

# ECSA Strategy

## Strengthening Citizen Science in Europe

*Citizen Science* – the involvement of citizens in research activities – can unleash potential for scientific research through increased data provision, better research design and production as well as enhanced transfer of different knowledge forms. In addition, Citizen Science can enable and strengthen scientific literacy in society and, through active participation, lead to better development and uptake of scientific innovation, and, in the best case, to social transformation.

We are witnessing an explosion of activity around Citizen Science as ordinary people, academics and NGOs begin to understand and use the power of modern IT systems, tablets, smartphones, watches and other devices. It is clear people are hungry to understand their environment, seek to improve quality of life and can play a major part in delivering the data on which policy decisions are taken. Provided with the right guidance, tools, techniques, feedback and support, Citizen Science can thus make major scientific and societal contributions.

However, there is generally little experience in most research domains and little guidance available for Citizen Science project development as the 2014 White Paper on Citizen Science for Europe has also mentioned. We now have some examples where Citizen Science is being used to answer policy questions, but almost no European cases where the full power of data from Citizen Science has been built into programmes put in place to monitor the effectiveness of EU Directives. The European Environment Agency has encouraged such action and has supported the emergence of coordinated Citizen Science programmes such as Marine Litter Watch and Noise Watch. The European Commission, in 2012, funded five multi-million-euro citizen observatories. Nevertheless, we still have too few examples to prove the value of Citizen Science at the strategic level.

Therefore, we propose a capacity development program for strengthening Citizen Science in Europe with several building blocks through the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA).

## Establishing ECSA as the European Network of Citizen Science Initiatives

ECSA has developed into a powerful association supporting and fostering Citizen Science across Europe and beyond in order to enhance the participation of the general public in research processes.

*Our Mission* is to connect citizens and science through fostering active participation.

*Our Vision* is that, in 2020, citizens in Europe are valued and empowered as key actors in advancing knowledge and innovation and thus supporting sustainable development in our world. Citizen Science is a recognized, promoted and funded approach to foster scientific literacy and the democratization of scientific expertise, to increase the social relevance and sustainable impact of research and to improve the evidence base for environment, biodiversity and climate change policy in Europe and globally.

## ECSA Governance and Supportive Infrastructure

ECSA is a legal entity registered as an NGO ('eingetragener Verein') under German law and open to individual and institutional members. It is governed by the General Assembly and an Executive Board along with a Board of Directors and a Steering Committee supplemented by the speakers of the Working Groups, which develop the programmatic work of ECSA. These bodies and other active members are supported by a small Secretariat (1-3 persons) that is currently hosted by the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. The ECSA Secretariat supports the operative work of the Executive Committee along with public and internal communication, regularly calls and meetings. It also advises members on how to connect their activities with ECSA goals.

## Our Aims

ECSA builds on the substantial expertise of its members in order to mobilize Citizen Science as a means for evidence-based sustainable development. ECSA will support the development of methodologies, increase capacities and develop three interrelated key competencies:

### > Promoting Sustainability through Citizen Science

*ECSA acknowledges the urgent need to join forces and set common goals in order to confront the multiple and interrelated threats to a sustainable future on our planet. Citizen Science can contribute significantly to monitor the causes of environmental degradation as well as the success of political and innovative social measures toward increasing sustainability.*

- ECSA will bring together key actors, excellent projects and innovative approaches in Citizen Science related to key dimensions of sustainable development including biodiversity, health, and infrastructure development.
- ECSA will encourage joint projects and the creation of synergies by developing joint methodologies, education and training materials, time and performance criteria for Citizen Science.
- ECSA will develop and implement EU-wide Citizen Science programmes, especially in areas with high relevance at European or national levels, such as sustainability, environment, and social and technical innovation.
- ECSA will demonstrate how Citizen Science initiatives support policies and decision makers at the local, national and European level in order to reach environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability targets.
- ECSA will also advocate the inclusion of Citizen Science approaches into suitable steps of the policy process, notably policy formulation and monitoring of compliance and policy effectiveness.

### > Building a Think Tank for Citizen Science

*ECSA aims to promote excellence in Citizen Science through the development of capacity, knowledge and skills at the European, national and regional levels.*

- ECSA will build capacity for Citizen Science by pooling the expertise and experience of our members and facilitating the exchange of best practice. ECSA will gather and distribute good examples and innovative projects through web sites, workshops, talks and publications. These include, for example, conditions for successful projects, questions of data standards and Citizen Science tools. ECSA will also work together with and link to the growing international Citizen Science community.
- ECSA strives to steadily grow its membership base across Europe in order to build the prime network of networks in Citizen Science in Europe that will be recognised as a competence centre and practitioners' hub internationally.
- ECSA will support the plurality of participatory approaches to research and innovation as a precious resource and a fundamental precondition for thriving and resilient societies. ECSA commits itself to encouraging this diversity and to enrich it through the creation of spaces for exchange of experiences and mutual learning.

### > Developing Participatory Methods for Cooperation, Empowerment & Impact

*ECSA aims to promote scientific literacy and increase capacity to make informed decisions, empowerment and the democratization of expertise through Citizen Science.*

- ECSA will develop and evaluate methodologies that are essential for working together successfully across disciplines and cultures. A special focus will be on increasing the impact of research and on building the self-determination and capacity for action of marginalized groups.
- ECSA will contribute to the development of methods for research, engagement and communication that improve cooperation between professional researchers and citizens as well as across different scientific disciplines. ECSA will learn from and cooperate with related actors in the field, such as science shops, Do-it-Yourself researchers and grassroots movements, and from methodologies like transdisciplinary and action research.
- ECSA will carry out and foster synthesis and research on Citizen Science, participatory research, volunteering and community service, in collaboration with members and partners to advance participatory methodologies and facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized communities into participatory research.

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