

# Collective Awareness for Sustainable Social Changes and Innovation

## Main findings from the dialogue on Platforms for Collective Awareness and Action

This workshop, attended by some 350 people, showed that there is already a broad and multidisciplinary **constituency** well aware of the value of open participatory online platforms and enthusiastically ready to participate in a call on this subject. Several different examples of such platforms were presented. It was clear that no "one size fits all" solution can be found to manage such a complexity. This reinforces the need for an open **bottom-up** approach to the development of such platforms, as opposed to a centralised top-down initiative.

These examples of sustainability platforms were often based on available or emerging ICT technologies put at use by civil society in open manners. They showed that the biggest impact of ICT on quality of life can be achieved by leveraging on emerging properties of socio-technical networks, which, when grounded on real humans and real institutions, can become a powerful catalyser for transformations of society towards a more sustainable future

As remarked during the wrap-up at the end of the day, the main objective is **to embed technology in political and social processes that will generate real commitment and effort. It requires holistic collaboration** encompassing all the different social and technical facets of the problem.

This can be done through both:

- **coordination actions** which can distil from current activities the best practices;
- **cross-projects research** which can better define broader and more inclusive platforms.

These issues are **urgent**, given the critical role that these platforms can play to increase sustainability at multiple levels, and involve challenges of considerable **size**, both in terms of disciplines involved and of critical mass that is needed to achieve some impact.

Concerning a possible framework for a new research initiative in this area, the presentations at the dialogue focused on 4 main areas for inter-related multidisciplinary research and development:

- 1) **Pilots of platforms** for collective awareness and action, to trigger novel forms of societal organisation, based on sharing and on co-creation of solutions;
- 2) **Models and simulations** based on real-world data, to support individual and collective decisions;
- 3) **Innovative trust mechanisms**, based on reputation, to create meaningful and trusted bonds which can serve as a sound basis for collective platforms;
- 4) **Multidisciplinary** understanding of the complex socio-technical interrelations (**internet science**), to address key concepts which are crucial for technological developments related to Future Internet, such as privacy and ethics.

Additional needs were mentioned during the dialogue, concerning:

- The (light) **coordination** of the different grassroots initiatives on the subject, to give voice to actors who have been working in isolation on similar approaches enhancing

the social aspects of ICT technologies, especially in regard of social networking, knowledge co-creation and sharing, awareness raising, political and democratic participation. This would be aimed to promote the best practices and to help creating the needed critical mass.

- The need to ensure a minimum level of **quality guarantees** of the information and content which is at the basis of the underlying social platforms. This requires a strict collaboration between people, civic society representatives, and institutions, and hints at a possible contribution at regulatory level.
- The need to provide **public support for free software and new decentralized infrastructures** for the Internet, in order to effectively empower citizens and participation.
- The importance of crowdsourcing (or, better, **smartsourcing**) as a way of getting information, and related challenges (e.g. quality of data, collective intelligence etc).
- The need to consider the **growing involvement of people** in the definition of technological research priorities, as testified by the emergence of **Citizen Science** initiatives, which needs support in a better structured framework than the current scattered ad-hoc opportunities.
- The need to include in the Internet Science investigation the complex phenomena concerning **Internet content and citizen involvement** in content generation: people gathering data voluntarily and their motivation; decentralization, new ways of management (not through control).

Concerning the positioning of such an initiative within the current workprogramme, several speakers at the event mentioned the concept of "**co-development**" of **science and society**, implying a close involvement of citizens and civil society in the development of new Internet technologies (PPPP, citizen science). Whereas normally this kind of platforms are developed in isolation, as an afterthought of technological research, several presentations during this workshop emphasised their role as possible drivers of future technological developments. Indeed the platforms for collective awareness are based on the unprecedented potentialities of social networks and distributed knowledge creation, which are **emergent properties** of ICT networks, and as such **strongly dependent on the policy and technological foundations and architectures** which are chosen. A closer contact with policy and societal needs is needed, which can also help identifying suitable indicators of success.

Further developments and actions will be made publicly available -for open discussion- at

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/collectiveawareness/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/collectiveawareness/index_en.htm)