POIESIS Newsletter VI

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TRUST IN SCIENCE

How Integrity, Science Communication and Public Engagement affect Public Trust in Science

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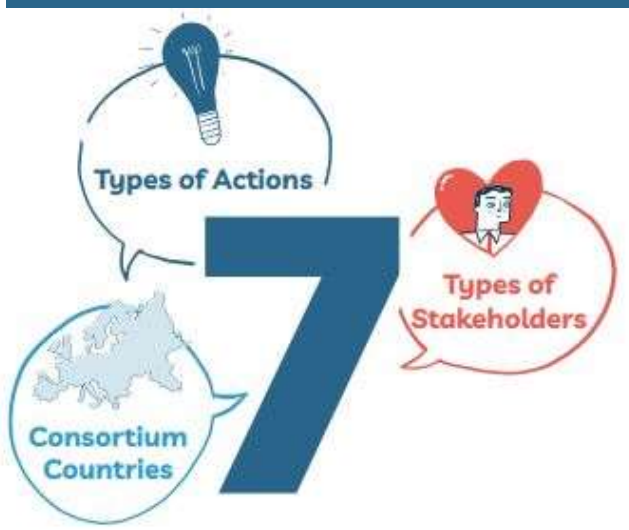
The POIESIS Final Policy Recommendations are here!!!

Three years of elaborate research work through extensive secondary data analysis and a plethora of scientific engagement events has been concluded to a set of 9 recommendations on Research Integrity, Science Integration, and Science Communication, along with a number of action points addressed to a variety of stakeholders including **Researchers**, **Policymakers**, **Science Mediators**, **Research Performing and Research Funding Organisations**, **Institutional Support Officers**, as well as the **European Commission** itself.

You can download the full POIESIS Policy Recommendations report (D4.6) here

How we got here? The POIESIS 3-year research journey



POIESIS hosted :

- 7 types of events characterised by a strong co-creational focus, across the
- 7 consortium countries involving
- 7 different types of stakeholders.

1

7 Public Workshops in 7 countries, more than 160 citizens

2

3 Focus Groups in each country, more than 130 researchers and mediators

3

3 Workshops with more than 40 research and mediation experts

4

Expert Interviews with more than 115 mediators and researchers

5

A large survey experiment with more than 2800 respondents in 7 countries

6

7 roundtable workshops with more than 80 institutional stakeholders

7

The POIESIS Final Scenario Workshop. featuring Research Policy Makers, and participants from the previous research activities

…along with an extensive Secondary Data Analysis on Trust In Science throughout Europe

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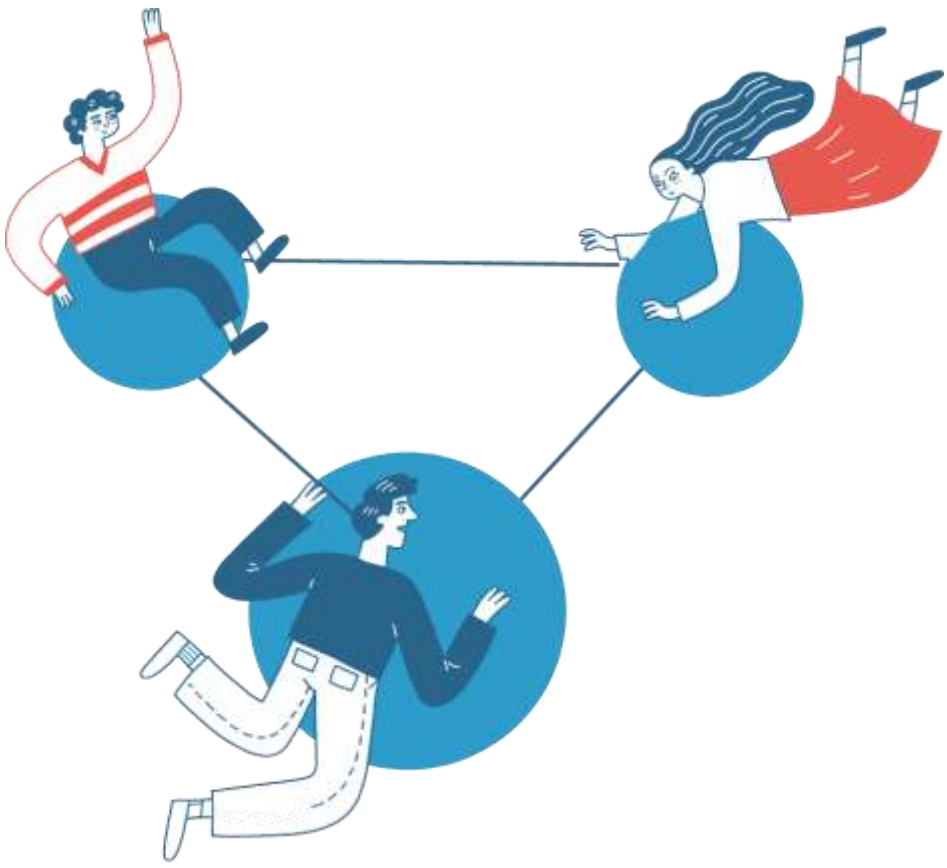
Research Integrity and the Organisation of Science

1. Align Principles and Practices of Research Integrity through changes to research culture and evaluation

There is a need to implement clear guidelines, codes of conduct, and promote shared research integrity standards across institutions and countries, reflecting the global and cross-border nature of science and research collaboration. At the same time, contextual differences must be taken into account.



Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

Research Integrity and the Organisation of Science

2. Ensure Transparency in Collaboration with External Interests and manage potential conflicts of interest

The potential for external influences to negatively affect societal trust in science is broadly agreed upon, and a lack of transparency in disclosing conflicts of interest and funding sources is seen as potentially decreasing trust in science. In this regard, researcher and institutional independence, as well as impartial research, are perceived as central to trust in science.

Transparency and disclosure of financial and non-financial conflicts of interest are also highlighted as crucial in science communication efforts. They are seen as a significant integrity principle among institutional and noninstitutional mediators, not least in navigating a complex global media landscape marked by disinformation and conflicting messages about research findings.

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

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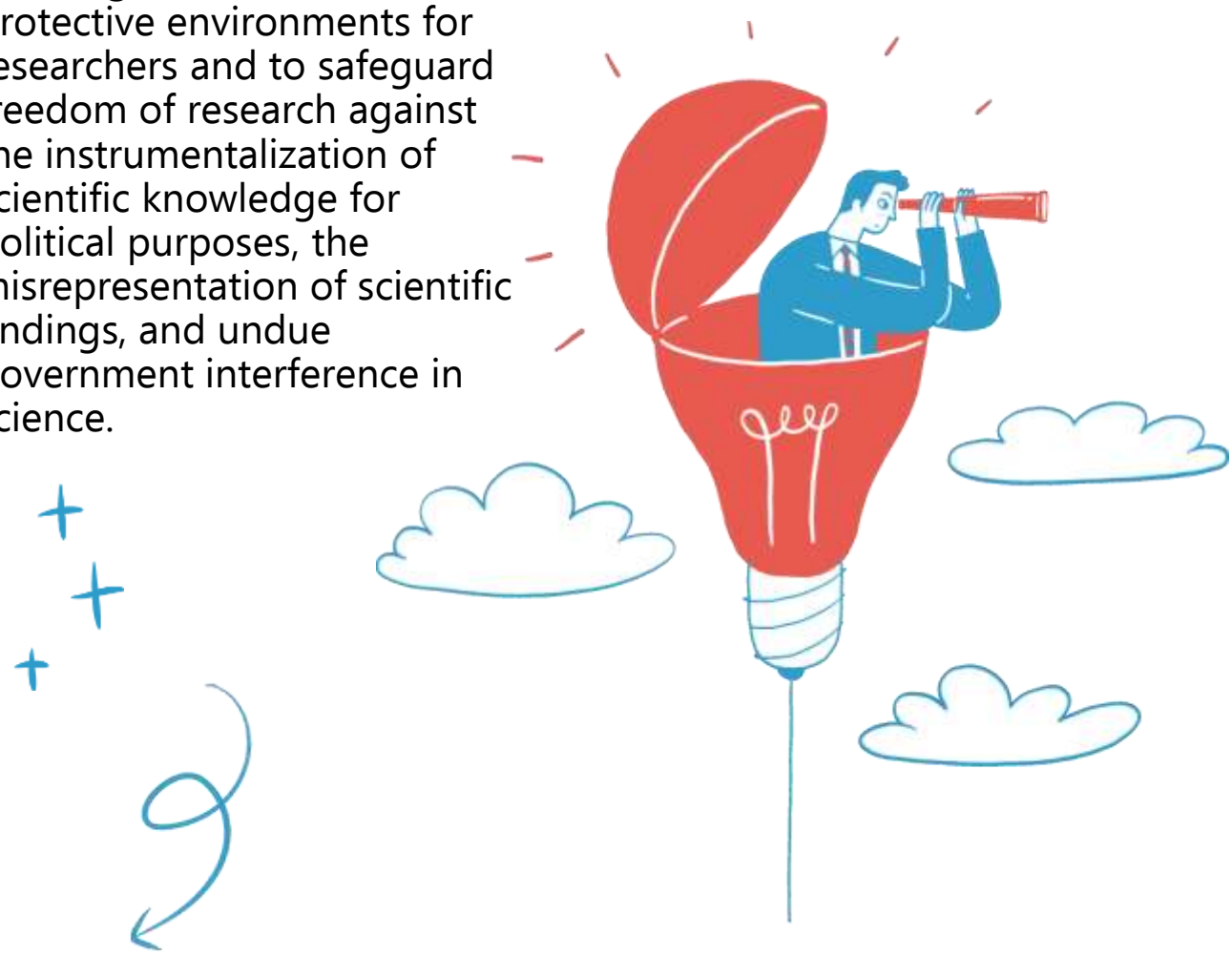
Research Integrity and the Organisation of Science

3. Recognize and mitigate the politicization of science and clearly define and communicate the boundaries of scientific expertise

Implement clear and widely shared guidelines to create protective environments for researchers and to safeguard freedom of research against the instrumentalization of scientific knowledge for political purposes, the misrepresentation of scientific findings, and undue government interference in science.



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Societal Integration and Public Engagement in Science

4. Align Public Engagement with Societal and Scientific demands

Public engagement can potentially be highly effectful in bolstering societal trust in science, particularly in areas where both science and society have clear needs or interests in improving the understanding between spheres. However, there are also concerns that unsuccessful integration of the public could backfire, further underlining the need to ensure meaningful integration in which public inputs are taken seriously while avoiding tokenistic approaches to engagement

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

Societal Integration and Public Engagement in Science

5. Nurture public engagement skills and motivation within both science and society

Ensuring that public engagement skills are nurtured is central if public engagement is to be fruitful. A key concern around public engagement is that if it fails to deliver on its promises, it might be as likely to damage trust as to build it. As such, it is key that public engagement is assisted and steered through development and maintenance of expertise. It should further be noted that public engagement is not always very wide-reaching, and as such focusing efforts towards making engagement relevant for key stakeholders should be prioritized if the trust building potentials of public engagement are to be reached.

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

Societal Integration and Public Engagement in Science

6. Prioritize infrastructure for public integration to support effective science-society interaction

Even if the will and knowledge necessary for interaction between science and society exists, infrastructure is required to facilitate such interaction. Ensuring that knowledge on existing resources is continually updated increases the likelihood of successful science-society interaction and helps alleviating the burden of undertaking such interaction from individual actors. Furthermore, prioritising engagement infrastructure ensures that organisations and the research system as such are prepared when engagement is necessary.

Particularly in societal crises where the role of science becomes more visible, having the infrastructure to help provide high quality engagement is key to ensure effectiveness and ensure that outcomes are positive.

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

Science Communication and Chains of Mediation

7. Foster effective science communication by being context-sensitive and engaging with society on its own terms

Science communication needs to be context-sensitive and engage society on its own terms. This requires not only wide presence of science communication but also that the contents of science communication need to be delivered in a form that is useful and appropriate for the public debate .

Effective science communication, or the lack thereof, is seen as a key determinant of societal trust. Science communication is a central avenue of interaction, and the qualities of communication are core to ensuring that science communication is effectful.

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

Science Communication and Chains of Mediation

8. Enhance awareness of the nature and principles of science through science communication

There are concerns that lack of public understanding of the nature and principles of science can produce rifts between science and society through misalignment and misunderstandings. Such concerns are particularly connected to issues around disagreements and uncertainty in science, and the potential for these to undermine trust.

There is considerable potential for enhancing the societal trust in science by enhancing the scope of science communication from results to the process of producing scientific information. Particularly in situations where science plays a prominent role in the public debate, such as societal crisis, a more nuanced representation of science might bolster against backlash connected to internal disagreement, mistakes, and updated understandings

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

Science Communication and Chains of Mediation

9. Adapt to the changing dynamics between science and society and strengthen cooperation among actors along the chains of mediation

Not all platforms have similar potential, nor are they assessed as equally trustworthy by users. Yet mediators need to use these platforms, and success in doing so can be crucial to the reach of reliable science communication. Furthermore, new kinds of science communication enabled by technological developments present new opportunities, but also potentially challenges, for the mediation between science and society.

Institutions should work to enable researchers, mediators, and the public to further the public debate on science in these new avenues and continually follow the conversation where it goes

Read here the action points recommended by POIESIS to potential stakeholders.

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POIESIS at the ENRIO 2025 Congress

A great step forward for POIESIS in sharing our Policy Recommendations for tackling societal mistrust in Europe, as the project was represented by **Tine Ravn** on the **ENRIO 2025** Congress Satellite Event (September 22nd) in Ljubljana, examining how European funded projects promote research integrity policy and practice in the European Research Area. The event was co-organised with our sister projects **VERITY** and **IANUS**, along with **RE4GREEN**, **PREPARED**, **CHANGER** and **The Embassy of Good Science**!

Our project co-ordinator presented the key findings of our 3-year research journey which consisted of 7 types of engagement events with 7 types of stakeholders and many hundreds of participants throughout Europe, and our final recommendations for tackling societal mistrust in Science!

POIESIS poster featuring our research findings was also very well received and gained much attention during the poster exhibition!

ENRIO2025

Congress on Research Integrity Practice

Last but not least, on September 24th, two distinguished members of our research team, Martin W. Bauer and Michel Dubois, featured on the Congress Keynote Session about Trust in Science presenting the results the POIESIS secondary data analysis and participatory research actions (7 countries, 22 focus groups, 7 round tables, hundreds of participants) respectively!

We are very happy to see POIESIS' research outputs being well received and contribute to the effort of tackling societal mistrust in Science in these challenging times.

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