

# CS-SDG

## Conference evaluation report

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Abstract	The company Stickydot srl has been selected to run the CS SDG Conference evaluation and present the results in an evaluation report. The four core elements of the evaluation report are: the Declaration's co-creation process; the assessment of learning outcomes (e.g. how participating in the conference has led stakeholders such as policy-makers, and scientists to reflect on various aspects of the link with the SDGs), quality of the conference and other types of impact; the assessment of meaningful networking; and, finally, the assessment of the conference organisation process.
Keywords	Citizen Science, Conference, Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, Evaluation





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**Evaluation report for the “Knowledge for change: A decade of citizen science (2020 - 2030) in support of the SDGs” Conference**

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# I. Executive summary

This report is the result of a formal evaluation of the organisational process, content, format and implementation of the “Knowledge for change: A decade of citizen science (2020 - 2030) in support of the SDGs” conference held on 14 and 15 October 2020 as well as the Declaration which was launched there after a co-creation process. The process was led by the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Germany, funded by the European Commission and supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany.

The evaluation made use of formative and summative surveys, feedback forms and semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative and quantitative data with a focus on learning outcomes regarding the link between citizen science and the SDGs, insights for policy response, understanding of the field and possibilities for meaningful exchange.

Analysis of the evaluation data provided a number of key findings:

- The **overall feedback on the content, format and technical set-up of the conference was positive**, with objectives largely achieved.
  - Participants perceived **a strong link between citizen science and the SDGs** during the conference, felt inspired towards new future forms of cooperation and enthusiastic regarding further development of the link between citizen science and the SDGs.
- A **clear connection between the citizen science community and EU policymaking** was present and perceived by participants.
- The conference organisers **adapted well to the constraints of the pandemic**, opting for a hybrid online and in-person event.
  - Participants reacted positively to the decision and the organisation team demonstrated strong teamwork and resilience.
- Conference **sessions were well received by participants**, who have learnt new and useful things for their work, discovered new projects, and found out about unexpected fields of application of citizen science, such as social sciences and health.
  - “Meet the Experts” sessions were particularly appreciated thanks to their participatory format.
  - The Hopin platform worked well and unexpectedly allowed for some interesting networking opportunities.
  - Participants and funders have in some cases suggested that the conference could have benefitted from having a more heterogeneous group of speakers.
- **Time constraints were a significant barrier to participation** in the conference due to the hybrid nature of the event, limiting the availability of online attendees.
- While the conference successfully brought together communities within the citizen science field, **participant demographics showed a rather high level of homogeneity** in terms of geographical representation and field of work.
- The **Declaration largely achieved its objectives** in terms of process and outcome, with participants feeling that the outcome represented their views.

## 2. Introduction

The “Knowledge for change: A decade of citizen science (2020 - 2030) in support of the SDGs” conference aimed at presenting, evaluating and discussing the contribution of citizen science (CS) in framing and achieving sustainable development, and specifically the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The conference brought together expertise from politicians, institutional and citizen scientists, economists, NGOs, and the civil society to implement mechanisms and processes for the sustainability transformation. Proven and emerging instruments have been discussed to increase the impact of citizen science for sustainability. The conference has been organised by the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin with many partners, generously funded by the European Commission and supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany (BMBF). It was held on 14 and 15 October 2020 in a hybrid format, both on-site in Berlin and virtually on the Hopin platform.

The current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak made the organisation of this international conference particularly challenging. The uncertainties linked with conference attendance and constantly changing security measures, in a situation where it was not possible for the conference organisers to foresee how travel restrictions could have evolved over time, resulted in the complex organisation of an event that could be followed both on-site and virtually.

The conference evaluation planning has therefore been adapted to such a complex scenario since its conception. The company selected to run the conference evaluation, Stickydot srl, has proposed a flexible and agile approach to the evaluation, focusing on the following principles in its implementation:

- Flexibility within the chosen methodological approach, depending on how organisational aspects of the conference evolve over time;
- Regular interactions with the conference organising team, and in particular with the Project Manager and PIs, as key to successfully overcome potential challenges;
- Support in overcoming practical challenges, exploiting Stickydot evaluation team’s expertise in organising such types of events under complex conditions and within an online environment;
- Simplicity for the participants, favouring tools and approaches that are easy and simple to use. This included limiting as much as possible the number of surveys to fill in and favouring the harmonisation of tools used. The evaluation should support – and not deteriorate – the conference experience;
- Accessibility for all participants. The software chosen for data gathering should be accessible and compliant with all standards concerning Screen Reader accessibility for blind and visually impaired people.

### **3. Expected outcomes**

The conference evaluation activities addressed four ambitious outcomes of the conference defined at the outset:

*O1. Policy makers are provided with a better understanding of options and limitations of citizen science approaches, as well as insights for policy response;*

*O2. Citizens and project initiators get inspired by finding out how their citizen science activities contribute to higher level targets, such as the SDGs;*

*O3. Meaningful exchanges and networking take place during the conference, leading to new perspectives, insights and interactions;*

*O4. Participants leave the conference with a better understanding of the rationale and dynamics of the field of citizen science, its potential, improvements needed, and how it contributes to innovation and outcomes that feed into a more sustainable economy and the achievement of the SDGs.*



## 4. Core elements of the evaluation

Participation in an online event is very different from the immersive experience of a face-to-face event. People attending an online event tend to do so in a more fragmented way, while performing other activities at the same time. While it had been originally suggested to perform the conference evaluation through Experience Sampling Method (ESM), a new methodological approach had to be envisaged in order to better fit with the envisaged online conference format. It is very complex to perform an ESM that takes into consideration specific framework conditions (distractions, interruptions, etc.), complementary sources of information, fragmented listening, etc. Attending a fully online conference is in general a digitally-intense experience; a dedicated evaluation app such as those used in ESM works well in face-to-face environments but risks to generate confusion or be scarcely used in a remote environment, where participants are already asked to make use of digital tools that often require registration, downloads, etc. in order to virtually attend the event.

Stickydot has therefore performed the core evaluation of learning outcomes and other types of impacts through less immersive types of formative and summative evaluation that could be implemented in a simpler way within the chosen online tool used to webstream the conference. As Hopin, the online platform chosen for broadcasting the conference sessions, did not provide tools like polls for collecting evaluation and feedback, Stickydot suggested using [LimeSurvey](#), an open access online survey platform fully GDPR compliant and easily accessible for participants. All surveys developed for the evaluation activities were accessible online, they could be opened on any browser, they did not require any log-in nor registration or downloading of specific software, and they were intuitive and easy to complete. Printed versions of the session evaluation survey were provided to participants attending the conference in Berlin. A total of five surveys were developed and distributed throughout the evaluation process.

Interviews also represented one of the core conference evaluation activities. Stickydot performed a total of 48 semi-structured interviews, recorded via Zoom and stored on a local server. All data gathering tools offered data encryption and after collection all data have been stored on an encrypted local server. Interview recordings will be erased once the evaluation analysis is completed.

All outcomes of the conference evaluation activities have been analysed by the Stickydot evaluation team and are presented in this report, in an anonymised manner.

### 4.1 Evaluation of the Declaration

The Declaration is one of the key conference outcomes, emerging from a dialogue process between various stakeholders and resulting in a social contract towards future concrete actions and priorities in the contribution of citizen science to SDGs. The level of commitment by all partners involved partially depends upon the participatory process that has led to the co-creation of the Declaration, ideally fostering endorsement by all participants and empowerment to take action.

Although not explicitly required by the *Desired performances* listed in the “Call for an evaluation study for the Citizen Science SDG Conference”, Stickydot proposed to perform an evaluation of the Declaration co-creation process, through two steps:

- Summative evaluation of the “Become an author of the Declaration” co-creation process: at the end of the “Become an author of the Declaration” series of virtual meetings, following the fifth and last one, a short survey has been shared by email with all individuals that have registered to at least one of the five meetings, inviting them to provide feedback on the process. 20 responses have been collected.
- Summative assessment: before and after the conference, specific questions about the “Declaring the Declaration” session announcing the Declaration, as well as questions about

overall expectations and impact, have been included in both the pre and post conference evaluation surveys and interviews with a selected sample of conference participants, to collect feedback on the Declaration itself as well as to assess possible long-term impact.

## **4.2 Assessment of learning outcomes, quality of the conference and other types of impact**

The assessment of learning outcomes and other types of impact has been performed through a series of quantitative and qualitative research activities, as follows:

- Upon completing the conference registration form, participants have been asked whether they agreed or not to take part in two short online semi-structured interviews, before and after the conference (30 minutes each). A sample of 15 participants has been selected to take part in the interviews, based on selection criteria that include demographics (age-range, geographic distribution, etc.) and stakeholder group (including all quadruple-helix). Questions asked aimed at assessing their previous and acquired understanding of the relationship between citizen science and SDGs, their willingness to contribute/get engaged in the future, their expectations towards the conference, their learning experience as well as feedback regarding different aspects of the conference;
- Ahead of the conference, all registered participants have been invited to complete a short formative survey to assess their level of engagement in citizen science activities, their level of understanding of the relation between citizen science and the SDGs, and their expectations towards the conference. A total of 29 answers have been collected;
- During the conference, at the beginning and at the end of each web-streaming session, the link to a very short online evaluation questionnaire has been shared with session participants, with the aim to collect feedback on the format and contents of the session. A total of 108 session feedback forms have been collected;
- At the end of the conference, the link to an online evaluation questionnaire has been sent to all registered participants. The final conference evaluation survey contained questions on both the conference impact and quality. A total of 56 overall evaluation surveys have been collected.

## **4.3 Assessment of meaningful networking**

The networking aspects of the conference have been one of the most challenging elements to evaluate, due to the hybrid format of the conference. The online platform chosen to host the conference, Hopin, supported several features aimed at facilitating networking between participants, including a networking function that allowed participants to randomly meet and interact with another conference participant for around 3 minutes. Hopin also supported one-to-one chat and video calls. Finally, social rooms have been created by the conference organisers and were open at all times for participants to use as a space for interaction with peers, random encounters or planned meetings during breaks. On-site participants have had the opportunity to enjoy interaction and networking during coffee breaks and lunches and social events and the conference site. The limited number of participants on-site (around 60) has favoured easier and more accessible opportunities for networking, despite social distancing and limitations due to the pandemic crisis.

The assessment of networking opportunities has developed through two main activities:

- an online survey has been made accessible to conference participants throughout the full duration of the conference, containing a few short questions aimed at collecting feedback about their experience of networking functionalities of the Hopin platform. A similar printed survey has been made available to conference participants on-site.
- questions about the networking experience have been asked to selected participants and conference organisers involved in the pre and post conference semi-structured interviews.

## **4.4 Assessment of the conference organisation process**

A group of 9 persons has been selected between conference organisers at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, EC representatives involved in the conference organisation process and members of the CPC, in order to collect feedback on organisational aspects that might have influenced the setting up of the conference, but also to assess expectations towards the conference and collect impressions on its impact. All 9 selected interviewees have participated in semi-structured interviews both ahead of and following the conference.

# 5. General evaluation of the conference

## 5.1 Participant profiles

General information about participants has been collected through the conference registration form: in total, 529 persons have registered to the conference. Information on geographical and gender distribution has been collected through the anonymised registration forms (N=529).

### Geographical distribution

Participants to the conference were predominantly European: in the registration form, 68% of participants indicated a country within the European Union. Many attendees were also coming from the European geographic area, such as the United Kingdom or Norway. However, a small portion of the attendees came from other parts of the globe.

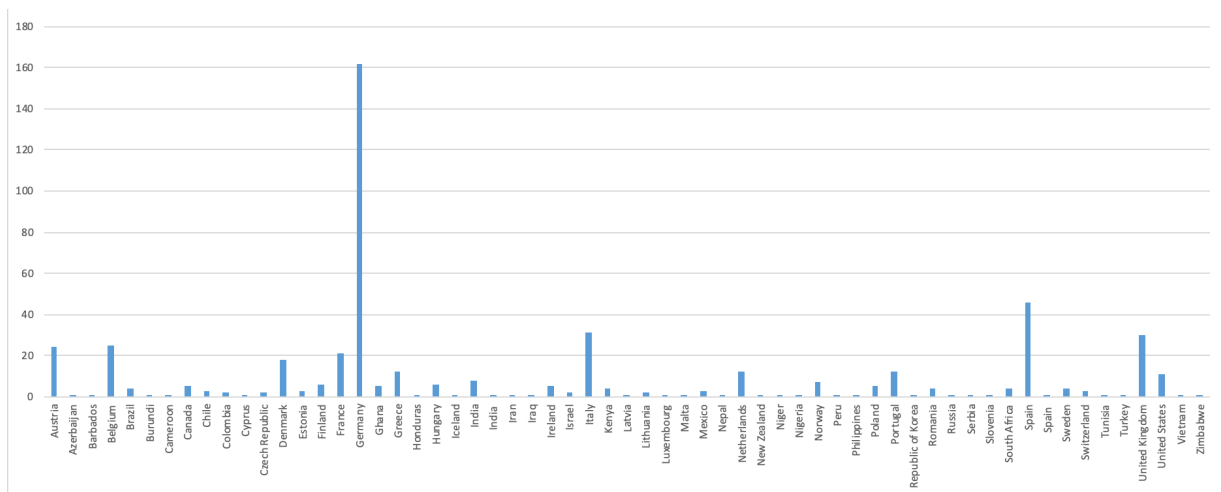


Figure 1: countries of all registered participants

### Gender

Upon registration, participants identified predominantly as women (64%), with a fair gender balance.

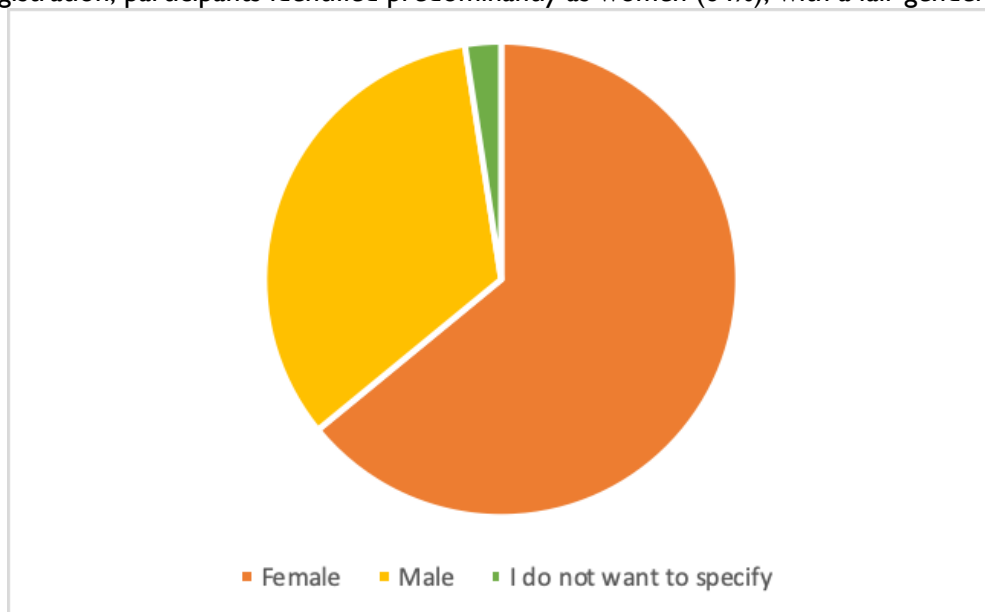


Figure 2: Gender declared by all registered participants

### Additional information on participants

Additional information on conference participants has been collected through responses to the conference formative evaluation survey and the conference summative evaluation survey. 29 responses have been collected through the formative survey, and 56 participants responded to the overall conference evaluation survey. Most of them have provided information about the stakeholder group, age group, level of experience in citizen science and the SDGs, type of involvement in the conference and participation in other science engagement events. As the number of responses was higher for the summative survey, its data was used in priority when relevant.

### Type of stakeholders

According to data collected through the conference summative survey, around half of the survey respondents were academics or researchers, the other half being spread between various profiles, such as public engagement professionals, education professionals or policy-makers.

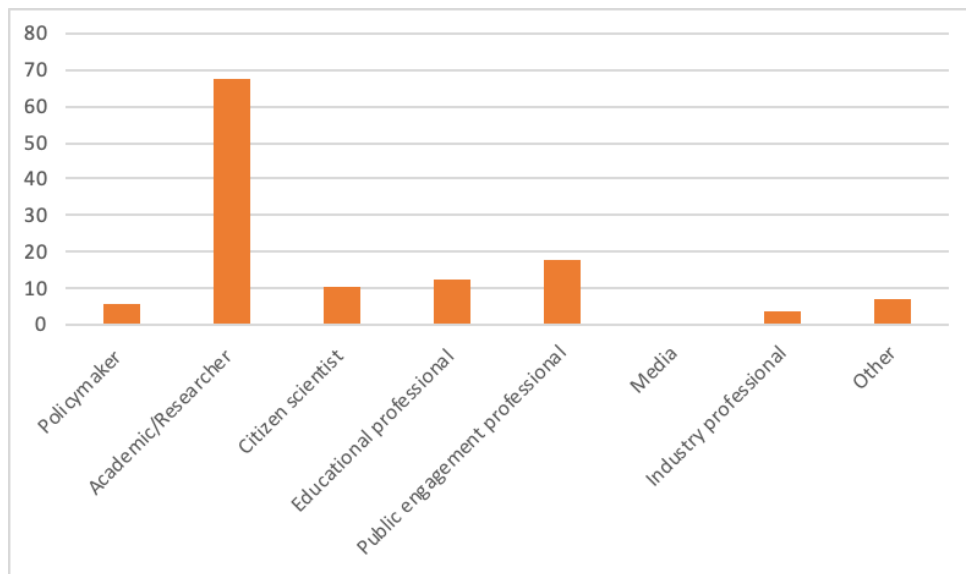


Figure 3: stakeholder profiles that participants most closely identify with (percentages).

### Age range

The ages of summative survey respondents were quite evenly spread, most of them being between 25 and 55 years old.

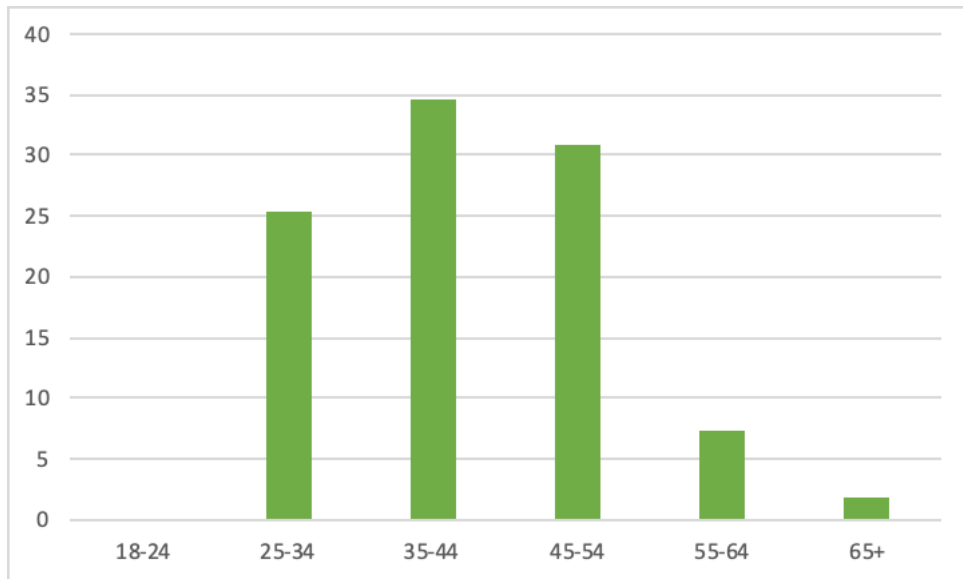


Figure 4: declared age group of survey respondents (percentages).

### Experience in citizen science and familiarity with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Almost all participants reported having some experience in citizen science, and a familiarity with the SDGs.

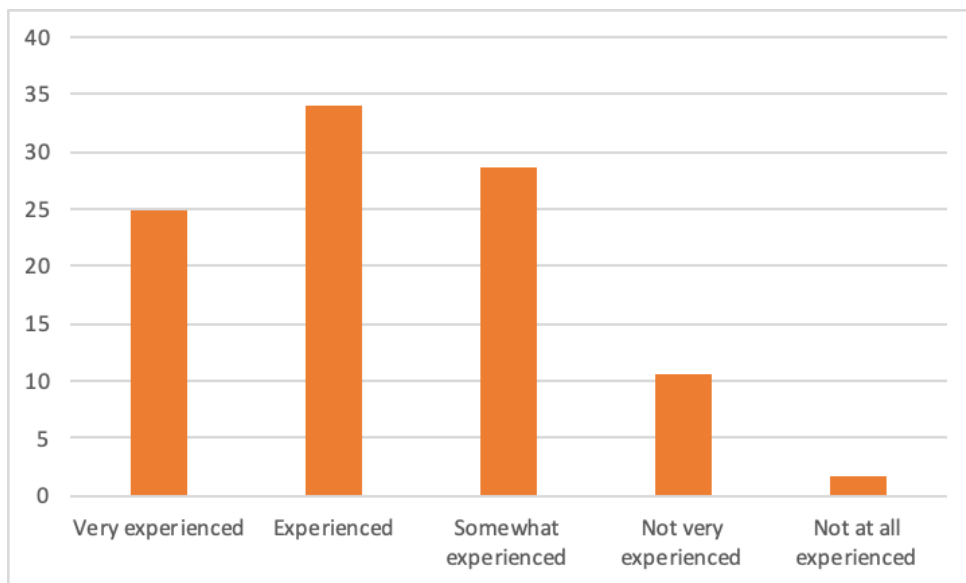


Figure 5: declared level of experience in the topic of citizen science by summative survey respondents (percentages).

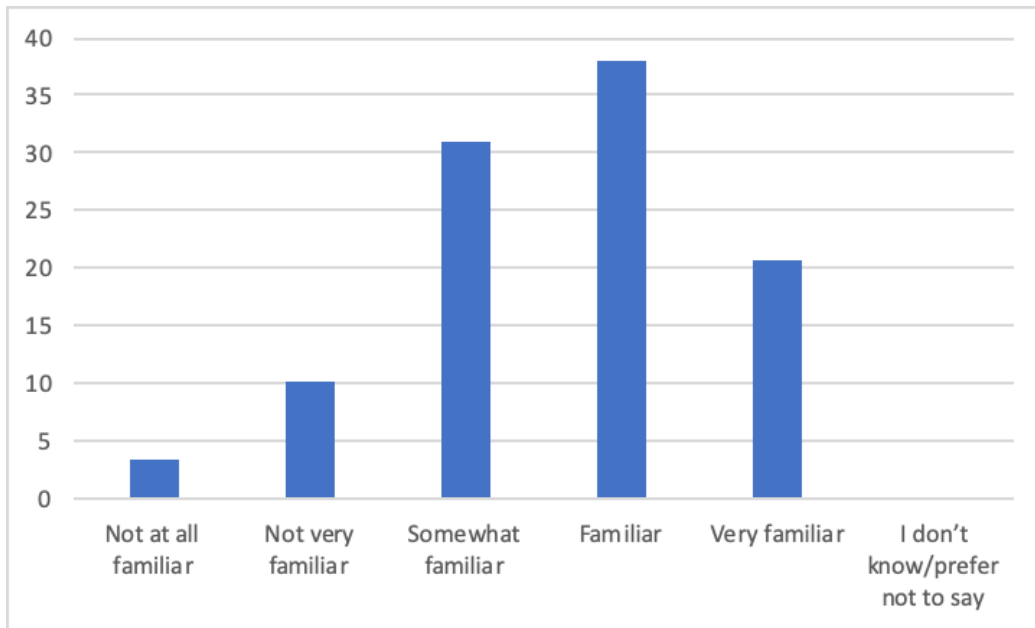


Figure 6: declared level of familiarity with the SDGs by formative survey respondents (percentages).

### Roles of participants

A significant number of the survey respondents were also involved as speakers in a session or presenting a poster. From the summative evaluation survey (N=56), we can estimate that around a third of the participants that filled the summative survey were involved in the programme as speaker, moderator or session organiser.

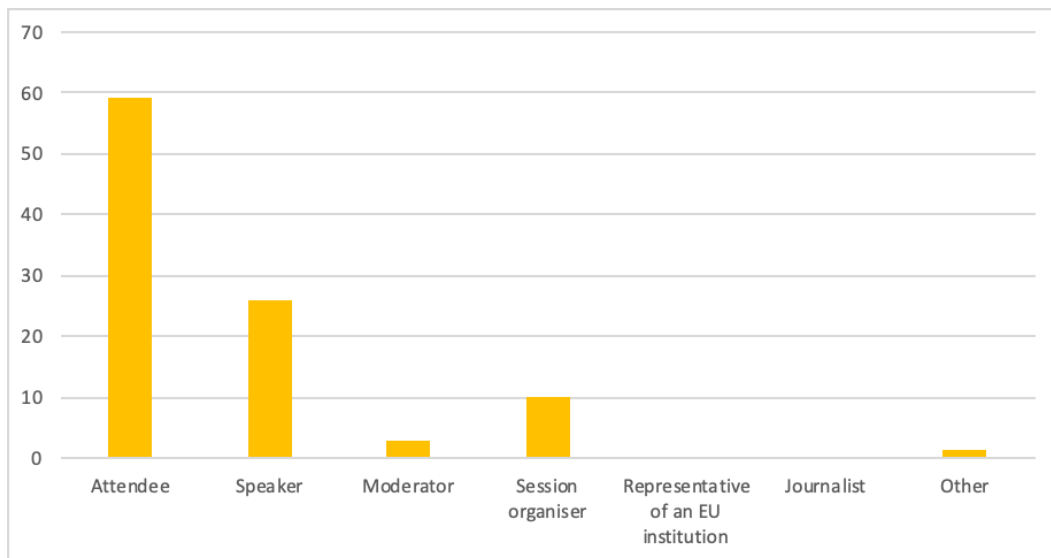


Figure 7: declared role at the conference by summative survey respondents (percentages).

### Participation in other citizen science-related events

The majority of respondents (N=56) had attended other international events and conferences related to citizen science and citizen engagement in R&I in 2020, including some online events. In particular, 41% of the respondents of the summative evaluation survey reported attending the ECSA conference. Only 31% of respondents stated not having attended any other conference this year.

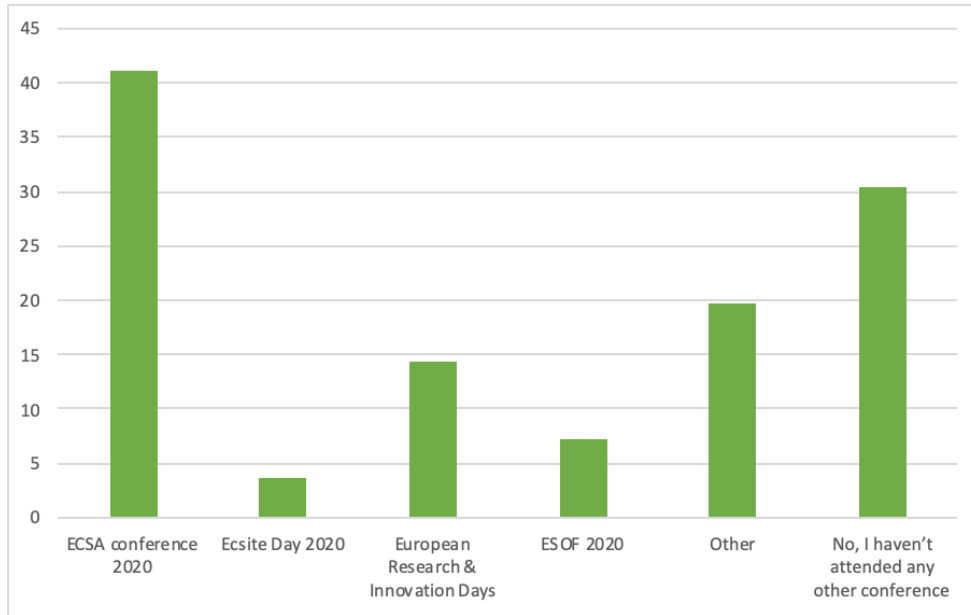


Figure 8: science engagement conferences attended by summative survey respondents in 2020 (percentages).

### Awareness of the conference

The data related to the awareness of the conference was collected through the formative survey (N=29). Participants had been made aware of the conference thanks to a variety of channels, from the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin mailing list to social media or communications from the European Commission. The prominent means, however, seems to be recommendations from peers: in the formative evaluation survey, 41% of the respondents stated they found out about the conference through a recommendation from a colleague, while 28% stated that they were made aware through social media.

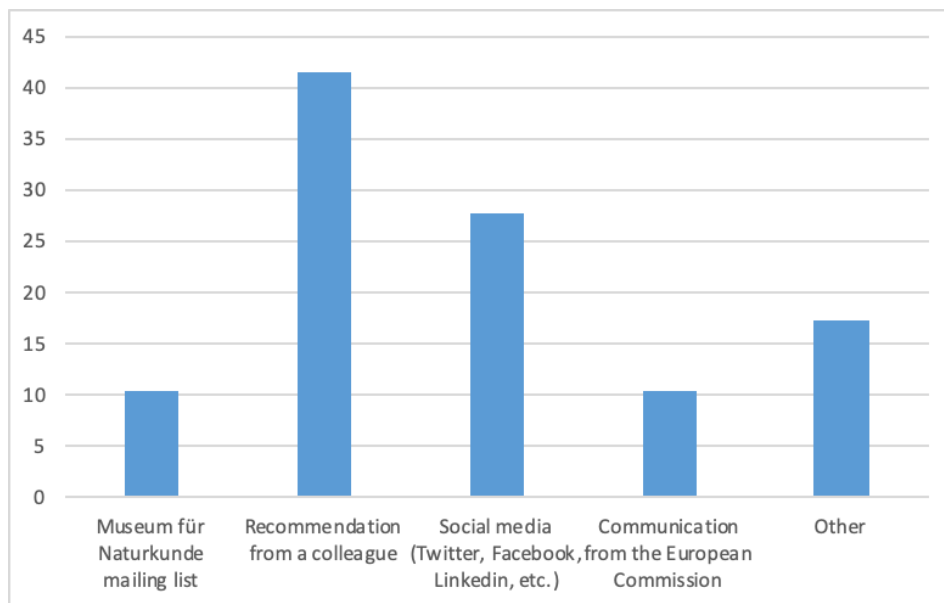


Figure 9: means through which formative survey respondents declare to have found out about the conference (percentages).



## 5.2 Conference expectations

Two evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of expectations towards the conference:

- the pre-conference formative survey (N=29)
- the pre-conference formative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding.

Despite the number of responses collected through the pre-conference formative survey (29 in total) being rather low, information collected through the semi-structured interviews with conference participants has allowed for an in-depth understanding of conference expectations.

### **Expectations of conference funders and organisers**

Interviews with 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding have allowed us to identify some key expectations towards the conference from this stakeholder group.

Organisers anticipated that the conference attendance would be high in number of participants and international diversity, federating communities. Mention was made of hoping to inspire the community through the sessions, to increase the understanding of the contribution that citizen science can bring to the SDGs, and to bring together and unite various citizen science disciplines and communities. On the long term organisers hoped that the conference would achieve lasting policy impact, such as for example strengthening funding of citizen science initiatives within Member States and at European level. Organisers also hoped that the conference could be repeated in the future and become a recurring event. “There could be a new edition of the conference in two or three years, especially as we get closer to 2030, focused on looking at what has been achieved and how much of the Declaration has been implemented”, one organiser mentioned.

Commission representatives expressed an expectation for impact to go beyond existing citizen science communities: “We want to see citizen science live up to its potential much more. My fear is that the impact is too focused on the citizen science community and we’d like to see awareness among other stakeholders that they should take citizen science seriously and engage with it.” They also expressed the wish for the conference programme to showcase a line-up of influential speakers and a broad thematic approach to citizen science.

Anticipation for concrete policy impact by EC representatives was also expressed in terms of recognition and references to the conference to be included in higher level policy documents, competitive council recommendations and conclusions. It was hoped that the conference could serve to prepare the ground at national level as well as to see institutions treating citizen science as a more mainstream part of research and innovation more broadly: “I hope it will help us but also policy makers of the Member States to get a solid mandate to support citizen science”.

The results of the conference formative evaluation survey give us an overview of participants’ expectations, and of the most important aspects of the conference to come for them. The formative interviews with participants provide more precise insights.

### **Expectations of conference participants**

One of the questions of the formative evaluation survey focused on assessing participants’ expectations towards the conference (“How important will each of the following be for you during the Conference? Please tick all that apply”). Participants were asked to rate nine possible types of expectations on a scale of “Very important/Quite important/Not important/I don’t know-prefer not to say”. Positive answers (Very important and Quite important) were used to assess participants’ preferred options.

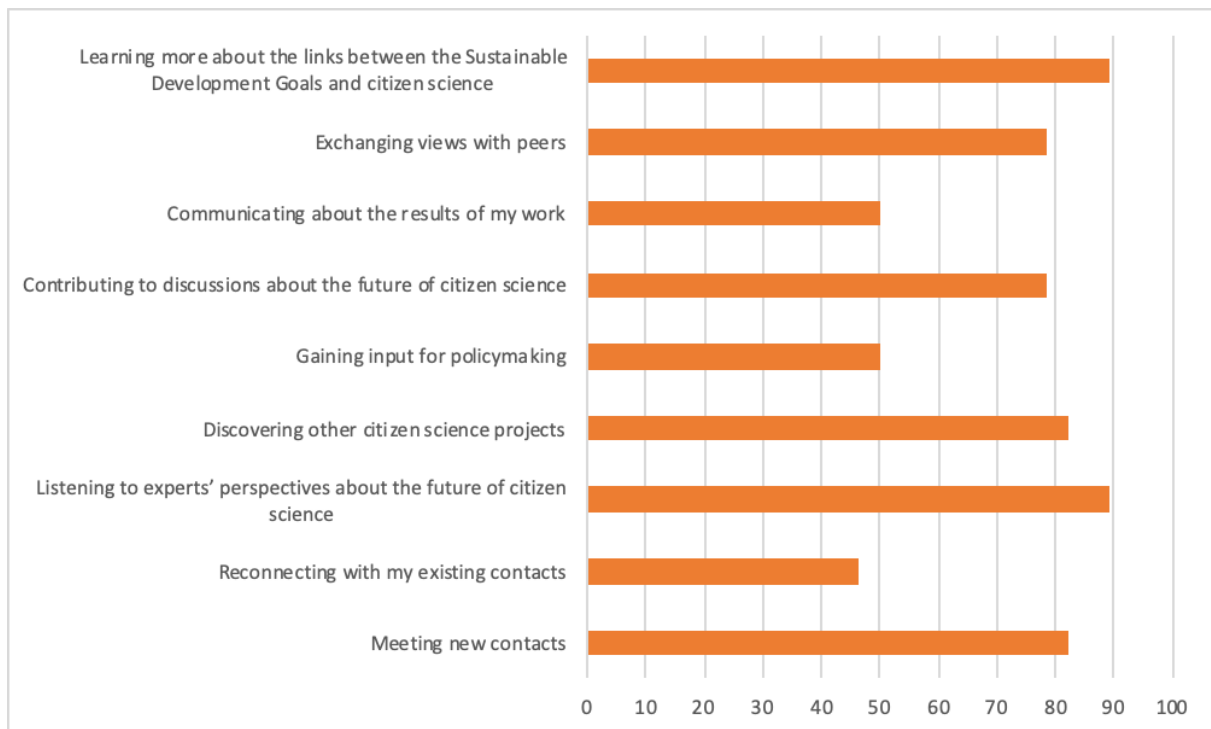


Figure 10: importance of various conference aspects in formative survey respondents' expectations (percentage responding "Very important" or "Quite important").

According to outcomes of the formative survey, the dominant expectation among the respondents was to **listen to experts' perspectives about the future of citizen science** (89%).

The idea that the conference could help achieve a better understanding of citizen science and its current and future trends also came up in several interviews with registered conference participants. For example, some stressed the expectation to define the boundaries of citizen science, or of sub-categories within citizen science, including getting a deeper understanding of how citizen science is used in different disciplines and whether there are differences between hard sciences and social sciences: "I hope to learn more about how to define citizen science." "How to draw the boundaries between different types of citizen science: Extreme Citizen Science, Social Citizen Science, etc. What are these labels, what are they serving, what is the content meaning?"

The second highest expectation amongst respondents of the formative survey was **to learn more about the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and citizen science** (89% - although with a lower number of "very important" answers compared to the previous category).

In pre-conference interviews, participants also clearly anticipated learning more about the link between citizen science and SDGs: "The SDGs topic, I wasn't sure about it. Now that I see the programme it's less scary. (...) I had an overwhelming feeling, but now it's getting very interesting to see the connection already there and how we can strengthen the connection, especially in producing non-traditional data."

According to participants, the link between citizen science and the SDGs may uncover new funding streams: "I hope I would get new knowledge from the funding and projects going on. A lot is going on in relation to SDGs." Participants also expressed an interest in data and evaluation results connecting citizen science and the SDGs: "[I hope] to gain more insight into to what extent citizen science is already used [for achieving] the SDGs and if that is going well." "With our background as a public entity we are looking forward to finding out data about the potential of citizen science and see some assessments of previous actions."

The third highest expectation amongst respondents of the formative survey was to **discover other citizen science projects** (82%). Participants expressed expectations regarding learnings: “New things! I hope to see other successful projects and topics in the citizen science community.” Some participants were also looking for tools and best practices: “Citizen Science platforms, tools, tips for development, and of course the communication, the engagement. These are the things we are struggling with as we are developing from scratch.” Others hoped for examples and models: “A basic understanding of the process: how do you set up a CS project. I know mainly the EC ones. With all these experts, I hope to learn more.” “Our future work is to get ideas of what can be done and how.”

Many saw the conference as an opportunity to meet new partners for future cooperation, some with a specific need in mind: “I will have to invite people to write papers for special issues [of a publication] so I hope to find the most interesting people to talk to. I want to create a network of people dedicated to this [specific domain within citizen science].” Many hoped to discover projects on topics close to their work.

The fourth highest expectation amongst respondents regarded **networking opportunities** during the conference. Participants were almost equally interested in **meeting new contacts** (82% - although with a lower number of “very important” answers compared to the previous category), which ranked much higher than **reconnecting with my existing contacts** (46%)

Despite optimism about the number of participants (“It’s been well advertised so I think many will be there.”), many participants expressed low expectations in terms of networking at an online event: “Online is not so good for networking, offline is much better and organic to meet people.” “Online, you cannot fully dedicate the time, and you are multitasking.”

Participants nonetheless saw a great need for networking in terms of community building and connecting actors from different fields: “This conference strengthens the community”; “The link between Citizen Science and the SDGs might be strengthened through the networking. Citizen Science participants and researchers may meet, as well as all other stakeholders.”

There is a recognition of the need to invent new networking formats: “I have hopes about the chat rooms and other channels to connect to other people. Something creative and interactive to connect with colleagues, to not just jump from one session to the other.”

Some participants also expressed the wish to get to know the local citizen science community better: “Possibly also to get to know more about the community in Berlin. The last conference on citizen science that I attended was 2-3 years ago.”

**Contributing to discussions about the future of citizen science and exchanging views with peers** (79%) also appear to be a key expectation of survey respondents.

Participants had an expectation to deepen the discussion on some of the issues around citizen science: “Seeing how discussions around citizen science and SDG evolve is important. How do we define it? How practitioners see themselves and how does the field evolve? In citizen science there are two priorities: for some the focus is on science productivity, for others it is the learning aspect. These are two different domains and we need to bring them together. Are they finally converging or still fighting?”

Interviewees also hoped that the conference participants would include profiles that go beyond the usual: “I don’t know. I am very skeptical: sometimes with these conferences, you are always with the same cluster of people. I don’t know who is attending here, but most of them are – I guess – the ones involved in citizen science but they are not citizens.” Another participant mentioned “We have many contacts but the vast majority are specialised and we want to connect with stakeholders who don’t even think they are impacted by our field.”

**Gaining input for policymaking** was an important expectation for 50% of respondents, similarly to **communicating about the results of my work** (50%).

As the link between citizen science and the SDGs can stimulate policy-making measures at various levels, interviews with national policy-makers have underlined that the conference represented for them an interesting opportunity to identify the main actors, trends and projects in the field. “Who are the actors? Who are the funders?”. International conferences such as this one are “important to bring the actors together.” “In this growing field, there are lots of new actors, international countries (...) we want to see where we stand in comparison to other countries!”

Moreover, gathering a large number of citizen science initiatives together in the event can demonstrate its actual impact and increase its credibility. As a policy-maker stated in an interview: “To implement citizen science more permanently, we need to give it a ‘street cred’. If you repeat the experiences often enough so that citizen science contributes to the SDGs, it can help citizen science a lot in gaining credibility and funding.”

Policymaking was also a topic of interest for non-policy makers. One participant stated “Policy is still new for me. The context in which we are working is quite politicised, and working with politicians is difficult. We have to build it from scratch and it is slow. (...) The new mayor’s office wants to open communication and conversation about sustainability, food, climate change, citizens, etc. so the conference may be useful there”. Another participant stressed the link with European-level policies and funding: “My expectation is to see the policy panel discussions. And to see how citizen science could be relevant to Horizon Europe.”

Regarding the expectation of communicating about the results of their work, participants clearly saw the conference as a communication opportunity: “I think it will support in terms of dissemination of the project I am involved in. It’s a platform for dissemination.” “We were informed by our [EC project] coordinator to submit to the conference. We are proud to be here and to show our results, and meet new people.”

There was also a sense of prestige connected with presence at the conference: “[My organisation] is one of the main players - there will be 5 of us so we would like to be there, be present and confirm our interest, maintaining our visibility.”

In the online formative survey participants were also asked an open-ended question about **what else participants considered as an important expectation of the conference**. Respondents provided several interesting answers, related with the conference format (“a nice atmosphere, enough time for breaks”) and contents (“methods and tools on how to provide effective means for citizens and different institutional actors in Europe to contribute to SDGs via citizen science” and “drawing a map/gaining an overview of actors and frameworks in place and seeing/identifying levers of change for my field of work”). Several respondents also provided further explanations regarding their expectations in terms of networking opportunities (“if I can be there in person, I would love to make some new contacts”). One interesting expectation from one of the participants concerns the variety of experiences shared throughout the conference: “it is not just big EU projects that make a difference (...) many of the traditional longterm actors in citizen science / participatory science don’t seem to be present and I hope a future event could be more inclusive and less of a bubble”.

Another open-ended question that participants could answer in order to share thoughts about their expectations and understanding of the conference was **what did they understand to be the focus** of the Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs conference. Several respondents identified making more evident links between citizen science and the SDGs, as well as showcasing best practices, as two elements at the core of the conference: “To share experiences regarding citizen science projects, from different fields and countries, and to question the links between citizen science and the SDGs (what can citizen science bring to the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs)”. Bringing various communities together, finding mutual connections and

exploring ways to strengthen collaborations between fields were also seen as key elements of the conference. Some participants also commented that the conference represented an opportunity for Germany and the EC to stimulate interest towards citizen science and showcase ways to support it.

One more aspect that was assessed through the pre-conference survey and interviews was participants' attitudes and **expectations towards the online format of the conference**. Even though several participants had planned to attend the conference in Berlin, several of them had to change plans in the weeks and days ahead of the start of the conference, as a consequence of the worsening of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the formative survey, participants were asked to state how positive or negative their feelings were about at least part of the event taking place online. 39% of survey respondents affirmed to have positive to very positive feelings about the online format, while only 11% affirmed having negative and very negative feelings.

In interviews, participants expressed limited expectations about the online format: "Since it's online I don't know how much I will be able to make an impact by following the sessions. I hope there will be some discussion." "In this virtual context I don't expect so much. I would simply hope to get some ideas for some additional exploration. In a virtual space you are limited to sessions with nothing in between - you don't catch up with old colleagues or meet new faces." "I was hoping to be there in person and discuss with people in person, this will be more complicated online. I don't like online features, not even social media. Online meetings are more stressful. I don't have many expectations, I will not be using any features".

In the last part of the formative survey, participants were given the opportunity to express any **additional comments regarding their expectations** towards the conference. Most of the comments in this section focused on challenges linked with the COVID-19 pandemic. One respondent commented "I really miss the not online meetings - but I did not register for the on site conference as I do not want to support Corona, I am very cautious...", and another participant commented "Great that the conference will and can go ahead even in the face of all the covid-19 restrictions! I hope that networking opportunities will work well (...) It's an important conference and I hope organisers manage to get people to 'mix', instead of staying in their own silos".

### 5.3 Conference content overview

Four evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of the conference content:

- direct observation throughout the conference (performed by three members of the evaluation team)
- the conference summative survey (N=56)
- the session feedback survey (N=68)
- the conference summative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding

In the conference summative survey, the overall quality of the sessions was mostly rated good (51%) by participants, followed by fair (22%) and excellent (18%). The conference has thus been broadly appreciated. The overall content of the sessions was rated as good by almost half the participants (45%), followed by fair (23%) and excellent (20%). When participants were asked an open-ended question about other main strengths of the conference, many marked the high quality and diversity of speakers.

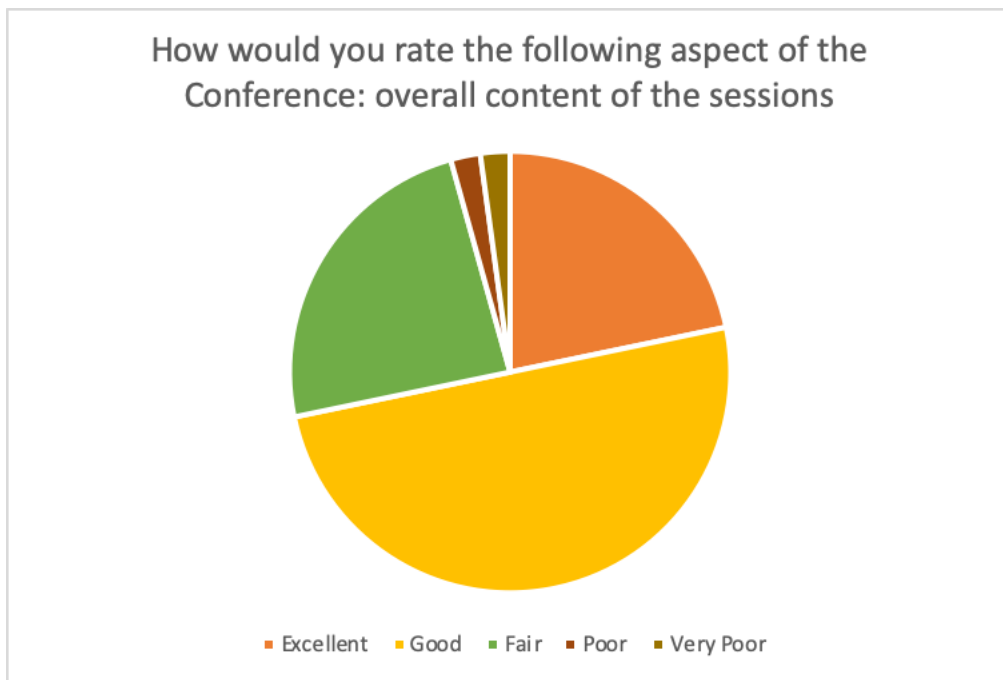


Figure 11: rating of overall content of the sessions, as emerged in the summative survey.

During the interviews, participants were particularly positive about the conference content and its “good curation”. The diversity of the content was a particular strong point: “I liked that there were more theoretical papers as well and lots of practical examples - that was very very helpful. [...] I liked the different aspects - how to implement, how to evaluate, toolkits, (...) policy.”

In terms of content weaknesses, participants did not report major missing themes. Some participants regretted that the focus on SDGs was mostly centered on high-level questions and not sufficiently tackling the practical work and tools: “There was not enough practical examples linking SDG and citizen science, it was way too theoretical, emphasising the importance of this link, but I don’t think I learnt enough in terms of what could be the next steps.” Some participants felt that German-speakers were overly represented in the programme and wished for more diversity of speakers: “It felt like majority German, Austrian and Swiss speakers. They can offer quite similar feelings and experience.”

In the summative survey (N=56), participants were asked how important for them each aspect of the conference had been. The aspects identified were:

- Meeting new contacts
- Reconnecting with my existing contacts
- Listening to experts’ perspectives about the future of citizen science
- Discovering other citizen science projects
- Gaining input for policymaking
- Contributing to discussions about the future of citizen science
- Communicating about the results of my work
- Exchanging views with peers
- Learning more about the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and citizen science

Participants were asked to rate these aspects on a scale of “Very important/Quite important/Not important/I don’t know-prefer not to say”. Positive answers (Very important and Quite important) were used to assess participants’ preferred options.

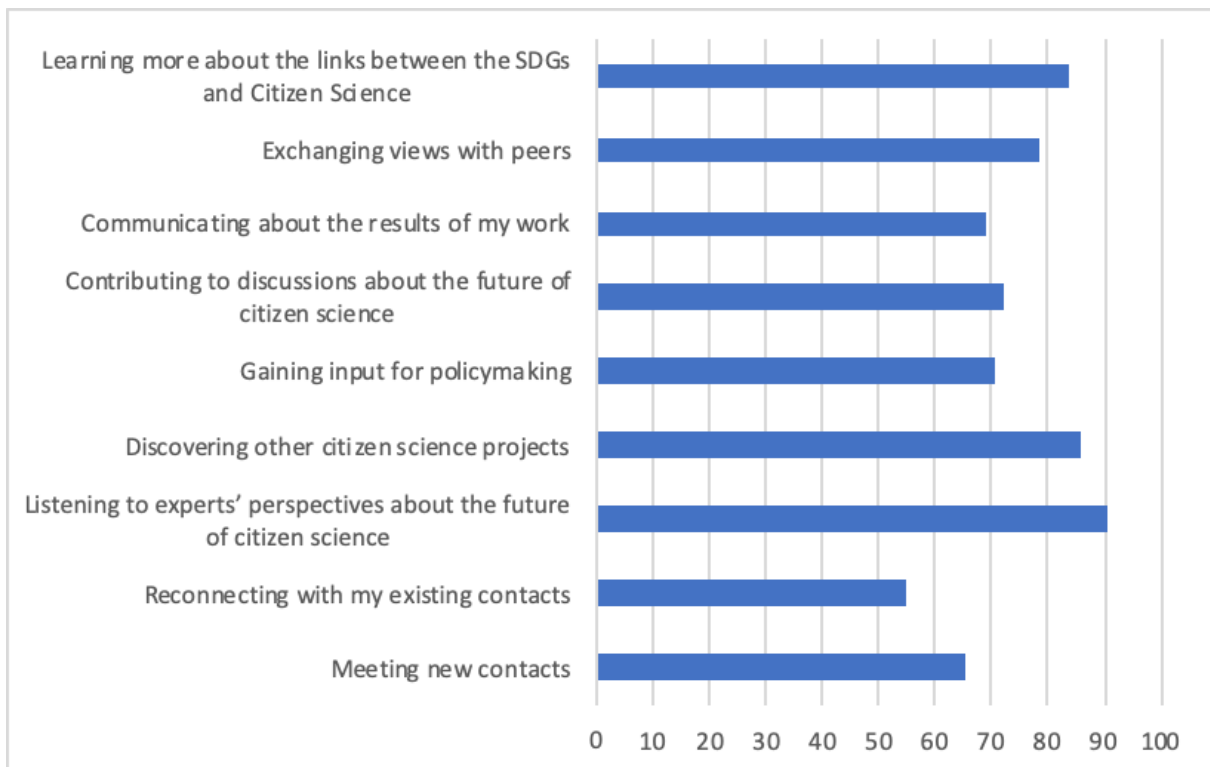


Figure 12: overall rating of conference aspects, as emerged in the summative survey (percentage answering “Very important” and “Quite important”)

The element that was perceived as the most important one was **listening to experts’ perspectives about the future of citizen science**, as 91% of the respondents considered it very or quite important.

Interviewees also outlined the quality of the conference speakers, and stressed their appreciation of sessions such as the “Meet the Expert” ones. Learning about the various citizen science fields and theories (e.g. Social Citizen Science), exploring how a recent concept can be linked to citizen science (e.g. the Anthropocene), and getting insights about potential future developments for citizen science have been referred to as major elements of the participants’ experiences.

Participants mentioned their highlights, such as for example: “I especially liked the roundtable with Muki Haklay and a few other people where they drew a general vision about what citizen science could do around SDGs - that was particularly interesting because there were specific examples of how to go about it.”

The next most significant aspects (85%) were **discovering other citizen science projects** and **learning more about the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and citizen science** (84%).

Discovering new citizen science projects has been seen crucial to participants: interviewees insisted on the diversity of the projects present, “I discovered that there is a large variety of projects doing citizen science in difficult areas, even remotely. Researchers are really relying on citizens even in polar zones.” They also appreciated the fact that projects and initiatives showcased were different from the ones usually seen at citizen science conferences: “it was not the usual ECSA projects, there were projects from beyond Europe, from other contexts and approaches”. This diversity was “inspiring” and was also triggering transfer of approaches and tools from experienced teams to newcomers. In the participants’ words, “there were some nice case studies on specific segments. It meant we could exchange knowledge, share knowledge, on biodiversity topics particularly.”

The link between SDGs and citizen science has also been very present in the conference programme. In the summative survey, most respondents (80%) agreed that **the event made a clear link between citizen science and the SDGs.**

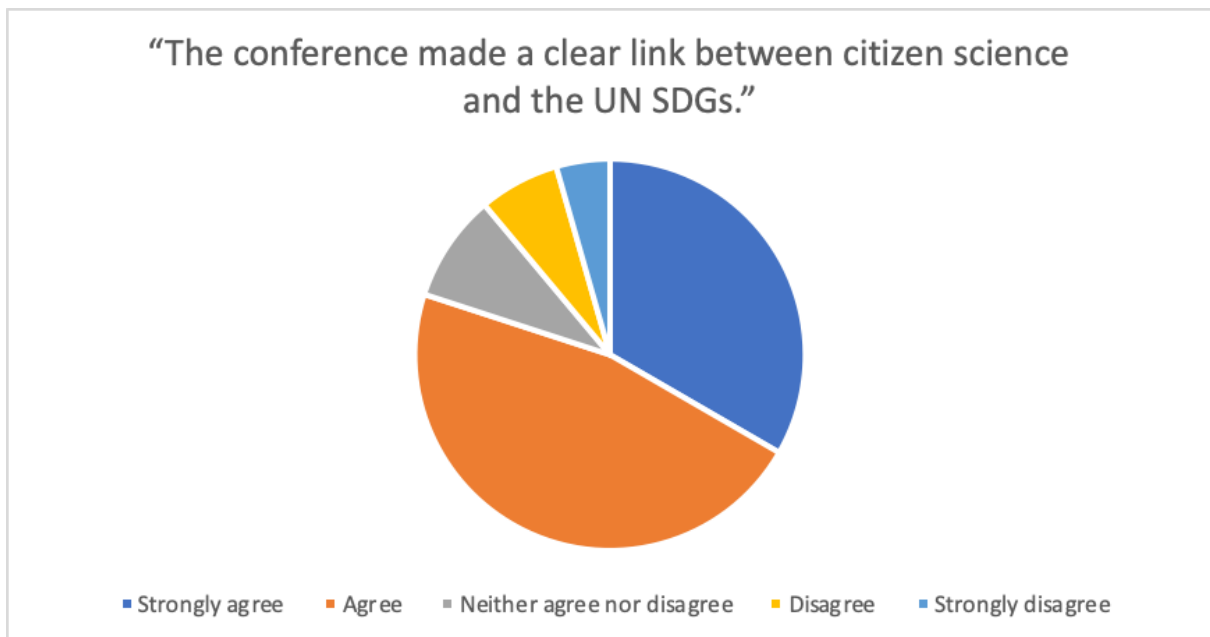


Figure 13: participants' feedback on the clarity of links between citizen science and the SDGs throughout the conference, as emerged in the summative survey.

Throughout interviews, participants also highlighted the strong link between citizen science and the SDGs that they saw at the conference: “The majority [of sessions] were directly linked [to the SDGs]. Each speaker was linking back to it. Also for us the SDGs are taking on a stronger role in our community.” They generally felt that even if they were well-informed, these learnings were important: “It was interesting how systematically it was spelled out. In the slides there were the relevant SDG numbers. So at least to me, I’m aware of these SDGs and their applications but it’s also through awareness raising that we can have an impact. Awareness raising was the most important element, and also showing good practices.”

The next most important aspects of the conference were **exchanging views with peers** (79%) and **contributing to discussions about the future of citizen science** (72%).

While we explore more in detail the networking elements of the conference in section [5.5 Networking at the Conference](#) of this report, it is worth mentioning that exchanges amongst participants appeared to be a significant element of the conference, as observed by the conference evaluators throughout the event. Online and on-site participants made use of interactivity tools such as the opportunity to ask questions through the sessions’ chats, which were generally lively and rich, with attendees reacting on speakers’ statements, exchanging links and resources, mentioning initiatives as examples raising awareness about an issue. In order to favour participants’ interactions beyond the scheduled sessions, the conference organisers had made available four “social rooms”, which could be accessed by anyone at any time throughout the conference and used for informal meetings (of maximum 20 persons). While the evaluators observed that the social rooms were not much attended, observations and interviews with conference participants revealed that sessions’ chats and the Hopin networking tools turned out to be the functionalities enabling most of the conference networking and interactions.

As far as discussions around the future of citizen science are concerned, interviewees appreciated the future-oriented approach of several conversations throughout the conference, which was perceived as a strength of the event: “It was a place to summarise so many previous results and achievements but also to look to a bright future working together.”



**Gaining input for policymaking** (71%) was also perceived as an important aspect. The presence of policymakers and topics related to policymaking has been acknowledged and appreciated by interviewees. The achievement of the conference in itself was perceived as an efficient tool for policymaking: “Now that it happened, [the conference] will be mentioned in new policy contexts.” Moreover, the content of the conference was believed to have the potential to significantly influence the national policies: “I think it can influence two things. First, the funding programmes, with more funding for [citizen science] subjects. Secondly, better policies.”

Participants also highlighted the European policy-related elements of the conference. Some of them, possibly less aware of EC funding streams, considered the conference as a useful opportunity to think about future projects and collaborations. “I liked the policy aspect - the officer from the European Commission encouraged everyone that there will be a lot of money available! [It’s good that they are] incentivising everyone because otherwise this won’t work.”

Another important aspect for participants was **communicating the results of their work** (69%). This was particularly mentioned by newcomers and participants from outside the European Union, who felt that this conference was an exciting opportunity to share their approach and their results.

## 5.4 Conference format overview

Four evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of the conference format (comprising both the technical aspects and the event format):

- direct observation throughout the conference (performed by three members of the evaluation team)
- the conference summative survey (N=56)
- the session feedback survey (N=68)
- the conference summative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding.

The conference was organised as a **hybrid event**, happening on site in Berlin and online through the Hopin platform. When asked “This year, much of the event had to take place **online**. In general, how positive or negative are your feelings about that?”, the responses were mixed between very positive (25%), positive (25%), neutral (27%) and negative (22%).

When asked to rate the **technical set-up of the conference**, respondents offer contrasting views: the main answer is good (38%), followed by fair (27%), excellent (17%), poor (10%) and finally very poor (8%). It seems that participants had very different experiences of the technical set-up, depending on their expectations, on their internet connection, and on their ability to follow an online event with attention.

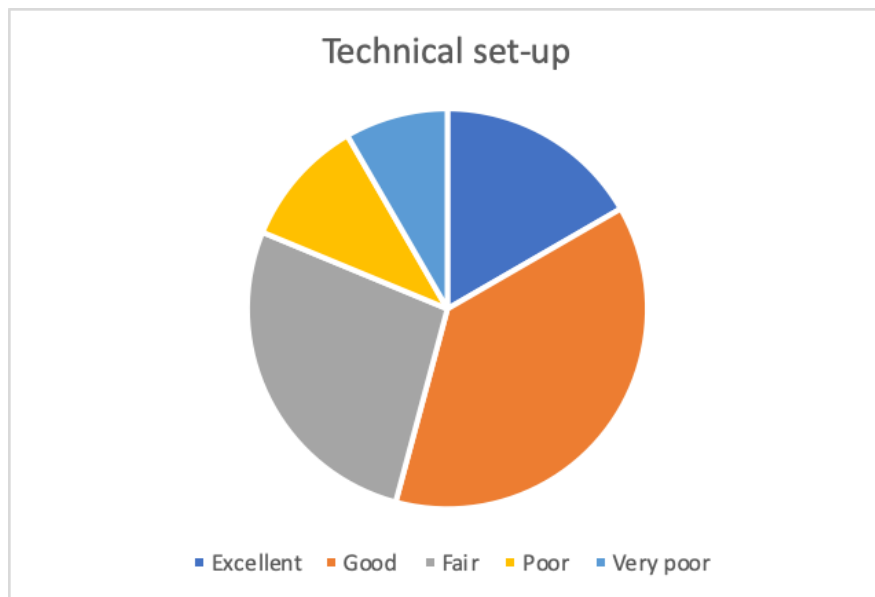


Figure 14: participants feedback on the technical setup, as emerged in the summative survey.

Between those participants who appreciated the **online nature of the conference**, a positive element often highlighted was how it allowed for a truly global attendance and a great overview of citizen science initiatives. Video-booths of the festival seemed to work particularly well: “The video booths of the festival were awesome. This should be done more often online!”

Overall, the **Hopin platform** was generally appreciated by participants, as well as the technical support and training for participants. Some interviewees referred to the quality of the platform used for the online conference: “Fantastic platform! [Our country] will run a Researchers Night event, and I suggested to get in touch with the organisers of the conference to use the same platform.” They mentioned that the Hopin platform was “comfortable” and “easy to use”.

Some participants elaborated on the **technical aspects** that they felt that could be improved, although there was acknowledgement that this is a common issue in all online events for the time being: “We are in a moment where we’re doing all these online conferences and we are mostly doing quite poorly. When you have all these different faces on the screen, sometimes because of the accent, the sound is not good, it’s a bit of a downer.” Some interviewees reported moments of difficulty related to internet connection issues: “the only problem was the internet (...) but I believe the platform is still great if you have a good [internet] connection. It can be a very nice and comfortable experience for all of us. Make sure the internet connection is working perfectly for next time.”

**Time constraints** were also referred to as a challenging element. For some participants, it was difficult to commit to attending two whole days, although they would have liked to: “So much is happening simultaneously so it’s hard to dedicate yourself fully and follow everything planned - I couldn’t isolate myself in my office for two consecutive days. Three or four hours a day max.”

Despite technical difficulties, the overall feeling emerging both from interviews with participants and direct observation during the conference is that the **online format was successful**: “It was a good solution to organise it online. Despite the technical problems the platform worked well.” Many also praised the hybrid nature of the conference. “I was impressed - it was a unique structure. [...] You didn’t have the feeling you were attending a virtual event. [The people chairing the conference] created a familiar atmosphere, that was really positive.” The programme and format was repeatedly referred to as “well organised”.

Participants also appreciated **efforts made by the conference organisers** to face such a complex environment and overcome technical issues: “It was very well done, considering the challenges

of this current situation. There were some technical challenges, but everything was handled well. I would only suggest doing more interactive sessions.” “I think the organisers made the best they could of the situation. Even the social event and the concert were very nice, it was great to be able to be part of it.” Participants also appreciated the fact that the Museum was prominent in the format: “It was one museum organising, so the people in charge of leading, moderating or facilitating sessions had this local approach. It’s a change from the usual generic venues. We’re coming from all types of places. It felt the event belonged to the institution and they presented themselves well.”

In the case of participants **attending the event on-site in Berlin**, there were also positive comments about the hybrid nature of the Conference: “I was there on day one in Berlin the whole time, for the second day I joined online as I realised that everything was happening online anyway. I was happy I could be there in person for one day, I met a lot of people I wanted to see, it is a different atmosphere and you have some of these great discussions that you don’t have online... There was a feeling that we are in a ‘crisis mode’ but I was impressed how they managed it. Everything physical (the location) was excellent and I actually also really liked the online tool.” However, the technical difficulties with the remote connections also affected the experiences of those present in person: “It was a good conference in terms of content but technically it was not very strong - I had the feeling a lot of people had problems connecting and being able to follow the conversation. I really saw a lot of embarrassment when people on stage could not talk to people online. I could follow because I was there but we saw in the chat people that could not hear.”

When answering open-ended questions in the summative survey with regards to the main weaknesses of the conference, some interesting points came up. Some participants mentioned that the **hybrid format of the event didn’t work well for them** and felt that given the circumstances, the conference should have been fully digital. This could have minimised technical difficulties and made the set-up simpler.

Another point raised was the fact that **asking questions during the presentations was not sufficiently encouraged** by community managers in the sessions, resulting in a limited amount of time left for interaction at the end: “We have experienced during the ECSA conference how rich and useful the chat can be and how much the efforts to crowdsource answers, to enable horizontal knowledge-sharing and to make more voices heard, were valued and appreciated by the community.”

## 5.5 Networking at the Conference

Three evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of the conference networking:

- direct observation throughout the conference (performed by three members of the evaluation team)
- the conference summative survey (N=56)
- the conference summative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding.

Networking is often a challenging dimension of online and hybrid events as it generally happens during the informal moments that are not part of the online experience. The **networking opportunities** aspect of the *Knowledge for change: A decade of citizen science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference was the one that rated the lowest (when compared to quality and content of the sessions, and technical set-up), with 35% of respondents rating it as fair, 26% as good and 18% as poor.



Figure 15: participants' feedback on networking opportunities, as emerged in the summative survey

As in the words of one interviewee, “informal moments, such as meals or transport together, were missing of course.” In order to provide **alternative networking opportunities** within the Hopin online environment that gathered most of the participants, the conference organisers set up tools such as social rooms and other networking functionalities to foster networking opportunities. Direct observation of the online event allowed the evaluators to see that while the social rooms were little to almost not used, other networking functionalities were instead more popular. On-site participants mentioned having enjoyed networking opportunities more than in usual (pre covid-19) conferences thanks to the limited number of participants, which favoured interactions and making new contacts.

Interviewees' opinions on the conference networking opportunities are mixed, with a slightly higher tendency towards fair or not so positive impressions, and thus reflect the complexity of mixed feelings that emerge from data collected through the summative survey. Some online participants affirm for example having used the networking time as a “time off”, or in some cases were intimidated to meet strangers online without any introduction nor facilitation: “[Networking?] Not that much, honestly. That is something I did not find useful, the networking opportunities. I was a bit reluctant to join, and a bit scared. I took my time for a break, and a coffee, and lunch. I did not find that networking worked for me this way”.

Some participants reported limited experience of networking at the conference, or some indirectly: “[The networking I did was] very little, to be honest. I sent emails to a couple of people but without success. I forgot if there was a tool - ah yes, there was a tool. But I saw several people I know so I was exchanging messages with them directly.” For some, **time was a limiting factor**, and the online format was a barrier: “No time to do that. [...] I didn't feel that comfortable - I'm a very sociable person but digitally I'm more shy.”

Participants also highlighted some **positive aspects** of their networking experience: “[The plenary sessions] were very helpful to identify people you would like to work with.”. “So, what I did is spot certain names by their comments in the chat, and this is working better for me because there is a point on which we connect. [...] I just collected the names and asked for their email address.” Another participant also appreciated this aspect: “The added value is that you can see the participants' names and contributions, so in this way it's easier to identify persons interesting for you. It's easier to go back to them.” Other participants used the poster session as a way to connect around meaningful topics: “The majority of people I discussed with were met through posters. Around five people. We got in touch by email afterwards. But it's not the same as in real life.”

Those participants who tried the **networking tools** online enjoyed the experience: “I liked the platform a lot, but mostly what I liked was the networking function. I used it twice, it was very interesting as it allowed me to meet some very nice people with whom I stayed in contact after the conference.” “I liked the networking sessions so much, it was very unexpected. It obliged you to explore how useful you could be to the other person. It was very new to me, surprising at first, but then it became normal. I was getting more and more curious each time. It was fun. And I felt safe as I knew that it was with the conference participants.” The posters and festival parts of the platform also raised interest amongst participants: “I especially liked the option of visiting the poster session anytime, skipping a session and networking with a randomly assigned person. I liked this format, these random meetings, it nicely simulated this conference atmosphere that you randomly bump into people.” Some participants particularly enjoyed the “Meet the expert” sessions: “I was surprised to see that I could join the stage, I didn’t understand at first, I was taken by surprise, but it quickly turned into a very nice experience. It’s good as it obliged us to try and be interactive, and not just listen.”

A key element of the networking dimension was the **variety of stakeholders** involved, the different backgrounds, the diversity of contexts. During the interviews, participants repeatedly mentioned this diversity as a key asset of the conference: “I really liked the diversity in the conference. Not only about researchers, but a much complex process: citizens, policy-makers (...) It shows that we need everyone to tackle this challenge and learn from each other, as it is complex.”

As a consequence, the networking aspects were still a somewhat important dimension of the conference. Almost half of the respondents of the summative survey stated that meeting new contacts was quite important (44%), while on the question of reconnecting with existing contacts they were almost equally split between not important (35%), quite important (32%) and very important (32%).

## 5.6 Evaluation of Conference sessions

Three evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of the conference sessions:

- direct observation throughout the conference (performed by three members of the evaluation team)
- the conference session feedback survey (N=68 in total)
- the conference summative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding.

The limited number of responses to the session feedback survey (69) did not allow for a detailed analysis of each individual session. However, grouped with the insights from the interviews, it enabled us to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences for each type of session.

### Plenary sessions

The feedback gathered through the session feedback survey regarding the plenary sessions (N=14) was very positive. Most participants reported learning during those sessions, stating that they strongly agreed (36%) or agreed (43%) with the statement **I learned new things during this session**. A large majority agreed (43%) or strongly agreed (36%) that the plenary sessions had been **useful to their work**.

On average, the **overall quality** of the plenary sessions has been mostly rated as good (50%), excellent (21%) or fair (21%). **Contents and formats** of the plenary sessions also raised satisfaction among the survey respondents: contents were mostly rated as good (50%) or excellent (36%), and the format was also mostly rated as good (43%) or excellent (43%). Answering an open-ended question on what they liked the most about the session, participants mentioned that the content of the plenary sessions was of high quality, with clear and well-explained points, as well as providing compelling views from the main speakers.

The **technical set-up** of the sessions was rated mostly fair (36%) or good (29%) (on a scale of Excellent/Good/Fair/Poor/Very poor). Participants reported having experienced some technical issues,

such as a frozen video or glitches in the sound quality. Evaluators could also observe that the conference audio streaming was sometimes intermittent during the live presentations of plenary sessions, but also that conference organisers were very quick in finding alternative solutions. Several interviewed participants expressed that they were aware that those issues are often unavoidable with online streamed conferences, and that they did not think the organisers could have done much to improve things.

### **Parallel sessions**

Parallel sessions were sessions in smaller groups: typically, three parallel sessions at the same time were offered to the conference attendees, who could join the one they wished or switch between sessions taking place simultaneously. The formats were diverse: some parallel sessions had a large number of speakers, each doing a short presentation – such as the Lightning talks – while other sessions offered an in-depth conversation with one speaker – like the Meet the Expert ones.

The feedback gathered regarding the parallel sessions (N=37) was very positive. Respondents expressed a high degree of satisfaction regarding the parallel sessions, which provided **valuable learning** and were considered **useful to their work**. Respondents mostly agreed (54%) or strongly agreed (38%) that they learned new things during the parallel sessions, and they also mostly agreed (57%) or strongly agreed (35%) that the session was useful to their work.

These sessions were overall rated good (59%) or excellent (27%), and both their content and formats were highly appreciated. The content was mostly rated as excellent (43%) or good (43%), the formats as good (54%) or excellent (24%). The most important strengths outlined by participants were the diversity of the speakers and of their background, and the variety of their perspectives. Hearing from representatives of different communities, stakeholders or contexts also proved valuable.

Also in the case of the parallel sessions, some issues were reported regarding the **technical set-up**, which was mostly rated as good (43%) or fair (35%). Respondents referred, for example, to the fact that, apart from the sound glitches, some speakers had specific requirements, such as showing a video, which came with issues – time to set it up, sound of the video not streamed, etc. Some respondents also mentioned difficulties with the time management in some sessions, and regretted that there was only limited time for questions or for dialogue between the speakers.

### **Evening event**

The evening event was co-organised by SoCiS project (funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research -BMBF- Förderkennzeichen 161TA210) and CoAct project (funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 873048). Technical support, event staff and finger food at the venue as well as registration fees for those who sent in videos for the call were supported through the SoCiS project. Very limited feedback was gathered during and after the evening event, as only two persons filled the session evaluation form for it (N=2). This might be due to the fact that a smaller number of online participants attended the evening event, and that participants might have been too tired or it was too late in the evening for them to take the time to provide feedback. Some interviewees, for example, reported they had family duties or that they felt like they needed to take a break after a full day of online presentations. **The small feedback gathered was positive**, praising both the content and the format of the evening event. One interviewee enjoyed the fact that the evening event allowed for more interactivity than other regular sessions. Respondents also appreciated the focus on practices: a moment for sharing tools and practices was perceived as complementary to the more high-level reflections of the day.

### **Poster sessions**

Several poster rooms to discover projects and citizen science initiatives were made available to the conference participants. Direct observation of the online conference performed by the evaluation team led to the observation that overall, poster rooms were in general visited by a smaller number of participants compared to plenary and parallel sessions.

This could be due to several reasons. For example, one of the interviewees mentioned: “I was a bit lost, there was a bit of confusion.” Other interviewees pointed out that they used the poster session time slot to “take a break”, as attending the full conference online was an intense experience. Some poster presenters were disappointed by the lack of attendance, and decided to use their time to visit their fellow poster presenters, reporting that they actually appreciated discovering new projects: “The presentation of my poster was at 6:30pm. I thought it was quite late. Lots of people were not present, I had only one visitor. Only poster presenters were visiting posters.” Positive feedback on the posters sessions was also shared. For example, some participants considered poster sessions a useful resource even when presenters were not there to discuss their work: “The posters were very useful even without a live presentation, just to watch the slides and videos.” Some participants also appreciated the “opportunity to interact with speakers and with people presenting their projects.”

### **Social rooms**

Four rooms, called “social rooms”, were specifically designated rooms for spontaneous networking and meetings, and were made available to participants throughout the conference, allowing for a maximum of 20 participants. Direct observation showed that social rooms were very little exploited by participants. This could be due to several reasons. Several interviewees reported taking the networking time as a break time and did not engage in the social rooms or other networking functionalities. Evaluators also observed that during the event, the social rooms were sometimes not promoted enough. The few attendees entering the social rooms could have felt intimidated and unsure about how to engage with others and start conversations. Online networking rooms may require greater promotion and a dedicated facilitation to engage with participants and trigger informal conversations.

## **5.7 Learning outcomes and pathways to impacts**

The following evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of the impacts of the conference:

- the conference formative survey (N=29)
- the conference summative survey (N=56)
- the conference formative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding
- direct observation throughout the conference (performed by three members of the evaluation team)

### **Learning outcomes**

The impact that was most acknowledged by interviewees, as well as survey respondents, was the **learning impact on participants**: “The impact is through shared knowledge.” Participants explained having acquired new understanding on citizen science, the discovery of new fields and projects, and a clearer comprehension of insights from the invited experts. Most of the respondents (84%) of the summative survey agreed that they learned something new during the conference. The importance of the input from experts, of the discovery of new projects, and of the gathering of unusual actors and perspectives was stressed by participants.

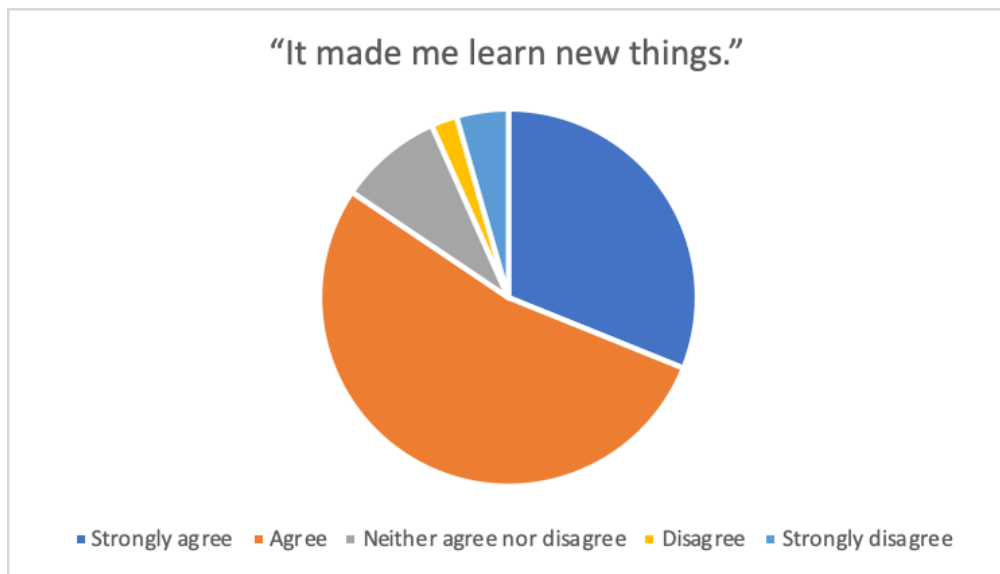


Figure 15: participants' feedback on the learning aspect, as emerged in the summative survey.

During interviews, some participants elaborated on what they learned: “I became better aware of the overall community. (...) I got information and understanding, insight into some projects. We are working on recommendations that are partly linked to SDGs and so for us it's a policy tool that could allow us to better align”. Participants acknowledged that specific attention was devoted to tackling multiple aspects and levels of citizen science, providing useful insights: “Lots of food for thought and I wrote lots of pages of notes - it was very stimulating.” “I think that's a great achievement that they condensed so much content into two days.”

Another strength of the conference was its **reflective aspect**, and its overview of the current theories and approaches related to citizen science. Interviewees stated that they took advantage of the conference to gain insights about specific fields they wanted to discover, such as Social Citizen Science: “I really learned a lot. I am in the process of learning what citizen science is. I love theories, so I can't stop at just a concept, I need critical views on it and see where it comes from. I had missed it until today, but here at this conference I really had a very good experience with the presenters and the talks.” “I liked the focus on social science, and the link with SDGs, and lots of discussions about sustainability.” Other participants appreciated that, far from simply promoting citizen science and its projects, the conference was also a moment of critical reflection: “It was not a promotional event about citizen science. There was a critical approach”.

Participants reported that they felt the **learning impact of the conference would extend beyond the conference participants**, as they were going to share their new insights within their institutions and networks: “It reinforced my experience from the ECSA (conference). I liked that it was much shorter and easier to consume. I learned a lot. My colleague and I agreed to organise our notes and present it to other colleagues. I started to discuss with colleagues, show them the insights.” “I already made a lecture about citizen science, by using what I learnt in the conference, presenting platforms and projects. It was with 50 teachers from my country.”

### Linking Citizen Science and SDGs

The summative survey (N=56) also allowed collecting more in-depth information about the relationship between citizen science and the SDGs as perceived by the participants. When asked if the conference provided them with **new knowledge about how citizen science's contribution to achieving the SDGs is important to our future**, a majority (69%) confirmed that it did. They also agreed (67%) when asked if the event helped them to see how their own work supports the achievement of the UN SDGs.



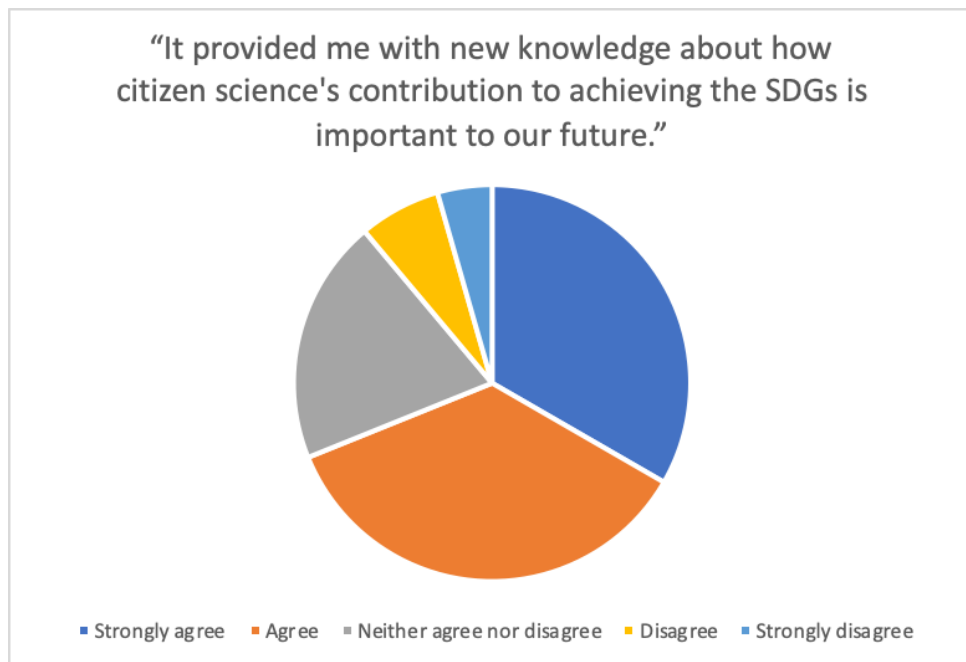


Figure 16: participants' feedback on the importance of citizen science's contribution to achieving the SDGs, as emerged in the summative survey.

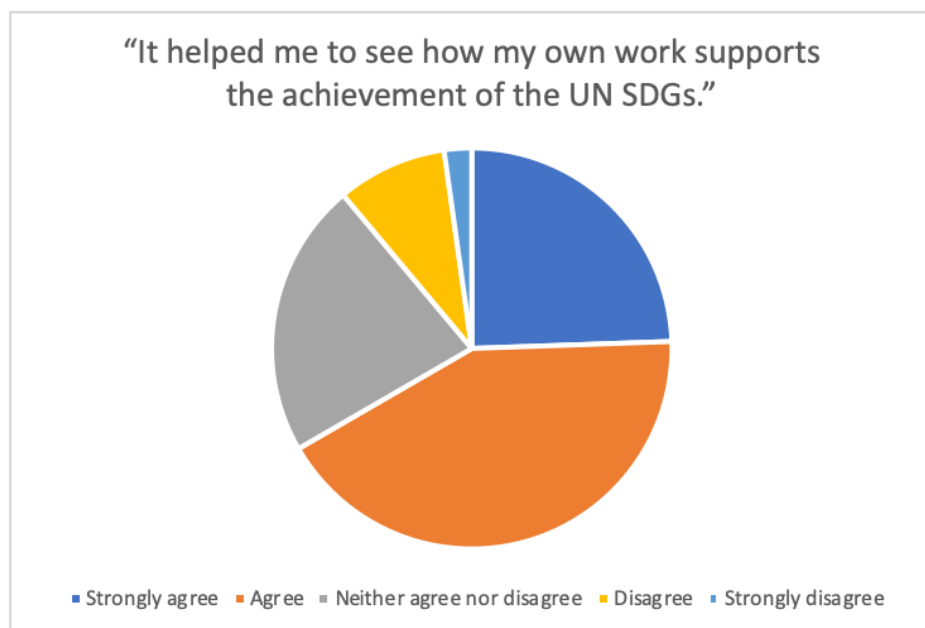


Figure 17: participants' feedback on whether the conference helped them see how their own work supports the achievement of the SDGs, as emerged in the summative survey.

Participants reported that they felt that events exploring the link between citizen science and SDGs would now become more common in the future: “I really hope this conference will be repeated, it’s a great topic, there is still a lot to do for SDGs, and citizen science can contribute a lot. Or if it is not a conference, at least have sessions on SDGs topics.”

The new awareness of the link between citizen science and the SDGs achieved through the conference also **transformed the way participants perceived their own projects and work**. The idea that citizen science activities may contribute to the achievement of the SDGs brought a sense of global positive action to the field, and increased mutual support: “[I learned to] think more global, more systemic. Everyone in the conference can work together. We can all have gains in working together by putting together our skills and knowledge.”

According to participants, **the link between citizen science and SDGs became more tangible and concrete** thanks to the conference: “What I did find useful is a lot of cool examples, my understanding was abstract before. Seeing some of these projects, seeing how far they progressed has filled it with more context. It gives me a better understanding of the feasibility of these things. It has deepened my perspective.”

### **Fostering new projects**

Triggering the collision of ideas, approaches and professional perspectives, the conference also helped the participants to **imagine new citizen science projects**: “it was very inspiring for us to have new tools and ideas to develop our thinking for new projects.” “I found out about new projects, useful for me. And I’ve met some new people with whom I can keep in touch with.”

The vast diversity of the fields, the large geographical coverage - even beyond Europe - and the variety of stakeholders confronted participants with **unexpected views and approaches**. Several of them reported that they were already thinking about transferring some concepts and approaches to their own context: “This conference will foster the development of new ideas and new projects. Innovations are not only the ones you invent, but also in adapting the [others’] ideas to your context, your country. In this conference, you listen and then you adapt in your local country.”

Witnessing the variety of projects also led the participants to the question of the quality of each project. It gave them a feeling of the **current “quality level” of the field**, and of directions for improvement: “We also have to discuss the quality: not all of the citizen science projects are good, we need to get better, get more clarity, especially to improve the data quality - there is an expectation from the European Commission there.”

Last, the presentations and exchanges also offered a unique moment to imagine **new models for citizen science** and scientific research in general. The concentration of expertise, of know-how, and the variety of backgrounds made it an ideal incubator to build emergent paradigms. “[Citizen science will] open options for people to contribute in various ways. The frontiers between the paid scientific system and the other contributors can be more flexible and permeable.”

### **Supporting participants’ work**

Participants were asked in the summative survey (N=56) to estimate how **relevant to their work** this conference had been. A large majority (89%) strongly agreed or agreed that the conference was relevant to their work: “It was in general very thought provoking and very useful for my work.”

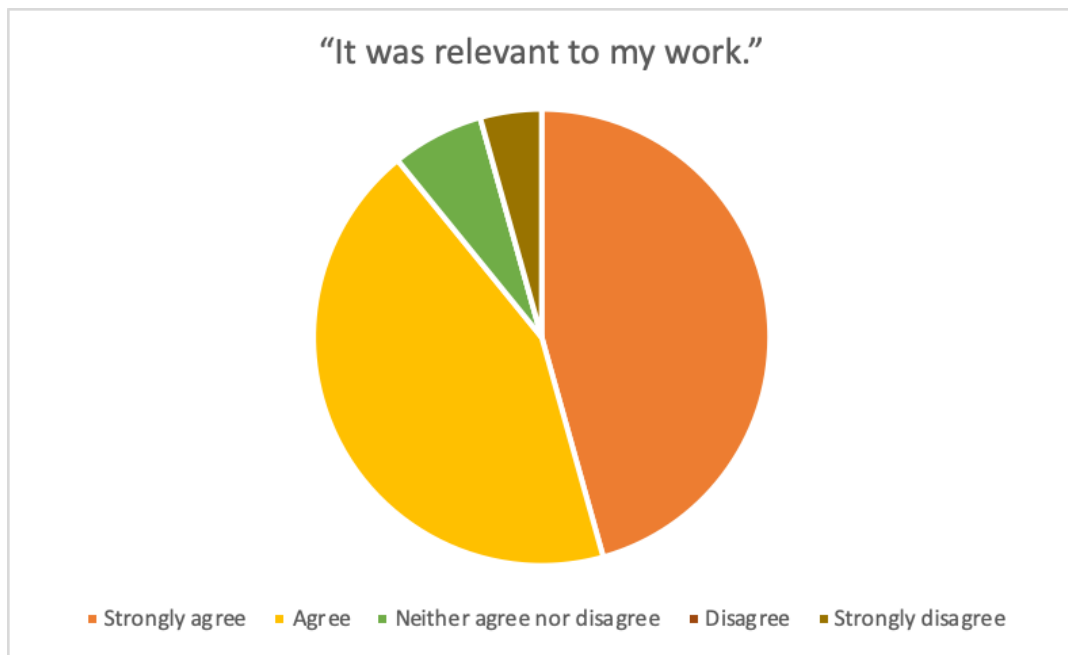


Figure 18: participants’ feedback on whether the conference was relevant to their work, as emerged in the summative survey.

Some respondents provided details about how useful the relevance to their work had been: “This morning I was working on a co-authored blog post with colleagues with whom I developed a citizen science pilot at a school [...] and in that writing we are thinking about how this conference helped us understand this whole framework. I learned that we are doing ‘extreme citizen science’ which is nice - I can place ourselves on the map. It was comforting to see that we are beginners but we begin with the most advanced and challenging model, with school pupils - that’s a challenge!”

Participants also mentioned that the conference was **a trigger to create a new tool linked to the exact topic of the conference**: “I wanted to validate some assumptions that I had, mainly the idea that there are no tools for practitioners for impact on the SDGs. I didn’t know if such tools existed. I confirmed that these tools don’t exist - I will make a tool that helps match project outcomes with SDGs. There are practitioners who just don’t care about SDGs, which is fine...that’s why you don’t need an extensive toolkit, but a rapid checklist.”

### Increasing the visibility of citizen science

Participants felt that the conference, supported by the European Commission and an official event of Germany’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union, gave visibility to the field of citizen science. The link with the SDGs made it relevant with today’s high level political agenda and offered new narratives to present citizen science to media, policymakers and citizens.

According to participants, the acquired visibility was useful for the citizen science community itself, as it strengthened its self-awareness and understanding of the diversity of the fields, and of its importance: “This conference was good for the citizen science community, because it makes clear where we are, and it makes the group visible for others.”

Participants also reported that the conference offered **visibility to outsiders**: it increased the “awareness of citizen science, in the whole world. Through the world press statement, the European Union presidency, and the Citizen Science Festival will generate some media attention.” Participants appreciated the fact that the conference comprised specific events which targeted citizens, such as the Festival. This also drew media attention (“It is very good press to communicate to the public sphere!”) and allowed a presentation of the citizen science approach and community to a general audience.

Interviewees acknowledged that **one major obstacle to the conference visibility was the coronavirus crisis**: “I assume the impact will be limited, because of the COVID-19 crisis”. Covid-related news were in competition with events and usual news: “I am not sure about the outreach: media, even for politicians, is important, and I do not know how much they reported. (...) The media need stories, and the stories have been provided by COVID-19.” In terms of PR, some organisers pointed out that citizen science could be linked with COVID-19: “Citizen science projects contribute to fight against COVID-19! We have projects about protein folding, (...) volunteers looking into data collection about the spread, the evolution, the geographical distribution of the virus”.

### **Contributing to new policies**

Participants also reported that the conference would be instrumental in favouring or building new policies which may foster the development of citizen science. First of all, the event was useful to take stock and have an **overview of the current policies** and political stances about citizen science: “Those events are very political, and it’s important to know how Europe and the world is using citizen science in relation with the SDGs.” The conference was itself a reservoir of ideas for research and citizen science policies, as some participants pointed out that the conference will be useful to “collect some ideas for citizen science programmes, and improve them. Hopefully it will have an impact on how Horizon Europe looks like.”

The idea that the conference could **influence funding streams** - and in particular the European Commission programmes - was a recurrent trend: “[we will have] more citizen science if it is adequately funded, [if it is] an integrated part in science policy programmes - Horizon Europe and others.” Several interviewees saw the conference as a demonstration of an important and useful community to potential funders: “The main impact was to gather this big community, increase the visibility to the EC. Citizen science had a chance to demonstrate the community and the work, and it may now be included in future calls.”

When conference participants were asked whether they thought there was a **commitment in the EU for citizen science to support the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals**, the majority thought that there certainly was commitment from EU institutions to support citizen science in relation to SDGs. This was especially the case when it comes to funding schemes. However, according to participants a lot still needed to be done in order to show the extent of this commitment: “Improving the interoperability of databases and strengthening the co-operation between national statistical offices and citizen science research/initiatives are only two important issues. Thus, the commitment should be significantly increased.” Another suggestion was to “establish clear unified measures of what we consider or not, and above all give academic support both to society and to the scientific communities that are involved in the role of citizen science.”

Participants and organisers pointed out that the idea that citizen science contributes to the SDGs may be key for **favourable policies**: “There is a possible policy impact, in supporting the SDGs”. They felt the association of citizen science with SDGs could be a way to organise and monitor the projects, evaluate their impact, and ensure interest at the highest political levels: “The long term timeline is the mainstreaming of citizen science. It’s a long-term strategy. First of all, there should be systematic funding of citizen science projects related to the SDGs.” Some participants expressed stakes related to democratic and political convictions: “It is a significant action to show us to the United Nations and international bodies: we as people working on the ground, close to local communities. There is a huge gap between the UN and local communities and institutions. (...) We need to bring citizen scientists and researchers in these conversations.”

Policymakers interviewed stressed the importance of the conference for **new policies**: “[The conference] is really a big step. We write speeches and papers, and funding proposals. (...) What is remarkable about the conference, is that for the next two years or so we can reference it in political goals, speeches, parliamentary debates, etc. We can now insert it as a reference to mention citizen science. It takes citizen science to another level.”

Participants also expressed the **importance of follow-up action** to ensure policy impact, highlighting the need for work and commitment after the event, systematically bringing attention to the contribution of citizen science in achieving the SDGs: “We have to seize that change to make it a reference point as much as we can, especially when the SDGs are mentioned.” Support from influential policymakers would also be essential: “Personally I am very pessimistic about the impact. Because you need a powerful political actor to use this document and introduce it in the public discussion.”

## 5.8 Organisation of the conference

The following evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of the conference organisation process:

- the conference formative interviews with 9 individuals involved in the conference organisation and funding, before the event,
- the conference summative interviews with the same 9 individuals involved in the conference organisation and funding, after the event,
- the direct observation of the conference organising team weekly meetings,
- the direct observation of the Conference Programme Committee meetings.

### Organisational process

The external conditions surrounding the organisation of the conference have been particularly challenging. In particular, **the COVID-19 crisis** unfolding throughout the year resulted in a high level of uncertainty with regards to several aspects of the conference organisation. As explained by the organisers, the original planning of an on-site conference in Berlin (along with satellite events such as the Festival) had to be adapted to the growing possibility of an online event. This led to increased pressure for the organising team as well as concerns regarding the conference impact: “COVID-19 changed the whole character of the conference. (...) It undermined the impact of the conference, and (...) the connection with the whole community of stakeholders. You need to see and touch for real the work of these scientists. As most events are now virtual, I am not sure how you can sell it to the stakeholders.”

As a result of the increased uncertainty, **a hybrid event format** was finally chosen by the executive team, the funders and the Conference Programme Committee. The choice of a hybrid event was reported by the executive team as a challenging aspects, as it merged the constraints and requirements of both an on-site and an online event: “We proposed to favour a fully online format but it was too early, we proposed so at the beginning of April and we were still at an early stage of the pandemic crisis, so it was decided by the funders to opt for a hybrid format. For us, it was like organising two conferences, knowing that it might have been all for nothing. There are also additional costs that came with this situation.”

As explained by members of the organisation, the complexity of the situation, including a sudden worsening of COVID-19 contagions in the weeks just ahead of the conference, resulted in the executive team being obliged to spend a considerable amount of time looking for **alternative solutions**, reducing the time dedication available to focus on other aspects of the organisation of such a high-level event: “I am really proud of how, throughout the course of preparing the conference, we kept thinking of new ways of achieving what we wanted to achieve”, one member of the staff mentioned. As a result, some resources of the organising institution were difficult to mobilize: “Within the Museum we should have been a bit more in advance organising things. The design, for example, should not have been on us, but the design department of the Museum has a tight schedule, so they could not fit in the work we asked for.” Not really knowing what would happen was the most complex part for some members of the executive team: “We kept adapting to the situation, everyone has put a lot of work into adapting to what we were told to do (i.e. having to work from home, shifting to a hybrid format, adopting security measures, etc.). We feared that the worst that could happen was that the conference might not happen.”

The organising team had to face **additional internal challenges**, such as changes in the core staff. Members of the executive team in charge of the conference also mentioned they would have benefitted from having more time to get to know each other and build their working habits and culture, as one organiser stated: “It would have been easier if the Museum team had been less new.” The COVID-19 pandemic also challenged some of the work practices, with the sudden requirement to work from home and other constraints: “Home office made it much more difficult. It’s easier to address small questions if we are all in a small office, even if we had regular “jour fixe” [recurring team meetings]. There was a lot of talking on the phone. And now everything is changing. We had a tough time in this regard.” The impact of this disruption was clearly challenging for the team: “We all felt vulnerable and in emotional turmoil at that time. It was a big challenge to get the team feeling when we were all at home. We’d never used Zoom before.” Employees reported putting a lot of efforts into team building to overcome challenges: “Despite being all obliged to work from home, the communication between us was good, we were exchanging a lot and all decisions were taken all together.”

Even though challenging, both organisers and funders considered that an **efficient process** was set up by the team to ensure a smooth and quick progress of the organisation: “The team works, it’s small but a really good team. Lots of pressure, but still fun!”. The team meetings were not only effective, but they also maintained the team dynamism and motivation by emphasising the achievements, the team effort and the creativity used to find solutions and maintain a sense of optimism around the event: “I felt that colleagues, funders and partners approached us with useful tips, I really appreciated this”. The process leading to the conference was also positively assessed by the conference funders: “The Museum team has been very professional, very reactive, as funders we felt listened to. We could see our suggestions being reflected in the conference programme and in the Declaration process.”

Members of the executive team shared positive comments about the **teamwork and collaboration with colleagues** around the organisation of the conference: “I felt very at ease, they are colleagues but also friends. I feel good around them and we can speak to each other, take criticism, or make constructive comments. Colleagues were encouraging and supportive”. “Everyone was hardworking and focused on getting this right. [...] We were a small team and although we had technical support, most of the work was done by us. Despite the pressure, everyone stayed in good spirits.” This impression was reflected by both the organising and funding partners. The very strong mutual support of the team made the whole conference organisation process an enriching experience: “It went very well, I would do it again. There was lots of respect for each other, and supporting each other. I’m very glad to have been part of that team.”

The **relationship between the executive team and the funders** was described as “very good”. “[The European Commission] was rather open, it was clear what they wanted, but it was still possible to discuss things.” The executive team felt they responded skillfully to the requirements and interests from their funders while ensuring that the event would be possible and successful: “We had a very good relationship with the European Commission, a successful cooperation. The discussion with them was very fruitful.” This positive relationship was also reflected in comments from funders: “The hierarchy here [at the European Commission] can sometimes be challenging. But the [conference organising] team knows well how to navigate it and they have lots of enthusiasm. [...] They are a small team but they are working well.”

The **Conference Programme Committee (CPC)** was also key: very active during the CPC meetings, it provided suggestions and a diversity of views: “We have a very good Conference Programme Committee, they supported us a lot, particularly in setting up all the sessions. The discussion on who would participate in the review process was very important.”

During the event itself, the whole team was fully dedicated and received **adequate technical support**: “We had very good technical support, I know how much they tried to make it very smooth. Some problems occurred that we could not solve, but we always checked and tested and worked closely with the [...] company. We were calling and supporting each other 24 hours a day. There were

lots of problem-solving and doing the best to find solutions.” However, the organising team had to spend a lot of time helping participants become familiar with the Hopin platform: “For the conference, the hybrid format had to be further developed at a late stage, as a lot of people could not come at the last minute. In Hopin I had to help people a lot, as they could not include things [posters] themselves. A lot of people did things very last minute, and there were several complications. I had to explain and show a lot of times how to [do things]. There were many questions beforehand.”

Finally, the simple fact that the conference happened in such challenging conditions was perceived as a great achievement by its organisers: “The main success? That we had this conference! With *real* people in *real* life.” The hybrid format was innovative and risky, and its implementation was also a major success: “Under these special circumstances ,[...] we managed the hybrid format very well. Of course, it was a main challenge to handle this, as it was a very familiar meeting in real life, but there were also lots of people online. It was our first time for a hybrid conference; I think it was a success.”

### **Uniqueness of the conference**

For the organising and funding team, the uniqueness of the conference was related to the **variety of stakeholders** to be involved: “There are a lot of conferences, projects and platforms on citizen science. They only talk to each other: citizen science with citizen science stakeholders, or research policy officers to other research policy officers. Here we connect all groups. It was planned like a high professional village where you can see the most successful projects that can be instrumentalised for change.” From the point of view of the funders, another unique aspect was the **policy impact**: “the conference has several unique aspects, such as for example being one of the few events on the German presidency list, or being directly supported in Horizon 2020. It is a high profile conference in terms of setting the trends for the future and hopefully influence each and every thematic field of the future Framework Programme, and support member states to get a solid mandate to support citizen science.”

Another particular aspect of the conference in the eyes of its organisers was the **presence of the public sphere**, through the involvement of citizens and policy-makers: “The conference will organise a process which will bring specific pressure for stakeholders: they can present themselves to the public sphere: ‘Look at us!’. The public sphere is society in general, but more specifically we [...] target policy makers.” The conference organisers also had the general public as a target group: “The festival brings a big contribution to involve the public. It’s really a pity that [we] had to cancel the projects’ on-site participation at the last minute [because of COVID-19]. Hopefully there will be 50 participants and it will still bring a nice feeling. Lots of extra work but totally worth it!”

### **Expected and achieved impacts**

Both funders and organisers shared the view that the conference’s main challenge was to bring in **influential speakers** and put together **compelling sessions**. Both also shared the view that the conference had to be successful at touching upon many themes and fields, uniting various stakeholder groups who have sometimes different points of view: “[It’s a challenge to] bring together all these different stakeholders, and the citizen science community which is very independent, it has a high degree of autonomy, it is very convinced of what they do.” Other team members stressed that “bringing citizen science and sustainability together for the first time [in a dedicated conference] - the community was shifted a bit”.

The conference **policy impact** was also a key concern of both funders and organisers: “The high level support from the German Ministry and European Commission, and from leading researchers in the field, was one of the strengths of the conference. Now that we saw them presenting (in the opening sessions), we could see their enthusiasm and that they really believed in it.” From the point of view of the main funder, “In European terms, this has been a presidential conference, so there have been reports about it. It is likely to make citizen science more prominent from the EU Council also, which is something we were expecting as one of the impacts. On the long-term, we hope there will be an impact also on the implementation of the ERA communication.” Members of the executive team also shared the same hope: “I hope that the conference and the Declaration will have an impact on ERA

and Horizon Europe, and that the European Commission and other funders will find in the conference the arguments they need to support citizen science.”

**Strengthening the citizen science community** has also been mentioned as a key impact for the conference: “It has also been a forum for many citizen science projects to come together. (...) It has a big impact to have CS projects come together. There is value in interacting together. There is value in sharing the tools and competences, so that it is better integrated.” “I think and hope that people attending the conference could see that citizen science can connect with different topics, from health to well-being, but also mental health, etc. I hope they also learnt from citizen science science. It showed how promising it is and there are still a lot of things unexplored, I hope this is the feeling that people got.”



# 6. Evaluation of the Declaration

## 6.1 Expectations towards the Declaration

A number of evaluation activities contributed to the assessment of expectations towards the Declaration, from various perspectives:

- A summative survey for participants of the “Become an author for the Declaration” Virtual Meetings (N=17)
- the pre-conference formative survey (N=29)
- the pre-conference formative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding, including participants of the declaration process.

Despite the number of responses collected through the pre-conference formative survey being low, information gathered through the semi-structured interviews with conference participants has allowed for a more in-depth understanding of expectations regarding the Declaration.

In terms of the expectations of the **conference participants** towards the Declaration and what it would achieve, the majority of respondents of the formative survey stated that their biggest expectation was related to some sort of **awareness raising amongst various stakeholders**: the media, policy-makers and scientists. Others were hoping for the Declaration to become a **milestone or benchmark** for the citizen science community. These expectations were also supported by comments from interviewees: “Having something which stands from common work can be a good stimulus to further develop and build on, it will be used as a benchmark or reference for future work, a brick to which we can add.” Some participants were **sceptical about the Declaration** and its potential to lead to actual progress and impact: “It will be just another declaration. Sounds nice, but nothing really follows from it.” “I’m not sure whether it can be helpful for policy-makers to make policies on citizen science. But it is important to have it as it can show the direction towards which policy makers should go, and bring ideas.”

In terms of motivations of the **participants** who took part in at least one of the online meetings of the “Become an author of the Declaration” process, most of them mentioned that they were part of the citizen science community, that it was related to their work and they were **motivated to make the field stronger**. Another reason for getting involved, shared by participants, was the opportunity this process offered of **connecting with colleagues and peers**. Participants also noted that they joined the meeting for the learning experience of creating such a Declaration.

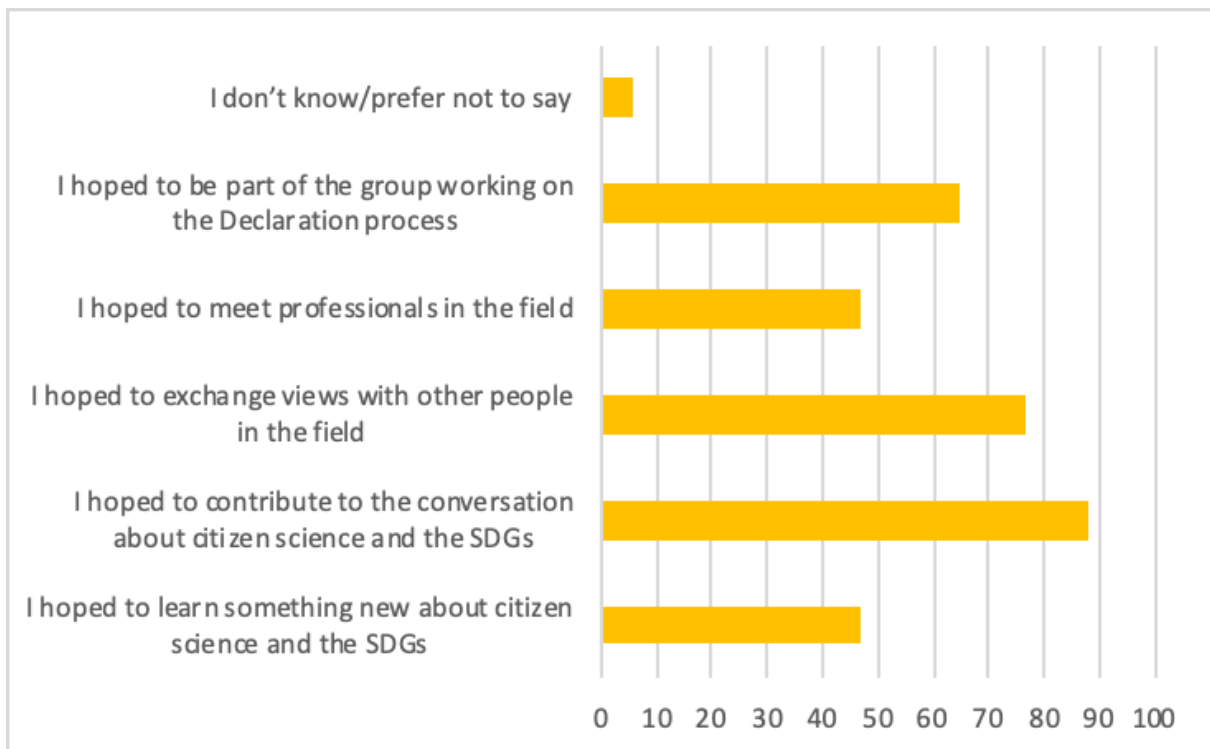


Figure 19: participants' feedback on their hopes about the experience of the Declaration process, as emerged in the declaration survey.

**Organisers' and funders'** main expectation towards the Declaration was that it would **federate communities working in citizen science** - a task which they felt was not easy. "The citizen science community had the perception that we have enough declarations. There was some scepticism in the community. But we have dealt with this quite well and convinced them and built this bridge between community and policymakers." Organisers acknowledged the pressure on the Declaration as a tool for professionals working in citizen science. "We've committed ourselves with so much support from the community to have a bottom-up declaration that will serve the community in the next funding schemes."

Organisers shared a number of key expectations from the Declaration, such as for example regarding its **impact on research funding mechanisms**, with a particular focus on Horizon Europe: "I expect the Declaration will have some kind of impact on EU policymaking and funding of citizen science and the SDGs. Something comparable to SwafS that really has an influence on Horizon Europe."

## 6.2 The Declaration process

Data on the experience of the Declaration process was collected through:

- A survey for participants of the "Become an author for the Declaration" Virtual Meetings (N=17)
- the pre-conference formative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding.

### Setup of the Declaration process

Participants in the "Become an author of the Declaration" Virtual Meetings felt that the **aims were clear** and that the **process was well set up**. They agreed that the aim of the process was clear (n=9, 60%); that the aim of the Declaration itself was clear (n=9, 60%). All participants surveyed agreed that the registration went smoothly and that the Zoom meetings ran well from a technical perspective.

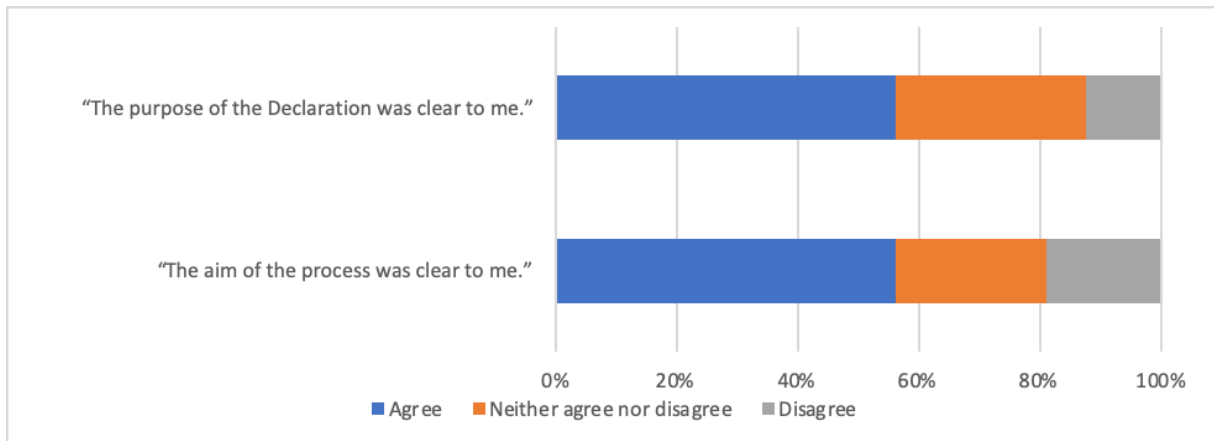


Figure 20: participants' feedback on the clarity of the objectives, as emerged in the declaration participants' survey.

Some criticism was raised regarding **the preparation process, in terms of materials and role**: 40% of respondents agreed that the materials circulated beforehand were sufficient to prepare them for the process while 40% disagreed. Around half of the respondents (n=7, 47%) agreed that their role in the process was clear to them. Answers to open-ended questions on the Declaration processes elaborated on the opinion that the process wasn't always clear nor well structured: "Maybe a better steering of the whole process would have helped here, including the clearer division of responsibilities regarding the actual writing of the text."

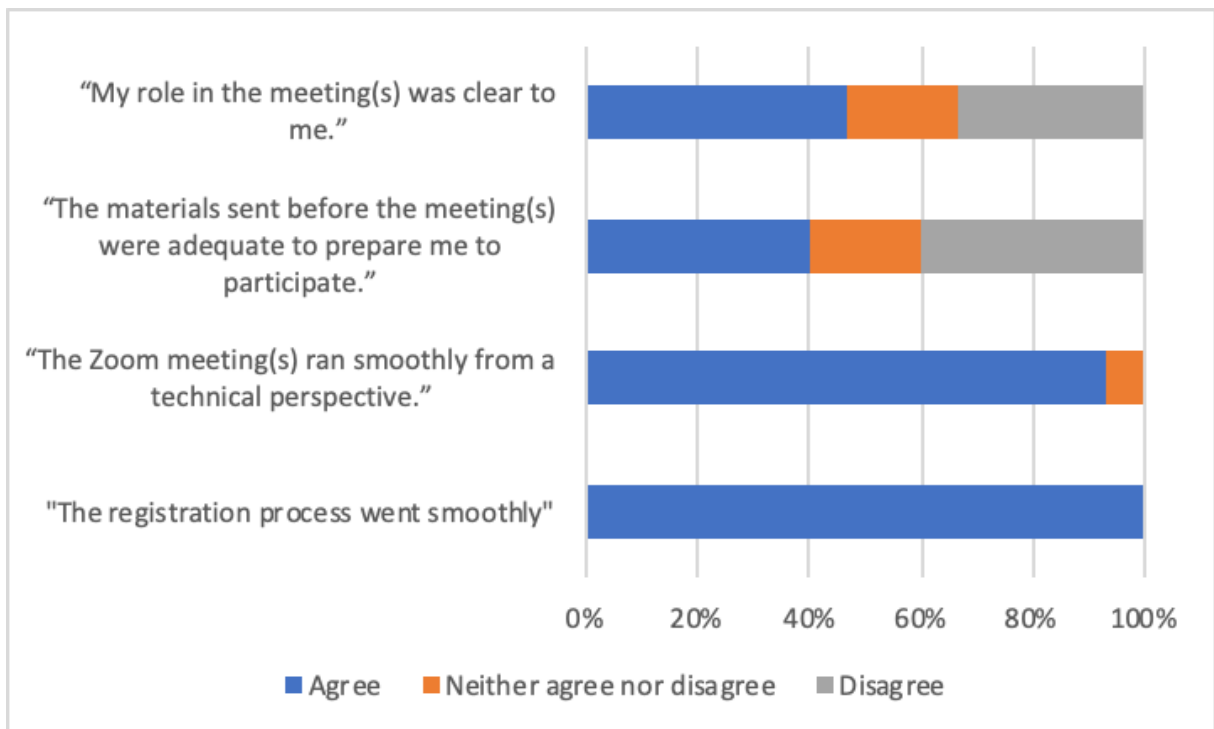


Figure 21: participants' feedback on the Virtual Meetings, as emerged in the Declaration survey.

## Participants' experience of the process

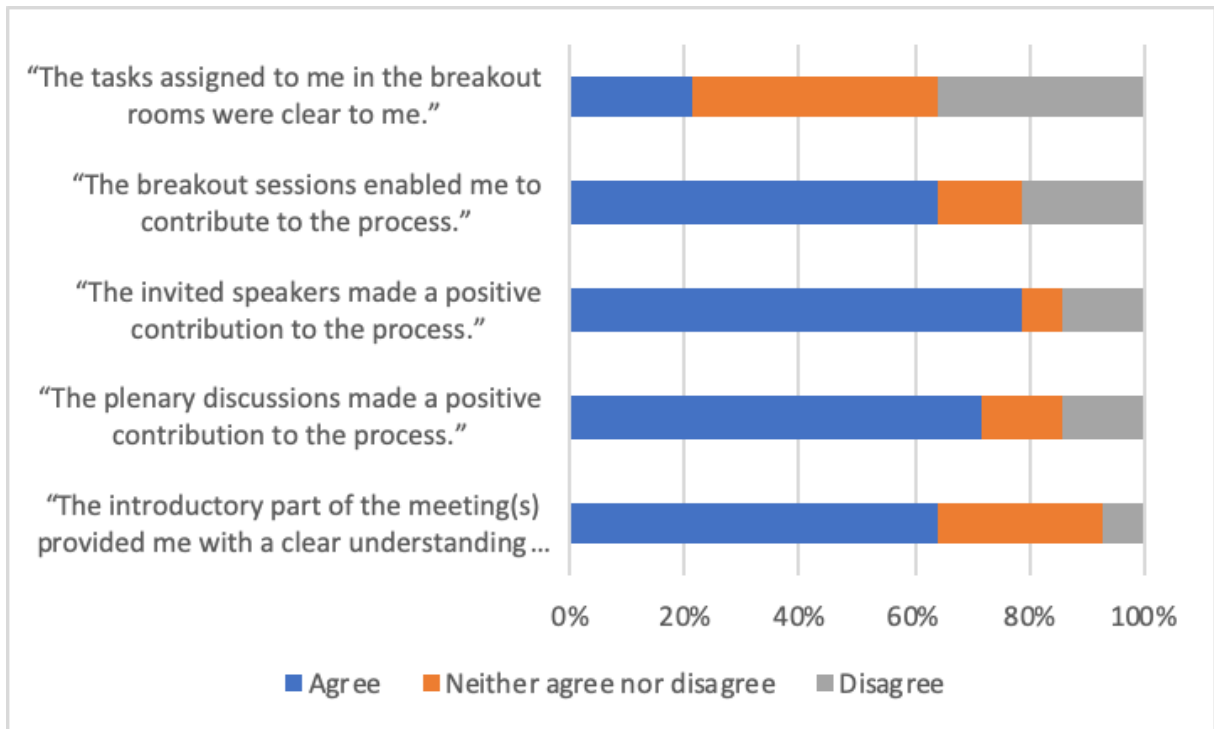


Figure 22: participants' feedback on the quality of the online meetings, as emerged in the Declaration survey.

Participants were **positive about the content and participation** in the Virtual Meetings. They agreed that the introductory part of the meeting provided them with a clear understanding of the topic (n=9, 60%); that the plenary discussions (n=10, 67%) and invited speakers (n=11, 73%) made a positive contribution to the process; and that the breakout sessions allowed them to contribute to the process (n=9, 60%). They agreed that they enjoyed the process (n=11, 73%), learned new things (n=11, 73%) and felt satisfied with the contribution they made (n=9, 60%). They agreed they made new contacts (n=8, 53%) and that the Virtual Meeting(s) they attended made them feel committed to the outcome of the Declaration (n=9, 60%). In the open-ended questions, participants commented that they really appreciated the opportunity to connect, exchange and brainstorm together with a community of scholars and peers: "Relevance, timeliness, meeting many committed and knowledgeable people, being able to make a valuable contribution."

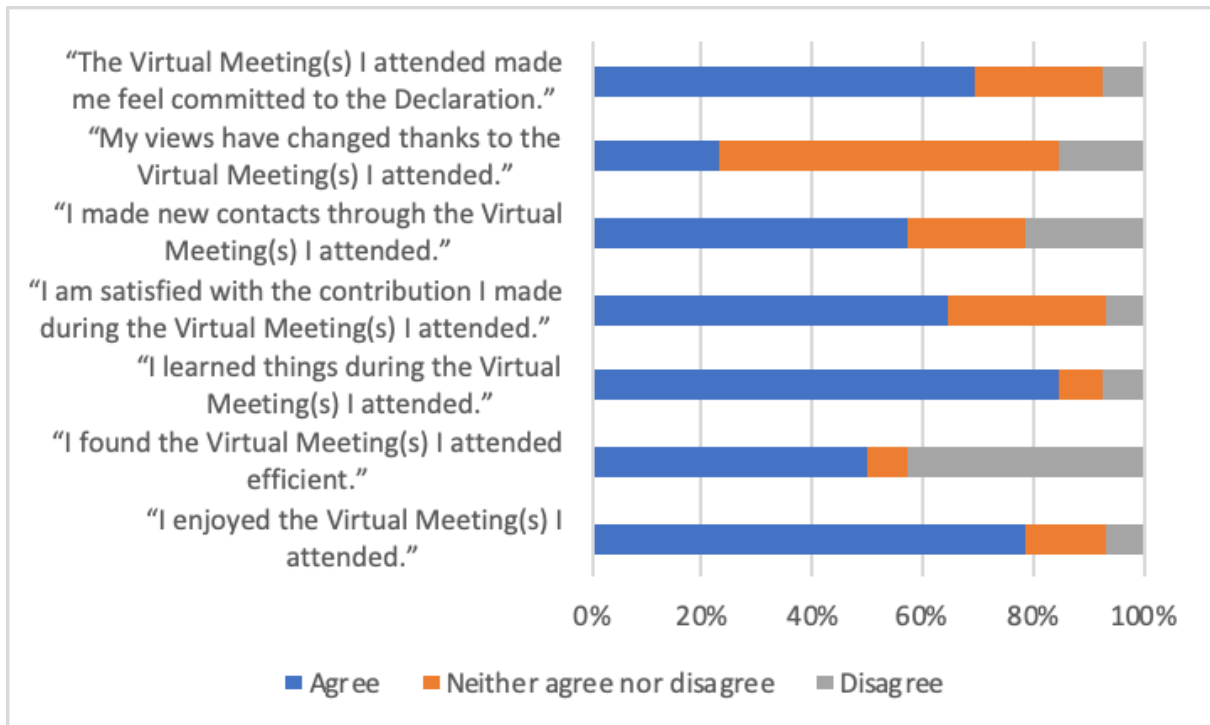


Figure 23: participants' feedback on their experience of the process, as emerged in the declaration participants' survey.

Some respondents expressed some critical views of the process, for example regarding the role of participants in breakout rooms, only few respondents agreed that this was clear (n=3, 20%). Slightly less than half of the respondents felt the Virtual Meeting(s) they attended were efficient (n=7, 47%). This was echoed in the open-ended responses, where participants mentioned that the time dedicated to breakout room discussions was too limited and tasks were sometimes confusing. One participant suggested that "it would have been useful to extend the invitation to other groups that work on co-creative research, like science shops, and other networks of researchers and practitioners in Europe (even if they don't call it specifically citizen science)."

### Organisers' and funders' view of the process

Organisers emphasised the **importance of the Declaration process** to their work and to their community, underlining the groundbreaking effort that this represented: "The Declaration process is unique! We've committed ourselves with so much support from the community to have a bottom-up Declaration that will serve the community in the next funding schemes." "[The Declaration] is a key asset [and is] very much supported by the community and by the European Commission." Funders also underlined the importance of the process: "In the creation of the Declaration, it was important to have a broad and open process. Open discussions about what would be the main messages, and then only to the very end they boiled this down to a list of recommendations."

Organisers also highlighted the **complexity of the Declaration process**: "The process of the Declaration was really interesting. There were lots of different views on how to do this. We found a nice way of getting our process together and we all felt that it was a high mountain to climb but the team effort was there with everyone very supportive. [...] We went from feeling overwhelmed to working together to make it work."

The organisers were also aware of the **limitations of such a bottom-up process**, and of the stronger influence it gave to their institution: "And at the end, it was not clear [to participants] how we transformed the ideas from this bottom-up process into the document. Maybe some people have bad feelings, because in the end the Museum had the sovereignty to establish the text. This is something that maybe we missed: to make that clear to all participants since the beginning."

## 6.3 Declaration outcomes

Data for the evaluation of the Declaration were collected through the following activities:

- The survey for participants in the “Become an author for the Declaration” Virtual Meetings (N=17);
- the conference summative survey (N=56);
- the pre-conference formative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding;
- the conference summative interviews with 15 registered participants and 9 persons involved in the conference organisation and funding.

The closing session “Declaring the Declaration” was aimed at presenting the Declaration to conference attendees. The Declaration was presented as a sort of social contract, calling for citizen science to be made a key factor across all policies and activities related to the SDGs, with a set of recommendations on how to do so. According to the results of the conference summative survey (N=56), 23% of respondents did attend the session “Declaring the declaration”. When asked if the Declaration was **representative of their views**, they mostly agreed (n=29, 76%).

When asked if the Declaration statements changed the way they thought about their work on citizen science, only 16% (n=6) agreed. A majority (n=22, 59%) thought that **the Declaration was clear about its expectations** of policymakers, academics and citizens scientists, and a similar proportion (n=22, 58%) thought that by committing to this Declaration, policymakers, academics and citizen scientists are helping to advance the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

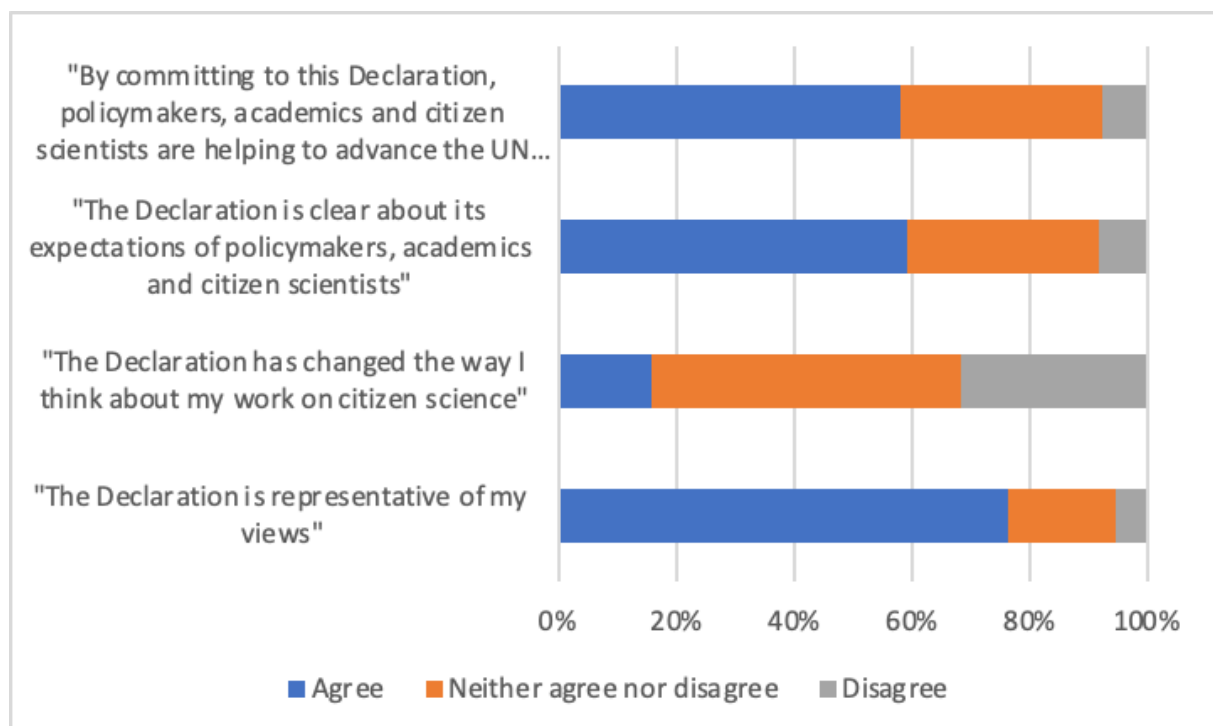


Figure 24: participants’ feedback on their views on the Declaration, as emerged through the conference summative survey.

During summative interviews, most **participants** were **positive about the role and the format** of the Declaration: “I took a look at it - I find it relevant, interesting, necessary. It’s a step forward.” “It’s a diplomatic and political move. It’s a very good idea to go with it. I like that it is only two pages, simple, very structured.” They identified it as “a tool to go further, and further promote how citizen science can contribute to SDGs. It might be one of the major things to emphasize and

promote this idea at policy-level.” Several of them mentioned that they had “signed it and shared it with colleagues.”

Participants highlighted its **usefulness regarding the evidence base for citizen science**: “For administrations, when deciding about how money is used, [the Declaration] should be used by administrations and by institutions financing citizen science. For institutions that do citizen science, it’s important because this can be used as a strong base to support their actions and show their impact. Until recently we haven’t shown the social impact of citizen science - we’ve been focusing too much on the science. One of the main goals of scientists is to show the positive impacts of their research when they involve citizens.” Other participants already planned to reference the Declaration in their research proposals: “I think it’s very good - again, a kind of awareness raising. It shows that a lot of people are committed to these goals. It’s a good basis for further negotiations and lobbying - when you write funding applications you can refer to the Declaration. It makes things easier.” Another participant gave an example of how the Declaration is used to link their own work with the SDGs: “In our webinars for educators now we do mention how the topic of our experiments contributes to the SDGs and which SDGs are being promoted. The conference and the Declaration have been helpful in moving in that direction. It’s a trend but it does connect the project with something larger - universal needs.”

A few participants had reservations about the extent to which the Declaration would make a real difference: “[It is] like all other declarations - always good to have them but I don’t give them much importance. Some values, some achievements but I can’t truly rely on that.” They mentioned the factors that they saw as essential for the success of the Declaration: “Citizen science is about action - there are Declarations that don’t become a reality. It’s necessary for citizens to be aware of this declaration and that they can take part in the process.” “It only has impact if people take it seriously and if it doesn’t evolve into some kind of lip service stuff.”

### **Organisers and funders views of the Declaration**

The general feeling among organisers was that **the Declaration met its objectives well** in terms of the specificity of its content, remaining concise enough to be useful: “It’s a nice short statement which brings together many different threads of the conference. There was a risk it would focus too much on certain areas of citizen science but thanks to the co-creation sessions it remained nice and broad, not too hung up on data.” “Content-wise it’s very much in scope, to the point, fulfils the purpose. I’m quite happy with it.”

Some members of the organising team felt the process **could have been planned and communicated more effectively**. “In hindsight we could have been more clear and structured in some approaches and workshops. [...] We are taking criticism so as soon as someone writes to us and tells us how to do it differently, we are open.”

The point was also raised that the **signatories of the Declaration** are mostly individuals and that more could be done to ensure that large institutions and networks sign up. “There are lots of individuals signing it but I’m not sure that carries the same weight as having some of the key stakeholder associations and networks, university departments, big organisations [...] I am concerned about it.”

Another key point raised by organisers was that the Declaration is the **beginning of a new phase**, rather than an outcome in itself: “The process is not over yet - we are looking for signatures. This is the starting point to have an impact. It’s on us now not to lose the drive.” “The first stage is [...] to collect a lot of endorsement for the Declaration. Next year we will have to look at the results of the Declaration. How this mainstreamed citizen science as a normal tool for funding. This we can only measure in the near future.”

It was also clear from organisers that the **next steps will be challenging**, to keep the momentum going once the specific budget is no longer there: “Personnel resources are directly linked - [the budget

for the Declaration] is ending so we have to find a good solution to ensure a long-lasting impact, spreading the Declaration via partner platforms.” “I guess the Declaration right now is just a document without any influence. To bring influence, we need to bring it nearer to the policymakers. (...) It should become a necessary tool for future funding. Then it will be a successful tool for research strategies. My fear is that if you look at the research strategy in the EU – there are so many documents, papers, texts about expectations and wishes. [...] There is a huge corpus of documents, so the declaration might just be a small part.” Respondents felt **partnerships** with related movements could help to ensure this political impact: “We could establish a coalition with the sustainable movements, to politicize the declaration.”

Funders mentioned having hoped for a stronger commitment from signatories: “At the closing event, when the Declaration was announced, I would have expected an invitation to signatories to follow-up, to stakeholders to display how they went from recommendations to actions. I’m expecting to see this kind of impact. Are signatories going to try and implement those recommendations, in front of their funders, to show the benefit of what we do? Will they take contact with environmental monitoring researchers?”.



## 7. Reflections & future perspectives

The overall feedback on the content, format and technical set up of the conference has been positive. According to both participants, organisers and funders, the conference and the Declaration have achieved the expected objective of strengthening links between communities and citizen science, towards the common aim of contributing to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants have perceived a strong link between citizen science and the SDGs during the conference, and reported feeling inspired towards new future forms of cooperation and new or stronger models of citizen science. Participants also felt enthusiastic regarding further development of the link between citizen science and the SDGs in future events and conferences, and regarding the creation of a multidisciplinary community around this. The conference has also been successful in federating several citizen science communities together: participants have been positively surprised by the wide variety of relevant projects and initiatives presented.

The strong connection between the citizen science community and EU policymaking has been evident throughout the event: participants have perceived, or at least expect that, the conference and the Declaration will have a relevant impact on future calls in Horizon Europe, as well as on local and national funding schemes.

Carrying out the *Knowledge for change: A decade of citizen science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference in the middle of the second wave of a pandemic crisis has been particularly challenging. Nonetheless, the conference has mostly run smoothly, both in its online and on-site versions. Participants have expressed a high level of appreciation towards the efforts needed to organise such an event under challenging circumstances, and felt sympathetic with the conference organisers for having managed to run a successful event. Conference organisers have shown an impressive level of resilience and adaptation by managing a very motivated and committed team, despite complexities arising from having to implement a hybrid format (on-site and on-line). There has been a good level of cooperation between organisers and the main funder, the European Commission.

Conference sessions have equally pleased participants, who have learnt new and useful things for their work, discovered new projects, and found out about unexpected fields of application of citizen science, such as social sciences and health. Minor technical glitches have not compromised the participants' experience of the conference and have quickly been addressed by the executive team. Participants and funders have in some cases suggested that the conference could have benefitted from having a more heterogeneous group of speakers, particularly in parallel sessions, which sometimes felt dominated by German-speaking contributors.

Time constraints have played a strong role both in the conference attendance, and in the collection of evaluation feedback. In particular, participants who attended the conference online identified timing as a barrier to following the conference as much as they would have liked to. Attending online events is very different from the full immersive experience of being on-site. Online events during full days (and evenings) may prove challenging in terms of attention and organisation. Several participants mentioned looking forward to having access to online recording of the conference sessions to be able to watch content they have missed.

In terms of session formats, the "Meet the Experts" sessions were overall highly appreciated by participants and funders, as they provided an informal setting, where participants could "go on stage" (i.e. join the screening area of the platform, turn on their camera and contribute to the discussion or ask questions to the speakers). Participants referred to them as a great networking opportunity, a way to feel heard and get involved, and one of their most enjoyable experiences throughout the conference.

Overall, the chosen Hopin platform has worked well and has unexpectedly allowed for some interesting networking opportunities. Although there seemed to be relatively low expectations towards networking opportunities in an online environment, participants and funders were satisfied with both networking opportunities provided by the online platform (including the networking functionalities, but also sessions' chats) and ended up making new contacts both online and on-site (thanks to the small number of participants on-site, networking was much easier on-site than in a big conference with 500+ participants).

Despite its aim to bring together several communities, the conference presented a rather high level of homogeneity of participants in terms of geographical representation (with a prevalence of German and Austrian participants), how participants got informed about the conference (via word of mouth and/or colleagues), stakeholder groups (most of the participants being researchers and from academia), thus resulting in possibly a limited number of participants from beyond existing citizen science circles.

The Declaration has been successful in terms of process and outcome, with participants feeling that the outcome represented their views, thanks to the "Become and author of the Declaration" process. Further actions are expected in the future regarding ways of monitoring the implementation of the Declaration's recommendation through concrete actions by signatories.

# Annex I: work plan

## August-September 2020:

Setting-up of the evaluation process. Interaction with the conference management team, as well as the CPC, has been a key element of this first stage of the process, which included:

- (almost) weekly 30 to 60 minutes long online meetings between the evaluation team and the conference management team at MfN
- one member of the evaluation team has joined as a silent observer all the weekly meetings of the conference organising committee, as well as one CPC online meeting
- finalisation of the evaluation plan
- preparation of all surveys and scripts for semi-structured interviews
- one member of the evaluation team has attended all the virtual meetings of the Declaration co-creation process.
- testing of all evaluation activities (surveys and interviews)

## October 2020:

Performing of most of the planned evaluation activities through surveys and interviews:

- Formative survey shared with registered participants ahead of the conference
- Summative survey of the “Become an author of the Declaration” co-creation process shared with participants of the online meetings
- Pre-conference interviews with a selected sample of 15 conference participants
- Pre-conference interviews with a selected sample of 9 conference organisers / sponsors / members of the CPC
- Finalisation of testing and full deployment of conference evaluation surveys during the conference

## November 2020:

Finalisation of all post conference evaluation activities (most of which had already started in October):

- Post-conference interviews with the selected sample of 15 conference participants
- Post-conference interviews with the selected sample of policy-makers
- Post-conference interviews with a selected sample of 9 conference organisers / sponsors / members of the CPC
- Analysis of quantitative data collected through online surveys

## December 2020:

- Delivery of the draft version of the Evaluation Report for feedback
- Delivery of the final version of the Evaluation Report

# Annex 2: survey scripts

In the following pages we provide the full scripts of the four surveys used throughout the evaluation process:

## **Evaluation of the Conference: formative survey**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in our short anonymous survey. The results will be put together into an evaluation report about the Conference. The report will be used to help reflect on the Conference and inform next steps as well as future initiatives.

### **A. Your profile**

A1. Which of these profiles do you most closely identify with? Please tick all that apply.

a) policymaker b) academic/researcher c) citizen scientist d) educational professional e) public engagement professional f) media g) industry professional h) other (please state:)

A2. In which country are you based professionally?

A3. What gender do you identify with?

A4. What is your age?

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-34
- c) 35-44
- d) 45-54
- e) 55-64
- f) 65+

A5. Please specify the capacity in which you are attending the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference. Please tick all that apply:

- a) Attendee
- b) Speaker
- c) Moderator
- d) Session organiser
- e) Representative of an EU institution
- f) Journalist
- g) Other (please specify)

A6. How experienced are you in the topic of citizen science?

- a) Very experienced b) Experienced c) Somewhat experienced c) Not very experienced d) Not at all experienced e) I don't know/prefer not to say.

A7. How familiar are you with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- a) Not at all familiar b) Not very familiar c) Somewhat familiar d) Familiar e) Very familiar f) I don't know/prefer not to say.

A8. Please feel free to leave any further comment regarding your responses:

### **B. About the conference**

B1. How did you find out about the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference?

- a) Museum für Naturkunde mailing list
- b) Recommendation from a colleague
- c) Social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
- d) Communication from the European Commission
- e) Other (please specify)

B2. What do you understand to be the focus of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference?

B3. One of the outcomes of the conference will be a Declaration as a kind of social contract, fostering voluntary commitment by all partners to advance the agenda of the SDGs according to their possibilities. What would you hope the Declaration to achieve?

### C. Expectations

C1. How important will each of the following be for you during the Conference? Please tick all that apply. (Very important/Quite important/Not important/I don't know/prefer not to say)

- a) Meeting new contacts
- b) Reconnecting with my existing contacts
- c) Listening to experts' perspectives about the future of citizen science
- d) Discovering other citizen science projects
- e) Gaining input for policymaking
- f) Contributing to discussions about the future of citizen science
- g) Communicating about the results of my work
- h) Exchanging views with peers
- i) Learning more about the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and citizen science

C2. What else would be important for you during the Conference?

C3. This year, part of the event will take place online. In general, how positive or negative are your feelings about that?

- a) Very positive
- b) Positive
- c) Neutral
- d) Negative
- e) Very negative
- f) Don't know / Prefer not to say

Please let us know any additional comments regarding your expectations towards the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference.

## **Evaluation of the Conference: full evaluation questionnaire**

Thank you very much for agreeing to send feedback on the Conference as part of *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs*. The results will be put together into an evaluation report about the Declaration, but we won't quote individual participants by name. The report will be used to help reflect on the process and inform next steps as well as future initiatives.

### **A. Your profile**

A1. Which of these profiles do you most closely identify with? Please tick all that apply.

- policymaker

- academic/researcher
- citizen scientist
- educational professional
- public engagement professional
- media
- industry professional
- other (please state:)

A2. In which country are you based professionally? .....

A3. What gender do you identify with? .....

A4. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

A5. How experienced are you in the topic of citizen science?

- Very experienced
- Experienced
- Somewhat experienced
- Not very experienced
- Not at all experienced
- I don't know/prefer not to say.

A6. How familiar are you with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- Not at all familiar
- Not very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Familiar
- Very familiar
- I don't know/prefer not to say.

## **B. Your participation**

B1. Which of the following parts of the Conference did you attend?

- Wednesday 14 October welcome session (12:15-12:50)
- Wednesday 14 October afternoon sessions
- Wednesday 14 evening workshops
- Thursday 15 October morning sessions
- Thursday 15 October afternoon sessions
- I visited the virtual Citizen Science Festival 2020
- I visited at least one Social Room
- I attended at least one Meet the Expert session

B2. What was your main role at the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference? Please tick all that apply:

- Attendee
- Speaker
- Moderator
- Session organiser

- Representative of an EU institution
- Journalist
- Other (please specify) .....

B3. Have you attended any other science engagement conference this year, online or in person?

- the ECSA conference 2020
- the Ecsite Day 2020
- the European Research & Innovation Days
- ESOF 2020
- No I haven't attended any other conference
- Yes, other (please specify) .....

### C. Overall impressions of the Conference

C1. What do you understand to have been the focus of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* conference?

.....

C2. How would you rate the following aspects of the Conference?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	No answer
Overall quality of the sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall content of the sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical set-up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C3. This year, much of the event had to take place online. In general, how positive or negative are your feelings about that?

- Very positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very negative
- Don't know / Prefer not to say

C4. What were the main strengths of the Conference? .....

.....

C5: What would you have liked to be done differently about the Conference?

.....

### D. Citizen science and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

D1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the content of the Conference?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer
“It was relevant to my work.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“It made me learn new things”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“It made a clear link between citizen science and the UN SDGs.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“It provided me with new knowledge about how citizen science's contribution to achieving the SDGs is important to our future.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“It helped me to see how my own work supports the achievement of the UN SDGs.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D2. To what extent do you feel there is a commitment in the EU for citizen science to support the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals? .....

D3. Any comments on your responses: .....

**E. The Declaration**

E1. Did you attend the “Declaring the Declaration” session on Thursday 15 October?

- Yes
- No

E2. Were you involved in the drafting of the Conference Declaration?

- Yes (please explain in what way): .....
- No

E3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the Declaration?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer
The Declaration is representative of my views	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Declaration has changed the way I think about my work on citizen science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Declaration is clear about its expectations of	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



policymakers, academics and citizen scientists

By committing to this Declaration, policymakers, academics and citizen scientists are helping to advance the UN SDGs

E4. Any comments on your responses: .....

**F. The impact of the Conference**

F1. How important was each of the following for you during the Conference?

	Very important	Quite important	Not important	No answer
Meeting new contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reconnecting with my existing contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening to experts' perspectives about the future of citizen science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discovering other citizen science projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gaining input for policymaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contributing to discussions about the future of citizen science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating about the results of my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exchanging views with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning more about the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and citizen science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

F2. Thinking about the outcomes of the Conference, including the Declaration, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer
“I will use the outcomes of the Conference in my future work.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



“I learned new things in this session.”

“I found the session useful to my work.”

C2: Please rate this session by marking the box that most accurately reflects your opinion:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	No answer
How would you rate the overall quality of the session?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How would you rate the content of the session?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How would you rate the format of the session?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How would you rate the technical set-up of the session?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**D. Your thoughts**

D1: What did you like the most about your experience at this session? .....

.....

D2: What could the organisers have done differently with this session to improve your experience? ..

.....

D3 Any other comments? .....

.....

**Evaluation of the Declaration co-creation process: Feedback form**

*Following the Virtual Meetings that have taken place so far, a link to a feedback form is shared with all participants. The link to the evaluation form is sent to all participants who have been to at least one of the Virtual Meetings. The aim is to collect feedback on the “Become an author for the Declaration” process, composed of 5 Virtual Meetings.*

Introduction:

Thank you very much for agreeing to send feedback on the “Become an author for the Declaration” process as part of *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs*. The following survey is anonymous and will take around 5 minutes. The results will be put together

into an evaluation report about the process. The report will be used to help reflect on the process and inform next steps as well as future initiatives.

### **A. Your profile**

A1. Which of these profiles do you most closely identify with? Please tick all that apply.

a) policymaker b) academic/researcher c) citizen scientist d) educational professional e) public engagement professional f) media g) industry professional h) other (please state:)

A2. In which country are you based professionally?

A3. What gender do you identify with?

A4. How experienced are you in the topic of Citizen Science?

a) Very experienced b) Fairly experienced c) Not very experienced d) Completely inexperienced e) I don't know/prefer not to say.

A5. How familiar are you with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals?

a) Not at all familiar b) Not very familiar c) Somewhat familiar d) Familiar e) Very familiar f) I don't know/prefer not to say.

### **B. Your motivation**

B1. In a few words, please tell us what made you decide to join the "Become an author for the Declaration" Virtual Meeting(s).

B2. When you decided to join the Meeting(s), what were your hopes about the experience? Please tick all that apply.

- a) I hoped to learn something new about citizen science and the SDGs
- b) I hoped to contribute to the conversation about citizen science and the SDGs
- c) I hoped to exchange views with other people in the field
- d) I hoped to meet professionals in the field
- e) I hoped to be part of the group working on the Declaration process
- f) I don't know/prefer not to say
- g) Other (please specify)

### **C. Your participation**

Five Virtual Meetings were held to develop the Declaration in the build-up to the Conference.

C1. Which of the following Declaration Virtual Meetings did you attend? Please tick all that apply.

- a) 1 July 2020 (Scoping aims and virtual impacts)
- b) 12 August 2020 (Declaring the Declaration)
- c) 26 August 2020 (In pursuit of a meaningful statement)
- d) 2 September 2020 (How can we implement our goals?)
- e) 16 September 2020 (Discussion of the first draft)

C2. How was your involvement in the 'Become an Author for the Declaration' in between Virtual Meetings?

### **D. The process**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the set-up of the Declaration development process? Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, I don't know/prefer not to say

D1. "The aim of the process 'Become an Author for the Declaration' was clear to me."

D2. "The purpose of the Declaration was clear to me."

D3. Any comments on your responses:

### **E. Organisational aspects of the Virtual Meetings**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the Virtual Meeting(s) you attended? Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, I don't know/prefer not to say

E1. "The registration process went smoothly."

E2. "The Zoom meeting(s) ran smoothly from a technical perspective."

E3. "The materials sent before the meeting(s) were adequate to prepare me to participate."

E4. "My role in the meeting(s) was clear to me."

E5. "The introductory part of the meeting(s) provided me with a clear understanding of the topic."

E6. "The plenary discussions made a positive contribution to the process."

E7. "The invited speakers made a positive contribution to the process."

E8. "The breakout sessions enabled me to contribute to the process."

E9. "The tasks assigned to me in the breakout rooms were clear to me."

E10. Any additional comments on your responses:

### **F. My experience of the Virtual Meetings**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the Virtual Meetings you attended? Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, I don't know/prefer not to say

F1. "I enjoyed the Virtual Meeting(s) I attended."

F2. "I found the Virtual Meeting(s) I attended efficient."

F3. "I learned things during the Virtual Meeting(s) I attended."

F4. "I am satisfied with the contribution I made during the Virtual Meeting(s) I attended."

F5. "I made new contacts through the Virtual Meeting(s) I attended."

F6. "My views have changed thanks to the Virtual Meeting(s) I attended."

F7. “The Virtual Meeting(s) I attended made me feel committed to the Declaration.”

F8. Any additional comments on your responses:

F9. What were the main positive aspects in the Virtual Meeting(s) you attended?

F10. What do you think could have been improved about the “Become an Author for the Declaration” Virtual Meetings?

# Annex 3: interview scripts

In the following pages we provide the full scripts of the four semi-structured interviews run throughout the evaluation process.

## **Evaluation of the Conference: formative interview with conference staff**

FOR EC REPRESENTATIVES ONLY:

Question A1a: What was the impetus for the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030)* in support of the SDGs project from the EC perspective?

Probe i: why did the EC decide to provide financial support for it?

FOR MfN REPRESENTATIVES ONLY:

Question A1b: What was the impetus for the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030)* in support of the SDGs project from the MfN perspective?

Probe i: why did the MfN decide to apply to the financial support provided by the EC (the call for named beneficiary)

FOR CPC ([Conference Programme Committee](#)) REPRESENTATIVES ONLY:

Question A1c: How would you describe / rate the involvement of the CPC members in the Conference organisational process??

Question A2: What do you identify as being special or unique about this *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030)* in support of the SDGs Conference?

Question A3: What do you identify as the strengths of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030)* in support of the SDGs organisational process?

Question A4: What do you identify as the challenges of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030)* in support of the SDGs organisational process?

Probe i:

Question A5: How would you describe the relationships with the conference organisation team members (think of both MfN and EC)?

Question A6: What do you expect to be the immediate / short-term impacts of the Conference?

Question A7: What do you expect to be the long-term impacts of the Conference?

Question A8: Final comments?

## **Evaluation of the Conference: summative interview with conference staff**

Question A1: You have been involved in the conference as (organiser/CPC member/funder): generally speaking, how did the conference go?

Question A2: What do you feel were the main strengths of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference?

Probe i: What were the strengths in terms of the content?

Probe ii: What were the strengths in terms of the format?

Probe ii.i: in case it doesn't come up, ask about their feelings on the hybrid format.

Probe iii: What were the strengths in terms of the interactions among participants?

Probe iv: What were the strengths in terms of the organisational teamwork?

Question A3: What improvements could have been made to the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference?

Probe i: What were the weaknesses in terms of the content?

Probe ii: What were the weaknesses in terms of the format?

Probe ii.i: in case it doesn't come up, ask about their feelings on the hybrid format.

Probe iii: What were the weaknesses in terms of the interactions among participants?

Probe iv: What were the weaknesses in terms of the organisational teamwork?

Let's move on to talk about the Declaration.

Question A4: What do you feel were the main strengths of the Declaration process and outcome?

Question A5: What improvements could have been made to the Declaration process and outcome?

Question A6: What impact do you now think the Conference and Declaration are likely to have?

Probe i: To what extent do you think the Conference and Declaration impact will meet your expectations?

Probe ii: Are there any additional impacts you noticed regarding the Conference and Declaration that you hadn't expected?

Question A7: Final comments?

## **Evaluation of the Conference: formative interview**

### **Topic A: Relevance to your work**

*These are warm-up questions, to get an understanding of their level of familiarity with citizen science and the SDGs. We don't expect long answers to these questions.*

Question A1: So to start, could you tell me in a few words, how relevant is the topic of citizen science to your work?

*In case the participant does not know what citizen science is, we explain that we refer to the [ECISA 10 principles of citizen science](#) and the [ECISA Characteristics of citizen science](#) as reference context. Citizen science practices cross disciplinary boundaries: some belong to fields widely acknowledged as scientific research, while others fall under the general term 'research', especially in the arts and humanities. We use 'scientific research' to refer to research in the sciences, the social sciences, the humanities and the arts.*

Question A2: Again, in a few words, how relevant are the UN Sustainable Development Goals to your work?

*In case the participant does not know what the SDGs are: "The SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."*



## **Topic B: Linking citizen science and the SDGs**

Question B1. What do you see as the contribution that the field of citizen science could make to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

Probe i: What do you see as the broader objectives of the citizen science movement?

Probe ii: What do you see as the common ground between the objectives of citizen science and the SDGs?

Probe iii: In practice, how does citizen science contribute to policymaking in support of the SDGs?

Probe iv: Do you know of any example of how citizen science contributes to policymaking in support of the SDGs?

Question B2. In your understanding, to what extent does your work support the contribution that citizen science can make to achieving the SDGs?

Probe i: What is the impact of your work in terms of citizen science?

Probe ii: How can your work help to address some of the barriers?

## **Topic C: The conference**

Question C1: What do you expect to get out of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference in terms of networking?

Probe i: Who do you expect to be participating?

Probe ii: What existing contacts do you expect to see again?

Probe iii: What new contacts do you expect to make?

Question C2: What do you expect to get out of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference in terms of knowledge?

Probe i: What about in terms of gaining new knowledge?

Probe ii: What about in terms of understanding the link between CS and SDGs?

Probe iii: What about in terms of finding out new sources of knowledge?

Question C3: What do you expect to get out of the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference in terms of supporting your work?

Probe i: What about in terms of how you do public engagement?

Probe ii: What about in terms of how you do policy engagement?

Question C4. How do you think the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference could contribute to strengthening the relation between citizen science and the SDGs?

Probe i: What do you think the Conference aims to contribute in terms of the relation between CS and SDGs?

Probe ii: How much of that do you think it will achieve?

## **Topic D: Declaration**

D1: One of the outcomes of the conference will be a Declaration as a kind of social contract, fostering voluntary commitment by all partners to advance the agenda of the SDGs according to their possibilities. Have you heard about it?

D2: What would you hope the Declaration to achieve?

## **Evaluation of the Conference: summative interview participants**

### **Topic A: About the Conference**

Question A1: How much of the Conference did you participate in?

Probe i: Were you able to attend all sessions?

Probe ii: What do you think of the online platform that was used for the event? (if on-site: what is your feeling about the conference location and organisation)

A2: What is your overall feeling about the Conference?

Question A3: How did you find the **content** of the Conference?

Probe i: Which sessions stood out to you?

Probe ii: What do you think was missing?

Probe iii: What would you like to hear more about?

Question A4: What did you think of the **format** of the Conference?

Probe i: What aspects of the format improved your experience of the Conference?

Probe ii: What aspects of the format detracted from your experience of the Conference?

### **Topic B: Linking citizen science and the SDGs**

Here I'm going to ask you about some of the same topics we spoke about before the Conference.

Question B1. Before the conference we talked about the contribution that the field of citizen science can make to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. What insight did you gain from the Conference about that contribution?

Question B2. Before the conference we also talked about how your work can support the contribution that citizen science can make to achieving the SDGs. What insight did you gain from the Conference about the role of the work you are doing?

### **Topic C: The conference**

Question C1: Let's talk about **networking**. How much did you connect, meet new people and exchange with others during the Conference?

Probe i: Was the networking experience in line with your **expectations**?

Probe ii: Did you use any of the **networking tools** (Networking function, social rooms, individual chats, etc.) provided by the conference platform?

Question C2: Let's talk about gaining **new knowledge**. How much did you learn new things?

Probe i: Was the learning experience in line with your **expectations**?

Question C3: What do you think you got out of the Conference in terms of **supporting your work**? How much has attending the conference supported your own work in different ways??

Probe i: Was the learning experience in line with your **expectations**?

Question C4. To what extent would you say the *Knowledge for Change: A decade of Citizen Science (2020-2030) in support of the SDGs* Conference contributed to strengthening **the relation between citizen science and the SDGs**?

Probe i: Did you hear of any particular initiative or discussion that you think might have played a key role in moving forward towards a stronger contribution of citizen science to the SDGs?

### **Topic D: Impact of the Declaration**

Let's talk about the Declaration that was announced at the Conference closing event. It called for citizen science to be made a key factor across all policies and activities related to the SDGs, with a set of recommendations on how to do so.

Question D1: Did you follow the sessions about the Declaration?

Question D2: What are your thoughts about the Declaration?

Question D3: What difference do you think the Declaration will make in terms of strengthening the way citizen science contributes to the SDGs?

Probe i: What difference do you think it will make in the short term in this respect?

Probe ii: What difference do you think it will make in the long term in this respect?

Question D4: How do you think the Declaration and outcomes of the Conference could be used in the future?

Probe ii: How could they be used in other aspects of the citizen science movement?

Probe iii: How could they be used beyond the citizen science movement and SDGs?

# About the evaluators

Founded in 2018, Stickydot is a Brussels-based SME specialised in consultancy services in the field of science engagement. Stickydot founding members have years of experience in co-creating innovative tools using participatory methodologies for dialogue, research and evaluation. Stickydot collaborates with institutions worldwide supporting dialogue around research and innovation through formats such as focus groups, research agenda setting, forums, deliberative democracy, collective intelligence, open space and other inventive dialogue tools, tailored to the needs of the group.

Stickydot team members have been managing EU-funded projects since 2004. Their core expertise ranges from the development of methodologies for multi-stakeholder involvement in research processes at various levels (co-creation, RRI, citizen science) to the facilitation and impact assessment of multi-stakeholder dialogue, capacity building, mutual learning platforms and training, the design of educational programmes for young people, as well as science communication activities (discussion games, exhibitions, dialogue activities, maker workshops, art & science), the production of policy recommendations and toolkits, the organisation, facilitation and evaluation of conferences and events, and outreach, communication and dissemination activities.

**Marzia Mazzonetto**, co-founder of Stickydot and Head of Research. Her main areas of expertise are public engagement with S&T and methodologies supporting multi-stakeholder engagement. She is deputy-coordinator of the SwafS project TRANSFORM and also collaborates with ECSA (the European Citizen Science Association) as Project Manager for the EU-Citizen.Science project. She is passionate about sustainable and inclusive co-creation processes leading to social innovation and participatory policies. In the past she has worked for five years as Senior Project Manager at Ecsite, the European Network of Science Centers and Museums, where she has been coordinator of the VOICES project and managed other EU-funded projects in the field of Public Engagement with S&T. She was an invited researcher at Núcleo de Estudos da Divulgação Científica in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and lived in Barcelona (Spain) where she obtained a Master of Advanced Studies (DEA) in Public Communication from the Pompeu Fabra University. Marzia Mazzonetto holds a degree in Communication Studies and a Master in Science Communication from SISSA - International School of Advanced Studies of Trieste (Italy).

**Maria Zolotonosa**, co-founder of Stickydot and Head of Public Engagement. Maria is in charge of several projects related to co-creation and public engagement. She has been managing FP7 and H2020 projects on science engagement and science education since 2012. During her role as Senior Project Manager at Ecsite (The European Network of Science Centres and Museums), she has coordinated the €3.5 million H2020 Sparks project that aimed at communicating the concept of RRI to the citizens in every EU member state through a travelling exhibition and a series of participatory events. Other projects she has worked on include SySTEM 2020, SISCODE, EU-Citizen.Science, KiiCS, INPROOFD and ENGINEER. Maria holds an MA in European Cultural Policy and Management from the University of Warwick. Maria has worked with many science centres and museums all over Europe as well as art and heritage organisations in the UK. Maria also possesses experience working in governmental institutions in Italy and UNESCO.

**Michael Creek**, co-founder of Stickydot and Head of Community Engagement. Michael focuses on facilitation and stakeholder engagement within Stickydot activities, developing, adapting, implementing and training people in participatory formats for dialogue around the research and innovation policy and processes. He has a masters in Linguistics from the University of Edinburgh and has 14 years' experience working on the development, management and implementation of European-funded projects on science-society dialogue, including Hypatia, Sparks, RRI Tools, HEIRRI, Sea for Society, PLACES, Polka, Xplore Health, TIME for NANO, Accent, FUND, Pilots and e-Castex. He has eight years' experience working in stakeholder engagement within health policy, bringing together patients, practitioners, civil society, research and industry to reach consensus on policy issues within maternal

health, obesity, sexual and reproductive health and rights and equal access to quality healthcare for vulnerable groups among other topics. He also works as a consultant facilitator for science centres and museums on science-society dialogue and organisational strategy.

**Didier Laval**, Stickydot collaborator. Trained with a Master of Science in Engineering (Institut d'Optique Graduate School), Didier has been developing and managing science and innovation engagement projects for 15 years. He worked in several French science centres (Palais de la découverte, Espace des Sciences Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace) before joining Ecsite (the European network of science centres and museums) in 2012. He was then appointed in 2014 Manager of Public Engagement at Cap Sciences (France), where he developed and led the Living Lab programmes and “the 127°”, a space dedicated to participatory innovation. He founded the consultancy company Culture Instable to foster new cultural projects at the boundaries of arts, culture, science and innovation, and societal engagement. Didier has also a strong experience in evaluation and developing and delivering training sessions (for Universcience, TRACES, Université de Bordeaux, AMCSTI...), in particular of co-creation methodologies. Didier has been a lecturer at the Université Versailles Saint-Quentin, at the Université de Bordeaux-Montaigne, at the IAE Management Bordeaux.