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Project fact sheet 14

Policy feedback:
innovation governance workshops

- **Two innovation governance workshops have been organised to explore the implications of NanoDiode findings for European research policy and practice.**
- **Policy makers, researchers and civil society representatives identified ways to integrate stakeholder engagement in research and innovation.**
- **A compelling business case for stakeholder engagement will encourage widespread uptake in research and innovation practices.**

The NanoDiode project organised two innovation governance workshops to discuss the project findings with policy makers and identify opportunities for the effective governance of nanotechnologies in Europe. The workshops built on the collective experience gained from two years of organising dialogue activities addressing a range of audiences.

Governance workshop: Embedding Stakeholder Engagement in European Research Policy

The first workshop was held in Brussels in 2015. This half-day workshop brought together European Commission staff (DG RTD), NanoDiode project partners and invited experts to explore opportunities to engage societal stakeholders in nanotechnologies and other key enabling technologies. The workshop participants suggested a range of policy options to strengthen stakeholder engagement: establishing an expert service to help running projects organise their engagement activities; offering practical training for researchers and policy officers; raising awareness at the 'cluster' level by organising coordinators' workshops; including stakeholder engagement in relevant call topic descriptions; building networks of engagement scholars and practitioners; and including stakeholder engagement as an explicit topic in performance appraisals.

Despite increasing interest and efforts towards stakeholder engagement in research and innovation, workshop participants noted that the purpose, structure and added value of engagement activities are not immediately obvious to everyone. These observations led to the conclusion that a convincing business case is needed, defining the benefits for different stakeholders by way of compelling examples. These examples should clarify how stakeholder engagement can enhance the quality and value of research and innovation by involving a broader range of social actors in decision making processes. The availability of concrete, ready-to-use tools will encourage widespread uptake in research and innovation practices.

Buy-in from all stakeholders will be essential for the transition towards a research and innovation system where societal considerations become part of the innovation drive rather than a problem to be addressed.

Working conference: Opening up Research and Innovation to Society

The second event was held on 31 May 2015 at the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels. It brought together a larger group of research and innovation actors, including European and national policy makers, researchers, communication managers and civil society representatives. The objective of the meeting was to motivate participants to strengthen stakeholder engagement in their own work. The audience had a central role: their questions served as the starting point for discussion. Plenary discussions on the rationale and benefits of stakeholder engagement were combined with interactive sessions where participants could get support for the organisation of their own engagement activities. They had the opportunity to discussthe activity of their interest during a knowledge fair with consortium members, drawing on their experiences in the NanoDiode project.

Stakeholder engagement: a continuing experiment

The workshop discussions identified both opportunities and challenges for strengthening stakeholder engagement in research and innovation. On a global level, technological and societal trends are pointing towards the need for new models for innovation governance that effectively integrate societal considerations in research and innovation. While the old model is increasingly criticised, new models are just beginning to emerge. The engagement of societal stakeholders thus falls within a broader area of experimentation into opening up the research and innovation system to societal needs and values. As the NanoDiode project draws to a close, explorations into enhancing the responsiveness of research and innovation will continue. Future efforts need to focus on communication and translation of these insights, providing hands-on tools and clearly explaining the benefits for those who engage in stakeholder engagement. Buy-in from all stakeholders will be essential for the transition towards a research and innovation system where societal considerations become part of the innovation drive rather than a problem to be addressed.

MORE INFORMATION

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NanoDiode is a project for outreach and dialogue on nanotechnologies, funded by the European Commission.
From July 2013 to June 2016, NanoDiode has organised a range of engagement activities across Europe, involving stakeholders in a dialogue on the funding, performance and outcomes of nanotechnologies research.

The NanoDiode fact sheets present the different activities carried out as part of the project and discuss the main findings and recommendations. This is the last of a series of 14 fact sheets, see: www.nanodiode.eu/factsheets.

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