

European R&I Agenda – Contributions from 30 Citizen Consultations

This policy brief is developed as part of the CIMULACT project and briefly presents the methodology, as well as the results of 30 citizen consultations, which took place in 30 European countries in the frame of the project. The policy brief highlights major advantages of involving citizens in research and innovation agenda setting and policy making, the distinctive features of the methodology, as well as important insights into the contribution citizens can make in the context of R&I programme development and policy making.

CIMULACT IN THE WIDER POLICY CONTEXT OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

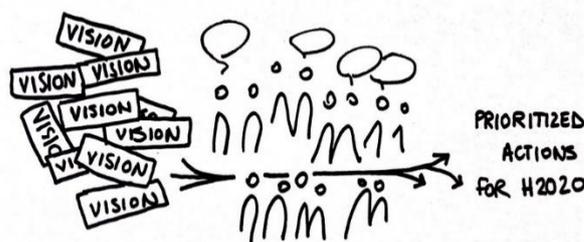
The objectives of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), as formulated by the European Commission (EC), include the anticipation and assessment of “*potential implications and societal expectations* with regard to research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of *inclusive and sustainable* research and innovation” (EC website¹). The definition reflects the most distinctive features of RRI according to the popular academic and practitioners’ discourse.

First, RRI renders societal actors and scientists/innovators *mutually responsive* to each other. Involving the public at large and stakeholders into the research and innovation (R&I) process improves citizens understanding of new scientific developments and discoveries and, thus, helps them make informed choices as to whether to accept these or not. Engagement activities also help scientists and innovators explore the potential impacts of their scientific results and innovations. Taking these into account in the design and development process improves the *sustainability* of innovations and research outcomes.

Second, public engagement fosters the *inclusiveness* of the debate on “what sort of future(s) we want science and technology to bring

into the world, what futures we care about, what challenges we want these to meet”², which opens up opportunities for directing these towards “socially desirable ends”³. Coping with current challenges and future uncertainties will only be feasible if science and society work closely together in shaping research itself, research agendas and science, technology and innovation (STI) policies.

The CIMULACT project contributes to this process by involving more than 1000 citizens from 30 EU countries, as well as numerous experts and stakeholders, in a large-scale effort to uncover the needs of citizens. These will serve as the basis for developing recommendations for EU research agenda and policy making in the field of STI. By involving citizens in consultations across Europe, CIMULACT provides a concrete and unique input into the future European and national level R&I agenda. Taking citizens’ concerns, needs and visions into account, policy makers render STI programmes and policies more relevant and accountable to societies in Europe, thus, fostering the closer connection between science and society.



¹ Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/responsible-research-innovation>

² Owen, R., Stilgoe, J., Macnaghten, P., Gorman, M., Fisher, E., and Guston, D. (2013). “A Framework for Responsible Innovation”. *Responsible Innovation*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

³ Ibid.

CITIZEN CONSULTATIONS - OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS

The citizen consultations which took place in the frame of CIMULACT gathered citizens' perspectives about the future in the form of visions for a sustainable future. These visions serve as the basis for achieving the objective of the CIMULACT project, namely **engaging citizens and stakeholders in the co-creation of European research agendas based on real, validated and shared visions, needs and demands.**



The consultations took place in 30 European countries (28 EU Member States, as well as Switzerland and Norway). Each country partner recruited around 36 citizens, following a recruitment strategy which ensures the diversity of the citizens, most importantly in terms of age, education level, field of employment and living area. The participating citizens were divided into 6 small groups and had the chance to discuss their concerns and hopes for the future and work on their common visions. The discussions were facilitated by table moderators. At the end of the 1-day event each of the small groups came up with a common vision for the future, presenting it to the others and elaborating it on a vision template. The visions from all 30 countries (180 altogether) were then analysed by experts and stakeholders in order to uncover social needs and translate them into recommendations for decision-making in the field of research activities, research agendas and STI policy making.

Some of the **distinctive features of the methodology** used in the project include:

- ❖ **Using citizens' implicit experiential knowledge and imagination** as the basis for vision making. In the CIMULACT project the term vision implies a picture of a desirable future, which is based upon hopes and dreams, concerns and fears for the future (30–40 years from now). The method tries to strip feasibility thinking from the creative process - it encourages citizens to develop their visions as freely as possible.
- ❖ **Citizens and experts meet separately**, thus, citizens are not deliberately influenced by experts' opinions when they formulate and discuss their views. Later on in the process, a space is created where citizens' visions are integrated with scientific knowledge. Experts and stakeholders gather to analyse the visions and the underlying social needs, upon which they base their recommendations.
- ❖ In a joint workshop, part of the citizens will meet with experts in order to develop scenarios for research programmes, which will be tested, validated, enriched and prioritised later on in the process. Several **feedback loops** between the groups involved in the project take place in order to allow for continuous improvement of the results, better integration of citizens' and experts' inputs and validation of the achieved results and conclusions.
- ❖ CIMULACT implemented an aspect, traditionally employed in co-design methodologies, namely the extensive use of **non-verbal communication** to bridge the diversity of cultural and professional contexts, and create a truly open negotiation space.



Collage made from citizens at one of the consultations

SNAPSHOT OF THE RESULTS

The results of the citizen consultations revealed a few important insights regarding the contribution citizens can make in the context of R&I programme development and policy making. These include:

- ❖ Citizens can significantly contribute to the discourse on science and innovation. Analysing the formulated by the citizen visions reveals trends in the priorities and preferences they have about future societal and scientific developments.

Vision "Technology at society's service", Luxembourg
I work 4 hours a day. This allows me to have lunch with my children and my partner in the community kitchen in our participatory house. Then I spend some time with my daughter in the surrounding wood. I started to get involved in participatory life in various forms: drama workshops, sharing platform for information exchange with other communities, energy and waste management.

- ❖ In citizens' discussions one can discern that often opinions reflect media discourse on the debated topics. Being involved in a dialogue about various topics helps citizens reassess their opinions, enhance their understanding and even reformulate their stand on the issue.
- ❖ The implementation of the method foresees citizens and experts working separately, which does not allow citizens to adjust their visions to the context of what is technically, financially or politically feasible at present. Yet, this is also the intent of the method – to stimulate citizens' creativity and present the 'perfect world' citizens would like to live in. The analysis of the visions improves the understanding of which are the unmet needs and aspirations of citizens across Europe, which areas of science need to be further advanced so that science better addresses citizens' needs and concerns,

Vision "Living together - shared homes in 2050", Germany
There are individual apartments of different sizes in multi-generational houses. Modular building designs allow flexibility when allocating rooms. Additionally, there are also communal rooms and shared gardens. Prerequisite for a successful housing project is the shared "sense of community" (also from an economic perspective).

which policies decision-makers need to prioritise in order to achieve the change citizens aspire.

- ❖ Understanding the limitations of the method is essential to adequately interpret the achieved results and conclusions. The methodology aims to cover a wide variety of target groups and present a variety of views. While the set of participants in each country cannot be considered representative, the application of the methodology in 30 countries and the involvement of above 1000 citizens in the development of the visions is a large-enough sample to consider it a sound depiction of the variety of views in Europe and enrich the discourse on STI programme and policy making.

Vision "Efficient recycling", Finland
Sampo collects fresh vegetables from his own rooftop garden that has been watered with recycled water from his household. He lives in an energy efficient housing community. Sampo goes to work to a self-sufficient food factory, dials his workplace code, and a road elevator picks him up.

After the initial analysis of the 180 visions, the following themes transpired as central in the citizen visions: Equality - Unity and cohesion - Citizenship awareness and participation - Holistic health - Technology at service of the humanity - Life-long processes - Personalised education and experiential learning - Living in harmony with nature - Personal Development - Green cities - Sustainable economy - Sustainable energy.

KEY MESSAGES

Smart agenda setting and policy making in the field of R&I in the future will involve citizens. They are key actors in the process of making science more relevant to societal challenges and to the uncertainties of the future. CIMULACT has demonstrated that gathering and analysing European citizens' perspectives on the European research agenda with view of enriching the scope of the debate on science, technology and innovation is an effort that pays off. This effort needs to continue in order to bring science and society closer together.

WHAT FOLLOWS NEXT

- ❖ At a workshop in Milano, **research programmes scenarios** will be co-created by citizens, stakeholders, researchers and policy-makers, based on the aggregated visions from the citizens and the identified overarching social needs.
- ❖ A **second consultation phase** will follow in all participating countries where the co-created research programme scenarios will be tested, validated, enriched and prioritised in two tracks: face-to-face consultations and an online consultation.
- ❖ A workshop for stakeholders, researchers and policymakers will transform the results of the second consultation phase into **prioritised actions for Horizon2020**, including policy options, possible research topics and recommendations.
- ❖ Throughout the project the forms and methods developed and implemented will be documented and assessed. The **methodological lessons learned** will be collected and extracted in an inspiration catalogue for further engagement processes in research and innovation priority setting.

IN SHORT ABOUT CIMULACT

CIMULACT engages citizens across Europe, along with a variety of other actors, in shaping a desirable sustainable future. In a highly participatory process, the project provides a unique contribution to European research and innovation policies and topics, creates dialogue and shared understanding among the actors, and builds strong capacities in citizen engagement, thereby enhancing responsible research and innovation in the EU.

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For more information on the project, please, visit the website at: www.cimulact.eu

PROJECT PARTNERS

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