COST Action CA15212
Citizen Science to promote creativity,
scientific literacy, and innovation throughout Europe

Cluster 1: Terminology and stage of development
(page 1 of the survey)

Input and moderation: Balint Balasz;
Note taker: Monika Suškevičs
discussed in Cēsis, Latvia, June 4th 2019

What does citizen science mean?
Which other terms are around?
What practices are linked to it?

COST Action CA15212
Citizen Science to promote creativity,
scientific literacy, and innovation throughout Europe

2

Results from Group 1: Terminology and stage of development

Input and moderation: Balint Balasz; note taker: Monika Suškevics

Key point of discussions in this group was the need to have a common definition of CS. Reasons for using a clear definition is the clarification of the concept, especially for surveys as this one. However, it needs to be taken into account whom the respective definition that is applied serves. For the case of the survey, this might mean the definition of CS does not necessarily serve citizen scientists themselves, but rather funders of CS activities. A definition should be non-exclusive and contain a motivation for better research and social innovation. A classification of CS (projects) may include different levels. In any case, the focus on benefits is crucial.

COST Action CA15212
Citizen Science to promote creativity,
scientific literacy, and innovation throughout Europe

CITIZEN
SCIENCE
COST ACTION

The questions in the survey:

1. **Is the term 'Citizens Science' used in your country? (single choice)**
2. **Are other terms used to refer to Citizen Science (in the national language(s) and translated into English – if applicable)?**
3. **Which type of objectives and values drive Citizen Science in your country? (multiple choice)**
4. **In which domains is Citizen Science supported/applied in your country? (multiple choice)**
5. **How would you describe the stage of development of Citizen Science in your country?**
6. **How would you see the stage of development of Citizen Science in your country with respect to your knowledge of other e1isting experiences and your expectations?**
34. **Would you like to share anything else with us that you deem important for providing a realistic picture of Citizens Science state of the art in your Country?**

Group discussion

Participants: José-Pablo Gómez-Barrón; Eva Novakova; Cecília Galvão; Per Esra; Katherin Wagenknecht; Artemis Skarlatidou; Bálint Balázs; Monika Suškevičs

We had a look at the survey results, but felt we couldn't interpret those further in a meaningful way, at this phase. There was also a general feeling in our group that it was and is difficult to speak on behalf of the situation in the whole country (some people didn't fill in the survey for that reason).

Instead, we had a more general discussion on CS terms and foremost different ways how it can be understood ("definitions"). Main points are summarized below.

- <u>Invisible</u> CS: activities which in content can be considered as CS, but do not use the respective "label". Common in CEE countries but not only!
- Do we need a common <u>definition</u> of CS? E.g. the CS definition on the COST website/memorandum of understanding
  - <u>Why</u> define?
    - ☒ When filling in the survey, everybody might have had a different concept of CS in mind. So, the survey results should also be interpreted bearing this in mind.
    - ☒ One might be familiar with several local/regional CS projects, but if you're not sure you know everything what is happening in CS at national level, it's also difficult to fill in this survey
  - Definition for <u>whom</u>? Citizen scientists themselves usually don't need it… maybe other stakeholders would need it – when one comes with a new term and it needs explaining how it differs from existing terms and initiatives
    - ☒ Funders' needs: prefer to have one common definition, might make their lives easier
  - Defining – <u>what</u> to include?
    - ☒ Problematic and difficult to give an all-encompassing definition of CS
    - ☒ In favor of leaving the term open – has the potential for CS to improve, to develop as it evolves
    - ☒ A need for multiple perspectives, a non-exclusive perspective, should include a motivation for better research and social innovation
    - ☒ Multiple purposes of CS: not only data provision, but also educative, etc. For instance, the viewpoint of research as a right (anthropologic perspective): in everyday life everybody needs to make "expert"-decisions (e.g. buying the

COST Action CA15212
Citizen Science to promote creativity,
scientific literacy, and innovation throughout Europe

vacuum cleaner example) but they are not necessarily equipped with skills and knowledge to do that.

- <u>Categorizing CS activities:</u> probably no "all-or-nothing" typologies, but rather different levels
  - *Fix-my-street*-type of projects might not have to do anything with scientific data, but it can still be CS
  - If the project benefits citizens, it could be enough to call it CS
  - More important than labeling CS activities, might be to understand the motivations and outcomes of CS

We also briefly discussed some specific recommendations for <u>improving the questionnaire</u> (if possible at this stage):
- Include more specific background questions, e.g. what are the backgrounds of the respondents
- To include self-reported (by survey respondents) confidence levels to the questions
- Include a "don't know" option for every question 🖥
- To have more open-ended questions? Might give opportunity to have more in-depth answers.

As this is a sociological survey (an expert-questionnaire), the limitations but also benefits should be beard in mind when analyzing and interpreting the results. E.g. the results depict the perceptions of the respondents, so are also interpretations, social constructs, and might not depict reality *per se*.
- General <u>conclusions</u>
  - We can see some tendencies from the questionnaire
  - But difficult to give specific recommendations at this phase
  - Contextualize! Even at a very high level, e.g. European vs USA's perspective on CS
  - Make people more aware of multiple CS benefits