

## Rebuttal to the reviewer's comments

Date 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024

Dossier no. 500.060.2401

Title: Impulse Citizen Science NL

Dear Margaret Gold,

Referees have assessed your above-mentioned proposal based on the criteria as described in the invitation letter from 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023. You now have the opportunity to write a rebuttal to the referees' reports. Open Science NL will submit your rebuttal together with the referees' reports, and your proposal to the Open Science NL Steering Board. Open Science NL will not share your rebuttal with the referees.

### Deadline for the rebuttal

You will receive five working days to respond to the referees' reports. The deadline for sending your rebuttal via an email to [openscience@nwo.nl](mailto:openscience@nwo.nl) is 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 14:00 CET.

If we do not receive your rebuttal before the indicated deadline, it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

### Instruction for writing the rebuttal

- Your rebuttal should be written in English and should contain no more than 2 A4's (Calibri, size 10).
- Please do not submit annexes or attachments.
- When writing your rebuttal, please respond directly to the content of the referees' reports (by mentioning reviewer 1 and/or 2).
- Please remain as neutral as possible and give concise answers elaborating if and/or on how you plan to address any issues mentioned by the referees. If you disagree with any of the referee's statements, please elaborate why this is the case.

### Generative AI

The use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT etc. is [currently not allowed throughout the whole review process](#). All documents that are for review by referees, committee members or judges are confidential and subject to confidentiality obligations. Therefore, no documents from the review process may be entered into generative AI tools.

### DORA and Dutch Research Council

The Dutch Research Council signed [DORA](#). DORA is a global initiative that aims to reduce dependence on bibliometric indicators (such as publications and citations) in the evaluation of research and researchers. In the spirit of this declaration, we ask you to omit descriptions of reputation of journals and citations scores (such as Journal Impact Factors and H-index) in your rebuttal. You can find more information here:

<https://www.nwo.nl/en/dora>

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions at [openscience@nwo.nl](mailto:openscience@nwo.nl). Further contact details are stated below.

Kind regards,

Frederike Schmitz

Programme leader Citizen Science/ Societal engagement

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**We thank both reviewers for their positive endorsement of our application, and their strong recommendation that funding be awarded.** We gratefully take this opportunity to address the points raised in their review notes, although we regret that there is still not enough space for a thorough explanation of how our own seven CS-NL objectives map against the four Open Science NL objectives, which we have split out into six distinct items in our activities table. A re-sorting could have made that much clearer. We can however clarify that the 'Knowledge Exchange' box *should* have been checked for the CS-NL Knowledge Platform - this error escaped our notice.

**Regarding whether the project plan is concrete and realistic,** we thank Reviewer One (R1) for finding our description of thirteen distinctive actions to be concrete and realistic. We concur that we are indeed ambitious in our aims. As R1 notes, we have placed the primary emphasis on the aspects of the CS-NL network that support and engage the members of the network in the activities of the network. It is our experience from our own active engagements in the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) Working Groups and the Citizen Science Global Partnership (CSGP) OS & CS Community of Practice that when facilitation, support, and good communication are put in place, the members themselves are able to achieve a great deal. We therefore see ourselves as enablers, facilitators, and amplifiers of the existing energy and ambitions within the network. We have done our best to reflect the stated ambitions of the CS-NL community itself in our proposal, and are therefore confident of their support in achieving these ambitions. We are further encouraged by the high level of engagement we already experience in the network, see for example the [report of the 2023 Network Day](#) (in Dutch).

We thank Reviewer Two (R2) for finding the instruments and activities we have set out in the application to be clearly described, suitable and realistic. We have indeed endeavoured to build on the good practice examples of other strong national networks across Europe, those further afield such as in the US, and the long-standing ECSA network. We continue to learn from each other via the Working Groups of ECSA and CSGP within which we are active. In response to the question about the link between the Mutual Learning Programme (MLP) and the webinars & workshops, we can clarify that the MLP is a separate and specific knowledge exchange vehicle for the regionally-based multi-stakeholder Citizen Science Hubs that will be separately funded by Open Science NL via an upcoming open funding call to be developed within the [2024-2025 work programme](#).

As R1 points out, we have not specified KPIs or a timeline within our application. Given our desire to implement these instruments and activities in collaboration with the CS-NL community we wish to set defined 'SMART' goals in consultation with them, such that they are sensible, realistic, and responsive to the needs of the community as they evolve. We are hesitant to set numerical targets that might become 'vanity metrics' rather than serve as measures of genuine engagement. However, once the CS-NL Board is in place we will co-develop a working plan in agreement with them that includes KPIs and key milestones, to ensure good momentum towards achieving our strategic aims.

**Regarding the CS-NL team composition,** we thank both R1 and R2 for finding the profiles of our proposed core team to be complementary to our ambitions and concrete actions, and possessing the relevant expertise. The three named team members have indeed already been playing a leadership and network-building role within the CS-NL community since its inception and bring in relevant insights from their activities in EU-funded projects over the years. We can clarify for R1 that Community Manager Anouk Spelt will take the lead in establishing and organising the new annual Knowledge Symposium and the already well-established annual Networking Day. The action to set up and execute an annual CS-NL Grant Fund will be led by Network Coordinator Margaret Gold in close collaboration with a dedicated Working Group / Advisory Group to be set up for that purpose.

We recognise the good advice of R1 to not underestimate the workload, and the concern of R2 that 1.6FTE might not be sufficient. In many ways we count on the involvement of our members to enable us to collectively achieve these aims, and in specific cases such as the building of the CS-NL website and the knowledge platform we intend to hire external assistance (for which budget has been costed and allocated). As R2 points we are already off to a solid start with a large and active membership base, and we also learn from the experiences of our peers experimenting with innovative new models at the European level, such as the funding of [CS Ambassadors](#) by the European Citizen Science project; the 'waterfall' open CS funding calls of the [IMPETUS project](#), [ACTION project](#), and [CSEOL project](#); and the participatory funding pilots of the [PRO-Ethics project](#). We have endeavoured to

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ensure that the budget provided by Open Science NL is not used entirely on personnel, but can also serve to support the wider network. We will develop the work plan according to the indicated FTEs to manage the workload, which will be closely monitored with the CS-NL Board. Should this at any stage become a difficulty, we will bring it to the Board's attention in order to consider mitigation actions.

**Regarding our target groups, and foreseen internal and external communications**, we thank R1 for finding our description of the personnel and budget resources and specific actions we will apply to be substantial. We indeed have particular attention for the inclusion of less well-represented groups such as grassroots organisations and SMEs. Concrete plans for how we will reach which specific groups via which channels and activities will be developed by all team members in a Strategic Communication Plan to be 'owned' and executed by the Communications Manager in collaboration with the Communication Working Group, as one of our first actions. As R2 notes we have not provided a detailed break-down of the composition of the non-academic membership group as we have not conducted a formal survey of any kind. However, registration for our networking day showed that this group is composed of interested citizens, teachers, librarians, policy-makers, civil servants, 'makers', and entrepreneurs; and NGOs / CSOs such as environmental education foundations and community-led monitoring networks. We agree with R2 that formal conference formats can form a barrier to participation, and we therefore wish to explore 'Unconference' formats such as BarCamps or a Citizen Science Festival as an adjacent event for citizens and citizen scientists.

**Regarding the inter- and transdisciplinary perspective**, we thank both reviewers for finding our application to be taking good account of the synergies and thematic overlaps of Citizen Science with other disciplinary communities who pursue societal engagement in various ways, with whom we will collaborate.

**Regarding organisational embedding**, we thank both reviewers for finding our description of the intended governance model and organisational structure to be efficient, suitable, and 'proven'. We recognise the good advice of R1 to aim for a good representative balance on our Board while keeping it a workable size. We note the concern of R1 that our sustainability plan is not yet defined and clarify that we wish to work on this collaboratively with our CS-NL Board, our members, and the supporting environment around us in the form of NWO, Open Science NL, and the network of Dutch Universities (UNL). We believe that four years of funding gives us a healthy runway to identify sources or models of ongoing support, and we will be looking to the European community of national CS networks for informative examples.

**Regarding R2's request for further clarification of the CS-NL Website vs the Knowledge Platform**, we can elaborate that we will start by building a 'Minimum Viable Product' (MVP) website that provides static information about the CS-NL network, its history and aims, and how to join. Non-static information will include upcoming events, WG news, and interviews with members. This MVP website will evolve in collaboration with the Communications WG and the Platform WG (for which user requirements are already being gathered).

For the Knowledge Platform, we intend to 'fork' the [open code base](#) of [the EU-Citizen.Science platform](#) for a bilingual CS-NL version that highlights Dutch projects and resources, in the same way that [the Brazilian CS network](#) has. The primary developers of the platform ([Ibercivis](#)) have already provided us with a time and cost estimate for this work plus ongoing maintenance, which they offer as part of the [European Citizen Science project](#)'s aim to support national networks such as ours. This approach ensures that all information shared by the CS-NL community is fully interoperable with EU-Citizen.Science and any other platform making use of that [API](#) and/or the [PPSR core meta-data standard](#). This platform will not provide its own hosting, but rather sign-posts where resources can be found in repositories with a DOI and perma-link (such as [CS-NL on Zenodo](#)), and links to the websites of Dutch initiatives with information about their aims and how to participate.

We will later evaluate whether the basic MVP website should be integrated into the Knowledge Platform (as both [the Flemish CS Network](#) and the [Austrian CS Network](#) have done), or whether they will be kept separate yet connected via a clear Menu link to the other site (as [ECSA](#) does to the EU-Citizen.Science platform).