RI-VIS

Increasing visibility of research infrastructures
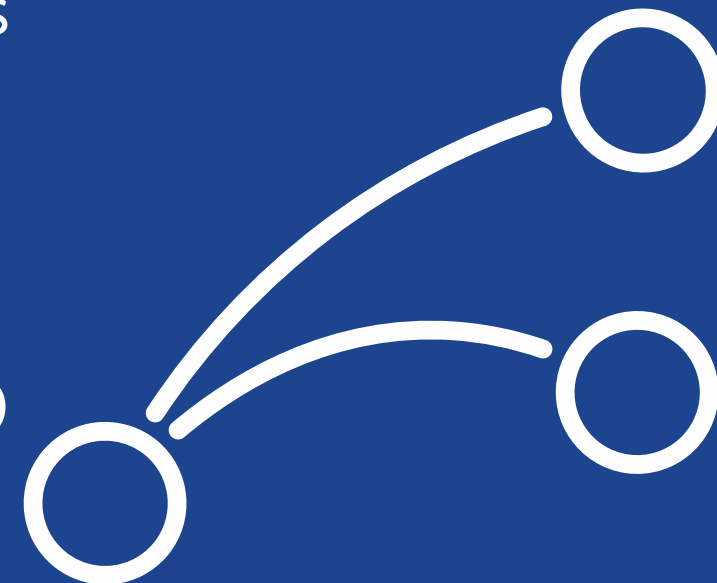
RI-VIS PROJECT: LESSONS LEARNED

1st EPOS International Conference

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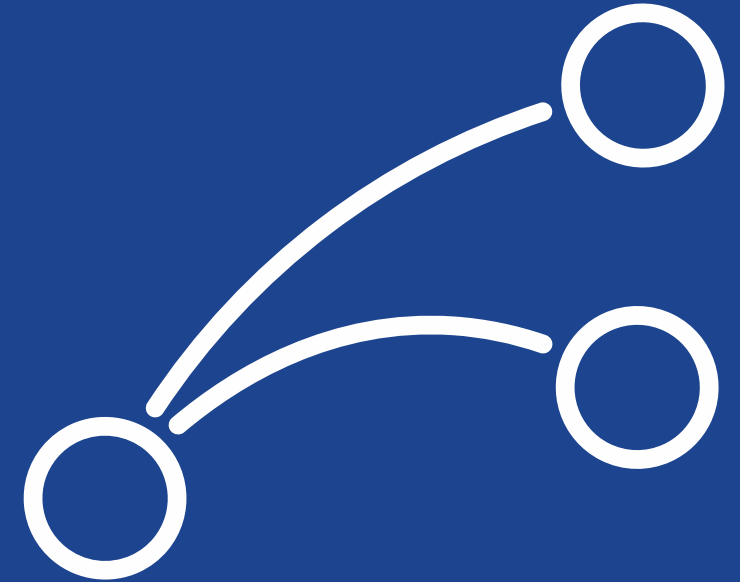
Ilha do Sal, 11th July 2022

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RI-VIS PROJECT: LESSONS LEARNED

In this talk:

- Introduction

- Brief overview of project RI-VIS

- Lessons learned:

    1. Cooperation with Africa and Latin-America

    2. Communication and engagement with Africa and Latin-America

RI-VIS Project Partners

Domains represented:
Life sciences
Environment
Social science

349 network partners
31 countries

Activities and results applicable to all domains

marine biology

al screening

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EMBRC
EUROPEAN
MARINE
BIOLOGICAL
RESOURCE
CENTRE
PORTUGAL

CCMAR
Centro de Ciências do Mar
Algarve

Research Centre dedicated to
OCEAN SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH

our Ocean, our Future

UNDERSTANDING · PROTECTING · EXPLORING

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COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT
FOR EUROPEAN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

SIMPLE INLINE TOOLS

International Symposia on Research Infrastructures

Africa - Europe 1-2 Feb 2021

Australia - Europe 5-7 Oct 2021

Latin America - Europe 15-17 June 2021

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COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES
FOR EUROPEAN RESEARCH
INFRASTRUCTURES
engaging with stakeholders in
Africa and Latin America

RI-VIS *White Papers*
Bi-regional recommendations for
cooperation of research infrastructures

All RI-VIS resources can be found at - bit.ly/ri-vis-resources

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Increasing visibility of research infrastructures

Cooperation with Africa and Latin America

RI-VIS *White Papers*

Bi-regional recommendations for cooperation of research infrastructures
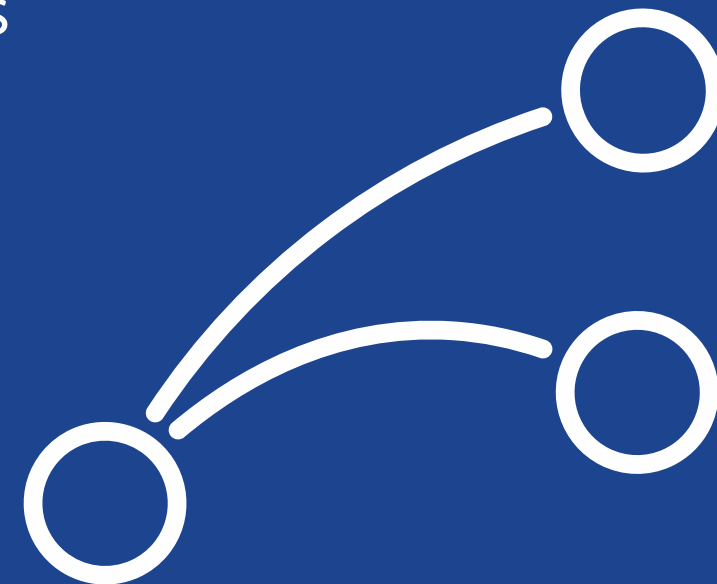
Author: Meeri Kim

Main goal:

To provide a **key recommendations from experts** (RI representatives and policy makers) **to facilitate partnerships** (Latin American-European RI and African-European RI)

Targets:

RI representatives, policy makers and funders
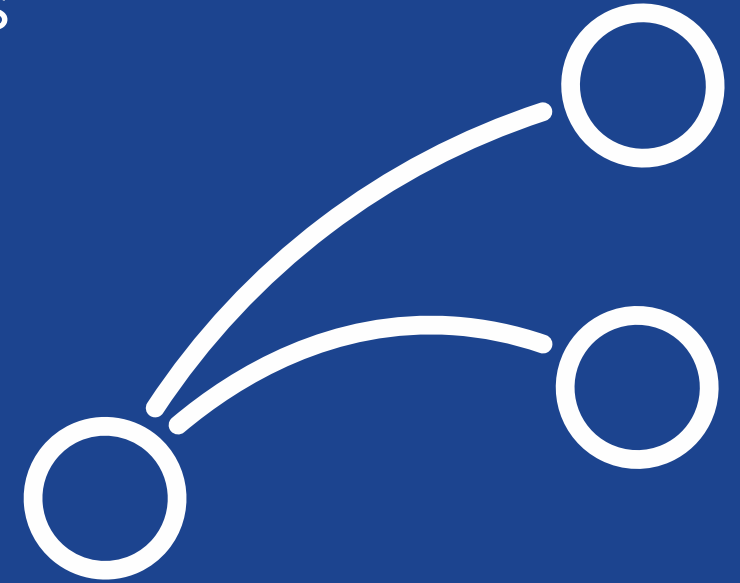
Approach:

Case studies and in-depth interviews to collect insights of experts from Latin American RIs, European RIs and policy makers

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Increasing visibility of research infrastructures

Cooperation with Africa

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Global Challenges

RIs are often involved with global issues and **need to include Africa in its research**, both in terms of data and solutions.

Best Practices

Learn from **existing success stories** of African-European RI collaborations.

Offer **different approaches, concepts and other means of participation** to countries outside EU.

Provide a **formal framework for partnership between countries**, such as a memorandum of understanding or a joint grant including expectations and standards for the RI collaboration.

Recognize that the RI collaboration should have **mutual benefit to both parties**.

Best practices

Have **patience and tolerance for other cultures** as well as different levels of technical competencies.

Learn new approaches: working in different parts of the world requires simpler and different solutions, based around mobile technology and scarcity of research infrastructure.

Engage with people and institutions **on the ground**.

Access

Provide **access for outside researchers** to have RI access to specialized equipment or facilities that may not be available in their own country or continent.

Outreach

Organize outreach activities such as **workshops and summer schools for international students**.
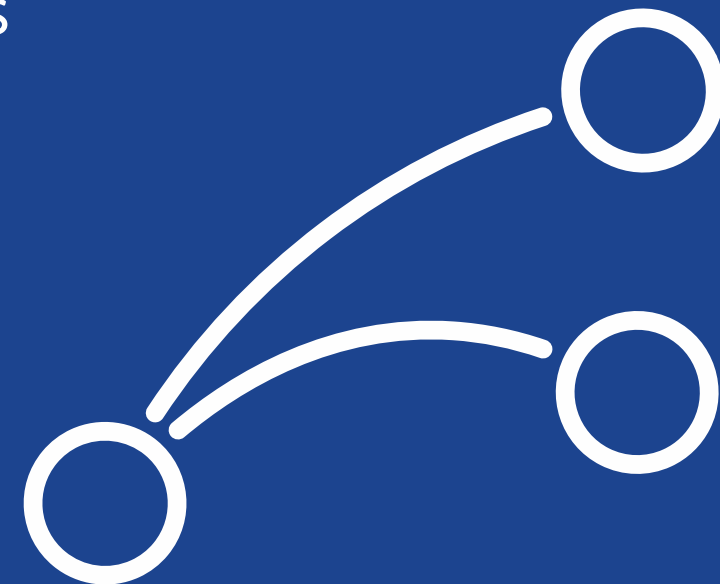
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Increasing visibility of research infrastructures

Cooperation with Latin America

Best practices

Scientific priorities must align between the two parties for a collaboration to be successful.

Getting involved with **initiatives that promote bi-regional collaboration** have proven effective as a means to connect RIs (e.g.: EU-LAC ResInfra, EULAC-PerMed).

Build trust and relationships incrementally, as having a few initial connections usually opens the door to many more.

Take into account that legal, ethical and funding frameworks **may differ significantly** in the other region.

Look into signing official agreements that place a **priority on long-term, sustainable collaboration** with partners from the other region instead of only working together on informal, one-off projects.

Access

Think about ways to **collaborate virtually**, such as making RI tools available through remote access.

Outreach

European RIs should place more emphasis on outreach **activities in Latin America** and make it clear that they want to collaborate.

Understand that Latin American researchers are **not as familiar with the concept of open-access RIs** in the European sense.
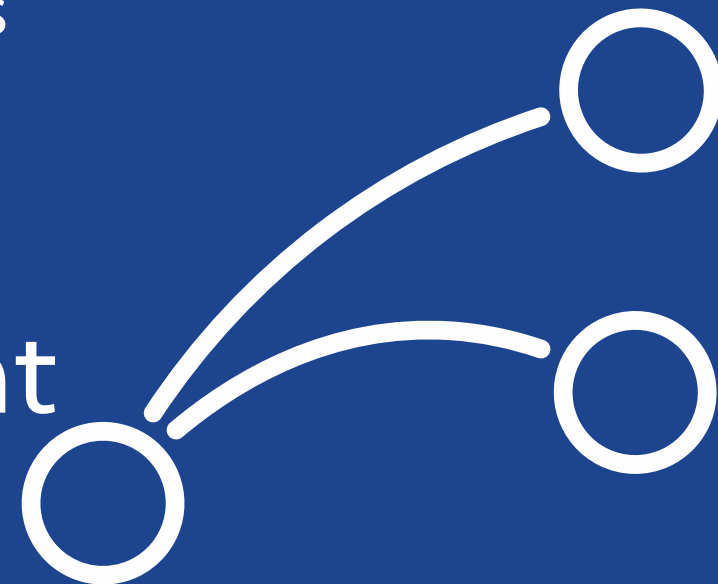
White papers:

Authors:

Sabrina Gaber

Rita Costa Abecasis

Bahne Stechmann

Daniel Adams

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INFRASTRUCTURES:
engaging with stakeholders in African countries

Authors:

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Andres Lopez Lara

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engaging with stakeholders in Latin America

What we set out to achieve

Main goal:

To provide a **roadmap to facilitate communications**, further **enhance awareness** of research infrastructures (RIs), and **drive collaboration** with stakeholders (eg scientists, research organisations) in Latin America and Africa

Targets:

EU RI communications officers as well as RI managers & relevant staff who need to create their own communications strategies to engage with different stakeholders from Africa and Latin America

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Starting point:

- RI-VIS communications toolkit
- two white papers on cooperation
- outputs of two Symposia (Latin America, Africa)

Approach:

- survey to compile information from local stakeholders and individuals with in-depth knowledge of the region
- establishment of two Organising Committees to oversee survey development, dissemination, & analysis
- Integration of the survey findings into a step-by-step manual to develop a regional communication strategy for each region

Survey

Main goals

To assess existing **awareness and understanding of European RIs**

To identify regional stakeholders' **main interests, goals and constraints** in terms of engaging with European RIs

Methods

Both open-ended questions and tick-box or drop-down options

Targets

Aprox. 20 regional stakeholders (per region)

Stakeholders: representatives of research organisations and institutions, research networks and associations, government entities that deal with science

Limitations

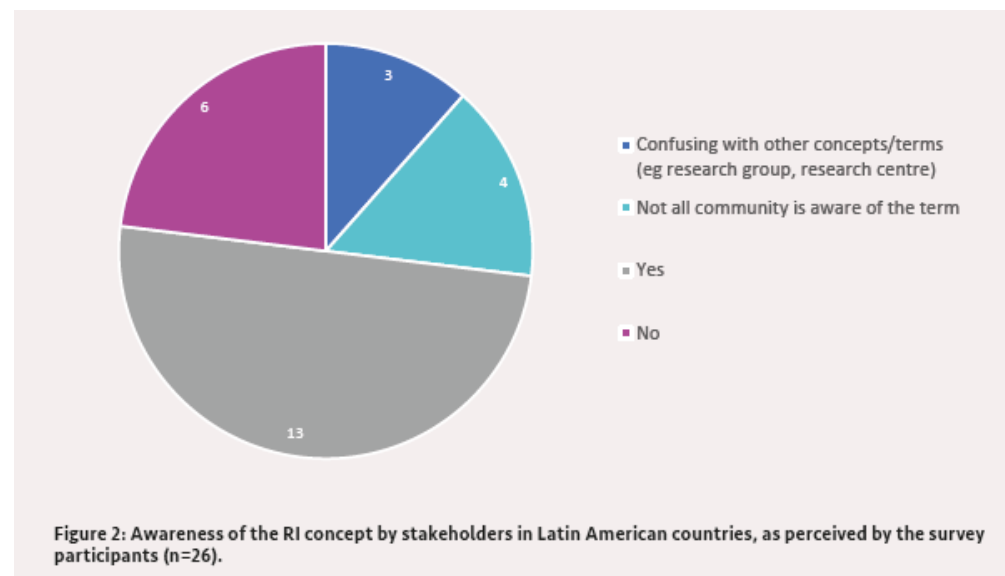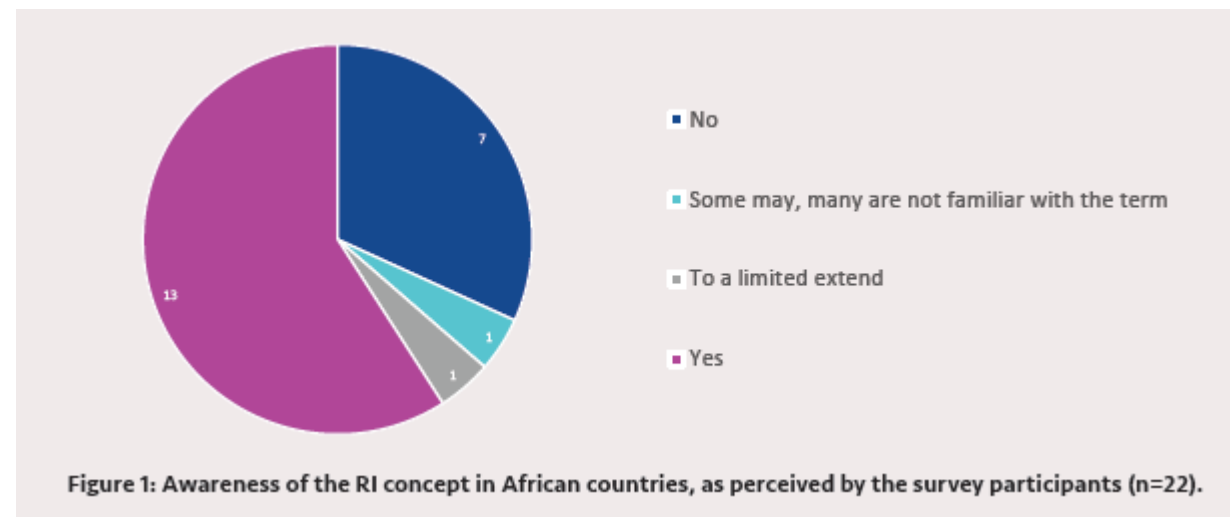Survey in English (although answers in Portuguese and Spanish were accepted)

Not completely representative

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A research infrastructure is an organization that enables the research community to use specific facilities, resources and services in order to accelerate scientific achievements and promote sustainable research.

Keep in mind that there are differing views of the definition of an RI in Europe (and among EU RI internal stakeholders, even within the same RI!).

Legend:
- No
- Some may, many are not familiar with the term
- To a limited extend
- Yes

Figure 1: Awareness of the RI concept in African countries, as perceived by the survey participants (n=22).

Legend:
- Confusing with other concepts/terms (eg research group, research centre)
- Not all community is aware of the term
- Yes
- No

Figure 2: Awareness of the RI concept by stakeholders in Latin American countries, as perceived by the survey participants (n=26).

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Strong desire for collaborative approaches with European RIs to:

Gain **access** to state-of-the-art equipment and services in Europe (but not necessarily using EU RI services at full-market cost)

Develop **joint projects and staff exchanges**, involving local stakeholders in project design/leadership (beware of top-down approaches!)

Increase **knowledge-sharing and building capacity** and infrastructures to meet local needs

Internationalise research and gain publication opportunities

Foster **science diplomacy** (particularly for African countries)

Funding

Potential **linguistic barriers** (all regions)

Difficulty knowing how to reach out to EU RI stakeholders and
ensure timely follow-up

Step 1: Do your homework

○ Identify and read background materials, identify existing collaboration with other RI's

○ Read literature to better understand the national/regional politics and see how your RI can add value by (co-)developing context-appropriate solutions to meet local needs

"

RIs need to have 'their thoughts and plans on the table when approaching [lower middle income country, LMIC] institutions'

Jim Todd, professor of applied biostatistics, LSHTM, Tanzania

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Step 2: Identify your communications goals

- Align communications goals with business goals

- Be clear in your expectations

- Keep in mind your targets' goals when developing your own, and adapt as needed

"

'Despite the fact that there is very modern equipment in the region, the expert professionals and knowledge in the development of these methods is deeper in Europe. The interest in collaborating is mainly to gain knowledge to design and carry out better experiments, beyond the equipment, to get to know people'.

Jorge Toldeo, scientific director of Red de Equipamiento Cientifico Avanzado REDECA, Universidad de Chile

Step 3: Identify and get to know your target audiences

○ **Coordinate with your RI peers** to identify potentially interested parties or 'target audiences'

○ **Consider all target audiences** (ie primary and secondary)

○ Consider **in-person events** such as community engagement **workshops** to better understand local needs and how your RI and local stakeholders could work together to address local needs

"

'You need to understand that some of them (individual scientists) come from difficult backgrounds, more than research, it is also about survival. Even the institutions they come from may have not had enough infrastructure, but they managed to make it anyway. That mostly means that they are resilient and determined, ready to prove themselves beyond all odds'

Anonymous respondent (South Africa)

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Step 4: Develop your key messages (1/2)

- People have **differing understandings of an RI**, so start with a basic definition and highlight your RI's specific areas of research

- Be aware of your **'cultural baggage'** and how your own socio-cultural experience/lens can affect your communications

- Keep in mind that words/messages may have a **different meaning** for different groups and within groups

- Be clear on the proposed **business model** (for EU/African collaboration) and **participation requirements** for collaboration

"

'Research institution is the closest in Kenya. Otherwise the word network is most relevant. The word platform or infrastructure is still new and barely relevant in country institutions.'

Mylène Ndisi, University of Clermont Auvergne, PhD student

Step 5: Identify relevant activities, tools, channels

- Make it easy to find relevant information for international audiences on your website (eg visible tab/link)

- First consider your approach and know where to start!

- Guidelines include tips to use websites/blogs, social media, mailing list, local press/media; local events/conferences

Step 6: Evaluation

- Develop a roadmap to evaluate and fine tune your regional communications strategy

'**Protocols** are very important. Hence **EU-RI should invite Directors at Ministries for Science and at Universities to visit the Research Infrasctructure**'

Rakeshnie Ramoutar-Prieschl, head of department, University of Pretoria

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If you are interested in developing activities to increase collaboration and engagement between EU, African and Latin American RIs...

... There are already some resources to get you started!

Where to find the Communication guidelines?
- Latin America: https://zenodo.org/record/5793657
- African countries: https://zenodo.org/record/5793442

Where to find the Cooperation recommendations?
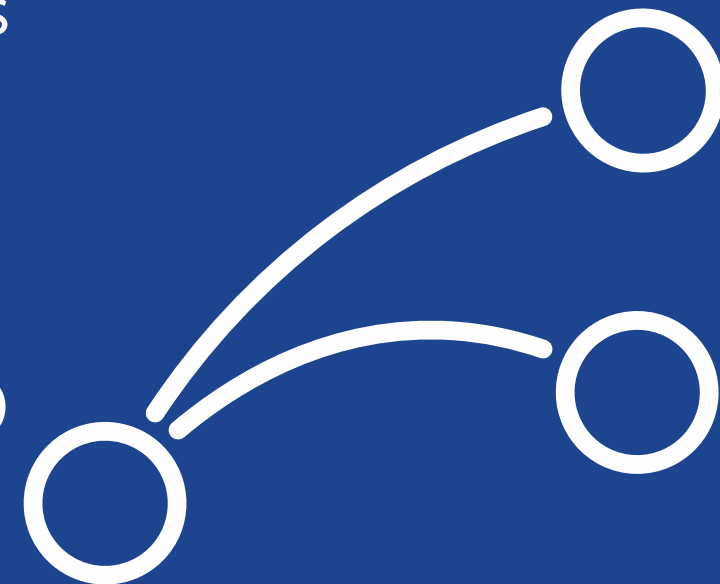- https://ri-vis.eu/network/rivis/white-papers

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Thank you!