



Living Knowledge
The International Science Shop Network



PERARES Deliverable D2.1

Living Knowledge Online Debates – Final Summary Report

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Living Knowledge Online Debates – Final Summary Report from PERARES project

1. Aim of the project

The **PERARES** (Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society) project aims to strengthen public engagement in research (PER) by developing multi-year action plans, involving researchers and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the formulation of research agendas and the research process. It uses debates on research to stimulate research requests from civil society. These are shared with research institutes, and results are used in a next phase of the debate. Thus, these debates may move 'upstream' into agenda setting. The PERARES project forms part of the activities of the Living Knowledge Network.

The aim of the online Knowledge Debates is to benefit the further development of the European Research Area by testing new ways to involve civil society stakeholders in interacting with and informing research agendas, along the lines given in the Ljubljana process and Lund declaration. The main objective of the work package was for partners to define, organise and manage a joint initiative to set up a transnational knowledge debate which would serve as a way to articulate research requests from all over Europe, and submit these requests to the collective research capacity of Living Knowledge members and beyond.

The Knowledge Debates aim to connect two worlds in public engagement with research: organisations and individuals organising dialogue (events) between research actors and societal actors, and those doing research on behalf of civil society organisations (through mechanisms such as Science Shops); aiming to create synergy through this connection.

The overarching idea was that by offering some real impact from dialogues (i.e. research questions that could be put on the agenda and would be answered), dialogues would become more than just an exchange of words without consequences, and more CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) and citizens may feel inclined to participate.

2. Format

For this project, partners linked existing debate formats with the science shop network, which already links civil society and research institutes, and started a transnational web portal for debates.

The online debates were primarily conducted in English due to limiting resources to hosting in one language, although project members also translated comments from different languages, and during years 3 and 4, some debate topics were conducted on the PERARES platform in different languages including Romanian and Hebrew. The debates were hosted at <http://www.livingknowledge.org/discussion/debate/>

The format of how to create transnational debates was arrived at through a scoping and planning process described below.

3. Sharing and Advancing Local Experiences

As a first step, the project team made an inventory of current experiences for dialogue events aimed at generating research questions or informing research. This was done at the University of Cambridge, University of Groningen and University Politehnica of Bucharest. Platforms for public debate were reviewed by project partners, including the University of Cambridge's Youtube channel, Science Festival, Festival of Ideas and 'Naked Scientists' radio show; the University of Groningen's public comments site 'Groningen Knowledge Debate'; Dublin City University's public video booth project 'Your Science Your Say'; and the German online discussion site diskutiere.de

None of these prior experiences of public dialogue had been created with an aim of helping to formulate research priorities or questions. PERARES members used consortium meetings to ascertain whether and how the science shop methodology of seeking research question ideas from civil society organisations could take place in the context of online public debate. Science shops usually do not take requests for research projects from individuals, but from community groups and civil society organisations, so the online debates were planned in such a way that PERARES members actively sought representatives of civil society organisations to contribute to the debates and submit question ideas. Members of the public were also invited and welcome to contribute to the debates and to ask questions, and this could provide insight into public views about areas of research.

The subject of nanotechnology was used as the topic for the pilot online Knowledge Debate following a review of previous dialogues on nanotechnology. This online debate was initiated together with with face-to-face meetings involving researchers, civil society organisation representatives and members of the public discussing applications of nanotechnology.

Based on those experiences, the subsequent two on-line dialogues were held on research issues relating to two topics that were dealt with in face-to-face meetings as well during the PERARES project, so the outcome of these meetings could be fed into the on-line dialogue. After that, regular Knowledge Dialogues were conducted. The web facility was also offered for use at the Living Knowledge Conference in Bonn, 2012, to draft the final declaration from that conference.

The University of Groningen Science Shop investigated restructuring its online Knowledge Debates with the aim of making direct links into the science shops' intake of projects. A Masters student in science communication under the supervision of Dr Henk Mulder produced a report on how to give examples of research projects that the science shops had conducted on themes like energy, and put these examples as links from the Knowledge Debate site, as well as text that would ask visitors to the site to pose questions that might be appropriate for future research. Experiences of this knowledge debate site were shared with others in the consortium through consortium meetings. The on-line discussion activities in Groningen were stopped unfortunately, because of costs for its maintenance.

The InterMEDIU Science Shop at Politehnica University Bucharest developed a website called "Science for all in Questions and Answers" which the public could use to ask questions in areas like "how safe is our environment" and "nature versus people?". The URL of the site is <http://perares.intermediu.eu/despre-noi/index.html>. It was designed to cover the needs of the InterMEDIU's main target group, teachers and students, and to support a continuous debate on subjects proposed by the website visitors and by InterMEDIU members. The activity of asking questions was quite low. To increase the number of visitors and enhance the on-line debates on the website, four essay competitions were held, in two categories, for high school students and those in higher education. Topics included the impact of nanomaterials on the environment and health, fuels of the future, and life cycle analysis. InterMEDIU organised live debates based on the most frequently received questions through the website and topics discussed by students in their essay competition entries, during the "Education for Sound Environment" national symposium (ESENS). A "Festival of young scientists", a pilot science fair, was held in September 2011 to stimulate interest among young people in science and engineering through experiments and to disseminate research results. The young researchers were undergraduate students as well as high school pupils and they disseminated their research results and scientific knowledge about the outstanding problems of the present time. Many of the scientific projects were based on the research subjects

arisen in the website's poll of questions, and topics discussed in young people's essays for the competition, related mainly to environmental protection, energy and natural resources. The event was successful and UPB was invited to organize it again in Calarași (2012, 2013) and in Oltenita (2012), Calarasi county.

The questions received via the website and essay competitions were related to nanomaterials' safety, energy and biofuels, and quality of environment. Some of them have been "translated" in desk research subjects by InterMEDIU UPB staff (e.g. energy from biomass, impact of shale gas exploitation by fracking, impact of POPs on environment). The nanomaterials-related questions were presented by InterMEDIU members to the round tables organized by the Romanian project NANOPROSPECT (May 2011). UPB also led one of the transnational knowledge debates for the PERARES project, on 'Natural resource issues across Europe – framing current knowledge about political and technological processes' (<http://www.livingknowledge.org/discussion/debate/debates/debate/natural-resource-issues-europe-framing-current-knowledge-political-technological-processes-2/>). Questions referring to wastes and soil pollution became research subjects for UPB students under the scientific coordination of InterMEDIU staff.

4. Development of Transnational Debate Portal

The specification for the web developer was first developed at the kick-off PERARES meeting in Groningen in June 2010 with the involvement of partner 20 (EUC) as well as partners UCAM, RUG, UiS and WilaBonn. However, there were serious problems with the work the original web developer did on the website. The decision was then taken to use a content management system for the PERARES online debates using the widely-available Wordpress system. The web developers behind the diskutiere.de project provided the template for online debates, and a new programmer worked on adapting this for PERARES online debate.

A manual for using the system was provided to all of the "nanotechnology partners" in PERARES. The team received passwords and information on how to use the system, and advice and guidance were provided from the WilaBonn and University of Cambridge teams.

4.1 Pilot the portal through a debate on nanotechnology

The novel feature of the PERARES online debates was that they aimed to engage the public and civil society organisations in forming research questions which will be circulated to PERARES members and science shops in the Living Knowledge network with the aim of carrying out new research, which will then be shared

publicly. Larger themes could be sent to research funders to make calls for proposals or research programs; follow-up on those suggestions would require work beyond the sphere of influence of the Living Knowledge / PERARES Network.

PERARES consortium members contributed their views on how the debate site should function, to enable effective sharing of knowledge and views between researchers, civil society organisations and members of the public.

Evaluation plans for the online dialogues were made together with PERARES work package 9 members and in discussion with the external evaluator.

At the second PERARES consortium meeting in Brussels in February 2011, consortium members with science communication experience and knowledge of societal debates concerning applications of nanotechnology from University of Groningen, Dublin City University, University of Cambridge and Danish Institute of Technology met and discussed content for the first nanotechnology dialogue. This group formed the “nanotechnology partners” group within the PERARES consortium. At this meeting, a formative evaluation of recent nanotechnology dialogue exercises in the EU was discussed, authored by researchers from Cambridge with input from the other nanotechnology partners, in February 2011

(<http://www.livingknowledge.org/livingknowledge/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/M09-1-perares-244264.pdf>).

Based on reviewing eight public dialogue projects carried out in five countries and at the EU level, this formative evaluation came to the following recommendations:

- i. The dialogue should have a clear purpose ‘on the table’ for debate.
- ii. Discussion should be grounded in specific cases and concrete issues.
- iii. Public engagement should be understood as an ongoing process of learning and reflection, rather than seeking to represent a single ‘snap shot’ of public attitudes.
- iv. Web-based dialogues are possible, but require careful and intensive moderation to ensure productive engagement.
- v. Web-based dialogue makes it possible to extend engagement over a wide geographical area, however it is important to link ‘transnational’ dialogue back to local engagement.
- vi. Participation in web-based dialogues requires considerable time and effort of participants if it is to be successful, it is therefore important to be clear what is offered in return for participation.

In order to come up with topics within aspects of nanotechnology which might have interest for civil society organisations (CSOs) and the public, the “nanotechnology partners” decided to hold local face-to-face events which would

build interest, and gain feedback on views from CSOs and the public. The topics focused on by the nanotechnology partners included:

- Nanotechnology and renewable energy
- Nanotechnology and ambient health care / 'lab on a chip'
- Environmental life cycle analysis of nano-particles
- Nanotechnology in medicine: cancer diagnosis and treatment
- Nanotechnology, food and labelling

The local face-to-face events were held in Nijmegen (organised by RUG Groningen), Cambridge, Dublin and Copenhagen with academic researchers and CSOs being represented as well as members of the public. These events provided information to help the 'nano partners' to write their starting material for the online debates.

In October 2011, the nanotechnology partners put their starting information into the Wordpress system, and the editorial board began to test the functioning of the online debate. The editors for the first debate were Nicola Buckley and Dr Robert Doubleday, University of Cambridge; Dr Henk Mulder, University of Groningen and Leiv Gunnar Lie, University of Stavanger. The editorial board prepared the Discussion and Participation Rules for the online debate. The transnational Online Debate on nanotechnology launched in December 2011 and was active for 4 months at <http://www.livingknowledge.org/discussion/debate/>

Stimulus material and starting questions were entered by the nanotechnology partners, who included academics experienced in science communication and/or nanotechnology research. This material was edited by the editorial board. The names, photos and affiliations of the nanotechnology partners are visible beside their contributions. Members of the public and representatives of civil society organisations were able to register with a user name to comment. The intention was to give all public and CSO contributors the option to provide their full name, affiliation, optional photo and brief biography. This function was not available in the www.diskutierte.de template, and so commenters only had their username visible, although in their posts they could write about their own knowledge, affiliation and experience. Once the system was updated to a newer version of Wordpress, users could provide more profile information.

The editorial team and nanotechnology partners took responsibility for promoting the debate pages to CSO contacts and public audiences. The editorial group members monitored the debate (comments were automatically notified by email to the editors for pre-moderation and approval for publication).

The editorial board and nanotechnology partners re-entered the discussion pages to answer questions or provide more information, and draw out possibilities to inform

future research. These questions became listed on a separate tab of the debates page, under the heading 'Questions'.

The editorial board shared these questions with PERARES consortium members to try to generate science shop projects. If any question is taken up for research, or can be answered directly, the contributor of the question will be involved in the ongoing formulation of the research project, and feedback will be provided on the PERARES online debate page as well as directly to the person providing the question.

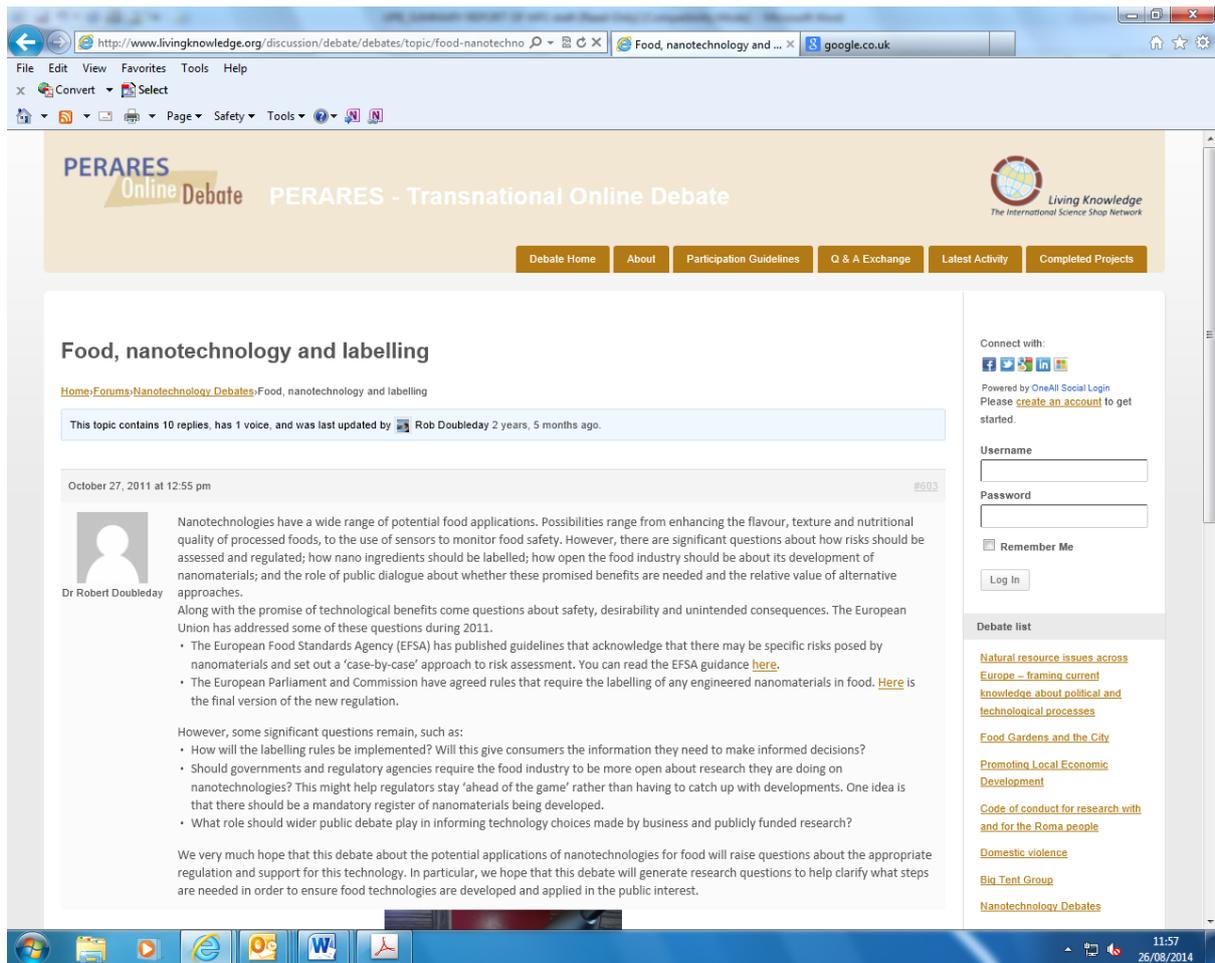


Figure 1: One of the nanotechnology online debates

5. Performing Transnational Knowledge Debates

After the pilot phase with the nanotechnology debate during years 1 and 2, in years 3 and 4, five new debates were conducted on the website of the Living Knowledge network.

Project members from Cambridge, Groningen and Stavanger acted as the general editorial board. All partners in PERARES were consulted to suggest topics based on issues that concern their local research and CSO partners.

The following debates ran on the website:

i. Nanotechnology(Dec 2011 – April 2012; 30 comments across 5 topics)

- Ambient Intelligence and Healthcare
- Cancer Nanotechnology
- Environmental Life Cycle Analysis of Applications of Nano-particles
- Renewable Energy and Nanotechnology
- Food, nanotechnology and labelling

ii. Domestic violence (July – August 2012; 26 comments)

iii. Code of conduct for research with and for the Roma people (November – December 2012; 7 comments)

iv. Promoting Local Sustainable Economic Development(May – November 2013; 6 comments)

v. Food Gardens and the City (July – September 2013, 4 comments)

Including:

- Social integration through urban food gardening
- Potential to supply cities with fresh food
- Agriculture in a city - a discussion in Hebrew

vi. Natural resource issues across Europe – framing current knowledge about political and technological processes (November 2013- February 2014, 28 comments)

Including:

- Underground and surface water pollution in gas shale exploitation by fracking and mining industry
- Gas and Oil exploration in Ireland and Crete
- Sustainable exploitation of national resources

Each debate was followed by a member of the editorial group summarising potential topics for student or academic research, and entering these on the Question and Answers page.

6. Outcomes

i. Formulating Research Questions

23 research questions have been entered, following the debates, by members of the editorial group for each debate, summarising questions that were raised and that could form the basis of a science shop / student research project:

<http://www.livingknowledge.org/discussion/debate/questions-requests/>

The following four question areas were taken up for answers to be provided, or conducted as research projects:

i. **What is the impact of the recession on experiences of domestic violence, and domestic violence services?**

- a. Student research project 2012-13: The Impact of the Economic Downturn on Experiences of Domestic Violence in Cambridgeshire, with Cambridge Women's Aid and other CSOs

<http://www.livingknowledge.org/discussion/debate/ticket/impact-recession-domestic-violence/>

- b. Although a small-scale study, there were findings of interest in the context, including the suggestion that since the start of the economic downturn there has been a 'depersonalisation' of services. Services have become more 'generic', for example with a move from office-based support for benefit applications to online applications. This has led to services under pressure being less able to provide individualised support to survivors of domestic violence. Recommendations included continued attention by statutory organisations to the ongoing development of guidelines on meeting the special needs of domestic violence survivors. Also, findings suggested that funding should be applied to mental health projects and employment training for survivors, to help them cope psychologically with increased difficulties of 'moving on' associated with the economic downturn. Additionally, it was urged that the commissioning process should include a close examination of the value voluntary services offer, measuring the personalized support given by organisations.

- ii. Also, after the domestic violence debate, it was explored whether the method of an online debate could be used to help formulate research questions for future funding calls for research into the issue of domestic violence. This was explored by VUB with a researcher from UCAM. The studies carried out by Masters students for PERARES work package 5 on domestic violence, and feedback and questions from CSOs during the domestic violence online discussion, provided evidence for suggesting to the European Commission that this process of engaging with CSOs indicated the need for research and

action plans on practices across Europe for effectively screening women regarding domestic violence during pregnancy. VUB and UCAM wrote a potential call text on the topic to share with colleagues at the European Commission in funding areas that could relate to domestic violence research.

iii. What other cancer treatment pathways are possible through the applications of nanotechnology?

- a. Nanotechnology question: In response to the information provided in the nanotechnology debate about applications of nanotechnology in cancer medicine through liposomes, the first drug-carrying nanotechnology carrier to reach cancer clinics, a question was asked about what other cancer treatment pathways were possible through applications of nanotechnology. A PhD student in nanotechnology wrote a response about a further application, DNA origami, forming DNA into three-dimensional nanoscale structures, with the aim of making a drug delivery vehicle to recognise the surface of cancerous cells as opposed to other fast-dividing cells in the body:
<http://www.livingknowledge.org/discussion/debate/ticket/liposomal-drug-delivery-systems/>

iv. What is the present state of the treatment technologies for waste water resulting from exploitation of shale gas by fracking?

- a. Water pollution in gas shale exploitation by fracking question: The debate related to mineral resources exploitation impact concluded that environmental technologies have to be adapted to specific impacts of mining industry for mitigating negative effects and a better legislation and public participation is compulsory. A undergraduate student did her graduation research (2013 at UPB) on the **present state of the treatment technologies for waste water resulting from exploitation of shale gas by fracking**. The research findings were presented in the student graduation thesis emphasising the lack of information about the waste water composition and reasonable techniques for reducing the content of waste water. Despite the great scale of fracking and water scarcity in many regions, the proposed techniques are just at pilot/proposal stage and extremely expensive, many of them generating other wastes that should be safely disposed. Only a permissive legislation will generate attractive production costs of shale gas.

- v. University of Twente put three questions from the nanodialogue in its offering to students (Summer 2014), and contacted the CSOs responsible for these questions to allow for direct contact with the student researchers once these have been found.

After the debate about the code of conduct for research with and for the Roma people, the PERARES members who worked on the debate were in contact with the ERGO Network for European Roma about grassroots empowerment. As a potential new funding opportunity for research and community development together, the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) programme (2014-2020) has been identified, where Roma are one of the priority areas.

7. Dissemination

Presentations were made on experiences of the PERARES online debates at the Living Knowledge conference 5 (Bonn, May 2012) and Living Knowledge conference 6 (Copenhagen, April 2014). These sessions and posters reached around 200 delegates and provided an opportunity for PERARES members to discuss others' experiences of online debate with them too, to help to formulate new ideas for moving forward. Presentations were available in the conference proceedings, available at www.livingknowledge.org

There was also a presentation on the PERARES online debates at the Public Communication of Science and Technology conference in Florence in April 2012, and the paper of the presentation was published in the conference proceedings, http://www.observa.it/allegati/PCST2012_Book_of_Papers.pdf. pp. 122-124

8. Evaluation

An initial evaluation of the nanotechnology debate was conducted within the PERARES consortium. A PhD student at the University of Groningen, Lotte Krabbenbourg, reviewed the activities around the nanotechnology debate and found that face-to-face discussions on applications of nanotechnology organised by and/or attended by members of the PERARES group worked quite well to scope out the area in which an online debate might be useful. The evaluation also found that it was a challenge to involve people and organisations in an online debate. People did share views, dilemmas, questions and uncertainties, and researchers and CSO representatives gave links to research reports and stated their views. However, the

extent to which participants in the online debate co-produced new insights, questions, issues, knowledge, relations or ideas was limited.

The experiential learning from this initiative included:

- There are significant differences between the science shop format and method of seeking research needs and questions among civil society organisations, usually in specific localities, and transnational online debate. Science Shops are used to work with groups and communities of place (or interest), which has already a more or less set vision of its research needs, in direct, face to face contact; this is totally different from working with an on-line, virtual community of individuals, in an indirect way (with additional delays because of moderation) communicating with text only.

Science shops do not take on research projects on behalf of individuals, but rather community groups and civil society organisations. Although the online debates were planned in such a way that PERARES members actively sought representatives of civil society organisations to contribute to the debates and submit question ideas, members of the public were also invited and welcome to contribute to the debates and to ask questions, and this did provide insight into some public views about particular areas of research. Each debate had a marketing plan which was the responsibility of each convened editorial group to carry out. For some debates, over 30 comments and questions were posted, and there was interaction between researchers, individuals among the public and representatives of civil society organisations.

For the future, a recommendation would be that focused work planning goes into considering how to bring multiple interested parties and stakeholders into the formation of research questions and research projects – drawing on online but also accompanying offline activity.

A challenge for science shops is how to inform debates within civil society about research in order to stimulate questions that may be answered in different ways: by summarising or referring to prior research, by the formation of new (student) research projects and so on.

There is a lack of evidence about the extent to which individual citizens would like to inform research questions. Prior research has indicated an interest from members of the public in there being public consultations about research directions, and there are online and face-to-face methods for these kinds of consultations, but the extent to which this translates into a) a proportion of individual citizens wanting to raise research questions, and b) there being a way for such a citizen to become informed about research carried out so far, to help inform future questions – still needs further investigation. There were

perceptive comments and questions from both individual citizens and civil society organisations during the PERARES online debates, but the online environment made the kind of local connections, dialogue, research project formation and trust-building that can take place in science shop project initiation much harder.

Another lesson from the project concerned the difficulties of using a website outside the scope that people concerned with a topic might particularly use. So for the future, consideration could be given to working with a particular CSO or media outlet to 'host' debates on their site, where communities of interest may be more likely to find a whole range of information on a topic that they are interested in or concerned about.

Some of the topics discussed in the PERARES online debates concerned sensitive subjects, where face to face contact might be particularly important in building trust between communities of researchers, CSOs and people affected by issues.

Moderation was important throughout. Firstly, to prevent spam and any abusive language. This was particularly important during online discussions about sensitive topics, and about research with marginalized groups in society. Online discussions can offer anonymity in a way that face-to-face discussions don't. This may make some questions easier to ask in online environments, but anonymity can also create conditions for comments which violate guidelines for the debate, so moderation was necessary.

There may be the need for researchers to think about this type of online engagement prior to the initiation of their research projects, and consider which CSOs and members of the public to engage, and whether to do this online or face-to-face. It seems likely that for different topics different approaches are needed. A one-off online debate, might not be the most desirable method but may need accompanying with live events, invited groups to workshops and other social and media campaigns.

Having the resources to pilot the online debates principally in English initially was a constraint, but PERARES members did translate comments and could also use the platform for debates in any language, and this was trialled in Romanian and Hebrew.

A promotional plan for each debate was useful. Once the plan was in place, it was clear which partners had responsibility for each marketing task. Some debates were accompanied by news stories on University websites; circulation of information to email lists connected with science communication and the topic at hand; and promotion through live events and workshops

9. Recommendations for the future:

Online debates which have as an aim bringing a broader range of stakeholders together to inform research agendas and questions may work best if they are designed to have a set of **accompanying face-to-face activities**. For example, there was a relatively broad range of CSOs involved in the PERARES online debate on domestic violence research topics, building on the networks of CSOs reached through the separate, but related, PERARES-work package 5 for student research projects in three EU countries on that topic. The nanotechnology debate also benefited from the face-to-face meetings and workshops that informed it, which helped to engage specific CSOs.

A number of questions that emerged from members of the public and CSO representatives during this project were of the kind that could be answered by reference to prior research and literature initially, even if that then could potentially give rise to new research ideas in particular localities. For example, a Politehnica University Bucharest student provided literature review in response to online debate questions about natural resources, wastes and soil pollution, under the scientific coordination of InterMEDIU staff. A recommendation is that **science shops and other public engagement units and staff look at how they can structure their activities to answer questions from the public and CSOs that can be answered through provision of information and reference to scientific literature (and the interpretation of this literature), as well as those questions requiring new research.**

The PERARES consortium members and science shop coordinators valued having opportunities to discuss areas of potential research with each other, and in the forum of online discussion, and there could be **future development of online methods to enable science shop coordinators to make connections about potential areas of mutual interest in community-engaged research.**

Further scoping should be done on wide-scale exercises to gauge public priorities for research, and the online channels and platforms used for these. The PERARES project built on learning from members' experiences of live debates through science festivals, science cafes, online video, interactive websites and more, but during the project consortium members also tracked other projects that may indicate future possibilities, making the most of rapid developments in online and social media usage. For example, coordinated campaigns involving multiple CSOs carrying out a mix of off-line activity (meetings, workshops, promotion) and online activity (asking for questions via Twitter etc) have recently been visible in the UK to gather research questions on depression, and international development, among other topics. These exercises made use of shorter ways to respond, via Twitter and

other social media, and had less reliance on Internet forums. **The popularity of social media and microblogging may suggest that these channels are important to prioritise rather than relying too much on setting up Internet forums.**

A recommendation can be made that **online debates could feed into new research projects by academic researchers or students more easily, if research funders used this kind of tool among others to help survey public and CSO questions regarding particular areas of research,** as this could lead to faster responses to ideas generated.

10. Conclusion

Running online debates with the aim of feeding into research projects was ambitious and this project enabled a trial of the technical platform requirements and editorial processes necessary across many European countries. We were able to pilot a process that linked face-to-face meetings and events with online discussion, publicity and the formation of student research projects on diverse topics from social to environmental science. There were a number of challenges and learning points, many of which concerned the best way to try to persuade numbers of people to take part in online forum discussions concerning research agendas. It is possible that researchers might see more of a need for this type of consultation if they identified the need at the beginning of a research project, or at the point of applying for research funding. There are many questions that are still open for the future, some concerning the differences between individual citizens' potential interests in research and those collective needs for research as represented by civil society organisations. The new EU Citizens Say initiative, and the development of further online platforms integrated with other forms of social media, set a context to for developing this area of work further.

Appendices

The following guidance was developed during the online knowledge debate period:

1. Process for running online knowledge debates:

- i. Purpose: The purpose of the online debate should be agreed among the editorial group. The PERARES debates have the aim of identifying gaps in knowledge where new research, carried out by a student or other researcher, could help to address information needs in civil society (and of civil society organisations in particular).
- ii. Editorial group: The debate should have an editorial group which should include researcher and CSO representatives. A starting text might be written by one member of the editorial group in particular and their photo and name accompanies that introductory text. The debate's editorial group should submit their starting material to the overall Perares online debate editor and she and the overall debate editorial group may have comments or amendments to suggest.
- iii. Liaison with web developer and provision of editors' technical manual: These need to be the responsibility of one of the key project partners, in conjunction with the rest of the editorial group, and all project members need to become familiar with the manual regarding how to use the system.
- iv. Starting material: The editorial group should prepare a short starting text of 100-200 words which explains that the debate aims to raise new questions about the topic, with the aim of generating research questions – and research will be shared via the site later.
- v. Images: The editorial group are asked to provide a picture of the 'introducer' of the debate, and a general picture which illustrates the topic.
- vi. Links and downloads: The editorial group should suggest some links to recommended background reading about the topic.
- vii. Uploading to the Wordpress site: The overall editor of the online debate can upload the text, images and links which start the debate
- viii. Moderation: The debate's own editorial group, as well as the overall online debate editorial group, have the moderation rights for the debate. This means that all comments need to be pre-moderated by one of the editors before they appear online. The participation and discussion rules appear on the P site.
- ix. Publicity plan: To be effective, the debate needs an accompanying publicity plan listing various interest groups, CSOs, publicity networks through their organisations/universities, local media, the Living Knowledge lists and so on, and project partners names' should appear against these groups, to share responsibility for publicity. Partners should record when they have completed their publicity tasks on this document too, for the editorial group to review.
- x. Language: During the project, there was only sufficient funding to have the main debate website appear in English, but members are encouraged to think of how they may translate the starting question and use other debate platforms in their own country to generate ideas for research questions. Partners can also report back from live events where questions may have been asked by individuals, and translate /summarise these questions. Project participants can also offer to translate submissions to the online debate.

- xi. Live events: Some of the busiest times to attract comments on the online debate have been when a debate has been open and publicised around the time of a face-to-face live event on the same topic. This has helped to generate comments on the site, so we encourage thinking about how to organise live events to complement the online debates.
- xii. Keeping the debate relevant and focused: The special feature of the online knowledge debate is that the aim is to generate research questions that can be carried out in response to civil society needs. This special feature should provide CSOs with a reason to interact with the site. The debates so far have been quite focused and not abstract, because they have had mixed participation from researchers, members of the public and CSO representatives.

2. Discussion Rules used for online knowledge debates

The PERARES Online Debate is a platform for free discussion around current and potentially controversial subjects. We like to give space to an open, friendly and constructive discussion. Please support the objective: discuss fairly and openly, especially when the debate becomes heated. To avoid misuse of the platform, the discussion posts won't appear automatically, but will be published promptly by a member of the editorial group. The editorial group pays attention to the compliance with the following rules.

- i. **Form**: Please ensure that your posts are factual, concise and easy to understand. Contributions should always refer to the topic of discussion and if possible take up the arguments of the other contributors. Constant repetition of the same content and mischievous posts, such as irrelevant jokes, are undesirable and should be avoided. During the debate, if contributors think that a question can be answered with reference to information already available, please provide suggested answer and/or links.
- ii. **Content**: Contributions will not be tolerated if content is illegal, insulting, offensive, harmful to minors, politically or religiously extreme, sexist, pornographic or similar. This kind of post (links included) won't be released or will be deleted without prior notification of the author.
- iii. **Advertising / Commercial Use**: Any posts that are obviously commercial, other forms of spam or thematically irrelevant will not be published or will be deleted.
- iv. **Publication / editorial**: After you posted a comment your contribution will be reviewed and approved. The message '*Your comment will be reviewed and approved shortly.*' will appear to show that your comment was received. When you post a contribution you authorise the staff of PERARES Online Debate to quote verbatim the contributions and comments in evaluation and appropriate publications.
- v. **Language**: The editorial board will aim to moderate contributions in any of the European Union's official languages. As the PERARES Knowledge Debate is a pilot, please bear in mind that we have limited resources to enable discussion in multiple languages.
- vi. **Disclaimer**: We point out the responsibility of the authors for posts, comments and documents. Articles and comments that appear in the PERARES Online Debate do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial staff. We are looking forward to informative discussions which contribute to new research questions: please contribute your views.