



# Religion & Innovation

Gearing up for the AI Revolution

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

January 2020



## Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b>	5
1. <b>The Challenge</b>	9
2. <b>The Vision</b>	13
3. <b>The Mission</b>	15
4. <b>The Model</b>	19
5. <b>The Strategy</b>	21
6. <b>The Strategic Lines</b>	23
– SL1 - Research and Action	24
– SL2 - Communication and Dissemination	28
– SL3 - Partnerships	30
– SL4 - Human Resources	34
– SL5 - Education and Training	36
7. <b>Fields of Application</b>	39
8. <b>Project Portfolio</b>	41
<b>Annex</b>	
– Project Briefs	45



## Introduction

### Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK)

Born in 1962 as the Trentino Institute of Culture and converted in 2007 into a private foundation co-financed by the Autonomous Province of Trento, the Fondazione Bruno Kessler consists of 5 research Centers employing 400+ researchers.

Qualified personnel offers administrative and research support and a specialized library and 5 laboratories provide the staff with the necessary tools to achieve scientific excellence via an interdisciplinary effort.

FBK's overarching goal for 2019-2027 is to research and test a model of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which does not replace human beings, but rather collaborates with them. The focus of its research and action is thus on scientific and technological innovation, as well as social and cultural innovation.

Particular attention is dedicated to issues such as Internet of the future, cyber security, quantum technology, sensors, data science, and cognitive computing.

Website: <https://www.fbk.eu/en/>

---

**400+** Researchers  
**5** Centers

---

### The Center for Religious Studies (ISR)

The Center for Religious Studies at the Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK) is a non-faith based institution with over 40 years' experience in innovative, international, and interdisciplinary research on religion, belief, spirituality and socio-cultural issues. As one of 5 centers within FBK, the Center for Religious Studies is committed to advancing our understanding of the religious, anthropological, philosophical, social, political and legal implications of the digital revolution and AI, whilst also researching and promoting social and cultural innovation. While instrumental to the advancement of FBK's overall strategy, the ISR has the freedom and independence to set its very own priorities in a rapidly-changing world. Its marked sensitivity to cultural, religious and other intersecting diversities predisposes the Center for interaction with a wide array of different actors, from non-profits to for-profits, international organizations, religious communities, migrant communities and more. The Center's collaboration with businesses is in line with FBK's commitment to sustaining research and innovation projects that can spur social, economic and cultural growth at the local, national and international levels. The ISR measures its success as an organization based on its ability to reach and surpass the objectives set out in its Strategic Plan, broadly defined in terms of social impact, cutting-edge research, organizational growth, reputation, effective communication and educational reach.

## The process leading to this Strategic Plan

The preparation of this document began in November 2018. The document draws on FBK-ISR's Strategic Plan for 2016-2018, and FBK's 2018-2027 Strategic Plan for AI.

---

### 2018-2027

#### FBK's Strategic Plan for AI

### 2019-2021

#### FBK-ISR's Strategic Plan "Religion and Innovation: Gearing up for the AI Revolution"

---

The preparation of this plan has benefited from the following presentations and discussions of our 2019 Position Paper on Religion and Innovation:

New York	United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development (February 2019)
Uppsala	Meeting with Directors of Religious Studies Centers, Impact Project (April 2019)
Abu Dhabi	Ministry of Tolerance (May 2019)
Trent	School of International Studies, University of Trento (May 2019)
Erfurt	Max Weber Kolleg, Universität Erfurt (May-July 2019)
Münster	Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" (June 2019)
Tokyo	G20 Interfaith Forum (June 2019)
Cambridge	The Woolf Institute (June 2019)
Istanbul	Turkey in Horizon 2020 Conference (July 2019)
Bochum	Center for Religious Studies, Universität Bochum (July 2019)
Barcelona	Observatorio Blanquerna de Comunicación, Religión y Cultura (September 2019)
Rome	Workshop with Italian anthropologists, Sapienza University (September 2019)
Washington DC	Kennedy Institute of Ethics and Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics, Georgetown University (November 2019)

The process has also involved:

- Pecha Kucha presentations delivered by individual researchers at the Center
- Focus groups on religion and innovation among ISR researchers
- SWOT exercise
- Individual meetings with: Alessandro Bozzoli, Paul Chippendale, Alessandro Cimatti, Alessandro Dalla Torre, Staffan De Mistura, Nicola Frizzera, Alessandro Girardi, Hans Joas, Andrea Bonaccorsi, Andrea Simoni, Azza Karam, Bernardo Magnini, Brian Grim, Bruno Caprile, Claudia Dolci, Elio Salvadori, Gianluigi Casse, Marco Pistore, Melissa Nozell, Oscar Mayora, Paolo Traverso, Silvio Ranise, Hartmuth Rosa and Sandro Trento.

The conclusion and adoption of the Center’s strategic plan 2019-2021 complement and complete the process of organizational innovation whose preceding steps have been the 2019 Position paper “Religion and Innovation: Calibrating Research Approaches and Suggesting Strategies for a Fruitful Interaction” (February 2019) and the 2019 Booklet “Religion and Innovation at FBK” (July 2019). The three documents taken together provide insight into what the Center for Religious Studies is today and into what it strives to be in the future. They form a unity.

---

**3 Key documents articulating our vision, mission and model:**

- **2019 Position Paper**
  - **2019 Booklet**
  - **Strategic Plan 2019-2021**
-





# 1. The Challenge

## The AI Revolution in a Religiously Diverse World

### **The Salience of Religion and Belief**

It is estimated that 84% of the global population, equivalent to approximately 6.1 billion people worldwide, subscribe to a religion, a religious denomination or a community of religion or belief. Religion and religions remain extremely relevant in this day and age. At the same time, the increased popularity of novel forms of spirituality has also led to a partial retreat of traditional religions and reshaped the religious landscape of the Western world and beyond.

### **Spirituality, Technology and Globalization**

Socio-cultural shifts in religiosity and spirituality and in the broader dimension of human convictions and values intertwine with technological advances and globalization. Although the latter have problematized the concept and nature of religion, they have also bred novel IT tools and communication strategies, that are currently being employed by numerous religious actors to expand their reach. Spirituality and globalization mutually influence each other and alongside political, technological and economic factors, morph the constantly evolving cultural milieu that we live in. A noteworthy phenomenon contributing to this constant metamorphosis is migration.

### **Religious Diversity**

Three dimensions of religious diversity can be discerned. First, the diversity of religion or belief, as well as of religious traditions, groups or communities, which makes the world religiously diverse (inter-religious diversity). Second, the diversity between those who declare themselves as religious and those who claim they are not, which implies diversity between religious and secular worldviews and practices (diversity between religion and nonreligion). Oftentimes, this divide is blurred, as a result of nascent forms of spirituality and the emergence of implicit religious beliefs and secular religions. Finally, there is intra-religious diversity: religions, religious denominations and religion or belief communities are in fact deeply heterogeneous, due to the flourishing of a plurality of individual/collective beliefs and practices. Within traditional religions, minorities and individuals are pushing for innovation and renovation, often in the hope of reasserting tradition and traditions. This threefold religious diversity raises two fundamental questions. How can one explore the new frontiers of the religious phenomenon? How can one translate this exploration into innovative thoughts and actions that contribute to a cohesive and inclusive society, while fostering economic and social growth?

### **Religious Diversity and Change**

Since religious diversity is above all to be understood in terms of change – people who convert (change their religion or belief), religions that change, societies changing their relationship between the religious and the secular – innovation and growth must necessarily constitute our ultimate horizon. Religious diversity is a source of conflict and violence, but it is also a resource for social cohesion and innovation against the backdrop of sustainable development.

## **Religious Diversity and AI**

AI adds a layer of complexity to these reflections. Can we envisage AI acting as a vehicle for religious diversity? Or will it stifle it? Will AI breed new religions or annihilate old ones? Conversely, will religion have an impact on AI, and if so, how and to what extent? At the present stage of AI development, answers to these questions have to take the form of working hypotheses. They also have to be relativized to different geographical contexts, not least due to the pronounced digital divide between the Global North and the Global South. The proactive approach to these challenges advocated by our Center involves questioning the kinds of values that we wish to imbue in present and future AI and cultivating dialogue among faith-based and secular actors holding diverse values on the matter.

## **The Interlocking Challenges of AI**

The challenge of the AI revolution in a religiously diverse world goes well beyond its foreseeable impact on religion or belief communities. Day by day, previously inconceivable technological advances are gradually transforming the world as we know it. The ‘Society of Artificial Intelligence’ is a scenario in which AI is, on the one hand, an increasing component of social and economic life and, on the other, a cultural approach producing a collective imagination about tech-based progress and its promises and threats for humankind. The best way to understand the ‘Society of Artificial Intelligence’, whether we regard its advent as imminent or not, is to view it as a challenge, or rather as a chain of interlocking challenges. These include unprecedented modes of automation with reverberations on daily life and the labor market; privacy issues arising from storage of big data for profit; biased algorithms designed to collect sensitive data; new forms of social injustice favored by the unequal distribution of skills dictated by novel technologies; shifts in modes of communication and social interaction; prediction tools disproportionately impacting minorities and individuals; and much more.

## **The Opportunities of AI**

On the flip side of the coin, are the numerous opportunities spawned by AI developments. A case in point is the string of AI-based solutions that are currently being tested to prevent crime, debunk stereotypes, enhance inclusion, reduce the risks of violent extremism, promote sustainability and much more. Today, we talk of AI’s potential to ensure access to healthcare in remote areas of the world, diagnose illnesses faster and more effectively and provide support to survivors of violence. The future of AI holds unlimited applications and our wariness of its entrenched risks should be balanced with a healthy appetite for change, a sense of curiosity and even excitement.

## **The Nature of AI**

In thinking critically about AI, we should also come to terms with a set of questions concerning the very nature of Artificial Intelligence. On the one hand, by calling the intelligence embedded in new technologies ‘artificial’, we allude to its man-made quality and non-naturalness. On the other hand, ‘intelligence’ is generally considered a paradigmatically human capacity. Our very identity as a species revolves around the social acknowledgment that humans are endowed with a ‘brand’ of intelligence which is unparalleled in the animal world. There is a sense, therefore, that by creating a highly efficient non-human form of intelligence one may deprive mankind of agency, freedom and responsibility.

## **Creativity and Values**

The paradox is self-evident: an act of utmost human creativity could potentially deny human beings of some of their most treasured assets. This tension between the thirst for empowerment and the threat of losing control, riddles the human imagination and calls for collaborative action by the humanities, the social sciences and AI experts to clarify the validity of such fears and the feasibility and limits of the much-coveted empowerment. Undergirding this endeavor are fundamental questions of moral, religious or spiritual innovation – for instance, are newly-articulated values needed in order to achieve empowerment?

## **Anticipating the Challenge**

As we witness the digital transformation picking up pace and disrupting all areas of life – thus challenging the organization and content of research in religion and belief, the social sciences and more – these questions become all the more relevant. Based on this understanding of the challenge, rather than merely adopting a reactive stance, our Center takes a proactive approach to change: we intend to join forces with like-minded partners to adequately anticipate it.

---

## **Our understanding of AI**

*We view AI as any outcome of research and action in “that branch of computer science that studies the properties of intelligence by synthesizing intelligence” (Stanford University, 2016)*

---



## 2. The Vision

### Inclusive Dialogue and Concerted Action for Value/s-Based Sustainable Innovation

#### Religion or Belief Communities for Sustainable Development

The relentless pace of scientific and technological progress has led many to predict a secularized and disenchanting future, in which religions will progressively retreat to the private sphere and subjective beliefs will be replaced by objective evidence. Yet communities of faith or belief and individual believers continue to occupy a critical space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They promote and sustain social development programs worldwide and are key interlocutors in the momentous dialogue on the Sustainable Development Goals, alongside an array of secular actors<sup>11</sup>. They also contribute comprehensive views of the world and eternity which go beyond the limited human horizon of development and may thus contribute to balancing and calibrating short-, mid- and long-term decisions and actions which are potentially irreversible.

#### Normative Commitments to Innovation

The reassessment of the nature and scope of religion or belief actors' agency goes along with broader questions concerning the goals and values that are guiding current socio-cultural and scientific/technological innovation. Innovation processes are always oriented by an implicit or explicit commitment to a set of normative beliefs, a worldview, or a value system. Such normative commitments have their roots in ethical, aesthetical, political and religious traditions of thought, practice, belief, spirituality and faith. In all realms, including in the world of technology, these commitments have indisputable reverberations on the ultimate scope of systems and products, the inclusiveness of the processes through which they are built, the methods they employ, and ultimately, the lives of people and communities.

#### Value/s-based Innovation

The question of how, and in what kind of society, we want to live is crucial to debates over the possible directions of technological innovation processes. Focusing on innovation in AI, the central value-question becomes: which values should be safeguarded and promoted in technological development (e.g., research integrity, responsibility), the production, commercialization and employment of the relevant technologies (e.g., human rights, environmental sustainability), and within the developed technologies themselves (e.g., freedom of expression, transparency, data security and safety, reversibility of decisions)? Pluralistic societies are characterized by value diversity and value disagreement. Regarding AI, diverse normative frameworks and interests compete for acceptance, giving rise to diverging claims and complex debates about the constraints, if any, to place on AI-related technological innovation<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/ethics-guidelines-trustworthy-ai>

## Religion as a Source of Agency

With its multidisciplinary expertise in the fields of religious studies, philosophy, theology, sociology, anthropology and legal studies, the FBK-ISR team is particularly well-placed to shed light on these complex debates and contribute to FBK's strategic commitment to human-centric AI technologies. We aim to explore religion as a source of agency that can potentially contribute to triggering and shaping innovation processes, and reconceptualize the agency of religious actors in AI-related debates and policy-making: rather than seeing them as posing limitations on what others (scientists, technology-developers, industries etc.) do or want to do, we view them as having the potential to negotiate the direction of innovation processes.

## Constructive Collaboration

While advocating for the inclusion of communities of faith or belief at different levels of decision-making, we remain alert to the risk of yielding "transactional relationships". Engagement efforts should never result in the commodification of faith and belief to serve predetermined agendas<sup>3</sup>. Rather, they should be based on respect for human rights and a genuine conviction in the added value of inclusion and self-reflection. We believe in dialogue, concerted action and constructive collaboration, and this is reflected in all our research and action.

---

## Our understanding of Religion and Innovation

**Religion: we rely on a non-essentialist and inclusive understanding of religion, which leaves room for new forms of faith, belief and spiritualities, as well as hybridization of religious traditions and practices.**

**Innovation: we adopt a broad understanding of innovation, which includes socio-cultural and scientific/technological innovation, as well as innovation in politics and the law.**

---

More at: <https://isr.fbk.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Position-Paper.pdf>

---

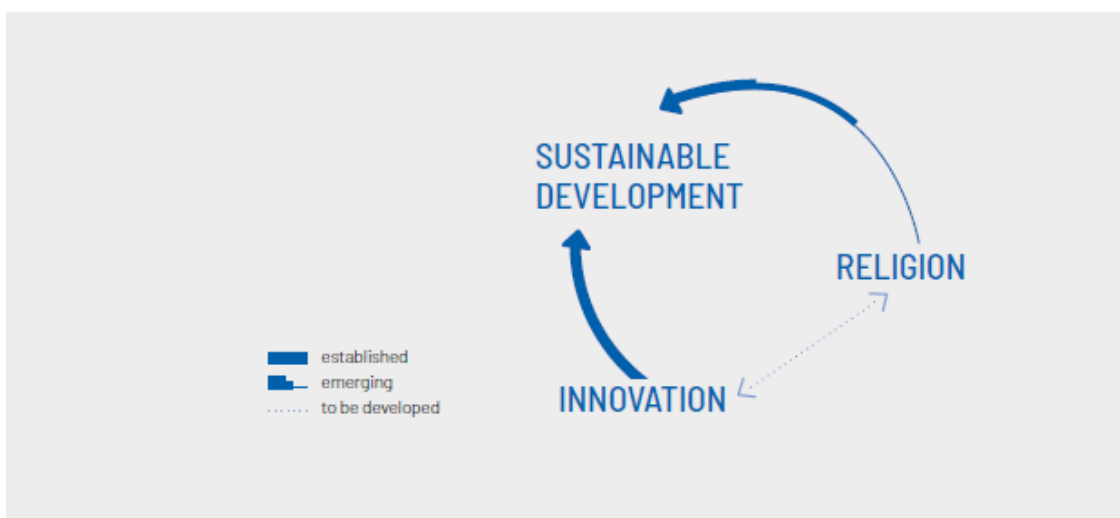
<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2019/04/religion-development-enhanced-approach-transaction/>

### 3. The Mission

#### Religion and Innovation

##### Sustainable Development, Innovation and Religion

We respond to the challenges posed by our fast-changing world with our mission on religion and innovation. In view of the established pattern of innovation for sustainable development, and the emerging trend which sees religion or belief actors engaging in sustainable development, we are committed to bridging the gap between innovation and religion in scholarship and action.



##### The Three Dimensions of Religion and Innovation

As defined in 2016 and elaborated and tested in 2016-2018, our mission consists in exploring and improving the interaction between religion and innovation in contemporary societies for the achievement of a safer, more inclusive and sustainable future. We rely on a broad understanding of innovation, inclusive of socio-cultural, scientific and technological innovation, as well as innovation in politics and the law, and on a non-essentialist, inclusive understanding of religion. We do not pursue a religious reform agenda, but balance our interest in religious approaches to innovation with our attention to the preservation of tradition and traditions. We identify three dimensions of the relationship between religion and innovation: innovation in religion, religion in innovation, religion of innovation. The value of this model is twofold: it identifies the distinct dimensions of the complex relationship between religion and innovation and emphasizes the interconnectedness and mutual influence between them.

#### INNOVATION IN RELIGION

We attempt to come to grips with the various processes by which religious communities "innovate", in particular through the interpretation of texts, theoretical reflection, the transmission and reinvention of traditions and institutional changes.

#### RELIGION IN INNOVATION

We investigate the contribution of religion in all its multifaceted manifestations, from innovation in science and technology, to social and cultural innovation and innovation in politics and the law.

#### RELIGION OF INNOVATION

We seek to explore the fideistic component of innovation, namely, innovation as faith, myth and belief.

#### The 3 dimensions of the relationship between religion and innovation



**Our Position Paper: 11 Recommendations for Research and Action on Religion and Innovation**  
Based on our 2019 Position paper, our research and action on religion and innovation hinge on **11 recommendations:**





- 1 Avoid a friend or foe approach
- 2 Take the context into account
- 3 Value diversity and freedom of religion or belief
- 4 Go beyond the "from the lab to the market" model of innovation
- 5 Value collective agency and responsibility
- 6 Pursue multi- and interdisciplinary research and combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies
- 7 Engage with innovation in politics and the law
- 8 Engage with different value systems and the ways in which they are challenged by scientific/technological novelties
- 9 Think of scientific, technological, social and cultural innovation as interrelated processes
- 10 Employ an inclusive and dialogical approach in the identification of problems and challenges
- 11 Listen carefully to opponents of innovation and opponents of religion

### Religion, Innovation & AI: Applying our Tridimensional Model

As argued in our position paper, large-scale technological innovations inevitably go hand in hand with social and cultural change. If accompanied and steered by public reflection and debate among all stakeholders, such change can fuel social, cultural, political, and legal innovation. Building on the activities of the past years, the Center's work during 2019-2021 focuses on the application of the tridimensional model in the study of religion and innovation in the AI society.

In line with this model, our action research hinges on the following areas of interaction between religion and AI:

*Religion in innovation:*

- Involvement of religious actors/stakeholders (institutions, religious leaders, communities) in public debates over AI governance (e.g., analysis of soft law initiatives)
- Value alignment: religiously grounded values and utility functions (quantifiability of religiously grounded preferences)

*Innovation in Religion:*

- Artificial Intelligence and freedom of religion or belief (case studies of digital tools, strategies and trends promoting or impeding freedom of religion or belief)
- The ways in which religions innovate with the aid of technology and their involvement in debates on AI

*Religion of Innovation:*

- The current state of AI research and development vs. non-expert perceptions of extant AI technologies (popular AI narratives and their relation to contemporary AI research and development)
- Religious imagery in AI narratives (in science communication, media, popular culture, academia, religious commitment or mere rhetoric?) and the role of AI topoi in scenarios of humanity's future(s) (transhumanism, posthumanism, techno-utopias and techno-dystopias)
- Fideistic approaches to innovation

## 4. The Model

### Autonomy as a Competitive Advantage

#### **We Value Autonomy**

FBK-ISR is based in Trento, capital of the region of Trentino and the Autonomous Province of Trento. Thanks to its special Statute, based on a 1946 bilateral agreement between Italy and Austria, the local government has a degree of autonomy in decision-making, which allows for policies and decisions to be tailored to the needs of the local community. Our geographical location acts as an enabling environment. Accordingly, “autonomy” is a core value of our Center, informing our approach and cascading through all aspects of our work. We view the autonomy of communities of faith or belief as a facilitating factor of innovation processes. At the local level, we support the development of public policies on religious diversity that uphold freedom of religion and belief.

#### **Our Glocal Vocation**

In line with our mission, we engage in interfaith/interreligious dialogue and religious diplomacy. We strive to initiate and sustain a virtuous circle of collaboration between different local realities – e.g. institutions, civil society, communities of faith or belief, research centers, the University of Trento – which can fuel knowledge-exchange and growth. Our vocation is glocal: we embrace an international outlook and combine it with close attention to the national reality and a strong desire to give back to the local community.

#### **Our Place in the Scientific Community**

While we embrace a pioneering model, we hold dear our belonging to the community of institutions and individuals working on religion in Trentino, Italy, Europe, and internationally, regardless of their strategic positioning. We balance our proneness to building alliances with our competitive spirit. Our autonomy allows us to take strategic and independent decisions about our positioning on specific issues; at the same time, we acknowledge the added value of collaboration. Its role is instrumental to knowledge-production and -sharing, as well as conducive to greater impact. As founding partners of the European Academy of Religion (see: <https://www.europeanacademyofreligion.org/euare2020>), we recognize and respect a wide variety of models and strategies. We appreciate those who still endorse a traditional model and see ourselves as complementary to them. We value those with an appetite for change and plan to partner up with them on common goals.

#### **Our Institutional and Organizational Model**

Our institutional model embodies the principle of autonomy in a broader logic of interconnectivity. The ISR is an independent center within FBK, with its very own mission, giving direction, depth and breadth to all of its activities and action. At the same time, the Center subscribes to FBK’s broader mission and strategic goals and sees itself as complementary to and dependent on other centers. We nourish a sense of belonging to FBK, and we do our best to advance FBK’s

mission and strategy through our own mission and strategy. The same principle guides the organization of human resources and research: we are aware of the risk for research units to be made of insulated individuals pursuing separate agendas; therefore we commit to building a cohesive and collaborative unit of interdependent members, variously framed within FBK organization and governance, depending on the relevant employment status, and committed to be physically present at the Center during their working hours.

### **Our Ten Guiding Principles**

Our Center's model is rooted in ten principles, guiding us towards being:

1. A Center fully integrated in FBK
2. A Center with a mission
3. An impact-based Center
4. A projects-based Center
5. A resource planning-based Center, constantly focused on adding external funding to the allowance annually received from the Province of Trento
6. An innovative Center fully integrated in the scientific community
7. A Center committed to responding to local and global issues
8. A Center systematically engaging with a range of stakeholders: public and private, profit and nonprofit, local, national, European and international
9. A Center contributing to the advancement of knowledge on religion or belief and management of religious diversity, based on the value of autonomy in self-government of political and religious communities
10. A Center committed to the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief in the context of universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated human rights.

## 5. The Strategy

### Goals, Strategic Lines, Fields of Application, Project Portfolio

#### Four Components

Our strategy articulates itself in four main components:

- FBK Strategic goals
  - FBK-ISR Strategic lines
  - FBK-ISR Fields of application
  - FBK-ISR Project portfolio
- 

#### FBK's Strategic Goals for a Sustainable Future

Our research and action align within FBK's strategic framework and with the Foundation's strategic goals:

- **Cybersecurity**
  - **Digital society**
  - **Health & wellbeing**
  - **Smart industry**
- 

#### Strategic Goal 1 – Cybersecurity

Enhancing cybersecurity entails developing IT solutions that can prevent and protect systems, devices, programs, organizations and ultimately, individuals from cyber-attacks. FBK develops cybersecurity solutions for digital identity management, cloud and IoT, risk assessment, and automated assistants for actionable security. It does so by combining a range of methodologies - from automated reasoning and model checking to qualitative and quantitative risk analysis - and incorporates approaches spanning multiple disciplines, such as economics, social sciences, humanities and law. The cornerstones of FBK's cybersecurity strategy are user-friendliness, respect for human rights, compliance and efficacy.

#### Strategic Goal 2 – Digital Society

Digital technologies play an ever growing role in all aspects of human life. This is apparent in the mishmash of cultural, behavioral, organizational, social, creative and managerial shifts, which fall under the umbrella of "digital transformation". The prime challenge is for this transformation to yield a more inclusive, safe and sustainable society in a social, environmental, economic and technological sense. On this view, FBK's "digital society" strategic goal is to develop high-level research, digital platforms and tools to face the key challenges posed by our digital societies in-the-making, particularly in the areas of: smart cities, mobility, inclusive societies, digital finance, education and transformation.

### **Strategic Goal 3 – Health & Wellbeing**

Nowadays, healthcare provision is undergoing a tremendous re-definition motivated by changes in demographics and resource limitations imposed by National Healthcare Systems. In this context, opportunities to enhance prevention, treatment management and patient empowerment through digital solutions are of utmost importance. Research and innovation in the field of ehealth and medical informatics is the core concern of FBK's electronic-Health Research Unit (eHealth). The latter is an interdisciplinary research group that studies methods and models for user centric design, implementation and evaluation of prototypic applications and ICT-based innovative services supporting the management of data, information and knowledge in the healthcare domain. A special focus of the Unit's research are eHealth applications and services supporting a model of care centered on citizens and patients (Patient-centered eHealth), as well as models and applications aimed for healthcare professionals (Clinical e-Health) to promote a high quality care process.

### **Strategic Goal 4 – Smart Industry**

Pursuing this goal, FBK aims to address the challenges posed by industry in the digital age with regard to industrial systems of various kinds: critical systems, adaptive and autonomous systems, systems for advanced perception, diagnosis and prediction systems. There are many previous and ongoing experiences in various application areas, such as railway, avionics, space, control of production, petroleum, automotive, robotics and process automation. More recently, thanks to the opportunities arising from specific commercial projects, the issue of digitization of the agrifood sector and, more specifically, the issue of applications of digital technologies for precision agriculture has also been addressed thanks to FBK's vertical competences in various transversal technological areas, which allow the application also in other sectors (e.g. archaeology, smart cities, cultural heritage, medical imaging, social experience)..

### **FBK's Scientific Committee**

As a fully integrated center within FBK, we rely on FBK's Scientific Committee as the reference for assessment and evaluation. Further information on the Scientific Committee can be found at this link: <https://trasparenza.fbk.eu/Organizzazione/Titolari-di-incarichi-politici-di-amministrazione-di-direzione-o-di-governo/Comitato-Scientifico> (Italian only).

### **Research Assessment**

Research Assessment (RA) is a key concern for FBK. The RA Unit's aims include: collecting all data pertaining to FBK research outputs; ensuring their quality, reliability, timeliness; contributing to the design, development and implementation of processes based on the evaluation of research; coordinating the participation of FBK in national research evaluation exercises; monitoring the evolution of research evaluation models, methods and tools; communicating the values and merits of research assessment; and strengthening connections with other dimensions of evaluation.

More at: <https://researchassessment.fbk.eu/>

## 6. FBK-ISR's Strategic Lines

### Five Strategic Lines

A key component of our strategy are our five strategic lines. For each line we identify the related goals, objectives and impact that we strive to achieve. We rely on several key indicators to guide us in our journey and help us measure our success. Each indicator is associated with its respective target. At the end of 2021, indicators will be utilized for a general assessment of this Strategic Plan, which will serve to highlight which targets have been met and which have not. This evaluation will be accompanied by a qualitative analysis, offering richer detail on the achievements and challenges faced during the three years. The outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative assessments will help us to better determine our post 2021 objectives.

---

### 5 Strategic Lines

**Strategic Line 1: Research and Action**

**Strategic Line 2: Communication and Dissemination**

**Strategic Line 3: Partnerships**

**Strategic Line 4: Human Resources**

**Strategic Line 5: Education and Training**

---

## SL1 –Research and Action

### **Our Goal: Create a Positive Impact on Individuals, Faith or Belief Communities and Societies**

Our research is geared towards making an impact. Through our work we not only contribute to building knowledge about relevant global issues, but we also constantly strive to transfer our research findings to broader society. In the years to come, we plan to capitalize on our past achievements and intensify our efforts towards developing and implementing cutting-edge research.

#### *Needs-Based Research*

As FBK-ISR researchers, we aim to be active, pro-active and involved in shaping the world that we live in. This entails becoming more attuned to the needs of individuals and communities and engaging in dialogue with a variety of actors, from faith leaders, to non-profits, for profits, local and national government representatives, academia and more. In this exchange of experiences, views and know-how, we see the potential for novel multi-level, integrated and inter-sectoral collaboration to collectively address the challenges of today and tomorrow. Our strategy is to invest in research stemming from dialogue on concrete needs, and fuel creative anticipation of future developments, which can reach policy-makers and key stakeholders and benefit all groups within society.

#### *Interdisciplinary Research*

We prioritize interdisciplinary research, which connects religious studies to scholarship in the humanities, social sciences and science and technology. This collaboration starts from joining forces with researchers within other centers at FKB to promote human-centric technology and AI. We understand interdisciplinarity as ‘seeking the integration of tools, methods and theories from various disciplines to answer a question, solve a problem, or address a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession. What is being integrated are the insights produced by the disciplines on a specific topic and not the disciplines themselves. In practice, researchers work together based on – and between – their disciplinary perspectives on a shared research topic, and in a coordinated and interactive fashion’. (Wernli & Darbellay, 2016).

#### *A Plethora of Skills*

The ISR fosters an open and collaborative environment where researchers take concerted initiative in seeking novel partnerships, cultivating existing ones and pursuing opportunities to fund further research and action. In practical terms, this means drafting project applications, taking charge of the development and implementation of projects, work packages, trainings and courses, and building alliances with relevant stakeholders. At the same time, FBK-ISR researchers continue to act as key interlocutors within the scientific community, participating in seminars, lectures and conferences, and producing high quality publications. While this commitment requires both dedication and diverse professional skills, it also empowers FBK-ISR researchers to be active players and change-makers in the local, national and international scenarios.



### *Cross-Cutting Competencies*

While our general contribution to FBK's work is based on our expertise on value and values (please refer to our vision above), our competencies include:

- Qualitative research
- Experiential education
- Conceptual analysis
- Debate analysis
- Qualitative impact assessment

### *A Wide Range of Disciplines*

Our researchers hail primarily from religious studies, philosophy, theology and sociology. In our projects, we collaborate with experts in the fields of anthropology, political science, legal studies, semiotics, psychology, economics, business and finance. Our collaboration with FBK-ISIG provides a strong partnership with historians and historians of religion in particular. Our partnership with the FBK' Center for Information and Communication Technology (FBK-ICT) allows us to interact regularly with ICT researchers.

### *Our Project-Based Approach*

Based on our guiding principle number 4 (see above), research and action are organized according to a project-based approach. We consider as project any series of actions and activities which:

- falls under a sound conceptual umbrella
- is actionable
- has a measurable impact (social and/or scientific)

### *Our 10-Steps Guide to Conceiving and Developing (Action) Research Projects*

The conceptualization and development of projects is guided by the following 10 steps:

1. Start from needs and gaps in the economy of the advancement of our mission and the development of this strategic plan
2. Develop a multi-year roadmap for high-level research (individual, collaborative or participatory)
3. Build partnerships with renowned research centers, universities, businesses, international NGOs and other civil society actors
4. Develop a business and sustainability plan
5. Devise a communications strategy
6. Embed impact assessments in research design
7. Organize seminars, conferences and events attracting international experts in the field
8. Publish books, monographs, chapters or articles in reputable international journals
9. Utilize the outcomes of impact assessments to identify pitfalls and build on achievements in future initiatives
10. Think big: aim to achieve more than initially planned.

### *Our Objectives for 2019-2021*

- 🌀 Consolidate our project-based approach to research and action
- 🌀 Engage in ongoing dialogue and collaboration with faith-based and secular organizations, communities and individuals at various steps of the research process
- 🌀 Assess ongoing projects and ensure their sustainability
- 🌀 Plan and conduct novel research through new projects that can address current gaps and needs

### *How we Pursue our Objectives*

- Regularly meeting with key stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, civil society actors, community leaders) to discuss needs, gaps and opportunities
- Developing projects which envisage the direct and indirect involvement of communities in research design, implementation and evaluation
- Building a shared repository of project opportunities for internal use
- Assessing the success rate of past project proposals
- Strengthening existing project-based partnerships
- Finding a healthy balance between leading and partnering up on projects
- Capitalizing on project outputs through publications, conference papers and other
- Developing interdisciplinary alliances for project proposals, aimed at dealing with relevant gaps and needs
- Making use of innovative research methodologies, including visual methodologies
- Consolidating inter-center partnerships within and outside FBK.

### *Our Landmarks*

The development of our research and action will include the following three steps.

- The AIR2020 conference on AI and religion (March 2020)
- A workshop series on Religion and Innovation for AI (May 2020 – November 2020)
- A paper on Religion and Innovation for AI (by November 2021)



For further information on the AIR2020 Conference see: <https://isr.fbk.eu/en/events/detail/17596/artificial-intelligence-and-religion-air2020-2020/>

*Our Indicators*<sup>4</sup>

	Target
Meetings with key stakeholders	20 meetings
(Action) research collaborations stemming from meetings	at least 5 projects
Project proposals submitted	20 proposals
Papers in conference proceedings	20 publications
Articles published in peer-reviewed journals	20 publications
Projects employing a mixed-methods and innovative approaches	5 projects
Projects ending in 2019-2021 which secure funding for phase 2/3 by 2021	at least 2 projects
Project proposals submitted in 2019-2021 involving community leaders/members of religious communities/civil society in project design, implementation or evaluation	at least 50%
Project proposals jointly developed and submitted with at least one other FBK center	30% of total project proposals submitted in 2019-2021
External funding secured in 2020	10% of the budget from the Province of Trento / AdP
External funding secured in 2021	20% of the budget from the Province of Trento / AdP
Positive evaluation on project proposals submitted in 2019-2021 (despite funding not being obtained)	60%
Projects involving impact assessments	30%
Successful project proposals submitted in 2019-2021	15%

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, here and below all numbers and percentages refer to the three-year period of 2019-2021.

## SL2 – Communication and Dissemination

### *Our Goal: Communicate and Disseminate our Vision on Religion and Innovation*

Effective communication is conducive to greater impact. ISR researchers rely on various tools to communicate their research, including (but not limited to) seminars and conferences, public meetings and events. Alongside the Digital Communication and Big Events team at FBK, they create podcasts and videos, and participate in recordings for FBK's radio channel. Events are promoted via the ISR Website and the Center's mailing list, available both in English and Italian. As per our internal Communication Guidelines, researchers themselves take initiative in promoting their activities and creating content for wider dissemination.

### *Closer to the Public*

Our strategy, in line with FBK's broader approach, is to bring research closer to the people, establishing channels for fruitful interaction with the public. In 2019-2021 we plan to intensify our communication and dissemination efforts by bolstering our online presence and participating in a range of public events.

### *Our Objectives for 2019-2021*

- 🌀 Seek novel channels to divulge the ISR's vision on religion and innovation
- 🌀 Improve our online communication
- 🌀 Make research outputs accessible to the public
- 🌀 Create opportunities for researchers working in ICT and the humanities to meet and share ideas and research findings.

### *How we Pursue our Objectives*

- Regularly participating in conferences, meetings and community gatherings at the local, national and international levels
- Relying on innovative methodologies to communicate research to diverse audiences, whenever possible, through collaboration with FBK's Digital Communications and Big Events Team, in particular through videos
- Consolidating and improving our announcement strategy via email and the website
- Organizing public events and publishing press releases on key international days
- Organizing regular informal meetings bringing together researchers from the humanities and ICT to share their ideas and project outputs
- Co-organizing public events alongside other FBK centers
- Making our research more accessible via our website.

### *Our Landmarks*

Corresponding to the development of research and action, our communication and dissemination will be developed through the same main steps.

- The AIR2020 conference on AI and religion (March 2020)

- A workshop series on Religion and Innovation for AI (May 2020 – November 2020)
- A paper on Religion and Innovation for AI (by November 2021)



For further information on the AIR2020 Conference see: <https://isr.fbk.eu/en/events/detail/17596/artificial-intelligence-and-religion-air2020-2020/>

#### *Our Indicators*

	Target
Presentations delivered at large public meetings/events	10
Presentations delivered at academic conferences	30
Blog articles written	10
Videos produced	9
Academic/public events organized	25
Press releases published	10
Events co-organized with researchers from other FBK centres	30% of total events organized in 2019-2021

## SL3 – Partnerships

### ***Our Goal: Create and Consolidate Strategic Partnerships with Academia, Non-Profits, For-Profits and Other Entities***

As an organization founded on inclusive dialogue and knowledge-exchange, we deeply value intersectoral, cross-sectoral and multi-level partnerships. We view collaboration with our partners as a unique opportunity for organizational growth and professional development for individual researchers. We nourish our local partnerships in Trentino, as well as our national and international connections. Both within and outside Fondazione Bruno Kessler, our policy regarding partnerships and collaborations is based on the conviction that joint projects should always be centered around shared research and innovation goals, as well as constant interaction. We thus reject models of collaboration and partnership where the role of any party is restricted to that of a replaceable service provider. We seek partners who share our vision on religion and innovation and take initiative in securing financial and non-financial resources in support of joint research and action.

### *From Europe and the Transatlantic Cooperation, to the MENA and OSCE Region, the UN and the Global South*

Our intention for 2019-2021 is to consolidate existing partnerships and forge novel ones in Europe, across the Atlantic and beyond, starting from our leading role in the European Academy of Religion. Thanks to our cooperation with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, we wish to establish fruitful channels for dialogue with the Global South, where the activities and action of numerous organizations and individuals are testament to the fruitful relationship between religion and innovation for sustainable development. We will also continue our productive conversation with the OSCE, in particular through the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, of which our Director is a member. Finally, our partnership policy intends to include various forms of interaction with the EU's action, in the internal dialogue under art. 17 by "The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union" (TFEU), as well as in its external action, in particular in the transatlantic cooperation with the USA and Canada, and with countries in the MENA region. We acknowledge the dimension of business and finance as crucial to the pursuit of our mission on religion and innovation in the context of the AI revolution. We plan to intensify our work with actors operating in the field of religion and business and seek novel partners.

### *Our Partners*

#### Around the world

- Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almati
- Blanquerna Observatory of Communication, Religion, and Culture Ramon Llull University, Barcelona
- Brigham Young University, Provo
- Centre national de la recherche scientifique Alsace, Strasbourg
- Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton
- Erasmus University Rotterdam
- Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
- Georgetown University, Washington DC

- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
- Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Wien
- Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Québec
- Pushkin Leningrad State University, St. Petersburg
- Ruhr-Universität Bochum
- The Woolf Institute, Cambridge
- Universität Erfurt
- Universität Innsbruck
- Universität Wien
- Université catholique de Lille
- Université de Luxembourg
- Université de Strasbourg
- Universiteit Antwerpen
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- University of Exeter
- University of Helsinki
- University of Illinois
- University of Roehampton, London
- Uppsala University

#### In Italy

- Amnesty International Italia
- Centro Studi Confronti, Roma
- Eurac Research, Bolzano/Bozen
- European Academy of Religion, Bologna
- Festival dei Diritti Umani, Milano
- Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, Roma
- Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII, Bologna
- Forum per i problemi della pace e della guerra, Firenze
- Reset Dialogues on Civilizations
- Rete Dialogues MIUR
- Sapienza Università, Roma
- Save the Children Italia
- School of Advance Studies for Interreligious and International Dialogue, Firenze
- Ufficio nazionale antidiscriminazioni razziali, Roma
- Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia
- Università di Padova
- Università di Siena

- Università Tor Vergata, Roma
- Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milano

#### In Trentino

- Arcidiocesi di Trento
- Azienda Provinciale per i Servizi Sanitari, Trento
- Centro per la Cooperazione Internazionale, Trento
- Fondazione Franco Demarchi, Trento
- Istituto provinciale per la ricerca e la sperimentazione educativa, Trento
- Museo delle Scienze di Trento
- Ordine dei Medici, Chirurghi e Odontoiatri della Provincia Autonoma di Trento
- Religion Today Film Festival, Trento
- Trento Film Festival
- Università di Trento

#### *Objectives for 2019-2021*

- 🌀 Identify and join existing networks working on issues considered pivotal to the Center's research and action
- 🌀 Invest in assessing and formalizing ongoing partnerships
- 🌀 Spearhead multi-level and multi-agency partnerships
- 🌀 Engage with the Global South as a key interlocutor in the area of religion and innovation for sustainable development
- 🌀 Enhance our role in the transatlantic alliance for freedom of religion or belief
- 🌀 Strengthen our cooperation with the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development

#### *How we Pursue our Objectives*

- Making contact with existing networks active locally, nationally and internationally in crucial areas of interest to the Center
- Signing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with key organizations for the purpose of ongoing collaboration
- Promoting the creation of novel partnerships bringing together policy-makers, religious leaders, community leaders, NGOs and more
- Establishing partnerships with faith-based organizations, NGOs, communities and individuals in the Global South (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean)
- Consolidating our collaboration with the OSCE and other EU institutions
- Building and/or strengthening transatlantic partnerships
- Engaging with actors in the MENA region



*Our Indicators*

	Target
Partner databases created	1
Roadmap of new networks	1
MOUs signed	3
Novel networks created	1
New partnerships launched, involving projects/initiatives in the Global South and/or the MENA region	3
Visiting researchers from partner institutions	15
Visits by FBK-ISR researchers to partner institutions	9
Joint events organized with partners	9
Partnerships for which FBK-ISR researchers have provided a written document (assessment of existing or prospective partnership; proposal of development; etc.)	30% of the list above
New partners	+ 10% of the list above

## SL4 – Human Resources

### ***Our Goal: Invest in a Cohesive Team for Talent Development and Acquisition***

Human capital is our greatest asset. We see sense of belonging to FBK, commitment to the advancement of our mission and strategy and team-building as key to our success. We offer long-term and short-term researchers opportunities for personal and professional growth in the form of trainings via FBK's Academy, job shadowing, participation in conferences and more. Researchers themselves are encouraged to seek out opportunities for skills development and discuss them with the Center's Director. Long-term researchers set their very own personal and professional goals and milestones, supported by the Director and the HR Department. Moreover, employees can access FBK's mobility program, which funds work exchanges with external Institutions for the purpose of knowledge-building and networking. Each team member can and should make their unique contribution to the Center's work, while improving their know-how in the process. Over the past three years, we have welcomed 200+ experts and visiting scholars to take part in workshops, conferences, research meetings, roundtables and more.

### *Investing in Human Resources*

In 2019 and 2021, we will continue to invest in human resources in a variety of ways. Our researchers' growth and their collaboration within the Center, FBK and with external actors are instrumental in pursuing our mission. The Center strives to retain talented researchers and seeks to attract novel and diverse talents hailing from disciplines such as economics, business and finance, semiotics, psychology, legal studies, social sciences, humanities and more. Moreover, it wishes to increase the diversity of its workforce, welcoming international professionals to the team.

### *Objectives for 2019-2021*

- 🌀 Consolidate the current budget devoted to HR (90% of total Center budget)
- 🌀 Increase budget devoted to HR from external funding
- 🌀 Support the professional development of employees in key strategic areas
- 🌀 Attract new and diverse talents
- 🌀 Foster team-building and creative thinking
- 🌀 Increase the ISR's bonus scheme (Premialità)
- 🌀 Optimize our staff development scheme (Ruoli e Percorsi)

### *How we Pursue our Objectives*

- Investing in developing the Center's partnership with FBK's HR Department
- Organizing internal workshops on project management in collaboration with FBK staff
- Encouraging job shadowing within FBK or outside the organization (whenever possible) for employees wishing to develop skills of interest in the economy of the Center's development
- Developing researchers' skills in research methodologies (e.g. visual methodologies; data-driven social research; quantitative research) through participation in courses and trainings
- Supporting staff wishing to partake in FBK's "mobility program"

- Securing work exchanges for staff via Erasmus + mobility schemes
- Promoting discussion on the creation of novel courses and training opportunities via FBK Academy
- Proactively identifying key skills in demand and seeking diverse individuals to join the team
- Organizing team-building activities that can encourage team bonding and spur creative processes
- Evaluating staff performance and professional development through periodical one-to-one meetings and an end-of-year assessment (bonus)
- Defining professional development goals for new recruits

*Our Indicators*

	Target
Informal internal seminars/trainings organized	6
Formal/informal job shadowing agreements pursued	3
Targeted trainings/courses attended by employees	6
Mobility programs completed	5
Team building events organized	2
Employee evaluations conducted	1 per year per employee
Self-evaluations by employees of skills acquired in specific areas and outstanding needs	1 per year per employee
Employees attending trainings/courses	50%
Contracted researchers	+10% by comparison with 2016-2018
Number of researchers accessing the mobility program in 2019-21	+10% by comparison with 2016-2018
The Center's budget for 2019 devoted to HR	+10% by comparison with 2018
The Center's budget for 2020 devoted to HR	+10% by comparison with 2019
The Center's budget for 2021 devoted to HR	+10% by comparison with 2019

**Our guiding policy documents:**

- Communications policy
- Bonus policy
- Percorsi e ruoli
- Visiting scholars policy

## SL5 – Education and Training

### ***Our Goal: Promote Education on Religious Diversity, Religious Freedom, Religion and Innovation***

Education is the bedrock of development inside our Center and within society at large. Internally, education takes the form of FBK's international PhD program – run in collaboration with top universities worldwide – which supports talented researchers who wish to conduct their PhD studies at the Foundation. Education is also a tool to project the outcomes of our (action) research outside the walls of our organization and give back to the community.

Many of our projects envisage educational activities, whether it is trainings for professionals, workshops with teenagers, lectures or informational events. Several of our team members are affiliated to Italian or foreign universities, where they teach classes and courses and supervise students. In the years to come, we intend to consolidate and intensify our educational efforts. We seek to attract researchers with Marie Curie program scholarships or others.

### *Objectives for 2019-2021*

- 🌀 Consolidate and develop our engagement for religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief literacy in the context of the European Academy of Religion and beyond
- 🌀 Engage with digital media literacy and AI literacy in the context of anti-disinformation policies
- 🌀 Consolidate and develop our effort in the I FBK's international PhD program
- 🌀 Invest in awareness-raising among youth
- 🌀 Strengthen the working relationship between the ISR and the FBK' Research and Innovation for Schools Unit
- 🌀 Create and sustain collaborations on the points above with academic institutions in Italy and abroad

### *How we Pursue our Objectives*

- Attracting candidates for the FBK's International PhD program
- Conducting targeted trainings and workshops and developing webinars in the context of projects or ad hoc collaborations
- Developing joint initiatives addressed at students at various levels of the education system
- Engaging in dialogue with academic partners for the purpose of joint PhD programs
- Organizing youth camps in collaboration with the FBK' Research and Innovation for Schools Unit Junior
- Defining with FBK-ICT a PhD program tailored to the Center's needs and able to attract prestigious universities and candidates
- Supporting Marie Curie applications

*Our Indicators*

	Target
Universities signing PhD agreements with FBK-ISR	3
New doctoral students admitted through FBK's International PhD program	2
Marie Curie applications through our call for expressions of interest	at least 2
New training courses promoted by the ISR for the FBK Academy	at least 1
Joint initiatives conducted with the FBK' Research and Innovation for Schools Unit Junior in 2019-2021	1-3
Marie Curie applications through our call for expressions of interest	+10% by comparison with 2016-2018
Activities in schools	+10% by comparison with 2016-2018



## 7. Fields of Application

### Three Fields of Application

In line with FBK's 2018-2027 Strategic Plan, the research lines for 2016-2018 converge in three fields of application for 2019-2021. The convergence of research areas and fields of application allows the Center to further develop its interdisciplinary approach and amplify its local, national and international impact. The three fields of application are:

- Inclusive and safe societies
- Ethics and rights
- Time and space mobility

#### *Inclusive and Safe Societies*

This field of application examines the manifold forms of conflict and violence worldwide, as well as the strategies employed by public and private actors to build societies that can promote, insofar as possible, safety and inclusion. While particular attention is devoted to the role of religions and religious and faith-based communities, our (action) research extends to the study of social tension, violent radicalization, cyber security, diversity and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. We explore the relationship between freedom and security through the lens of religion and innovation, pooling FBK's transversal competencies on AI technologies and on their socio-cultural and political implications. In collaboration with the FBK' Research and Innovation for Schools Unit Junior we analyze the vital role played by schools and education in strengthening inclusion.

#### *Ethics and Rights*

This field of application explores the ethical, normative and legal issues arising from the development of new technologies and the related forms of exclusion (e.g. digital) that derive from their enhanced usage in everyday society. We turn to tradition and religious innovation in an attempt to identify the seeds of a potential collaboration between human beings and machines and a human-centered dimension of new technologies. This area of application enquires into the possibility of extending rights, duties and ethical norms to machines and novel AI technology.

#### *Time and Space Mobility*

Mobility is a key interpretative tool to make sense of contemporary societies. We conceptualize mobility as a dynamic phenomenon involving both the spatial dimension (movement of people, ideas, goods, data, capital and services) and the temporal one (the acceleration or individual appropriation of time, the crafting of historical memory, the projection beyond human time, eternity and eschatology). Through research and experimentation, this field of application investigates mobility through the lens of the global and the local; religious practice in the urban and virtual space (i.e. digital religions and augmented realities); the sacred and its trajectories across time (i.e. secularism and post-secularism); and the spatio-temporary dimension of contemporary religious geopolitics.





## 8. Project Portfolio

---

### 8 Projects

#### Our Project Portfolio is Made of Eight Projects

---

##### Arguing Religion

The aim of this research project is to improve our understanding of argumentation-based responses to religious disagreements. Building on past and ongoing ISR research in the fields of secularity, post-secularity, and argumentation theory, the project addresses a range of questions about the various forms of religious disagreements and the meaning and goal of “arguing religion”.

##### Critically Connected

The project focuses on social representations and digital cultures spread among young people and on their attitudes towards diversity (be it based on religion, ethnicity, gender, disability etc.). Adopting the action-research methodology, the project particularly investigates the adolescents' approach to media content and hostile forms of communication addressed to minority groups, such as *hate speech*, and intervenes to provide them with correct information, media literacy and guided reflection on some controversial issues related to plural and inclusive societies.

##### Freedom of Religion or Belief

This project aims to study, promote and protect religious freedom and freedom of belief at the regional, national and international levels. Building on the co-production alongside the Universities of Cambridge and Luxembourg and subsequent publication of the 2017 Annual Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance, commissioned by the European Parliament Intergroup, the project aims at contributing to the activities of the European Union, the OSCE, the G20 Interfaith Forum and the European Consortium for Church and State Research. The project includes activities aimed at the production of an interactive web- based atlas mapping the rights of religious or belief minorities in Europe (Atlas of religious or belief minorities rights). The project also includes research on legal pluralism, the family, marriage, and LGBTQ+ rights, and research on religious diplomacy and policies on migrants based on the template of operation Mediterranean Hope.

##### Migrant Trajectories and Policies

The project, developed in collaboration with Save the Children Italia, is aimed at investigating the integration challenges of migrant minors of first and second/third generations. It also intends to experiment, through pilot actions, formal, informal and non-formal education solutions able to address these challenges. The study reserves a particular attention to minors' cultural

and religious background, while listening to their own voices and expectations in order to promote forms of participatory social innovation.

### **Religion and Digital Technologies**

Religions are historically mutable phenomena. They change and develop in dialogue with their social, political, economic, cultural and technological environments. In recent years, social science research on religion has provided us with a growing body of evidence that the uptake of digital technologies by communities of faith or belief and by individual believers is having an impact on how religion is practiced, organized and communicated. So far, this research has focused mainly on social media technologies and their use by religious actors. In collaboration with FBK-ICT, the goal of the action-research project “Religion and Digital Technologies” is not only to contribute to this established line of research but to extend its scope so as to cover digital technologies which have so far attracted little attention from researchers. Apart from social media and their impact on religion, the project also investigates the interactions between religion, artificial intelligence, and virtual/augmented reality technologies.

### **Religion and Violence**

The project examines the relationship between religion and violence, by looking at religion not as an independent and decontextualized variable, but as deeply interlinked with politics, society, culture, the economy and ethics. The Religion and Violence Project capitalizes on the outcomes of the two “Exiting Violence” Conferences, held in Trento in 2017 and in Washington DC in 2018, in collaboration with Reset Dialogue and Georgetown University, respectively.

### **Religion, Ethics and Medicine**

Combining theoretical exploration and action research, this project assesses the impact of patients’ ethical and religious beliefs on medical practices and realities, as well as the ways in which novel medical approaches can affect faith, religious practice and spirituality. Bio-medicine, neurosciences, and the identification of ethically-sustainable approaches and interventions that can promote the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities are core concerns of this research project. The project includes actions related to Transhumanism, enhancement, AI and neuroscience with Université catholique de Lille and Georgetown University, Languages, communication and narratives in medicine and healthcare with University Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan, the BABEL project on Balancing Best Interests in Healthcare, Ethics and Law with the Wellcom Trust and the University of Bristol, and Global Faith Based Health Systems with Georgetown University.

### **Spirituality and Lifestyles**

Spirituality is the part of the religious life that has been traditionally associated with self-cultivation and self-transformation. The research project “Spirituality and Life Styles” aims to investigate today’s innovative social practices that follow in the footsteps of those religious anthropotechnics (i.e., mental and physical exercises, special training, varieties of asceticism) which were originally meant to bring about fuller and more authentic habits and frames of mind. In line with the modern affirmation of ordinary life, the research focus is on mundane matters such as nutrition, walking, sexuality, play, etc. The project will focus in particular on nutrition (The moral of the table) and the mountain (Resonant mountains).

## Project Portfolio, ISR Fields of Application, and FBK Strategic Goals

ISR Projects	ISR Fields of Application				FBK Strategic Goals			
	Inclusive and Safe Society	Ethics and Rights	Mobility in Time and Space	Cybersecurity	Digital Society	Health and Wellbeing	Smart Industry	
Arguing Religion								
Critically Connected								
Freedom of Religion or Belief								
Migrant Trajectories and Policies								
Religion and Digital Technologies								
Religion and Violence								
Religion, Ethics and Medicine								
Spirituality and Lifestyles								

