

Response to SFI Consultation Paper for a Successor to SSTI

DCU Societal Impact Platform, March 2015

Summary

This response to the SFI Consultation Paper for a successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation reflects the views of Dr. Padraig Murphy and Dr. Ecaterina McDonagh of the Societal Impact Platform, DCU. While we welcome the inclusion in the proposed new strategy for greater response from Irish science and knowledge to societal and public challenges, and to new interdisciplinary action involving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) with arts, social sciences and humanities (AHSS), we propose any future science and technology strategy needs to better integrate the European model of 'Science with and for Society' and 'Responsible Research and Innovation'. This model, in action following excellent social science research on science/society interaction since the early 2000s, is a *co-creation* model, where interdisciplinary academic and other-partner teams, meaningfully and with equal status, tackle the grand challenges of our time, while setting key points of public dialogue at multiple points along the STI value chain.

About the Societal Impact Platform, DCU

DCU, as the University of Enterprise, has re-oriented its research to address societal challenges and to further enhance translation from research to innovation. The DCU research and innovation strategy focuses much of its research on four externally facing research areas, or Hubs, that are of national and international importance: health technologies, and the healthy and ageing society; information technology and the digital society; sustainable economies and societies; and democratic and secure societies. These areas are enhanced and supported by three cross-cutting platforms: the Societal Impact Platform (for human and social insights into science and technologies); the Business Innovation Platform; and the Science and Technology Enhancement Platform. The Societal Impact Platform (SIP) facilitates knowledge exchange across disciplines - such as the inclusion of SMEs, NGOs and AHSS researchers in large-scale internationally- funded research and innovation projects, as well as developing smaller-scale community-based research projects. In its strategic objectives, it will use internationally recognised methods of internal validation of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI).

Proposed new emphasis in SSTI - detail

Interdisciplinary approaches

In the transition from the prioritization outlined in Report of the Research Prioritisation Steering Groupⁱ, the SIP welcomes future emphasis of SFI to "place Research Prioritisation and the focus on research relevance and impact within a broader context and to develop and articulate a vision for science policy across

all disciplines (including STEM and AHSS)”. Given the importance placed on real interdisciplinary approaches to societal challenges, the SIP recommends more references to STEM/AHSS interaction across the pillars

Proposed action:

References throughout the text to co-creation of knowledge, design and innovation using combined expertise of STEM, AHSS, CSOs, public bodies and industry

Science with and for Society and Responsible Research and Innovation

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is a crucial horizontal pillar in the response of Horizon 2020 Grand Challenges in Europe and globally. Following the European Framework 7 Science –in-Society research strands, future research consortia will require consideration of how issues in engagement, gender equality, governance, ethics, science education and open access relate to their own researchⁱⁱ.

The SIP welcomes the following statements in the propose new SSTI:

“incorporate policy around research to support the broader knowledge base and research to support the development of policy in key sectors of relevance to the economy and society (e.g. health, agriculture, marine, energy, environment, communications) and address key challenges”

and the recommendation for:

“Better focusing of RD&I activities around public and societal challenges”

Particularly welcome is the ‘Research for Policy and Practice’ strand of Pillar 7.

However, in order to effectively address the science /society dimension of publicly-funded science, models and best practice from Europe must now be employed, from emphasis on STEM education (which SFI is to be commended for recognising and promoting) to deeper public engagement through dialogue initiatives and community-based approaches. There are available metrics for societal value, such as the inclusion of global HEI –recognised socially-modified economic value SMEVs (see the DCU Case study from Campus Engageⁱⁱⁱ)

Proposed action:

The cross-cutting theme of Responsible Research and Innovation to be included as well as policy research for workable metrics on public/civic engagement beyond ‘education and outreach’.

ⁱ Forfás (2011) *Report of the Research Prioritisation Steering Group*, Dublin

ⁱⁱ European Commission (2012) *Responsible Research and Innovation: Europe's ability to respond to societal challenges*, Brussels

ⁱⁱⁱ Kelly et al (2014) *Capturing the Economic and Social Value of Higher Education: a Pilot Study of Dublin City University* available from <https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/community/pdfs/Report2014.pdf>