D1.4. Policy Brief 2

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ABSTRACT: This deliverable includes a short policy brief that gathers the final recommendations from the project in light of the project final results and developments.

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Initials, acronyms and abbreviations	
ARC Fund	Applied Research and Communications Fund
HARNO	Estonian Education and Youth Board
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
R&I	Research and Innovation
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
RPO	Research Performance Organisation
RRI	Responsible Research and Innovation
UJI	Universitat Jaume I
UNINOVA	Instituto de Desenvolvimento de Novas Tecnologias

ACKNOWLEDGMENT & DISCLAIMER

EUROPEAN

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ETHICAL GOVERNANCE OF R&I IN HIGHER EDUCATION, FUNDING, AND RESEARCH CENTRES

Promoting Ethics Governance from theory to practise in Research Performing and Research Funding organisations

July 2023

INTRODUCTION

Institutional changes are required to respond to the increased interactions between R&I stakeholders in society. Through institutional changes, research funding and performing organisations become more "porous" and accept inputs from citizens and organisations that used to be considered outsiders to the world of R&I. Examples include citizen science, extended peer review in funding agencies, co-creation of public policies, agenda setting in research and innovation programmes, co-production of research and innovation content, and co-evaluation of proposals, activities or other R&I funding decisions.

Good practices are widespread in Europe in terms of: citizens' and citizens' associations engagement in science; formal and informal science education; gender equality in science; research ethics and integrity and open access to research results. The good practices in these five fields are much more easily, efficiently and sustainably implemented when the organisations funding, performing or associated to R&I have adapted significantly their governance frameworks to open up through a process of institutional change.

Results of the projects should contribute to a greater involvement of all stakeholders in R&I, and a better and more sustainable engagement with citizens and society as a whole. The implementation of the ETHNA System, as designed, would ensure such engagement. Achieving this goal will depend on joint work between academia research, business and industry, civil society and also government. This Policy Brief aims to provide policy recommendations to relevant policy makers on how to promote ethical and effective self-regulation with and for Society. These pointers can be useful for the upcoming Horizon Europe and, in a broader term, for the promotion of other policies with R&I scope.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Both the overall project's evaluation and the results in the form of institutional changes originated during the piloting process in 6 institutions within the consortium have allowed the identification of essential actions and processes for the implementation of a system such as ETHNA. ETHNA is an ethical governance system for research and innovation that strives at institutional changes driven by internal and external stakeholders within each of the organisations through open and deliberative processes.

This synthesis is based on the following sources:
1. Evaluative statements collected during two participatory evaluation workshops with the ETHNA System implementing partners held in September 2022 and included in Alves (2022).
2. Online self-evaluation questionnaire completed by the Lab Managers from the six implementers in late October and early November 2022.
3. Presentations and discussions of the first results of the ETHNA System implementation at a workshop, organised in November 2022 in Sofia.

It has become evident throughout the implementation of six parallel institutionalisation efforts that the following aspects are essential:
- To undertake a deep analysis of the resources and internal structures available (material and human) of the Research Performing Organization (RPO) or Research Funding Organization (RFO) before deciding the level and type of implementation provided by ETHNA System.
- To get the strong commitment and active support from the leadership about the adoption of the ethics management tools is very much needed (Ethical Code, Ehical Committe, Ethical Line and Monitor process).
- To set up a work team with a clear Lab Manager that actively leads the implementation process. The team can be relatively small, but it needs to be committed, proactive and able to adapt the ETHNA System tools to the needs of the organisation.
- To internally identify who is responsible for planning, executing and monitoring the process (RRI Officer).
- To create knowledge and awareness among researchers and innovators on the parts of the ETHNA System that have been decided to be implemented and the RRI. The specific benefits of their implementations for Research and innovation linked activities should be highlighted.
- To obtain the involvement and approval of the smallest units affected by the implementation within the organisation structure prior to starting implementing the system within the organisation.
- To identify external incentives, such as, EU funding requirements (e.g. in case of a Gender Equality Plan), The European Charter for Researchers, The Code of Conduct for Recruitment", international awards or participation in projects that may work as a starting mechanism. It is necessary to be aware that they alone cannot guarantee the sustainability of the proposed institutional changes.
- To modify, if it is a small part of the organisation, the use of the participatory methodology to engage internal and external stakeholders from the quadruple helix to co-create the system at the core of the organisation (living lab), but without iterations.

- To start the process without aiming at adopting all pieces of the ETHNA System: RRI Officer, Code of Ethics and Good Practices, Ethics Committee, ethics line and monitor indicators. If the ETHNA System can work as a tool for reflection that helps the organisation to articulate their most urgent ethical priorities, this is an excellent result in itself.

From this evidence and analyses the nine aspects have been incorporated in the final version of the Guide to implement the ETHNA System (González-Esteban, et. al. 2023)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has led to the formulation and validation of the following *conclusion* on the main project question: How to promote an ethical and effective self-regulation of Research Performance and Funding Organisations with and for society?
Moreover, the *recommendations* have been highlighted during the identification phases, they have been confirmed through the results of the implementation phase and multi-consultation exercise and validated by the evaluation phase of the project. The following findings and recommendations can be made.

General recommendation:
- Promote governance structures of RRI that combine democratic and bottom-up understanding of RRI, engaging stakeholders, including lay people" and "expert and top-down support and understanding of RRI, relying on expert systems and committees, both in forward-looking as well as in backward-looking ways.
- Organise and disseminate information on Research Ethics and Responsible Research and Innovation dimensions and issues.

Specific recommendations:
- Devising and sustaining an ethical governance system of R&I, either as a RPO or a RFO, involves starting a cultural change within the institution (attitudes, behaviours, processes, incentives, etc.) that requires continuous planning, following-up and evaluation. For that reason, it is relevant to support with incentives those organisations that are either implementing or promoting those structural and institutional changes, e.g. in calls for proposals, to value positively the fact that the organisation has an action plan on ethical governance as it is suggested by the ETHNA System, as well as the fact of having a sustainability plan for the implementation of the project.

- Mutual understanding and specific problem resolution through co-creation networks among organisations that are driving and implementing institutional changes towards ethical governance systems of RRI, is one of the levers that motivate and stimulate change. The support of public policies through specific calls for proposals to strengthen or generate specific new support and common growth networks should target strengthening the changes and broadening the progress already achieved.

- Institutional leadership, together with structural resources of the organisation (knowledge, time, financial resources, etc.) —as the project has been able to show— are essential to be able to succeed in the implementation of an ethical governance system. In this sense, the recommendation in the domain of public policy would be to boost and even demand specific training for institutional leaders and staff, especially at the organisations that are key in the research and innovation processes in the domain of responsible research and innovation.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY

The ETHNA project is published all the information on the progress and results on its own homepage [https://ethnasystem.eu] and the data that can be useful to R&I researchers is managed in ZENODO [https://zenodo.org/search?page=1&size=20&q=ethna] and will be present at the Embassy of Good Science.

We can highlight the finalisation of the ETHNA System Guide, the Toolbox, the 5-year ETHNA System Sustainability Plan and the Manual for Coordinators of the ETHNA System.

The project has created and will continue creat academic publications that are being and may be used by researchers, as well as by institutions interested in the implementations of an ethical governance system. As an example, to be highlighted is the book in open access: González-Esteban, E., Feenstra, R.A., Camarinha-Matos, L.M. (eds) (2023) [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33177-0_2]

The project will stay in place over time within the implementation organisations of the project, and five of them have established a sustainability plan.

Finally, the consortium has established networking with other projects working on RRI implementation, such as the project Catalisi: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101094917 and with other sister projects ROSiE, TIME4CS and VERITY.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The **overall goal** of the ETHNA System project was to define and implement a "meta-governance" system in Research Performing Organizations and Research Funding Organizations considering different contexts. An ethical governance that aligns the research and innovation spaces, within the organisations that implement it, along with the dimensions (anticipation, inclusion/deliberation, reflexivity, and responsiveness) and key areas of RRI (research integrity, governance, gender perspective, public engagement and open access).

The specific objectives that had been established from February 2023 up until June 2023, were the following:
- To revise the ETHNA System Guide for the implementation of the system and the toolbox that goes with it, given the implementation and evaluation processes made of them, as well as generally of the project.
- Based on the learnings gathered during the piloting of the system and the evaluation processes undertaken, to create a ''Manual for future implementers or trainers in the ETHNA System'', as well as the "Five-year ETHNA System Sustainability Plan" to ensure an adequate and efficient deployment of the system within the organisations.
- To disseminate project results at the Final Conference targeting a specialised but broad audience minding relevant actions in the domain of policy-making, business and industry, civil society and the research innovation and funding community.
- To identify the questions that have to face ethical governance models whose main objective is to promote responsible research and innovation. Issues that should be considered in a research context that has been progressively defined as a ''publish or perish'' one, with high competitiveness levels for economic and financial resources for research.
- To publish the most relevant results achieved during the implementation of the project with a prestigious publishing house and in open access so the sustainability of the project is enabled.
- After the project evaluation process has been finalised, to identify the impact that the implementation of the piloting has had in the advance and generation of good practices linked to RRI keys and dimensions the MoRRI indicators and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in each of the organisation where it has been implemented.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME   Ethics Governance System for RRI in Higher Education, Funding and Research Centres [ETHNA System].

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WEBSITE	https://ethnasystem.eu
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FURTHER READING	

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