D4.2: Terms of Reference for the establishment of a SMART-ER Unit of Public Engagement

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This document presents the Terms of Reference for the establishment of a SMART-ER Unit of Public Engagement (called Public Engagement Community of Practice). It aims to establish the main principles of governance for the Community of Practice established via the ECIU University Research Institute for Smart European Regions (SMART-ER, ECIU University’s SwafS project). SMART-ER aims to jointly address complex societal challenges under the framework of the UN SDG11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable). SMART-ER, together with diverse stakeholder groups at a local, national and European level, showcases and works in accordance with a shared Research and Innovation Agenda and an ambitious implementation plan, including public engagement practices. A comprehensive overview of current public-engagement practices, and specifically of citizen science in the context of SMART-ER, was conducted as a basis...
for the creation of this Community of Practice. Following a thorough consultation process, this document presents the terms of reference for the creation of the SMART-ER Public Engagement Community of Practice, in line with the ECIU University’s activities and research and innovation agenda in the pilot phase. These terms of references detail the procedures and mechanisms in order to set up this Community of Practice in order to foster further collaboration regarding public engagement practices at the level of the Virtual Research Institute.
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Symbols, abbreviations and acronyms

CoP          Community of Practice
CS           Citizen Science
D            Deliverable
DO           Development Objective
EC           European Commission
ECIU         European Consortium of Innovative Universities
EU           European Union
H2020        Horizon 2020
LCP          Local Contact Point
M            Month
PE           Public Engagement
RF           Research Field
R&I          Research and Innovation
SAB          Scientific Advisory Board
SDG          Sustainable Development Goal
SMART-ER     ECIU University Research Institute for Smart European Regions
SwafS        Science with and for Society
ToR          Terms of Reference
UN           United Nations
UPE          Unit for Public Engagement
VRE          Virtual Research Environment
VRI          Virtual Research Institute
WP           Work Package
1 Introduction

The overall objective of SMARTER WP4 is to develop an ECIU University Framework for Researcher-Society Dialogue that will support public engagement in emerging topics of societal concern, particularly those relating to UN SGD11 to define the SMART-ER research agenda at the European level. This aims to enable regional citizen-engagement activities to be linked and co programmed at the ECIU University level, and to co-define the research priorities of SMART-ER. In this regard an ECIU University Public Engagement Community of Practice (Referred as Unit for Public Engagement (UPE) in the SMART-ER proposal), was to be established to act as the reference point in assessing and supporting public-engagement initiatives for the SMART-ER institute. This community of practice aims to work as a transversal unit for the SMART-ER Institute, providing support and expertise to the processes related to public engagement. It comprises a group of researchers and support staff working in the field of public engagement and related topics.

The European Union’s Horizon 2020 framework that defines public engagement as “…participatory multi-actor dialogues and exchanges to foster mutual understanding, co-create research and innovation outcomes, and provide input to policy agendas.” Engaging with various publics is of increasing importance to higher education in Europe and globally. It allows the sector to strengthen relevance, responsiveness and accountability in a sustainable manner. The various publics part of these participatory multi-actor dialogues and exchanges include:

- Public sector: local, national and regional authorities, regional health care providers, European networks, sport and culture bodies, etc.
- Private sector: industry/enterprise engagement, industry associations and chambers of commerce, public private partnerships (e.g. in health or transport, etc).
- Civil society: community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), citizens assemblies, neighbourhood associations, etc.

In order to develop the Virtual Research Institute (VRI) activities in public engagement, a few representatives with experience and interest in the topic among the ECIU members were identified, encouraged and supported to align interests and form the nucleus of a Community of Practice. The activities of this Community of Practice are intended to include assessment (meaning here the identification of relevant participatory engagement methods to embed into the SMART-ER activities) and training activities to enhance the ability of the ECIU University to engage with society. The goal is to establish a virtual Community of Practice in which researchers will work at their home institutions while actively sharing experience by developing a shared agenda of public engagement practice across Europe, and ensuring the integration of public engagement within the governance and operation of the SMART-ER Institute.

2 Objectives and structure of the document

Within the context previously mentioned, these terms of reference for the establishment of a Public engagement Community of Practice have the following objectives:

- Define the procedures and mechanisms for setting up this Community of Practice to integrate public engagement practices as a core principle of the SMART-ER Institute.

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1 the umbrella theme for the ECIU University being developed under the Erasmus+ pilot
2 The term Public Engagement Community of Practice was preferred by WP4 members compared to the term “Public Engagement Expert Group” initially mentioned in the proposal as Public engagement practices are not formalised at the level of all ECIU Universities and therefore there is no researcher or staff who can be entitled as “expert” in this field.
3 This work will be closely linked with WP5 which aims to run Citizen Science pilots for SMART-ER benchmark experiences, sharing resources and results.
SMART-ER

- Summarize the main principles of governance and action plan for the 18-month period (M13-M30) regarding this Community of Practice in order to enhance the ability of the ECIU University to engage with society and with the objective to set out a SMART-ER Framework for Public Engagement.

This results in the following structure of the deliverable: methodology for selecting members of this Community of Practice and its governance; main activities conducted; expected results and integration of activities into the SMART-ER Institute.

3 Constitution of the Community of Practice

3.1 What is a Community of Practice?

According to the Wenger & Wenger-Trayner (2015) definition: “A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. [...] the key elements are: The domain: members are brought together by a learning need they share [...] The community: their collective learning becomes a bond among them over time [...] The practice: their interactions produce resources that affect their practice.”

Beyond defining the term, the Literature Review conducted under the ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership ColLab Project about collaborating and sharing innovations in teaching and learning in higher education, identified certain essential concepts which characterise Communities of Practice: “the sharing of knowledge and experience (old + new); providing an interactive learning process; forging intimate relationships based on trust; creating a supportive network; solving common problems; pursuing projects through interaction and collaboration; bridging boundaries (cross-boundary connectivity). All of these depend on three fundamental factors: regular interaction, sharing and cooperation”.

The definition above stresses the need for members of a Community of Practice to be brought together by a learning need they share. Public engagement is a case in point: it is inherent to the Challenge-based research approach (CBR) promoted through SMART-ER. In CBR, working closely together with partners from business, education, government, civil society and citizens is intrinsic to an approach that seeks to ensure that the output of academic research makes a tangible contribution to real life challenges.

More precisely, ECIU University understands Challenge-Based Research (CBR) as “research undertaken with partners from business, education, government, civil society and citizens, using the challenges they face in reality as a point of departure, with the objective of arriving at implementable solutions to these challenges”. Challenge-Based Research is strongly related to the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), which implies that the different stakeholders (research staff, citizens, companies, etc.) work together throughout the research and innovation process, in order to better align the results with the values and needs of society.

While the Public Engagement Community of Practice has been formed primarily to implement Challenge-based Research, it will also ensure that key concepts such as Responsible Research and Innovation and also Smart Research Ecosystems are also embedded in its practice.

3.2 Methodology used for the formation of the Public Engagement Community of Practice

A survey and workshops at each SMART-ER member university were conducted in WP4 to collect information about activities within the area of public engagement. While no distinct ‘shared vision’ could be established, the discussions focused on both overarching goals and objectives, specific elements of a future public engagement hub as well as a more generic issues that would ensure the quality of public engagement at the SMART-ER Institute. Several workshop reports provided visions, or overarching goals and objectives, which

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5 Challenge-based research for a stronger and more sustainable Europe paper: 627cd02f3c41e753fe57f0f5_ECIU_Paper-2022-1205.pdf (webflow.com)
were used to inform future discussions towards the SMART-ER guidelines on Public Engagement (Deliverable 4.1).

Following this work, all the ECIU Universities were contacted in order to select 2 persons per institution (minimum) late December 2021. The ultimate objective was to establish the basis for a virtual Community of Practice in which researchers would work at their home institutions while actively sharing experience by developing a shared agenda of public engagement practice that works across Europe, and ensuring the integration of public engagement within the governance and operation of the SMART-ER Institute. It was decided by members of WP4 that members of the Community of Practice should be persons with at least some experience in public engagement and strong interest in developing further public engagement activities. These persons (either researchers or non-academic staff members of the university) will be actively involved in the following activities:

- develop assessment and training activities to enhance the ability of the ECIU University to engage with society;
- share best practices across the SMART-ER Institute;
- provide support and expertise to the processes related to public engagement for the SMART-ER Institute and each institution.

3.3 Members of the Public Engagement Community of Practice

In January 2022, the members (contacted by SMART-ER Local Contact Points) joined the Public Engagement Community of Practice, ensuring a mix of established researchers and non-academic staff either interested or working directly in public engagement activities within their institution. The number of members per institution is listed in table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the University</th>
<th>Number of members part of the Community of Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City University (DCU)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institut National des Sciences Appliquées (INSA)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaunas University of Technology (KTU)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linköping University (LIU)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidade de Aveiro (UAVR)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Università degli Studi di Trento (UNITN)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona (UAB)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Stavanger (UiS)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Twente (UT)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Development of an operational framework for the Community of Practice

In order to start planning the activities of the Public Engagement Community of Practice, a short survey was sent to the members of the Community of Practice in order to identify the types of training and assessment activities to be organised as well as the priorities of work for the group with the objectives to share best

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6 Researchers working in the coordination of WP4 activities are also engaged in the Public Engagement Community of Practice

7 Full information about members of the Community of Practice is accessible on the SMART-ER website under this link: [https://www.eciu.org/smart-er-for-researchers](https://www.eciu.org/smart-er-for-researchers)
practices and to ensure the integration of public engagement within the governance and operation of the SMART-ER Institute. The results of this survey can be found in Annex I.

3.4.1 Assessment and training activities to enhance the ability of the ECIU University to engage with society;

Based on the survey results, two specific activities were organised with the initial members of the Community of Practice (Table 1):

1/ Exchange session on March 15, 2022: the objective of this 2-hour session was for each university represented in the Public Engagement Community of Practice to present their activities related to public engagement and share best practices. These best practices were then used as the basis for the development of the guidelines and toolbox for the implementation of a shared agenda for public engagement produced via SMART-ER (D2.1).

This session was a first opportunity for the members of the Public Engagement Community of Practice to meet and share their best practices both from their own experience and also at the level of their University regarding public engagement.

The following best practices were highlighted during the meeting:

- Master students' internships including specific public engagement actions;
- The need for reciprocity between academic partners, citizens and stakeholders;
- The representation of public engagement practices in the governance structure of the university;
- The communication to researchers about the need to engage with society in their research;
- Researchers taking part in professional communities on networks which offer a lot of possibilities to transfer knowledge to society;
- Responding to strategic European events, such as the European Capital of culture, in order to enhance the ability of the institutions to engage with society;
- Collaboration with the schools as an interface with the Community;

2/ Workshop on April 27, 2022: this 3-hour workshop provided the opportunity to focus specifically on science-society encounters and other elements which were mentioned in the survey as enablers for greater public engagement (i.e., communication, capacity, skills, incentivisation tools, strategy).

The discussions were led around the key factors enabling public engagement as identified in the survey and workshops conducted in task 4.1 (i.e. institutional prioritisation, practical support, communication and dissemination, capacity building/training/individual commitment)

During the Workshop with the Community of Practice, the suggestion was raised that SMART-ER could collect and publish relevant case studies from partner institutions in order to support the need for institutional prioritisation.

Besides, during the exchange session/workshop with the Public Engagement Community of Practice, several actions aiming to allow for this practical support at the level of SMART-ER were highlighted:

- Funding transnational research and visits
- Public engagement training for young researchers
- Learning-by-doing is an interesting approach to develop public engagement-related competences.
- Action-research could be a great tool to consolidate impactful public engagement. Action-research can generate transformational outcomes (for instance, systemic changes, change social norms, shift in institutional culture)
3.4.2 Assessment of the SMART-ER Institute

While this pilot phase focuses on co-constructing research projects based on the approved research and innovation agenda, the ultimate goal is to embed public engagement practices into the SMART-ER activities, in particular via the following actions:

- following the launch of the SEED funding (WP3), the selected consortia will need to demonstrate to what extent their projects engage citizens, civil society and end users.

- Discussions with Citizen science pilots teams (WP5) will also be encouraged in order to share and benefit from best practices highlighted by the Public Engagement Community of Practice.

- Field coordinators who will work on creating ECIU Communities of Practice in each of the four SMART-ER research areas (i.e. Energy and sustainability, Circular Economy, Transport and Mobility, Resilient Communities) will also need to be informed about public engagement practices so that they can integrate corresponding elements into their potential responses to European calls.

![Diagram of Public Engagement CoP](image)

Figure 1: support to be provided by the PE CoP to specific SMART-ER activities

3.5 Pilot Action Plan

In summary, the Pilot Action Plan for the SMART-ER Public Engagement Community of Practice agreed among WP4 members is as follows:

- During the pilot phase, the core group of the Community of Practice will work on exchanging best practices, identifying, and promoting enablers for greater public engagement at the level of SMART-ER. These key factors will then serve as assessment metrics for the public engagement activities of SMART-ER.

- Between M20-M36 the Community of Practice aims to support public engagement initiatives for SMART-ER. It will also advise the Citizen science pilots teams and SMART-ER Research Field coordinators in their activities as needed. This will be done via various means:
  - a series of webinars will be launched on participatory engagement methods allowing the Community of Practice members to present participatory engagement methods more in-depth, based on their expertise. The recording of these sessions will be published on the SMART-ER website to allow all researchers from ECIU-University to benefit from the best practices shared.
Several events will be organised in collaboration with the citizen science pilots. Members of the core group of the Community of Practice will be invited to join at least 2 events (the mid-project workshop and the final conference) to facilitate exchange on participatory engagement methods and to ensure synergies with participatory activities conducted by the pilots. Researchers involved in the Citizen Science pilots will also be invited via an open call to join the Public Engagement Community of Practice during the various meetings with the WP5 coordination team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop with Citizen Science Pilots (WPS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop with Citizen Science Pilots (WPS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final conference with Citizen Science Pilots (WPS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of resources on enablers for public engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4 Organisation modalities and governance

For the initiation phase of the SMART-ER project (Month 0 -12), a number of roles and administrative bodies have been defined as per the Project Handbook (Deliverable 7.1) for management and governance of the project, in close alignment with the Erasmus+ ECIU University project structures (Deliverable 7.2).

At present this includes:

- ECIU University Board (Governance)
- Vice-Presidents for Research (Advisory)
- SMART-ER Executive Team (Management)
- Coordination Team - 2 coordinators (Project and scientific) and 2 project managers (technical and administrative)
- Local Contact Points (University-level)
- Work package leaders and task leaders (Project-level)

As the SMART-ER Pilot Virtual Research Institute continues to operate within the SMART-ER Horizon 2020 project, the team of work package 4, supported by the work package Points of Contact will continue to support the participation of the public engagement Community of Practice during the pilot phase and the corresponding activities (webinars and other events planned as part of the Pilot Action Plan). General
awareness building and engagement with SMART-ER across institutions during the pilot phase will continue to be coordinated by the SMART-ER Local Contact Points (LCPs) who will be contacted to suggest further participation to the Community of Practice. During the pilot, appointed Research Field Coordinators across each area will also be informed about the activities of the Community of Practice so they can embed public engagement practices shared by the Community of Practice within their pilot project.

Communication about the activities planned for the Community of Practice and instructions about how to join it will also be done via the website under the section dedicated to Public Engagement.

### Figure 2: section dedicated to Public Engagement on ECIU website

#### 5 Bibliography


#### 6 Annex I Survey results

6.1 **Introduction**

Between the 15th of December and the 15th of January 2022: a short survey was sent to all the members of the Community of Practice in order to identify the types of training and assessment activities to be organised as well as the priorities for the Expert Group with the objectives to share best practices and to ensure the integration of public engagement within the governance and operation of the SMART-ER Institute.

6.2 **Survey respondents**

As indicated in table 2, 11 members responded to the survey, from 7 different universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AALBORG UNIVERSITET</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAUNO TECHNOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETAS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINKOPINGS UNIVERSITET</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 Has your department/unit been engaged in collaboration with actors from the societal sectors listed below?

According to the responses collected via the survey, all the respondents indicated they had previous experience of collaboration with the Public sector and the majority of respondents had also previous experience collaborating with the civil society sector, industry sector and other organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Obs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public sector</strong> (e.g., representatives for local, regional, national authorities, civil servants, municipal planners, regional health care providers, state departments)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil society sector</strong> (e.g., ‘Save the children’, unions, community-based organizations, as well as NGOs such as interest organizations representing specific areas)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry sector</strong> (e.g., private companies, industry associations)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong> (actors that are not clearly pertaining to the two specified groups above, e.g., citizens, museums. In this category, organizations such as publicly funded incubators, research supporting entities are also included, e.g., ALMI)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: responses to the question "has your department/unit been engaged with actors from the societal sectors listed?"

6.4 What are the types of training activities you would be interested in as part of this Public Engagement Community of Practice?

Following the responses received, 7 respondents indicated in priority webinars with external public engagement expert that would be most interesting for them. Workshops and exchange sessions were also mentioned as preferred options for 3 of them.

6.5 Are there any assessment activities of public engagement developed in your institution?

Only 3 respondents indicated that there were some public engagement assessment activities already developed at their institutions. They specified in their responses that for they run seminars and public workshops on the topic or they have developed a suite of videos that show best practice in public engagement, as part of a pilot project.
6.6 What are your expectations in joining the SMART-ER Community of Practice on Public Engagement?

In summary, in joining the SMART-ER Community of Practice on Public Engagement, the participants expect:

- To exchange about their practices and the practices of others
- To enlarge the community at their institution and their expertise on public engagement
- To get to know the partners better and possibly join new joint projects or new partnerships for the future
- To better understand the boundaries between science and society and to promote science-society encounters
- To learn more about the results of successful public engagement and to get inspiration
- To learn about the about the spectrum of public engagement practices (what specific forms it has taken), in which way universities support this kind of engagement, whether there is an incentive system, success monitoring, etc

Based on these responses, the exchange of best practices and development of new collaborations appeared as key elements for developing greater public engagement at the level of the partner institutions of SMART-ER.

6.7 Prioritize different aspects/initiatives that are needed to enable greater public engagement in your institution

In summary, the different priority aspects and initiatives that are needed to enable greater public engagement at the level of the respondent’s institutions are the following:

- Develop funding mechanisms for research projects including public engagement
- Improve communication with the community,
- Create spaces for sharing and creating knowledge, experiment new participatory practices
  Increase engagement with the public institutions though official actions and agreements, promote applied research
- Develop the education in schools and kindergartens
- Make it a strategic requirement for all active researchers to develop relevant resources and sharing of best practices
- Develop an incentive structure where engaging in society is actually seen as a merit

The results highlighted in this summary are aligned with the results of the initial survey conducted as part of task 4.1 which highlighted four main key factors for enabling public engagement: institutional prioritisation; practical support; communication and dissemination; capacity building, training, individual commitment.

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