

*Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is so new that it is not well documented and good practice has not been spread. It is, however, gradually pervading research and innovation culture and policy. As a means to spread such good practice, a pan-European group of science foundations have now created Awards for Responsible Research & Innovation. This article explores how these awards came about to stimulate people to introduce RRI aspects in their work.*

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## **RRI Awards: recognising good practice**



### **European foundations reward Responsible Research and Innovation**

The idea of connecting and aligning research with society is already meeting fertile ground. As a result, Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is gradually stepping away from the margins into mainstream research and innovation culture and policies. Supported by the European Commission, many projects have set out to identify, describe and discuss the different aspects of RRI. Meanwhile, there are numerous initiatives to formalise and institutionalise RRI into policy, industry and education.

Despite this growing interest in the topic, RRI practices have not been well-documented in a wide range of research disciplines. We do not know how scientists can adopt RRI principles to guide their research. We know even less how they actually apply them.

### **Responsible practice awards**

Until now, there have hardly been any prizes granted in recognition of good practice in RRI-driven research. Such good practice has often remained unnoticed. As a result, the opportunity for others in the field to learn about them is also limited. This inspired a group of European science-related

Foundations to create Awards for Responsible Research & Innovation ([EFARRI](#)). EFARRI is a joint initiative of the [King Baudouin Foundation](#), Belgium, [La Caixa Foundation](#), Spain, the [Fondazione Cariplo](#), Italy, the [Lundbeck Foundation](#), Denmark, the [Robert Bosch Stiftung](#), Germany, and the [European Foundation Centre Research Forum](#).

Their objective is to stimulate researchers and innovators to share their experience with RRI. They also aim to open up a rich diversity of promising RRI practices across Europe; including EU Member States as well as the associated countries of the European Research Area.

## **Over 200 submissions**

A call for proposals was launched on 15th September 2015. It focused on rewarding excellent research practices where the process requirements of RRI have successfully been integrated throughout the research process. To spread the word, we partnered with the national coordinators of the RRI-Tools project, called '[national hubs](#).' These disseminated the call for proposals across 30 European countries, reaching out to thousands of interested researchers and innovators.

By the 7th December 2015 closing date, we received almost 200 eligible applications from across Europe and even beyond, including from Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey. The highest number of applications came from Spain, Italy and Belgium. The submitted projects were diverse, ranging from health to energy research and from humanities to physics.

## **Assessment process**

All applications were first evaluated on their eligibility. In a second phase, a multidisciplinary team of the Delft Technical University, the Netherlands, performed a preliminary assessment of the research quality and its congruence with the principles of RRI. As part of the third round, the proposals were assessed on 4th March 2016 by an international jury of renowned academics in the field of RRI under the chairmanship of Jeroen van den Hoven, professor of ethics and technology at Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands. They have short-listed the fifteen most inspiring and promising research and innovation practices.

During the summer, the jury will select the three winners among the fifteen short-listed. They will consider the applicants' contribution to a societal challenge, how the short-listed projects integrate RRI dimensions, their scientific quality and their replicability. The three winners will receive €20.000 each at the RRI Awards ceremony in November 2016. We hope these awards can contribute to make the RRI discourse, which is often seen as abstract and vague, more tangible and inspiring.

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