

# Co-creation: A Practical Tool to Enhance Responsiveness in Research and Innovation

CO-CREATION



Co-creation can enhance responsiveness by:

- Supporting the translation of abstract needs, values and concerns into practical options and action in research and innovation practices
- Facilitating a process of realisation and exploration of how and why broader societal perspectives matter in research and innovation

## The issue at stake

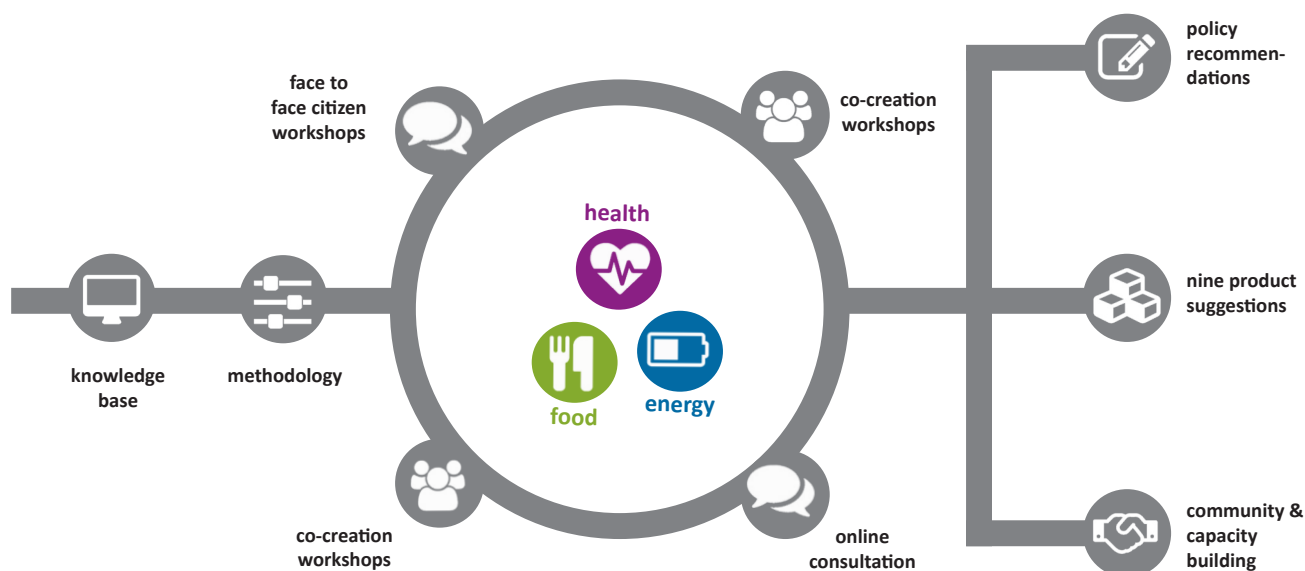
GoNano explored how co-creation might be used to enhance the responsiveness of nanotechnology research and innovation. Responsiveness is understood as the capacity and willingness of researchers and producers to integrate societal considerations in early stages of technology development (see GoNano Policy Brief 2). Co-creation can enhance responsiveness by enabling productive collaborations between researchers and societal stakeholders over longer timeframes, leading to tangible outcomes such as a new research avenue, proposal, product or prototype.

## GoNano strategy and key findings

GoNano aimed to demonstrate how researchers can work with publics and professional stakeholders to create novel suggestions for future nanotechnology products. Citizens discussed possible future nanotechnology application areas

GONANO POLICY BRIEF NO. 1

## GoNano process: Governing nanotechnologies through societal engagement



to identify their wishes, needs and concerns. Building on outcomes of the citizen workshops, stakeholder workshops were organised to co-create concrete 'responsive' design suggestions for future nanotechnologies. These suggestions were shared and discussed more widely by way of an online citizen consultation.

The results from the online consultation were in turn used as input for a second round of stakeholder workshops, focusing on the uptake of the responsive design suggestions of the previous round.

- Participants appreciated the co-creation events and valued the opportunity to learn from stakeholders they would not usually engage with. Such appreciation of opportunities for interaction and learning should not be underestimated. Productive integration of societal considerations in research and innovation will, to a large extent, depend on mutual learning between stakeholders, and on the shared conviction that broader societal perspectives matter.
- The gap between the appreciation of broader issues around research and innovation and knowing how to integrate those issues in daily research practices and priorities remains significant: the challenge is to get from constructive dialogue to practical action.
- GoNano showed that focused, guided interactions between different stakeholders can lead to novel suggestions on how to integrate broader considerations in research and innovation decisions.

### Key recommendations on using co-creation to enhance responsiveness in research and innovation

#### ● Identify participants' motivations

The GoNano experience confirms that co-creation processes need to identify the concrete interests and address the motivations of all participants, whilst staying true to the objectives set out at the beginning and maintaining continuity of thought throughout.

#### ● Bridge the gap

Design and use co-creation processes to 'translate' needs and concerns from the social realm to practical options in the technological realm. Start broad and gradually drill down to the level where the discussion topics and identified courses of action are specific enough to be relevant to and affect the decisions of the actors involved.

#### ● Transition from knowing to doing

Aligning research and innovation to societal needs and values is not just a matter of deciding what sorts of future applications European citizens and stakeholders want and need. It is also a matter of practically realising the desired change. Calls for responsiveness will need to identify the win-win opportunities where 'doing good' and 'doing well' coincide.

The EU-funded GoNano project (Governing Nanotechnologies through Societal Engagement) aims to align future nanotechnologies with societal needs and concerns. From September 2017 until December 2020, GoNano brought together citizens, researchers, industry, civil society organisations and policy makers across Europe to co-create concrete suggestions for future nanotechnologies.

The GoNano policy briefs present the results of the engagement activities and provide recommendations based on the GoNano experiences. This is the first of a series of seven policy briefs. Please see <http://gonano-project.eu/policy-briefs/> for the complete series.



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