

## RNI 2025 YOUNG RESEARCHERS' DAY

« University as an Institution for the Emergence and Dissemination of Responsible Innovations : From Theory to Appropriate Practices »

Location : Paris, EDC Business School

Date : Monday, 13 october 2025

### CALL FOR PAPERS



**RRI**  
RESEAU DE RECHERCHE SUR  
L'INNOVATION

**Forum innovation 2025**  
ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT AND ENGINEERING OF INNOVATION:  
TRAJECTORIES AND PROSPECTS FOR SYSTEMIC INNOVATION

13-16 | OCTOBER | 2025 | PARIS

**30**  
years

**innovations !**

**AUF** ASSOCIATION UNIVERSITAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

**EDC** PARIS BUSINESS SCHOOL

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### Context and Justification

The Innovation Forum, organized annually by the Research Network on Innovation (RNI), explores how economics, management, social sciences, and engineering sciences address new challenges, processes, or domains of innovation. The 2025 edition will mark the 30th anniversary of *Innovations, Journal of Innovation Economics and Management*, whose first issue was published in 1995 (*Innovations* 1995/1 (n°1)). The central theme of this edition will be systemic innovation, an essential approach to tackling major contemporary challenges.

These challenges primarily relate to the impacts of human activity on the climate, with damages already deemed "irreversible," according to the IPCC (2022b). In this context of sustainability crisis, the second part of the latest IPCC report, titled *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerabilities* (IPCC, 2022a), emphasizes the urgency of collective mobilization involving states, businesses, NGOs, and particularly Higher Education and Research Institutions (HERI). In France, for instance, the swift response of the academic sector, via *France Universités*<sup>1</sup>, highlighted the necessity to "*mobilize universities and their research capabilities to support policymakers in a systemic and multidisciplinary approach*"<sup>2</sup> to address global sustainability crises.

Universities play a pivotal role in innovation ecosystems (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Heaton et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2021) and knowledge-based economies (Audretsch, 2014), which grants them increased social responsibility in the face of rising sustainability challenges (Bayuo et al., 2020; Owen et al., 2020). This growing responsibility calls on universities to act as laboratories for participation, dialogue, and action, committed to sustainable development (Amaral et al., 2015; Van Ginkel, 2002). According to UNESCO (2009), universities have the responsibility to "*advance our understanding of multifaceted problems with social, economic, scientific, and cultural dimensions, as well as our capacity to confront them*" (p. 2). In this sense, a responsible university "*considers all the impacts generated by its activities—teaching, research, research valorization, and institutional management—to create shared value for the entire community and thus respond to society's concerns regarding sustainable development*" (Mobhe Bokoko, 2024, p. 6). It positions itself today as a key actor in bridging the gap between academia, industry, and society, thereby contributing to the transition toward more responsible research and innovation practices (Tassone et al., 2018; Klinecicz et al., 2022; Bernal-Sanchez, Feenstra, 2023).

The concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), the English translation of *recherche et innovation responsables* (RIR), has been central to the European Union's (EU) research and innovation programs. For instance, "Horizon 2020"<sup>3</sup>, launched for the 2014–2020 period, encouraged universities to work on research projects focused on ecological transition (European Commission, 2015; Stilgoe, 2018). The ongoing European program "Horizon Europe"<sup>4</sup> (2021–2027) aims to align European research and innovation projects with society's values, needs, and expectations regarding the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Responsible innovation refers to "a transparent, interactive process by which societal actors and innovators become mutually responsive to each other with a view on the (ethical) acceptability, sustainability and societal desirability of the innovation process and its marketable products" (Von Schomberg, 2011, p. 50). It can be summarized as an attempt to govern research (Boutillier, Uzunidis, 2007) by involving science and innovation actors, along with a broader public, from the earliest stages of developing desirable and sustainable solutions (Georget et al., 2023; Lubberink et al., 2017; Owen et al., 2021; Stilgoe et al., 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> France Universités is a non-profit association under French law (Law 1901) that brings together the executive leaders of universities and other higher education and research institutions (EESR) to represent the voice and values of universities in public debate.

<sup>2</sup> Press Release from March 1, 2022: "New IPCC Report: A Call to Universities and Science": [Link](#).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.horizon2020.gouv.fr/>

<sup>4</sup> With a budget of €95.5 billion, Horizon Europe is the most ambitious research and innovation support program ever implemented by the EU and the largest in the world: [Horizon Europe Program](#).

It employs a systemic approach through a multi-actor, transdisciplinary ecosystem capable of deliberating and strengthening the alignment of innovation processes and outcomes with societal needs and expectations (Aggeri, 2020; Stilgoe et al., 2013; Shelley-Egan et al., 2020; Von Schomberg et al., 2013). This approach also addresses a very concrete issue: developing operational solutions for how researchers, innovators, and the public can implement solutions to sustainability challenges (Georget et al., 2023; Owen et al., 2021; Pavie, 2020).

Moreover, responsible innovation emerges as a particularly relevant lens for examining the actions and impact of universities in formulating solutions to the pressing challenges of sustainability (Berger-Douce, 2022; Bocquet, 2022; Guston, 2004; Uzundis, Mobhe Bokoko, 2022; Mobhe Bokoko, 2024). By emphasizing practices and solutions that account for social, economic, and environmental impacts, responsible innovation offers a conceptual and operational framework that tightly links scientific knowledge to society's urgent needs (Georget et al., 2023; Owen et al., 2020; Owen et al., 2021; Macnaghten, 2020; Stilgoe et al., 2013). It encourages universities to reflect not only on the technologies and models they develop but also on how these innovations can address the global sustainability crisis (Mobhe Bokoko, 2024; Tassone et al., 2018; Van Geenhuizen, Ye, 2014). This approach includes the participation of local stakeholders and fosters the development of inclusive and resilient innovation ecosystems (Bocquet, 2018; Blangy et al., 2018; Ferrández-Berruenco et al., 2023; Owen, 2012).

However, despite the growing body of research on the university's role in addressing the sustainability crisis through the lens of social responsibility (Karawowska, 2021; Kouatli, 2019; Meseguer-Sánchez et al., 2020; Mobhe Bokoko, 2024; Vallaey, 2014, 2018), few studies delve deeply into its direct actions and impacts on society, the economy, and the environment through the emergence and dissemination of responsible innovations. This gap is particularly noticeable in the Francophone context, where institutional incentives remain limited. The creation in October 2024 of the *Network of Responsible and Inclusive Francophone Universities* (RUFRI)<sup>5</sup>, supported by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), represents a promising example. This network aims to encourage Francophone universities to integrate the principles of responsibility more fully into their missions while promoting responsible research and innovation initiatives.

In this particular context, the RNI 2025 Young Researchers' Day, organized as part of the Innovation Forum 2025, will take place on October 13, 2025, at the EDC Business School campus in Paris. This event aims to mobilize a new generation of Francophone researchers around the question : **“How can universities become indispensable institutions for the emergence and dissemination of responsible innovations?”** Through this question, the day of reflection and action will align with a collective and systemic approach to innovation as a relevant strategy to address today's societal challenges.

## Key Themes :

The contributions will highlight research insights from economics, management, sociology of science and technology, and, more broadly, the social sciences or engineering. They should

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<sup>5</sup> <https://auf-semaine-francophonie.auf.org/fr/ateliers/creation-du-reseau-des-universites-francophones/37>

explore the role of universities in promoting forms of responsible innovation. Presentations at the RRI 2025 Young Researchers' Day may address the following themes and questions:

### **1/ Responsible Innovation in Higher Education (Pedagogical Level)**

This theme focuses on the role universities play in training future graduates (employees, entrepreneurs, policymakers) who are committed to sustainability and capable of designing innovative solutions with positive societal impacts in their professional activities (Murga-Menoyo, 2014; Mejlgaard et al., 2019; Rieckmann, 2012; Tassone et al., 2018). Key questions include: How can sustainability and social responsibility issues be systematically integrated into educational programs? What specific pedagogical and/or methodological tools could facilitate learning about responsible innovation? What are the challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies, particularly the rise of artificial intelligence? How can students be encouraged to develop solutions addressing concrete societal challenges? How can educators be motivated and trained to incorporate sustainability and responsibility into their teaching practices? How can the impact of graduates on the sustainable transformation of their organizations be evaluated?

### **2/ Developing a Research Policy Aligned with Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility (Research and Valorization Level)**

By embedding responsibility into the objectives, processes, and outcomes of academic research, universities can enhance society's innovation potential to address sustainability challenges (Dias et al., 2022; Cuppen et al., 2019; L'Astorina, Fiore, 2017; Uzunidis, Mobhe Bokoko, 2022). However, the predominant focus on technological and economic progress often conflicts with broader societal goals of responsible innovation, making it difficult for universities to align their efforts with sustainability priorities (Héraud, Popiolek, 2021; Bayuo et al., 2020; Meseguer-Sánchez et al., 2020; Von Schomberg, 2021; Timmermans, Blok, 2021). Questions for discussion include: What processes can universities develop to promote responsible research? What tools (models, methodologies, criteria, etc.) are needed for this purpose? How can responsible academic research contribute to addressing sustainability challenges? How can universities play a key role in science and innovation governance, particularly through collaboration among multidisciplinary researchers, students, policymakers, industry, and civil society? How do factors such as university size and operational context affect their efforts (Abi-Aad et al., 2021; Laperche et al., 2021)? What roles and strategies can universities adopt to promote the development and dissemination of responsible products and services? How can fraud and predatory practices in scientific activities be combated? What role can open science play in these dynamics (Uzunidis, 2018; Laperche, 2018)?

### **3/ Developing Sustainable and Inclusive Campuses as Hubs for Responsible Innovation (Organizational Level)**

University campus management impacts not only the well-being of students and staff but also the environmental footprint of academic activities (Sart, 2023; Santos et al., 2020; Vázquez et al., 2016). Key questions include: What responsible innovations are being developed to improve the well-being of students and staff? What innovations aim to reduce the ecological footprint of campuses? How can sustainable and inclusive campuses function as living labs to test and demonstrate the relevance and impact of responsible innovations implemented on-site? How can students, academic staff, and administrative personnel be included in co-creating projects for a responsible campus? What university social responsibility (USR)

strategies can promote exemplary practices in research and responsible innovation? What approaches to governance and organizational change can be adopted?

#### **4/ The Role of Universities in the Emergence of Responsible Innovation Ecosystems (Innovation Ecosystem Level)**

Through clear role definitions and shared taxonomies among stakeholders, the quadruple/quintuple helix model helps explain how universities can become key players in developing innovations that address sustainability challenges (Liu, Stephens, 2019; Valackienė, Nagaj, 2021; Smolka, Boschen, 2023). However, academic-industrial collaborations face several obstacles, such as limited access to information about respective needs and advancements, as well as challenges in managing research and innovation processes (timing, costs, objectives, and evaluation criteria) (Boutillier, Uzunidis, 2007; Cinar, Benneworth, 2021; Ferrández-Berrueco et al., 2023; Valackienė, Nagaj, 2021). Key questions include: How can a responsible innovation ecosystem be defined? What roles can universities play in their development? What systemic approaches are required for their effective functioning? What tools can facilitate collaboration between responsible universities and other societal actors? How can university campuses become hubs for local and regional sustainability-focused initiatives (e.g., green business incubators, circular economy hubs)? How can universities structure and coordinate consortia to accelerate environmental and technological transitions?

#### **5/ The Role of Public Policies in Supporting Universities as Drivers of Responsible Research and Innovation (Public Policy Level)**

Public policies play a crucial role in positioning universities as key actors in responsible research and innovation (Owen et al., 2020; Stilgoe, 2018). By providing adequate funding, fostering collaboration, and promoting ethical research practices, such policies can help universities stimulate economic and social development while addressing societal challenges. Key questions include: What public funding and incentive mechanisms can support responsible research and innovation in universities? How can the impact of these policies on responsible research and innovation processes and outcomes be evaluated and monitored? What lessons can be drawn from past responsible research and innovation policies? What new policies are needed to address emerging challenges in the context of sustainability?

#### **Target Audience :**

This event is aimed at all young researchers (PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows) within the French-speaking academic community, particularly those affiliated with institutions that are members of the AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie). Participants will be selected based on their submitted communications.

The target audience includes PhD candidates as well as francophone early-career researchers aged 35 or under who have defended their doctoral thesis within the past five years.

The **RNI 2025 Young Researchers' Day** will offer a unique opportunity to bring together researchers specializing in the proposed themes, enabling them to exchange ideas in small groups about their research work and inspire new and relevant lines of inquiry.

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### **Important Dates :**

**Submission deadline :** April 30, 2025

**Notification of Acceptance :** June 30, 2025

**Conference :** October 13, 2025

### **Submission Format :**

- Proposals for communications should include:
- An extended abstract (3 to 5 pages maximum), including: A presentation of the research problem; The methodology ; Expected results; A bibliography (limited to 10 references).

Submissions may be written in **French** or **English**. The authors' names and institutions must not appear in the submitted documents.

**To submit your proposal:** <https://foruminnov25.univ-littoral.fr/en/submit/>

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