

NOTE #10

RRI and governance of complex research organisation

By Krzysztof Bielawski, Marta Dziezic, Izabela Raszczyk

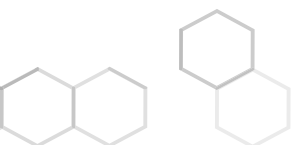


RRI IMPLEMENTATION IN BIOSCIENCE ORGANISATIONS

GUIDELINES FROM THE  STARBIOS2 PROJECT



Andrea Declich with the STARBIOS2 partners



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The University of Gdańsk (UG) is a complex organisation – the largest university in the Pomorskie Region (Poland) with more than 30,000 undergraduate, post-graduate and PhD students trained at 11 faculties and employing approximately 3,200 staff. It is a dynamically developing institution that combines respect for tradition with a commitment to new directions. The University of Gdańsk has experience in the implementation of national and international projects focusing on research, teaching, networking, and development; it cooperates with higher education institutions and other entities in most European countries as well as outside Europe. The ultra-modern facilities on the University's Baltic Campus contribute to the high potential for providing innovative teaching and conducting excellent research.

STARBIOS2 activities focused on RRI were planned as pilot activities in one of the faculties: the Intercollegiate Faculty of Biotechnology of the University of Gdańsk and the Medical University of Gdańsk. From the beginning, the governance structure in the form of a “Core Team” has involved actors from the Faculty and the University authorities in order to keep the activities strictly in line with the institutional strategies and objectives. For implementation of activities ‘facilitators’ from other units have been involved in order to have a broad perspective that increases the chances for sustainability (e.g., Library, Office for Science).

In addition, the **current reform of the system of the Higher Education sector in Poland brought a synergistic effect.** University authorities recognize more and more the importance of RRI and their efforts will be “rewarded” as the so-called ‘third

mission' of the universities has been included in the periodic national evaluation of institutions by the Ministry. The effects of this evaluation have a concrete impact on the funding that institutions receive.

Following the concept of establishing RRI practices in research organisations, it rapidly became obvious that such a complex organisation as a university requires structural modifications on various levels in order to achieve changes in the five areas of RRI. A process of institutional change requires adapting governance frameworks so that implementing good practices effectively becomes possible. STARBIOS2 actions have spread around the university.

One of the steps taken in the direction of providing institutional change at UG was signing the *Declaration of Social Responsibility (CSR)* in November 2017 in Warsaw during the conference *Social Responsibility of Science - challenges for academic and business environment* at the Polish Ministry of Development. At that time, 23 Polish higher education institutions signed a CSR Declaration. The declaration includes twelve points stipulating the principles related to CSR in higher education. On behalf of the University of Gdansk the document was signed by **Prof. Krzysztof Bielawski**, UG Vice-Rector for Development and Cooperation with Business and Industry, leader of the STARBIOS2 project at UG. Being a signatory of such a Declaration emphasizes the university's engagement in a dialogue with society. Such engagement is in accord with the principles of responsible research and innovation which have increased insignificance in the EU in recent years.

Representatives of the University of Gdansk: **prof. Krzysztof Bielawski**, **Izabela Raszczyk** and **prof. Barbara Pawłowska** have also become members of the working group on Social Responsibility of Academia founded by the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development of Poland. The group gathers on a regular basis to work on a comprehensive review of defining a socially-responsible academia and developing a collection of the best practices of responsible research implemented in the institutions of higher

education in Poland. The group plans **further dissemination and educational activities on a national level** to mobilise non-participating universities to join the initiative and adopt the *Declaration*.

Furthermore, the University of Gdańsk has also become part of the **Forum of the Engaged Universities**, consisting of 7 Polish universities that came together as a bottom-up initiative. This initiative also focuses on the issue of societally-engaged research and showcases those engaged research practices improving the societal impact on research. Meetings at the Ministry for Science and Higher Education have already taken place in order to make this initiative **visible to the decision-makers in the HEI sector**.

As the pilot edition of the STARBIOS2 project has focused on promoting and implementing RRI practices in the biosciences area, the Action Plan activities have been applied at the Intercollegiate Faculty of Biotechnology of University of Gdańsk and Medical University of Gdańsk (IFB). However, in some cases, it was also possible to affect university-wide regulations, such that the effects of implemented actions touched other UG faculties. Therefore, within the framework of the university-wide PRO UG programme, that was funded as a large project from external sources, a unified programme for undergraduate studies now includes an obligatory RRI course for all undergraduates, not just those in the biosciences. Promoting integration of RRI aspects into science education raises awareness of RRI in both teachers and students. A course "How to become an RRI-oriented scientist?" has been included in the syllabus for MA students at IFB starting from the academic year 2019/2020. Thus, the **structural change initiated by our efforts to raise awareness** resulted in an increased interest in the field, and have put our programme on **another level of receiving additional funding from another funding instrument** for implementation. This appears to be an approach that will achieve sustainability beyond the STARBIOS2 project.

To sum up, structural change in complex organisations requires involvement of institutional authorities and a broad involvement of actors. It is beneficial to use any upcoming external synergies. A critical mass of interested and active actors on a national level also facilitates the effort. Last but not least, a transfer of ideas into new funding is a good sign for long-term sustainability.

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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