

**ENGAGING CITIZENS IN INNOVATION PROCESSES**

**Executive Summary**

- Societal challenges, such as digitization or climate change, establish the need for setting participation on the political agenda.
- Joining forces of users, citizens, and industry in shared innovation processes provide opportunities to tackle the needs of both society and economy.
- Co-creation needs a clear compass to gain socially desirable outcomes. The concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) provides a strong framework for matching technological progress with public needs.
- Policy support of RRI-based co-creation is needed to improve awareness of this approach and to disseminate best practices.
- Responsible co-creation is demanding. Policy funding should be based on quality criteria.

- RRI follows the principle to integrate environmental and societal concerns in innovation and research processes.
- Public engagement is at the heart of all RRI principles, aiming at embedding RRI across all areas of science and technology by mapping existing societal engagement with a focus on how and why citizens can be engaged in research and innovation processes and highlighting how practices could be improved in the future.
- RRI provides the opportunity to anticipate the impacts an innovation will have and work accordingly to benefit society and the environment.
- Engagement can make policy and business decisions more transparent, comprehensible, and legitimate, as well as improve the implementation and effectiveness of innovation policy.

**Supporting policy with scientific evidence?**

Observing the current political landscape, on various levels from local communities to supranational institutions, one can see a rapidly growing demand for concepts and approaches on how to engage citizens in policy-making. An important manifestation of this trend is the launch of the *Competence Centre for Participatory and Deliberative Democracy*. The centre explicitly responds to the “increasing demand from the European Commission, EU institutions and countries for capacity to support participatory and deliberative

**Why should policy support participation in innovation processes?**

To answer this question, looking at Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is necessary. RRI has emerged as a powerful concept for co-creation with users and citizens and political support has contributed to the diffusion of the concept. Further political engagement, however, is necessary to keep RRI in focus in the face of current societal challenges. In particular, the following benefits of RRI are important:

LIVING INNOVATION  
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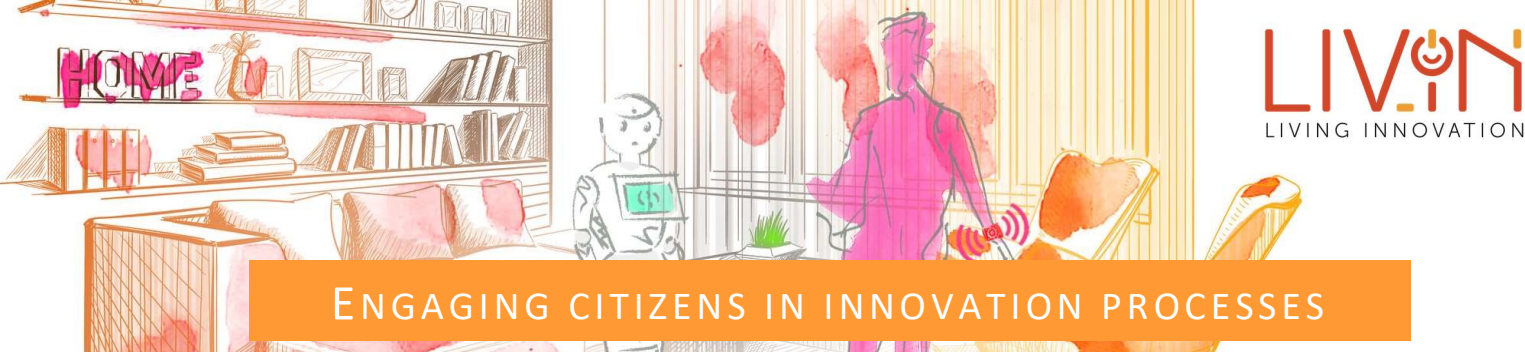
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projects and policies”.<sup>1</sup> Key is the centre’s focus on gathering scientific expertise to build up a knowledge pool for citizen engagement and providing advice on “guidance and tools to support the development of socially robust policy through participatory and deliberative practices across different levels of governance in the EU”. In which policy areas is the need for participation particularly urgent? Thinking on developments, such as digitization, augmented reality, or green economy, the need for applying more participatory approaches in innovation policy and processes becomes obvious. This is the point at which the EU-funded project LIVING INNOVATION enters the game, since it gathered rich experiences in co-creating innovations in advanced technologies worth sharing in this policy brief.

### What are the success conditions?

To unfold its potential in contributing to achieving more societally sound innovations, RRI needs to be built upon a strong practical component. The approach of user co-creation meets this requirement and helps to transfer the RRI concept to business contexts. Co-creation allows users to take an active role in innovation processes.

### What kind of political support is needed?

Involving citizens in innovation processes is an important step, but it cannot be squeezed into a scheme. However, some essential funding incentives can be set to

contribute to the successful implementation of co-creation processes:

*Research funding needs to allow a framework for trial and error and for gaining experience.*

There is no guarantee that a possible outcome can be outlined at the very beginning of the process. Participation needs openness and no pressure to achieve a specific result. Working openly with citizens, taking their needs seriously, and only searching for joint results in the next step, often contradicts classic research funding. This does not mean that a high-quality outcome is not sought, but this outcome cannot always be determined from the beginning in a responsive process.

*No enforced specific outcome expectations and requirements before the process is started.*

Specific outcome expectations and requirements prior to the co-creation process should be avoided. What is needed, therefore, is flexible research funding that also ensures the ability to link up after the actual participation process.

*Participatory culture needs more time if it is to establish commitment and connectivity.*

Research funding programs should specifically address processes in which industry and citizens develop innovations in innovative and responsible formats, such as real live labs and living labs.

*An award for successful industry-user collaboration should be initiated to help promoting co-creating in a responsible way.*

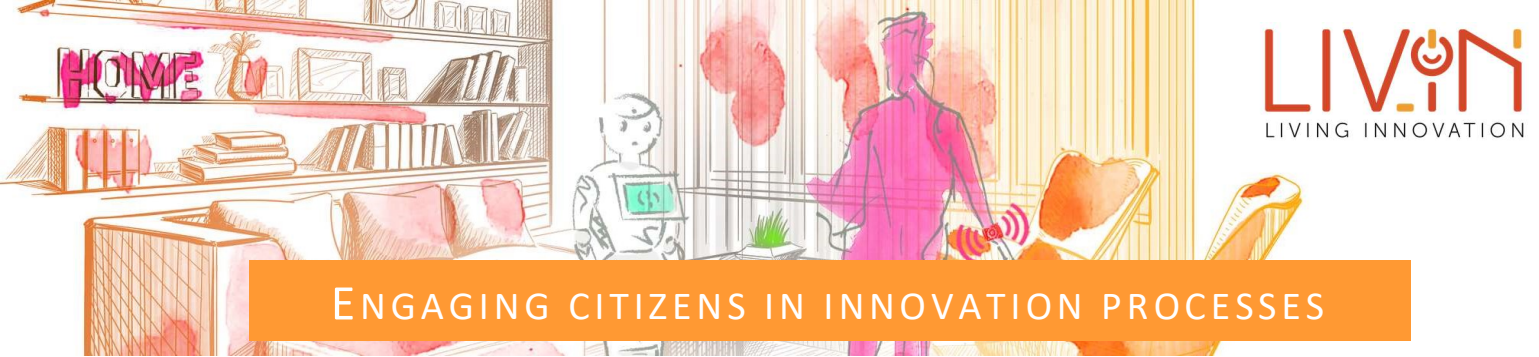
### A glimpse on the LIVING INNOVATION project

How can companies and citizens collaborate for the sake of embedding new technologies into the needs of both entrepreneurs and users?

Relying upon the approach of Responsible Research and Innovation, the EU funded project LIVING INNOVATION sought to create innovations in the emerging fields of smart home and smart health technologies and services.

Over the years 2019 and 2020, a total of six Co-Creation Labs with 150 participants were conducted to both arrive at deployable innovations adapted to user needs and practical knowledge on how to conduct industry-citizen collaborations.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/event/other-event/launch-competence-centre-participatory-and-deliberative-democracy> (accessed October 26, 2021).



## What quality criteria should be used to decide on funding requests?

- **Legitimacy:** A clear mandate for the process must usually be defined and is important for the legitimacy of the co-creation process.
- **Methods:** The methods applied should be aligned with the goals of the co-creation process. There are many methodological handbooks that link the use of the right method with the respective goal of the co-creation process.
- **Selection of participants:** The question of who should be involved in the process is also not a trivial one. It is worth asking which citizens should be involved and how they can be recruited. Focus should be placed on hard-to-reach groups to foster inclusive innovation.
- **Scientific evaluation:** The promotion of a scientific process-accompanying evaluation of the participation process is an important factor in ensuring the quality of the co-creation process and its results and the satisfaction of all those involved.

### Promoting engagement of citizens in innovation processes should...

#### ... MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

- ... be tailored to the circumstances and objectives. Involve the right number and relevant people.
- ... be effectively embedded in the relevant policy or decision-making process.
- ... be reviewed and evaluated to improve practice.
- ... be transparent.
- ... be well communicated.
- ... keep those involved informed (feedback to participants).
- ... treat participants with respect.
- ... give priority to participants' discussions, needs and ideas while ensuring that interests do not dominate in RRI processes.
- ... build trusting working relationships.
- ... have integrity (ensuring real commitment, data, and privacy).