PS Lifestyle

Participant Recruitment and Engagement Strategy

PSLifestyle Citizen Science Labs

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Introduction

I. Overview

PSLifestyle aims to help close the action gap between climate awareness and individual action, and increase citizen participation in sustainability topics. It will engage citizens through an online tool to collect, monitor and analyse their environment and consumption data as well as co-research, co-develop, and uptake everyday life solutions for climate change.

PSLifestyle will engage with citizens across eight countries in two phases. The first phase will help to develop and contextualise the online tool, and to understand citizens' capabilities, opportunities and motivations to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. The second phase will serve to facilitate the large-scale deployment of the tool.

This document aims to support the first phase of citizen engagement, which will take the form of "citizen science labs". Each local lab implementer will organise three lab iterations with two sessions each (six sessions total) in their locality, between April 2022 – April 2023.

The PSLifestyle citizen science labs are guided by three interlinked documents:

- **Governance Framework**: provides the overarching framework for the citizen science labs
- **Participant Recruitment and Engagement Strategy**: provides information and tools to help local lab implementers engage citizens to take part in the labs *(this current document)*
- **Citizen science lab Manual**: provides information and methodologies on how to run the labs

Taken together, these three documents support local lab implementers in carrying out different aspects of the citizen science labs. They are designed to be read as a trio, each strengthening the other. Where relevant, references to the governance framework and the citizen science lab manual are included in this recruitment and engagement strategy, highlighting instances in which aspects mentioned in this document are further detailed in the other two documents.

The focus of the Participant Recruitment and Engagement Strategy is on helping local implementers develop and roll out an appropriate outreach strategy to maximise citizen participation in the project's citizen science labs in their localities. In line with overarching

PSLifestyle objectives, it includes a specific focus on ensuring that citizen participation is diverse and inclusive.

Citizens are not a homogeneous unit, with differences across gender, age, education, socioeconomic status, cultural background, etc. The citizen science labs will aim to capture and draw on these differences, so that their outcomes reflect as much as possible the lived realities and experiences of different population groups.

Partner targets for each pilot region are indicated in the table below:

Pilot area	**Citizen science lab participations (total, over 6 sessions)**
Estonia	175
Finland	180
Greece	200
Germany	190
Italy	160
Portugal	200
Slovenia	150
Turkey	200

II. Guidance for use

This document outlines three key steps to engagement and recruitment, which are as follows:

- **Step 1:** Identifying the "who" – *who to engage and who can help with this process*
- **Step 2:** Building the "how" – *through messaging, incentives, communication tools, and accessibility and attractiveness*
- **Step 3**: Retaining participants – *how to optimise continuous engagement*

Each step contains guidance and tools. Alongside general information, the document also includes concrete examples and resources ("top tip" boxes).

The following points on this guidance are worth noting from the outset:

- **A living strategy**: participant engagement is not static – each partner's strategy will evolve and be updated over the course of the citizen science labs, for instance to:
    - Reach a greater number of citizens;
    - Reach a specific target group who were not represented in the first session(s) of the citizen science labs, ensuring diversity and inclusivity;
    - Take into account learnings from early outreach, and from testing the engagement strategy.
- **Tailoring to local contexts:** the strategy provides tips and tools that local implementers can adapt and tailor to suit their local contexts and available resources.
- **An open dialogue**: this document is not the final word – citizen science lab implementers are encouraged to keep the conversation on participant engagement open throughout the year of the citizen science labs, and EuroHealthNet and CSCP are happy to continue to offer support and updated guidance.[1]
- **Online/offline considerations**: although the citizen science labs will hopefully take place face-to-face, this document also includes advice for how to carry out virtual engagement for online labs.

Top tip: anticipating and adapting to challenges

The three steps of this strategy aim to provide local lab implementers with as much structure and guidance as possible, whilst highlighting that a flexible, adaptable mindset will be key to successful citizen engagement. Participatory projects always require capacity to adapt to new challenges and circumstances as they arise. Local implementers can try to anticipate and prepare for possible issues by considering alternatives and back-up plans to support the measures they put in place.

Citizen outreach and engagement is challenging. Planning in sufficient time, learning by doing, and regular exchanges to share experiences will be very useful.

More details on the three steps of this strategy are provided in the following.

[1] For a full overview of the different roles and responsibilities of the PS Lifestyle citizen science labs, please refer to the labs' Governance Framework.

Step 1: Identifying the "who"

Recruitment and engagement for the PSLifestyle citizen science labs begins by identifying: characteristics of citizens who will take part directly in the labs (**participants**), and organisations who can help to recruit these participants (**multipliers**). More details on both are provided below.

I. Participants

The PSLifestyle citizen science labs aim to bring together a broad and diverse group of citizens, striving to be as inclusive as possible. This will enable them to receive input from participants across different backgrounds and gather a variety of perspectives.

In particular, local lab implementers should strive to reach out to participants across:

- age groups (aged 16+; further ethical guidance on involving minors will be provided)
- genders
- socio-economic status
- education levels
- cultural backgrounds
- people with disabilities
- other population groups that are, or are at risk of being marginalised (adapted to different contexts), such as migrant populations

Building an inclusive project is not an easy task, and will take time. Local lab implementers should consider different barriers to participation, and ways in which they could be overcome (more details on this are provided in Step 2, Section IV "Accessibility and attractiveness").

As the citizen science labs progress, organisers will build knowledge on barriers and challenges and increase their capacity to respond appropriately.

II. Multipliers

"Multipliers" are individuals or organisations who can help lab implementers both to broaden their outreach (reaching more citizens) and to target their outreach (reaching some of the target populations listed above). Multipliers often have previous experience of engaging citizens, and/or work with or represent different target groups. The below provides more details on possible multipliers to reach out to, and how to engage them.

Identifying multipliers

Identifying multipliers does not need to be a complicated or time-consuming technical procedure. In many cases, it will rely to a large extent on already existing networks and information local implementers have at hand.

Local lab implementers are recommended to make a list of relevant organisations (and contact persons) in their local contexts who could help them reach out to citizens by disseminating messaging through their networks.

Typical multipliers local implementers may want to include on their list are:

- **Municipalities** – who will likely have experience in reaching out to their citizens, and may have contacts and resources to offer, in particular if local implementers can show how the citizen science labs connect to local initiatives/objectives
- **Citizen science and/or citizen engagement initiatives** – local implementers can draw on the contacts and work carried out when preparing the PSL Lifestyle *Report on lessons learned, synergies and activities to build upon, with database of 30 inspiring citizen science initiatives*
- **Civil society Organisations (CSOs) - local/regional/national** – relevant CSOs include those working on:
    - environmental topics (such as the European branches of the WWF, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the European Environmental Bureau and its national/regional members, Climate Action Network Europe and its members; and
    - social topics (see "Top tip" below for a list of example organisations).
- **Organisations who could help reach out to vulnerable groups** – these include organisations working on social housing and poverty as well as more informal organisations who have the confidence of local communities (see "Top tip" below)
- **Community organisations** – such as services/community centres

- **Sports' clubs**
- **Organisations related to different age groups** – schools and universities, teachers' and parents' organisations, youth organisations, neighbourhood elderly centres
- **Academics** – such as those working on sustainability issues at local universities and research institutes
- **Local businesses** – in particular "sustainable" business, who can reach out through their customer base. Businesses should be selected carefully, so that they do not skew the project towards a profit-driven approach.
- **Prominent figures from different stakeholder groups**, who can help to build close and organic relationships with a broader group of citizens they represent. These could be leaders of local cooperatives, for instance, as well as relevant social media influencers.

Top tip: using multipliers to reach out to vulnerable or marginalised groups

- Reaching out to vulnerable groups is particularly challenging. If feasible, it can be useful to work with prominent, well-trusted figures from the targeted stakeholder groups, which local organisations can help to identify and facilitate contact with. When trying to reach groups that experience social exclusion, for instance, it is often useful to involve people who have previously experienced similar situations ("experts by experience"). The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is the largest European network of national, regional and local networks, involving anti-poverty NGOs and grassroot groups as well as European organisations, active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. EAPN and their members in different countries could be a useful first point of contact for PSLifestyle local lab implementers. Local implementers may wish to invite staff from EAPN or other organisations to join the citizen science labs in case it is not feasible to directly involve citizens from marginalised communities - these participants would be invited to advocate on behalf of the communities they represent.
- Other organisations it might be useful to contact include: Social Platform, SOLIDAR, Caritas Europe, Eurodiaconia.
- Examples of projects who have used multipliers to ensure inclusive participation include:
    - A Belgian citizen science project, CurieuzeNeuzen, that reached out to local mosques and youth centres in Brussels to support them in efforts to engage with their communities.

- A project in Finland, the Lahti living lab, that involved language schools to reach out to immigrants.

Engaging multipliers

A few elements local implementers can consider in their outreach are:

- **A progressive approach:** local implementers will not necessarily mobilise all these multipliers, or all of them at once - this strategy provides different options, which can be adapted according to appropriateness, suitability, capacities, etc. It can be useful to begin by defining which of the multipliers would be most advantageous to reach out to, which are known within the local implementers' team, and which are more likely to be motivated by and willing to contribute to PSLifestyle. Local lab implementers may expand their network during 2022-2023, and be able to engage multipliers whom they did not know in early lab iterations.
- **Researching multipliers to help build relationships:** before approaching organisations, in case be useful to learn about the organisation (in case it is a new contact), in order to think about areas of common interest or ways in which the opportunity of contributing to PSLifestyle might appeal to them, or link to their existing projects/activities. Reaching out with this insight can help to build a more personalised relationship, which focuses on shared aims.
- **Defining benefits to multipliers:** local lab implementers may also want to consider what "benefits" they could offer to multipliers as a thanks for their help. Benefits could include: learning more about local challenges, receiving summaries of the citizen science lab outcomes, and having an active role in the workshops (as participants and/or assisting to facilitate).

Step 2: Building the "how"

Having identified the participants and multipliers, local lab implementers can move to the second step: developing the different processes and tools to engage citizens. This step is broken down into: understanding and tapping into motivations, defining the messaging, and designing specific outreach tools. A final section highlights the importance of considering accessibility and attractiveness of the lab locations.

I. Motivation and incentives

The aim of the participant recruitment and engagement strategy is to motivate citizens to take part in citizen science labs. Before designing specific messaging and tools, it is therefore important for local lab implementers to understand how to motivate citizens – in other words, local lab implementers need to understand the different reasons **why** citizens might be interested to join the citizen science labs (motivation), and **how** to tap into these reasons (incentives).

Whilst different citizens are motivated and incentivised by different elements, some of the key ones to consider are included in the tables below. Most of these are interlinked (in particular the first three), and not mutually exclusive – individual citizens may be motivated by a variety of different factors. Local lab implementers may also consider adding to this list of motivations/incentives, tailoring the information to their specific contexts.

Throughout, it is important to bear in mind that the burden of change should not be placed on citizens – rather, the aim is to involve them as change makers, who are enabled and encouraged to make positive, sustainable changes. This is particularly relevant for vulnerable groups, who may face additional barriers to change.

Motivation	**Sense of (broader) community:** citizens are motivated by the fact that they will be part of a common movement across countries.
Possible Incentives	- Highlight the "**European Sustainable Lifestyle Ambassador**" programme, through which 2 citizens from each of the citizen science labs will be able to travel to one of the labs in another country and report the learnings back to their local labs. - Create/direct citizens to a common webpage or tool such as Slack, where they can exchange with citizens from their own citizens science labs as well as others across the pilot regions, exchanging views, ideas, and values.

Motivation	**Meaning/change-making:** citizens want to feel that by participating in the citizen science labs, they are contributing to a greater goal and making a difference.
Possible Incentives	- Highlight how the outcomes of PSLifestyle will contribute to positive, critical change that benefits people and planet, and showcase how citizens can be part of this, for instance letting citizens know that they will be truly listened to, and explaining how their input will be used, enabling them to see the impact of their participation – creating a shared vision and sense of purpose. - Emphasise the overall goals of PSLifestyle as a project developed with, by and for citizens. - Invite a representative from the local municipality and/or other stakeholders such as businesses, CSOs, as this can help citizens feel like they are being listened to and that their voices are being acknowledged, and can contribute to real change. - Highlight how citizens can actively contribute to a more sustainable future in ways that go beyond the scope of the project.

Motivation	**Contributing to the neighbourhood**: citizens are interested in helping to make positive changes in their neighbourhood, creating a good life for all within planetary boundaries.

Possible Incentives	- Emphasise that participants will exchange with a broad range of local citizens about local challenges and help design solutions, assessing the barriers and opportunities to such solutions. Ideally, local lab implementers can highlight that they will share results with local policymakers, whilst being careful to manage expectations. - Organise social activities after the citizen science lab to help bring together the community, such as a neighbourhood walk, food/drink, etc. Some people might simply be looking to meet new people in their neighbourhood too, and this is a structure in which to do so.

Motivation	**Curiosity, learning and capacity-building:** citizens may also be interested in an opportunity for discovering new things, for personal growth, and in gaining knowledge and skills.
Possible Incentives	- Include learning components to the citizen science lab, showcasing how citizens who take part will find out more about sustainability, enabling them to make more informed decision on both personal and societal levels. Consider giving out a certificate of participation as a record of attendance. - Organise events in interesting venues and/or invite interesting guests that citizens may otherwise not be able to visit/interact with. - Highlight how building skills and experiencing citizen science methods could help citizens in future initiatives.

Motivation	**PSLifestyle online tool**: citizens may be motivated by the idea that they are contributing to develop a new, cutting-edge, ambitious online tool.
Possible Incentives	- Emphasise the aspects of the citizen science lab related to technological developments.

Motivation	**Economic:** some citizens may be motivated by receiving compensation for the time they contribute to the citizen science labs.
Possible Incentives	- PSLifestyle cannot offer financial incentives. However, local lab implementers can think creatively about in-kind incentives they could offer to participants. For instance, they could partner with local municipalities or other organisations to offer incentives such as free public transport for a limited period of time, tickets to certain events, access to local sport or cultural facilities, etc.

II. Messaging

One of the most critical aspects of the engagement strategy is the messaging, in which the learnings and preparations from the motivation/incentive exercise are brought together to formulate attractive, engaging messages to convince citizens to take part in the citizen science labs.

The following three underlying principles are important to consider when developing messaging. They are particularly relevant from a diversity and inclusivity perspective.

- **Simplicity**: the wording of messages should be in local languages, and easy-to-understand by all, avoiding jargon and technicalities. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that messages should be too obvious – it could be a good idea to tell people something they don't already know, sparking their interest.
- **Clarity**: the wording not only needs to be simple, it also needs to be clear, so that citizens understand exactly:
    - what is expected of them and how they will contribute (purpose, scope, process)
    - why they should take part (any benefits they could expect, drawing on the motivations/incentives tables)
    - expected outcomes (see more on "Show results", p.12)
    - timeline and long-term perspective (covering the six sessions of the citizen science labs)
    - practical details: timing, location, logistics, how to RSVP
    - local lab implementers should also be able to explain the aims and ethos of PSLifestyle in simple and consistent terms.
- **Relatability**: it is not enough for the words to be easy to understand and clear – citizens also need to be able to relate to the concepts, meaning and values.

Top tip: making messaging relatable and relevant

- **Relevant to local contexts**: It can be useful to tie messaging related to the citizen science labs into local, ongoing debates and concerns that citizens are already aware of, as this will help increase visibility. If public transport, or sustainable food, are already hot topics in certain municipalities, the messaging can be linked to these issues. Lab implementers can get in touch with local municipalities to get

insights on their agendas and see how the citizen science lab outreach can be tied in. Municipalities' plans could for instance include days on environmental topics, car free days, etc.

- **Relevant to concerns of different population groups**: Tying in messaging about the citizen science labs to broader issues that are relevant for specific groups will help to make the citizen science labs relevant to them. Abstract discussions about sustainability and sustainable lifestyles may not be appealing to people living in deprivation, but if they are linked with concrete concerns about accessibility of public transport or pricing of food and energy, they may become more relevant.

On top of these, four further points are important to bear in mind:

- **Show results**: it is important to let participants know how their contribution could impact themselves, as well as their neighbourhoods and communities, and people and planet as a whole. When talking about results, it can be useful to:
    - **Explain impact potential** – by highlighting that the results of the citizen science labs will be shared with key actors, and in such a way can contribute to the development of products and services that match the realities of participants and contribute to their wellbeing. The final product the labs will help develop (the online tool) will help to raise awareness amongst a large group of citizens (4 million!) that change is needed, and contribute to the push for broader systems change. Lab implementers can be ambitious, but should ensure not to over-promise, so as to manage expectations – the language should remain open (highlighting the potential, without absolute guarantees).
    - **Highlight diversity** – to show that PSLifestyle aims to develop an online tool that is representative of different perspectives, across population groups (and this is why it is important that different stakeholders join the discussion!).
    - **Emphasise the co-creative nature** – to let participants know that the outcomes are built with, by and for them (rather than the citizen science labs "extracting" their contribution without giving anything in return).
- **Personalise**: It is recommended that local implementers develop or adapt messaging for each citizen population groups (as listed in Step 1, Section I "Participants"). Personalising the content and the wording of communications is essential to make sure that the messaging is tailored to targeted citizens, and to be able to explain to these citizens why they are needed in particular, and how their contributions are critical. This is again particularly important to reach vulnerable groups. Lab implementers may wish to

emphasise the welcoming and inclusive nature of the citizen science labs, to help convince groups who fear being excluded or marginalised in the discussions.

- **Test**: to ensure the messaging is adequately tailored for different groups, lab implementers can test different messages with individuals from the groups they are targeting. The multipliers mapped as part of the first step can be a useful resource here, to check that the messaging is appropriate, easy to understand, possible issues or barriers, etc.
- **Be positive:** as much as possible, lab implementers should develop positive messaging, highlighting the fact that by taking part in the citizen science labs, citizens can contribute to creating a good life for all within planetary boundaries. Threatening scenarios of a "doom and gloom" future should be avoided.

> **Top tip: images are also important!**
>
> A Belgian citizen science project, CurieuzeNeuzen, developed messaging to encourage citizens to take part in their project on air quality. In the images that accompanied the messages, they used white clouds (clean air – what we are aspiring towards) rather than grey clouds (polluted air), to show that by participating, citizens can help make a change.

The **PSLifestyle Communication and Dissemination strategy** includes examples of messaging that lab implementers can draw inspiration from (the "*Project descriptors for external communications*" are likely to be particularly useful). The strategy also provides a common branding that can be used for many of the tools indicated in the following section.

An easily recognised branding harmonised across pilot regions helps to ensure recognition, capture interest and motivate engagement in the project. The PSLifestyle branding includes a logo, as well as adaptable templates (e.g., for social media cards, leaflets, etc.). All relevant information is available to lab implementers on the PSLifestyle WP5 Teams space.

III. Tools and means

The content of the messaging will depend to a certain extent on the kinds of tools and means local lab implementers use to disseminate the messaging. As before, implementers will need to consider which messages and approaches are most appropriate for which target group.

A distinction can be made between communication tools that are "passive" and those that are "active". The former require a one-off engagement, and the latter a more engaged approach. Implementers can select those that are most appropriate to their local contexts

and the target groups they are trying to reach, as well as to their capacities and resources, balancing the need to be ambitious with the need to be realistic. In order to reach a broad range of citizens, it is recommended to use a mix of different communication tools.

Passive tools

- **Printed leaflets and posters**: this material can be left in different locations, focusing on well-frequented public spaces and places where targeted groups tend to concentrate, such as schools, universities, businesses such as supermarkets, community centres, libraries, public transport shelters, local coffee houses or pubs and church communities. Leaflets can also be strategically disseminated at festivals, local events and "neighbourhood days", other citizen science labs or similar initiatives, etc. Lab implementers can put flyers into mailboxes of particular areas they are targeting. Creative methods (such as these stitched mini-banners) can capture people's attention and provoke interest, although they are often time intensive.
- **Traditional media**: lab implementers can reach out to journalists in print or online papers or local radio to investigate whether they would like to write an article/broadcast about the project. When discussing with media, it's important to have clearly in mind the main messages of the project and why citizens should take part, highlighting the link to current and/or local affairs. Lab implementers could also offer an interview with a citizen who has taken part in a citizen science lab, if the citizen is enthusiastic and can showcase the project well.

Top tip: diversify media outreach to reach different target groups

Different media have different readerships – if possible within their resources, local lab implementers can try to combine different styles of messaging in different types of media, such as adverts, interviews or articles in:

- regional or local printed/online newspapers (adds in the "help-wanted" sections could be useful)
- local radio
- free magazines or local publications issued by local governments
- sustainability-focused publications (with the knowledge that the audience will already be interested in the topic)
- free "metro"-style newspapers that get a wide readership
- short articles in school bulletins (to reach parents/teachers) or university bulletins (to reach students)

Active tools

- **Social media**: local implementers can also explore Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram to reach different target groups (depending on capacities). Communication should be tailored according to the platform. Social media posts can range from informative (text-based) to more fun images (for instance, a "behind the scenes" of setting up the citizen science lab), 'stories' and short videos, social media cards, quizzes ("did you know?" on PSLifestyle topics), gifs, etc. They can provide information about the project more generally as well as the citizen science labs in particular. Influencers and community-based groups can help share messages.

> **Top tip: make it fun - tell a story**
>
> Storytelling is a well-established way of gaining viewers' interest. Stories can be personal (e.g., from the perspective of a participant or project partner), more educational (e.g., about the project), or historical (e.g., about sustainability). Lab implementers could for instance engage the "European Sustainable Lifestyle Ambassadors" to share their story as a way to spark interest among their networks.

- **Websites:** websites can be a useful central resource to direct citizens to, specifically: the PSLifestyle general website; the local websites (tied with the online tool). Local lab implementers can also advertise the citizen science labs on their own websites, and look into whether other organisations or the local municipality would be happy to display information on their official webpage.
- **Mailing lists and newsletters**: this can be an effective way to reach an established community of stakeholders, if lab implementers already have existing mailing lists, will be setting up a new mailing list or are able to work with a local partner or collaborate with an existing project to disseminate through their newsletters and networks, in respect of GDPR regulations.
- **Community apps**: many neighbourhoods have local apps to update each other on community issues. Lab implementers could engage multipliers to post messages on these.
- **Surveys**: lab implementers can try to recruit participants by distributing an online survey, aiming to gather initial feedback and secure interest in joining the citizen science labs. Possible survey tools include: Google Forms, Survey Monkey, JotForm, Typeform.

- **Verbal communications**: lab implementers can explore raising awareness about the citizen science labs through word-of-mouth, phone calls, activities in schools and community centres, or other local events, as well as conferences (to reach academia). Working with multipliers will facilitate this process. Presenting the citizen science labs at **community meetings and workshops of related initiatives** can be a particularly effective method.
- **Snowballing/domino effect**: if local lab implementers are in touch with particularly engaged citizens, they can work with them to further distribute invitations amongst their networks, to their friends, family, communities.

Top tip: engaging individual citizens as multipliers to reach vulnerable groups

Understanding and respecting local socio-cultural contexts is essential to implement an appropriate outreach strategy. In some cases, local populations may be reluctant to embrace new knowledge or techniques. Identifying and building a relationship with a few trusted, open-minded individuals who are well-connected to the wider community can help to convince others to join the citizen science labs. Local lab implementers can think of asking these multipliers to tell their own experiences of participating in the citizen science labs, e.g., through a video posted on social media.

Top tip: consider barriers to outreach

Not all tools will be suitable to reach all population groups. Recruiting on social media will not successfully reach citizens with limited digital literacy or online access. Local lab implementers will need to consider their list of target participants, and identify which tools are more suitable for which groups, what barriers certain groups may experience, and how to overcome them.

It can be useful to combine social media outreach with strategically disseminated printed leaflets and posters (e.g., through community centres, in local libraries, at local markets, on supermarket bulletin walls, etc.). If lab implementers have the time and resources, they can also directly invite participants by walking/talking to people in selected areas. This may be particularly relevant for reaching out to vulnerable groups.

A project in Italy, Air Heritage, organised a "pedibus" (walking bus) to reach out to local schools, and also set up an info-point in the city-centre.

IV. Accessibility and attractiveness

The final component of "how" to build an engagement strategy concerns the set-up of the citizen science labs themselves, as this can be an important motivator as well as a barrier to participation.

Most of the information related to the physical location and set up of the citizen science labs is included in the Governance Framework (e.g., concerning the location, timing, duration, etc.). The following sets out ways to ensure that citizen science labs are organised in ways that both encourage and enable people to attend, by ensuring **accessibility** (and thereby inclusivity) and enhancing the **attractiveness** of these events.

Accessibility

As much as possible, local lab implementers should aim to ensure that the citizen science labs are accessible to participants from across population groups, and that there are as few barriers to participating as feasible, acknowledging that what is accessible to certain social groups may not be as accessible to others.

It can be helpful to think about examples of people within the lab target groups, considering some of the **barriers** that might prevent them from attending, and how these barriers could be reduced or removed. For instance: Person X isn't sure she'll be welcome in the location (church hall) since she's of a different religion (possible solution: move location if feasible), or person Y is deaf and relies on sign language interpretation (possible solution: invite an interpreter to attend with them).

Stating upfront in the sign-up information the **accessibility information** (e.g., the venue has no stairs) and the type of support that can be offered, can be helpful, as it removes the burden from individuals and lets them know that there is an interest in making the citizen science labs accessible.

When searching for locations to hold the citizen science labs, the following considerations are worth bearing in mind, in terms of accessibility:

- **Getting to the citizen science lab**: to the extent possible, citizen science labs should be easy to access via public transport. In some cases, it might be necessary to organize a pick-up service to collect participants.
- **Timing and duration**: the time of day of citizen science labs can hinder participants from joining. Most citizens will only be able to join meetings after typical working hours, but

many might also have family commitments in the evening. Offering childcare services, if feasible, could help overcome this barrier.

- **Online accessibility**: organising the citizen science labs online will help to make them more accessible in terms of location, but there may be other challenges to address, such as non-existent or bad quality internet connection, a lack of digital tools, and/or digital literacy. In this case, it will be important to offer technical support so that all citizens feel able to take part in activities (see Top tip below).

Top tip: organising accessible citizen science labs for vulnerable or marginalised groups

- In-person labs: Organising the citizen science labs directly in targeted local communities, in spaces that are easy to access and already known and shared, can help to remove some barriers to participation.
- Online labs:
    - Over the course of 2020-2021, the UK government's Environment Agency organised a series of webinars with citizens on air quality, aiming to reach in particular people from deprived communities. In their outreach, the Environment Agency stated that they were available to offer support (technical, material) to citizens who wished to participate but could not due to lack of access to internet connection, laptops, etc.
    - Depending on local implementers' material and financial resources (and on the COVID-19 situation), this support could include lending laptops or tablets, helping to identify places with free access to internet, making agreements with education centres, libraries or business centres in the communities.
    - Local implementers could also try link up with initiatives like the European Basic Skills Network and the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), to see what kind of support is available to ensure people have access to online activities.
    - Local implementers can also consider providing trainings themselves to participants (see further in Step 3, Section III, "Providing support").

Whilst striving to be as accessible as possible, it is likely that lab implementers will also need to compromise. For instance, if they are able to link up their citizen science labs with ongoing activities organised by one of the multipliers (municipalities, other citizen science projects),

they may have less control over the physical environment (although the other citizen science projects will hopefully also set up accessible and attractive locations!).

Attractiveness

A second element to consider when setting up the citizen science labs is how to make them attractive to participants, creating a welcoming environment and a sense of community. This can also help to retain participants (see further on this in Step 3: Retaining participants).

If the citizen science labs are organised face-to-face, one way to do this is to organise events before or after the discussion. Local lab implementers can use the PSLifestyle topic areas (food, transport, goods, housing) as inspiration, putting in place activities such as:

- Cooking together, or sharing food (breakfast/lunch/evening)
- Gardening
- Clothes/objects sale or swap
- Walk (or cycle) around the neighbourhood
- Testing an e-bike or an electric car
- Partnering with a local sustainable business (e.g., to taste local products)
- Meeting/talk with local scientists to find out more about sustainability
- Family games

If the citizen science labs are organised online, lab implementers can try to organise a quiz, or leave time for a more informal chat after the end of the discussion, where participants can get to know each other better.

Step 3: Retaining participants

This final section provides tips on how to keep participants motivated across the year of the citizen science labs. Evidently, not all participants will take part in each session. However, the elements listed below are in any case good practices to adopt, as they will help to ensure that participants feel listened to, meaningfully involved, and valued.

I. Transparent and regular communication

Maintaining regular contact with citizen science lab participants helps to build a sense of community, of trust, and of working towards a common objective. This may encourage citizens who took part in one citizen science lab to join again when they are available. Even if they do not participate in another citizen science lab, they will remain part of the community, and may help to raise awareness about PSLifestyle. Personal (ideally face-to-face) contact is particularly helpful, as it helps to create a sense of community and trust.

Participants may be encouraged to remain in contact with the lab implementers if the latter are clear and open in their procedures and communication, and if they provide regular updates to those who have taken part in previous activities.

Local lab implementers can share updates about the next citizen science labs, about PSLifestyle progress more generally, as well as more inspirational updates about sustainable lifestyles. Implementers should feel free to select the tools and structures that are most suitable.

Tools to keep in touch with participants include:

- **Newsletter**: regular newsletter shared through a mailing list (the mailing list should be updated as the labs progress to include new participants).
- **Online forums**: setting up a discussion forum (such as Slack) can be a good option, as it offers opportunities for a two-way conversation, with participants able to engage with citizen science lab organisers as well as with each other. Creating a Facebook group is also an option, although it requires more regular updates and may not be so engaging.

Top tip: using Slack to sustain interest in ongoing project

Over the course of 2020-2021, the UK government's Environment Agency organised a series of webinars with citizens on air quality. They invited all participants to join a Slack. After each

webinar, the Environment Agency posted a report of the discussion and the presentations on the Slack. This enabled participants who weren't able to join the meeting to be kept in the loop of discussions. The Slack was very active throughout the project, and was important in helping to sustain participants' interest over a long period of time.

Regular communication in a transparent way about the citizen science labs builds trust and engagement, making participants feel like they are part of a community. Participants should truly feel that the citizen science labs are designed with, for and by them – the next section includes some suggestions for how this can be achieved.

II. Showcasing value

Showing participants that their input is acknowledged and incorporated allows them to see the value of participation. This makes it more likely for them to enjoy contributing to the citizen science labs, that they will recommend the experience to others, and return themselves.

One of the main ways to show participants that they are meaningfully contributing to the process of the citizen science labs is to co-create the labs with them, which can be done by:

- **Enabling participants to help steer content of the discussions during the labs**: depending on which facilitation techniques local lab implementers use for the labs, it can be a good practice to allow space for participants to provide input on the structure and topics of the labs. Instead of imposing topics to discuss, or starting discussions with assumptions about what the important issues are, local implementers can ask participants what it is *they* want to talk about (within the PSL citizen science lab framework), and use this to structure the agenda. Local implementers should be ready to be flexible, open to adapting and willing to share some of the shaping of the process with the participants. If people feel that the project is very top-down they may not trust it – participants need to have a sense of agency.
- **Asking for feedback**: it is important to regularly ask for citizens' feedback on what they did or did not like in current lab, and on what they would like to see more/less of in the next labs. This can be done through an offline or online survey distributed at the end of each lab. Creating a feedback loop will give participants the chance to express their ideas and opinions, while offering the opportunity to monitor satisfaction and to make changes in case of negative feedback. Local implementers can also ask for feedback on the engagement strategy itself, to understand directly from people they are targeting what

worked/what didn't work/what they can do differently. For instance, it can be useful to ask participants how they learnt about the citizen science lab, and what motivated them to join.

- **Planning the next iteration**: related to this, asking for feedback on the previous lab can also be an opportunity to plan for the next one. Whilst bearing in mind that the topic for each lab is already defined, it is possible to ask participants for their opinion on structure, sub-topics, etc. This will give them more of a sense of ownership over the next iteration, and may make them more likely to take part.
- **Highlighting individual citizens' contributions**, to show the value of their insights and their participation. One way to do this could be by featuring "testimonials" either on social media, a newsletter, or the project website, which could for instance be short interviews, quotes or photos of citizen science lab participants speaking about their role in the project, why they are taking part, their sustainability goals, etc. Local implementers could also create a poster or elements to display in local communities.
- **Taking part in recruitment**: lab participants can become "multipliers" by spreading the word within their communities to foster project participation, creating a snowball effect, which could result in an increase in participation. They can also help to develop ways of engaging their communities.
- **Showing impact**: as far as possible, local implementers should showcase how participants' input is being considered and the impact it is having on shaping PSLifestyle discussions. Local implementers can for instance highlight how the findings of the citizen science labs will serve to provide input for policy recommendations.
- **Continuing to engage after the end of the citizen science labs**: even after the citizen science labs are done, local implementers can continue updating citizen science lab participants (e.g., via newsletter or social media), to ensure that they continue to feel part of the community, and can see the impact of their contributions. They may help to spread the word amongst their communities and encourage people to become users of the PSLifestyle online tool. Citizens should feel both that the project, and the project's objectives, continue even after the end of the citizen science labs, and that they are invited to remain a part of it.

Top tip: ensuring inclusive involvement

Not all participants will feel comfortable expressing themselves openly during the citizen science labs. Local lab implementers should strive to create an open, friendly and respectful

atmosphere in which all participants feel that their opinion is heard and that they are welcome to provide feedback without judgement, with every opinion given equal weight.

Techniques implementers might wish to employ include dividing participants into smaller, **breakout groups**, to make sure everybody has the time and opportunity to speak and doesn't feel intimidated by a large setting (this is valid for online and offline meetings). Local implementers can also suggest participant write down ideas on post-its (or in the "chat" function of online meetings), in case they are not all comfortable sharing out loud.

More details on how to organise inclusive discussions and facilitate participation from all citizens can be found in the *Citizen science lab Manual*.

III. Providing support

Providing support to citizens is central to the process of citizen science labs, and can be particularly important for retaining participants, particularly more vulnerable groups. Listening to citizens' feedback and adapting project activities accordingly is a good first step. If local implementers have the means and resources, other ways to provide support include:

- **Support Desk**: local implementers can set up a support desk to make sure that everybody feels they have the capacities and capabilities to engage. This could be as simple as setting up a dedicated email and phone number which is clearly indicated to all prospective and current participants as a resource for them to get in touch in case of any questions or difficulties (including accessibility needs and requests), at any time during the citizen science lab process. Participants may find it difficult to ask questions and to provide their feedback if support activities are not well defined, so clearly specifying who is in charge of answering citizens' questions/doubts, and how citizens can access them, facilitates this process. Participants are more likely to join and actively contribute if they feel confident in performing what is expected of them at the citizen science labs.
- **Mentor scheme**: local implementers could also offer personal support structures to build capacity, knowledge and skills amongst participants through a regular exchange. This could be of particular relevance for more vulnerable groups. Mentors could be found amongst the teams of local lab implementers and/or other organisations with whom they are working. This is more labour intensive, but building such a relationship can help to increase confidence and participation.
- **Trainings**: Alternatively, lab implementers could offer group workshops or training sessions to help participants overcome barriers to participating (such as digital barriers).

Conclusion

The Participant Recruitment and Engagement Strategy provides tips and tools for local lab implementers to help them engage citizens to take part in the citizen science labs.

The intention behind this document is not for local lab implementers to apply all of the suggestions; they are unlikely to have such resources. Instead, the strategy aims to provide ideas that implementers can chose from, to help them reach their recruitment targets and the objectives of the citizen science labs.

Three cross-cutting points are worth emphasising a final time:

- **Adaptability:** lab implementers will need to tailor the strategy to their local contexts. Each location will face specific challenges and will need to adapt engagement to their local environment.
- **Inclusivity**: to be inclusive, it is necessary to understand challenges and barriers to the participation of vulnerable groups, and how to overcome them, considering these elements throughout all steps of the strategy.
- **Meaning**: citizens need to perceive that their contribution has a positive impact and is meaningful. Listening to citizens' feedback, empowering them, creating a community, and explaining how outcomes of the citizen science labs will persist after the project will be central.

At their heart, the PSLifestyle citizen science labs are a **co-creative endeavour**. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. By listening to participants' feedback, local lab implementers can better understand what drives their participation, how to make sure that they remain engaged, and how to maximize their contribution. The more the project will present itself as a strong network of creative innovation, the more likely that citizens will feel part of the change they want to see for their local context.

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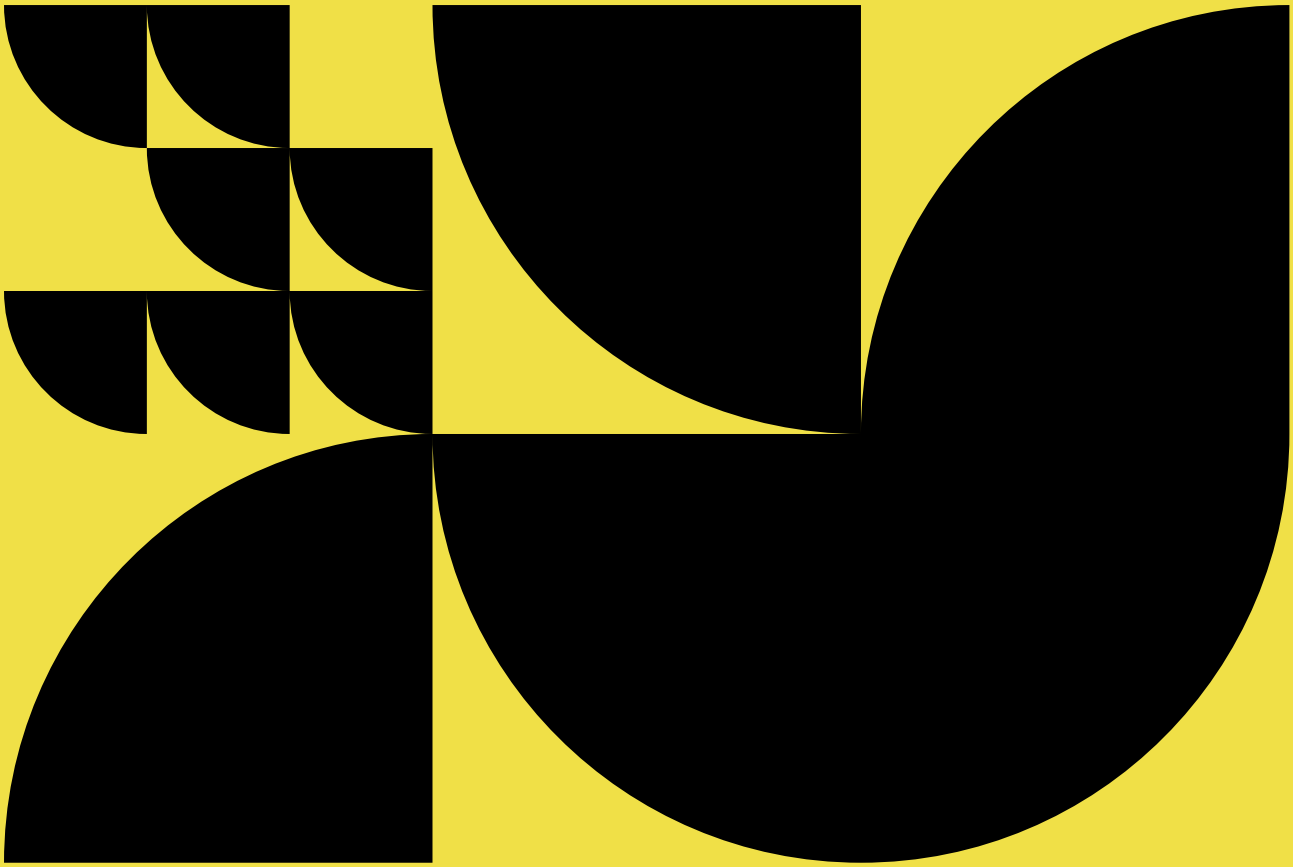

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