



D5.5 Report on the difficulties found in the implementation processes

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Elsa Alves (DBT)



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Contributing Partners:	Marko Hajdinjak (ARC Fund), Gábor Szüdi (ZSI), Ülle Must (Harno), Giovanni De Grandis (NTNU), Eva Pardo Gil (ESPAITEC), Xavier Eekhout Izaskun Lacunza (FECYT), Luis M. Camarinha-Matos (UN-INOVA), Philipp Hövel (EUREC), Ramón Feenstra (UJI), Maya Bidstrup (DBT)
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ABSTRACT: This deliverable is a detailed account of the key discussion points and findings of four participatory evaluation workshops with the ETHNA System implementing partners, internal and external stakeholders held online in September and October 2022. The main aim of this report is to collect the difficulties found in the implementation processes while looking for common and divergent points which will feed into the last evaluative and analytical tasks of the ETHNA project.

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Abbreviation	
ARC Fund	Applied Research and Communications Fund
ESPAITEC	Parc Científic Tecnològic i Empresarial
ETHNA	Ethical Governance of RRI in Innovation and Research Performing Organisations and Research Funding Organisations
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
Harno	Education and Youth Board of Estonia
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
R&I	Research & Innovation
RRI	Responsible Research and Innovation
UJI	University Jaume I
UNINOVA	Instituto de Desenvolvimento de Novas Tecnologias

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a detailed account of the key discussion points and findings of four participatory evaluation workshops with the ETHNA System implementing partners, internal and external stakeholders held online in September and October 2022. The main aim of this report is to collect the difficulties found in the implementation processes while looking for common and divergent points which will feed into the last evaluative and analytical tasks of the ETHNA project.

This report presents the work undertaken to achieve objective and task 5.6, *conduct a participatory evaluation of the ETHNA System implementation*. Two of the workshops were dedicated to discussions among implementing partners, while the two other workshops were dedicated to discussions among internal and external stakeholders respectively.

The evaluations focused on the added value of the ETHNA System in general and particular challenges and adaptations at the piloting activities carried out throughout the implementation. By participatory evaluation was meant involving stakeholders and implementing partners as active participants in the evaluation.

The three groups involved in the workshops brought different perspectives to the evaluation:

The focus of the implementing partners was to create a space for self-evaluation discussions and critical reflections on their own hands-on experiences working to implement the ETHNA System through the living lab approach;

The internal stakeholders had the opportunity to state their unfiltered opinions and contribute to cross-cutting discussions about the ETHNA System, and their involvement in the living lab. The inclusion of the internal stakeholders in the evaluation enabled a perspective on the implementation process from people familiar with the institution but who were not directly involved in the implementation;

Lastly, external stakeholders were included in the evaluation, as it is a fundamental aspect of the living lab approach to get the input from the surrounding society, reflecting organisational and societal needs. Therefore, representatives from science, industry, etc. were included. By inviting external stakeholders to participate in the workshop, new perspectives were brought up.

The report does not draw out final conclusions about the viability of the ETHNA System or its implementation. Rather, its main aim is to gather and structure evaluative statements by the partners and the involved stakeholders in order to submit these to the evaluative activities needed for drafting the blueprint for implementation of effective RRI governance, the evaluation report about the ETHNA System implementation, and for finalisation of the ETHNA System concept. This report therefore supplements the data gathered independently for these tasks. However, it does already indicate some preliminary recommendations and take-aways from the threefold perspective.

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1 Introduction

This report is a detailed account of the key discussion points and findings of 4 participatory evaluation workshops with the ETHNA System implementing partners, internal and external stakeholders held online in September and October 2022. The main aim of this report is to collect the difficulties found in the implementation processes while looking for common and divergent points which will feed into the last evaluative and analytical tasks of the ETHNA project.

The overarching goal of this series of workshops was to involve the participants in shaping the evaluation questions within the themes of the Living Labs, the methodology of the ETHNA Lab process and the ethical governance system ETHNA System. The workshops were organised as semi-structured events centred on these main themes, leaving great flexibility to pursue questioning and dialogue among participants. Furthermore, the participatory approach generated collective reflections on the insights and lessons learned from the ETHNA System implementation, as well as ethical governance as a whole. The workshops employed a diversity of exchange formats to support mutual learning and feedback gathering as needed. Some desirable results are recommendations to improve the ETHNA System implementation.

2 Implementing partners' participatory evaluation

2.1 Concept and methodology

The implementing partners' participatory evaluation workshops happened on the 15 and 16 September 2022, 3-hour long each, aimed at holding self-evaluation discussions among implementers by sharing their views within the themes of the Living Labs, the methodology of the ETHNA Lab process and the ethical governance system ETHNA System. Six representatives from 4 organisations attended the first workshop (ARC Fund, ESPAITEC, UNINOVA, and NTNU) and other 5 attended the second one from 4 organisations (UNINOVA, NTNU, Harno and UJI).

The purpose of the workshops was to create a common space for the implementing partners to critically reflect on their experiences with the ETHNA Lab and the ETHNA System implementation and share their honest assessment of the overall experience.

The first 2 sessions were dedicated to discussing the ETHNA Lab process and the Living Lab methodology, followed by the ETHNA System implementation's first results, based on the implementation status and challenges, which allowed to focus on the different concerns and issues, which the implementers have been facing. Specifically, the aim was to address the more unique situations and aspects that they have come across and worked with as part of the implementation work throughout the implementation phase. The actual experiences and insights reported here, which are not meant to be final conclusions, will be laying the foundation for the evaluative activities further on in the project, as a supplement to the further data gathered in these tasks.

These sessions consisted of a short panel, where each participant elaborated on a given question, followed by open discussion. The questions were: *What would be one experience with the ETHNA Lab implementation and Living Lab methodology you would like to highlight? And how have you experienced the added value of the ETHNA System at your institution?* The participants were guided by some questions by the facilitator but also motivated to steer the conversation and critically reflect together. A generous amount of time was allocated, which aimed at going deep into the challenges the implementers have encountered while at the same time learning from the different approaches they have taken. A third open slot theme was programmed for a brainstorm task on a Mural board, where the participants could elaborate their own questions or identify issues which haven't been tackled or deepened enough before. Finally, there was a takeaway task where the participants were asked to identify and sum up the main learnings from the whole process of the implementation phase in a one-liner.

Programme

9.30-9.40	Welcome and agenda
9.40-10.15	Theme 1: The living lab implementation process Panel session followed by open discussion Panel session question: What would be one experience with the ETHNA Lab implementation and Living Lab methodology you would like to highlight? <u>Each implementing partner will be able to present their answer for 2-3 minutes. Preparation is optional.</u>
10.15-10.25	<i>Coffee break</i>
10.25-11.15	Theme 2: The use and implementation of the ETHNA System Panel session followed by open discussion Panel session question: How have you experienced the added value of the ETHNA System at your institution? <u>Each implementing partner will be able to present their answer for 2-3 minutes. Preparation is optional.</u>
11.15-11.25	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.25-12.00	Theme 3: Open slot Brainstorm and discussion about other relevant theme(s) selected by the participants
12.00-12.25	Takeaways Summary and discussion of the main learnings
12.25-12.30	Wrap up

2.2 Implementation challenges

The challenges identified by each implementer are organised per context, implementer and issue, and presented in the tables below, supported by paraphrased statements of the participants.

2.2.1 Research centre context

2.2.1.1 ARC Fund

Challenges of implementation in a small organisation	<i>Very small pool of people that can be involved in the different activities;</i>
	<i>Same members have been involved in the RRI-based projects over the last 5 years, so there is a kind of RRI fatigue and lack of enthusiasm. The other half of the team is difficult to engage in these topics as they have limited time for their own tasks.</i>
Resistance/rejection of senior management	<i>A comprehensive document following ETHNA methodology covering RRI key areas was</i>

	<i>rejected based on the fact it did not have the style of a code. So, we are thinking in producing 2 different documents, one that satisfies the requirements of the management and another that serves the purposes of the ETHNA project.</i>
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2.2.2 Higher education context

2.2.2.1 NTNU

Staff resistance and structural hindrance	<i>At our department in NTNU, ETHNA would be doubling up structures that are already in place. It would be another top-down measure, and what is needed is more awareness and better utilisation of existing structures. We have detected one ethical issue, regarding gender imbalance, but structures are already in place, the issue is to make use of them and promote a cultural change. Because of the resistances, we could not follow the recommended steps and had to adapt.</i>
Engagement of external stakeholders	<i>Very difficult to recruit external stakeholders. We did not get any response from students, which we expected to be interested in participating in the focus group.</i>

2.2.2.2 UJI

The implementation methodology was too rigid	<i>The biggest challenge was to follow the steps and in the period that ETHNA needs us to do it, and at the same time our institution has its own timeline. We had to skip some steps and change some procedures in order to attain the same goals.</i>
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2.2.3 Innovation Ecosystem context

2.2.3.1 UNINOVA

The implementation methodology was too bureaucratic and in a one-way approach	<i>We were following the steps without fully understanding why we need to follow all these detailed steps. It could have followed a co-design or collaborative approach and involving the implementers in the methodology while adapting to different realities.</i>
Engagement of external stakeholders	<i>The methodology started from a false assumption that stakeholders are eager to adopt ethics, be enthusiastic and engage in these processes. This is not our experience: it is difficult to convince them that these topics are relevant, they seem to be focused in getting funds and performing their research. In this regard, the</i>

	<i>methodology didn't help much. We interact a lot with start-ups and small companies.</i>
Senior researchers' resistance to change	<i>Not easy to change the culture at work, so we have put more emphasis in training junior staff.</i>

2.2.3.2 ESPAITEC

Lack of co-creation; the internal documents have been updated and not shared in drive	<i>We joined the project one year after and we are still trying to catch up with all the topics and we find obsolete documentation.</i>
Engagement of external stakeholders	<i>Stakeholders do not have time, or it is too difficult to explain RRI concepts for someone who is not related to the area. In our case, we deal with start-ups which are small companies and lack sometimes human resources to participate in these initiatives and also do not see value in it. We need to extract bits and pieces of the material provided by the ETHNA project, so they are able to understand and make use of it.</i>

2.2.4 Research Funding Organisation context

2.2.4.1 Harno

Implementation is a learning process, and it takes time to learn the jargon	<i>I would expect our experienced partners to understand that sometimes even basic things need to be repeated. I would also like to feel that what we are doing is not a routine activity, but that we are contributing something new to this specific project.</i>
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2.3 Cross-implementer analysis of the challenges

By looking at the challenges identified by each implementer, we can group them in 3 different overarching aspects of the implementation process which cut-across different implementers and implementation contexts. The aspects identified are the implementation method, institutional resistance and reluctance (at different levels), and some internal (consortium) constraints.

Implementation method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too rigid • Top-down approach • Difficulties in engaging external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education context • Innovation eco-system context
Institutional resistance and reluctance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of human resources: small organisation • Scepticism by staff who does not see added value in the system • RRI "fatigue" (too many initiatives in the last years) • Senior management resistance to accommodating change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research centre context • Higher education context • Innovation eco-system context

Internal (consortium) constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communication issues • Learning by doing at low pace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation eco-system context • Research funding organisation context
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The challenges regarding the implementation method were commonly reported as the method being, generally, too rigid, i.e., not considering site-specific conditions, which led to changing or skipping steps in the process. Another implementer pointed out that it is a too top-down approach and therefore rejected by staff who regards administrative solutions for ethical issues with scepticism.

Furthermore, and in particular in the context of innovation eco-system, one of the main challenges identified was the difficulty of engaging external stakeholders. In that context, small companies and start-ups are not aware and/or do not have resources to build and sustain ethical codes.

In terms of institutional constraints, several and divergent issues were identified: lack of resources, resistance to see the added value in the ETHNA System because of having other systems/codes in place, general reluctance to be involved in another RRI initiative, and unwillingness to update the old ethical codes.

Finally, the third challenge group refers to internal communication issues as well as different pace of learning. One of the implementers stressed the fact they are at an early stage of the implementation process. The other one said that implementing is a learning and iterative process and therefore other implementing partners, and the consortium as a whole, could be more aware of these differences and needs and be more flexible while providing relevant information.

2.4 Implementation opportunities and institutional change

This aspect of the implementation is further developed in D5.4, ETHNA System Implementation report. Although all implementers at the time of the workshops were still running at different stages, some positive changes have happened so far, which are relevant to document here, as paraphrased below:

Increased awareness on ethical issues (ES-PAITEC and UNINOVA)	<p><i>Being able to share with my colleagues the importance of RRI and gender balance.</i></p> <p><i>The guidelines were very helpful to convince internal members</i></p>
Good training materials for PhD students (UNINOVA)	<p><i>The ETHNA System materials were included in a study programme on ethics and RRI for PhD students</i></p>
Helped achieve political goals (UNINOVA)	<p><i>We are in a very good position to show our national agency that we have implemented these mechanisms, which otherwise would have been difficult to play the political game</i></p>
Helped visibility and expand network (Harno)	<p><i>We had opportunity to discuss with our colleagues from the Estonian Research Council, the main research funding organisation in Estonia. We had also the possibility to discuss with different ministries, and, for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs asked me, after our meeting, to be member of the Gender Equality Council. Also, after discussions with Human Rights Centre, we participated in competition, and yesterday we were informed that the Education and Youth</i></p>

	<i>Board is one of the nominees for the label "We respect differences" awarded by the Estonian Human Rights Centre.</i>
Guidelines on open access have gained traction (UNINOVA)	<i>Having guidelines on how to publish in open access helped the researchers in selecting the channels where to publish</i>
Update and develop new ethics codes (ARC Fund)	<i>ETHNA was not a novelty, but it offered a well-structured and practical way to update and develop new ethical codes</i>

2.5 Some preliminary recommendations

Following on the identification of the challenges faced throughout their pilot work, implementers were asked to look back at the processes that they have been a part of until now and understand what has worked for them so far with their pilots, what they have learned along the way, thereby coming up with some preliminary recommendations. The recommendations fell mainly on 2 aspects: the implementation method design and execution, and organisational culture change and uptake of the ETHNA System.

Several implementers stressed the importance of being flexible when following the implementation steps, and when designing the overall implementation process. At least two pilots' representatives reported that they skipped some steps, or they adjusted them to the reality of their organisation.

This was contested, however, by another implementer, who argued that a flexible approach which can potentially be adopted by any research funding or performing organisation, at any stage of their RRI journey, may risk being too vague and not feasible to be executed. Rather, it was suggested that another approach would be to be more specific in the target organisation when designing the implementation method.

Within the same aspect, it was recommended that a co-creation approach is more suitable in the design phase, where the implementers could be part of the design rather than just executors of a finished plan.

Concerning effective organisational change and uptake of the ETHNA System, it was recommended regular training of the young staff, as well as an assigned responsible person or small team to execute the system implementation and regular monitoring.

The set of these preliminary recommendations is listed below:

1. Be flexible when following the implementation steps
2. Be more specific with the system target: being suitable for a broad range of organisations at the different stages in their journey towards RRI might be challenging to execute
3. Co-creation of the implementation method, build things bottom-up and not top-down
4. In order to change culture and mentality, young researchers and new employees need to be trained regularly
5. For the project to be feasible in the long run, it needs a person or small team who is in charge to execute and monitor it

3 Internal stakeholders' participatory evaluation

3.1 Concept and methodology

Internal stakeholders have been involved in several steps of the ETHNA implementation process: planning, consultation, testing and review. In the workshop, 5 stakeholders attended representing 3 pilots and 3 different contexts of implementation: research centre, innovation eco-system and higher education.

The aim of the participatory evaluation workshop with the internal stakeholders was, in a similar fashion to the implementers' workshop, to create a common space to critically reflect on their experiences with the ETHNA System implementation and ethical governance practices in general at their organisation.

It started off with a short panel, where each participant was tasked to elaborate on a question: *How was your involvement in the process (the ETHNA System implementation)?* By involvement, it was meant for them to share which tasks they were involved in, and if they were satisfied with the result. The participants reported their experience, which was then followed by an open discussion. The second session was a break-out session (3 and 2 participants in each group respectively) dedicated to reflecting beyond the ETHNA System which allowed the internal stakeholders to share their expertise in dealing with ethical governance and broaden their recommendations. The goal was here to identify the challenges, lessons learned and actions to take, when planning or doing ethical governance in research organisations, while learning from the different approaches they have taken. Finally, they participated in a brainstorm session where they were asked to identify the main competences gained from being engaged in the ETHNA implementation phase.

Programme

9.30-9.50	Welcome and introduction
9.50-10.40	Theme 1: The ETHNA Lab – experience and evaluation <i>Open discussion on the ETHNA Lab involvement process</i>
10.40-10.50	<i>Coffee break</i>
10.50-11.50	Theme 2: Ethical governance in Research Organisations – challenges, lessons learned and actions to take <i>Mutual learning group work session</i>
11.50-12.05	Co-creation of ETHNA Lab workshop certificate <i>Joint brainstorm</i>
12.05-12.10	Wrap up

3.2 ETHNA implementation process: experience and evaluation

Identified challenges

The participants were directly asked about barriers they have faced throughout their involvement in the ETHNA System implementation process. They identified 5, which are further elaborated with paraphrased statements from the participants in the tables below.

Innovation eco-system context

Senior management resistance	<i>Difficulties in negotiating with the senior management; although they know now more about ethics following our meetings, they still try to convince themselves their old code is good enough and no change is needed</i>
Junior researchers' resistance	<i>They resist in incorporating the code as their life becomes more complicated, i.e., more work to do in the research process</i>

Research Centre context

Lack of awareness and circulation of the ethical codes/documents	<i>Dissemination needs to be improved. Documents need to be visible to all: researchers and staff alike, clearly stating what is expected by them and the institution as a whole</i>
Some ethical recommendations not adequate to organisational procedures	<i>Some recommendations did not consider the financial constraints of the organisation, for instance, training opportunities and capacity building events need to be set in advance in the project applications so they can guarantee the necessary funds for their execution, so they had to be readjusted</i>

Higher Education context

Management of expectations among researchers	<i>Researchers come up with many initiatives and practical ideas which cannot be fulfilled</i>
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Recommendations

Following on from the identification of the challenges faced in their experience, the internal stakeholders were asked to come up with recommendations to overcome some of them and they agreed on the following ones:

1. The different institutional documents addressing the RRI key areas need to be conveyed not just via the website, but also through training sessions and short workshops, where the documents are presented and some ideas of how to update these documents are collected to be in line with the research world;
2. Young researchers need to be trained in the topics of RRI, as the younger they know these concepts the easier will be to integrate them in their research, and to understand that RRI is part of doing the research, not something on top of the research;
3. Regular trainings should take place at least annually at the research organisation targeting the staff, so everyone is in line with the requirements and steps for the execution of the ethical codes.

Opportunities (institutional changes)

The internal stakeholders were inquired about institutional changes at their organisation, following the ETHNA System implementation. All of them answered they are still going through a transitional moment from reflection into factual implementation, where internal processes are still taking place. Moreover, the scope of change reflects the stage of each pilot. Yet, they could already identify some positive impact in their institutions, namely:

Higher education context

- A new **Code of Ethics, an Ethical Committee to be approved (October 2022) and an Ethical Line** which did not exist before the ETHNA System
- An **extern hired to be RRI Officer** and to be in charge of monitoring ethical issues
- The **rectorate buy-in** to the new ethical governance system
- **Opportunity to be compliant and in line with the European regulations** and ethical recommendations
- **Enthusiasm from the researchers** who come up with initiatives and practical ideas

Innovation eco-system context

- **Awareness** (although no practical changes have happened yet, research staff has become aware of the importance of ethical codes)

Research centre context

- Production of a well-structured and detailed **document that integrates in one place organisational information of the implementation of the different RRI key areas**
- The establishment of an **Ethics Board inspired by the ETHNA System with the aim to evaluate how the code of ethics is being implemented** in the research practices

All internal stakeholders, moreover, stressed the fact that the ETHNA System implementation process has inspired their organisation to further develop RRI key plans, and overall better ethical governance deployment. Specifically, one of the participants stated that this experience would result in better research process and implementation in the future.

3.3 Ethical governance: challenges, lessons learned and actions to take

In the break-out session, the internal stakeholders were asked to reflect on ethical governance issues beyond the ETHNA System, so they could have an opportunity to deepen and extend in scope the evaluative discussion, as well as stress the participatory nature of the workshop, having the opportunity to propose their own questions to jointly reflect on. They were tasked to identify the challenges, lessons learned and, finally, possible actions to take to overcome the faced hindrances. Both sessions resulted in very dynamic interactions where the participants had opportunity to elaborate further on previous points.

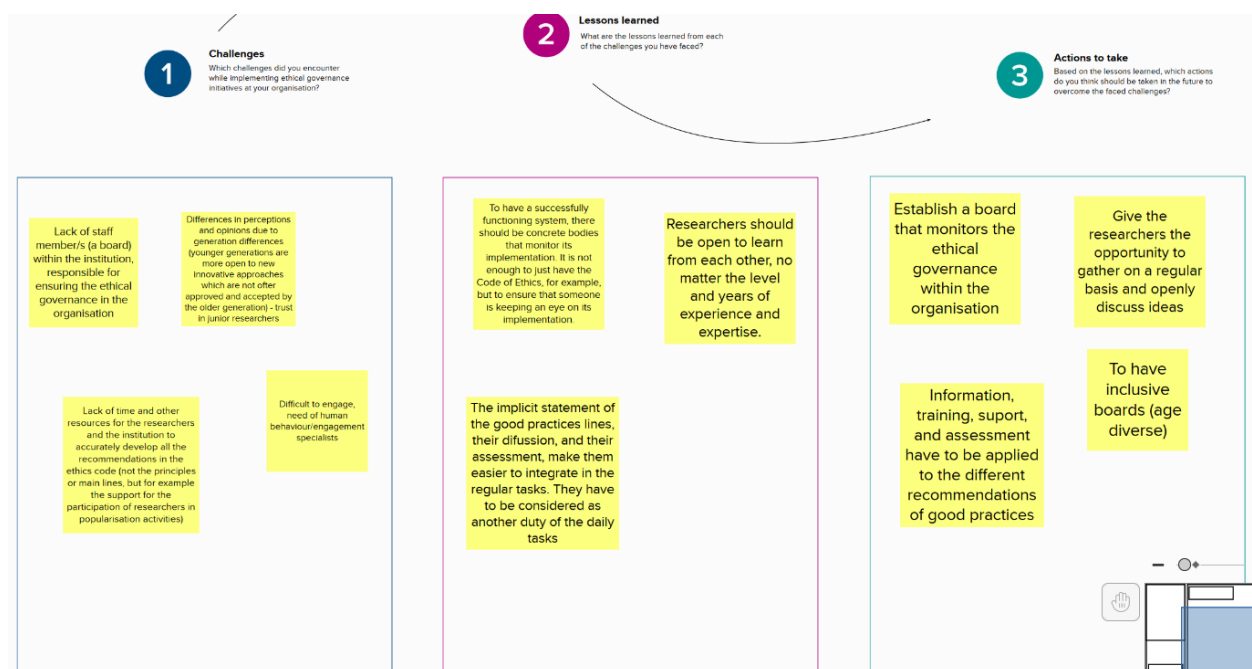


Fig 1: Screenshot of Mural Board – Internal Stakeholder's workshop break out session group 1

Break-out group 1

The identified **challenges** of group 1 were the following:

Lack of staff members and a board in general to ensure implementation of ethical governance	<i>The documentation framework is not enough to implement change</i>
Lack of resources in general: financial, human and time to implement ethical governance	<i>Organisations struggle with finding resources for some of the activities recommended in the ethical codes, such as initiatives in science popularisation</i>
Senior management resistance to change and lack of trust	<i>Differences in perceptions and opinions due to generational differences (younger generations are more open to innovative approaches which are often rejected by the senior members)</i>

In the group discussion, it was stressed by one participant that having ethical codes and regulations in an organisation is not enough. It is all the more relevant to assign at least one person, but ideally a board, that monitors the implementation of the different action plans, as well as working with the staff members to integrate the plans in their everyday work in a streamlined way. All participants supported the idea.

Regarding the senior management resistance to change, one participant referred that he did not experience it in his involvement in the ETHNA implementation at his organisation. However, it was admitted that it could happen in a broader implementation setting, as his experience was limited to a focus group.

Suggested actions:

1. Establish a board that oversees ethical governance practices in general and evaluates them;
2. Include behavioural experts to manage change at organisations;
3. Have inclusive boards with junior and senior researchers alike;

4. Give researchers the opportunity to gather and openly discuss ideas;
5. Dissemination, training, support, and assessment need to be applied to the different recommendations of good practices.

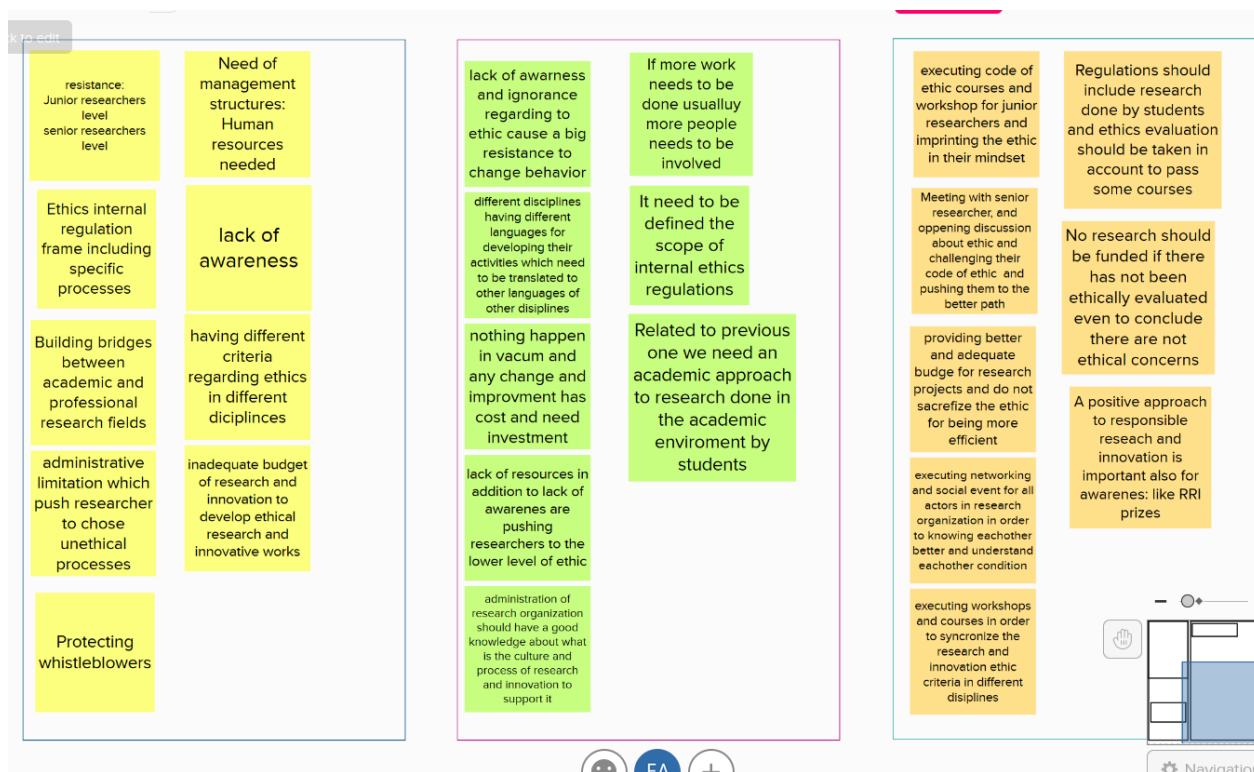


Fig 2: Screenshot of Mural Board – Internal Stakeholder's workshop break out session group 2

Break-out group 2

The identified **challenges** of group 2 were the following:

Institutional constraints: lack of awareness and flexibility	<i>Administrative departments lack of awareness of ethical issues, and ignorance may cause a big resistance in changing behaviours. Administration is not from the ethical environment of R&I and they need to facilitate the ethical process</i>
Inadequate budget for ethical governance	<i>Funds for ethics aren't being allocated enough and low budget might make us less ethical as it limits the way we execute a task</i>
Upper management disengagement in increasing awareness of ethics	<i>Management needs to be involved in order to increase awareness. If we consider researchers the most important actors in developing research, upper management should support this, but this does not happen</i>
Different criteria regarding ethics in different disciplines	<i>Social scientists perceive ethical issues in a different way than engineers, perhaps we need to either synchronise or translate them into different languages</i>
How to protect whistle-blowers	<i>Generally, they are seen as traitors</i>

How to control data protection issues	<i>No relation between ethics and legal issues in the “little research”</i>
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Suggested actions:

1. Awarding responsible researchers, beyond scientific production and have a 0-100 responsibility scale to have in mind when designing research;
2. Institutions should invest more in ethics, namely by way of human resources;
3. Arrange training courses to create awareness of the importance of ethics in research but without uniformisation, rather specific for each target group;
4. Upper management should be involved in promoting awareness of the importance of ethics among researchers;
5. At Universities, rectorate and vice-rectorate are the most important actors to engage; they need to believe in ethical governance and not see it just as a European requirement;
6. Hire specialised staff or train existing staff in these matters and create teams with a wider scope of profiles;
7. Organise big events to bring along senior researchers, administrative staff, etc., 2 or 3 researchers are not enough if one wants to create impact in ethical governance.

4 External stakeholders' participatory evaluation

4.1 Concept and methodology

External stakeholders have been involved in the consultation step of the ETHNA implementation process. In the workshop, 7 stakeholders attended, who have been involved in 4 pilots, from 4 different contexts of implementation: research centre, innovation eco-system, research funding organisation, and higher education. They were from different societal areas, such as research organisations, industry associations, and private companies.

Similarly to the other participatory workshops, the aim of the workshop with external stakeholders was to create a common space for them to critically reflect on their experiences with the ETHNA System implementation, in an honest way, as well as with ethical governance practices. In order to do this, the workshop started off with a short panel, where each participant elaborated on a question which was sent to them in advance: *What has been the most inspiring and/or insightful learning throughout your involvement in the implementation of the ETHNA System?* After their presentation, the floor was open for discussion, and although there were guiding questions, the goal was for the participants to steer the conversation and critically reflect together, so they were told to ask questions to one another to deepen the discussion. Finally, there was a joint brainstorming task where participants were asked to identify the main competences gained from the experience with the ETHNA System.

Programme

10.00-10.20	Welcome and introduction
10.20-11.10	Discussion: The ETHNA System – experience and evaluation Panel session followed by discussion
11.10-11.25	Co-creation of workshop certificate

	Joint brainstorm
11.25- 11.30	Wrap up

4.2 ETHNA System evaluation and lessons learned

All external stakeholders agreed that the ETHNA System, as a framework and toolbox, can be inspiring and useful for their own organisations. All of them were aware that ethics is a cross-cutting issue and that all projects, no matter their nature or setting, should have an ethical point of view, and all organisations should have an ethical code. Below, follow their statements on the insights they gained by being involved in the ETHNA System implementation. Generally, all impressions were highly positive, and they regarded both the ETHNA System and their involvement as insightful experiences that they could learn from. The only less positive remark regarded the fact that ETHNA, by being a broad approach for ethical practice in research, may be difficult to apply in small organisations, though the participant stressed that it still can work as a reference for future guidance.

- 1. The ETHNA System is a very broad and holistic approach to ethical practice in research, and for instance, in a small organisation, many of the approaches that are recommended, we lack the right people to put them into place, but it can definitely work as blueprint for what we can do in the future and set our own performance indicators based on the guidance offered.*
- 2. Deliverable 4.2¹ was very insightful, especially the annex that explains the whole process of putting the system in place at the organisation.*
- 3. Being a system piloted in different locations and settings, it makes it much easier for us to advocate for something like this to be implemented in our scale.*
- 4. The most important lesson learned is that funding organisations also have ethical responsibility and ETHNA provides this opportunity for reflection.*
- 5. I was asked about ethical issues in research when invited within ETHNA and it was interesting for us to focus and reflect on issues that we haven't been aware that can happen in our company.*
- 6. It is difficult to control to what extent people are being ethical or not. ETHNA works as a general umbrella so that individuals can be inspired by these initiatives and choose their actions. So, it is useful and convenient to have this sort of tools, not just for research organisations but for everything, so better results in projects are achieved.*

¹ D4.2: A Guide to the Ethical Governance of RRI in Innovation and Research in Research Performing Organisations and Research Funding Organisations. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6532789>

4.3 Open discussion



Fig. 3: Screenshot of the discussion notes on a Mural board – External Stakeholders' workshop

After having inquired the stakeholders about their experience of being consulted within the ETHNA System implementation, the floor was open for questions, and some issues on ethical governance were discussed among the participants. A summary of the main issues discussed follows below.

Monitoring and anticipating ethical risks

A concern raised by one participant regarded the anticipation and monitoring of risks, specifically in a tech company. Another stakeholder shared that one of the positive aspects of having an ethical system is that the officer in charge should not take long to investigate the underlying issue after an alert has been issued. A company which does not react immediately is not sustainable, as a serious break of an ethical code would affect the structure and future of the company. Controlling risks means, thus, having a general protocol and being able to react and address every single case. However, it was further clarified in discussion that there are issues that can be anticipated or that automatically raise an alert (e.g.: environmental issues), and, on the other hand, there are issues, such as fixing prices against competition, that is something that does not raise an alert, and therefore needs to be anticipated.

Overlapping legal and ethical responsibilities

Another participant, expert in law, brought the attention to overlapping legal and ethical responsibilities. Legal responsibilities can go together or not with ethical issues. People must obey the norms in the legal terms, but an ethical code is something else that any organisation or project should have, and everyone at the organisation or in the project should follow the same ethical guidelines. A participant contested this clear-cut distinction between ethical and law issues, defending that both law and ethics are always up to reflection and interpretation, neither law nor ethics can be dogmatic.

Ethical clearance and transdisciplinarity

A participant stressed that ethics is one of the most important aspects in a big research management system in general, and it is quite new that, for instance, the vice-rectorate have now ethical responsibilities. They are in charge of conflict of interest, the director of administration is in charge of unequal treatment, human resources office of other ethical issues. The distribution of ethical responsibilities and monitoring regarding academic ethics is a new approach.

Following this comment, another participant shared that there is need of ethical clearance in her context, but there is no ethics board at national level, so even plagiarism is under-regulated. This was echoed by another participant who said that private companies also are in need of ethical clearance, and there is no one forcing them to take ethical clearance or consult ethics committees for their activities. Research in public organisations is more scrutinised than in private ones. A participant suggested that one needs to copy or get inspired by ethics committees that work well and implement the same strategies.

A final issue mentioned but not discussed was transdisciplinarity: ethics is a subject that belongs to the disciplines of philosophy and social sciences and is now being applied to technology and innovation.

Lessons learned

Participants were finally asked to sum up in a one-liner what they have learned along the way. Below follow their lessons learned:

1. Capacity to create ethical plans for their own organisation
2. Each ethical issue is different, how to solve each one is a different challenge. A complete ethical system – like ETHNA – helps
3. Need of codes of ethics and ethics committees for carefully applying general rules to every single case
4. Understanding ethics not as a limit
5. Ethics is a cross-cutting issue at the core of any action in any project
6. The knowledge differences among countries and settings (contexts) are important for collaboration



Fig. 4: Screenshot of the final takeaway task on the Mural board – External Stakeholders' workshop

5 Conclusion

This report aimed at providing an account of the key findings of the four participatory workshops held with the implementing partners, internal and external stakeholders in September and October 2022, with particular focus on the challenges of the ETHNA System implementation process as stated by the participants, while including already institutional changes at the pilots' organisations, as well as some preliminary recommendations, which will eventually contribute to the final evaluative tasks of the project.

The performed workshops provided a space for the implementers, as well as the internal and external stakeholders involved in the ETHNA System implementation, to honestly share about their challenges, while at the same time highlighting the opportunities the ETHNA System has offered to the organisations. All actors involved in the workshops shared their take-aways from this experience, and how the ETHNA System may be fine-tuned and effectively integrated at the target organisations.

The main take-aways by the implementers were the need for the ETHNA System implementation method to be: 1) flexible, 2) co-creation based, and 3) more target-specific. It was moreover added that in order for the ETHNA System to be effectively integrated at the target organisations there is: 4) a need for continued training of young researchers and new employees and 5) a need for a person or small team to be in charge to execute and monitor the system.

As for the internal stakeholders, the main take-aways from being involved with the ETHNA System implementation were: 1) the need for the different documents addressing the RRI key areas to be well conveyed and disseminated, 2) the need for young researchers to be trained in these topics, and 3) regular trainings, at least annually, targeting the staff, so everyone is in line with the requirements and steps for the execution of the ethical codes.

As for the external stakeholders, the main take-aways from being involved with the ETHNA System were that the ETHNA System facilitates: 1) the capacity to create ethical plans for organisations, 2) as a complete ethical system helps solve different challenges, 3) the knowledge differences among countries and contexts are important for collaboration and that 4) ethics should be seen as a cross-cutting issue at the core of any project and 5) never be seen as a restriction.