ecs european citizen science

Report on the ECS participatory selection workshops III

Enhancing Engagement and Innovation: Insights from the ECS Co-Design Process

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1. Introduction

This report documents the participatory workshop held on December 11, 2023, as part of the ongoing co-design process in the ECS project. This year marks a significant enhancement in our approach, with an increased number of participatory workshops, specifically targeting environments with active community engagement. The December workshop was integrated into the monthly session of the "ECSA Working Group European Citizen Science Platform", further fostering the exchange and collaboration between the ECS project and the ECSA working groups. This ECSA working group is dedicated to the growth and sustainability of the **eu-citizen.science** platform, a central hub for those interested in citizen science. The group follows the overarching aim to further democratise science and promote scientific literacy. Participants, being closely related with the platform, brought valuable insights from ongoing discussions and analyses. The methodology of this session mirrored that of the previous cycle's participatory workshops, maintaining consistency in our approach to collaborative development and knowledge exchange.

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. 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 in this cycle remains consistent with the approach detailed in other reports. However, a key enhancement is the integration of the workshops within specific active environments, ensuring deeper engagement from relevant community members. This particular workshop was conducted during the monthly session of the "ECSA Working Group related to the European Citizen Science Platform." This adaptation has allowed for more targeted and informed contributions, leveraging the existing familiarity and active involvement of participants with the **eu-citizen.science** platform. The process still encompasses iterative stages of ideation, development, and refinement, with a focus on collaborative input and knowledge sharing.

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** (Since April 2023).
- A round of **participatory selection workshops**, where users had the opportunity to contribute ideas of the functionalities to be developed.
- **Co-design of the selected functionalities**, in which the participants determine the specific characteristics of the services to be developed.
- **Final development and testing** of the co-designed services.

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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 prioritisation. Here is a detailed look at our approach:

2.1 Outline of the Participatory Selection Workshop

This 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 familiarise 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 Prioritisation**: After grouping similar ideas and synthesising 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.

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 9 participants attended this session. The workshop brought together a diverse group of professionals, each contributing unique perspectives and expertise. Profiles included:

- Developers skilled in technical aspects of platform development.
- Project managers with experience in citizen science projects.
- Researchers specialising in different fields such as biology or social sciences.
- Professors with a background in geoinformation science.
- Managers experienced in public engagement.
- Researchers from environmental and scientific institutions, focusing on field research and data analysis.

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 (5 women and 4 men) 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 workshop resulted in a productive exchange of ideas. This section provides a summary of the ideas generated during the session and the results of the prioritisation process.

3.1 Summary of Ideas Generated

The workshop participants put forward various suggestions that reflect their collective experience and understanding. These ideas are focused on improving how users interact with the platform (e.g. user experience), broadening its functions, and introducing new elements to enhance community engagement. Here is an overview of the key service improvements frequently mentioned:

- **Personalization:** Implementing a user interface that is customizable to display content based on individual interests and professional backgrounds.
- **Enhanced Navigation and Filtering:** Developing advanced filtering options right from the start of the user experience to help users quickly find relevant topics, regional projects, and content in different languages.
- **Collaborative Features:** Enabling shared project ownership, direct messaging between users, and matchmaking systems to support collaborative work and community building.
- **Data Management and Transparency:** Making data hosting details accessible and encouraging projects to share datasets, which could include metadata and data extensions.
- **Resource Provision:** Amplifying access to scientific research outputs and providing a dedicated resources tab with tools beneficial for citizen science practitioners.
- **Educational and Instructional Content:** Creating educational videos and detailed guides to help new users navigate the platform, register projects, and learn about citizen science.
- **Community Engagement and Communication:** Highlighting citizen science working groups, integrating ORCID profiles to strengthen community networks, and improving blog visibility to engage users.

These ideas underscore a desire for a platform that is not only user-friendly and informative but also encourages active participation and collaboration within the citizen science community.

3.2 Prioritisation Process and Results

At the end of the brainstorming session, participants prioritised 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:

- **A personalised "Home Page"** that aligns with users' interests emerged as a top priority, highlighting the demand for a tailored experience.
- The implementation of a **"nearby" search** was also favoured to help users find local communities.
- **Language-specific** project filtering was seen as crucial for accessibility and user inclusivity.
- Finally, **the need for a comprehensive user guide** with straightforward instructions on platform navigation and project registration was underscored, emphasising the importance of connecting the guide to a frequently asked questions section.

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, it's crucial to bear in mind that, although these ideas have been prioritised during this workshop, this does not imply they will necessarily be the services developed in the platform's next update. The development team must consider their feasibility with the available resources for the project. Furthermore, as already noted in this report, various participatory service selection sessions have been conducted concurrently during this cycle. This means that at a certain point, a final prioritisation among the outputs of each workshop must be made by the Development Team.

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.

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

- **January 2024**: There will be one more participatory selection workshop, open to general participation, which will be the last of this co-design cycle.
- **Late January 2024**: The development team will decide which services will ultimately be developed, based on their feasibility and potential to improve the user experience.

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- **March 2024:** Further co-design workshops will be conducted to finalise 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.

- **Late March 2024**: 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 optimised for user-friendliness and functionality.

- **End of April 2024**: 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 finalise 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. 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, 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.

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

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 ongoing co-design process has become a cornerstone of the eu-citizen.science platform's evolution. Reflecting on this cycle, it's evident that the success of the previous year has solidified our methodology. The workshops have not only continued to harness the collective intelligence of a diverse community but have also become a crucible of innovation and inclusivity.

We have observed a maturing in the community's collaboration, with stakeholders confidently navigating the process and contributing richer, more nuanced insights. The co-design approach remains a journey of shared learning, where each participant's input is valued and shapes the platform's future.
The affirmative response to our co-design framework is a clear indicator of its effectiveness. It has fostered a vibrant and supportive community that is passionate about citizen science. This cycle, we've seen an increase in engagement, a testament to the trust and commitment of our users.
As facilitators, our learning curve has been steep but rewarding. We are continually adapting, improving our strategies to meet the community's needs, and enhancing our facilitation techniques to capture the wealth of ideas presented.
The democratic prioritisation of services continues to be a highlight, ensuring every voice is heard and considered. While this approach comes with challenges, especially when consensus is elusive, it is a vital aspect of our commitment to a community-led development process.

In sum, the co-design process has not just been about developing a platform; it has been about nurturing a community. The enthusiasm and dedication of this community have been inspiring, reinforcing the value of a participatory approach to creating tools that serve such a dynamic and innovative field.

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.

6 Appendices

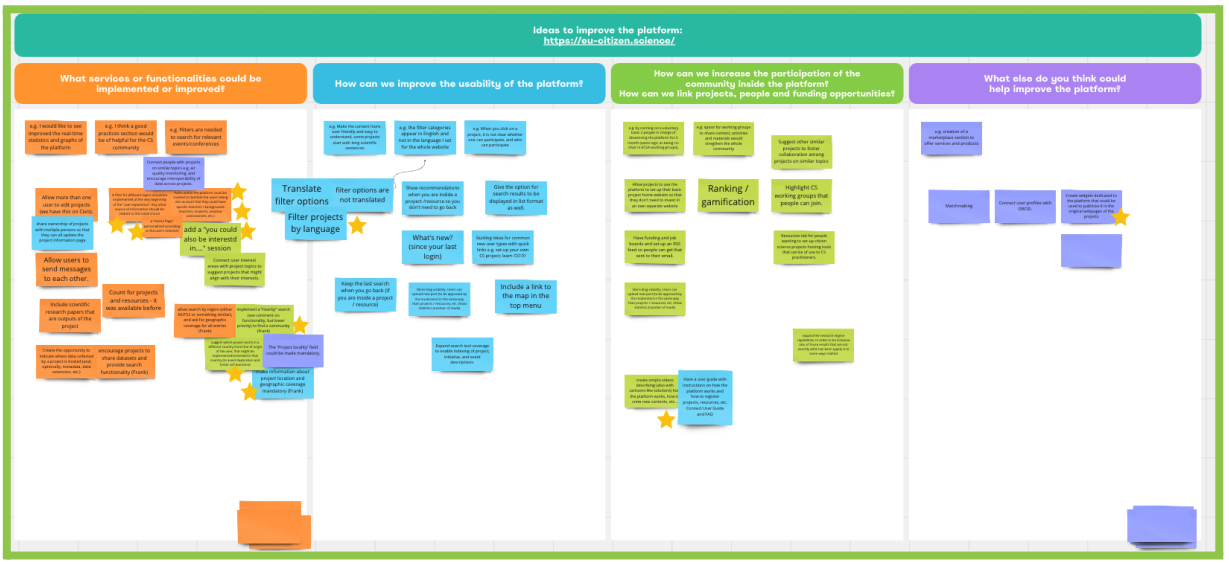
This section includes additional detailed information related to the co-design process.

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 session