

N NEW HORIZON

Final Conference Session 1: The Social Lab Approach – Experiences from First Hand

Grant Agreement No.	741402	
Project Start Date	May 1 st , 2017	
Duration of project	48 months	
Version	1.0	
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Submission date	18.05.2021	
This project received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 741402. The opinions expressed in this document reflect only the author’s views and in no way the European Commission’s opinions. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.		

Executive summary

Session 1 focused on the practical experiences of Social Labs, presenting experiences from first hand. The session could attract 59 participants, coming mostly from research organisations, but also from the CSO and industry/business sector. After a short input by the session hosts on the purpose, the process and the reflexivity of Social Labs, main results and findings of the Synthesis Report on reflection and learning across Social Labs were presented. This was followed by the main element of this session - a panel discussion, involving Social Lab managers, facilitators and participants/pilot hosts, who talked about their experiences, discussed outcomes and successes, but also reflected on challenges and learning cycles.

Social Lab managers reported that it was a challenge to bring participants into the process and keep them on board until the end. Important for staying in the process was the common interest of the

participants and commitment towards the topic and pilots chosen. Participants of the labs were quite diverse, which was challenging, but also brought in different perspectives and lead to a valuable exchange. Lab participants were perceived as agents of change by the panel discussants. Social Lab participants reported they liked the tools used in the Social Labs most as everybody could contribute with ideas, which enhanced the results and lead to the main success of the pilots, even if participants, due to their different backgrounds, often used different “languages”. Collaboration and co-design of ideas were perceived as important by the panel discussants as well as to ask from the beginning “Who can be a pilot host?” It was necessary to find ideas and teams and to be result-open. In the end Social Labs contribute to cross-learning an all levels – on personal, institutional and sometimes also on national level. However, financial support – like e.g. seeding money - as well as some kind of recognition for participants and pilots hosts is recommended.