2024/736

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COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2024/736

of 1 March 2024

on a Code of Practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Whereas:

(1) Strong citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation is key to accelerate the uptake of innovative solutions and to develop new technologies, products, and services to address the most pressing societal challenges while ensuring fair, green and digital transitions [1].

(2) The Code of practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation reflects the new directions introduced by the Council Recommendation on the Guiding principles for knowledge valorisation, as it encourages connections and co-creation between all R&I actors and emphasises the importance of entrepreneurial skills and practices [2]. It also contributes to the action to 'Upgrade EU guidance for better knowledge valorisation' which is part of the ERA Policy Agenda for 2022-2024 [3].

(3) The Council conclusions on the new European innovation agenda state that there is a strong role for communities, cities and regions to build globally competitive research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems and growth strategies. Moreover, they reaffirm the need to encourage High Education Institutions (HEIs) to improve their capacities to engage with their ecosystems including societal actors by instilling the necessary knowledge, skills and competences [4].

(4) The Council Recommendation on the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe calls for a more active citizens and societal engagement in research and innovation to be promoted in all its dimensions, to raise awareness of the benefits and impact of research and innovation in people's daily lives, ensure a greater diversity of approaches for designing and implementing research and innovation policy and make R&I more relevant for society [5].

(5) The Council Recommendation [6] on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation, and entrepreneurial talents in Europe recommends Member States to place a specific emphasis on schemes aiming to strengthen the skills needed by researchers to engage in knowledge valorisation activities and promote and support systems for assessment and reward of researchers that, among others, recognise a diversity of outputs and activities including interaction with society.

[1] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Research & innovation valorisation channels and tools – Boosting the transformation of knowledge into new sustainable solutions*, Publications Office, 2020
[2] Council Recommendation (EU) 2022/2415 of 2 December 2022 on the Guiding principles for knowledge valorisation (OJ L 317, 9.12.2022, p. 141)
[3] Annexed to the Council conclusions of 26 November 2021 on the Future governance of the European Research Area
[4] Council document 14705/22
[5] Council document 13701/21
[6] Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe (OJ C, C/2023/1640, 29.12.2023, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj).

(6)   The transition to open science and the shift towards open innovation represent both challenges and opportunities in the evolving R&I ecosystem. The citizen science approach has grown in importance as a key element of the European Research Area to enhance research, while citizen and societal engagement in R&I increases research relevance to societal needs and trust in science. These developments should ensure excellence and the impact of the Union's investment in R&I, while safeguarding the Union's interests. In this regard, the Toolkit on Tackling Foreign R&I Interference [7] helps to raise awareness and build resilience in the R&I sector across Europe to bolster research security in joint R&I activities [8].

(7)   Citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation presents opportunities and challenges as it may involve different actors such as universities, research organisations, businesses, including Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs), local communities and municipalities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), citizens groups, social partners, arts and cultural institutions, with unique competences and contributions to impactful knowledge valorisation [9].

(8)   Citizen engagement should be a standard practice in knowledge valorisation, especially when this concerns better responding to citizens' needs and benefiting society, besides traditional profit drivers. It should promote a sustainable and recurrent engagement of groups and communities in an enabling environment where the benefits and value created are recognised and organisations develop strategic approaches to promote it.

(9)   The aim of the Code of practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation is to provide effective guidance and relevant tools for actors involved in research and innovation (R&I). The Code of practice will support R&I actors to create an enabling environment, help establish participatory processes and practices and contribute to sustainable citizen engagement to better match innovative, knowledge-based solutions to citizens' needs.

(10)   The Code of practice builds on the input from the community of practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation, and is also informed by the findings of a study on best practices of citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation [10].

(11)   All R&I actors, such as universities and other HEIs, public and private research, innovation and technology organisations, research and technology infrastructures, businesses of all sizes, policymakers and other actors such as cities and communities, civil society and citizens groups, and intermediaries, such as knowledge and technology transfer professionals, incubators, science parks, labs, hubs, are encouraged to follow this Code of practice.

(12)   The recommendations under point 2 of the Code of Practice are formulated at the organisational level, although their content is also crucial to guide individual researchers, innovators, citizen engagement practitioners and their teams. The recommendations under point 3 of the Code of Practice aim to guide the actions of practitioners designing and running citizen engagement programs and initiatives as well as to all actors and stakeholders that play a key role in their success (citizens, researchers, industry, intermediaries, policy makers and others).

(13)   This guidance will further enhance the vibrant research and innovation environment within ERA to better recognise the potential of citizen engagement for impactful knowledge valorisation and positive societal transformation.

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[7] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Tackling R&I foreign interference – Staff working document*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

[8] Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on European Economic Security Strategy (JOIN/2023/20 final)

[9] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Fostering knowledge valorisation through the arts and cultural institutions*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

[10] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Fostering Knowledge valorisation through citizen engagement*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

1. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Recommendation the following definitions apply:

(1) "knowledge valorisation" is the process of creating social and economic value from knowledge by linking different areas and sectors and by transforming data, know-how and research results into sustainable products, services, solutions and knowledge-based policies that benefit society [11];

(2) "citizen engagement" refers to the involvement of citizens in participatory processes of decision making, implementation and monitoring, to improve quality, transparency and ownership of policies at local, national and EU level [12], which has been strongly supported by the Conference for the Future of Europe and the resulting European Citizens Panels for addressing current and future challenges and adapting new tools through citizens' panels in key areas [13]. This also links to the revamped Have Your Say portal, including the online Citizen Engagement Platform.

(3) "citizen science" refers to the voluntary participation of non-professional scientists in research and innovation at different stages and at different levels of engagement, from shaping research agendas and policies, to gathering, processing and analysing data, and assessing the outcomes of research [14];

(4) "citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation" refers to the engagement of citizens, citizens groups, civil society organisations, and communities with R&I actors to valorise knowledge and research results for innovative solutions that address societal needs, help exploit market opportunities and inform policy making. This is achieved through the commercialisation and market uptake and deployment at the workplace or in society of innovative products, technologies or services that better respond to users' needs, through creating value for society that is not monetised, through informing policymakers, and improving policy making, as well as through raising awareness, cultivating skills and knowledge and developing new organisational, consumption, and production models that support behavioural changes and transformations within society. [15]

(5) "academia" refers to universities and other higher education institutions including public and private research and technology organisations [16], universities of applied science and other higher vocational education and training institutions;

(6) "intellectual asset means any result or products generated by any R&I activities, (such as intellectual property rights, data, know-how, prototypes, processes, practices, technologies, software) [17];

(7) "open science" means an approach to the scientific process based on open cooperative work, tools and diffusing knowledge, as set out in Article 14(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council [18];

(8) "open innovation" means the approach of opening up the innovation process outside of an organisation [19];

(9) "open access" means access, provided free of charge to the end user, to research data, including scientific publications, in accordance with Article 14(1)(a) and Article 39(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695.

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[11] Recommendation (EU) 2022/2415.

[12] European Committee of the Regions, *From local to European: Putting citizens at the centre of the EU agenda*, Directorate for Communication of the European Committee of the Regions, 2019.

[13] Conference on the Future of Europe - European Commission (europa.eu)

[14] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Citizen Science – Elevating research and innovation through societal* engagement, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020.

[15] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Fostering Knowledge valorisation through citizen engagement*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

[16] Adapted from the definition of academic sector in the Horizon 2020 Annotated Model Grant Agreement.

[17] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/499 of 1 March 2023 on a Code of Practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation in the European Research Area (OJ L 69, 7.3.2023, p. 75).

[18] Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1).

[19] Recommendation (EU) 2023/499.

2. **BUILDING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT**

2.1. **It is recommended to adopt at organisational level an engagement strategy for value creation within a consistent action framework, by:**

— defining the objectives of the engagement with the involved stakeholders (such as citizens and citizens' groups, cities and communities, academia, industrial partners and policy makers), as well as their incentives and expectations;

— developing a clear and transparent reasoning that explains how the engagement of citizens delivers value for society;

— identifying impact pathways in the short- mid-, and long-term, especially taking into account the main objectives of addressing citizens' needs with innovative solutions and delivering on R&I related policy objectives including, when possible, potential impacts additional to those targeted, such as citizens empowerment, increased trust in science and impact on citizens' skills (development on new skills and competences, such as related to civic participation, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship);

— developing a valorisation roadmap to ensure that the engagement of citizens translates into value for economy and society, including the resources required to generate societal and economic impacts. This should include properly planning all stages of the action and especially the follow-up stages, ensuring engagement of private and public actors who will commit towards the uptake of solutions (including the further developments needed to reach a deployment stage). The valorisation roadmap should also plan the capacities and (access to) resources required to promote the uptake, such as from industry, academia and policy makers, including cities and communities. It should also consider the means to bring the solutions to market and society, such as public funding, crowdfunding, business support etc;

— including a monitoring and evaluation framework, also for assessing the societal and economic value derived from the citizen engagement process.

2.2. **Building capacities and developing synergies are key elements in effective citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation. It is recommended to:**

— provide training and skills development to all staff involved in knowledge valorisation to increase societal engagement and use of participatory practices and processes;

— build strong expertise in participatory practices in public administrations through capacity building programmes for public officers and include skills for co-creation and citizens engagement in the competences framework of all public R&I institutions and policy making bodies;

— identify complementarities and build synergies with other initiatives, platforms and programmes, as well as with private companies that are active in this field;

— continuously explore relevant local, regional national and existing EU policies, programmes and strategies.

2.3. **It is recommended to adopt a transdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration approach and appropriately manage intellectual assets. This requires:**

— using opportunities to collaborate across different sectors and domains such as technology, business, civil society, and all sciences, including social sciences, humanities and the arts, to create transdisciplinary programmes and schemes;

— taking into account intellectual assets management, in line with the Code of practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation in the ERA [20], aiming to address background knowledge of all participants, open innovation, open science, the use of data for the co-creation of innovative solutions, the use and sharing of results;

— aim to recognise everyone's contribution to the results, by defining clear ownership provisions - if possible from the start of the action, and acknowledging citizens' contributions, including in presentations, scientific publications, manuscripts, and descriptions of final results and products;

[20] Recommendation (EU) 2023/499.

— adopt an open access approach when appropriate to foster the reusability of the results;

— ensure that privacy, confidentiality and ethical principles are upheld in the management of intellectual assets, particularly when dealing with data and the dissemination and sharing of results.

2.4. **To ensure social inclusion, diversity and gender equality, it is recommended to:**

— adapt the engagement strategy to engage with all target groups, including people in a vulnerable or marginalised situation, underrepresented, younger people, older people, people with disabilities, and people with migrant background, by addressing barriers to participation, including but not exclusively due to lack of relevant skills and resources;

— take into account that citizens may engage in the action in different degrees, with some being able to devote more time and resources than others;

— aim for interdisciplinarity and complementarity in the researchers' groups, achieving a good matching with the citizens and other actors;

— aim to include, when needed, specific professional skills and profiles, for example experts for facilitation and mediation, legal experts to support in intellectual assets management and experts in citizen engagement, as well as experts in inclusivity, diversity and ethics.

2.5. **Citizen engagement programmes should aim to promote the replication and scalability of citizen engagement actions and projects when appropriate, by:**

— supporting the use of existing and, as needed, the development of frameworks, toolkits, and guidelines that can be easily adapted and used by organisations and communities according to their needs [21],

— promoting the sharing and accessibility of tools and guidelines, best practices and lessons learned;

— involving relevant intermediaries who can largely facilitate the interaction with concerned communities and guide the processes for replication and upscaling, when relevant and as appropriate taking into account any context specificity;

— making use of platforms which bring together the different R&I stakeholders (researchers and academia, civil society, industry, practitioners and policy makers) [22]

— facilitating the use of available digital platforms and public knowledge repositories [23] documenting the challenges and opportunities of best practice examples in long term citizen engagement actions and ensuring their visibility and sustainability;

— developing specialised, tailor made guidelines for practical on-the-ground implementation, also leveraging relevant case studies from similar contexts whenever possible.

2.6. **It is recommended to recognise and valorise time and effort spent by those involved in the citizen engagement process, including through:**

— supporting the development of incentives and rewards, such as prizes, public/formal recognition schemes at the local level such as from municipalities, citizens' associations, public institutions, academia and funding bodies;

— recognising and rewarding in performance evaluation of researchers, drawing on the work of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

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[21] For example the guidance and tools by the Competence Centre for participatory democracy, the *Do it yourself (DIY) manual for mobilising and engaging stakeholders and citizens in climate change adaptation planning and implementation, and the Corporate Guidance for Citizen Engagement (December 2023).*

[22] Such as the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS).

[23] Such as the EU knowledge valorisation platform, the EU Citizen science platform, the LivingLabs platform.

2.7. **It is recommended to support actions to increase awareness of the benefits of knowledge valorisation, including through:**

— organising public awareness raising initiatives involving relevant stakeholders, including community and non-profit organisations, local authorities, academia and businesses;

— promoting awareness campaigns and training activities within each organisation addressed to their own personnel;

— fostering engagement of citizens through dedicated actions, such as campaigns, public assemblies and online platforms.

2.8. **It is recommended to adopt at organisational level a clearly defined evaluation framework to assess the efficacy of citizen engagement and participatory processes that lead to knowledge valorisation, by:**

— defining appropriate quantitative and qualitative indicators and metrics to evaluate the citizen engagement action, which are aligned to the action's objectives and respond to the needs of the stakeholders, based on a common vision which has been jointly discussed, defined and understood by all;

— taking into account that commonly used output indicators may be limited in providing a comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of the participatory process and there is a need to go beyond outputs and assess the outcomes and impacts of the concrete action;

— considering key areas for an evaluation framework, such as outreach, which involves a detailed examination of who is engaged and the terms under which engagement occurs, participatory activities, which assess how the various actors are involved in the process, and value creation, which entails identifying and assessing the benefits from the participatory process.

3. **MANAGING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FOR KNOWLEDGE VALORISATION**

3.1. **It is recommended to clearly identify and agree on the incentives and expectations of all partners. This requires to:**

— clearly define and communicate the incentives that different actors have for engaging for knowledge valorisation, in particular:

(a) the incentives for citizens, which may include recognition, a strengthened sense of belonging to a community, sharing knowledge, feeling empowered, making a meaningful contribution, engaging with science, learning something new, building new skills such as in project management and entrepreneurship and achieving material awards;

(b) the incentives for researchers, which may include formal recognition for their efforts and role in the community, career and mobility opportunities, networking and building multistakeholder collaborations, as well as making advancements in their field, and developing solutions with high societal and economic impact;

(c) the incentives for industry, which may include developing products and services that better respond to the needs of society and demonstrating corporate social responsibility;

(d) the incentives for policy makers and other public sector stakeholders, which may include better policy making and delivering solutions to societal challenges, as well as increase trust and transparency in policymaking.

— ensure that incentives align with ethical principles and values, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics or vulnerable communities;

— take account of the cultural context and consider cultural differences in how incentives are perceived and valued;

— identify the expectations of participants and in particular those of citizens, researchers, industry, policy makers using a co-creation process, where expectations are developed collaboratively;

— take into account the need for flexibility and adaptation and aim to ensure that expectations remain aligned with the evolving context and goals of the engagement, and put in place mechanisms to address and resolve conflicts when expectations are not met or conflicts arise, in a transparent way that strengthens trust.

3.2. **It is recommended to keep the impetus throughout the engagement process, by:**

— ensuring an environment that fosters the principle of transparency and creates trust among all involved, including the community(ies) that is(are) affected by the results of the action;

— establishing a continuous and transparent exchange with all participants, clearly articulating the significance of their input and providing transparent insights into how their contributions will be used;

— using an accessible and inclusive language and facilitating citizens access to high-quality information and resources, also by providing appropriate training (for instance on the management of data, background knowledge and intellectual property) when needed.

3.3. **It is recommended to define the appropriate single method or mix of methods and tools for the implementation (e.g. living labs, deliberative platforms, hackathons, consultations etc), in particular by:**

— aiming for the best matching between the objectives of the action, the target group, the stage of engagement, the resources and specific context, and the characteristics of different methods/tools when choosing the method or combination of methods and tools;

— using known best practices and guidelines and building upon existing expertise, networks and tools ([24]);

— retaining emerging knowledge from the implementation of citizen engagement actions and sharing your practices and lessons learned for the benefit of a growing community of citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation practitioners.

3.4. **To develop and implement an appropriate communication strategy for the engagement action, it is recommended to:**

— provide targeted communication materials and briefings to all the actors involved, clearly explaining their role, expected outcomes, benefits, etc.

— clearly communicate the potential social and economic impact to strengthen ownership of all participants;

— communicate throughout the whole process rather than focusing only at the starting stages as an information and recruitment tool;

— ensure clarity and transparency in the messages to participants and all stakeholders through engaging science communication professionals if possible;

— maintain an open channel for feedback between organisers, citizens and other stakeholders that feeds into the monitoring and evaluation of the action, that is clearly communicated from the start and can improve the framework of collaboration, while keeping the requests for feedback from citizens and other participants manageable;

— communicate 'outwards', outside the research project/co-creation process, to a broader audience; this includes highlighting success stories and positive outcomes resulting from citizens engagement in knowledge valorisation to inspire others and provide practical examples for future initiatives.

([24]) See for example Climathon (climate-kic.org). European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Pottaki, I., *Valorising research through citizens' engagement – How to run hackathons with citizens*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.

3.5. **It is recommended to capitalise on the potential of digital technologies to facilitate citizens engagement actions, especially by connecting participants from many regions, by:**

— promoting the use of digital solutions with a human-centric and sustainable design;

— empowering citizens through skills development and training to use appropriate digital platforms;

— using digital technologies next to traditional technologies, where appropriate, to increase participation and inclusiveness.

Done at Brussels, 1 March 2024.

For the Commission
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