

JERRI Briefing Paper

Exchange on RRI at the RTO Innovation Summit, November 7th 2018 11.30-12.45

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Background

JERRI - “Joining Efforts for Responsible Research and Innovation”¹ is a project funded by the European Commission in Horizon 2020 through the SwafS programme: Science with and for society”. In a nutshell, within JERRI, the two RTOs TNO and Fraunhofer have joined forces to advance the agenda of “Responsible Research and Innovation” (RRI) within their organizations. We have adopted a broad notion of RRI as a continuous process that allows us to better align our organizations’ activities with societies’ needs. In order to excel in this process we need to advance certain capacities within our organizations. As an inroad into the RRI capacity building, we have worked on the five RRI dimensions as defined by the EC: Open Access/Open Science, Gender Equality, Societal Engagement, Ethics and Science Education. For each of these dimensions both organizations have formulated ambitious long-term goals and designed concrete pilot activities to advance towards them. In this process, we have regularly exchanged experiences between TNO and Fraunhofer. After being 2/3 through the project, we feel that we have important lessons to share with other RTOs. In particular, we would like to discuss our insights on why it is important to engage with RRI and what are the specific challenges and opportunities for RTOs in the process.

Why do we think that it is important for RTOs?

Orienting research and innovation systems towards societal needs is fast becoming a dominant paradigm of research and innovation policies:

- Not only the EC but also many national governments have adopted RRI fostering measures e.g. to orient innovation towards the SDGs, requesting open access publications, ethical reviews or gender balanced perspectives. Citizens, among them many of our employees, as well as a growing number of our clients in industry are expecting us to make positive contributions to addressing societal challenges.
- We feel that RTOs have a crucial role to play in this process. Due to their close linkages to industry, policy, academia and other societal actors, a shift in RTOs practices will “draw in” many others. There is a huge opportunity for RTOs to become prime catalysts and mediators of this responsibility transformation and thereby to increase their relevance in innovation systems. This will also renew our “license to operate from society”.
- At the same time, exactly due to their unique mediating function, RTOs face specific challenges and frictions in moving towards “science with and for society”. In JERRI, we found, that we need to find RTO specific solutions that allow us to align RRI goals with our traditional missions of contributing to research excellence and competitiveness in our respective innovation systems - goals that are also highly relevant to societies’ wellbeing. Balancing these aspects will most likely cause frictions for every RTOs with probably different implications depending on its local /national context. RRI paradigms

¹ <http://www.jerri-project.eu/jerri/>

such as “open science” and “citizen participation” need to be adapted to the RTO context e.g. by balancing them with confidentiality and efficiency requirements, in order to unfold their full potential.

- As RTOs we cannot build our efforts on public funding alone. Rather we need to work together with our clients in industry and society to find “responsible business models” that are benefiting all sides.
- If we/RTOs are to fully embrace “science with and for society” we need to learn how to create value from society in our innovation-ecosystem (from golden triangle to quadruple helix) so we can create impact that is both socially desirable, sustainable and ethically acceptable and at the same time fits with our value creation models. Responsibility oriented practices do not emerge on their own, but require active creation of space to diffuse deeply into the organization.
- It is important that policy actors and in particular the EC clearly understand both, the huge potential of RTOs for underpinning the RRI agenda but also their specific challenges and support requirements in adopting this concept.
- Even more important however it seems for us as the RTO community to develop a shared understanding and joint position towards the RRI agenda. Only such a proactive move will allow us to become active drivers of responsibility-oriented practices based on our embedded values rather than being passively driven by external requirements and struggling to fulfil ever-new requirements that are perceived as a burden rather than an opportunity.

What is our suggestion for EARTO and the Innovation Summit?

EARTO seems the perfect forum for facilitating such an RRI reflection process among RTOs. As the summit's topic of “creating impact through research” indicates, the issue of societal impact is already on the agenda. The JERRI findings from TNO and Fraunhofer are well suited to function as a starting point for further advancing this dialogue. We suggest to use the JERRI results to start working on a joint RRI position paper with a group of interested RTOs. Ideally, such a paper could already be launched at the next EARTO conference in 19-21 March 2019 in Helsinki. We would like to use the Innovation Summit as a forum to initiate this discussion process in the run up to the conference. We therefore invite colleagues from other RTOs interested in this discussion to join us on Wednesday the 7th of November from 11.30 - 12.45 in room Einstein.