



JRC COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE (VERSION FINAL 18TH DECEMBER 2018)

1. Introduction

Citizen Engagement is hoped to be a transformative tool to address different pitfalls of policy making in the EU. Engaging citizens across the EU policy cycle could potentially overcome some of the difficulties policy making is facing, not least because it could help with ensuring the social robustness of those policies, in other words, answering actual societal concerns and desires.

Indeed, over the past decades, it has been observed an increasing tension between a growing demand for evidence-based policy advice (science for policy) and a loss of public trust in science. This comes amid a more generalized trend in public distrust in governance institutions. While scientific knowledge is a necessary foundation for policy-making, a number of large-scale policy issues have led to controversies that cannot be handled by mainstream knowledge sources alone. Progressive acknowledgement that different epistemologies [ways of knowing] and different *knowledges* need to be considered in policy-making is visible everywhere. In addition, public interest and social utility can no longer be presumed or voiced through political representation alone. When “facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent”¹, a robust characterisation of most of the societal issues that are dealt with by the European Commission becomes fundamental together with the necessity to create spaces to engage different actors. Moreover, in the context of the COM “Better regulation for better results - An EU agenda” there is a strong call for new forms of engagement to steer increasing proximity to European citizens when it comes to the design and implementation of policies that affect us all. This agenda has so far mainly been implemented through new guidelines on stakeholder consultation.

¹ Framing context of post-normal science after Funtowicz, S. and Ravetz, J. 1990. *Uncertainty and quality in science for policy* (Vol. 15). Springer Science & Business Media.

To ensure a genuine engagement of citizens in the policy cycle, more could and should be done to go beyond mere stakeholder consultation. By establishing and maintaining citizen engagement in the whole policy cycle, the ‘evidence’ provided in its different steps becomes inclusive of and open to citizens’ voices, concerns, expectations, knowledge and imaginaries about EU governance. The JRC can help in the development of meaningful citizen engagement spaces and processes.

2 Mission of the Community of Practice

The mission of the Community of Practice (CoP) is to bring together the existing, but so far scattered, expertise on various variations of citizen engagement. Starting from JRC colleagues this will later also include peers in policy DGs and outside the EU institutions. This collaboration will enable the EC to draw, and build on, an extended pool of expertise. It will also improve information sharing and enhance the collaborative and more efficient work among relevant actors of the domain, with the overall aim to strengthen the contribution of citizen engagement and its integration into EU Policy cycle.

This “community” therefore includes and engages with those who carry out different forms of citizen engagement activities using a variety of tools to assess outcomes, and/or maintain spaces where citizen engagement can take place.

3. Objectives of the Community of Practice

The main objectives of the CoP are as follows:

1. To strengthen and broaden the evidence base process, enhance knowledge and provide the Commission with a holistic and socially robust overview of the topic.
2. To communicate and highlight the importance, contribution and potential of citizen engagement in all phases of the policy cycle.
3. To connect people, enable open dialogue and share interests, views and ideas among colleagues involved in citizen engagement practices, providing a space for sharing best practices, lessons learnt, methodologies, and data in citizen engagement practices.
4. To explore how citizen engagement practitioners frame their work and anticipate how it will influence the policy cycle.
5. To identify possible synergies, support coordination among activities and foster collaborative as well as inter- and transdisciplinary initiatives.
6. To strengthen JRC capacity to provide citizen engagement services as part of its support to policy DGs.
7. To contribute to the delivery of specific major joint outcomes such as flagship reports, meetings and events.
8. To propose *demonstrators*, i.e. topics in priority policy areas where different approaches to citizen engagement can be deployed and experimented with.
9. To learn from communities about their own community-led engagement practices and, conversely, to empower those communities with knowledge generated through the projects run by the members of this CoP.

In order to fulfil its objectives, the CoP will primarily complement and support the work of the transversal JRC initiative on citizen engagement.

As a first step, JRC staff will be involved in the launch and initial stages of the CoP² through purposefully organised events and brainstorming meetings, and actionable collaborative activities. As the Community matures, membership will be expanded to include other services of the Commission. Afterwards, external actors will be invited to join, as appropriate. The ToR will be consequently amended.

4. TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

The further development of the CoP will require dedicated actions to ensure that the CoP fully utilises existing resources and, importantly, to capture shared values, working practices and an overarching idea of the rationale for engaging heterogeneous actors. Furthermore, the community of practice will need to be promoted across the JRC (and beyond) with infrastructure set up in such a way as to make it easy for new members to join, and also on an ad-hoc basis. This also implies supporting services for sustaining this emerging community, namely tools and venues.

1. Collaborative workspaces.

A *virtual* collaborative workspace for the CoP is established on Connected. Unit H.2 will assist further in identifying needs, functions, information architecture and then the implementation of such architecture and features. It will also train and support the community managers in their role, based on agreed principles. Other complementary tools could also be made available and linked through the Connected space, such as database and virtual engagement spaces. As a next step, a physical collaborative space will be secured with the upcoming development of a JRC ‘collaborative space’ (Building 17). A *makerspace* is also available for citizen engagement.

2. A series of lectures and conferences.

The CoP will organise a lecture series where distinguished scientists, researchers, representatives from EU Agencies, international organisations, NGOs, the business community and other relevant stakeholders will be invited to deliver talks on different topics. The aim is to enrich the knowledge base, open up the CoP within a broader context, trigger debate and identify new issues, aspects and perspectives.

3. Workshops, meetings and other formats of engagement.

The CoP will organise and/or facilitate the organisation of workshops on various themes and organise meetings to discuss/brainstorm on particular topics. This could include also on-line events, e.g. forums, e-participation .

4. Annual Citizen Engagement Festival.

The CoP will organise an annual event extended to the outside communities where citizen engagement work will be displayed and discussed in interactive forums with invited experts and citizens.

5. Citizen engagement inventory.

The CoP will maintain a citizen engagement activities inventory for the European Commission.

² See the Annex of the ToR for the planning of the first year.

6. Citizens feedback mechanisms, namely feedback emails, reports, organisation of debriefing events, on-line engagement follow-ups, etc.

The CoP will systematically explore ways of maintaining dialogues with the citizens engaged in participatory events, by e.g. inviting them further to participate in its events.

5. GOVERNANCE

The governance of the CoP should be simple and consist of a Community Manager who will work with different units across the JRC and will also appoint tasks and responsibilities according to the CoP needs. Where relevant, the CoP can have a steering committee/working group where a number of tasks are allocated to dedicated task leaders; for example, when maintaining and identifying the external network or communicating strategies and implementations or leading events organization. The CoP manager will be supported by an assistant. Other resources needs have to be negotiated with members.

Participants of the CoP can either request to become Members themselves or be invited by the committee. The CoP is open to all EC staff engaged and/or with expertise/experience in topics relevant to the scope of the CoP. The Project and Work Package leaders responsible for activities related to citizen engagement will be invited to join the Community and contribute to it as part of their work-related tasks.