspect that is well established in research and society.

Overall, bringing all these aspects or Keys together under one term "RRI" was criticized and questioned as it is not perceived as useful, particularly having in mind that there are also other, more established concepts in use, such as Sustainability. There was no added value perceived in the introduction of RRI as a competing concept, particularly since its ingredients are already in the national research agenda.

*Are any of the keys mentioned as aspects of responsibility?*

The main Keys that were discussed in detail were Engagement and Ethics. Here there are already many established practices as well as increasing demands. In Germany, the demand (particularly from civil society) for engagement in S&T decision making has increased over the last years, "obliging" organisations to engage with societal actors in some way. At this point, the discussion revolved around how this can be done and which formats and institutionalised processes can actually be useful. Gender was also mentioned several times as we already find many established programmes in place. Many experiences have been gained in gender mainstreaming offering a useful basis for building on this key. Open Access as well as Science Education were not discussed in detail as they seem to play a minor role in the German discussions at present. This could have to do with the fact that the discussions during the workshop circled around the broader level of interactions between science/research and society and how this relationship can be improved. In order to achieve this, Engagement and Ethics were seen as the most important Keys and therefore were the focus of the discussions.

*In what way can the AIRR dimensions help to evaluate how participants are referring to RRI and related concepts, including emerging and broadening notions of responsibility?*

The RRI Dimensions themselves were not explicitly mentioned by the participants. Yet, as described above, the importance of the relationship between science and society and the framing of the term “responsibility” clearly refer to Dimensions such as “inclusiveness” or “responsiveness”. Overall, the Dimensions were perceived to be more useful than the Keys in order to evaluate the broader discussions of RRI, since they describe better the RRI concept than the Keys (e.g. the Key “Gender” should also be focusing on diversity, not only gender aspects). As we witnessed in the workshop, the understanding of “responsibility” could not be framed only according to the RRI Keys; participants would easily discuss the Keys they were most familiar with and where national programmes have already been established in, without any need to define the concept of responsibility. On the other hand, it was clear that concentrating on the RRI Dimensions instead of the RRI Keys helped expand the discussion on a broader conceptual level.

*When presented to the project’s concept of RRI, what were the participants’ responses?*

For the participants, familiar with RRI the presentation of the RRI keys led to a clear connection with the European Commission’s endorsement of the concept. Participants who did not know RRI before used the Keys to frame their presentations and showed which activities and programmes their organisations had been undertaking along the Keys. Yet this proved to be difficult with some Keys, such as Science Education, as it was unclear which practices this actually includes or does not include.

*How was responsibility in research and innovation defined? Where there differences between the participants? What was identified as significant barriers, drivers and best practices to the further development of responsibility in research and innovation, to RRI (and potentially to the keys)?*

Much of the discussion focused on questions about the implementation of RRI in research practices. Many of the discussion points dealt with the conflict between the increasing application of quantitative standards in research evaluation processes, on the one hand, and the mainly qualitatively assessed inclusion of various stakeholders in the research process, on the other. The research system does not take these inclusive aspects into the evaluation process, resulting in difficulties to correctly assess the impact of research and researchers. Furthermore, the participants saw the importance of the regulatory aspects of science that could enable initiatives towards more inclusion or responsibility, by e.g. regulating processes of exchange between experts and stakeholders. Yet, a top down approach was not seen as overall useful due to the concept of autonomy in science and research that is particularly important in the German context. Instead, evaluation criteria should be reassessed, opening up spaces for discussions in which topics and challenges can be reframed. The actual establishment of RRI has to be done on the level of peer groups and here the communication between different actors within the science system is needed.

*At what level (state, institutional level, individual researchers) did the participants tend to address responsibility in research and innovation?*

In order to actually establish responsibility, the participants stressed the importance of cooperation on all levels. From the state and institutional level, participants demanded theme-setting and framing that incorporates responsibility as well as enabling open spaces for discussion and exchanges between researchers, their teams and societal actors. Since a top down approach was not seen as useful, the only

possibility is to pursue a “cultural” change within research peer groups. A priority should therefore be to set a particular framing within the research funding area.

### **Reflections on the workshop process**

*How easy was it to recruit people?*

Recruiting participants was fairly easy by using our networks and those of the invited research organisations.

*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)?*

The discussions were open and constructive even though some points were repeatedly stressed by some participants (e.g. how to enable engagement in research). Regarding the RRI keys, the moderator had to somewhat steer the discussion towards this topic since it neither came up naturally among the participants nor were they keen to focus on them.

*Did the participants seem interested in the project’s results?*

Yes, the participants were very interested in staying informed about the project results. Especially interesting for them were the international comparisons in the project as well as the focus on changes on the organisational level. Additionally, exchanges with other RRI projects were discussed and will be pursued further.