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Report on the ECS participatory selection workshops IV

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

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Funded by the European Union

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1. Introduction

This report provides a detailed account of the third and final Participatory Service Selection Workshop conducted on January 25, 2024, as part of the second cycle of the ECS (European Citizen Science) Co-Design Process. Held online, this workshop aimed to engage the community in selecting and co-designing new services for the eu-citizen.science platform, ensuring open and diverse participation. Through this process, we seek to enhance collaboration between citizens and science, promoting transparency and inclusion in developing services that meet the needs and interests of the European citizen science 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. 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 open to the public, where anyone interested could participate by sharing their ideas and impressions on the current state and potential improvements of the platform. This workshop closed the "Participatory Service Selection" period after 2 other thematic workshops: one held at the European Connect.Collaborate.Create event on "How to assess Impact in Citizen Science projects" and another one held at the monthly session of the "ECSA Working Group European Citizen Science Platform" on how to improve collaboration between the platform and the ECSA Working Groups. 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.

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

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 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 8 participants attended this session. The workshop brought together a diverse group of professionals and citizen science enthusiasts, 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
- Experts in co-design methodologies
- Digital innovator producers
- Citizen Science enthusiasts

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 men and 3 women) 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

During the analysis of the outcomes from the workshop, the ideas generated were thoughtfully categorised into seven distinct groups. This post-event categorisation was aimed at streamlining the vast array of inputs and facilitating a structured approach to understanding and implementing the suggestions. Here's a detailed breakdown of the concepts identified within each group:

- **Homepage Development:**

Suggestions for a significant homepage redesign were central, advocating for a more intuitive and visually appealing layout inspired by the "Glovo" style. Participants identified issues with text overlap and responsiveness, proposing a dynamic, personalised homepage experience that encourages user engagement and simplifies navigation. Key ideas included implementing topic filters at the user experience outset, a section for related interests, and incorporating project images to invigorate the platform's visual and interactive appeal.

- **Translation & Localisation Service:**

The importance of enhancing accessibility through automatic translation and localisation of the platform's content was emphasised, ensuring inclusivity across different linguistic backgrounds by translating filter categories and options.

- **UX & UI Improvements:**

Feedback underscored the necessity for significant UX and UI improvements, such as redesigning creation forms, optimising space usage, and enhancing text alignment and font visibility. Innovations like a dark mode, floating search button, intuitive filter designs, and expanded search functionalities were suggested to augment the user interface for a more accessible and engaging experience.

- **User Interaction & Communication:**

Various methods to bolster community interaction and collaboration were proposed, including linking users with projects, establishing discussion forums or adopting communication platforms like Discord or Slack. Enhancing collaborative features, promoting data interoperability, and improving user-to-user communication were also highlighted.

- **Incorporation of Content and Tools:**

There was a consensus on the need to integrate new content and tools to enrich the platform, including real-time statistics, event calendars, RSS feeds, and features for impact analysis. Adding scientific research papers, facilitating data sharing, and providing resources for citizen science practitioners were also suggested to expand the platform's utility and content diversity.

- **Enhancing Participation and Gamification:**

Ideas aimed at increasing user engagement included boosting blog visibility, introducing a ranking/gamification system, and spotlighting citizen science ECSA Working Groups, fostering a more active and communal platform participation.

- **Guides and User Support:**

The workshop underscored the necessity for comprehensive user guides and instructional videos to help users navigate the platform more effectively, register projects, and utilise resources. Proposals included project update reminders and a more cohesive user guide and FAQ integration.

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

As with previous workshops, the last part of this session featured a voting process allowing participants to express their preferences for the most relevant ideas generated during the workshop. This democratic approach to prioritisation revealed a clear winner: the redesign of the Homepage stood out as the most voted idea.

Recognising the broad scope encapsulated by the concept of "Homepage redesign," the session concluded with a focused co-design effort to delve deeper into how this redesign could be most effectively implemented according to participant feedback. This discussion brought forward various ideas and references, including the Zooniverse website as an example of best practices in a citizen science platform and the "simple yet functional" brand image of Glovo, which participants admired for its user-centric design approach.

The consensus around the redesign emphasised several key principles:

- **Simplification of the Homepage:** The goal is to feature "fewer, but more important" elements, ensuring that users are not overwhelmed and can easily navigate to the most valuable parts of the platform.
- **Incremental UX Changes:** Rather than undertaking a complex overhaul, the redesign should focus on small, impactful adjustments in the user experience that collectively produce a significant positive effect on user interaction and satisfaction.
- **Diverse Content Display:** Enhancing the visibility of the platform's varied content through dynamic tools such as image carousels and distinct sections can make the homepage more engaging and informative.

- **Responsive Design Decisions:** A crucial aspect of the redesign is to ensure the platform's responsiveness across devices, making it accessible and user-friendly regardless of how users access the site.

These general but consensus-driven ideas set a strategic direction for the homepage redesign, aiming to make the platform more intuitive, engaging, and accessible for all users, reflecting the community's needs and preferences as identified through the participatory selection process.

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

Following the third and final Participatory Service Selection Workshop in this second ECS Co-Design Process cycle, a co-design digest compiling all inputs from the service selection workshops has been prepared. This document has undergone thorough analysis by the Co-Design and Development teams to assess the relevance and feasibility of each proposed service. The aim was to establish a prioritised list based on community interests and available resources, which will guide the initiation of service implementation. A glimpse into this list can be found in Section 6 "Appendices".

In light of the strong community consensus, the development team has commenced work on the first service, the Homepage redesign. Given the broad nature of this concept, it may encompass a wider range of services as required. Subsequently, the team will develop as many services as possible, following the aforementioned prioritised list.

The forthcoming steps in the ECS Co-Design Process are outlined as follows:

- **End of March 2024:** A co-design and testing workshop will be conducted once the services have reached a more advanced stage of development. This will allow the community to provide feedback on the current state of the services, enabling the development team to finalise their implementation effectively.
- **End of April 2024:** The definitive implementation of the services will be completed and showcased at a Launch Event for the newly updated version of the platform. This event will celebrate the culmination of this cycle's co-design efforts and introduce the enhanced functionalities to the wider community.

This timeline reflects a structured approach to integrating community feedback into the development process, ensuring that the evolution of the eu-citizen.science platform remains aligned with the needs and aspirations of its users.

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 ECS Co-Design Process, particularly through its series of Participatory Service Selection Workshops, has embodied the spirit of collaborative innovation that stands at the heart of the European citizen science community. This second cycle, culminating in the third and final workshop, has not only reinforced the value of community engagement but also highlighted the dynamic interplay between diverse stakeholder perspectives and the practical realities of platform development.

Reflecting on this process, several key insights emerge:

- **Community-Driven Innovation:** The workshops have vividly illustrated the power of harnessing collective intelligence. By inviting a broad spectrum of participants – from project managers and researchers to citizen science enthusiasts and digital innovators – the process ensured that the platform's evolution is truly reflective of its users' needs and aspirations.
- **Challenges of Broad Concepts:** The prioritisation of the Homepage redesign underscores the community's desire for a more intuitive and engaging platform. However, it also highlights the challenges associated with broad, conceptual ideas. The subsequent co-design discussions were crucial in breaking down this overarching concept into actionable elements, illustrating the importance of clarity and specificity in collaborative design efforts.
- **Balancing Ambition with Feasibility:** The analysis of workshop outcomes by the Co-Design and Development teams played a critical role in aligning community-driven innovations with technical and

resource constraints. This balancing act between ambition and feasibility is a central tenet of successful co-design processes, ensuring that the final implementations are both visionary and viable.

- **Iterative Engagement and Feedback Loops:** The planned follow-up workshop for co-design and testing before the final implementation phase is a testament to the iterative nature of the co-design process. This ongoing engagement with the community not only enriches the development process with valuable feedback but also fosters a sense of ownership and investment among participants.
- **The Power of Transparency:** The commitment to transparency, as evidenced by the detailed documentation and sharing of workshop outcomes, builds trust and enhances the collaborative spirit. It ensures that all stakeholders are informed of the decisions being made and the rationale behind them, reinforcing the collective responsibility for the platform's development.

As we reflect on this cycle of the ECS Co-Design Process, it is evident that the journey of collaborative innovation is as important as the destination. The insights gained, challenges encountered, and the solutions developed through this process not only contribute to the enhancement of the eu-citizen.science platform but also serve as valuable lessons for future co-design initiatives within the broader citizen science community. This iterative, inclusive, and transparent approach to development sets a benchmark for how technology platforms can be co-created in a way that truly meets the needs of their diverse user base.

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

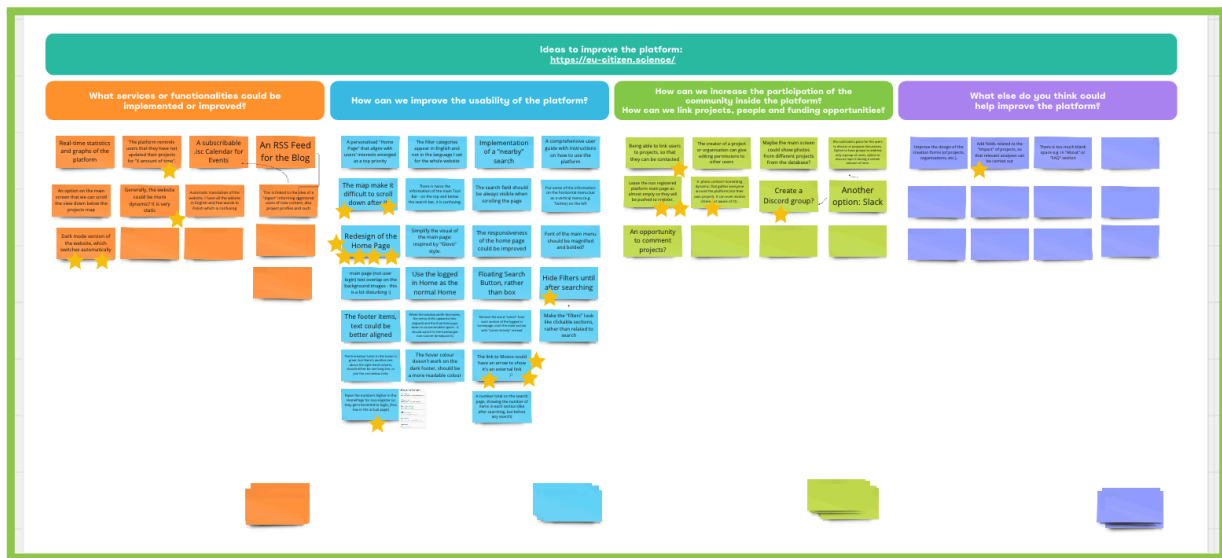
This section includes additional detailed information related to the co-design process.

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

6.2 Screenshots from the Service Prioritisation List

This subsection provides a visual glimpse into the Service Prioritisation List, a key outcome of the collaborative efforts between the Co-Design and Development teams. The list, captured in the screenshot below, showcases the thoughtful deliberation and strategic planning that underpin the ECS Co-Design Process. It represents a carefully balanced commitment between the relevance of each proposed service to the community's needs and the resources available for development.

The prioritisation process, as reflected in these screenshots, illustrates not just a ranking of services but a nuanced understanding of how to maximise impact while navigating practical constraints. Through this prioritisation list, we embark on a phased implementation journey, starting with the most impactful services, to enhance the eu-citizen.science platform in a way that is both ambitious and achievable.

User's input	Relevance	Technical Difficulty
Homepage development		
Homepage redesign	Very high	Hard
Simplify the visual of the main page: inspired by "Glovo" style.	High	Hard
main page (not user login) text overlap on the background images - this is a bit disturbing :)	Very high	Medium
The responsiveness of the home page could be improved	Very high	Medium
Use the logged in Home as the normal Home	Low	Easy
Leave the non-registered platform main page as almost empty so they will be pushed to register.	Low	Medium
A "Home Page" personalised according to the user's interests	High	Hard
A filter for different topics should be implemented at the very beginning of the "user experience". Any other source of information should be related to this initial choice	High	Hard
Generally, the website could be more dynamic? It is very static	High	Hard
add a "you could also be interested in..." session	High	Hard
Maybe the main screen could show photos from different projects from the database?	Medium	Medium

Extract from the Service Prioritisation List