



poiesis
TRUST IN SCIENCE

Final Policy Brief

Project title: Probing the impact of integrity and integration on societal trust in science

Project acronym: POIESIS

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EUROPEAN

POLICY BRIEF



PROBING THE IMPACT OF INTEGRITY AND INTEGRATION ON SOCIETAL TRUST IN SCIENCE

POIESIS is a three-year project funded by Horizon Europe that strives to tackle societal mistrust in science by understanding how, and to what extent, societal trust in science, research, and innovation is affected by the alignment of research practices with principles of research integrity and by the integration of citizens and societal stakeholders in different phases of the research cycle.

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POIESIS sets out to probe the impact of integrity and integration on societal trust in science. The project takes its departure in three widely held and intuitive assumptions on the relationship between science and society:

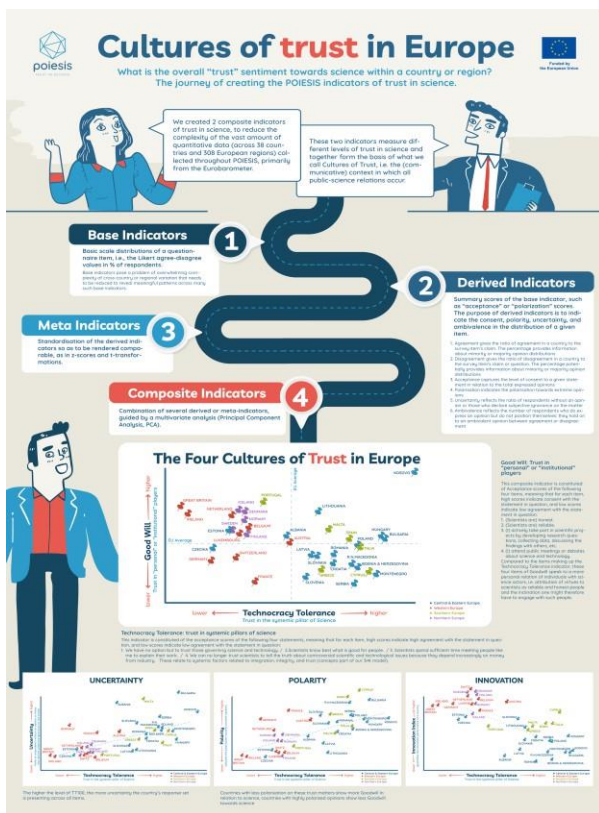
- First, that trust in science depends on scientists' capacity to demonstrate high standards of research integrity and breaches to research integrity will lead to mistrust.
- Second, that citizen and civil society's involvement in co-creating research and innovation agendas and contents makes research more relevant and responsive to society, strengthening co-ownership and trust.
- And finally, that institutions foster integrity and societal integration by enabling and supporting researchers to act responsibly.

To deepen our understanding of these processes, POIESIS implemented an ambitious empirical programme that interrogates the processes through which integrity and integration impact and shape public trust, and the role of institutions and science communication for these processes. The multi-method, cross-national, and multi-stakeholder approach of POIESIS provides a robust empirical basis for understanding how and when integrity and integration matter for societal trust in science.

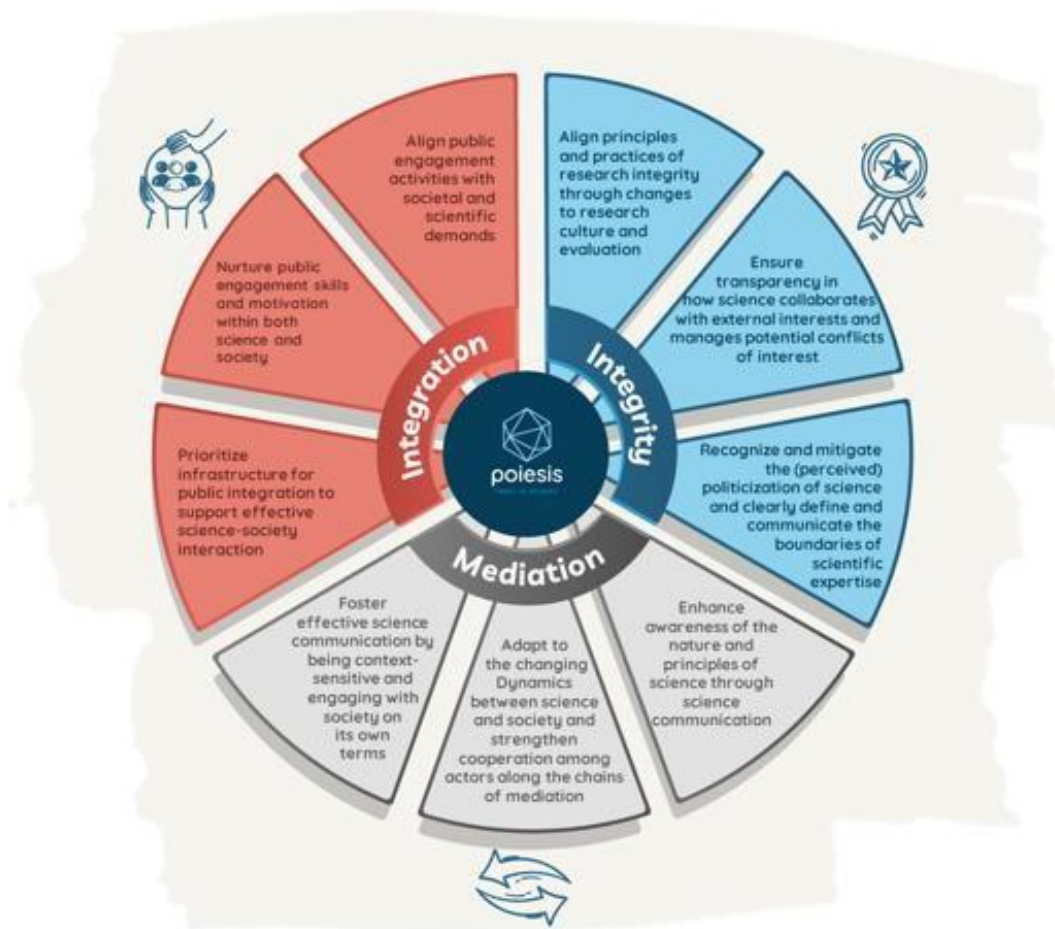
POLICY RESULTS

POIESIS reaffirms that trust in science is high but simultaneously identifies cracks in the relationship between science and society that should be kept in mind to ensure that trust in science is maintained or even strengthened. Moreover, POIESIS provides considerable nuances to the three assumptions highlighted above. The project's results derive from [extensive research activities and engagement events](#), together with [secondary data analysis](#), leading to the implementation of policy recommendations for tackling societal mistrust in science and for strengthening the co-creation of Research & Innovation contents by society. Part of the secondary data analysis was the identification of the cultures of trust in Europe.

The question “What is the overall “trust” sentiment towards science within a country or region?” was the starting point of the journey of creating the POIESIS indicators of trust in science. Two composite indicators of trust in science were created to reduce the complexity of the vast amount of quantitative data across Europe collected throughout POIESIS, primarily from the Eurobarometer. Based on the Technocracy Tolerance (tt) and Goodwill (Gw) indicators, POIESIS mapped the Four Cultures of Trust in Europe for 37 European countries and their respected regions. You may read the results [here](#).



While POIESIS reaffirms that there is no crisis of trust in science, it also highlights areas where the science–society relationship faces challenges. The nine [final recommendations](#) of POIESIS aim to provide guidance on sustaining current initiatives that bolster trust and trustworthiness, while also addressing existing challenges and further strengthening the relationship. All recommendations are accompanied by targeted actions for key stakeholders, and none of the recommendations are the sole responsibility of a single actor nor are they the product of shortcomings that are solely the fault of science nor society. Improving research integrity and societal integration in science has reasons beyond building trust, and lack of trust or skepticism towards science is not by definition problematic. However, **POIESIS provides a firmer understanding of how integrity, integration, and trust are connected, and provides directions for how challenges to these relationships can be addressed** in future research and science policy.



In particular, the POIESIS recommendations highlight how European and national policymakers, research performing organisations, research funding organisations, researchers, and mediators can work to maintain trust in science and address current and future challenges. These recommendations address the three core areas of research integrity, societal integration in science, and science communication, and build directly on the findings of the POIESIS project to provide robust empirically founded recommendations. Furthermore, **all recommendations are accompanied by specific actions for relevant stakeholders, who are to be pivotal in ensuring societal trust in science.** In the following pages you may find the actions recommended to the European Commission per each of the nine recommendations.



Recommendation 1 *Align Principles and Practices of Research Integrity*

Recommendation 2 *Ensure Transparency in Collaboration with External Interests*

Recommendation 3 *Recognize and Mitigate the Politicization of Science*

Actions for the European Commission

- ✓ Map existing tensions within European research systems and launch a targeted consultation with Member States, research funders, and academic institutions to document: a) researcher dilemmas in applying integrity principles (e.g., data sharing versus GDPR), b) misalignments between stated principles (e.g., transparency, rigor, and collaboration) and actual evaluation practices, and c) varying definitions and interpretations of “research integrity” and “trust” across disciplines and countries.

- ✓ Establish an intersectoral European working group comprising representatives from research-performing organisations, funding agencies, data protection and legal experts, ethics committees, and civil society organisations. Task the group with developing scenarios to reconcile competing principles (e.g., security versus openness) across diverse research contexts.

- ✓ Develop a contextualized and adaptive policy framework by defining a European baseline of shared integrity principles, including procedural integrity, respect for persons, transparency, and accountability.

- ✓ Develop and implement differentiated research integrity protocols tailored to specific sectors, disciplines, and methodological contexts, such as health, climate, social sciences, and artificial intelligence (AI).

- ✓ Introduce proportionality clauses in open science policies to account for varying levels of data sensitivity and risk.

- ✓ Support the reform of researcher assessment and merit systems and encourage Member States and institutions to commit to the CoARA principles.

- ✓ Promote the use of qualitative indicators of integrity-related contributions, such as responsible mentoring, ethical leadership in collaborative projects, FAIR data production, public engagement, and responsible science communication.

- ✓ Secure transparency in funding and cooperation agreements

- ✓ Implement quality and legal advice mechanisms to support researchers navigate collaborations with external parties

- ✓ Ensure funding programmes that are explicitly insulated from partisan or interest-driven agendas, supporting open-ended research outcomes that are not dominated by the policy interests of current governing bodies.

- ✓ Support the development of a public discourse around research funding and collaboration with societal interests



- ✓ Strengthen bridge-building between research communities and the political system to enhance the uptake of research-informed policymaking

- ✓ Implement strategies and procedures to ensure transparent, science-informed policymaking within science-for-policy ecosystems, including measures to prevent the misrepresentation of scientific findings.

- ✓ Assess how efforts to make science more responsive and actionable may lead to public perceptions of government pressure or interference in scientific activity, which could be perceived as a risk to scientific integrity

- ✓ Launch a targeted consultation with Member States, research funders, and academic institutions to document the current state, challenges, and monitoring practices related to the rights and responsibilities associated with freedom of scientific research

- ✓ Launch a Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) on the politicization of science and its consequences for public trust in the uptake and benefits of research and innovation.

Societal Integration and Public Engagement in Science



Recommendation 4
Align Public Engagement Activities with Societal and Scientific Demands

Recommendation 5
Nurture Public Engagement Competences

Recommendation 6
Prioritize Infrastructure for Effective Science-society Interaction

Actions for the European Commission

- ✓ Continue integrating societal concerns and demands across all areas of research, while simultaneously advancing targeted research and policy in public engagement with science.
- ✓ Work to further improve the level and responsiveness of public engagement in European research projects, being mindful of pitfalls around tokenism or box-ticking behaviour.
- ✓ Further discussions among policymakers, researchers, and the public on the forms and extent of public engagement that they prefer, to ensure that engagement reaches its potential in the areas in which it is the most effective.

- ✓ Commit to continued investment in making science available for society at large, in both deliberation and dissemination and through open science practices
- ✓ Ensure that public engagement research is established and funded as an independent field, and not merely an addition to other research fields
- ✓ Facilitate cross-national networks to ensure that lessons learned in public engagement are shared and transferred across national contexts.

- ✓ Prioritize and incentivise public engagement research and public engagement activities in and outside research institutions
- ✓ Ensure support for implementing and developing public engagement, to continually develop practice and ensure that engagement does not become a mere byproduct
- ✓ Work to establish and maintain networks in and across institutions to facilitate the development, sharing, and maintenance of expertise on engagement
- ✓ Provide resources for implementing public engagement initiatives and infrastructure through cross-contextual cooperation and learning
- ✓ Ensure that lessons learned are channelled between national and institutional contexts in networks and research collaboration.





Science Communication and Chains of Mediation

Recommendation 7
Foster Context-sensitive Science Communication

Recommendation 8
Enhance Awareness of the Nature and Principles of Science

Recommendation 9
Adapt to Changing Communication Landscapes

Actions for the European Commission

✓ Be attentive to science communication as a societally impactful outcome of research and facilitate and incentivise these activities.

✓ Support the establishment and maintenance of science communication spaces and organisations and emphasise the importance of both deliberation and dissemination.

✓ Push to increase diversity in science communication and science communication audiences in terms of individuals, venues, and formats.

✓ Ensure that the results of research are available to broader society and relevant stakeholders in a format they find useful.

✓ Work cross-institutionally to facilitate cooperation of science communication, education, and science debates

✓ Produce and maintain codes of conduct for science communication to ensure that these follow best practices and align with societal and scientific needs.

✓ Prioritize understanding of not only the results but also the methods and nature of science in science education and science communication efforts.

✓ Be proactive in steering adaptation to changing communication landscapes, through guidelines providing support for developing science communication practices.

✓ Ensure that legislation is regularly updated to protect researchers from harassment in online and other less regulated science communication environments.

✓ As modes of communication evolve, maintain and adapt codes of conduct for science communication that support not only established institutional actors but also emerging science communication practitioners.



PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME Probing the impact of integrity and integration on societal trust in science (POIESIS)

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WEBSITE <https://poiesis-project.eu/>

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FURTHER READING

- D3.4: How can institutions promote
- D4.4: First/Initial Policy Brief (submitted)
- D4.6: POIESIS Policy Recommendations (submitted)

All submitted deliverables can be found here: <https://poiesis-project.eu/deliverables/>



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