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# EISRI Summit

## The Role of the Media in Responsible Research and Innovation

*Trinity College Dublin – 25-26 February 2013*

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## HIGHLIGHTS and PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

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“Citizens have a right - and are expected - to be involved in the crucial decisions of what their futures will look like and how science and technology can contribute to its betterment”

*European Commission Expert Group*

Under the auspices of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU, AC hosted the second edition of the European Intersectoral Summit on Research and Innovation in partnership with the Irish Ministry for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Trinity College Dublin and The Irish Times.

The Summit brought together over two hundred delegates from academia, business, media and policy makers from across Europe to look at the role of the media in Responsible Research and Innovation.

## The game changer

The starting point of the debate was the recognition of the startling changes that the information eco-system and media environment in general has seen in the past years. It is clear that media and communication, broadly conceived, play a central role in shaping the opinion and attitude of society. It is therefore equally important that the key stakeholders – research institutions, industry, media and policy makers – make sure that they correctly address the question of authoritative communication of (and on) research and innovation to citizens.

As Simon Hampton, Director of European Public Policy of Google stated: the internet is the single most powerful force of change in the world of knowledge that we have seen in at least the past 600 years.

The impact of the World Wide Web in how people access and use information is inestimable. However it is also putting the current models for dissemination and communication on its head.

Mark Little, Founder and CEO of Storyful, highlighted that we are currently living through a historic disruption in the way storytelling and journalism works. Audience have changed attitudes and today labels and power do not count as much as humanity and authenticity.

The question assessed by the Summit looked precisely at how the opportunities and challenges of this new media ecosystem can be developed in terms of Responsible Research and Innovation.

## Responsible Research and Innovation

The framework for Responsible, Research and Innovation (RRI) stresses the fact that the grand societal challenges will have a better chance of being tackled if all societal actors are fully engaged in the co-construction of innovative solutions, products and service. Thus RRI is being developed in order to foster the creation of a Research and Innovation policy driven by the needs of society and engaging all societal actors via inclusive participatory approaches. The RRI approach is supported via six keys that will be addressed during the conference: Engagement, Gender Equality, Science Education, Open Access, Ethics and Governance.

As outlined by Nobel Laureate and former Director General of CERN Prof. Carlo Rubbia the most severe scientific problems are those responding to long-term issues, like cancer, climate change or changing demographics. We need to critically assess how society and the different stakeholders can be engaged in the whole governance process to avoid the risk of investing only in short term solutions. Michael Faraday tells us that electricity was not invented by improving candles.

In the welcome address, Dr. Patrick Prendergast, Provost of Trinity College Dublin, addressed this important issue of responsible governance when setting research agendas. The independence of the press, the fourth estate added to Montesquieu's tripartite system (legislature, an executive, and a judiciary) of the separation of power, is today a fundamental tenant of democratic and

innovative societies. In a world where research and innovation is gaining more power it is necessary to think how to maintain checks and balances in setting research agendas and ensuring the common good when it comes to research. Universities could and should have a fundamental role to play here stressed the Provost. Research needs to be independent. Research that is too controlled is not the source of innovation.

In light of this increased power and thus responsibility of research it will be increasingly important to maintain an open and transparent dialogue with the public at large. This will be important both in reference to setting research priorities but also to increase awareness of what is already available, to increase technology and innovation acceptance in Europe.

Dr. Matthias Bichsel, Project and Technology Director of Shell, stressed the importance of innovation and technology acceptance if Europe is to benefit from the developments of science and innovation. Innovation is not only about good ideas but about making them a reality. Whether we are talking about CCS, nanotechnology or biotech.

**Trust**

The importance of building and maintaining trust was brought up again and again throughout the Summit. This is true in all fields but is becoming more and more important for science as the impact and speed of development of new technologies is increasing. As Colm Galligan, Medical Director of MSD Ireland, mentioned, it will be pivotal in the future for all stakeholders involved in research and innovation to build platforms of trust where academia, policy makers, industry and media can work together for the public at large.

Further, research and innovation have a pivotal role to play in responding to the grand challenges that society will have to face in the coming years. Trust between science and society will therefore be necessary in order to set long-term projections and investments for the benefit of society at large. Media have a pivotal role to play here.

**Research: a collective endeavour**

Responsible Research and Innovation define a new approach to research and innovation that underlines the importance of engaging society as a whole in the research and innovation process in order to make full use of Europe’s intellectual capital to the benefit of citizens, entrepreneurs and scientists.

This concept aims to innovate the research process creating a more inclusive and transparent mechanism for engaging all actors of society in research and innovation. The relevance of this position for the future competitiveness of Europe was highlighted by the opening speech by the former President of France Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Honorary President of Atomium Culture in stating that “concept of Responsible Research and Innovation will be of key importance in building a competitive and dynamic research and innovation environment in Europe”.

Michelangelo Baracchi Bonvicini, President of Atomium Culture, followed this statement by highlighting the huge opportunities created by the changing media environment in changing “some fundamental aspects of the research environment to make the European Research Area more open, flexible and welcoming” and the importance of empowering the single individual.

Prof. Paul Boyle, President of Science Europe underlined the need that science be borderless. The need for increased coordination and collaboration between countries sectors and disciplines.

Dr. Jean J. Butte, Chief Technology Officer of EADS, reminded us of the words of Dublin-born Nobel-Prize winner George Bernard Shaw: “If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.”

**Let’s put our money where our mouth is**

In light of the Irish Presidency priority of “growth and jobs” Minister Sean Sherlock underlined the important role that research and innovation have given their potential role in contributing to economic recovery, competitiveness and growth across the EU.

The importance of this issue for economic recovery and jobs and growth were underlined by also by President Barroso and Chancellor Merkel who participated to the Summit through video-conference.

However, as reminded by the former prime Minister of Spain and Chairman of the Board of AC Felipe Gonzalez, Europe needs to start taking real action on these aspects if we want to succeed: “Throughout my quite extensive political career I have never heard any politician at any level disagree with the importance of setting research, innovation and education as a key priority in their political agendas; this, however this is not reflected in the budgets.”

This point will be significant in the current discussions on the EU budget for the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. The Vice-President of the European Parliament Mr Oldrich Vlasák stated that the development of a competitive European knowledge society was the common goal of the European Parliament and Europe now needs to ensure that budgets reflect this, stating his personal conviction that increased investment in research and innovation is not to be considered only as a positive perspective but as an absolute necessity.

Media, both traditional and new, can play a significant role in increasing awareness of the important role that science can play in helping to resolve some of the important challenges that society will have to face in the coming decades. The question remains how to better collaborate –academia, industry, media and policymakers- in this way. The Summit presented a number of interesting best practices including current patterns of collaboration, the UK Science Media Centre and how to utilise the power of social media through innovative ICT tools like Storyful.

**Science for society**

Dr. Alexander von Gabain, Chairman of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology reminded of Joseph Schumpeter’s message that innovation is when a discovery comes back to society.

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn stressed the importance of ensuring that research and innovation are driven not only by the best science and by market potential but also by society's needs and concerns.

“For example, research and innovation-based improvements to the care of older people will be much more effective if we involve all the experts in the process – and by this I certainly include older people themselves and the organisations that represent them.”

The impact of science in today’s world is unquestionable. Yet the research process is still seen as top-down; with the products or results of research being presented to the public. This needs to become more dynamic. The public at large should be engaged from the beginning in the setting the research agendas.

Dr. Jean Botti stressed that media must drive the debate about what we want for the future. This is an opportunity we have today of developing real two-way dialogue about the needs and concerns of society.

But how do we do this? One clear outcome of the summit was that we need to allow for different tools to develop. We need to assess a plethora of different projects and systems to understand what works and what does not work.

Mr. Octavi Quintana-Trias discussed the recent *Special Initiative for Citizen Engagement* developed by Atomium Culture, Der Standard (Austria), Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany), The Irish Times (Ireland), Sole 24Ore (Italy) and El País (Spain) to engage the public in debates about Horizon 2020.

**The six keys**

The discussions in the breakout sessions centred on how media can support the development of a more inclusive European Research Area through six keys: engagement, ethics, gender, science education, open access and governance. Each of these six themes were addressed and some new ideas brought forward. In particular, recurring themes could be divided into two main areas.

The first looking at how to scientists can work more closely with journalists in order to increase understanding and awareness of the role and responsibility of research and innovation in addressing some of the core issues facing societies today.

The second looked at the role of new media in creating networks, access to information and changing the way that science and society can interact.

The full outcomes of the summit will be developed in a report that will be published towards the summer.

## Dare to change

The discussions of the summit reflected the difficulty in answering some of the more fundamental underlying issues. In particular the changing media environment and the impossibility to predict what will happen in the next ten years. What was clear was the willingness to critically assess these issues and move forward together in trying to promote best practices.

Simon Hampton, Director of Public Policy of Google, underlined the appetite for good quality content has never been higher yet, in a world where everyone can produce content the difficulty in the “discovery” of the content. As Mark Little put it: “it is not about the wisdom of the crowd but the wisdom in the crowd”.

As President Felipe González underlined Europe needs to get the courage to accept disruptive innovation. True innovation comes from anomalies in the system, when something does not go according to plans. If we want true innovation in Europe we need to be willing to accept this risk! We need to put our money where our mouth is.