



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	<i>Preparation of the Council ("Competitiveness") of 4-5 December 2014</i> Science with and for Society - Policy debate

BACKGROUND

With the aim to better align research and innovation outcomes with values, needs, and expectations of society, the Commission has been promoting an approach to research and innovation in which all societal actors (researchers, citizens, policy makers, businesses, civil society organisations, etc.) work together during the whole Research and Innovation process.

In this context, under the auspices of the Italian Presidency, a conference "*Science, Innovation and Society: achieving Responsible Research and Innovation*" was organised in Rome in November 2014 to further promote Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). To this end, the Conference concluded endorsing the so-called "*Rome Declaration*".

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION TO BOOST ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL SUSTAINABILITY

RRI is the process of aligning research and innovation to the values, needs and expectations of society.

It requires that all stakeholders are responsive to each other and take shared responsibility for the processes and outcomes of research and innovation. This involves common responsibility and action in science education, the definition of research agendas, the conduct of research, the access to research results, and the application of new knowledge in society- in full respect of gender and ethics considerations.

More than a decade of research and pilot activities on the interplay between science and society points out to three main findings. First, technology acceptance should not be pursued by means of solely economic sustainability. Second, diversity in research and innovation is vital for enhancing creativity and improving scientific quality. Third, early and continuous engagement of all stakeholders is essential for sustainable, desirable and acceptable innovation. Hence, excellence today is about more than ground-breaking discoveries: it includes openness, responsibility and the co-production of knowledge.

The benefits of RRI go beyond the fulfilment of societal needs:

- it ensures that research and innovation deliver smart, inclusive and sustainable solutions to our societal challenges;
- it engages new perspectives, new innovators and new talents, allowing also to identify solutions which would, otherwise, go unnoticed;
- it builds trust between citizens and public and private institutions in supporting research and innovation;
- it reassures society about embracing innovative products and services;
- it assesses the risks and the way these risks should be managed.

Research and Innovation are sources of renewed growth and jobs and are necessary to tackle the grand societal challenges. Indeed, aligning research and innovation to the values, needs and expectations of society is fundamental towards the European Union agenda for jobs, growth, with outcomes contributing to long-term prosperity and well-being of citizens. These outcomes, together with (monetary) GDP growth, have to be included in the assessment of a Country's wealth.

By placing the emphasis on the social responsibility of research and innovation and of their "actors", researchers and innovators, it is expected that the best creative talents are mobilised in Europe and that a culture where innovation can happen everywhere in society, e.g. through farmers, patient groups, social workers, citizens at large, is fostered.

RRI also promotes shared values between European research and industry towards products and services which are better aligned with citizens' preferences and better respond to societal needs (i.e. eco-innovation).

EUROPE LEADING THE WAY

European regions and countries are already engaged in this approach. Societal demands for ambitious environmental policies led to creative social and technological innovations such as fuel efficient vehicles, solar devices and mobility solutions based on sharing.

Europe has the capability to lead this process: it has indeed an excellent scientific base and world-class research infrastructures, as well as an adequate governance to address both the opportunities and the challenges of research and innovation, particularly in sensitive issues such as open access and privacy in the age of big data. Furthermore, Europe can take advantage of its well-educated, culturally rich and diverse society, where citizens are familiar with collaboration across borders and cultures.

The EU funding programmes have been essential to support RRI as such. The lessons learnt have led to a strategy for a societal challenge-based approach in Horizon 2020, with a dedicated 'Science with and for Society' specific objective, accompanied by a clear message to mainstream RRI throughout the whole Programme. To this end, an enhanced effort is envisaged to assure that this message is fully translated into concrete actions and results.

QUESTIONS FOR THE POLICY DEBATE

In light of the overall context described above, the Presidency invites the Council (Competitiveness – Research part) on 5 December 2014 to address the following questions:

1. Do Ministers agree on the need of promoting Responsible Research and Innovation across all relevant policies and activities, including in shaping the European Research Area and the Innovation Union? What do the Ministers suggest as the most appropriate framework conditions to strengthen the R&I process through the engagement of all the societal actors, particularly in developing innovative solutions for the grand societal challenges?
2. Which reforms and instruments are needed in order to better integrate RRI in the national research and innovation governance?