ecs european citizen science

Report on the ECS participatory selection workshops

Driving Collaboration and Innovation: Insights from the ECS Co-Design Process

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1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide a comprehensive report on the first round of participatory selection workshops that were recently conducted (17 and 18 May 2023) as part of the ECS Co-Design Process, the initiative to expand and enhance the services offered by the eu-citizen.science platform, part of the European Citizen Science (ECS) project. These workshops played a vital role in ensuring that the development of the platform is guided by the needs and insights of its diverse user community.

1.1 Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this document is to share a detailed overview of the process and outcomes of the participatory selection workshops. It is intended to keep participants and other stakeholders informed about the decisions made, and the rationale behind those decisions, during the workshops. By sharing this information, we hope to maintain transparency and foster continued engagement from all stakeholders in the ongoing development of the platform.

1.2 Overview of the Co-Design Process

The co-design process is conceived as a means to facilitate user participation in shaping the future development of the eu-citizen.science platform. We recognize that the best way to understand the needs, preferences, and potential challenges of users is to directly involve them in the design process.

The process is divided into four annual cycles, each including all phases from the initial identification of needs to the final development of services or functionalities and their integration into the platform. This iterative approach allows for continuous learning and improvement in each subsequent cycle. The full process is described in Deliverable "D2.1 Plan for the community co-creation activities". A brief summary of the steps taken:

- Initial asynchronous **identification of needs through a survey** sent out several weeks prior to the workshops.
- A round of two **participatory selection workshops**, where users had the opportunity to contribute ideas of the functionalities to be developed.
- **Co-design of the selected functionalities**, a part of which was done at the same workshops, with the rest being completed in another round of follow-up workshops in June.
- **Final development and testing** of the co-designed services.

The participatory selection workshops were conducted using a Miro board, a collaborative online platform that enables participants to brainstorm, share, and discuss ideas. The board was divided into sections, each representing a different phase of the workshop, guiding participants through the process.

This document presents a summary of this process and its outcomes, with a focus on the services selected for future development.

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2. Methodology

The methodology for the participatory selection workshops incorporated a blend of collaborative brainstorming, interactive discussion, and voting. It was structured to encourage broad participation, facilitate open communication, and drive consensus-based prioritization. Here is a detailed look at our approach:

2.1 Outline of the Co-Design Workshops

These workshops were structured into three key phases:

- **Initial Exercise**: Participants were asked to fill out a digital post-it with their name and their profile. This introductory task served as both an icebreaker and a way to familiarize the participants with Miro.
- **Idea Generation**: This was the main section of the workshop. The board was divided into four columns corresponding to different aspects of the platform: functionalities, usability, participation, and a catch-all 'other' category. Participants were encouraged to explore the eu-citizen.science platform in a separate browser tab and suggest potential improvements in each category. Participants were encouraged to propose at least two ideas per column.
- **Idea Prioritization and Co-Design**: After grouping similar ideas and synthesizing them into potential functionalities, we conducted a vote to identify the two most popular proposals. Each participant had two votes, signified by placing a star sticker next to their chosen ideas. The workshop then moved into a co-design phase, where we explored how the selected functionalities could be implemented, what features they should include, and whether they could be integrated with other ideas that did not make the final cut.

2.2 Use of the Miro Board

Miro, a collaborative online platform, was selected as the primary tool for the co-design workshops. It was chosen for its ability to support real-time interaction, brainstorming, and discussion among a large group of participants. Miro enabled participants to zoom in and out, move around the virtual board, and interact with the content.

We primarily used digital post-its for idea generation, which participants could copy, paste, and drag around the board as needed. A star sticker was used during the voting phase, and participants could freely engage with the platform, providing a fluid and interactive user experience.

2.3 Participant Profiles

A total of 14 participants attended the participatory selection workshops. They represented a broad cross-section of profiles related to citizen science, providing a variety of perspectives and insights. Importantly, in the selection of participants for these sessions, the ECS co-design team strived to achieve a gender balance to ensure diverse perspectives. Here is a brief overview of their self-identified profiles (in alphabetical order):

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- Austrian hub for CS projects.
- Citizen science communicator.
- Citizen science project manager.
- CS practitioner from the private sector.
- CS Project Manager and Developer.
- Developer and project manager
- Junior researcher.
- Non-profit involved in CS Projects (often engagement or methodology).
- Professor researcher in Smart Communities projects: co-creation, data & CS.
- Project manager.
- Researcher.
- Researcher and lecturer in citizen science and science communication.
- Researcher in data management, ontology, and semantics with a background in ecology.
- Researcher/Social Scientist = public policy, sociology, social gerontology.
- Social Impact and RRI agent.

The diverse backgrounds of the participants greatly enriched the quality of the discussion and contributed to a comprehensive overview of the needs and opportunities for improvement within the platform. The achieved gender balance further added to the richness of perspectives brought to the co-design process, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable process.

3 Workshop Outcomes

The workshops resulted in a productive exchange of ideas and a clear path forward for the next phase of the eu-citizen.science platform development. This section provides a summary of the ideas generated during the sessions and the results of the prioritization process.

3.1 Summary of Ideas Generated

The participants contributed a range of ideas reflecting their diverse backgrounds and experiences. These ideas revolved around enhancing the platform's user experience, expanding its capabilities, and adding new features to facilitate more interaction among the users. This is a broad outline of the different types of services most frequently repeated in the sessions:

- **Geographic Visualization**: Participants expressed the need for a map displaying all submitted projects and organizations to aid geographic orientation and connections.

- **Enhanced Search Tool**: Suggestions included extending the search tool with recommendation capabilities, adding more filters on the home page, and enhancing the keyword search across all categories.

- **Translation Capabilities**: To promote inclusivity and accessibility, participants proposed the addition of a tool for automatic translation of materials.

- **Improved Events Navigation**: Suggestions here included separating past and upcoming events and adding search filters and logos/images for each event.

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- **Personalized User Experience**: Suggestions were made for a more interactive platform, including transforming the forum section into a social space for interaction and personalized recommendations based on user profiles.
- **Open Data Linkage**: The need for linking to open datasets collected by the citizen science projects was emphasized.
- **Marketplace for Partnering in EU Projects**: This idea highlights the need for a space to find partners for EU projects.
- **Enhanced Project Matching**: Suggestions included better categorization of projects based on equipment used, and improved visibility of events and project metrics.
- **Funding Opportunities**: There was a strong interest in creating a section dedicated to European, national, regional, and local funding opportunities.

3.2 Prioritization Process and Results

At the end of the brainstorming session, participants prioritized their proposed ideas through a voting process, with each participant voting for their top two ideas. The ideas that garnered the most votes are listed below:

- **Keeping Content Up-to-Date**: Participants proposed sending periodic reminders to project owners to update project information.
- **Geographic Visualization**: The idea of having a map showing all submitted projects and organizations was reiterated.
- **Funding Opportunities**: The need for a dedicated section for funding opportunities was highlighted.
- **Onboarding Process**: Participants called for a clearer onboarding process for new projects.

While these ideas were the ones that received the most votes, it is important to note that there was no clear winner, with the selected ideas receiving only one more vote than other proposals. Furthermore, the development team conducted a secondary prioritization process based on the feasibility of implementing these ideas. Consequently, the development plan will likely include several of the proposed services, some of which did not receive the most votes during the workshops. The development team's primary focus will be on the ideas that best align with the platform's vision and technical capabilities, while ensuring that the broad range of needs and preferences identified in these co-design workshops are addressed.

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4 Next Steps

This section provides an outline of the next steps in the development process, including a proposed timeline for the development of the selected services and how workshop participants can continue to be involved.

4.1 Development Timeline

The development team has already begun investigating how to implement the selected services. Preliminary work is focused on understanding the feasibility and potential impact of these services on the overall user experience of the platform. The team will also explore ways to improve existing services based on the feedback received, such as enhancing stats and metrics, refining the events section, and improving the search tool.

Here is an outline of the projected timeline for the next stages of development:

- **May – June 2023**: The development team will continue investigating and begin to develop the selected services, with the goal of determining their feasibility and potential for enhancing the user experience.
- **Late June 2023**: Further co-design workshops will be conducted to finalize the design and functionality of the services to be implemented. Participants will have the opportunity to provide additional feedback and contribute to the refinement of these services.
- **July 2023**: A testing phase will be opened to identify potential bugs or issues with the services before their final implementation. This will ensure that any technical problems are addressed and the services are optimized for user-friendliness and functionality.
- **End of July 2023**: An update of the eu-citizen.science platform will be released, featuring the newly developed services. An online event will be held to showcase the new features and to gather initial user reactions and feedback.

4.2 Participant Involvement in Future Stages

Participant involvement has been crucial to the co-design process thus far, and we highly value the ongoing participation of our community members in the platform's development.

As we progress into the next stages of development, there will be further opportunities for participants to contribute:

- **Co-Design Workshops**: Participants are invited to join further workshops to finalize the design of the new services. These workshops will provide a space for participants to provide their insights and feedback, further shaping the development of the platform.
- **Testing Phase**: Participants will be invited to take part in the testing phase in July. Their feedback will be invaluable in identifying and fixing potential issues before the services are publicly launched.
- **Final Presentation**: Participants are invited to join the online event at the end of July, where the updated platform will be launched. Their feedback on the new services will be vital to assessing the success of the co-design process and guiding future improvements.

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We believe that the continued engagement of the community will be instrumental in making the eu-citizen.science platform a success. We look forward to our community's ongoing participation and contribution in this exciting journey.

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5 Conclusion

This section provides a summary of the process, reflections on the co-design approach, and acknowledgement of contributions.

5.1 Reflection on the Co-Design Process

The co-design process adopted for the development of the eu-citizen.science platform has been a remarkable journey. It highlighted the benefits of involving a diverse set of stakeholders in the design and decision-making processes, particularly when developing a tool meant to serve a wide-ranging community of users.

This process was centered around collaboration and active participation, with all the ideas, suggestions, and decisions emerging from the participants themselves. The co-design workshops served as a platform for communication, creativity, and shared decision-making, leading to a set of services that truly reflect the needs and preferences of the eu-citizen.science community.

Importantly, the process also brought to light the diverse needs and desires of the citizen science community. These insights provided a deeper understanding of the different facets of citizen science and how a platform can best serve this multifaceted field. It was illuminating to see how different participants approached the same challenges from unique perspectives, reinforcing the importance of a diverse, inclusive community in the co-design process.

The voting system adopted for service prioritization ensured democratic decision-making, though it presented its own challenges when no clear winners emerged. However, it also demonstrated the wealth of good ideas generated during the workshops, and the commitment of the development team to incorporate as many of these as possible.

5.2 Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the participants of the participatory selection workshops. Their contributions, ideas, and active participation have been invaluable in shaping the future direction of the eu-citizen.science platform. Their time, dedication, and thoughtful input have not only helped in the identification of new services, but have enriched the overall understanding of the diverse needs and desires of the citizen science community.

A special thanks to the members of the co-design team in ECS. Their guidance and support ensured a smooth and productive co-design process.

This is truly a community effort, and we are excited to see how the platform will evolve with the continued involvement and input from its users. We look forward to the next stages of development and the launch of the new services. Together, we are making eu-citizen.science a collaborative space that supports and enriches citizen science across Europe.

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6 Appendices

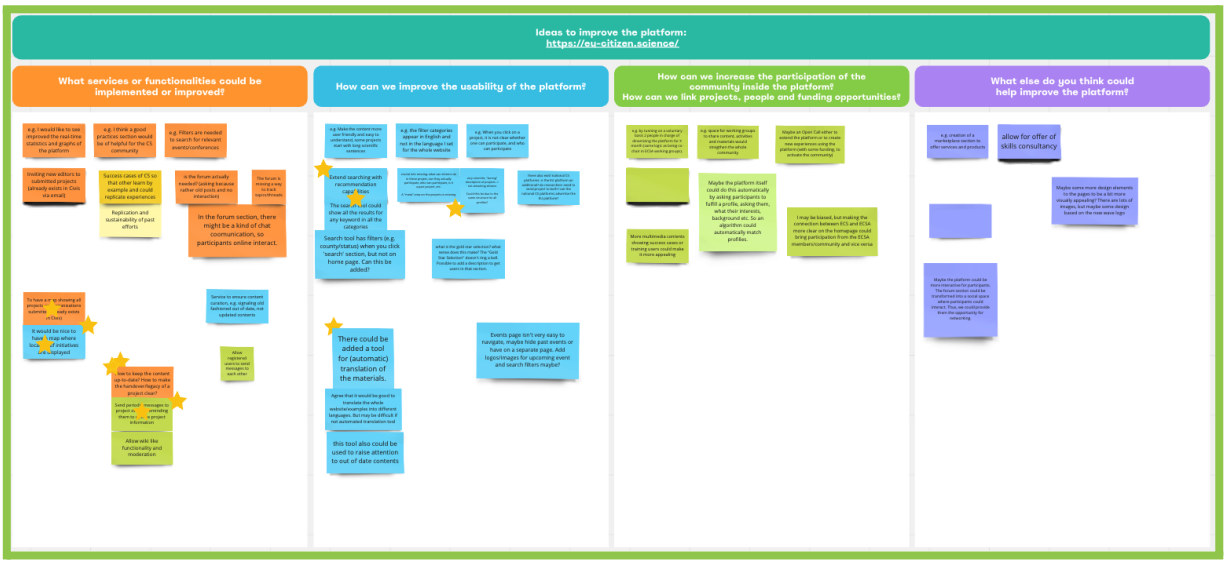
This section includes additional detailed information related to the co-design process.

6.1 Screenshots from the Miro Board

The screenshots capture the creative and collaborative process that took place during the co-design workshops, reflecting the active participation and diverse contributions of all participants. They also provide a visual record of the process and serve as a useful tool for recalling discussions, ideas, and decisions.

For the sake of document completeness, a description of the Miro board layout can be given. The board was divided into several sections to guide the co-design process:

- **Board 1**: Personal introductions and participant profiling. Here, participants shared their professional backgrounds and experiences. Screenshots of this board are not included as it contains personal information about the participants.
- **Board 2**: Identification of needs and ideas for the platform. This section was a brainstorming area where participants were encouraged to contribute their ideas freely. Subsequently, it was the board where the prioritization of services was carried out by voting. During the workshops, the ECS co-design team grouped similar ideas together. This grouping is already reflected in the screenshots below.



Board 2 from the 17 May 2023 session

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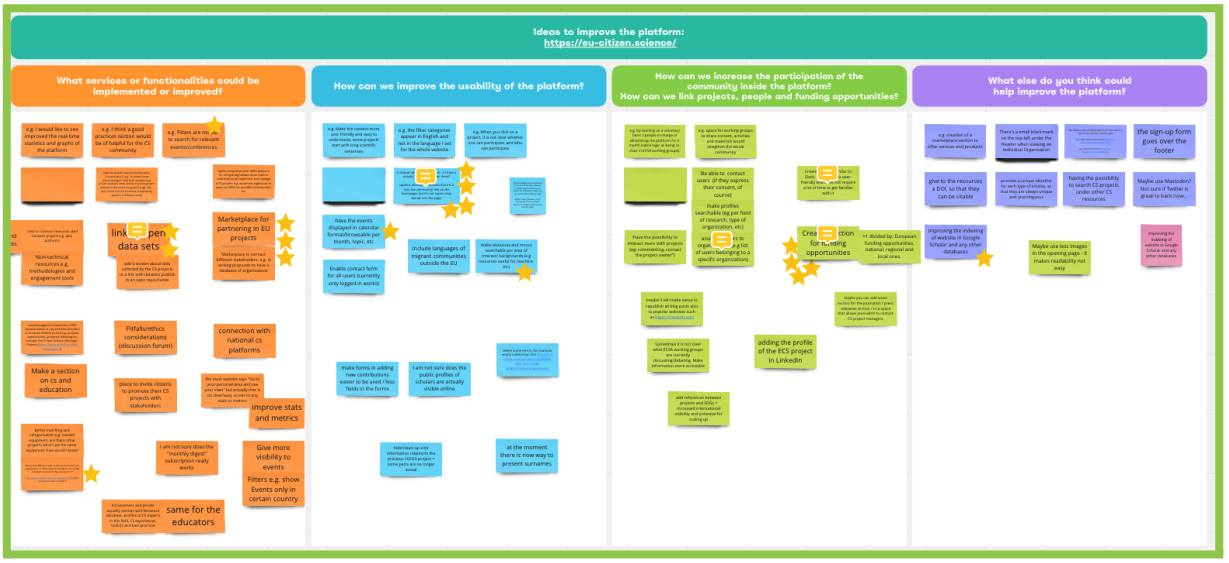
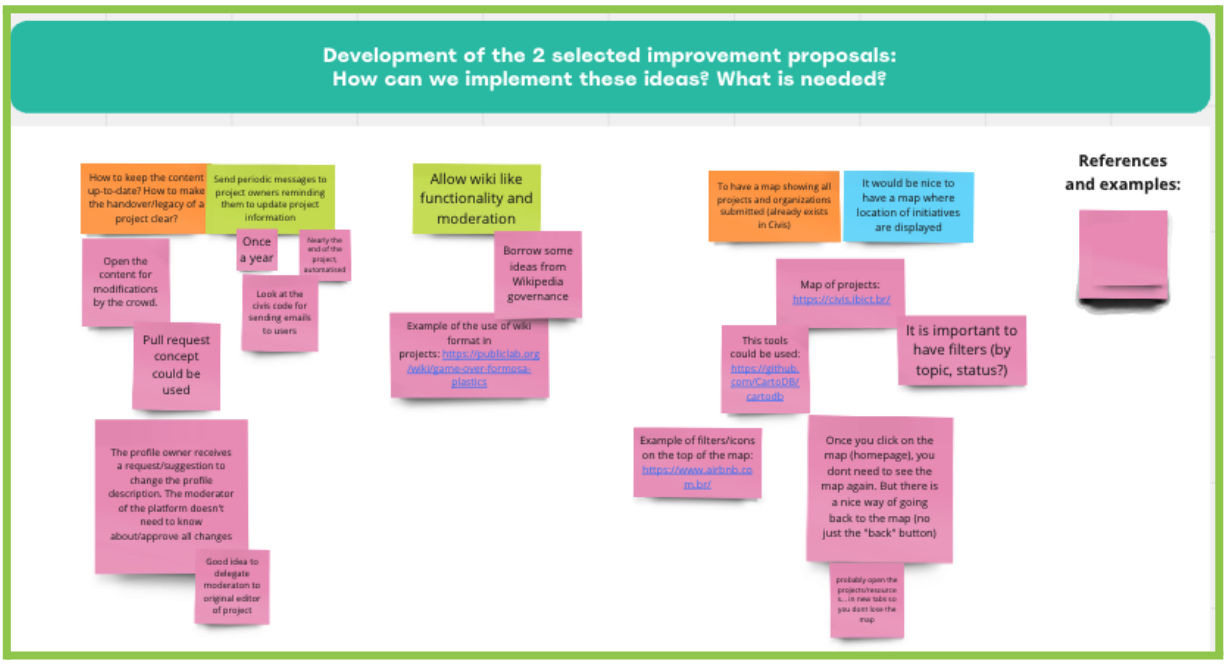


Board 2 from the 18 May 2023 session

- **Board 3**: Co-design of prioritized services. A second brainstorming section is added here, focusing exclusively on the services that have received the most votes: ideas are contributed, references to services that are already known, etc.



Board 3 from the 17 May 2023 session

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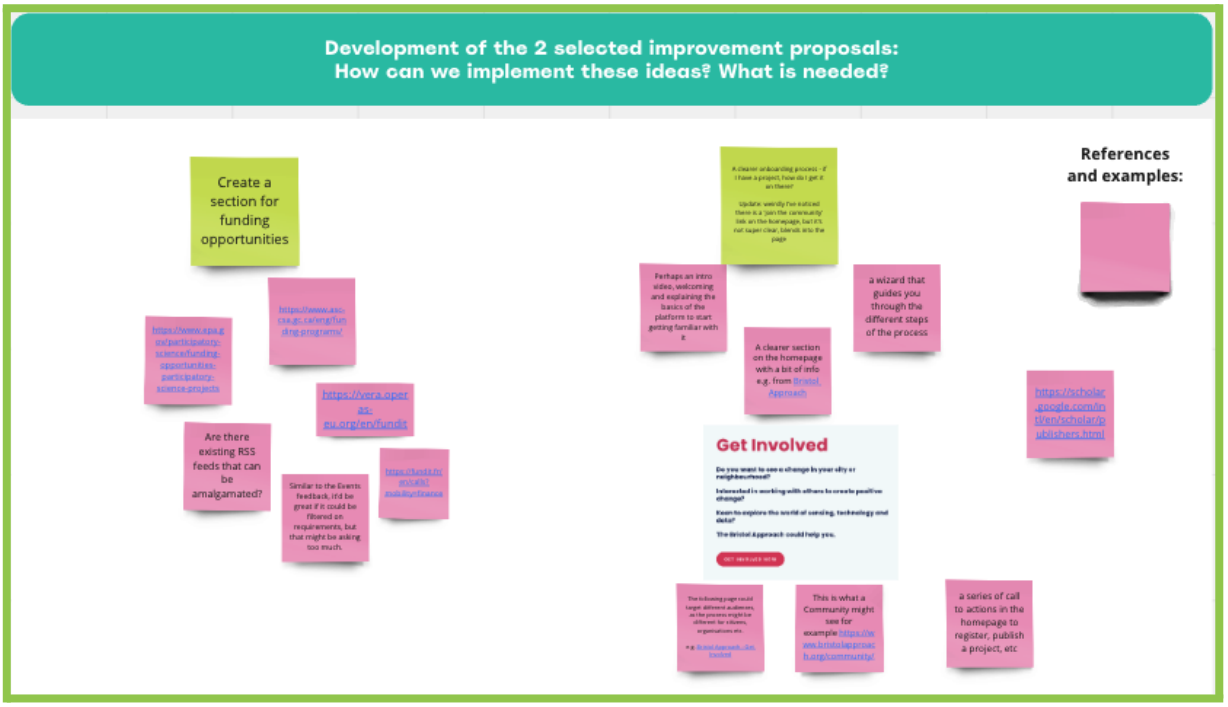

Board 3 from the 18 May 2023 session

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