

# **N** **NEW HORIZON**

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

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### 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.