

New ACCOMPLISSH project results: “Co-creation is a co-responsibility”

We need to do more with the vast but untapped potential for scientific research in order to be stronger involved in society. This is one of the recommendations from the ACCOMPLISSH conference in Zagreb on 29-30 May 2017. All though nobody will deny the impact that for example medical sciences have had on the improvement of lives, sometimes people tend to forget the input other ‘types of science’ like economics, linguistics, psychology or geography have had on for example policies in the field of mitigating climate change.

The ACCOMPLISSH project is set out to deliver new insights on how to create more societal impact from the above mentioned sciences, that could be described under the broader definition as social sciences and humanities. Partners in the project are convinced that societal impact can only be achieved when academic researchers are working together in an ecosystem with other types of institutions (government, industry and societal organisations). A so called quadruple helix setting.

Research by the consortium shows that this process of co-creation has to be a shared responsibility. Co-creation processes often start with one partner, but all the different types of partners should take responsibility to co-create. And they should also have a reflective and conscious attitude towards the outcome of the project. Especially academia are well placed -as neutral institutes- to provide evidence or innovative insights.

Preliminary research and lively discussions by the consortium also showed that there is a huge difference between European countries in the ability to tap into the potential of research. Some countries hardly have an infrastructure to support this, or are caught in political webs and simply do not have the possibility to move beyond their core activities of teaching and researching. One of the recommendations will be to invest more in this infrastructure (for example by employing so called knowledge brokers between science and society) and making universities aware of the unique role they have within society.

The academic partners in the project also concluded that critical self-reflection on different levels is also needed. Universities need to make a shift from publishing as fast as possible to sharing knowledge as soon as possible. Research papers are hardly ever read by the wider public. Researchers need to be introduced to and start working with new communication channels to reach a wider audience. A scientific publication can be used as the basis for a press release, a newspaper article or a tweet. Every message should lead back to the original publication, creating a ‘long tail of science’, allowing researchers to reach out to a broader audience without sacrificing scientific quality. Furthermore universities need to reconsider their rewarding system, introducing incentives for societal impact next to publications only.

Results from the ACCOMPLISSH project work on barriers and enablers of co-creation as well as the working paper on research design & research communication will be published on our website www.accomplissh.eu. The next official ACCOMPLISSH dialogue meeting will be hosted at Tallinn University in Estonia November 13 and 14 2017. This summit will be an interactive meeting, we invite participants from different sectors of the quadruple helix to join in.

The ACCOMPLISSH (ACcelerating CO-creation by setting up a Multistakeholder Platform for the Social Sciences and Humanities) project has been funded by the European Commission and is being coordinated by the University of Groningen. The project started in spring 2016 and will run for three years. For more information about the project, please contact j.e.kwakkel@rug.nl or visit our website www.accomplissh.eu

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693477

