



REINFORCING

Fourth REINFORCING Open Call on “Responsible Digitalization”

Introduction

REINFORCING supports organizations and institutions in Europe to transition to a new paradigm where responsibility and openness drive research and innovation (R&I) processes. The green and digital transitions have become of paramount importance to address the societal challenges that European societies currently face. The twin transition will bring enormous benefits but also non-desired externalities and implications. In this regard, EU institutions and territories need to shift to more open and transparent R&I practices in which all actors share responsibility to develop services and products that are acceptable, sustainable and bring social satisfaction.

The Open and Responsible Research and Innovation (ORRI) approach promotes collaborative efforts, sharing research outputs as early as possible for engaging citizens in co-creation processes and opening R&I to the whole society. Implementing Open and Responsible Research and Innovation (ORRI) can seem a daunting task. Over the past decade, many resources and tools have been created, but an effort to systematize, curate and create a single-entry point was still missing. REINFORCING is this much-needed European central hub for ORRI. The REINFORCING platform (<https://reinforcing.eu/oss-platform>) is the entry point to knowledge, training, ORRI skills matchmaking and capacity building for organizations interested in starting or continuing their journey to creating an inclusive R&I ecosystem. Furthermore, the project brokers unique networking opportunities for organizations, institutions and territories interested in becoming part of the European ecosystem that is transforming the R&I system by bringing it closer to society and societal needs.

To support this change, REINFORCING has ring-fenced funding for 96 grants - between 20,000 and 60,000 euros- to invite institutions from around Europe to develop projects aiming at implementing new modes of doing R&I that drive more just transitions. This call is the fourth one of the seventh calls for cascading grants that will be launched by REINFORCING. Future calls will support territories and organizations experimenting with ORRI for the first time (ORRI Incubator Open Calls) as well as those scaling up their ORRI activities (ORRI Booster Open Calls).

This funding call is aimed at supporting applicants with proven experience in ORRI practices who would like to strengthen and institutionalize their ORRI approach (ORRI Booster Open Calls). Proposals can be centered around new ideas or initiatives or can complement existing or emerging projects in order to advance ORRI principles in the context of “Responsible digitalization”.

Open call description

Digitalization of society has become pervasive during the last decade. The expansion of the Internet, the Web and mobile devices has critically modified the way that citizens interact with the physical and legal environment in an unprecedented manner. The rapid advancement, deployment and adoption of digital technologies by modern societies has brought in significant benefits and advances. Thanks to digital technologies now we can work remotely, trace our sugar levels in blood, observe a fetus into a mother’s womb, traveling abroad without maps or communicating with a





person that speaks a foreign language. Digitalization has also been accelerated, thanks to the pandemic, and many digital transformation processes into society have been speed up due to the virtualization impetus that occurred during the COVID-19 crisis.

However, and together with these benefits, several drawbacks have also emerged too. The rapid digitalization of the physical and legal spaces has also brought significant backlashes. Technosolutionism and/or technoptimistic visions have been promoted during the last decade around different digital technologies, denying the need of understanding and assessing social contexts before deploying digital technologies. That is why different problems associated to digital technologies are attracting an increasing attention from public opinion such as digital divides, the proliferation of misinformation and propaganda on the online environment, privacy concerns, the rising of “filter bubbles”, the automation of biases and discrimination, and/or labor precarity fueled by digital platforms, among others.

The ORRI approach can be of help for addressing some of the drawbacks caused by digitalization, promoting a more reflective and responsible approach towards digital transformation of society, addressing, anticipating and assessing their ethical, legal and social implications, as well as promoting more participatory, inclusive and fair deployment and adoption of digital technologies into society.

Specific challenges of the open call on “Responsible Digitalization” to be addressed

Four specific challenges to be addressed under this ORRI Booster call have been identified for promoting “Responsible Digitalization”. This list of challenges to be addressed under this ORRI Booster call is not exhaustive nor limited to these specific ones:

- **Public engagement around digital technologies:** Many digital technologies work as “black boxes” and many citizens are completely blind about their inner workings.
- **Privacy, transparency and trust in digitalization processes:** The deployment of digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence or Internet of Things raises several issues around the preservation of these human values in different contexts.
- **Digital literacy and digital divides:** The rapid advancement of digital technologies also creates divides in the population regarding access, knowledge and mastering of these technologies.
- **Misinformation and manipulation:** Digital technologies have created new and powerful vehicles for old problems around communication and public debate. They also have raised serious threats for modern western democracies.

Applicants may apply for one or more of the listed challenges or address other specific topics for which they have identified a gap in the context of “Responsible Digitalization” and justify the selection in the application process. Some examples of specific activities that can be proposed for the potential projects to be funded are included below. Please note that the list is non-exhaustive and should serve as a possible inspiration rather than a task list. Also, please note that the applicants are expected to perform different complementary activities within the eighth month period of the supported project, not just one particular activity. Applicants should also demonstrate how funded projects will help towards the institutionalization of ORRI approaches.





Potential activities:

- Training and capacity building on public engagement around digital technologies and its implications.
- Design and implementation of co-creation processes to develop digital solutions and services in the context of “Responsible Digitalization”.
- Future scenario or visioning workshops with different stakeholders, including citizens, that address potential ethical, legal and social implications of the deployment of digital technologies into particular contexts.
- Design and execution of engagement strategies in digital transformation processes and/or policies into particular contexts, which are accessible and inclusive, fostering an environment where all voices are heard and valued.

Please note that REINFORCING doesn't fund:

- Activities related to technological developments and/or proof of concepts, while could support co-creation and/or visioning workshops linked to those activities.
- Activities of any kind in which artificial intelligence-based systems or techniques are used or developed.

Call requirements and details

- Projects must be run in the context of “Responsible Digitalization” and the project actions must contribute to the achievement of the Fourth REINFORCING Open Call objectives (ORRI Booster call).
- Projects are expected to consider and implement specific Gender¹ activities (ideally enlarging them toward Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness) and comply with Horizon Europe Open Science² requirements since the proposal stage.
- Funded projects are expected to release at least an ORRI resource (or tool) to be included in the REINFORCING online platform. The resource should be included in the proposal text as one of the results to be delivered.
- For this ORRI Booster call, not more than 14 organizations/consortia implementing projects lasting 8 months will be supported with grants of up to 20,000 euros each.
- This ORRI Booster Open Call is aimed at supporting applicants with proven experience in ORRI practices who would like to strengthen and institutionalize their ORRI approach. Therefore, evidence of experience in ORRI is required to properly comply with the requirements of the call.

Opening date: **18th of November of 2024**

Closing date: **30th of January of 2025 at 17:00 CET**

Information on application procedures is available on the REINFORCING website, where the Guide for applicants and the Frequently Asked Questions can be downloaded here: <https://reinforcing.eu/open-calls/current-calls>.

¹ See <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffc06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> and https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en

² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/open-science_en

