



EUROPEAN

POLICYBRIEF



TRANSFORM

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**Bringing RRI into regional
R&I decision-making
through citizen engagement**

March 2021

INTRODUCTION

This Policy Brief outlines recommendations for policymakers willing to embark on citizen engagement actions for research and innovation and promote institutional changes in terms of RRI embedding within regional governments.

These recommendations are grounded in the lessons learned by project partners in the implementation of TRANSFORM in the first 15 months of its lifetime within the three clusters involved in the project (Brussels Capital Region - Belgium; Catalonia - Spain; Lombardy – Italy) and cross-cluster activities.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The implementation of the TRANSFORM Project in its first 15 months provides several considerations of utility to policymakers willing to engage in experiences of local RRI grounding through citizen engagement.

First and foremost, RRI is a process of continuous collaboration and exchange among R&I stakeholders that cannot be pursued by simply ticking the box of presumed standard requirements. Implementing *meaningful* RRI is the objective to be accomplished. This target requires a solid

understanding of and a genuine commitment towards RRI on the part of policymakers involved. Meaningful RRI can be achieved through an honest dialogue based on mutual trust between RRI promoters (practitioners of RRI and citizen engagement) and RRI enablers (policymakers that can foster RRI in the territory); an in-depth analysis of the context (the local research and innovation ecosystem) in which RRI will take place; a shared timeline and common objectives in order to agree on what is feasible to achieve, when and how.

Secondly, citizen engagement, as the entry point for grounding RRI in the territory, has to be implemented with a clear scope. Participatory processes should valorise the particular contribution that citizens can bring into the policymaking process by sharing perspectives, needs and expectations as well as creativity, ideas and experiences that can be very different from those derived from the “usual” stakeholders in R&I (researchers and innovators). Thus, citizen engagement needs to be shaped to properly facilitate as well as incentivize the citizens’ place and agency in the process.

Thirdly, the outcomes of citizen engagement need to be actionable. The citizen engagement process should be designed to produce actionable results, such as suggestions that policymakers can use to design better R&I local policies for the common good. On the contrary, processes conducive to outcomes that cannot be included in policymakers’ decisions and actions can undermine the commitment of policymakers, the trust of citizens and the long-term sustainability of such approaches. On the other hand, what emerged from co-design and co-creation with citizens should be taken into account seriously, whatever the result is. If the outcomes are actionable, but the policymakers cannot follow-up on the citizen contribution for whatever reason, this should be clearly stated and explained. Participatory processes should always be organised so as to guarantee transparency, accountability and consequentiality.

Fourthly, each R&I ecosystem - and so the related policy context - is unique and “best practices” for RRI-place based implementation should be adapted to the specific regional framework (no one-size-fits-all solution). Showcasing a set of diverse approaches in different regional R&I ecosystems, as explored in TRANSFORM, can provide inspirations and concrete suggestions on how RRI could be flexibly tailored for any specific setting for other regions.

Finally, innovative and alternative solutions to adapt to external shocks (i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic) are needed. “Classic” citizen engagement action plans, which require in-person activities, should be revised at times of COVID-19. Experimenting with new methodologies and online instruments can result in new opportunities for citizen engagement. Still, this could also bring constraints and practical issues to be carefully considered and possibly sorted out.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote meaningful RRI through open and honest dialogue among the actors involved so as to plan what can be actually achieved during the foreseen timeframe.
- Shape participatory processes revolving around the added value that citizens can bring and results fully actionable.
- Plan and perform accountable and transparent citizen engagement processes, explaining at the beginning if and how the outcomes will be used and at the end if and how they have been implemented.
- Recognise and value diversity and custom-made experiences of territorialization of RRI. RRI is a process and needs place-based adjustments.
- Be flexible and responsive to external shocks (i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic), exploring and experimenting new tools and instruments to achieve the objective of citizens' participation in decision-making.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY

Best practices, emerging from the citizen engagement actions introduced in the three regions, will be described in 3 Strategic Roadmaps for the implementation of RRI within S3, which will detail the activities implemented in TRANSFORM:

- *Strategic Roadmaps for the implementation and support of territorial RRI through Participatory Research Agenda-setting within S3 priorities - Lombardy Cluster.* Citizen engagement activities and especially participatory agenda-setting approaches will be applied both to the design and the implementation phase of S3 and to co-design the Lombardy Region Three Years' Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation, in line with S3.
- *Strategic Roadmaps for the implementation and support of territorial RRI through Citizen Science within S3 priorities - Catalonia Cluster.* The Catalan cluster is working towards transforming regional R&I projects from the triple to quadruple helix. The aim is to incorporate citizen science as a means of integrating RRI into Catalonia's S3 2021-2027, its instruments and the actors of the Catalan R&I ecosystem.
- *Strategic Roadmaps for the implementation and support of territorial RRI through impact-driven innovation design and analysis within S3 priorities – Brussels-Capital Region Cluster.* Through the creation of an innovative tool to support a quadruple helix assessment

of innovations, the region will experiment an iterative and dynamic process beneficial to local R&I projects contributing to S3 while also making them more strongly oriented towards societal needs and the local public good.

Furthermore, the *TRANSFORM e-book* will present the experimentation processes explored in the three regional clusters, detailing methodologies and strengths, weaknesses and practical hints to implement the activities in further settings. The e-book will be an easy-to-use guide for policymakers and local stakeholders to implement RRI and participatory approaches in the context of S3.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

TRANSFORM brings together three European regions – Lombardy (Italy), Brussels-Capital (Belgium) and Catalonia (Spain) – to adapt to local contexts, test and disseminate three sound co-design and co-creation methodological frameworks (participatory research agenda setting, design for social innovation and citizen science) within their Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3). These frameworks provide approaches and application areas of responsible and accountable territorial development through new forms of local decision-making. Regional governments involved in TRANSFORM reflect on, experiment with, learn from and adopt RRI approaches to their R&I policies and actions. The three implementing regions also engage in mutual learning within and beyond Europe, pairing with a co-design initiative in Boston (USA).

Concrete examples of inclusive and sustainable territorial development will be attained, thus providing a set of reliable Policy Recommendations to transforming regional R&I ecosystems towards RRI.

TRANSFORM is contributing to:

- Establish more open, transparent and democratic R&I ecosystems in Europe;
- Consolidate Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation by integrating an RRI approach within existing regional innovation processes;
- Empower diverse stakeholders to implement and/or engage with the development of responsible regional development processes and evaluate their impact;
- Explore concrete R&I working methods based on three sound methodological approaches: participatory research agenda-setting, citizen science and design-thinking for social innovation;
- Advance territorial Responsible Research and Innovation by promoting shared learning and diffusion of governance innovations.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	Territories as Responsive and Accountable Networks of S3 through new Forms of Open and Responsible decision-Making - TRANSFORM
COORDINATOR	Angela Simone, Fondazione Giannino Bassetti, Milano, Italy, angela.simone@fondazionebassetti.org
CONSORTIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Association Européenne pour l'Information sur le Développement Local – AEIDL – Brussels, Belgium• Departament de la Vicepresidència i d'Economia i Hisenda - Generalitat de Catalunya – GENCAT – Barcelona, Spain• Finanziaria per lo Sviluppo della Lombardia – Finlombarda – Milan, Italy• Fondazione Giannino Bassetti – FGB – Milan, Italy (Coordinator)• INNOVIRIS – Brussels, Belgium• Museum of Science – MoS – Boston, United States• Plateforme belge pour la participation citoyenne – BE participation ASBL – Brussels, Belgium• Regione Lombardia – RL – Milan, Italy• Science for Change – SfC – Barcelona, Spain• Universitetet i Bergen – UiB – Bergen, Norway• Universitat de Barcelona – Barcelona, Spain• Université catholique de Louvain – Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
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BUDGET	EU contribution: 2.083.187,50 €
WEBSITE	https://www.transform-project.eu/
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FURTHER READING	Simone A. and Calderini M., 2021. "Give citizens a seat at the table", <i>Nature Italy</i> . doi: 10.1038/d43978-021-00038-1 http://www.nature.com/articles/d43978-021-00038-1