

NOTE #6

RRI in Africa

By Carla Montesano and Vittorio Colizzi



RRI IMPLEMENTATION IN BIOSCIENCE ORGANISATIONS

GUIDELINES FROM THE  STARBIOS2 PROJECT



Andrea Declich with the STARBIOS2 partners



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The integration of university and research systems, and of these with civil society, is one of the open issues concerning the bioscience sector in the context of increasing globalization. This type of integration is not new in Europe (being among the aims of the European research framework programmes, which are also aimed at developing the so-called ERA - European Research Area) and has a long tradition within highly industrialized countries (for example between European countries and the USA). It constitutes a field of innovation in the case of cooperation with emerging and developing countries and, in particular, with the African continent. In the last two centuries this continent has often been the subject of passive transfer of European technologies and “values”. However, in the last decades, African governments and research actors have been developing and implementing their own policies and action strategies in this field. For European and African people, developing together the responsibility for research, especially in the field of biosciences, is an opportunity that must go hand in hand with technological transfer and innovation, to which Africa is now making impressive qualitative and quantitative progress.

In this framework, the promotion of a shared orientation between European and African partners on the subject of research and responsible innovation can be a way to proceed. This theme was one of the objects of the Action Plan of the University of Tor Vergata.

On this matter, a workshop titled “RRI in Africa: challenges and perspectives” was held in October 2018. It was focused on RRI implementation in biosciences in Africa. The experiences of

STARBIOS2 members in the cooperation between African and European research organisations were discussed. Among the approximately 80 participants were professors and PhD students in Europe and Africa, STARBIOS2 members, rectors of the Somali National University and Evangelic University of Cameroon, representatives of Italian universities (Camerino, Modena, Rome La Sapienza, Rome Tor Vergata, Padua, Parma, Pavia and others) and research institutions (CNR), and UNESCO. Focusing on RRI implementation in biosciences, some topics of discussion were the RRI approach, problems specific to RRI in Africa, experiences from higher education in Cameroon and Italy, student mobility, and scientific projects of Africa PhD students enrolled in Italian universities. The discussions resulted in some ideas on how to best develop a plan for RRI implementation in African research institutions, and the conclusion that there may be a need to re-think the European strategy for RRI in the African context. In this framework, a promising approach for improving the exchanges between African and Italian universities was singled out in the promotion and further development of the “dual degrees” experience.

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ABOUT THE STARBIOS2 GUIDELINES

This guideline aims to help readers formalize and trigger structural change aimed at introducing appropriate RRI-related practices to their own organisations. This is not a series of prescriptions, but an itinerary of reflection and self-interpretation addressed to different actors within the biosciences. To support this itinerary of reflection and self-interpretation, the document provides...

- a description of a general RRI Model for research organisations within the biosciences, that is a set of ideas, premises and “principles of action” that define the practice of RRI in bioscience research organisations,
- some practical guidance for designing interventions to promote RRI in research organisations in the Biosciences, putting into practice the RRI Model,
- a set of useful practices in implementing the structural change process,
- and information on particular STARBIOS2 cases and experiences, as well as materials, tools and sources, are also provided in the Appendix and in the Annex.



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