

## Public engagement

### 1.1 Lessons learned relevant to European and national policy makers

A crucial outcome that has emerged from the analysis is that **European research policy and funding schemes played a strategic and crucial role** to foster the adoption of public engagement tools and the related cultural attitudes. We outlined not only that the European funding schemes requiring public engagement tasks favoured instrumentally such kind of activities within funded projects, but that, more generally, the strong emphasis from the EU level on public engagement influenced also indirectly both national funding agencies and local research organizations, enabling a virtuous progress also on the understanding of the importance of public engagement in research. The role of EU policy emerged quite clearly when comparing organizations belonging to EU countries and those located outside the EU, where, even when present, the focus on public engagement remained less coherently developed, especially in relation to its implications for fostering a more participatory science open to the wider society.

At the same time, EU policy makers should also consider that the effective research policy framework developed up to now still remain partial, as the **EU policy on RRI has generally succeeded to influence only the more advanced and sympathetic levels of scientific organizations**, which are represented by those researchers more connected to EU-funded projects, newer generations of researchers and fields where public involvement activities are already more developed (such biomedicine or environmental sciences). Consequently, more work is required to stir a wider and broader change on all levels of research organizations.

At national level, policy makers need mainly to focus on the idea that this influence from the **EU level has been translated only partially on the routine practices of local institutions** and that a better alignment between EU policy and national policies ought to be realized. Indeed, only partially and in a marginal way national legislations and documents already adopted in an explicit way public engagement activities. If national scientific policies aim at improving their scientific competitiveness, and democratic processes connected to science, as well as to produce scientific outputs more in line to societal needs, **national policy makers need further efforts to advance suitable conditions for developing public engagement activities**. These efforts should include the structural level (for instance, integrating public engagement activities in the national evaluation systems), as well as the cultural level (for instance, by implementing more organic initiatives of training on public engagement, especially among new generations of scholars).

A different point needs to be made for extra-EU countries, where is visible the lack of influence from supranational frameworks and where, consequently, we observed two different but complementary situations. The first situation regards those extra-EU countries where the work to improve the science-society relationship is well developed and where public engagement can be fostered especially by putting more emphasis on it within contexts seemingly already prepared to implement this dimension. The second situation regards those countries where a more direct involvement of citizens in scientific research processes is still at the beginning and where policy makers seem to be primarily required to identify more strongly the involvement of societal actors as a crucial challenge for their scientific systems in the next years.

## 1.2 Lessons learned relevant to different organisations

The report strongly focused on the lessons that can be learned by scientific organizations to improve their public engagement activities. These lessons regard different aspects, related both to how structuring in a better way public engagement activities and how to improve the cultural conditions favouring this dimension. These lessons have been also presented in the form of useful practices (section 4.4) that can be inspirations to develop similar activities in different contexts, even if having in mind the idea that contextual and local constrains always imply some sort of adaptation, re-articulation and adjustment of those useful practices.

We identified three crucial aspects that need to be taken seriously into account by research organizations to improve public engagement activities. First, scientific organizations should focus on the **need to overcoming the fragmentation** of public engagement activities within their organizations, an issue which is more relevant for very large research institutions. In this case, what could be useful include actions like building up a dedicated staff team, establishing web sites able to gather and make more visible the existing experiences and also to start collecting indicators and data to assess their own performances in public engagement. Secondly, scientific organizations should invest in order to **create a context more favourable to embrace public engagement activities**: on the one hand, by elaborating an explicit system of rewards and career improvements related also to the efforts devoted to public engagement; on the other hand, by investing in training and education, especially for PhD and early-career researchers, about how to perform more advanced forms of public engagement. Finally, and more generally, scientific organizations need to robustly acknowledge that, far from being an ancillary and subordinate work, **public engagement represents instead a crucial challenge to improve their ability to innovate** and their chances to compete in an increasingly complex and competitive scientific world.