



Designed as stakeholder engagement activities, 35 European Awareness Scenario Workshops (EASWs) on sustainable research programming were conducted in three series in 13 different countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom). They brought together different stakeholders (from public organisations, civil society, and the business sector) to establish a mutual learning environment and to generate shared visions of socially acceptable, trustworthy, and transparent conditions for developing sustainable innovations in the area of food and health. This participatory activity was organised around the principles of a transparent recruitment strategy, harmonised implementation procedures taking account of power imbalances, as well as authenticity in reporting, allowing for a retrospective comparison of the outcomes.

First suggested and piloted by the Danish Board of Technology, the scope and the European dimension of the EASWs conducted by INPROFOOD are unique and give important information for future participatory actions at a European level.

✓ Positive aspects

Stakeholder recruitment - By employing a lottery and open call process for inviting stakeholders instead of using the regular channels, this participatory activity succeeds, to a great extent, in engaging stakeholder groups that are usually not sufficiently integrated into participatory discussions on food and health programmes. This process can hold up on scrutiny and is traceable by interested and sceptic parties.

Implementation procedures - The provision of a toolkit enables all implementing organisations to follow a unified process. The use of professional facilitators ensures the implementation of this designed process and makes sure that everyone has a voice and that no single person or stakeholder can dominate the deliberations. A briefing exercise for these facilitators is mandatory, though.

! Aspects to consider

Stakeholder recruitment - For large countries, it might prove to be difficult and labor-intensive to produce a single database. The invitation process has been perceived as quite labor-intensive by some partners. Personal invitations and follow-up calls have shown to be very valuable and almost mandatory to attract participants. Open Calls for Participation have been perceived as much less labor-intensive but may not attract enough stakeholders without a large (and costly) advertising campaign. Non-arbitrary selection might lead to the non-attendance of certain stakeholder organisations which may be expected to attend.

Implementation procedures - Careful documentation should be ensured in each working group to optimize information translation (e.g. by dedicated note takers). The stringent following of the foreseen procedures is necessary to make workshops comparable. The procedure, its background, and its objectives and use, need to be explained carefully to the participants. The procedure is time-intensive.

CONCLUSIONS: Scenario Workshops are a sophisticated, well thought-out, and democratic method to facilitate participatory processes – especially for the inclusion of target groups that are neglected in usual processes. The implementation at European and multi-state level needs careful and intensive planning, briefing, and monitoring. A financial support, especially for civil society organisations that do not have the means for covering travel expenses needs to be considered to ensure their participation.