Interview

DETECTIVE

In March 2026, the Communication & Dissemination team had the pleasure to exchange with **Xenia Schneider** from **XPRO Consulting Limited**, leader of **Work Package 2 (WP2)** of the DETECTIVE project.

WP2 focuses on stakeholder empowerment and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), ensuring that detection methods, tools, and knowledge developed within DETECTIVE are effectively taken up and sustained beyond the project's lifetime.

Xenia Schneider

Good morning, Xenia. Thank you for taking the time to exchange with us on your work in DETECTIVE. Could you introduce yourself and explain how your background supports the objectives of WP2?

Good morning! I am the founder and Director of XPRO Consulting Limited, an independent small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) based in Cyprus. XPRO specialises in Responsible Research and Innovation, or RRI for short, transition management, and the design of innovation processes with a focus on governance and end users in highly regulated sectors. XPRO works with European research consortia, public authorities, laboratories, and SMEs.

My background is multidisciplinary, combining computer science, international business strategy, organisational and change management, governance analysis, and applied experience in biotechnology and environmental innovation. I have worked in corporate environments, including the pharmaceutical and biopharma sectors, and spent several years with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, gaining direct experience in international policy coordination and multi-actor governance. Over the past decades, I have also led and contributed to numerous international research and innovation projects, coordinating complex multi-stakeholder collaborations across Europe. As an associate professor in international business strategy and leadership, I have continuously engaged with systemic change and organisational transformation.

This experience is very relevant to WP2. In DETECTIVE, it is not enough to develop strong scientific results: those results also need to be understood, taken up, and applied in practice. That means connecting technical work with governance, implementation, and stakeholder trust. This is exactly where WP2 plays a key role.

As part of this work, XPRO applies its RRI Roadmap©™, an eight-phase RRI methodology that supports stakeholder co-creation and systemic transition planning. This helps ensure that stakeholder empowerment is measurable, policy aligned, and sustainable beyond the duration of the project.

What motivated you to join the DETECTIVE project and to lead WP2?

DETECTIVE operates at a critical juncture in EU innovation governance. The evolving regulatory framework for New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) requires not only scientific robustness, but also coordinated enforcement capacity, interpretative clarity, and cross-border consistency.

What attracted me the most was the opportunity to strengthen institutional preparedness at the European level. In my experience, transition and change management are essential to ensure that science and technology truly deliver impact. Technical solutions, no matter how advanced, do not translate automatically into effective implementation. They require structured capability building, institutional coordination, and governance readiness.

Detection tools alone therefore do not guarantee harmonised implementation. Laboratories require interpretative guidance, enforcement authorities need structured decision support, developers and agri-food operators require clear compliance pathways, and policymakers need informed feedback from operational realities.

WP2 provides this systemic interface. Through the RRI Roadmap©™, we structure empowerment as a transition process rather than a consultation exercise. By integrating co-creation RRI workshops, EU-wide surveys, systems mapping, the NGTs Community of Practice (CoP), and targeted knowledge transfer and learning modules, WP2 builds durable capacity that reinforces EU added value by reducing fragmentation and strengthening coordination among Member States.

How does WP2 approach stakeholder empowerment in practice?

WP2 approaches stakeholder empowerment through a structured and participatory process that involves key actors across the NGT ecosystem. Enforcement authorities, laboratories, developers, agri-food operators, policymakers, and researchers are involved through a series of five multi-stakeholder RRI workshops designed to identify needs, analyse challenges, and co-create practical solutions.

The process begins with stakeholder mapping, identifying stakeholder needs and capability gaps related to NGT detection, traceability, and regulatory implementation. These insights are further explored through EU surveys and the Systems Mapping Approach, which helps visualise the gaps, complexity and interdependencies within the NGT detection and governance landscape.

The subsequent workshops deepen the analysis through structured dialogue and scenario-based discussions. For example, the RRI-3 workshop captured stakeholder perspectives on detection and traceability challenges across the agri-food value chain. Building on these insights, the RRI-4 workshop examined potential future enforcement scenarios and identified the capabilities laboratories and authorities would need to respond effectively. This work resulted in the DETECTIVE Capability Needs Matrix, highlighting priority areas for capacity building.

The process culminates in the RRI-5 workshop, where stakeholders co-create the DETECTIVE Empowerment Programme. Through this approach, the training content, knowledge exchange mechanisms, and support tools are defined directly by those who will use them, ensuring strong relevance and practical applicability.

By grounding the empowerment process in stakeholder experience and structured co-creation, WP2 ensures that DETECTIVE's technical results are closely aligned with real operational needs across the EU.

What role does WP2 play in ensuring the long-term impact and legacy of DETECTIVE?

WP2 ensures that the knowledge, networks, and tools developed within DETECTIVE continue to support stakeholders beyond the project's lifetime. Building on the insights generated through the multi-stakeholder RRI workshop series, WP2 translates these outcomes and the DETECTIVE's results into sustainable mechanisms for capability building and collaboration across the European NGT ecosystem.

The long-term impact of WP2 is structured around three complementary pillars.

1. **The NGTs CoP:** a durable European platform connecting laboratories, enforcement authorities, developers, agri-food operators, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders interested in the detection and traceability of organisms and derived products obtained through NGTs. The stakeholder co-developed mission of the NGTs CoP is to foster structured exchange and shared learning across EU Member States.

   The NGTs CoP offers an easy to use platform for knowledge sharing, expert dialogue, webinars, newsletters, and capability-building activities. Through discussion forums, thematic exchanges, and training resources, members may share experiences, discuss challenges, access project knowledge, and contribute to the collective development of solutions related to the detection and traceability of organisms and products obtained through NGTs.

   Membership is open to anyone interested in NGT-related topics, with both individual and organisational membership available. The NGTs CoP already counts more than 300 members and continues to grow.

2. **The DETECTIVE Empowerment Programme:** A modular training and knowledge-sharing framework covering the full scope of DETECTIVE, including regulatory, legal, economic, detection and traceability aspects, as well as communication and trust building. The programme supports the development of organisational, technical, and operational capabilities required for the effective implementation of the detection and traceability of organisms and products obtained through NGTs.

   To maximise outreach and sustainability, the programme will be delivered through the NGTs CoP and supported by a Train-the-Trainer initiative. This cascading approach will enable trained participants to disseminate knowledge and training materials within their organisations, laboratories, and national networks, thereby expanding the programme's reach across Member States.

3. **The DETECTIVE Multidimensional Decision Tree:** A decision-support tool linking analytical outcomes with regulatory interpretation pathways, supporting laboratories and enforcement authorities in navigating complex detection and traceability situations and enabling faster and more consistent enforcement responses.

   Together, these three pillars strengthen harmonised enforcement preparedness, promote coordinated governance, and support continued knowledge exchange across the European Union, ensuring that DETECTIVE's results remain accessible and useful well beyond the project's duration.

Thank you, Xenia. We look forward to hearing more about the progress and activities of WP2 as the DETECTIVE project continues.