



## Responsible Research and Innovation - science and civil society working together

Contributed by: **European Economic and Social Committee**

**On 14-15 January, four projects funded by the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development held a conference in Brussels, co-hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee, to present their findings, conceptual developments, concrete messages and policy recommendations on Responsible Research and Innovation.**

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is the ongoing process of aligning research and innovation to the values, needs and expectations of society. It is one of the specific and cross-cutting objectives of Horizon 2020, the EU's biggest ever Research and Innovation Programme with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years. The four projects Great, ProGReSS, ResAGorA and Responsibility, together known as the Go4 projects, have the common objective of improving our understanding of the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation and developing approaches, tools and mechanisms to facilitate the uptake of RRI across Europe and beyond.

"Research and Innovation are a key pillar in the EU strategy to create sustainable, inclusive growth and prosperity and to address the challenges our society faces in Europe and in the world", said Gonçalo Lobo Xavier, EESC vice-president in charge of communication, in his opening speech. "For the European Economic and Social Committee as the voice of civil society, the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation is of the utmost importance - it shouldn't be targeted towards institutions but towards citizens. EU citizens need to understand the reasons and the goals of the different research projects in each specific field. Citizens should be seen as active actors in the research process, not only as mere observers."

Attendees at the conference on Responsible Research and Innovation: Shaping New Horizons acknowledged that political and social decision-makers were starting to recognise the work being done on RRI. However, in order to keep up the momentum it is necessary to leave the theoretical realm and to put forward very practical and concrete ideas and recommendations for how to improve the public's understanding of and trust in research. During the conference policymakers, civil society representatives and academic researchers looked at both current practices and potential future directions.

Bridging the gap between research and society has been an important topic for the European Economic and Social Committee. A year ago the Committee organised another conference which brought together around 200 representatives from across Europe and beyond to discuss integrating civil society into research.

About the projects:

The Res-AGorA Project is a three-year EU FP7 project (2013-2016) which has worked with practitioners and strategic decision-makers to develop a good-practice framework, called the "Responsibility Navigator". The framework facilitates reflective processes involving multiple kinds of stakeholder and policy-maker with the general aim of making European research and innovation more responsible, responsive, and sustainable.

The main aim of ProGReSS is to establish a global network on responsible research and innovation, involving academia, SMEs, international organisations, policy advisors, research funders, NGOs and industry. The project aims to maximise opportunities for marginalised peoples and industry to provide input into its work.

The RESPONSIBILITY project aimed and succeeded in creating a forum and a virtual observatory on Responsible Research and Innovation, in order to help its network of stakeholders to adopt and diffuse a common understanding of RRI among the various players in Europe and around the globe.

The GREAT project has examined the normative basis on which responsible innovation can be understood with respect to research activities. It investigated governance measures for adopting and implementing responsible approaches to research and innovation. It also carried out an empirical investigation, based on an analytical grid, into how RRI governance is currently conceptualised and how is taken into account in research.

### Contributor

**Organisation** European Economic and Social Committee  
Belgium  
[Website](#)

**Contact person** Siana Glouharova  
[E-mail](#)  
[See more news from this contributor](#)

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