
RICOMET 2015

Risk perception, communication and ethics of exposures to ionising radiation

Mol, Belgium; Karlsruhe, Germany; Fontenay-aux-Roses, France; October, 2015

Public declaration after the RICOMET Conference

Appeal to implement Responsible Research and Innovation in Euratom nuclear research, development and activities

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is a cross-cutting issue in Horizon 2020 research programme. It implies giving due attention to social and ethical issues, as well as stakeholder and public participation in science, technology and innovation (European Commission, 2013).

In line with the RRI Agenda, the International Conference on “*Risk perception, communication and ethics of exposure to ionizing radiation*” (RICOMET, June 2015; <http://ricomet2015.sckcen.be>) affirmed that the Social Sciences and Humanities research deserve a more prominent place in Horizon 2020 Euratom projects than is presently the case. This is because the Social Sciences and Humanities can facilitate RRI in a timely and supportive manner.

The RICOMET Conference highlighted that areas like medical, industrial and nuclear energy applications of ionising radiation research, as well as emergency management and rehabilitation, would benefit from nuclear risk governance. This would include, among other things, enabling citizens to weigh on nuclear research policy by setting priorities and inputting values.

We believe that Horizon 2020 should pursue the Responsible Research and Innovation Agenda in future nuclear and radiological protection research in Europe. We call for the **incorporation of activities to broaden the social and ethical aspects taken into account during core scientific and nuclear research and development**. Shaping R&D pathways in socially desirable ways implies trans-disciplinary methodological approaches and activities to build strong societal justification. More resources should be put into stakeholder dialogues and commitment to establishing socio-technological forums (conferences, pluralistic study groups, etc.).

The appeal to deeper integrate social sciences and humanities resonates with the spirit of the European Research Area (ERA). In the working document *Science, society and the citizen in Europe*, emphasizing “*growing scepticism*” and “*hostility*” of society towards the advances in knowledge and technology, the European Commission argues that the relationships between science, technology and society “*have to change because of the impact of science and research on competitiveness, growth and jobs and on the quality of life in Europe*”. More recently, in the more specific context of the Framework Programmes, the Commission states that “*for Europe to become the most advanced knowledge society in the world, it is imperative that legitimate societal concerns and needs concerning science and technology development are taken on board*” (Work Programme 2007, Capacities, Part 5, Science in Society).

Addressing the social, ethical and participatory dimensions of nuclear R&D offers great opportunities for the development of trans-disciplinary project proposals in the nuclear field, and collaboration with partners from multiple disciplines that embrace a range of issues, dimensions and expertise. R&D including what is commonly called 'governance' aspects allows researchers from related fields of nuclear technology, radiological protection, safety and emergency response *in fine* to better serve their responsibility towards European society, responding to the expectations of both authorities and publics.

In order to fulfil the full range of targets identified, it is important that the upcoming Euratom Horizon 2020 calls ensure the continuity of a forum for different stakeholders and include governance topics to the extent necessary. We feel that the ethical and societal dimensions of nuclear technologies and applications are of high importance and research and innovation need to be strengthened.

On behalf of the RICOMET participants,

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