

Citizen Participation in Horizon Europe

Sparks Hackathon at Copernicus Science Centre, Warsaw, Poland

To maintain the vitality of its democracy and restrain the political polarization of its society, Europe needs to empower citizens to participate in the discussions and choices it faces when dealing with technological and societal challenges.

Engaging citizens with science will allow European society to welcome and trigger those changes and shape them with its own values. This has to include: more researchers and innovators, a mutual trust between society, research, business and public institutions, and citizens with a strong scientific, technological, innovative and entrepreneurship culture.

The EC Horizon Europe proposal acknowledges the importance of communicating with citizens, but its translation in Horizon Europe is ill-conceived, driven mostly by a top-down communication where experts explain to citizens. Rather, a science engagement approach where scientists and citizens are equal should prevail through:

- A distinct programme to enhance the relation between society and science, and pursue research on innovative practices on this evolving relation
- The implementation of science engagement throughout Horizon Europe with an articulated plan for each research project.

BENEFITS OF SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Science engagement refers to activities, events, or interactions characterized by mutual learning among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise, and life experiences who articulate and share their perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and values. It is practiced by a range of people and organisations, with science centres and museums at the forefront.

An enhanced, integrated system for science engagement in Horizon Europe will:

- **Promote critical thinking** and citizens' ability to search and analyse information, thus combating fake news and other misinformation phenomena;
- Foster an **innovation and entrepreneurship culture** by engaging people with science
- Prepare the future **workforce** for research and industry
- Enhance **innovation uptake** by having citizens involved in research and innovation
- Reflect society's desire for more **transparency and participation in science governance and co-creation of agenda setting**
- Allow citizens to shape technologies and their uses in order to align them with **European values**
- Better **communicate scientific results** by demonstrating and debating the impacts of research and innovation policy
- Restore **societal trust** in science and scientific institution
- Enable better **research and innovation outcomes**
- Position Europe as a leader that involves all society in **tackling the SDGs**

IN PRACTICE



Copernicus Science Centre - credits: A. Steifer

Stimulate engagement opportunities between researchers, innovators and citizens

To promote shared responsibility for scientific issues, specific engagement formats such as the Reversed Science Café can be used. This format empowers the audience to share their opinion and knowledge and to formulate recommendations for the researcher presenting his/her case.

In 2014, a Reversed Science Café dedicated to the possible use of muscle electrical activity sensor (EMG) as a preventive examination for sudden infant death was run at Copernicus Science Centre, Warsaw (Poland). A mix of participants with different level of knowledge took part in the discussion and created a set of recommendations, including one regarding the analysis of societal issues linked with the development of this diagnostics technology, especially linked to data privacy.

More on Ecsite Position Paper: <https://www.ecsite.eu/activities-and-services/resources>



89/7 AVENUE LOUISE
LOUZALAAN
B-1050 BRUSSELS
BELGIUM
+32 2 649 7383
WWW.ECSITE.EU

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