Bursary reflection

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I am very grateful to the Living Knowledge Conference Steering Group for the bursary that allowed me to attend the conference and present the communication “Science Roadmaps as a collaborative RRI model for research institutions”.

I attended for the first time a Living Knowledge (LK) Conference in 2012, in Bonn. Back then, as a recent research fellow in a research project that intended to create the first science shop in Portugal, this was an enlightening experience and a turning point in my career as a researcher. I had the opportunity to contact with a large community of people and institutions that shared the same values and vision that I personally had for research and innovation, acknowledging the importance of participatory research approaches, public and patient engagement and the promotion of socially-driven research and innovation.

Being able to attend the 7th LK Conference a few years later, as a postgraduate student in Public Health, and to contact with all that people engaged with Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) confirmed my (personal and) professional commitment to conduct research with and, above all, for society. I was already deeply engaged with the RRI concept and practice but the plenary sessions and the discussions about this new EU cross-cutting approach to research, its values and requirements and as well as the sessions on how to form effective collaborations and to increase research impact were very interesting and led us to think beyond the already known and disseminated RRI concepts and practices. I can easily recall the discussion around the risk of RRI become a tokenistic approach in the plenary session conducted by Professor Jacqueline Broerse and one of main aspects highlighted by Dr. Rajesh Tandon: the importance of, when promoting inclusion in the research and innovation process, address the reasons why, after all, exclusion exists.

It was really a positive experience to be in such enthusiastic, inspiring, creative, and friendly environment, where we could felt the increasingly support to the RRI approach and its meaningful engagement of relevant stakeholders as key factors that will help us to tackle our current and future societal challenges. Attend events such as this, where we could feel that we belong to a community engaged with a different approach to research, is particularly important to post-graduate students and young researchers such as I am, especially when we are facing difficulties in obtain funding and conduct research projects grounded on participatory approaches or RRI process factors while trying to thrive in a more competitive and publication/market-driven science.

Due to all of this, I hope to be able to attend the 8th LK Conference in Budapest and to continue to participate in the discussion on how to promote collaborative and participatory approaches addressing the population’s perspectives, needs and expectations regarding research and to contribute to a more sustainable and socially desirable research, discussing new strategies to increase public participation in research and innovation-agenda setting!