



EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF

INTRODUCTION



RRI-LEADERS started in January 2021, bringing together nine partners from five European countries. The main goal was to assess the relevance of the responsible research and innovation (RRI) principles (public engagement, gender equality, ethics, open access and science education) and the four dimensions (anticipation, inclusiveness, reflexivity and responsiveness, known as AIRR) to territorial governance, and to facilitate their integration in important policy areas in the four participating territories, as follows:

- ▶ Region of Western Macedonia, Greece: energy transition.
- ▶ Municipality of Thalwil, Switzerland: energy transition.
- ▶ Sofia Municipality, Bulgaria: support for innovation, youth employment and entrepreneurship, sustainable urban development, and digital skills.
- ▶ City of Sabadell, Spain: active ageing and smart specialisation.

21 Dec 2023

This is the second policy brief of the RRI-LEADERS project. It addresses European policymakers at different levels of governance - EU, national, regional and local, with the objective to inform them about key results stemming from the studies, analyses and activities (conducted in the period Jan 2021 – Dec 2023) focused on integrating the principles and dimensions of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) in the governance of selected sectoral policies in four European territories. This second issue presents the *transformative outlooks* developed by the partners from the four territories in the focus of RRI-LEADERS, the *Vision for Responsible Territorial Policymaking*, the policy conference *Territories as Leaders in Responsible Research and Innovation*, and the *Policy recommendations to different levels of governance*, stemming from the experience of the four territories in integrating RRI in territorial development.

TRANSFORMATIVE OUTLOOKS

The partners designed and followed a common and constructive approach - a multi-stage, multi-actor co-creation, for engaging policymakers, businesses, researchers, civil society and citizens in (i) assessing the relevance of RRI and AIRR to territorial governance, as well as in (ii) developing a transformative outlook for each territory, participating in RRI-LEADERS.

These outlooks consist of an action plan with measures for implementing the intended transformation in each territory through the integration of RRI-AIRR as a framework for addressing territorially significant policy areas.

The process of conceptualising and developing the transformative outlooks encompassed the following steps: (i) establishing the relevance of RRI-AIRR to the four territories through mapping, in-depth stakeholder interviews and focus-groups; (ii) establishing policy objectives through four territorial Delphi studies, followed by World-Café events; (iii) developing the first drafts of the territorial outlooks based on the results of the mapping and the Delphi studies. The next step was to engage citizens to review and validate the Transformative Outlook. The final step in each territory was the endorsement of the Transformative Outlook by relevant stakeholders and territorial authorities, which aimed to ensure the uptake of the results of the RRI-LEADERS co-creative process. In this context, endorsement meant a form of a recognition of the Transformative Outlook by the respective territorial governance body and its partial or full integration into the territorial policy agenda. The goal of the endorsement was to influence further institutional changes with respect to the closer procedural integration of the RRI-AIRR concept or individual RRI keys/AIRR dimensions. The endorsements were also an act of directly exploiting the RRI-LEADERS outcomes. However, since each territory has a different socio-economic background, different institutional setting and has chosen different policy area, the endorsement process required different procedures and interventions in the four territories. Yet, all endorsement events managed to gather stakeholders and policymakers who have the power to influence transformations in the policy-making processes in the respective territory. Moreover, the majority of the measures, listed in the four TOs, have been fully or partially endorsed, which evinces that the RRI-LEADERS approach of promoting and applying the RRI framework was a successful experiment that could serve as inspiration in many other EU regions.

VISION FOR RESPONSIBLE TERRITORIAL POLICYMAKING

The RRI-LEADERS consortium envisions **responsible territorial policymaking** in the following way:

To achieve sustainable development¹ and enhance resilience² at territorial level in times of rapid changes and high uncertainty, territorial policymaking needs to incorporate all relevant scientific, technological, innovative, economic, and environmental aspects of territorial development, but must not stop there. Responsible territorial policymaking entails also consideration of different societal and ethical issues. It addresses the needs and expectations of society and citizens, corresponds with societal values, and builds upon the combined knowledge of all territorial stakeholders.

The RRI-LEADERS Vision for Responsible Territorial Policymaking incorporates the main principles of the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) approach into the policymaking process, thus making it anticipatory, inclusive, reflexive and responsive, and well suited to administer a sustainable and resilient territorial policy development clearly focused on the societal needs.

¹ Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

² The capacity to withstand or recover quickly from difficulties/shocks/crises.

The Vision introduces the following **principles of responsible territorial policymaking (RTP)**:

- RTP supports the attainment of the long-term EU policies and contributes to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- RTP is future-oriented.
- RTP is reflexive, responsive and adaptable.
- RTP means co-creation, co-implementation, and joint responsibility of all stakeholders, involved in the process.

Policymaking needs to be based on sound methodological grounds and needs to be evidence-based. One way to achieve this is by applying RRI in territorial policymaking. The benefit of implementing RRI in territorial policymaking is also showcased through its contribution to decentralising capacity and research policy and fostering policies that are not “geographically blind”. Responsible territorial policymaking also entails the responsibility of the advanced regions to help the lagging regions, especially as the vast majority of European regions fall under the latter category.

POLICY CONFERENCE “TERRITORIES AS LEADERS IN RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION”, 19 OCTOBER 2023, COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, BRUSSELS

The policy conference gathered more than 180 stakeholders who, supported by project outcomes, made a strong case for the relevance of RRI and AIRR to the local and regional level. The discussions focussed on how the RRI principles could be useful for territorial policymaking and what are the practical requirements in order to see a wider uptake across Europe entail. Several barriers, hindering the uptake of RRI-AIRR in local and regional government were pointed out, including: (i) the jargon of RRI (articulation of the complex RRI/AIRR principles is needed to facilitate their integration into territorial policymaking); (ii) RRI framework is too academic (needs to be made more practical and comprehensible); (iii) science and research are often seen as being outside the competence of the local authorities; (iv) resources (tools/methods required for effective implementation of RRI-AIRR can be resource intensive at local/regional level).

Inclusion was recognised as the most important aspect of RRI, having the potential to empower society, communities and citizens. Participants also agreed that since local/regional decision-making has flexibility in adapting concepts to local circumstances, the real strength of RRI/AIRR can be its potential to induce a culture change in the territory.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RRI-LEADERS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The RRI-LEADERS consortium has developed a list of policy recommendations for integrating the RRI-AIRR framework into territorial policymaking processes on the basis of project results as well as the experiences of partners during project implementation. While recommendations target territorial policymakers, they might be of interest to representatives of national and EU-level institutions as well.

Integration of RRI-AIRR in Territorial Governance

RRI-LEADERS project results show that responsible territorial policymaking should be based on the specific characteristics of the respective territory and take into account the needs and values of society. While the RRI-AIRR framework is to an extent already employed in regional and municipal policy strategies, any plan that contributes to sustainable territorial development requires identifying the RRI aspects that are most commonly neglected by policymakers or misunderstood by stakeholders and developing their capacity to begin implementing them. Implementation of the RRI-AIRR framework may help shape a more cohesive, well-informed society as well as an administration

that is prepared to face emerging issues and is able to create and adapt policies accordingly. Therefore, the RRI-AIRR aspects are fundamental requisites for ethical, effective and sustainable policymaking.

The list of policy recommendations is non-exhaustive and priority has been given to the most pressing issues to be addressed in territories as follows:

1. Strengthen the capacity of territorial administration for anticipatory policymaking.

Territorial administrations currently lack the needed know-how for defining strategic goals via anticipation, which is important as it allows the creation of proactive rather than reactive strategies, thus making territories more resilient and better prepared to global changes.

2. Enhance reflexivity in territories.

Reflexivity implies the application of a more comprehensive, systemic approach to policymaking that could be kicked-off by citizen engagement as citizens have a holistic vision of the future in their minds and search for solutions, which are out of the box and faraway of the administration's silo.

3. Initiate inclusive regional decision-making mechanism in territories.

Inclusive (businesses, research and citizens) territorial-level decision-making mechanisms may consist of public consultation tools that should be constantly active and operate in major decision-making regarding prime territorial policy foci or other issues that may significantly concern specific societal sectors (e.g. digital platforms/means are such tools).

4. Promote participatory co-creation and policy development.

Participatory co-creation and policy development processes guarantee that policies reflect the specific characteristics of the respective territory and take into account the needs and values of society - use case-specific targeted engagement methods for participatory co-creation (inclusion by design, incentivise underrepresented groups, «managed participation/inclusiveness»), depending on the specific issue under scrutiny.

5. Strengthen ethical and social aspects in territorial R&I projects.

Strengthen ethical and social considerations in the evaluation, selection and implementation of territorial-level R&I projects by developing ethical guidelines/procedures, training researchers, and engaging (non-academic) stakeholders in the research process. Support initiatives that bring research and innovation closer to citizens.

6. Rethink and redefine principles such as gender equality/diversity as well as open data and science education.

Considering various gender dimensions of policy impact, generational differences, minority groups, intersectional discrimination, etc. is of utmost importance for responsible territorial policymaking. Open data and science education are very challenging aspects that need to be addressed in order to improve transparency in policymaking.

7. Mainstream RRI in territorial research and innovation.

R&I results need to reflect societal and ethical aspects of research - RRI-based results could be integrated into existing administrative routines and policies by setting up a municipal R&I team to coordinate internal processes and communication with external parties. Developing RRI-based local and regional research ecologies that act together is necessary for handling global challenges (coronavirus pandemic, migration, climate change) - ensuring good structural and administrative

support for stakeholder collaborations is needed to develop resilient response capacities which can survive political power shifts.

8. Foster peer-to-peer learning among territories in order to steer transformative societal processes.

A territory could steer transformative societal processes in the most effective and efficient way by learning from the experience of other territories.

9. Create RRI observatory at territorial level.

An RRI observatory will monitor and record the level of implementation of the RRI aspects at distinct policies/policy frameworks; will provide an updated praxis of RRI, and insight into developments in RRI research and methodology. The embedment of regional key performance indicators into the RRI framework will accelerate sustainable regional development and social acceptance.

10. Institutionalise RRI.

Use digitalisation to include RRI protocols into the new administrative procedures. Internal procedures, workflows, and digital systems should be adapted to the ambition of having an active policy for RRI.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY

The experiences gathered during the implementation of RRI-LEADERS project in the period July 2022 – Dec 2023 are summarised and presented in project deliverables and thus available to other projects and stakeholders.

The ones which could be used immediately by territorial stakeholders and policymakers are:

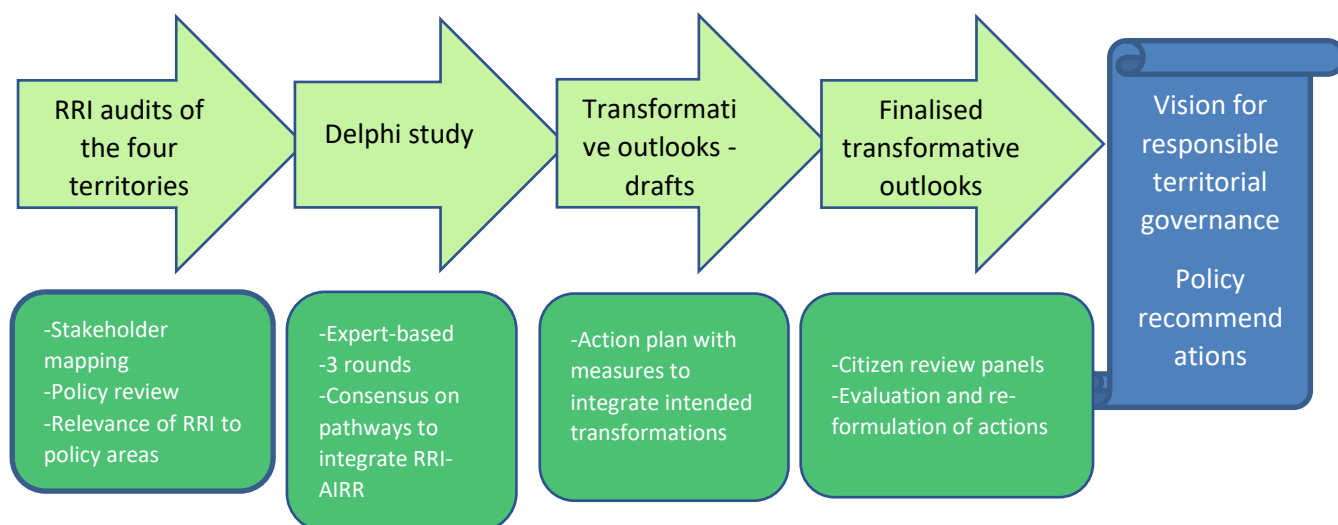
- Deliverable 4.1 CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL MANUAL: Methodological guidelines for the organisation of citizen review panels
- Deliverable 5.4 Vision for Responsible Territorial Policymaking
- Deliverable 5.5 Territories as Leaders in Responsible Research and Innovation: Policy Conference Report

Beyond these project outputs, the positive effects of the applied multi-stage, multi-actor co-creation approach deserve to be highlighted. The richness of information and analyses provide a sound basis for further exploration of the project results by the research community. Last but not least, the overall project approach can be adapted and followed in other territories and policy areas.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

RRI-LEADERS explored the relevance of RRI to territorial governance in four European territories, representing different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, different scope of territorial oversight, different institutional and decision-making infrastructures, different R&I landscapes, and different dynamics among territorial actors. The project objectives were: (1) to facilitate the adoption of RRI principles within territorial governance; (2) to promote innovative, inclusive, and responsive multi-actor multi-stage co-creation approach in participating territories; and (3) to provide an evolutionary perspective on the future of RRI in territorial policy and governance.

RRI-LEADERS Methodology



PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	Leveraging Leadership for Responsible Research and Innovation in Territories (RRI-LEADERS).
COORDINATOR	Zoya Damianova, Applied Research and Communications Fund, Sofia, Bulgaria, zoya.damianova@online.bg
CONSORTIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applied Research and Communication Fund Sofia, Bulgaria - University of Western Macedonia Kozáni, Greece - The Danish Board of Technology Hvidovre, Denmark - The Catalan Foundation for Research and Innovation Barcelona, Spain - Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur, Switzerland - Regional Association of Local Government of Western Macedonia Kozáni, Greece - Sofia Development Association Sofia, Bulgaria - Municipality of Thalwil Thalwil, Switzerland - Economic Development Agency of Sabadell City Council Sabadell, Spain

FUNDING SCHEME	Horizon 2020: SwafS-14-2018-2019-2020: Supporting the development of territorial Responsible Research and Innovation
DURATION	January 2021 – December 2023 (36 months).
BUDGET	EU contribution: EUR 1 999 855
WEBSITE	www.rri-leaders.eu
FOR MORE INFORMATION	Contact: Zoya Damianova, zoya.damianova@online.bg
FURTHER READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliverable 3.3 Compendium of territorial reports with orientations for the development of the transformative outlooks, developed within the framework of WP3 Delphi exploration of consensus about future orientations for RRI in the participating territories. • Deliverable 4.1 CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL MANUAL: Methodological guidelines for the organisation of citizen review panels • Deliverable 4.2 Transformative outlook for Western Macedonia • Deliverable 4.3 Transformative Outlook for Sofia Municipality • Deliverable 4.4 Transformative Outlook for the Energy Transition in Thalwil • Deliverable 4.5 Transformative Outlook for the Innovation in Active Ageing in Sabadell • Deliverable 5.3 Case Narratives: Qualitative Evaluation of the RRI Experience of Four Territories: Western Macedonia, Greece, Sofia, Bulgaria, Sabadell, Spain, Thalwil, Switzerland • Deliverable 5.4 Vision for Responsible Territorial Policymaking • D5.5 Territories as Leaders in Responsible Research and Innovation: Policy Conference Report • D6.6 Endorsement of transformative territorial outlooks: summary report <p>All reports listed above are accessible through the website of the project at https://www.rri-leaders.eu/publications/</p>