

National workshop on RRI in Norway - report

Executive summary

The participants in the workshop represent different organizations, areas of authority and functions in the Norwegian research- and innovation sector. Overall, the participants in the Norwegian workshop took for granted that responsibility in research and innovation and reflection over the relation between research, science, society and the serious challenges our societies face today is both crucial and unavoidable. Only one organization explicitly and actively employed the term “RRI” in its organizational discourse and practice, but dimensions and keys associated with RRI were recognized and conceived as important by all the participants. Some accentuated sustainability and democratic processes, others accentuated research ethics and integrity, while others again stressed the importance of anticipation, involvement, reflection and responsiveness. The differences did not reflect a conflict in interest concerning responsibility, however, but were more a reflection of the different contexts of action and areas of responsibility and authority of the organizations participating in the workshop. The participants shared a common interest in the important role that questions of both responsibility, sustainability and scientific integrity should play in both today’s and the future’s research and innovation politics and policies. They also shared a common concern over the challenges research, researchers and research institutions are facing in a time of post-truth and post-trust between citizens and scientists. At the same time precisely these tendencies seem to make RRI more important than ever. The participants also discussed concrete dilemmas pertaining to sustainability, democracy, involvement, technology assessment and funding of grey-zone innovation and research:

- Should research and innovation funding organizations fund projects that may secure socio-economic sustainability at a local level, but be harmful or at least problematic in terms of climate change and global sustainability?
- Considering Norway’s oil-dependency: should all future petroleum projects be terminated with reference to climate change?
- To what extent and in what way is it possible and wise to involve stakeholders and citizens in discussions about research and innovation?
- Research and innovation are supported by the tax-payers, but should the tax-payers and their different concerns decide what the researchers should do research on?
- What does it mean for researchers to take responsibility for their research?
- How can research and innovation funding, assessing and conducting organizations avoid a possible scenario in which RRI, responsibility and ethics become trivialized check-box activities?

By the end of the day all participants explicitly told the project group that they looked forward to learn more about the results of the project, and expressed a common interest in being invited to a potential future workshop arranged by the project.

Introduction

The workshop took place **February 2, 2017** at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA).

The participants were (in alphabetic order):

Marianne Barland, project manager, The Norwegian Board of Technology

Cathrine Egeland, research professor, The Work Research Institute (AFI), HiOA (RRI-Practice)

Ellen-Marie Forsberg, research professor and research director, AFI, HiOA (project manager for RRI-Practice)

Knut Fægri, vice chancellor, University of Oslo (UiO)

Jan Erik Grindheim, political scientist, the think tank Civita

Elisabeth Gulbrandsen, special advisor, The Research Council of Norway (RCN)

Silje Handeland, adviser, AFI, HiOA (RRI-Practice)

Helene Ingjerd, director, The National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (NENT)

Haakon Kobbenes, senior adviser, Ministry of Education and Research

Per Melchior Koch, special adviser, Innovation Norway

Tatiana Maximova-Mentzoni, senior researcher, AFI, HiOA (RRI-Practice)

Anne Ullman, senior adviser for the director of the research administration at HiOA

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

The participants in the workshop represent different organizations, areas of authority and functions in the Norwegian research- and innovation sector. **The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research** have national responsibility for day care institutions for children, primary and secondary schools, high schools, higher education and adult education. The Ministry also have national responsibility for research. **The Research Council of Norway (RCN)** is a national research strategic administrative body under the Ministry of Education and Research. RCN administrates research funds from all the Ministries in the Government and funds research in all disciplines, basic research, applied research and innovation. RCN also advises the Government and state authorities in questions concerning research and research politics. **Innovasjon Norge** (Innovation Norway) is an organization owned by the Norwegian state and the counties as their instrument in distributing funding for realization of innovative projects leading to commercial development in Norway. **The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees** is an administrative body under The Ministry of Education and Research. The committees shall contribute to processes where research in private or public settings are conducted in accordance with the national ethical guidelines for research through investigations into specific cases, advisory activities and information work. **The National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (NENT)** has responsibility for questions concerning research ethics in science and technology, industrial-, agricultural - and marine research, as well as the parts of bio- and gene-technological research not covered by medical research. **The Norwegian Board of**

Technology is an independent, public body that gives advice concerning new and emerging technologies to the Parliament and the Government. **The University of Oslo (UiO)** is Norway's largest, oldest and highest ranked university. UiO has a range of research centers, seven of them with Excellence status, and is directly involved in innovation through commercialization of research results and through cooperation with external companies. UiO is the only Norwegian university to be among the 100 most innovative in Europe. **Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA)** is Norway's largest state university college specializing in professions like nursing, education, engineering, journalism and social work. **Civita** is a liberal-conservative think tank engaged in public debates, analyses and publications about politics and society.

In order to secure some kind of ideological balance we also invited the social democratic think tank **Agenda**, who were positive, but did not have the opportunity to send a representative, and the environmental activist NGO **Framtiden i våre hender** (The Future in Our Hands), who was supposed to be represented by one of their leaders. At the last minute however he had to notify his absence.

The workshop was organized in three sessions:

- An introductory session with a presentation of RRI Practice by Ellen-Marie Forsberg, and a presentation of preliminary findings and reflections from the document analysis by Cathrine Egeland.
- A session with 10-15 minutes presentations about responsibility and understandings of RRI by all the participants followed by discussions after each presentation.
- A session with discussion and summarizing of the presentations, possibilities and challenges for RRI in Norway and the way forward.

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? The participants all agreed that the linear model of science has been challenged (even if some of the participants argued that it could not be replaced) and that major challenges pertaining to our societies and our climate makes reflections about the relation between science and society not only relevant, but crucial. The notions of responsibility differed somewhat between the participants. Some of them accentuated responsibility in relation to CSR and sustainability, some in relation to the responsibility researchers have for their research, some in the relation researchers have for doing research in accordance with research ethical guidelines, some in relation to the task of involving the public and citizens in discussions about emerging technologies, some in relation to the responsibility funding organizations have for reflecting and acting in grey zone problematics pertaining to research and innovation activities with both positive and negative outcomes, and some in relation to RRI and the different keys associated with RRI: gender equality, open access, ethics, science education, public engagement. These different accentuations did not reflect major differences in what the participants perceived to be right or proper responsibility, however, but was more a reflection of the different contexts of action and areas of authority and responsibility that the different organizations have in the Norwegian research and innovation sector.

To acknowledge the importance of responsibility in research and innovation as such is quite uncontroversial in Norway; Norway is a small, social democratic country where industrial relations

and the Nordic model of tripartite cooperation have paved the way for close dialogue between research, society, politics and innovation.

Is the term RRI used at all? How? Only one organization (RCN) employed and discussed RRI actively in their discourses and activities prior to the workshop. All the participants were not only positive to RRI, but also considered it crucial to the further development of the national discourse on responsibility in research and innovation in Norway. RCN is the definite front runner of RRI as a discursive entity in the Norwegian context; many of the documents written and distributes about RRI in Norway are either written by persons working in RCN or by RRI-researchers on commission by RCN or by RRI-researchers in projects funded by RCN. At the same time the participant from RCN was stressing that it was important for RCN that nobody should “own” RRI or give it a finite, non-negotiable definition; rather its openness and fluidity was highlighted.

What do people understand by it? Except from the participant from RCN, who addressed RRI in a direct and fundamental way using a version of AIRR, and the participant from The Norwegian Board of Technologies, who also framed RRI in line with the AIRR dimensions, the participants tended to address RRI in terms of some of the keys or in relation to more common notions of sustainability and responsibility.

Are the ideas and concepts that underpin RRI used by participants? If so, what terms are used? In what way is this context specific? Most of the ideas and concepts that underpin RRI was used in different ways by the participants. They were concerned with involvement, ethical reflection, the importance of science, science education and trust building in a time of public distrust towards science and politics, integrity and transparency, open access and gender balance in the research institutions, anticipation and engagement in the light of emerging technologies, social and environmental sustainability, and the further development of institutional practice pertaining to responsibility in the research and innovation sector.

Are any of the keys mentioned as aspects of responsibility? The participants either addressed all or some of the keys in terms of responsibility or as something they “took responsibility for”. Some commented that they did this because they had googled RRI for the workshop and found EC documents that presented the keys.

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? Both RCN and The Norwegian Board of Technology actively related RRI to the AIRR dimensions. The Norwegian Board of Technologies has AIRR as their main methodological approach in their involvement of citizens in discussions about emerging technologies, in their scenario activities and in the ambitions to be a continuously learning organization. The other participants did not directly refer to AIRR, but were implicitly employing AIRR related concepts and concerns in their presentations.

When presented to the project’s concept of RRI, what were the participants’ responses? We did not emphasise our own approach to RRI. This was not discussed.

How was responsibility in research and innovation defined? Were 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)? The participants defined and discussed responsibility in research and innovation in different ways because they work with questions of responsibility in different organizations with different tasks and areas of authority in the Norwegian context. The most explicit difference occurred in the more ideological discussions about the representative from Civita’s suggestion of a revival of the labour

division between research, industry and politics, and the challenges pertaining to involvement of citizens in discussions over research and development. There were not mentioned any major barriers to the further development of responsibility and RRI in Norway, but grey zones involving dilemmas pertaining to responsibility and citizen science were discussed. The participants did not mention any practices they themselves labelled as 'best', but they presented a number of practices or activities that they carry out in their organisations, like:

- To establish a ombud position dedicated to science and ethics of research
- Support initiatives like "Scholars at risk"
- Arranging scenario workshops about emerging technologies with stakeholders and citizens
- To integrate RRI perspectives in the major technology and innovation programmes

At what level (state, institutional level, individual researchers) did the participants tend to address responsibility in research and innovation? Responsibility were addressed at both state level (how to balance responsibility with economic activities in oil-fuelled Norway), institutional level (how to practice responsibility in research activities and research and innovation funding), and individually (how can individual researchers take responsibility of their own research).

Reflections on the workshop process

How easy was it to recruit people? It was easy to recruit participants for the workshop. As mentioned above, to discuss responsibility in relation to research and innovation is not particularly controversial in Norway, where social democratic traditions of dialogue, trust and cooperation are firmly rooted. Before sending out invitations the research group sat down and discussed which organizations should be invited given the description of the workshop in the protocol. We then found the specific persons who should be contacted within these organizations. Many of these we already knew from other settings. Everybody responded to the invitation in a positive way, something that probably is a result of their own engagement in different responsibility related discourses in the Norwegian research and innovation sector. In a possible next workshop it would be relevant to extend the dialogue on the national discourse of responsibility in research and innovation to include also e.g. Statoil (Norway's largest oil company) or The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV); both these organizations are end-users and funders of research and innovation and will probably be able to contribute with interesting reflections on the relation between responsibility, research and innovation.

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)? All participants contributed with informative introductions, and payed serious attention to eachother's arguments and viewpoints. The discussions flowed unstrained and by itself without the project group having to help the discussion going. Rather the group a few times had to remind the participants of the schedule as many of them had a lot to say about the subject. Overall, there were little explicit disagreement or heated argumentation between the participants, except from e.g. the more ideological discussion introduced by a participant who argued in favour of a more traditional division of labour between research, business and politics. This argument was expected however, and not something that caused a particular high level of conflict in the workshop. Rather, it contributed to making the workshop not just an arena of consensus about non-controversial understandings of responsibility, a celebration of goodness and concerned scenario creation, but an arena of real discussion and reflection.

Did the participants seem interested in the project's results? All participants explicitly told us that they looked forward to learn more about the results of the project. They also expressed a common interest in being invited to a potential future workshop arranged by the project. They advised that the project group should be active in our communication with different stakeholders about RRI and RRI-Practice, and try to strike a balance between not making RRI too complicated and at the same time not making it too simple. They also advised us to keep our perspectives in close touch with questions of practice.

After the workshop a summary of the workshop and evaluation forms were sent out to the participants. We got back three of these forms. The respondents expressed satisfaction with the workshop. The answers were a bit more uncertain as to whether their organization in the future would explicitly implement the RRI-concept in their policies or work.