BETTER Life

MAY, 2023

ISSUE #1

WWW.BETTERLIFEHORIZON.EU

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A WORD FROM LEADING PARTNER

Digital Centre for Socially Engaged Research in Life Science is just Starting

Socially engaged research might sound for somebody as something odd. It might be considered as something which does not belong to life sciences. I hope this E-zine will demonstrate that such understanding reflects ill-informed views. E-zine as an electronic form of the journal is an excellent tool to communicate in a digital way the results of the project BETER Life. When I used the wording “to communicate” I had in mind two-way communication: from the people involved in the project to the people around us and from the people around us (whoever they are) to us as “project makers”.

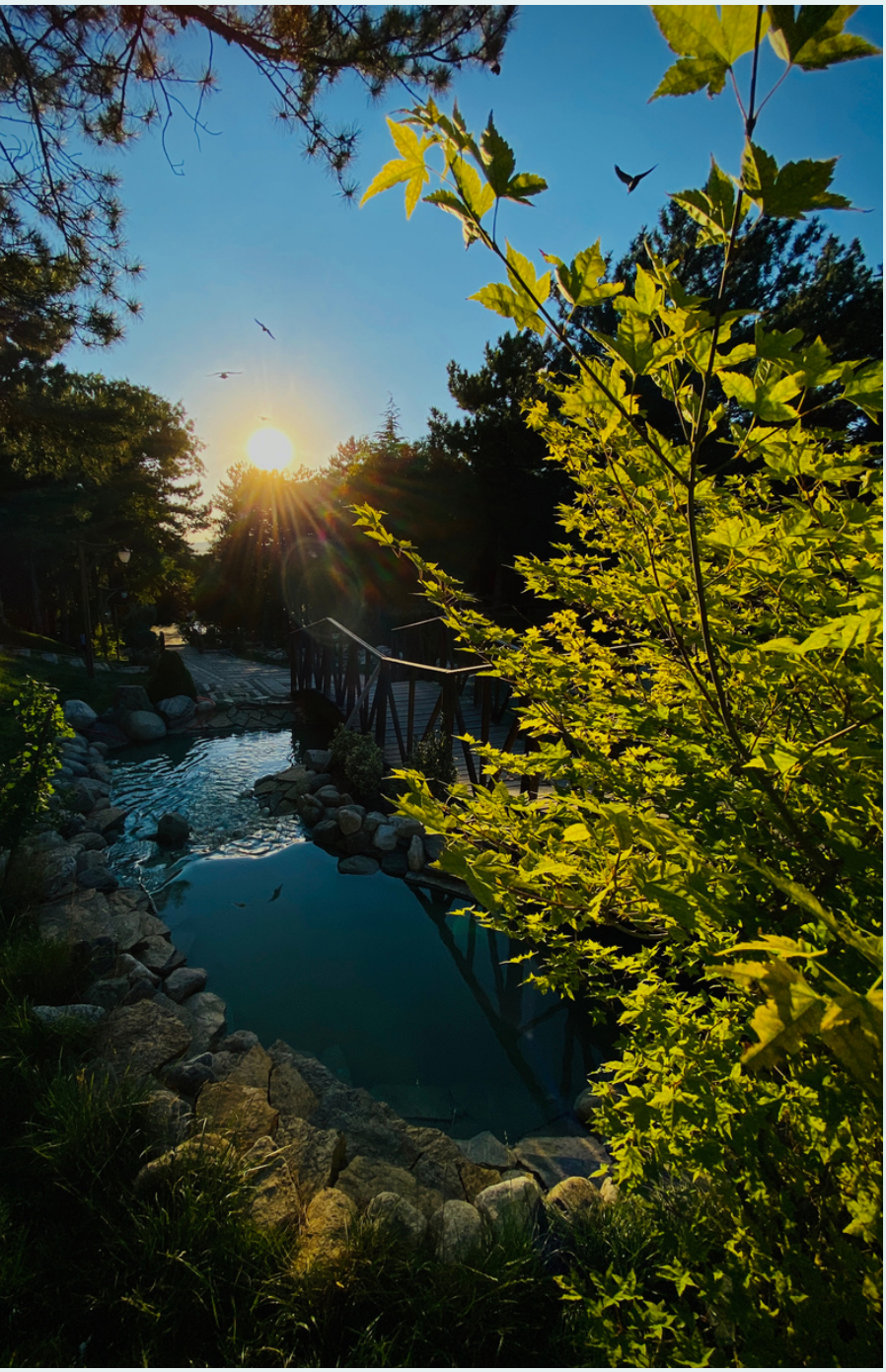
Communicating science in a two-way process is crucial for the development of life sciences. Today, digital devices facilitate communication, that is why the main outcome of the project is supposed to be a digital centre for socially engaged research in life sciences. Life sciences of the future will not be separated from the society. It means life sciences will be engaged in society. And such engagement will be facilitated through digital technologies.

The project of BETTER Life is designed in such a way – to create the outcomes in a digital form together. This E-zine should contribute to such co-crating. The aim of this E-zine is not only to present the outcomes of the project but also aspires to be a digital platform for discussion and for training those who are interested in socially engaged research. Such training is in line with the project because the BETTER Life project wants to provide the background (infrastructure, facilities and know-how) for training early career researchers to be skilled in the implementation of the research addressing societal challenges and being beneficial for society.

MICHAL LOŠŤÁK,
BETTER LIFE PROJECT COORDINATOR

PROJECT BETTER LIFE

OBJECTIVES



The general objective of the project "Bringing Excellence to Transformative Engaged Research in Life Sciences through Integrated Digital Centres" — short BETTER Life — is to establish the EU Digital Centre of Excellence for Socially Engaged Research in Life Sciences (hereinafter EU BETTER Life Centre).

The Centre will be an inter-institutional support structure for developing capacities of early career researchers (PhD students and researchers not yet fully independent) aiming to foster socially engaged research (SER) to tackle societal challenges in their surrounding ecosystems while consolidating the EU BETTER Life Centre as a world reference in planning, supporting, and implementing SER in life sciences.

01

To consolidate, through joint efforts from widening and non-widening countries, a strategic vision for the EU BETTER Life Centre that is committed to long term sustainability, aiming to stand as a world reference in sociallly engaged research in life sciences.

02

To build the intra- and inter-institutional capacities to foster societally engaged research in life sciences through the resources, guidelines, network cooperation, and policy designs at a regional and international level.

03

To build the individual capacities for boosting the social impact of the research developed by early career researchers by providing the tools, skills, knowledge, collaboration, and inter-institutional support to design, development, and valorisation of research engaged with their surrounding ecosystems to contribute to the delivery of EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the European Green Deal, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

04

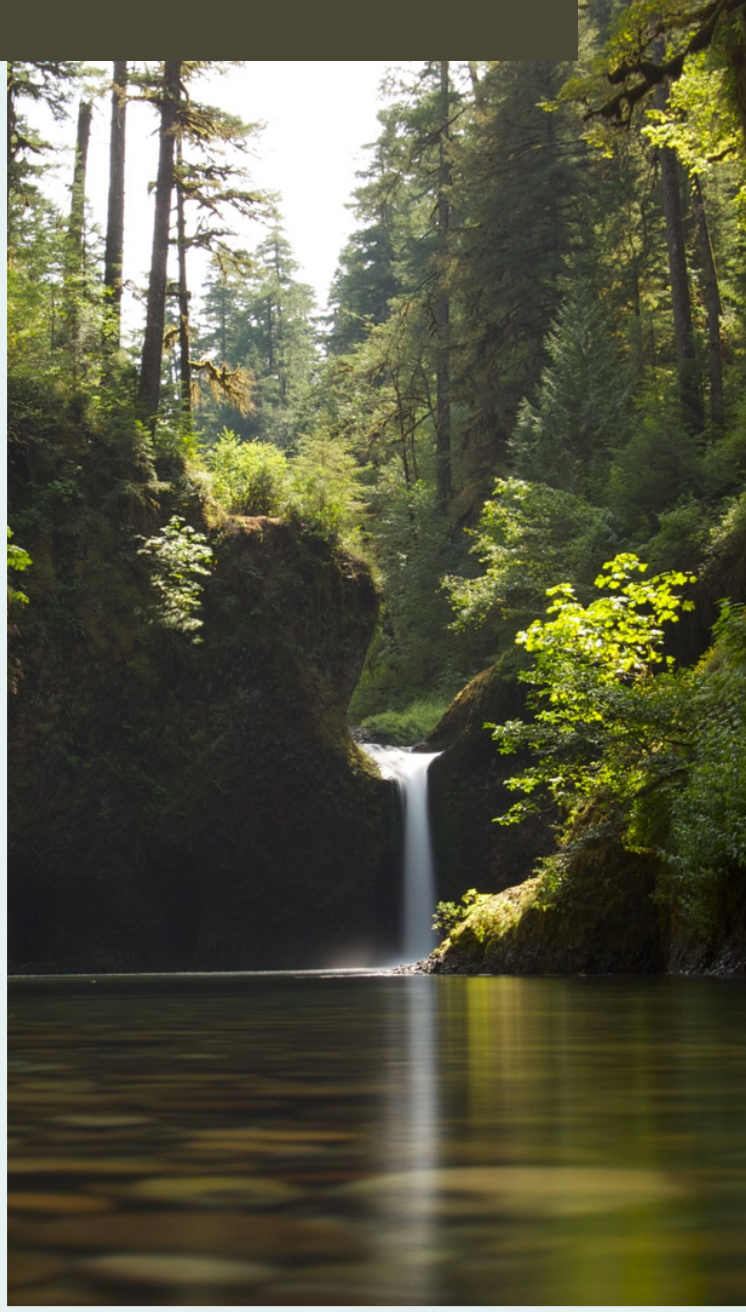
To consolidate EU BETTER Life as a world reference through the development of pioneering transferable tools to foster SER in life sciences at an individual, institutional, regional, and international level allowing all society actors to work together in the development of solutions that are beneficial and accepted for all.

THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE BETTER LIFE PROJECT

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE OF

EU BETTER LIFE CENTRE

INTRODUCTION
TO THE TASK



THE TASK concentrates on developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the EU BETTER Life Centre, which aspires to become a world-class institution for Socially Engaged Research (SER) in life sciences.

The core objective is to bring together all partners to co-create the Centre's strategy through workshops.

This section of the E-zine presents an overview of the main questions, objectives, and strategies discussed during the workshops, focusing on the essential role of stakeholders in shaping the future of the EU BETTER Life Centre.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL CENTRE FOR SOCIALLY ENGAGED LIFE SCIENCES, AND HOW SHOULD IT APPEAR?

A Digital Centre for Socially Engaged Life Sciences should serve as an online hub to facilitate SER in life sciences.

The platform should feature an online database with toolkits and resources, localized websites for individual centres, strategic support, resource provision, discussion incentives, and networking opportunities for stakeholders.

To ensure the ease of use and accessibility, the platform should be interactive, with a centralized hub linked to individual university websites in regional languages.

> **What is the vision for science and life sciences in 2030?**

The vision for life sciences in 2030 includes achieving various sustainability elements such as biodiversity, green agriculture, and eco-friendly practices. It also involves increasing public trust in science and promoting collaborative efforts to address social needs.

The envisioned future includes raising regional-level awareness about life sciences and establishing agencies that connect quadruple helix actors at European and global levels.

In 2030, life sciences should be community-friendly, accessible, and driven by open data.

Research should be tailored to address individual needs, and the results should be communicated in a way that is easily understandable by the general public.

Integrating life sciences into the educational system, from kindergarten to higher education institutions, will ensure widespread knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Collaboration with other domains and political arenas will help life sciences address current and future challenges more effectively.

Additionally, embracing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies will enhance the research process while ensuring that human control and decision-making remain at the forefront.

WHAT IS SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH, AND HOW DOES IT MANIFEST ITSELF IN PRACTICE?

Socially Engaged Research refers to a research approach that emphasizes creating social value and fostering meaningful interactions with societal stakeholders. It follows the quadruple helix model, involving government, academia, civil society, and businesses in the research process.

SER manifests itself through projects that have clear conceptual and social goals, mechanisms for social participation, identified societal stakeholders, and the creation of both scientific and social value.

Who are the involved parties (stakeholders) in SER for Life Sciences?

Key stakeholders in SER for Life Sciences encompass quadruple helix actors, including government, academia, civil society, and businesses. Other essential participants are regional agencies, expert consultants, and sectoral end users. These stakeholders play a crucial role in the research process, contributing their expertise and knowledge to develop effective and sustainable solutions. Active participation, communication, and dissemination of information are vital for fostering a collaborative environment. Stakeholders should be involved not just as targets but as integral contributors throughout the research process.

WHAT ARE THE IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTING SER IN LIFE SCIENCES?

To implement SER in Life Sciences, the research should be conducted with and for citizens, aiming to improve the quality of their lives through participation, co-creation, and co-design. Establishing a Digital Centre for Socially Engaged Life Sciences will provide the necessary infrastructure to support collaborative and participatory research.

The BETTER Life Centre should offer an online platform with databases, case studies, training courses, communication forums, and user-friendly open access web platforms.

To implement SER in Life Sciences, the research should be conducted with and for citizens, aiming to improve the quality of their lives through participation, co-creation, and co-design. Establishing a Digital Centre for Socially Engaged Life Sciences will provide the necessary infrastructure to support collaborative and participatory research.

ACTIVITIES

In March 2023, the BETTER Life project hosted two online workshops focusing on SER in life sciences and the co-creation of the EU BETTER Life Centre's strategy.

The workshops aimed to design a framework for SER in the field of life sciences and to identify key strategies and approaches for co-creating the BETTER Life Centre strategy.

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Understanding the importance of open and frequent communication, we leverage different digital platforms to disseminate our updates and news. Our strategy involves a thoughtful approach to our website, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts. Here is how we plan to do it:

Website (https://betterlifehorizon.eu/): Our website serves as the primary source of information about our project. It features detailed descriptions of our mission, objectives, and ongoing activities. We regularly update the site with news articles, and event announcements, ensuring that our stakeholders stay informed about our work.

Social media – Twitter (@BetterLifeEU), **Facebook, LinkedIn**: Twitter allows us to deliver quick updates and engage with our followers in real-time. We share news about workshops, research developments, and other project-related activities. By retweeting and engaging with our followers, we foster a community of individuals and organizations interested in SER in life sciences.

We use Facebook to share longer updates and photos. We utilize LinkedIn as a platform to connect with professionals in the field of life sciences and beyond.

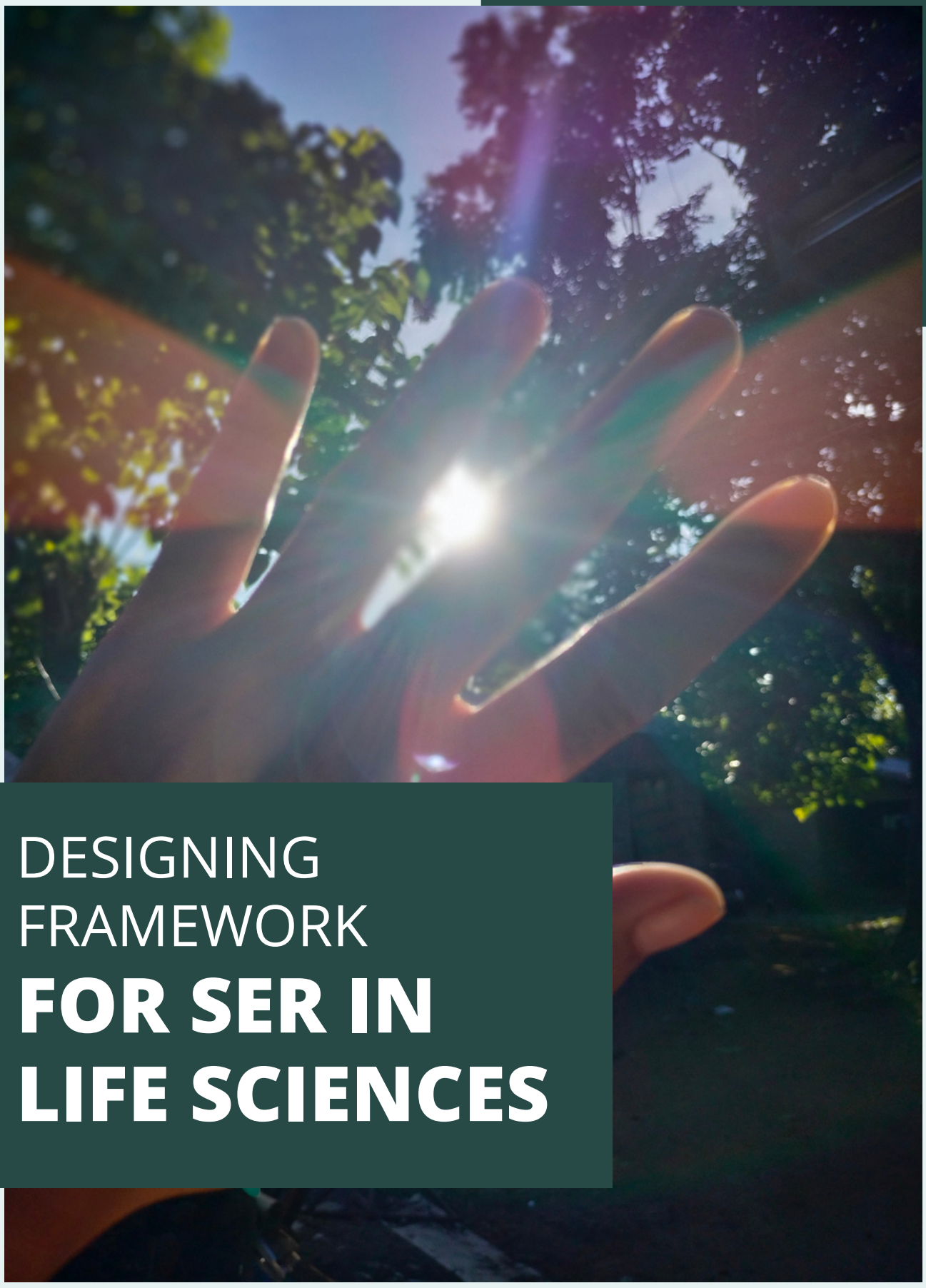
BETTER LIFE APPLIED IN THE FALLING WALLS GLOBAL CALL

> **Falling Walls representatives nominated the BETTER Life project to apply to the Global Call.**

The Falling Walls Global Call is an international competition format that brings together science enthusiasts from diverse backgrounds. Falling Walls fosters discussion on research and innovation and promotes the latest scientific findings among a broad audience from all parts of society.

It is a unique international and interdisciplinary event for scientific breakthroughs and scientific dialogue. It brings together scientists from around the globe to discuss breakthroughs with global leaders in science, politics, business, and the media.

The results of the application should be announced by the end of June 2023. In case BETTER Life is successful, we will present the BETTER Life project on the Falling Walls Summit, which takes place annually in Berlin from 7 – 9 November.



DESIGNING
FRAMEWORK
FOR SER IN LIFE SCIENCES

Advancing Socially Engaged Research in Life Sciences through the Definition of a Framework and Standards

The EU-funded project BETTER Life aims to foster socially engaged research in life sciences as a strategy for tackling diverse societal challenges.

This project responds to the need to create enabling conditions for early career researchers to implement transdisciplinary research involving societal stakeholders (academia, business industry, governments, and civil society).

As part of the first stage, the project sets the basis by defining the framing dimensions and standards for socially engaged research.

These elements will set a panorama of the aspects, in which the project will have a potential impact.

SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH

Socially engaged research is not a methodology or procedure with predefined techniques and strategies. It is a strategic approach to the definition, planning, management, and execution of a research agenda, in which there are meaningful interactions with societal stakeholders.

This approach is rooted in the so-called “mode 3 knowledge production”, a paradigm that extends beyond the dichotomy of theoretical/applied research by using multi-stakeholders, multi-systems, multi-networks, and multi-levels of knowledge in the processes of creating knowledge and solutions for society, businesses, and industry.

Socially engaged research requires enabling conditions (circumstances that facilitate adoption, implementation, and effectiveness) at the institutional level. This means that research units go beyond the “ivory tower” of their intuitional bubbles, have established regional networks, build trust with their local stakeholders, and play a role in the regional development where the institution is located.

Of course, this requires efforts beyond the individual work of specific project researchers. It requires conceiving research from both theoretical and social perspectives in constant dialogue with its context.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR **SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH**

As one of the key steps in setting the scene for the BETTER Life project, the team has worked on defining the dimensions of what is to be understood as socially engaged research.

For this purpose, the consortium has explored diverse frameworks and developed workshops to define a framework useful for institutions, researchers, and other stakeholders to make sense of the elements involved in socially engaged research.

As a first approach, the consortium preliminarily identified four key dimensions and twelve subdimensions.

1

Institutional environment: Support structures, research capacities, and contextual knowledge.

2

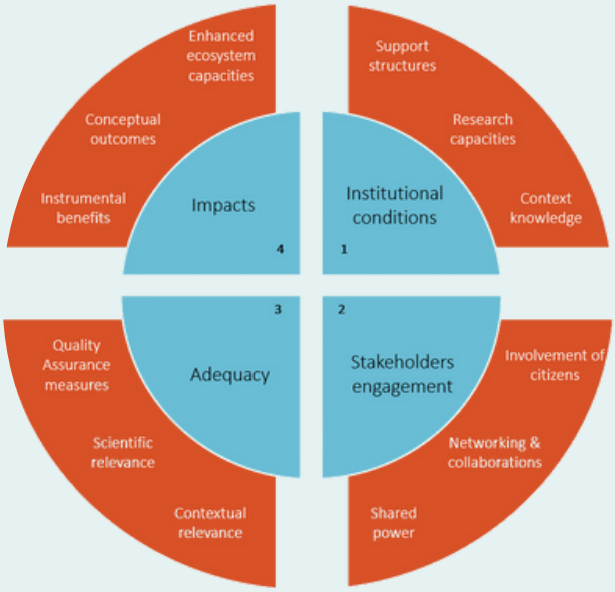
Stakeholders' engagement: involvement of societal stakeholders, networking and collaboration, and shared power.

3

Adequacy of research: contextual relevance, scientific relevance, and quality assurance measures.

4

Impact of socially engaged research: instrumental benefits, conceptual outcomes, and enhanced local capacities.



This is the first graphic representation of the framework for socially engaged research that is still in the processes of refinement. This is a preliminary version and may differ from the last version that will be published in the upcoming months.

From an institutional standpoint, this framework can enable institutions to identify their capacities, processes, and potential impacts related to socially engaged research. For researchers, this framework provides a comprehensive view of the requirements, support opportunities, and potential impacts associated with their engagement in research. Furthermore, internal and external stakeholders can easily assess and understand the framework of action of socially engaged research.

THE STANDARDS FOR **SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH**

After the identification of the key dimension of socially engaged research, the consortium moved to the development of standards: guidelines and levels of achievement expected from socially engaged research. These standards provide a direction inside each of the elements constituting socially engaged research by providing a goal to each of the 12 subdimensions of the framework. The standards that the consortium is developing are qualitative, opening the possibility of setting both qualitative and quantitative indicators within each dimension.

The standards will act as a lens for identifying the key elements of socially engaged research in institutions, the level of development, and improvement opportunities.

At the same time, they will be useful for researchers to identify the key elements in which their research could be connected from a socially engaged perspective.

The standards for socially engaged research will be operationalised as possible sources of evidence that could demonstrate the level of achievement in each of them.

Additionally, the project will move to developing tools that could support the implementation of a socially engaged perspective into research in each dimension.

In the final stage of the project, the framework and standards will allow for the production of evidence on the development and achievement of socially engaged research.

MOVING **FORWARD**

The BETTER Life project is making significant strides in advancing socially engaged research in life sciences by defining a framework and standards.

The project is poised to contribute to the advancement of socially engaged research in life sciences by establishing a robust framework and standards that promote collaboration, meaningful engagement with stakeholders, and the generation of knowledge that addresses societal challenges. By creating enabling conditions and providing guidance, this project has the potential to transform the research landscape and foster positive societal impacts.

In the next steps to be taken in 2023, the project will develop tools to foster socially engaged research in alignment with the framework and standards. These foundational activities will support the development of capacity-building activities for socially engaged research. These activities will involve virtual local and international bootcamps and a winter and a summer schools, aiming at building capacities in early career researchers to foster socially engaged research.

COMPENDIUM OF **INNOVATIVE PRACTICES** ON SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH

Summarising examples of 25 innovative practices in socially engaged research we came to useful conclusions and recommendations. After the analysis of these examples we made a summary from the point of view of all actors in the quadruple helix model.

> **On the part of the government actors,**

we could conclude that the main suggestions for success of implementation of SER in life sciences were related to the necessity of strengthening, improving and supporting the institutional capacities of local self-governments in the implementation of development programs and projects at the local and regional levels, strengthening human capital through training and professional development programs, especially in the area of strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises, companies, project management, as well as that of supporting agricultural and tourism development and other sectors related to the improvement of socio-economic development of the territory in which it operates.

The capacities of local companies and local self-governments are quite dependent on their own insufficient funds or on central state institutions and ministries that also have their own priorities. Social capacity at the local level is not sufficiently encouraged.

The opportunities for more social engagement are foreseen in creation of new educational programs for students with innovative mentoring programs, as well as good practice examples of localcompanies that have been implemented through academic entrepreneurship, as they managed to put their innovations on the market through creation of spin-off companies or as direct knowledge transfers.

Threats for the enhanced social engagement are seen in negative selection, family and political nepotism in organisations, as well as neglecting the strength and importance of society.

> **On the part of companies,**

their focus is on having practically trained young people at universities that are key for their development and growth. Stimulating the economy and speeding up the production cycle with clearer, more efficient and better controlled rules, expanding capacities in education of citizens in production and consumption are a good way for future growth.

Negative side and threats for the social engagement that have been recognized are that there is no awareness of the extent to which factors affect economic processes and the quality of products, services and the lives of citizens; greater awareness of regulations for quality control in the EU is expected as well.

Opportunities for more social engagement lay in leaving space for more influence of professionals, educated citizens, civil movements and professional associations on legal regulations and quality systems in various areas of interest to society, then, the creation of a fair environment by all important factors of the industry, society, state, especially the rule of law, and a more direct inclusion of the academy in the labour market, so that they could take advantage of the opportunities that lie in the already established companies in the region and could apply their expertise in creating and reengineering business processes to other organisations.

The use of the models from the best practices and consulting scientific theories in a system without established specific rules is like ‘catching the wind in a net’. There lies an opportunity to establish stricter Corporate Codex and Ethical Standards for gaining more satisfaction of professionals and citizens in general. Such a practice would restore citizens' confidence in their abilities to exert a certain influence on their business and living environment.

> **Academia actors,**

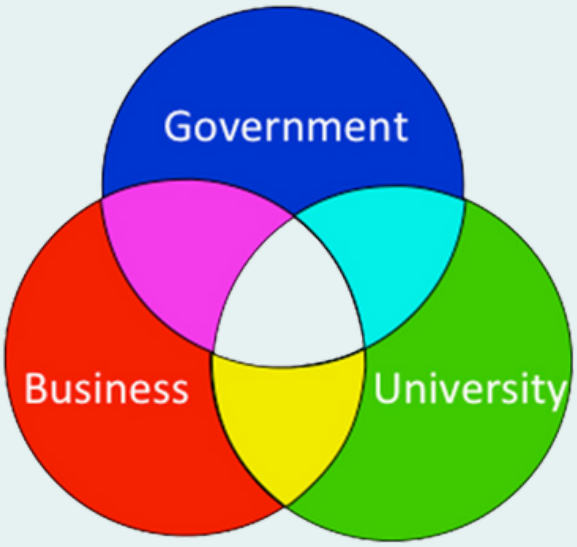
as one of the catalysts and idea creators in initially established core of **helix model [1]**, notice, suggest and recommend: expensive transformation processes from an idea to commercial healthy products.

In addition to insufficient education of people, knowledge is increasingly available, but the process of its implementation in the official education system is much slower and inconsistent. Insufficient education of people as well as the huge dependence of young people on their parents and their social status significantly affects early career researchers development, because they do not have proper social status and social power for social engagement.

The existential threat present in developing countries makes it more difficult for them to devote themselves to participating in the commercialization of science. More visibility of scientific commercialisation in real life is recognized on local levels. However, locally there is a need for more popularisation of science as the most important resource that will move us forward as a society.

Clearer determination of the quality of scientific workers and ranking of scientific achievements is needed for establishing quadruple helix models. More realistic, more rational, more independent and better education for all people with new tools and technologies should be available.

Besides, faster implementation of knowledge and science results in the educational system could enhance work habits for all age groups, such as young people, people who need retraining, additional education, self-employed, etc. Among young people, building a sense of accomplishment with their own knowledge and skills is of crucial importance.



[1] The Triple Helix thesis emerged in the mid-1990s, a time when universities and industry were exhorted by policy makers to work together more closely for the benefit of society, resulting from the commercialisation of new knowledge (see, for example, Branscomb 1993 on the US). The thesis became articulated as a confluence between Henry Etzkowitz' long-term interest in the study of university-industry relations and Loet Leydesdorff's interest in an evolutionary model in which there is an overlay of communications between different and independent spheres of activity. The first paper, Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, (1995), The Triple Helix---University-Industry-Government Relations: A Laboratory for Knowledge-Based Economic Development came about after Etzkowitz' (1994) participation in a workshop in Amsterdam and an ensuing volume, entitled Evolutionary Economics and Chaos Theory: New Directions in Technology Studies (Leydesdorff & Van den Besselaar 1994).

Society organisations

NGOs, local society communities…) have the following impressions about their performance, possibilities and position: all the activities that are being implemented must have expert approach and clear positive effects on the environment, because only in this way can they support the development of a sustainable society we aspire to.

They are trying to direct all their own strengths and capacities to the achievement of these goals, and they also receive a good response from state institutions, academies and local business associations.

They need more agile people who are ready to put ideas and efforts into action. Obstruction of accession to the European Union and the slow opening of the accession chapters are considered an obstacle from the Society's view.

The equalisation of importance and specific weight of smaller and larger local self-governments, financial independence and proportionate assistance where necessary, and not by the number of loyal and eligible voters are initiatives that represent great local potential for popularisation of civil strength in changing the rules and impact on environment protection.

Encouraging young graduates in the field of environmental protection to devote their ideas to the application of their scientific research is foreseen through supportive initiatives in the cooperation with international networks and alliances, national and regional networks and alliances, local networks and alliances, working groups, coalitions, councils, professional and activist networks.

Our valuable examples of innovative practices, describing experience of various partners that we interviewed also exceed goals such as: science for real life in local circumstances!

HOLDING CONSULTATION EVENTS WITH

QUADRUPLE HELIX ACTORS

MAPPING NEEDS, CAPACITIES AND CHALLENGES OF

REGIONAL ECOSYSTEMS

> **Mapping local capacities, pains, needs, challenges, potential and opportunities of regional ecosystems was a very interesting, network-built journey that highlighted some crucial, common and distinctive nodes in the countries of the partners involved.**

Creating a data/experience base that described the starting ground on which to graft a fruitful path toward Socially Engaged Research in Life Sciences was, in fact, one of the key points for proceeding with the next steps of the project.

Each of the partners, at this stage, organized two consultation eventsin which they had meetings with the Quadruple Helix actors (academia, local government, industry, society) in their respective territories.

This resulted in an important synoptic framework for each of the proposed indicators that allowed for a comparison between seven regions/territories in seven countries – Serbia, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Germany, Latvia, and Italy.

In all, 56 stakeholders were involved: researchers and academics with expertise in fields ranging from life sciences to sociology; environmental industries; governments at different levels, NGOs, and representatives of active citizenship.

By doing an important job of synthesizing, but still leaving all the material collected in full availability to the large research network of the Better Life project, they came up with some main and strategic lines to focus on when developing the design of frameworks for SER in life sciences and the governance of EU BetterLife centres.

Specifically at the local level, the following points were highlighted:

- Many diverse and motivated actors, competencies and know-how;
- Willingness to cooperate and consciousness about the necessity of specific channels and strategic approaches;
- Participatory moments between academia, technical offices, politicians, and settled communities on landscape-related/environmental issues;
- Interest in sustainability among young generation;
- Local knowledgeby local communities;
- New tools of communications to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Local Capacities

Local Pains

- Problems related to education;
- Problems with local governments and PA;
- Lack of professionalism and skills related to communication;
- Lack of culture of participation/cooperation;
- Lack of multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research/approach;
- Distrust of science/scientist;
- Not enoughresources (human, economic, knowledge);
- Conflicts betweenlife sciences and economy/industry.

Local Challenges

- The transition from extractive researcher to participatory researcher is already a great revolution;
- “Impacts” of science are to be made more visible to the public;
- Different, inclusive languages and communication (drawing, pictography, art, theater), also by using modern technologies, for better communication of scientific results;
- Transfer of knowledge, skills and technology must be a permanent process in order to solve a looming problem regarding the shortage of expertise.

Local Needs

- Need to develop a culture of participation (local governments, institutions, local communities);
- Need to develop communication: through new digitaltools, to communicate research results, to inform, to understand each other;
- Need for a life sciences facilitator.

Local Potential

- Since it is perceived that most of the needed know-how (in terms of research capacities and findings) already exists, the common recognized potential is therefore as follows:
- Public education about environmental protection;
- Strengthening the outreach and communication of science;
- Training to existing professionals operating in the field of environmental protection, green economy, etc.;
- Knowledge transfer (also with the innovative use of new digital technologies);
- Participatory processes and citizens’ involvement in research co-creation as well as in co- design and co-planning activities.

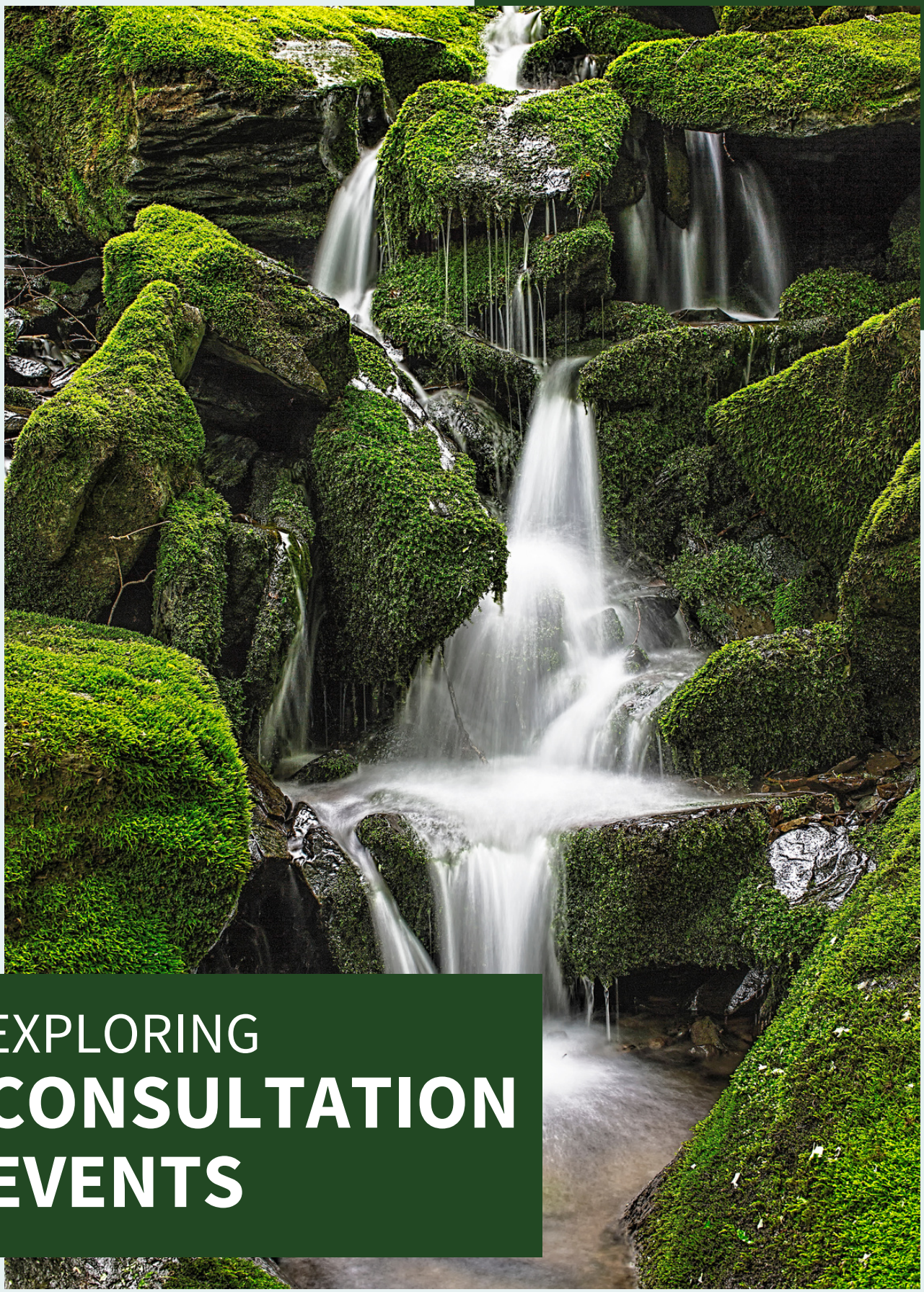
In the end, a slightly weaker emphasis and focus, though a little recurrent, was put on rural and inland areas, rather than on cities.

Local Opportunities

- Co-operation and co-creation with international/national/local networks and alliances;
- The project can create a platform for live conferences to facilitate communication and collaboration among researchers, experts and society;
- Use of new technologies (Apps), artificial intelligence, etc.;
- The education must form open scientists who think not only about the powerful knowledge, but are also sensitive to public;
- In corporation of local research organizations into ambitious climate plan.

Regeneration of hamlets now being depopulated or abandoned: getting involved nevertheless helps to strengthen the feeling of identity.

Specific issues



EXPLORING **CONSULTATION EVENTS**

FOSTERING QUADRUPLE HELIX COLLABORATION FOR SOCIETY-ENGAGED RESEARCH IN ROMANIA

Welcome to this dedicated section of the E-zine, focused on the importance of consultation events involving quadruple helix actors in driving society-engaged research in Romania.

In this segment, we delve into the significance of these events, showcasing their role as catalysts for collaboration among academia, industry, government, and civil society. Through an examination of successful case studies, we aim to highlight the transformative power of quadruple helix engagement in research and its impact on Romanian society.

Consultation events serve as platforms where quadruple helix actors converge to exchange ideas, co-create knowledge, and address complex societal challenges.

These events create space for dialogue, enabling stakeholders to contribute their unique perspectives, expertise, and resources towards solutions that drive societal impact. By fostering cross-sector collaboration and inclusiveness, consultation events become invaluable in shaping research agendas and advancing sustainable development in Romania.

In our BETTER Life extended Consultation event document we present noteworthy case studies from Romania and other European countries, showcasing successful consultation events that have propelled society-engaged research forward.

These examples highlight the diversity of initiatives, ranging from thematic workshops to policy roundtables and innovation forums. We also explore how these events have brought together researchers, industry leaders, government officials, and civil society representatives to jointly tackle pressing issues and generate innovative solutions.

Drawing insights from the case studies, we identify key lessons learned that can guide future consultation events in Romania. We delve into the importance of fostering trust, transparency, and mutual respect among quadruple helix actors. We also emphasize the need for long-term engagement, recognizing that sustained collaboration nurtures meaningful partnerships and ensures the continuity of societal impact.

Additionally, we explore the role of facilitators in promoting inclusive participation and creating spaces that foster open dialogue. We examine the enabling factors that facilitate successful consultation events. We discuss the significance of supportive policies, funding mechanisms, and infrastructure for promoting quadruple helix collaboration. Furthermore, we explore the potential of digital platforms, online engagement tools, and data-driven approaches to enhance the reach, effectiveness, and inclusiveness of these events.

By embracing emerging technologies, Romania can unlock new possibilities for quadruple helix engagement in research.

We reflect on the transformative potential of consultation events involving quadruple helix actors in society-engaged research. We underline the importance of sustained commitment and collaboration among academia, industry, government, and civil society to address the evolving challenges faced by Romania.

By fostering a culture of knowledge exchange, co-creation, and shared responsibility, Romania can position itself as a leader in driving societal impact through quadruple helix collaboration.

We invite readers to explore the valuable insights and experiences shared in this section of the E-zine, with the hope that it sparks further discussions, partnerships, and initiatives centred around society-engaged research in Romania and elsewhere. Together, we can harness the collective power of quadruple helix collaboration to shape a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for all.

BETTER LIFE CO-ORGANISED **SUMMER SCHOOL** ON ENGAGING SCIENCE FOR BETTER CITIES

> **In cooperation with BETTER Life partners and several other likely-minded projects, Estonian University of Life Sciences is preparing a summer school ENGAGE! Engaging Science for Resilient and Liveable Cities that will take place in Tartu (August 7-18, 2023).**

The ENGAGE! summer school will be a vibrant mixture of interactive sessions, field trips, and group work. Its unique setting, designed to give participants hands-on project and research experience with the management and planning of urban green and blue infrastructure, will provide a particular focus on the production and dissemination of socially engaging science supporting resilient and liveable urban environments.

The School will start with an introductory two-day period (period 1 – scoping phase) during which the students will receive an overview of the state of the art and urban sustainability challenges from across the world (with a focus on Europe) and by sectors' and stakeholders' perspectives.

This period will also introduce the challenges related to the low-level of engagement of relevant research with the society, including urban residents and social groups, policy makers, as well as praxis communities directly dealing with urban management and planning.

The next four-day period (period 2 – research training phase) will be filled with research methodology and skill training workshops, including alternative (choice) sessions run in parallel. These workshops will cover a broad range of skills, including (but not limited to) the field and remote sensing data collection techniques, GIS, modelling and assessment tools, as well as science-policy-society interfacing and communication.

During the period 2 students will also need to decide on the project group to join in order to explore real life issues and contribute to their understanding and solution. This will be supported by presentations of case studies and field excursions.

During the following five-day period (period 3 – project phase) project groups will be expected to run research and to develop and present proposals for a practical solution for a real-life problem, or detailed paper proposals reflecting on their project experience and learning outcomes of the ENGAGE! School. In doing so they will be supported by tutors appointed to each group, and by all the School faculty that will be available for consultations. All the projects will compulsory include a stakeholder communication component in order to explore how more engaging research would make cities a better place to live.

The final day of the School will be the presentation and discussion of the project results, and the graduation. Successful students will be awarded an ENGAGE! Certificate of Completion at the end of the course and transferred 3 ECTS. Participants and faculty will be encouraged to re-develop the final reports into academic papers or project applications.

The ENGAGE! summer school will be a valuable learning experience for everyone, but having a great time is also a summer essential. All 30 participants will be students or young experts, therefore we would like everyone to have a memorable time with us in Estonia!
Further information can be found on https://conference.emu.ee/summerschools/engage/.

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