



FOUR LESSONS LEARNT

Compiled by GRACE partner Knowledge & Innovation, **Lessons learnt** is a section emerging from the experience of the GRACE project's Implementing Organisations. This content is based on knowledge gained during the implementation of their Grounding Actions, providing orientations for future actions. Initially designed for the project's six partners, they can be useful for anyone developing an RRI project!

1. Building the team in charge of RRI-related actions

The team in charge of RRI-related actions should be aware of their potentials and limits in activating institutional change processes.

To be effective, the team should become a **transformational agent**, i.e., a group of people able to mobilise other individuals and stakeholders, within and outside their organisations, and to channel their energy and interest towards RRI-related objectives.

Acquiring RRI-relevant knowledge and skills is a necessary first step to take for gradually allowing a team to serve as a transformational agent within the organisation. This entails **activating an internal learning process as well as accessing expertise** from outside the team, internally or externally to the implementing organisation. Different strategies can be developed, such as establishing an advisory board, accessing training opportunities and resources, exploiting in-house expertise, or cooperating with other organisations and networks.



To serve as a transformational agent, the RRI team should also be **internally visible** and have some sort of recognition, which can be achieved through the involvement of leaders, enlarging the extended team as far as possible or an increased use of institutional communication channels.

Cohesion and a sense of ownership are two key elements to make a team able to mobilise others on RRI. Internal conflicts and diverging views may lead the team to be less impactful and should be addressed straightforwardly and timely. Cohesion can be achieved through regular reflexive meetings with the whole team, allowing them to build up their identity (a common view, a common way to work together, etc.).

2. Mobilising relevant actors (individuals, stakeholders, leaders, etc.)

The concept of RRI is not easy to explain and the terminology used is complex, making it difficult to communicate on RRI effectively. There is a need to define a clear **communication approach and stakeholder engagement strategies**, such as showcasing good examples of RRI application, promoting peer-to-peer communication, or focusing on the practical and participatory nature of RRI.

Another difficulty met by RRI teams can be **researchers' lack of engagement** on RRI-related issues, justified by a lack of time. It is important to develop specific activities focusing on them, using different kinds of means, such as tailored communication strategies, establishing incentives, promoting networking activities, or including RRI-related standards in the research process.

The **involvement of managers and leaders** is also key, but it should be a differentiated and dynamic process fed through a set of activities and means tailored to the organisation's features and even to the position of each manager.

Administrative staff should be considered the primary ally of RRI. Engaging administrative staff entails the development of actions aimed at ensuring the cooperation of the relevant administrative units and the progressive shift of responsibilities from the RRI team to them.

3. Activating the change process within the organisation

Flexibility and responsiveness are required to implement RRI and may be supported by adopting a trial-and-error approach. Establishing **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** is also key.

To accelerate the institutional change process, it is necessary for the team to get a clear picture of the organisation. This may require specific **diagnostic tools** but it entails also a broader capacity to perceive and interpret any relevant aspect of the organisation throughout the RRI implementation process.



Participatory tools are necessary for RRI to be implemented. They should be light and flexible enough to be applied in the ordinary life of the organisation and the staff.

4. Embedding RRI through the Grounding Actions

Institutionalising RRI does not entail the end of stakeholder mobilisation. RRI should be understood as an **evolutionary process** that requires a proactive engagement of key stakeholders to push forward. Training and awareness-raising initiatives, networking, communication, and the presence of “champions” could be pivotal in this regard.

The way in which new institutional arrangements are established may be different according to the, e.g., the type of organisation, the RRI key concerned, or the leadership lifestyle in the organisation. It is up to the RRI team to understand how a new action or measure is embedded in the organisation. A realistic approach to RRI should be adopted, privileging as far as possible **the alignment of RRI with the existing activities and structures**, such as attributing new tasks and roles to the Communication Department, the Teaching Department, or the Human Resources Department.

Apart from institutional and organisational aspects, it will be extremely important to be able to **transfer the theoretical and practical knowledge**, but also motivational aspects and know-how to those who will take on the responsibility for future RRI-oriented actions.

This knowledge transfer first requires the RRI team to be aware of the knowledge and expertise acquired during the project, to then plan **specific actions** such as the development of guidelines and training activities and the backing of staff in charge of RRI-related actions.

