

HEIRRI: Integrating responsible research and innovation into universities and higher education institutions

16 September 2015, Barcelona Biomedical Research Park, Spain

Research and innovation have to be responsible. That is the main basis for the European project HEIRRI (Higher Education Institutions and Responsible Research and Innovation). The project aims to integrate the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) at all stages of education of scientists and engineers, so that research and innovation meets societal needs, values and expectations. The project started in September 2015 and will last three years. It's one of the first initiatives that Horizon2020 sets in motion to integrate RRI into universities and higher education institutions. The HEIRRI project is coordinated by Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Spain), accompanied by University of Bergen (Norway), Aarhus University (Denmark), Institute for Advanced Studies (Austria), University of Split (Croatia), ECSITE, the European network of science centres and museums, with more than 400 institutions from 50 countries, "La Caixa" Foundation (Spain), the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP), which chairs, the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), with 208 universities in 78 countries, and Innovatec (Spain). All in all, nine European institutions integrate the HEIRRI Consortium.

The HEIRRI kick-off meeting connected the members of the nine European institutions participating in the project for the first time and provided an extensive overview of the three years of the initiative. During the meeting, hosted in the Barcelona Biomedical Research Park (PRBB) on the 16th of September 2015, the institutions discussed the phases of the project to promote the application of RRI through six key areas: public engagement, ethics, science education, gender equality, open access and scientific governance. They also emphasised the potential of RRI as a transformative, critical and radical concept.

All participants presented their involvement in the project, which included the elaboration of training materials, pilot experiences, the implementation of the ongoing project RRI Tools and a communication and internationalisation strategic plan, among others.



Getting to know HEIRRI

Interview with Gemma Revuelta, Director of the Studies Centre on Science, Communication and Society from Universitat Pompeu Fabra. She is the HEIRRI project Coordinator.

What do you expect of the HEIRRI project when completed in 3 years' time?

We expect the project will contribute to the integration of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) within the education of sciences and engineering. The aim is to promote

it in the long term, so that future scientists and engineers (as well as others involved in the process of R+D+i) have the knowledge and skills to integrate RRI in their activity. Thus, research and innovation could be in line with the expectations, needs and values of society. Integrating RRI into university education may increase social benefits of research and innovation in Europe.

How can RRI improve the university of the future?

To incorporate RRI into daily scientific practice has two clear benefits, according to Van den Hoven *et al.* (2013): firstly, it has the potential to make a more efficient investment in research and innovation; and secondly, to encourage it to focus more on global social challenges. Awareness, knowledge and acquisition of tools to incorporate RRI into professional practice should be taught as early as possible. In this sense, higher education institutions play an essential role.

The first HEIRRI conference, "Teaching Responsible Research and Innovation at University" will be hosted in Cosmocaixa (Barcelona) on March 18th 2016. It will focus on raising the awareness of RRI and its diverse aspects among the HEI community, as well as aiming to spark the debate on how institutions can include the concept of RRI in their curricula to train future scientists and engineers. The conference will bring together professionals from European organisations working in Research and Innovation, including higher education institutions, research centres, public entities, industry, and civil society organisations. It will also give visibility to the project and will provide input for future actions. A preliminary programme of the event is available at http://www.rri-tools.eu/documents/10182/37230/1stHEIRRIConf_DraftProgramme.pdf

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