

Welcome to **WBC-RRI.NET**: Here's our top content to get you started
**Embedding RRI in Western Balkan Countries:
Enhancement of Self-Sustaining R&I Ecosystems**

With great pleasure we are introducing **WBC-RRI.NET** through our first e-newsletter! You are receiving this newsletter because you have expressed interest in receiving content related to responsible research and innovation. Hence, we assure you that you have made the right decision and you will benefit from our brief updates, relevant news and valuable information.

WBC-RRI.NET is a project funded by the EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme Horizon 2020 that aims to embed Responsible Research and Innovation in Western Balkan Countries. The project consortium consists of **13 partners from 8 countries**.



Start date – End date
01.03.2021 – 29.02.2024

Responsible research and innovation (RRI) is an approach that anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations with regard to research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation.

Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) is a place-based approach characterized by the identification of strategic areas for intervention based both on the analysis of the strengths and potential of the economy and on an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) with wide stakeholder involvement.

Although Western Balkan Countries have significantly improved in terms of research and innovation, there is still a gap in comparison with the European countries. In order to bridge the existing gap, **WBC-RRI.NET** aims to enhance local and regional R&I ecosystems' capacities, to tackle societal challenges and territorial research priorities, to integrate RRI principles at a territorial level in five Western Balkan Countries including the existing or upcoming Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and to promote a multilevel steering R&I governance framework.

WBC-RRI.NET integrates the following RRI keys:

- Public Engagement
- Gender Equality
- Science Education
- Open Access
- Ethics
- Governance



Curious already? Check our website and learn more about the **RRI keys**.

The project approach addresses 4 region-level and 1 country-level ecosystems: Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in Serbia, Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the City of Skopje in North Macedonia, Kune-Vain-Tale Lagoon in Albania and the Country of Montenegro. Comprehensive RRI activities are extended throughout the entire project, thus encouraging active dialogues in the wider WB macro-region, in line with the RRI principles, under a holistic framework.

The territorial approach offers an opportunity for development in accordance with the local strengths, weaknesses and specific elements. Therefore, specific RRI keys are touched in-depth in each WB territory in line with the scientific domains.

Learn more about our activities in the respective target regions [here](#).

Target WB territories, scientific focus and target RRI keys of the 5 RRI anchor' initiatives



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What has been done until now?

Workshop on Gender Equality Plan Development: Fulfilling the Horizon Europe requirements and beyond!

Our first public project event tackled gender dimension in order to release the full potential of the population and to ensure excellence in research activities. Addressing the gender dimension in R&I landscape means taking into account gender-sensitive and gender-relevant features from policy, organisational and research perspectives. Details are available in our blog post: [Gender dimension in R&I landscape: An overview with a special focus on the Western Balkans](#). From 2022, Gender Equality Plans become an eligibility criterion for participation in the Horizon Europe programme for most research institutions. As it takes a bit of time to prepare such plans according to the requirements, it is important for stakeholders to start the process now.

The event attracted 85 participants from the Western Balkans and beyond, and discussed how to support gender equality in the regional research and innovation ecosystem. Although it was held online, it resulted with experienced advices and fruitful discussion. Key take-away points from the event are available in the following article [Event review: Gender Equality Plans Development: Fulfilling the Horizon Europe requirements and beyond! July 2, 2021](#).

The event also served as an introduction into the creation of **WBC-RRI.NET** dedicated Working Group on Ethics and Gender and if you are interested to participate in an exchange of experiences in relation to topics such as the development of GEPs, please join us and register your interest in the respective RRI key [here](#).



Mapping Western Balkan Territories' R&I ecosystems

The project consortium has been intensively working on mapping of the territorial R&I ecosystems in order to achieve the set goals and to involve all quadruple helix actors. The mapping toolbox developed by the work package leader **SEERC**, in collaboration with **UNIS**, **ZSI** and **Co-PLAN**, is comprised of four different mapping tools:

- Database of key R&I and RRI actors
- Database of R&I, RRI and S3-related practices and initiatives
- Observation grid of territorial and/or national policies
- Observation grid of territorial/national opportunities and territorial/national challenges for R&I/S3 development and RRI integration (SWOT analysis)

Data collected through these mapping tools provide the necessary evidence towards each territory's disposition and potential to enhance RRI, towards developing the RRI 'anchor' initiatives and ultimately towards building the RRI-network in the WBs. Final report on mapping Western Balkan Territories' R&I ecosystems, as well as the mapping tools, will be available on the project website shortly after November 2021.



Set-up of working groups

As mentioned above, **WBC-RRI.NET** aims to set up working groups of stakeholders who are interested in exchanging opinions and experience on the RRI keys, learning from each other, developing guidelines and reports, etc. in regular events:

- WG 1: Gender and Ethics
- WG 2: Science education and public engagement
- WG 3: Open access and open science

We would like to invite you to fill a short survey expressing your interest and sharing some information about your experiences so far and your availability to contribute - click [here](#) and let us know about your contact data, we will send you the survey.

Continuous coordination and collaboration

In order to continuously monitor the status of project activities, share ideas for joint fulfillment of objectives and to timely prepare the deliverables, the project consortium gathers together on monthly project meetings led and coordinated by Prof. Dr. Goran Stojanovic, from the University of Novi Sad, Serbia, coordinator of the **WBC-RRI.NET** project.

Follow our activities through our website and social media channels. We will make sure to enrich your knowledge with interesting content and inform you about RRI activities in accordance with your preferences.

For any further information, do not hesitate to contact us info@wbc-rri.net

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Disclaimer: The contents of this newsletter are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union.

