

# Engaging with leaders for institutional change

**Long-lived institutional change has always been one of the goals of ORION. It's relatively easy to find and convince like-minded people that responsible research and innovation (RRI) is important. However, in order to bring about real change, it's important to engage with people all the way through an institution. Only then can true institutional change become a reality.**

The Centre for Genomic Research (CRG) in Barcelona is a world-renowned institute for biomedical research. As such, Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) policies and strategies implemented there will have a significant impact, not only on their own research but also on an international community that looks to them for inspiration. As an ORION partner, the CRG took part in many activities including a public dialogue to discuss the CRG strategy.

The ORION team at the CRG planned a workshop to define the scope of their public dialogue on site in Barcelona. As the time came for the first workshop, senior figures of the CRG were slightly skeptical about the exercise, although it was unclear as to why. Perhaps the benefits of the public dialogue were unclear or perhaps it seemed that implementing RRI would be resource intensive and distracting from the world class research. It was essential to get the buy-in of senior figures to introduce real institutional change and the ORION team had to win them over.

In total there were three workshops on the public dialogue and the senior figures attended two of them. The ORION team noticed a shift in their engagement and, as the workshops progressed, they appeared more open. This gave hope that the value that RRI could bring to the institute was being appreciated, and that even it could support their goals in research excellence.

After the workshop, it was clear that senior figures were enthusiastic about RRI. Discussions were positive and there was a lot of momentum for creating real change. However, this is normal after an event

like a conference or a workshop. The difficulty is often maintaining the momentum and following through on plans and promises to implement.

The CRG senior figures and the ORION team were able to continue discussions and maintain the momentum for all the ideas generated through the workshop. This led directly to the production of a number of communications materials, such as an infographic for disseminating the public dialogue, and of course the ultimate aim was to inspire other institutions to consider developing a similar initiative themselves. Guidelines on how to organise a public dialogue in a biomedical research centre have subsequently been developed.

However, the biggest change came slightly later when senior management implemented two new actions into the CRG strategy that directly addressed RRI and came directly from the public dialogue. Specifically, a series of regular talks about ethics for scientists has been introduced and commitment gained to run two more public dialogues on specific research topics of the centre. In addition to these new actions, a more humanised, personal and impactful public engagement strategy, with a strong focus in social media, has been also implemented.

This was a huge success for the ORION team, who were hoping to have meaningful dialogues with the senior management of the CRG and have an impact on the centre's strategy but didn't necessarily expect the implementation of new actions to come about so quickly. This goes to show that there is an appetite for RRI within research institutions.

## HOW CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS ARE INFORMING THE CRG STRATEGY

The CRG explored how to incorporate the views of citizens and stakeholders in its new Strategic Plan (2021-2024) through a public dialogue. A public dialogue is a process in which citizens interact with other actors across society to deliberate on relevant issues.



### OBJECTIVES AND KEY MESSAGES FROM THE DIALOGUES

<p><b>1 BASIC VS APPLIED SCIENCE IN GENES, CELLS AND ORGANISMS</b></p>	<p><b>2 FUNDING</b></p> <p>START-UPS</p>	<p><b>3 ETHICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b></p> <p>ACTION GUIDELINES</p> <p>INTERNAL DEBATE</p>	<p><b>4 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <p>NEWS</p>
<p><b>Strong support for basic science</b>, which was considered interesting and necessary. When science is related to health, it is of great interest to citizens. Strong support for the CRG in terms of its values, scientific projects, way of working and commitment to Open Science.</p>	<p><b>Support for collaborations with private companies</b> and the creation of <b>start-ups</b>, but with transparency. Public felt that profit from patents and enterprise should be reinvested in science. Approval to devote efforts towards patronage and philanthropy to fund science at the CRG.</p>	<p>The public wants more <b>internal debate</b> among the science community to create <b>guidelines</b> that go beyond the current regulations on ethics. Scientists need to move beyond their professional persona and become more humanised.</p>	<p>Science in social and traditional media needs to be more prevalent, and <b>scientists need to communicate</b> their research more clearly, ideally through one-to-one conversations with the public. Scientists need to talk to the public and engage in science not only as “experts” but also as “citizens” who are part of society.</p>

### FROM THE DIALOGUE TO THE CRG: WHAT WILL BE INCORPORATED TO THE CRG STRATEGIC PLAN?

<p><b>REGULAR TALKS AND DEBATES ABOUT BIOETHICS WITH AND FOR SCIENTISTS</b></p>	<p><b>PUBLIC DIALOGUES ON NEW RESEARCH AREAS AT THE CRG</b></p> <p>NEWS</p>
<p>These actions are possible thanks to the open and responsible research pillar at the CRG, as they can be incorporated into this framework.</p>	

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