

# A Guide to Responsible Social Experimentation

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## **Guidelines for all SHARED GREEN DEAL partners (consortium partners and local partners) on how to translate the RRI guiding principles into action**

The aim of these guidelines is to translate the guiding principles of our shared RRI vision into practical actions.

Applying these guiding principles can ensure that the:

- results of the experimental process are relevant and useful for both the participants and society more widely, through how the results provide solutions for addressing societal challenges (e.g. related to the e.g. European Green Deal);
- experimental process is inclusive (e.g. every participant has their say), reflexive, adaptive and responsive to the (changing) needs of the experiments' participants as well as to developments external to the experiments.

### Notes:

- We have clustered some of the guiding principles when they addressed related aspects and can be discussed together.
- Not all guiding principles may be applicable to your project activity or role. Please choose as appropriate.



Our

# 26 SHARED GREEN DEAL

## Guiding Principles for planning and implementing responsible social experiments

We are committed to conducting our experiment in a (socially and environmentally) **sustainable way**:

Guiding  
Principle

1

**We use inclusive, just, and socially acceptable approaches, methods and tools.**

### Things to keep in mind!

- Try to use methods that allow all stakeholder groups to raise their points and articulate their needs and expectations.
- Is everyone agreeing to use the proposed approach on how to conduct the experiment?
- Reflect on how well the experiment has worked so far: Which approaches and tools have worked well with the participants? What kind of challenges arose?

- Discuss these points with the participants of the experiments in, for example, a “reflexive session”.
- For more inspiration on tools and methods to be used in your experiment, check the RRI Tools table in Annex 4 of the RRI toolbox.

Guiding  
Principle

2

**We are aware of past findings.**

### Things to keep in mind!

Stay up to date! Look at what other researchers, innovators, and practitioners are doing in the field. Make sure to use the most recent information available when designing and conducting your experiment.

Examples include:

- Review relevant literature and studies.
  - Ask experts in the field for their opinions on the current state of knowledge.
- For sure, you have already done this work during the application phase. But consider these points also from time to time while conducting the experiments. Knowledge is evolving and answers to your initial questions might be different at different times.

Guiding  
Principle

## 3

**We discuss how we can contribute with our action to sustainability transitions and make use of this normative perspective. We look at the societal impacts of the project as enabling factors to this transition.**

#### Things to keep in mind!

- Identify the societal needs and challenges that the experiment aims to address. Needs at the (local) level of the experiment might need a more specific focus, compared to societal needs defined at other levels (e.g. national, international). It is good to establish a link between the needs identified at the level of the experiment and the more overarching needs at other levels.
  - Take into account societal needs and challenges in the design and implementation of the experiment.
- It is important to involve different stakeholders in the problem definition activities. Do not take any problem orientation (or solution) for granted.
  - Discuss with your project participants what would their contribution to a sustainable transition process be (in the topic of your experiment).

Guiding  
Principle

## 6

**Using RRI will be a learning process for all consortium members. We strive to build our capacities in RRI and consider how best it can be applied in our project, while at the same time being aware of its boundaries.**

#### How to implement?

- *This principle is not relevant for the experiments.*
  - RRI is a concept with no final definition, and it needs to be operationalised for each project and project task. What RRI means to you, is likely to change during the lifetime of the project and depending on the activities.
- Use the “RRI session” during the consortium meeting to ask questions and critically discuss with the consortium new ideas and opinions.

**Guiding Principle 7**

**Applying a responsible and reflexive approach might uncover unforeseen and potentially negative effects of our activities. We are prepared to address the unforeseen.**

**Guiding Principle 10**

**We are aware of difficulties in the research practice, like recruiting participants. Therefore, we have practical alternatives. We acknowledge the right to fail in reaching the effects we have aimed for during the experiments, and commit ourselves to reflecting on and drawing conclusions from unintended consequences. Being responsible also means being flexible and adaptive to changes in our own processes.**

**Things to keep in mind!**

- Think about the (un)desirable outcomes and risks of the experiment's activities.
- Be aware of potential difficulties in implementing your experiment and think about practical alternatives. Unforeseen external developments pose additional barriers and opportunities that need to be addressed.
- Think about possible alternative methods, design choices or goals to conduct your experiments. What alternative effects might be achievable by changing setups or processes?
- Be mindful of unintended effects on the experiments' participants or on non-participating groups, e.g. on social groups, on the environment.

- Try not to answer these questions by yourself or with a restricted steering group. Instead, try to hear the participants' opinion on future outcomes and negative effects. Use the reflexive sessions (see Section 2.5, in the Deliverable 6.2) to keep regular contact with the participants.

In case initial plans need changing, communicate this in time and to all relevant stakeholders (participants and consortium members) and seek agreement for the changes.

We aim for **responsible internal project management**:

**Guiding Principle 8**

**We seek reliability and accountability in our project management, such as completing tasks on time and taking ownership of our work.**

**Things to keep in mind!**

- Accountability is not only the responsibility of the overall project management team or the work package leader. We all contribute to good project management by respecting timing and deadlines.
- Changes might happen! Be open in your communication with your project colleagues.

**Guiding Principle 12**

**We aim to contribute to environmental sustainability and use environmentally friendly products and processes (e.g. travels) in our internal project management.**

**Things to keep in mind!**

- Have you considered environmentally friendly products for the catering of your gatherings?
- Choose local/regional, organic and plant-based foods for catering
- Encourage your experiment team/participants to use low-carbon means of travelling.

**Guiding Principle 13**

**We seek transparency on the project's goals and results.**

**Things to keep in mind!**

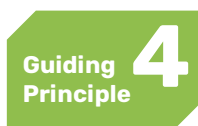
- Is the communication flow towards the participants and within the management team transparent and open? Especially if timing or procedures have to be changed?
- How does communication allow for feedback? How is feedback integrated in the decision-making?
- Have the participants of the experiments all the information they need?
- Use the reflexive sessions to engage in a discussion with the participants whether they feel adequately informed on the implementation of the experiment.

**Guiding Principle 9**

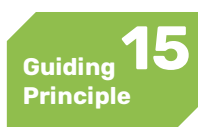
**We acknowledge both our own and the team's work, pay attention to the team's well-being, and cultivate respectful and mindful interaction.**

**Things to keep in mind!**

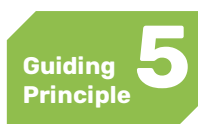
- Are you ensuring the well-being of all of your participants and co-workers?
- This could, for example, be through asking at the beginning of each meeting how people are feeling ('check in'), or through having a clear idea about everyone's time and personal capacities within the projects, through addressing challenges of equal engagement and needs concerning the work-life-experiment balance
- Check the gender guidelines with regard to the aspects of diversity and intersectionality.



**We reflect on which stakeholder groups' perceptions are given priority in experiments and consider social inequalities. We ensure diversity and inclusivity in the group of participants in our experiments.**



**We reflect regularly with participants on whether the experiment is taking into consideration needs, concerns and values of all participants.**



**Working in different contexts, we take into account local conditions in our experiments and use coherent, context-specific principles shared by the participants of the experiments and seek a representation of local actors.**

#### Things to keep in mind!

- Ensure diversity and inclusivity in the group of participants in your experiment and seek a proper representation of local actors
  - Identify the key external stakeholders that can benefit/lose from the results of the experimentation.
  - Try to understand the perspectives, needs, and interests of different participants. Consider social inequalities when determining which stakeholder groups' perceptions are given priority.
  - Keep in mind that participants can have different ways to express their opinions and might not feel comfortable speaking in large groups or in the presence of specific groups or representatives
- Check the guidelines on gender for more information on how to apply a gender-sensitive and gender-responsible approach, and for tools that can be used to ensure a diversity of participants.
  - Use the reflexive sessions to engage in a discussion with the participants on the decision-making during the experiment.

We aim for **responsible internal project management**:

Guiding  
Principle

16

**We ensure equality of roles between researchers, subcontractors and participants. This includes jointly discussing and elaborating the goals and implementation of the experiments. We aim for co-creation during the different stages of the experimental process, not only at the end of the project.**

#### Things to keep in mind!

- Make sure that every participant is aware of their roles and responsibilities in the project implementation.
  - Try to allow for co-creation with the participants; this includes discussion with the participants on the goals of the experiments and the ways of conducting the experiment.
  - Are all participants of the experiment willing and equipped to apply new forms of knowledge? Knowledge forms could be e.g. including practical knowledge on renovating small things in the houses within the knowledge sharing networks?
- Use the reflexive sessions to engage in a discussion with the participants on their roles and responsibility during the experiment.
  - You could try out methods of sharing practical knowledge between participants and directly include the participants as co-creators (e.g. through co-design of group sessions and interviews).

... aim for **DISSEMINATION** of our results to different societal stakeholders

Guiding  
Principle

18

**Results are disseminated to a wider public in a sensitive but impactful way.**

Guiding  
Principle

19

**We attach great importance to a simple understanding and practical use of our results, for example with easy-to-read and accessible publications and target-group adapted communications.**

#### Things to keep in mind!

- Think about who (which group) will be interested in the results of your experiment.
  - Think about what will be the best way to communicate results to these groups.
  - Think about when the communication towards project-external stakeholders should best start.
- Think about your target groups and how to communicate the results of your experiments to them from the start of the experiment, not only at the end.
  - You can get support from the ICLEI, the consortium partner in charge of communications.

... comply with the standards of **research ETHICS** in our research work and collaborations internal and with external partners:

Guiding Principle **20**

**This includes informed consent as well as awareness of (our own) power positions and possible biases.**

Guiding Principle **21**

**We agree on the formal ethic commitments that the consortium has subscribed to, in particular concepts such as anonymity and confidentiality of participants. We adhere to the internal work processes of quality review and internal deadlines.**

#### Things to keep in mind!

- Are you using the templates and informed consent forms that have been prepared by the consortium partners?
  - Are they suited to the needs of your experiment / to the specific stakeholder groups you work with?
- Familiarise yourself with the guidelines and templates written for the SHARED GREEN DEAL project. You can find them in Section 2.5 of the RRI toolbox.
  - Explain the needs for and the values of using adapted ethical forms to your participants.

... recognise that **GENDER EQUALITY** adds value to research and innovation in terms of excellence, creativity, and societal relevance of the knowledge produced:

Guiding Principle **23**

**We promote equal opportunities for people from any gender, and gender balance in the teams in academic and non-academic partner organisations.**

Guiding Principle **24**

**We ensure the inclusion of women´s expertise in the internal structures of the project including managing positions (WP leads), general assembly, and advisory boards.**

Guiding Principle **25**

**We aim to reflect on and integrate gender dimensions in the content of the project activities, identifying and addressing gender inequalities and needs in the context of the experimental streams.**

Guiding Principle **26**

**We acknowledge that gender interacts with other categories of identity and adopt an intersectional approach to issues of equity and justice.**

- Please read the separate section on “gender” definition and gender guidelines in this document.