

Policies and Activities Supporting Societal Engagement in Research and Innovation

The current policy brief is the first one out of six that will be published during the Engage2020 project. It provides an overview of the key assumptions about public engagement and its policy relevance shared by the project consortium, and introduces the key levels of the research and innovation processes where we believe policy attention should be concentrated, as well as the most prominent forms of policy and activity support upon which we base our recommendations.

Engaging societal actors in research and innovation (R&I) activities is beneficial to the researchers as well as the general public. Societal engagement can be pursued for both **democratic reasons** (citizens having a say on research agendas) and **instrumental reasons** (more appropriate research results by including societal knowledge, ideas and capacities; higher awareness of science and technology with citizens).

In Engage2020, we focus on **genuine engagement forms, which go beyond traditional one-way communication of scientific findings**. We aim to identify innovative policies and activities, which support engagement and which can also be applied outside of the original setting.

INTRODUCTION

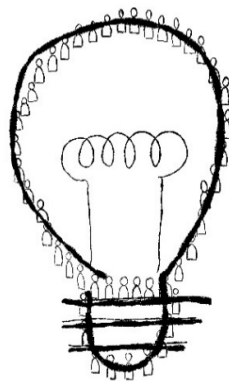
The engagement of societal actors in research and innovation is deemed especially important in tackling the challenges that Europe and its citizens face today. The European Commission identified seven Grand Societal Challenges – key issues such as demographic change, green transport and efficient energy - that it hopes to address within its

largest research programme, Horizon 2020, with a budget of €80 billion. Many experts believe that these Grand Societal Challenges can only be tackled effectively **if a wide range of societal actors are fully engaged in the process**. In the last decade, participatory approaches gained particular importance in the field of science and technology policy making. Many policy makers have come to acknowledge that technocratic approaches alone cannot address the challenges society faces today. Therefore, the search for new forms of governance in the field of science, innovation and technology development are necessary. This includes giving the public a role, and a voice that fosters socially robust and sustainable problem solving.

At the European Union level there is growing interest and support for societal engagement in activities at all levels of the research and innovation processes. A total of 46 EU-level cases on policies and activities that engage societal actors in research and innovation activities were reviewed as part of Engage2020, with key conclusions summarised in the next sections.

SCANNING PROCESS OF SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT

This policy brief presents the results of an overview of current policies and activities that support societal engagement in research and innovation activities in Europe and beyond. The findings are the result of a thorough scan of existing policies and activities, with a clear focus on societal engagement in research and innovation. The process concentrated on policies and activities that engaged societal actors, such as civil society organisations (CSO), citizens, affected, consumers, employees, users, and other, at four different levels of the research and innovation process: **policy formation, programme development, project**



Graphics by: Edward Andersson

definition, and research and innovative activities, all in relation to the seven Grand Societal Challenges: (1) health and demographic change; (2) food security and sustainable agriculture; (3) clean and efficient energy; (4) green transport; (5) climate change and resource efficiency; (6) inclusive and innovative societies; and (7) security.

The process included scanning policies, funding mechanisms, other instruments and activities aimed at supporting research and innovation in Europe and beyond. Descriptors such as the type of activity or policy, reasons for setting up the policy or activity, disciplinary areas of use, societal challenges addressed, complexity level of use, choice of participants' inclusion, and evaluations (known success and failure factors) were also considered. The scanning process concluded with the publishing of a **detailed report** that is available for viewing on the website of the project at www.engage2020.eu.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

There are specific groups of actors, which should be involved in science and innovation policy: **CSOs** (such as patient organisations or environmental NGOs) and **citizens** with regard to democratic motifs, or understood as **volunteering lay persons, users, consumers and employees**.

In principle there are four different levels which are crucial to identify policy options in the field of PE of these actors in science and innovation policy. They are briefly explained here. These four levels interact to some extent, and are interdependent.

Levels in the Research and innovation process

1. Policy formation is the praxis of defining the conditions for R&I activities. This includes making policies for distribution of funds between programmes, rules and instruments on responsible R&I, definition of financial instruments etc. Two examples of praxis of relevance could be the Consensus Conference and The World Wide Views concept. The Consensus Conference delivers in-depth qualitative input to policy makers from a panel of citizens. The World Wide Views can deliver quantitative response to ideas for policies from

well-informed, deliberative, representative citizen/consumer/employee meetings with up to thousands of participants, and is based on multi-site concurrent – for example EU27 – implementation.

- 2. Programme development** is the process of defining the content and the calls in R&I research programmes. This is typically a process involving member state representatives (for European research), programme committees, the research community, and different platforms and hearing processes. Involvement of society at this level is seldom structured as an actual participatory process, though in some instances on-line hearings and calls for ideas are worth noting. New praxis of getting input to the definition of programmes may be based on direct involvement of CSOs of policy affected groups (patients, educators, etc.) or of societally concerned groups (environmental or social NGOs), or it could involve citizens directly in formulating visions for research programmes (such as the CIVISTI method¹ or the VOICES project²).
- 3. Project definition:** at this level engaging society may be about inviting relevant CSOs, affected people, employees, etc., to suggest foci for the specific research or innovation project, thereby increasing the relevance for civil society, or the chances of innovations being welcomed by the markets. Examples of such praxis can be found in the traditions of different research actors, e.g. in participatory action research, and in the work of Science Shops and science-for-citizens activities. Expansion of the scope of such praxis could be about setting up research policies which ensure up-stream involvement of relevant societal groups.
- 4. Research and innovation activities:** engaging society directly in the research and innovation activities may for example increase the amount of empirical data for researchers (citizen science), may allow for clarification of normative issues in the scientific process (e.g. processes to ensure responsible research and innovation on project level), or it may improve the relevance and thereby the implementation of research and innovation results (for example through Science Shop related activities). It may also raise citizens' awareness of research and innovation.

¹ See <http://www.civisti.org> for more information.

² See <http://www.voicesforinnovation.eu/> for more information.

Forms of policy and activity support

Engage2020 identified 6 forms, or dimensions, of policy and activity support, which are relevant to encouraging public engagement in science and research, and provides its recommendations based on these categories:

- 1. Rules and regulations.** This is the most formal effort to integrate public engagement in R&I policy making and practice. Rules and regulations mainly are appropriate and needed to integrate PE on the level of policy making (in our scheme: policy formation and programme development). With regard to R&I policy on the European Union (EU) level this would comprise policy making processes of regulation of risks and benefits of new technology options (such as the debate on nano-materials), priority setting in EU R&I funding and development of particular funding schemes and programs (such as the development and design of Horizon 2020). On this level processes of public consultations are increasingly integrated in policy making (be it by single consultation processes on directives, as practiced by the European Commission (EC), or by institutionalised bodies of technology assessment (TA) and technology dialogues on the national level. However policy formation and programme development is still mainly dominated by boards of experts with representatives mainly from research, academia and strong economic interest groups. Existing PE practices on this level mainly suffer from an unclear function and role with regard to decision making, and it often remains unclear how and whether at all results of PE processes are taken account of in decision making. Making PE (i.e. public consultation) a standard procedure in policy formation, would give public engagement a formal role in decision making in S&I and would definitely strengthen the relevance of PE within policy making.
- 2. Funding and other incentives.** Funding constitutes a very effective lever to direct research activities. Thus, conditions for funding can be elaborated to strengthen and broaden PE activities in EU-funded research. However, currently, there is a weak connection between funding agencies and CSOs. This seems to be strongly connected to general lack of knowledge of the relevant public how they can participate in EU research. On top, sufficient funding possibilities for community based research are currently not foreseen by the EC.
- 3. Infrastructure, institutions, networks.** Setting up institutions or enlarging the scope of existing EU-institutions for PE would be a powerful measure towards public engagement within the EC. Such institutions dedicated to PE could not only form an important knowledge and cooperation base which could be used to connect questions and demands from EC-staff, researchers, and citizens alike. Furthermore, it could fulfil an important networking function between the national PE landscape and the EC.
- 4. Training.** To conduct a PE process and to get relevant results out of it is a demanding task. Even if a participative process has been conducted in the best methodical manner, it is not certain that the results of the process would be used and kept up by the political institutions that started the participation process. In order to implement the PE processes in R&I actions of the EC, of national or regional R&I structures, and to use the results in the administrative bodies involved, it is especially important to *directly address and educate the various groups of people which are involved in the PE-process (EC administrators and advisors, national policy-makers and government experts, scientists, other public actors)*. The successful integration of PE requires not only theoretical and methodical knowledge about the various forms and methods of participation. It furthermore requires certain “participative” competences, e.g. discursive, analytical, or moderation skills, which should be trained. Policy measures in the field of capacity building/training in PE should again address all four levels in the R&I process we identified above.
- 5. Promotion.** Next to the strong “formal” incentives some “soft” promotion activities are proposed. They have the potential to raise interest in PE on a broad and continuing basis. Therefore, scientists and CSOs alike should be addressed. The establishment of new formats of PE, like dedicated journals or conferences, would especially contribute to promote PE within the scientific system as such, particularly since the scientific career planning and reward system is not currently conducive to doing community related research.
- 6. Projects and Studies.** Many current projects that are being implemented in the EU with the support of the EC rely on and incorporate forms of PE in their design and implementation, thus

creating open and transparent processes for the inclusion of a broader set of societal actors, as well as increasing legitimacy and validity. Particularly, such processes also help ensure that the typical powerful stakeholders are not the sole influencers on deciding about future research topics and priorities. In addition, PE should not be considered only as a side function in identifying what is to be raised in the future. Instead, there should rather be funding and calls for research on PE itself.

ABOUT ENGAGE2020

Engage2020 is a project funded by the European Commission (DG Research) that looks at research, innovation and related activities, and explores how members of society are involved today and, perhaps more importantly, how they could be involved in the future. The project maps how, where and why members of the public, stakeholders, consumers and other groups are being engaged in the research process, from early policy development to the delivery of research activities.

The core ambition of Engage2020 is to increase the use of engagement methods and policies by mapping what is practiced and to spread awareness of the opportunities amongst researchers, policy makers and other interested parties.

To learn more about the project, its deliverables and partners involved, visit the website <http://www.engage2020.eu>. For further inquiries, please contact the project coordinator or any of the partners in the Engage2020 consortium.



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