



Submission to a Consultation

European Plant Science Organisation
www.epsoweb.org

EPSO Submission to the European Commission consultation 'Science with and for society'

Brussels, 9.10.2014

Information about the respondent

EPSO is a registered organisation with the European Commission registrar:

Name: European Plant Science Organisation, EPSO
Legal status: Non-profit academic internal organisation
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We are answering as an independent academic non-profit organisation with more than 220 research institutes and universities from 31 countries mainly in Europe, and 3 100 individuals, as members, representing over 28 000 people working in plant science.

Country of location: EU level organisation

Our organisations' main activity is support to research and advise on science policy. Our field of work includes plant science, agriculture - horticulture - forestry, biotechnology - plant breeding, energy, environment, food, health, international cooperation, policy, research infrastructure, public outreach, education etc.

Due to the short time frame, this input is based on discussion and feedback of our members at the annual General Meetings of EPSO from 2010 (when a new action in public outreach was requested), 2011 (when the launch of the Fascination of Plants Day as such outreach action was agreed), 2012 and 2013 (when we organised the first and second FoPD), and 2014 (when we discussed preparation of the FoPD 2015).

We focus on support for 'Science with society snowball initiatives that are directly bringing scientists together with society, are interactive, regular and long-term and give the research community the capacity to build their communication activities to the society at large, across countries in Europe and beyond. This is based on our members' experience with outreach activities and the EPSO and member experience with the Fascination of Plants Day (www.plantday.org).

1. What should be the main priorities needed to shape the next "Horizon 2020" Work Programme build an effective cooperation between science and society?

EPSO, as a large independent academic non-profit organization representing more than 220 research institutes, departments and universities from 31 countries considers it critical that researchers are

engaged in creating communication platforms and are able to use these freely to communicate directly with the general public.

As one priority, the 2016-17 Work Programme should aim to support 'Science with society snowball initiatives that are directly bringing scientists together with society, are interactive, regular and long-term and give the research community the capacity to build their communication activities to the society at large, including young people such as school children, students and, as appropriate, policy makers and the media'.

Such initiatives would be able to produce common materials and build a network of communicators, to achieve a high impact communication at local, national, European and global levels. This includes sharing of best practice.

2. Which are the main barriers preventing effective cooperation between science and society?

Barriers (B): Science can appear distant to the public (B1) as researchers work enclosed and communicate in technical language. It is often communicated by intermediate professionals (B2), occasionally superficial or sensationalist coverage or misinformation by groups or individuals in their own interests.

As researchers work under time-pressure (B3) we need to create occasions and resources with them to communicate their research. Doing this at European / global scale can unite communities and achieves critical mass motivation and impact (B4). Despite the huge success, the Fascination of Plants Day (see 3.) could not run in 2014 due to a lack of resources (B5).

European funded centrally provided coordination and resources (designer, webmaster, printing, mailing, images) for 'Science with society snowball initiatives that are directly bringing scientists together with society', free for anybody to use is needed.

3. Which topics could be supported by the next "Horizon 2020" Work Programme 2016-2017 with regard to "Science with and for Society"?

We propose European resources for the coordination and central resources of 4-6 'Science with society snowball initiatives that are directly bringing scientists together with society', for regular long term (e.g. biannual over 6 years) outreach activities at European/ global scale, enabling a variety of research communities to run their communication effort.

EPSO organised the Fascination of Plants Day (FoPD) in 2012 and 2013 with huge success, growing from a European to a global initiative. FoPD support was recommended by the European Parliament (Plant breeding report, 24.1.2014).

FoPD has an excellent leverage effect: over 1000 events in 2013. A brand was created, online and printed communication materials produced, all events listed on a central website. National co-ordinators translated and tailored materials to their region, used their networks to encourage events. FoPD united a global research community and engaged the public with plant science on an unprecedented scale.

4. What would you like to see as outcomes from the projects funded through the "Science with and for Society" calls for proposals 2016-2017?

1-Build effective cooperation between science and society: Improve direct interaction of science and society at local levels across the world; Co-ordinate outreach for best motivation, resource use and impact; Share best practice, education and engagement materials

2-Recruite new talent for science: People discuss directly with practising scientists in a relaxed, interactive environment their work and careers; Show children and students how science can address

challenges and how they could contribute – interest, fascinate them to consider science careers / study

3-Pair scientific excellence with social awareness: Improve visibility and public appreciation of a scientific domain related to challenges and opportunities; Create a platform and common communication materials allowing researchers to develop their public engagement skills; Realize where products of today/ tomorrow come from, link tradition and new technologies for future success

4-Take European leadership in a global arena

5. How do you see international cooperation (beyond EU borders) being addressed in "Science with and for Society"?

Science is global, our challenges are global, and communication has become global.

With this in mind, we propose an event for which a successful brand is developed and implemented throughout the world by the open sharing of materials to national co-ordinators in all (incl. third-party) countries. It is anticipated the interaction and collaboration involved in organizing such an event will aid the building of new relationships throughout the research community.

Specifically in our experience, the FoPD started as a European initiative but already the first one (in 2012) encompassed over 30 countries in / beyond Europe. The 2nd FoPD even generated over 1000 events in 54 countries on all continents in 2013.

The research community is global but rarely functions as such. FoPD proves that a united global effort on a central idea can inspire the general public across the world, making them feel part of something bigger than themselves.

In this way, Europe can take leadership in a global arena.

6. In which priorities of "Horizon 2020" and how should science and society issues be integrated (e.g. in Excellent Science, in Industrial Leadership, in Societal Challenges)?

The proposed initiative is best supported under the Societal Challenges pillar as it spans the full research – innovation – market cycle, engaging all stakeholders. An obvious one is the SC2 (agri-food), in which 4-6 initiatives will enable several sectors to develop and improve their outreach activities.

In the Excellent Science pillar similar activities could increase public appreciation for the value of fundamental science. In addition, science museums could be activated through collaboration with networks such as Ecsite, the European network of science centres and museums

Similarly, the Industrial Leadership pillar could be utilized to communicate the value of basic and applied research as benefit of the European economy – how this materializes in jobs, competitiveness and leadership.

7. Do you have further comments

Given EPSO's experience and successful activity in this area, we will be happy to discuss experience and ideas further with you. Pls see www.plantday.org for the underlying idea, sharing of resources, leverage effect and success of FoPD 2012, 2013 (www.epsoweb.org/file/1807) and start of FoPD 2015.