

Recommendations from the SciShops Symposium

The SciShops Symposium 30-31 January 2020, Brescia, Italy, brought together professionals active in Science Shops, community-based participatory research (CBPR) and citizen science, and included representatives from academia, civil society and industry.

In an interactive session during the event, participants were asked to discuss two questions with each other and then submit their suggestions using the digital www.menti.com tool.

The intention is for these suggestions to be disseminated and used to inform future work in this field at international, European, national and local levels.

Q1: How could the European Commission support future work in this area?

Suggestions by participants have been collated and categorised below:

Funding and calls

- Securing funding for Science with and for Society work, giving more visibility to these types of actions.
- By showing the importance of investing in this area, it has the multiplier effect of convincing governments of the importance of investing in this area too.
- Invest less money in more actors.
- Provide smaller grants for single institutions.
- Develop new models of calls that allow smaller organisations to take part.
- Fund more projects within one call than is currently done.

Supporting the sustainability of projects

- Support the continuation of previous projects/programmes.
- Provide support to explore the sustainability of projects and results.
- Encourage the embedding of project results in existing structures.

Sharing and promoting best practice

- More EU coordination between projects.
- Share more success stories from European projects.
- Develop a kitemark for CBPR.
- Provide “best principles” rather than best practice.
- Take time to listen to project success stories to understand the impact of investing in this area.

Awareness raising and education

- Promote and recognise the benefits and social impact of this kind of work.
- Raise more awareness of the importance of this area.
- Raise youth/students' awareness of these topics and concepts – the next generation to work in this field.
- Support a training network.
- Train evaluators of project proposals to give them a better understanding of community-based research.
- Raise awareness among society.

Facilitating collaboration

- Encourage collaboration between European projects that have the same/similar objectives.
- Facilitate collaboration rather than competition between projects.
- Organise more matchmaking events.
- Encourage more involvement of industry and governments.

- Support collaboration through twinning within and between projects to achieve more impact.
- Provide funds to allow people to organise more local matchmaking events.
- More involvement of schools and other education actors.
- Provide assistance for teachers to get involved in the co-creation of projects.
- Get more feedback and input from national citizen associations.

Promoting citizen engagement in research / community-based participatory research and Science Shops

- Develop specific EU policies to support work in this area.
- Expect researchers to become very engaged with their communities by asking for this explicitly in funding calls.
- Keep Swafs alive as a programme within the next framework programme.
- Make CBPR / citizen engagement a part of research project evaluation.
- Encourage the CBPR approach in funded projects.
- Check whether RRI (responsible research and innovation) is really taking place.
- Identify countries with less CBPR experience and support these countries.
- Citizen science should be a priority.
- The EU should mainstream citizen and public engagement with research. Projects that successfully include Science Shops and other ways to include work with citizens in the whole process should win funds. Aim: Science shops in unexpected research proposals.
- Support a coordination action to support the engagement of schools, as well as the engagement of citizens/Science Shops in specific hot topics.
- Help achieve culture change by enforcing policy change at the institutional level.

Q2: How can the international Science Shop / Living Knowledge community support future work in this area?

Suggestions by participants have been collated and categorised below:

Supporting knowledge exchange

- Exchanges.
- Mentoring for new CBPR initiatives / Science Shops.
- Share information, findings and experience.
- Share good practices.
- Provide networking opportunities.
- Produce video materials.
- Help disseminating project results.
- Encourage active engagement in the Living Knowledge network.
- Organise webinars, such as the 'virtual visits' with existing Science Shops run by the SciShops project.
- Integrate the SciShops platform with that of the Living Knowledge network.

Supporting new collaborations

- Support the creation of new partnerships.
- Encourage more cooperation and less competition between those working in the area.
- Networking events to build collaborations that are focused on developing realistic projects that we can make happen.
- Create more opportunities for new partners to join and participate in proposals and coordinate the involvement of Science Shops in project proposals.
- Provide resources to support networking.

- Find/create small funds to support small international collaborations, making organisations less dependent on big EU proposals.
- Booster funds for new or just established Science Shops (like the ACTION project does for citizen science, ca. 10.000 Euros for 6 months with training/support).
- Brokerage opportunities via a website.
- Create sub-networks at a more local level.

Advocacy work

- More lobbying.
- Have a stronger focus on policy.
- Advocacy at a high level using curated examples that demonstrate impact and value.

Awareness raising

- Share and raise awareness of the values of Science Shops.
- Help to communicate results and inspiring examples of CBPR.
- Raise youth/students' awareness of these topics/concepts to get the next generation involved.
- Help raise awareness amongst academics of the opportunities to work with Science Shops.
- Help raise awareness amongst students of the opportunities and benefits of undertaking Science Shop / CBPR research projects.
- Help to promote CBPR, Science Shops etc in less experienced countries.
- Get active in mainstream media, spread the word at all levels of society.
- Promote reward and recognition for this type of work.
- Help to generate visibility for CBPR projects at a higher level until it becomes mainstream.

- Raise the profile of the Living Knowledge network / international Science Shop community at universities and research institutions. One Science Shop could act as a hub for many different universities.
- Build a dense network from local to continental level.