

Intervention by Christine von Weizsäcker
1st Panel „How to link innovation and precaution? Link it to responsible innovation?“
RECIPES Final Conference, 11 May 2022, Bruxelles

The RECIPES Project provided many useful discussions, clarifications and a very useful guidance document.

Since the Earth Summit in 1992, I have been consistently following and participating in the Rio Process that led to the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals. Three sibling Principles of the Rio Declaration provide very important guidance and tools for the successful implementation of sustainable development pathways:

- Principle 10: also called the Democracy Principle, implemented in the Aarhus Convention to which the European Community and its member states are Parties
- Principle 15: the Precautionary Principle, also linked to resilience and disaster risk reduction
- Principle 16: the Polluter-Pays Principle. It could be mentioned at this point already that the word „responsabilité“ in French also means „obligation to repair the damages you caused to others“.

The RECIPES Project very productively focused on the first two of these three interlinked Principles when facing the challenges of innovation in research, development and market approval.

Where do we go from here? In many contexts, not only in our one, a new term pops up: „responsible innovation“. What will keep it from just being a new buzzword hiding „business-as-usual“ for a prolonged period of time, ending up in a responsibility bubble?

- **On Innovation:** Recent Reports by IPBES, IPCC and UNEP, CBD and WHO on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Environment, focus on sustainable pathways out of these interlinked multiple crises. They all agree that this can only be achieved by systemic, multidimensional, cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and participative approaches. Thus, a new type of innovation is being promoted, which moves beyond mere patentable techno-fixes. The latter remain important in the global market competition, e.g. with US and China.
- **Responsibility** means the ability, sometimes even obligation, to respond. This may range from personal integrity to voluntary guidelines, and to strict liability and the obligation to provide financial security, including taking insurance. The insurance sector, of course, does not like potential damages of great extent combined with an unknown probability of occurrence. They ask for a high prize or even refuse to insure. This is an incentive for the risk-takers to apply precaution. The debate on the inclusion of liability and redress in the EU supply-chain legislation indicates the possibly important contribution of Principle 16 to the real implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Involvement of the public on these issues could go far beyond mere top-down awareness-raising, education and information dissemination. It could be very useful and productive, exploring additional aspects and drawing a differentiated picture of „benefits for whom?“ and „damage to whom?“. **This, I think, calls for a follow-up project to RECIPES. It could be called RECIPERS, the „R“ standing for responsibility.**

IPBES: <https://ipbes.net/document-library-catalogue/summary-policy-makers-global-assessment-laid-out>

IPCC: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/>

UNEP: <https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

CBD and WHO on One Health: <https://www.cbd.int/health/SOK-biodiversity-en.pdf>