

The Socialisation of the European research in the perspective of the Knowledge Society. Interpretations and policies with the contribution of social sciences

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Handbook on the socialisation of scientific and technological research: a presentation

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The context

- “Social Sciences and the European Research Capacities” (SS-ERC) Project
- 6th Framework Programme
- Project implemented by a consortium made up of: Scientific Park Office, Rome Tor Vergata University (coordinator); The Danish Centre for Studies in Research and Research Policy, University of Aarhus (DK); Laboratorio di scienze della cittadinanza (I); University of Maastricht (NL); Science and Research Centre, University of Primorska Koper (SL); General Foundation of the La Rioja University, Logroño (E)

The starting point (I)

- One of the main starting points of the project was the widespread presence of views on S&T such as:
 - All S&T's problems could be solved by increasing research funds
 - Most of the hindrances met in science-society relationships derive from the lack of “scientific literacy”
 - “Good research” ever produces innovation
 - The way in which science is made will never change
 - Science is under attack (by religions, eco-activists, social scientists)
 - Science and technology are dangerous

The starting point (II)

- These views appeared to be expression of “commonsensical” interpretations of or a reaction to the profound changes affecting S&T
- In the last decades social sciences produced a large amount of knowledge on these changes, allowing to overcome, refine, or improve these views

The starting point (III)

- However, most of this knowledge does not penetrate research systems and is still scarcely used for policy making (also because of the attitudes of social researchers), even though it could be of pivotal relevance to boost and drive European research and innovation
- Hence the focus of the project: “Social sciences and the European Research Capacities”: i.e. How social sciences could better support European Research to increase its own capacities

The project at a glance: main steps

- **Literature review** on the knowledge produced on S&T by social sciences
- **Database** of 217 social research institutes working on S&T in Europe
- **Research** on the dynamics of scientific and technological research in five countries
- Five **experimentations** where forms of co-operation between social researchers and natural scientists/engineers have been tested
- The draft of the **Handbook**
- **Dissemination** activities

The question (I)

- How social sciences could better support European Research to increase its own capacities. But which capacities?
- **S&T contradictory condition:** huge advancements and increasing social weakness
- Signals of a scarce “**social mobilisation**” (low appeal of scientific faculties; decreasing social status of scientists; gap between science and culture; poor attention to S&T by large sectors of public administrations and political leaderships; women discrimination in scientific careers; intensifying sense of fear, worry or disinterest among people about research, even when science is appreciated).

The question (II)

Transformations in science and technology (Mode 1/Mode 2; Post-academic science):

- S&T as a “**mass-phenomenon**” (in terms of number of researchers, types of institutions involved, pervasiveness of technology, etc.)
- Changes in **S&T production** (contextualisation, political steering, trans-disciplinarity, bureaucratisation, competitive access to research funds, commercialisation, institutional hybridisation, etc.)

The question (III)

- Research is becoming a complex “**social undertaking**” involving many actors, cultures, languages, institutions and interests
- **Science** and **society** continuously interact at different levels, without “traffic lights”, gatekeepers and clear rules

S&T Socialisation

The notion of S&T socialisation refers to the capacity of research actors and stakeholders in:

- Managing and steering transformations affecting scientific and technological research (**identity**);
- Adapting S&T to a changing society (**adaptation**).

S&T Socialisation areas

- Scientific practices
- Scientific mediation (research management, teaching, promotion of new projects, local networking, knowledge managing)
- Scientific communication
- Evaluation
- S&T governance
- Innovation

What is new in S&T socialisation

The notion of S&T socialisation was developed to:

- Map a **single profile** of science-society relationships
- Put together **stocks of knowledge** developed by different “circles” of researchers, experts, and policy makers
- Identify **new domains, phenomena** or **processes** involved with S&T
- Systematically single out **obstacles, hindering factors, and opportunities**
- Provide a frame for developing **S&T socialisation policies**

What is at stake

- Low S&T socialisation levels bring about **low-quality research**, in terms of scientific contents, and **low-impact research**, in terms of social and economic innovations
- If S&T is at risk, **society** is at risk too
- The proposal: flanking usual research policies with **specific S&T socialisation policies**

THE HANDBOOK ON THE SOCIALISATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH



Targets

- Scientists and research institutions
- Policy makers
- Enterprises and their associations
- Civil society organisations

The structure

- **PART A – A NEW SETTING FOR DEALING WITH S&T** (it provides the context for framing the “question” and introduces the notion of S&T socialisation)
- **PART B – ORIENTATIONS FOR INTERPRETING** (it deepens S&T socialisation, the relation between socialisation and democratisation and the S&T socialisation policies)
- **PART C – PROCESSES AND POLICIES IN THE SIX AREAS OF S&T SOCIALISATION** (it provides strategic and practical orientations to develop S&T socialisation measures and policies)



SS-ERC Project Website:

www.techresp.eu



Thanks for the attention