

# D6.4 - Stakeholders and Citizens User Input

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# TRIGGER

## TRends in Global Governance and Europe's Role

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#### **D6.4 Stakeholders and Citizens User Input**

##### **Changes with respect to the DoA**

Not applicable

##### **Dissemination and uptake**

Confidential, only for members of the Consortium (including the Commission Services)

##### **Evidence of accomplishment**

Report

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### 1. Introduction

*This document is developed as part of the TRIGGER project (Trends in Global Governance and Europe's Role), which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme, under the Grant Agreement number 822735.*

This document aims at describing the meetings through which the feedback for the development of the project has been collected. These observations will mainly contribute to the future development of the COCTEAU platform by uncovering the complexity of the policymaker's role in the tool and highlighting the engagement aspects requiring improvements.

An exhaustive explanation of the platform's motivations and the design choices, followed by a quick hands-on session, guided the guests in the platform, illustrating all the implemented activities' details. The complete design of COCTEAU is exhaustively discussed in deliverable "D6.7 - COCTEAU digital mockup".

The meetings involved six so-called "improvement areas" shaped as six questions posed to the guests, who provided their feedback either by answering the questions directly or using them as guidelines to organize their observations.

The deliverable is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the meetings, their development, and the material shared with the guests, Chapter 3 explains the six improvement areas as well as their motivations and their pros and cons, Chapter 4 illustrates the feedbacks collected during the meetings, also reporting the ones worth mentioning, Chapter 5 provides insights on the topics for the future development of the project.

### 2. Meetings' Structure and Motivations

As the platform's development proceeded, some interesting discussion topics and questions emerged, mainly regarding the policymaker's role and interactions within the COCTEAU platform. Due to the nature and complexity of the context involved, the team considered it necessary to consult policymaking and government experts' opinions. The objective was to collect relevant feedback to improve the platform. The meetings provided interesting points of view, both through the questions proposed and the comments collected during the discussion between the experts and the teams.

Each meeting was coordinated by at least the POLIMI or CEPS teams.

Four sessions were carried out, each one with a different group of experts:

- The first one was held online on 9th November 2020 (duration 90 min). It engaged the representatives of the Govlab from New York University and the representatives of the OECD Open and Innovative Government Division.
- The second one was held online on 10th November 2020 (duration 60 min). It engaged an expert in government and Public Management from Bocconi University.
- The third one was held online on 11th November 2020 (duration 90 min). It engaged international experts in the policymaking field, from the Joint Research Centre (JRC), from European Parliamentary Research Service,
- The fourth one was held online on 20th November 2020. It presented the mockup at the IRSPM SIG seminar on "the Potential of Design for Addressing Wicked Issues" with the title "Emergent Design-led Strategies in Addressing Wicked Issues."

In anticipation of the event, the guests were provided with a small set of documents to improve their understanding of the project. On a more practical side, a dedicated scenario was configured to allow the experts to freely explore the platform, concretizing all the concepts explained during the presentation.

Before delving deep into the discussion points, an exhaustive presentation covering the project and the COCTEAU tool was carried out to appraise the guests about the meetings' object. The first steps of the presentation provided some background on the project and the context in which the tool was developed. The main goals of the platform, its structure, and the sections users play through were illustrated. Alongside explaining the platform's activities, some insights on the design and the platform's principles were provided. In the end, the devised questions provided a starting point for the final discussion. After the presentation, the guests provided their own opinions and feedback on the tool. The most relevant ones are reported and discussed in the following chapters.

The presentation is made available via a Dropbox link<sup>1</sup> and the platform is freely available online.<sup>2</sup>

The following chapter describes the areas of improvement we designed to guide the discussion and the following six questions derived, highlighting their pros and cons and motivations.

### 3. Improvement Areas

COCTEAU is a tool that is still evolving as TRIGGER progresses. During the initial testing phase, the Polimi team has used COCTEAU, some members within the TRIGGER consortium boundaries, and selected groups of students attending Politecnico di Milano. During these test phases, valuable feedback has been collected; however, the platform has still to be validated in some capacity by a panel of experts. Their input has been crucial to smooth some aspects of COCTEAU.

In this context, we identified several areas of further development that, according to our team, could potentially enrich the future versions of COCTEAU. We intended these areas as a source of inspiration to better guide the discussion with the experts. Those six areas are represented by the main variables we used to

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/s/6o01uvtin3d1w04/20201108\\_Testing%20Cocteau.pptx?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/6o01uvtin3d1w04/20201108_Testing%20Cocteau.pptx?dl=0)

<sup>2</sup> <http://trigger-game.eu/?ref=freetest101ohgf>

build the digital platform, and they will represent the references for the upcoming months of refinement of the platform before the final deployment:

1. The first area is represented by the overall concept of COCTEAU, as a two-sided platform to engage citizens and policymakers to "co-create the European Union," plus the underlying approach leveraging on gamification techniques and image texturing activities. This area covers all the processes applied to engage the user since it represents the most delicate and risky part, and we still need a profound reflection on the motivation to play with COCTEAU.
2. The second area is represented by the users' input and how the data produced by the platform can be aggregated in information useful to the policymakers.
3. The third is represented by the policymakers' role, which in principle should be the facilitators of the platforms and the content creators.
4. The fourth area is covered by the output for the policymakers since this is still ongoing in the design process.
5. The fifth area is represented by the time Horizon of the challenges, we assumed the period should rather be in the short run, but this assumption should be tested and confirmed with the experts' opinion.
6. The final area is represented by the typology of users. There is an ongoing debate internal to the Consortium on which audience is the most suitable for policymakers' best input. If relatively to this area, we should apply COCTEAU to existing dynamics (such as deliberative and collaborative mechanisms as mini-publics, citizen assembly, etc.).

Regarding these six areas of further development, we designed six questions connected to the topics stressed in the previous paragraph to stimulate a fruitful discussion among the participants during the feedback sessions. The experts'



different expertise and experiences provided the team with several perspectives according to the different disciplines.

Area 1: What is your opinion regarding the process of user engagement? Is the process exciting and feasible? Do you think it is something citizens could appreciate? Do you have any suggestions about how to enrich it?

Area 2: Do you think the data collected could be useful to the policymakers? In which context? Do you perceive the production of such data (inspired by future scenarios and related sentiments) as something that could better inspire policymakers?

Area 3: What can be the role of the policymaker? Is the policymaker capable of generating such challenges and managing a community of users? According to your opinion, do they need gamification and engagement instruments? If yes, in which context?

Area 4: What is the right time horizon for such challenges? We assume that challenges adopting a medium-run horizon are the most suitable, do you agree? What is your opinion? What is an example of a challenge you would like to test with COCTEAU?

Area 5: What could be the most appropriate output for such a tool? Do you think the data collected could be useful for policymakers? In which context?

Area 6: What is the most appropriate target user group for such a tool? Do you think communities of citizens are the most suitable target, or do you think more expert-based communities can benefit more from these engagement mechanisms?

### 4. Debate Outcomes

In the first area, the stakeholders reported such a tool's potential, highlighting the advantage of having a platform ready to go in an uncertain time as the one we live in. There clearly is room for developing complementary digital instruments for decision making, especially in the development of "phygital" activities that should share and consider both aspects (digital and physical activities) to provide a great engagement experience to the users. Despite the general excitement of the experts regarding the tool, there is still a great need to clarify its role in the policymaking cycle; even if we consider the gap between citizens and policymakers, it is not trivial to design a tool that works efficiently, including the most significant number of users and the largest span of scenarios.

The platform's final goal should be considered with greater detail, an additional page with a specific explanation of the whole process and commitment of all the parts to the outcomes should be added to the scenario proposed. This extra page should provide additional information to align both sides, citizens, and policymakers' expectations. One of COCTEAU's primary risks is that the scenarios are likely to be interpreted differently by a policymaker and a citizen, given different backgrounds and educational levels/expertise. For this reason, the platform should be the most inclusive possible, providing necessary information understandable by all the users.

The participants suggested adding more information about the scenario (especially before the quizzes section) to increase the symmetry among the features to implement. Players without familiar background with respect to the other players could bring their bias about the scenarios' topics without having an authentic experience of deep reflection and exchange.

In this framework, the possibility to use COCTEAU as an education tool has been mentioned, opening new directions that should be deepened and elaborated.

Regarding the engagement process, the activities based on images and tags were appreciated by the experts, who considered this characteristic of the tool to overcome the complexity of the language for a non-native speaker.

Finally, the overall concept and the underlying approach registered positive feedback from the experts.

Regarding the second area, the general opinion of the experts was confirmed as positive. They acknowledge the importance of tracking original inputs produced by the citizens, especially in a context where this kind of analysis is currently managed by different platforms, like social media. The idea of engaging citizens with activities linked to future scenarios, typical of foresight mechanisms, is an original input in digital policymaking. This is an opportunity to stimulate the "co-creation" of different options and collect citizens' reactions. According to the experts, this is the most valuable strength of the platform.

The third area registered the highest amount of feedback. The experts suggested that the platform's current version could be improved with an additional and more sophisticated part where citizens and policymakers can intensely debate, stimulating what is traditionally defined as a co-creation activity. That is when there is a bidirectional conversation between the parts. In the context of this third variable, the experts suggested using the platform also in a more "local way", using it as a complementary tool to engage citizens during more formal and physical activities played directly on the field. In this regard, policymakers would produce ad hoc content customized on a specific target, more defined and circumscribed. The complexity of adopting COCTEAU more globally is implicitly more challenging, given the persisting distance incurs between citizens and policymakers.

The experts, especially the ones of the OECD, demonstrated significant interest in testing COCTEAU in the context of digital deliberative policymaking; a further discussion will be opened in the future once the final version of the platform will be released.

Generally speaking, the last two areas were addressed with convergent feedback from the audience of experts. Regarding the ideal target group for COCTEAU, all the experts convened that it should be accurately chosen and not be a platform to engage with a broad focus on the general public at this development stage.

## 5. Future developments

### 5.1. Existing EU tools for citizen engagement and COCTEAU

Over the last decades, different European projects aimed to improve the interaction between citizens and policymakers: “Futurium” and “European Citizens' Initiative” are two of the most relevant ones. “Futurium” is a platform dedicated to European citizens for discussing EU policies: anyone can join a group, rate and comment discussions, and sharing content on external social media and websites. “European Citizens' Initiative” instead allows citizens to call on the European Commission to take (legislative) action: If a citizen initiative receives at least one million signatures, the European Commission will decide what action to take.<sup>3</sup> These tools are different from COCTEAU, especially in how the citizens are engaged within the platform, even though the final objective is the same. COCTEAU aims to be an independent tool through which policymakers can interact in a structured and gamified way with communities of citizens, providing the first with an exhaustive explanation of the data collected through the platform. Even though COCTEAU aims to be a separate tool, its integration with the mentioned platforms is an excellent opportunity to enhance its capabilities. For example, COCTEAU doesn't focus on European policies, but it improves the citizens' understanding of a concrete problem on which the European Union would like to know their opinions. Combining one of the mentioned tools and our platform would allow citizens to learn and discuss concrete problems first and then share their thoughts about a policy or propose a new law covering the aspects they debated. The latter is just an example of the platform's infinite possibilities in a process that mixes different tools with different objectives in the complex scenario of policymaking.

### 5.2. “Shift” of the policymaker's role

COCTEAU can provide an approximation of how much (or how little) impact a policy has on citizens' everyday lives. However, at this moment in time, this point

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<sup>3</sup> [https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/how-it-works\\_en](https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/how-it-works_en)

of view is not particularly easy to grasp for policymakers. In this sense, policymakers should be aware that the questions they pose via COCTEAU should not be about overarching goals that will pan out in a few years. A necessary step is to predict a policy's effects and formulate relatively simple questions for citizens to answer. Overall, policymakers should have a more active role when defining challenges and driving the discussion on the platform. This, in turn, impacts whether or not COCTEAU can be used only in a local fashion, or it can make a leap forward to more community-oriented discussions like the "Conference on the Future of Europe."

### 5.3. Empathy-centered Design

Decision-makers are usually trained in environments and perspectives far from the population's needs, leading to cultural partitioning and taking decisions that divert from society's thoughts and desires. Therefore, understanding the citizens and their needs and views is one of the most critical skills a policymaker should devise.

Generally speaking, humans connect in many ways. One of the most studied ones in the neurosciences field is empathy, the definition of which is still not clearly outlined. In his book "Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion"<sup>4</sup>, Paul Bloom stated that "there are probably nearly as many definitions of empathy as people working on this topic".

Among all the definitions, one of them defines empathy as "the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling"<sup>5</sup>. Although this definition may be suited for our use case, it is worth reporting the two types of empathy defined by Maxwell & DesRoches<sup>6</sup>: "affective empathy" and "cognitive empathy." The former refers to the sensations and emotions we get in response to others' feelings. The latter is

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<sup>4</sup> Bloom, P. (2017) *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*, Ecco.

<sup>5</sup> Bloom, P. (2017) *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*, Ecco, Page 27.

<sup>6</sup> Maxwell, B., & DesRoches, S. (2010). Empathy and social-emotional learning: Pitfalls and touchstones for school-based programs. *New directions for child and adolescent development*, 2010(129), 33-53.

sometimes called "perspective-taking" and refers to our ability to identify and understand other people's emotions. Even though "affective empathy" is the one that generates stronger reactions, due to the nature of our approach, "cognitive empathy" is the one we would like to leverage to strengthen the bond between policymakers and citizens.

In the latest version of COCTEAU, users' feelings are measured in two dimensions: "Positive - Negative" and "Incremental - Disruptive." Following the feedback sessions, the shortcomings of this approach became evident when using COCTEAU in different scenarios. This model may well be adapted and still used in the tool; however, using a well-established approach, both in practice and academic literature, could generate more value in the end.

The concept of empathy can be applied to different aspects of the COCTEAU application, focusing on the bond between the actors rather than the collected content. The analyses of the content collected, and the policymakers' outcomes will benefit from the relevance feelings and empathy have when envisioning the future. One of the activities that would be carried out is the user's profiting from a sentiment perspective. This classification could also be handy to analyze the feelings associated with the visions the users share.

The main difference between the European platforms mentioned before and our approach is the lack of this valuable ingredient. Indeed, they do not aim at creating a relationship between the engaged sides, but only at collecting useful content in a forum-like fashion.

From a user perspective, this empathy measurement process will be reflected within COCTEAU's user interface. The highest-ranked users could get special awards to showcase on the platform and gain access to dedicated gamified functions (like the ability to propose questions themselves), keeping the users engaged in the long run. As a consequence, the meaning of points earned by partaking in COCTEAU's activities ("Quick" or "In-Depth" matches) will evolve to allow deserving individuals from the community to distinguish themselves.

As with many other online social platforms, gaming the system is a relevant problem strictly tied with this shift in focus. An example of such issues is users interacting only with like-minded posts and quickly gaining points.

## 6. Conclusions

In this document, the steps undertaken to gather feedback about COCTEAU, the questions that emerged, and the tool's possible evolutions have been reported and discussed.

Throughout a series of 4 interactive sessions, discussions with experts belonging to policymaking, service delivery, and decision-making sectors have been held. While some aspects still need further development, COCTEAU gained some praise for the idea and positioning within the policymaking process.

The level of engagement of policymakers in creating scenarios for the platform and their interaction with the user base were among the main topics of debate. Another interesting point was the possibility of applying COCTEAU to the service delivery setting and alike.

Overall, the Polimi team stays committed to implementing the feedback collected in COCTEAU to have a complete tool by the end of the TRIGGER project.



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