

Recommendations from the "Citizen Involvement in European Research & Innovation Agenda Setting" workshop

Organised by the European Commission, 13 November 2018

The European Commission invited 23 experts to a one day workshop on how best to involve citizens in R&I agenda setting for the implementation of Horizon Europe.

This group strongly supports European Commission's intention to co-create and co-design the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Robust societal engagement is vital to ensuring Research and Innovation (R&I) aligns with the needs, values and expectations of citizens. The group considers the following recommendations key to maximising the potential for societal engagement in the programme:

No one size fits all but all sizes exist

Proven methodologies for co-creation processes already exist and should be used. Different contexts, objectives, societal groups, etc. will often require adapted methodologies. Citizens should have the opportunity to participate at all levels - the local and up to EU level.

Clarify objectives and roles in the co-creation process

The EC must develop and communicate a clear strategy on how co-decision will take place and how dialogue and feedback will be taken on board. Who will decide who is engaged and how, who will monitor, evaluate and amend? The role and decision level of each group of participants within the process should be defined. Clarity on terminology is also needed, e.g. the distinction between 'the public' and 'stakeholders', individual citizens and civil society, and between types of civil society organisations. Feedback loops should be promoted to ensure mutual learning where input from citizens and civil society, missions' representatives and policy-makers are equally valued.

Ensure meaningful engagement

Citizens and civil society should be engaged in a meaningful way throughout the programme, and the co-creation process should have a real and concrete impact, for example on the definition and monitoring of missions. To provide meaningful results, Horizon Europe should go beyond public consultation, such as surveys and polls, and ensure robust and structured engagement with participatory methods for identifying societal needs, and make use of multi-actor processes to transform these outcomes into programmes, scoping papers, calls and topics. The important role of societal engagement in addressing societal challenges and maximising the societal impact of R&I should be recognised. This should also extend to the European Innovation Council for open innovation activities.

Embed a consistent approach on societal engagement throughout Horizon Europe

For the co-creation process to be valued by citizens, engagement with citizens and civil society must be a continuous and holistic process in Horizon Europe. The EU must develop a clear roadmap for how an agenda of co-creation will be embedded from start to finish that involves at least:

- A strategy to engage citizens and civil society in all stages of the strategic planning process
- A Citizens' engagement approach in all research projects funded by the EU, adapted to the specificity of the research project, monitored, evaluated for quality and done in collaboration with science engagement professionals.
- Numerous and diverse engagement opportunities on missions topics, not only on the missions research projects themselves, and societal representation on mission boards.
- Societal representation in monitoring and evaluating R&I linked to societal challenges, from the outset until its concrete implementation/follow-up.

Build a Lighthouse for engagement in Horizon Europe

Societal engagement is at a maturity level to allow for its mainstreaming across all of Horizon Europe. As in any mainstreaming there will, however, be a need for 'Lighthouses' to consolidate and enrich the efforts.

Such a Lighthouse in Horizon Europe would, notably, develop:

- Capacity building for the Commission Services as well as for the wider scientific community
- A community for existing and new competent science engagement actors to ensure that existing expertise and competences are built upon.
- New experiments and evaluation of experiences.
- Coordination of Research & Innovation Agenda Setting across Horizon Europe, including the setting up of data repositories, so that outcomes of engagement processes can be re-used.
- The European Commission has a very good starting point for such a Lighthouse. A continuation of the efforts of the SwafS-like programme would be an obvious way to consolidate societal engagement knowledge and pursue societal engagement research, as well to set up the needed infrastructures, address barriers to engagement and monitor targets for improving engagement.

Overall approach

Throughout the process, citizens should be valued for their ideas, perceptions and needs. Top down communication approaches should be replaced with societal engagement approaches, cultures and attitudes among policy-makers and citizens.

Position of the Citizen Involvement in R&I Agenda setting Experts Group

Although not a requirement for the approval of the above, the Group asks the EC to officially include this experts group in the process and to be regularly consulted by the EC. It can provide sets of practical tools and recommendations to translate these principles into practice.

Recommendations endorsed by the following organisations:



Amsterdam Public Health research institute (APH)



CREATING SOCIETY TOGETHER

