

Policy brief PRO-Ethics

Engaging Diverse Stakeholders in Research and Innovation: A Call for Inclusive Policies

Executive Summary

This policy brief addresses the critical need for inclusive participation in research and innovation, as the main goal towards which the PRO-Ethics project was designed. A recent panel discussion held during the 'Connect. Collaborate. Create.' Conference strengthened this need, highlighting the importance of integrating diverse perspectives, ensuring ethical practices, and redefining research excellence to include participatory elements. This document outlines actionable policy recommendations to promote inclusive, ethical, and democratic research practices.

Background

In a recent panel discussion with the title 'When funding agencies do stakeholder participation: Aspirations and ethical implications' experts from various fields came together to discuss enhancing participation in research and innovation. The conversation was moderated by Margaret Gold of Leiden University, who continuously provided valuable insights for the development of the [Ethics Framework and Guidelines](#) as advisory board member of the PRO-Ethics project. In addition, the panel brought together experts on various aspects of ethical participatory engagement in research and innovation: Juliana Chaves Chaparro of UNESCO, Robert Gianni of Maastricht University, Anne-Floor Scholvinck of the Rathenau Instituut, and James Morris of Science Europe. The panel was one of the highlights of the 'Connect. Collaborate. Create.' Conference, held on 19-21 October in Paris as a partnership between the PRO-Ethics and the COESO projects.

This conversation is pivotal in the current global landscape, where scientific research significantly affects societal development. The panelists provided insights into ethical, democratic, and practical aspects of participatory research, and gave valuable guidance for policymakers and research institutions.



Key Themes and Arguments

Human Rights and Open Science

Panelists argued that access to scientific knowledge is a fundamental human right. They advocated for open science policies that ensure research findings are accessible to all, thus democratizing knowledge and fostering innovation across diverse communities. This includes supporting open access publishing and public databases.

Democratic Participation in Research

The discussion emphasized the necessity of involving a wide range of stakeholders in the research process. This approach not only enriches research outcomes but also ensures that research addresses real-world problems. Policies should incentivize the inclusion of non-traditional and marginalized voices in research design and decision-making processes.

Ethical Considerations and Public Trust

A significant focus lay on embedding ethical considerations deeply within research practices. This involves ensuring participant safety, data privacy, and the employment of informed consent procedures. The panelists suggested policies that promote transparency and accountability, thereby building public trust in research processes.

Research Funding and Policy Influence

The influence of funding organizations in shaping research agendas and promoting participatory research and innovation was the main topic of the discussion. Panelists recommended funding policies that prioritize socially relevant and participatory research projects. This includes grants and awards for projects that demonstrate inclusive stakeholder engagement as well as a direct and measurable impact on society.

Challenges in Engaging Diverse Stakeholders

Engaging diverse stakeholders, especially those from underrepresented groups, presents various challenges. The panelists discussed the importance of overcoming cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic barriers to ensure meaningful participation. Policy interventions could include targeted outreach programs and capacity-building initiatives.

Impact on Research Quality

The panel argued that inclusive research practices enhance the quality and relevance of scientific outputs. They suggested redefining metrics of research excellence to include aspects like community impact, stakeholder engagement, and societal relevance, alongside traditional academic metrics.

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) Implementation

The discussion also touched upon RRI, emphasizing its implementation in various research contexts. RRI involves considering the long-term impacts of research on society and the environment. The panelists called for policies that embed RRI principles in research funding, governance, and evaluation processes.

Policy Recommendations

- Develop policies that promote open access to scientific knowledge, ensuring it aligns with the principle of science as a human right.
- Encourage funding models that facilitate participatory research methods into diverse research contexts, especially those that include diverse and marginalized stakeholders.
- Implement comprehensive ethical guidelines that integrate respect, transparency, and trust into all stages of the research process.
- Redefine research excellence criteria to include measures of participatory elements and societal impact.
- Promote the implementation of RRI principles in research practices across disciplines and organizations.

Conclusion

The panel discussion highlighted the need for urgent policy changes to foster more inclusive and democratic participation in research and innovation. Adopting these recommendations will lead to more ethically sound, democratically engaged, and socially relevant research outcomes. Such changes are imperative to ensure that research and innovation processes not only advance scientific knowledge, but also contribute positively to society.

PRO-Ethics was a 4 year project funded by the EU H2020 scheme, running from 2020 to 2024. Our aim was to facilitate more relevant, fair and effective research and innovation activities.

PRO-Ethics brought together a consortium of research and innovation funding organisations (RFOs) from across Europe to test ethical ways of involving citizens in the activities of funding agencies, including strategy development, innovation projects, and evaluation processes..

Through real-life experiments in the context of 11 pilots, dialogue with relevant stakeholders, and theoretical assessments, the project has developed an Ethics Framework and Guidelines for participation.

Our consortium consisted of 15 partners from 12 European countries, including RFOs, universities, research and technology organisations, and academic research organisations.

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Please visit PRO-Ethics' website pro-ethics.eu for detailed information about the project, our pilots, our reports and results. You can also watch our video or find us on [Zenodo](#).



Project details and contact info

Project Name: PRO-Ethics – Participatory real life experiments in research and innovation funding organisations on ethics

Coordinator

Centre for Social Innovation, Austria

Consortium

Danish Board of Technology, Denmark

Technical University Delft, Netherlands

Sciences Po, France

Nesta, United Kingdom

EUREKA, Belgium

EUREC Office, Germany

Innoviris, Belgium

Research Council Norway, Norway

Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology, Spain

Austrian Research Promotion Agency, Austria

VDI/VDE Innovation + Technology, Germany

Executive Agency for Financing of Higher Education, Research, Technology Development and Innovation, Romania

Research Council Lithuania, Lithuania

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For more information

Website:

<https://pro-ethics.eu/>

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/pro-ethics>

Zenodo:

<https://zenodo.org/communities/pro-ethics>

Unfortunately, PRO-Ethics partner Technology Agency of the Czech Republic had to leave the consortium in spring 2022.

LBG Open Innovation in Science Center joined PRO-Ethics via an open call in autumn 2022.

Contact

contact@pro-ethics.eu

ZSI - Zentrum für Soziale Innovation GmbH
Linke Wienzeile 246
1150 Vienna, Austria
institut@zsi.at

