

## I HAD A DATE. A NUCLEAR ONE. (FERDIANA HOTI)

Talking about nuclear science and technology on a first date sounds like such a turn off right? It's a bit like talking about football or telling your date "well, my previous relationship was so toxic (high CO<sub>2</sub> emission) so now I'm desperate and that's why I'm using you although I know you're not the best option". Well, some people are still attracted by this (don't act like you're not!) and want to know more.

A couple of weeks ago I participated in a workshop called "Nuclear Dating". Spoiler alert, this is not a type of bad-tinder-date story. I actually liked all the dates (yes, there were more than one) and we all tried to find something in common with each-other in order to bring something useful out of this date. *Responsible* dating you would say. Well, that was part of the workshop too. One of the main goals of this event was to learn about the logic behind Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and see how we can incorporate it in our ideas of a common project.

The workshop was organized by the Academy of Belgian Nuclear Research Center and the venue was at the *Hard* Rock Café in Brussels, because, where else can you work *hard*, play *hard*? The aim was to bring together PhD students and Early Career Researchers (ECR) from exact- and social science disciplines to share insights on, and approaches to, research on ionizing radiation and nuclear technology. We wanted to explore ways to connect with each other and integrate different perspectives and forms of knowledge.

We started the event by first presenting our research topics/interest. Every participant gave a short presentation in *Pecha Kucha* format. It worked quite well for all of us and it was much easier to understand each-other's projects when they are not explained in detail as is usually the case. There were really all different sorts of projects starting from cancer treatment with alpha therapy, to gender diversity management and democratization of science through do-it-yourself citizen science initiatives. For those of you that don't know, my PhD research deals with the communication aspects of radiological risk situations. Hence, my interest for this workshop.



After presentations and questions, the speed dating started. Every social scientist had speed dates with the researchers with technical background. Therefore, every person had 4 dates where we tried to find common viewpoints and ideas of how our knowledge or expertise can be useful for the other. Although the research fields were very different, we still managed to come up with common ideas of how we can collaborate with each other. And as almost always, arguments that "social science IS a science and plus a relevant one even for such technical aspects" had to be included during the speed dating.

After the speed dating, we were introduced to RRI concept. RRI means that societal actors work together during the whole research and innovation process in order to better align both the process and its outcomes, with the values, needs and expectations of European society. After being explained about the six main RRI keys (public engagement, gender equality, ethics, science education, open access and governance), we formed small groups of two people and had to state arguments pro and contra some of these keys. In my group, we had to argue why public engagement is important and why gender equality isn't. The latter was quite hard for me to state because I could only think of why it actually is important.



Finally, it was time to incorporate these RRI keys into a research project ideated by us. This time we formed groups of four people (polygamy you might say) in order to bring more diverse knowledge and expertise to the table. Each group had two social scientists and two researchers from the exact sciences. This required out-of-the-box thinking. Creating a new project by just adding our current (PhD) research focus was not useful and possible because every research topic was very different from the other. Nevertheless, we managed to come up with novel projects by incorporating different methods we apply in our research. We also managed to include RRI keys in these projects and clearly divide and explain the roles of every member of the group. After presenting the project, we discussed about it with the members of the other team as well as with the organizers of the workshop in order to see what is missing and what could be changed.

So all in all, the workshop was very useful for me and for the other participants too as far as I noticed during the discussions. Apart from learning about RRI, we connected with other researchers and got a better understanding of what they are doing and how we can collaborate together while taking into account RRI keys. It really gave an insight into how we can create and collaborate in interdisciplinary projects. Nowadays, as we all know, although a lot of research is said to be interdisciplinary, the work is still done in a parallel way, each researcher working on her own field and then bringing everything together. But in this workshop, we learnt how to break new ground and work together, rather than in parallel. Furthermore, we found common ground on how we can cooperate outside of the research as well with some of the participants. I invited one of the participants working on gender diversity for a **second date** in an event I will organize about gender equality next year. So, in conclusion, it was a useful date and I would recommend to all researchers no matter what your status, interest or orientation might be.

