The responsible research and innovation in social sciences and humanities (RRI-SSH) initiative seeks to help foster responsible research initiatives within the European community. I attended a two day workshop (July 8th & 9th, 2015) which gathered 144 representatives from DG-connect and ICT-related H2020 projects with the goal of identifying challenges, sharing knowledge, networking and building synergies. Moreover, we were informed that by the end of the two days we would have a concrete action plan which would provide reference to how one is to be responsible social actor in the field of scientific research. Here I will focus on some of the aspects of the two days I found to be most interesting and thought provoking.

Prior to the event participants had been asked to provide key words that they believe define RRI. The results of this were presented to the group in the form of a word cloud, with the size of each word representing the frequency with which the word was selected (see below).

![Word Cloud Image]

These words represent how the community of European researchers conceptualise responsibility. As scientists were are no stranger to ethics and working within such guidelines. However, the RRI-SSH initiative tries to take this a step further by saying that being a responsible societal actor requires us not just to “tick-boxes” but to engage more thoughtfully with the process of responsibly research.

The opening address by Nicole Dewarndre (Advisor for Societal Issues from DG-Connect) echoed this sentiment. She suggests that, for one to be responsible, one must utilise both a practical and conceptual approach. This necessitates that we have a platform in which multi-disciplinary groups are able to discuss and share knowledge in order to have a more “fluid” and adaptive framework in order to tackle the various ethical issues that arise through the creation of new technologies.

It was noted that though many of the items in the word cloud reflect the various dimensions of RRI-SSH (i.e. public engagement and open access), gender equality and science education are not represented. This is particularly interesting given the broad gender representations present at the workshop. The response to this was to say that, in order for us to be responsible we must engage at
all levels of the system. This is correct; however, I believe this perhaps glosses over a problem that pervaded throughout the event and may be detrimental to the RRI-SSH initiative if not addressed.

In my opinion, the reason why these words closely depict the dimensions of RRI –SSH are two fold –

(1) Because most (if not all) participants had read the OnLife Manifesto prior to responding

(2) For the participants to provide “good” answers they would need to provide something close to what the RRI initiative wants them to respond with.

Though I am not suggesting anything sinister in their approach, a number of the subsequent outcomes of this workshop are based off responses to similarly biased questions. Therefore, for the RRI-SSH initiative to harvest new ways of conceptualising how to conduct responsible research and innovation, a more methodological approach must be considered. Taken as they are, I believe that the absence of certain dimensions, such as gender equality, actually reflect the importance the participant has attributed to the issues based off the wording of RRI-SSH documentation. This highlights a possible barrier in terms of the language being used to describe these dimensions.

The next interactive stage of the workshop had participants consider what it means and takes to enact responsible research and innovation. This was achieved by having participants answer the question:

“What will make us confident and proud regarding our commitment for responsibility in ICT-related Research and Innovation?”

After writing down some ideas individually we were then instructed to gather in groups of 5, to jointly select the best ideas. We were then placed into groups of 25 where what was deemed to be the 4 most popular ideas were placed on a wall and compared to what other groups had come up with. Lastly, all participant s voted which ideas they considered to be most important. Below are the outcomes of this activity, these were clustered by the organisers to represent 5 unique pillars.

Pillars A and B were organised to represent the reasons why we should enact a responsible approach to R&I. This includes concepts such as providing “value for society” and increasing sustainability. Pillars C and D relate to how to put responsible research into practice, involving “real engagement” with users and promoting interdisciplinary dialogue. Lastly, Pillar E I said to reflect our needs to validate this process through user centred design and measuring our impact on society.

This lead to the next activity, which had participants choose one of the 5 pillars and jointly identify actions that they could take at the level of their project and what influences could have on towards third parties (those also involved in the H2020 process and also the wider scientific community).
chose pillar E, where we discussed our concerns in regards to best practices. What more can we do other than simply complying with ethics? What do we need to demonstrate in order to comply with RRI? And how can we validate and improve upon this?

The outcome of this process was to highlight the need for multidisciplinarity throughout the process. This also included my concern for factoring language as a possible barrier. To this end there was talk about having “translators and facilitators” operate within the RRI framework. As the COCOHA project is highly multidisciplinary we benefit from having consistent exposure to these kinds of interactions and thus are in an advantageous position to promote RRI.

Additionally, a large proportion of the participants identified the need to include the user in the process. For us this will be via the promotion of the COCOHA website, through creating social media updates (via Twitter and Facebook) and disseminating information to general public in clear and uncomplicated language.

In terms of the concerns raised by my group, these were largely abated by the reveal of the RRI-ICT forum, which will offer a platform for sharing best practices with the entire H2020 research community. This will also give us a database with which to participate in tutorials, access toolkits and monitor our progress in respect to the wider research community (see www.rri-ict-forum.eu).

Going forward, though the workshop does not provide us with a concrete action plan with which to begin implementing RRI, it does provide us with the seed in which to grow meaningful discussion with regards to the manner in which we conduct our research and how this effects the wider society. The RRI-ICT forum will provide a measurable through interacting with each other and acting on the advice given to use we can generate a framework with which to inform current and future researchers, that is based on (and adapted to) current issues as they arise within the committee. At the project level we can contribute to this by considering the principles of RRI at all levels of the project and sharing any issues, boundaries or successes with the RRI forum.