

ESF Member Organisation Forum on Science in society relationships

Proposal

Sept 2009, 1st/ JP ALIX (CNRS)

Title: Improve dialogue and roadmapping of Science to society

Proposing organisations

Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS, France.

Indication of the other interested MOs and stakeholders

To be fulfilled

Rationale for proposing the topics as a MO Forum

A new strategic question in science policy

"A globally competitive European Research Area of excellence, to facilitate the advancement of science and help create a knowledge-based society in Europe ... requires effective and trusted bridges between science, society and the private sector." ¹

- A healthy science-society relationship is a strategic asset for both parties; although science has contributed enormously to the advancement and well-being of society, this contribution is not always clear for the different publics in the society.
- Furthermore, while science has always got inspiration directly or indirectly from society and tried to serve the emerging societal needs, the customer-service provider nature of the relationship between society and science

¹ EUROHORCS-ESF strategic, 2009

should be made more transparent and be improved by establishment of efficient forums and channels, interfaces and dialogues through which the flows of communication are carried out, where the representatives of the social publics and science can meet, inspire each other, and participate in each other's decision-making processes.

- These forums and interfaces would create opportunities to discuss concerns, ethical and critical issues that scientific endeavours and results may raise in the societal publics. A better science-society relationship could clarify for the critical social publics whether a concern is rooted in science itself or rather caused by the commercial, political, media etc. use and coverage of certain scientific results.

The European Science Foundation :

- being a natural platform for exchanges and mutual learning between its members,
- having initiated with CNRS the organisation of a road mapping event in late June - early July 2009, where the representatives of 24 ESF Member Organisations as well as further stakeholders and experts of science-society relationship the specific steps ESF should make to help the scientific community improve its relations with the different publics in society.
- planning a series of actions concerning the Science in society field to be decided in 2009,

is proposed to play its role in this improvement through support to a Member organisation Forum for the three next years.

Envisaged aims, objectives, actions, and potential outputs of the Forum

The ESF MOs have broad experience regarding each component of the science-society relationship. They have also developed and used various ways in the management of the relationship. It is just natural that they may want to present their experiences and exchange on them.

A MOF on science-society relationship management may cover the following issues:

- For the first Overarching Workshop:
 - o definition, concerns and criticism from or to the different social publics of science

- What kind of scientific results have raised concerns among the citizens, the media and other publics in the countries the MOs represent?
 - What kind of publics did crop up around the specific issues? Should one speak about regular publics or the different concerns created different publics?
 - How to foresee concerns ?
 - the evaluation and training for scientists to participate to public debates with different publics as part of a professional activity
 - the recommendations concerning fora and public debates in which scientists and scientific institutions should participate (how to detect fields and partners, create debates, lead debates, and prepare potential decisions using debates)
 - the survey about current practices in relations with current publics, as a realistic starting point for future fora, or the need to create new fora and the way to enlarge participation in MOs
- For workshops 2-4: On the relationship management
 - Which is the proper actor in the science-society relationship: individual scientists, research teams, scientific organisations?
 - What are the capacity needs of science-society relationship?
 - How do the MOs motivate the scientists/research teams/organisations to participate in the dialogue? Through evaluation methods?
 - In the management, what weight did the following activities have? Communication, media management, public relations, direct dialogue with the representatives of the given publics etc.
 - What kind of forums, communications channels do MOs use?
 - Were the management efforts successful? Did they fail? Why? What lessons to be drawn from the success and failure?
- For the second Overarching Workshop and the Final Conference: On the general strategy the MOs use in science-society relationship
 - What are the strategic objectives and the specific techniques regarding the future relationship management? Big initiatives or rather non conventional local forums?

- What are the best practices?
- How can and should ESF help the MOs in implementation? ESF as a learning process? ESF as a laboratory?

The MOF project may consist of four to six events

It may take two to three years. The workshops may be organised partly according to the different publics science has to deal with and partly according to the overarching aspects relationship management has. If the Governing Council meeting of October 2009 approves the project, the timeline may be the following:

1. Early 2010: Overarching Workshop on the situation of science-society relationship: where, in which countries, in which disciplines, on which levels of society is this a problem? How serious is the problem? Set the methodology and common steps for 2 to 5 so that we are able to synthesise at step 6
2. Autumn 2010: Workshop on science-citizens and science-education relationships: with NGOs, teachers, students, administrators, education policy makers.
3. Early 2011: Workshop on science-media relationship: with journalists from electronic, print and web media, from quality and tabloid media.
4. Autumn 2011: Workshop on science-industry and science-politics relationships: with politicians from national and European politics, the representatives of industry and further users of scientific results.
5. Early 2012: Overarching Workshop on the specific issues and best practices of relationship management.
6. Autumn 2010: Final Conference on Science-Society Relationship

Feedback from the Forward Look into the Member Organisation Forum and vice versa

A Forward Look project should be launched in parallel; it is expected to produce an extensive final report and a science policy briefing, which summarize the results of the whole Roadmapping project and put forward new knowledge for the scientists and recommendations for the science policy makers.

Its recommendations in particular and its scientific results in general will be extremely useful for the MOF in accomplishing its tasks. Intellectual and functional bridges will have to be established so that MOF can integrate the results of the FL.

Quality in the implementation of the process

Participants

An MOF obviously involves Member Organisations but also further scientists, experts and stakeholders, whose expertise and views help define the best practices in a given science management activity. The MOF will invite scientists specifically dealing with the scientific aspects of science-society relationship.

Duration

2 to 3 years

Potential output (summary)

Guidelines for MOs to improve their relationship to their publics and their stakeholders

Practical examples to be disseminated among members

Network of MOs representatives aware of science interaction with society

Network of stakeholders having experience about dialogue between scientists and society

Budget

MOs will provide the MOF through time and travel costs of their members

ESF should provide a coordinator and support the survey by consultancy and support the expenses of the final conference, which has to be opened to publics (not restricted to MOs)

Steering Committee

Complexity of the project needs a coordinator, and a steering committee so that the followed strategy is kept able to fulfill main objectives

It will have to define the methodology of survey and ensure the quality of deliverables to the MOF members and to Roadmapping Science to society Initiative of ESF

It should be composed of a few members with easy connections (6)