Challenge 2: Citizen Science for a Fair and Just Society

Why this matters

Social Fairness is a priority for the European Commission, while 'leaving no-one behind' is the central pledge of the UN 2030 Agenda. Recent events such as the Covid 19 Pandemic, cost of living crisis and global unrest have posed unique challenges to fairness in European societies. Societies are evolving, with changes such as the rise of generative AI technologies, increased adoption (and weaponisation) of social media and the acceleration of climate change impacting diverse communities in different ways. At the same time, the democratic principles underpinning European society are under threat. Social views are growing increasingly polarised while societal divisions are increasing. Citizen science can support communities and individuals in diverse ways through educating them on these evolving issues and topics; creating opportunities for them to take a leading role in community action or empowering them to protect democracy and ensure all voices are heard.

For this challenge, we particularly recognise that novel approaches to citizen science, using art, storytelling, multimedia or other technologies, may also foster participation of marginalized and underserved groups. We therefore particular encourage submissions proposing novel or deeper forms of volunteer engagement, as well as projects from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. However, this does not prevent submissions using other disciplinary or methodological approaches.

We focus on three distinct but related topics pertaining to promoting a fair and just society:

- **Democracy and Peace:** Democratic institutions across Europe are under attack. Trust in those institutions is low and some groups, particularly young people, are disillusioned by democracy. Social divisions are high and peace is under threat. We see citizen science as an opportunity to promote social cohesion and understanding between different groups, fostering democracy and peace.
- **Inclusion:** While novel societal and technological developments pose opportunities for citizens, not every community has benefited equally from these opportunities. Some groups, such as rural communities, the elderly or those of lower socioeconomic status (to name but a few) have found it harder to exploit these opportunities and risk being left behind. Citizen science has the potential to empower these communities, giving them the opportunity to advocate for their views and for change.

- **Public Trust, Education and Empowerment:** Trust in science and public institutions is at risk and misinformation is increasingly common. Citizen science has the potential to educate communities, giving them an opportunity to experience, learn from and contribute to the scientific process. Collaborations between researchers, academics and stakeholders such as artists can be instrumental in creating engaging, accessible content which resonates with and informs diverse audiences. Through these strategies, citizen science initiatives can bridge the gap between research and communities, fostering trust, understanding and action.

What we are looking for

In our Open Call 2025, IMPETUS is looking for Citizen Science projects that contribute to the theme of "Citizen Science for a Fair and Just Society". Specifically, we are interested in projects that address one or more of the following topics, which may relate but are not limited to SDGs #4, #5, #10, and #16:

- **Democracy and Peace** and promoting, safeguarding or enhancing understanding of democracy, the democratic process and systems or social cohesion.
- **Inclusion** through promoting inclusion; understanding factors which lead to exclusion and inclusion; empowering marginalised communities or promoting inclusion in novel societal or technological developments.
- Promoting **Public Trust, Education and Empowerment** where a broad approach to education is taken and may involve traditional educational settings or education through engagement in citizen science.

Applicants should aim to implement projects that contribute to research that enables solutions to these issues. Projects that address topics in or through social and artistic research are explicitly included in this call.

How we select projects

We particularly welcome applications from projects that are run by, or actively involve, underrepresented groups and their public representation. This includes those belonging to groups at risk of social exclusion and discrimination, such as refugees, ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities; or from lower-middle income countries; as well as projects that focus on inclusion dimensions of their research.

All projects **will also be assessed against criteria of equality, diversity, equity, openness, and potential impact on policy.**

IMPETUS has an [inclusive view of Citizen Science](#) initiatives, which can have a wide-ranging scope of scientific and social activities that engage citizens and aim to deliver scientific advancement and social benefits, support communities, and foster an open and inclusive civil society.

Eligible projects could include but are not limited to:

- Citizen engaged in digital humanities research
- Initiatives that incorporate characteristics of Citizen Science as defined by the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA)
- Science and research communication with citizens
- Participatory artistic-led research
- Science education that engages citizens

What we offer

Successful applicants will receive funding and support to deliver a seven-month project. Support will include training and expert guidance from a range of experts within and beyond the IMPETUS consortium, as well as peer-to-peer support and exchange.

Projects can apply for two kinds of grants, depending on their current development stage:

- Projects that are no more than six months into their Citizen Science journey and are yet to establish a community and/or data collection and processing procedures, can apply for a **Kickstarting grant**, worth 20,000 €.
- Projects that are more advanced, with established processes, an engaged community, and initial evidence of impact, can apply for a **Sustaining grant**, worth 10,000 €. We expect these grants to be awarded for the continuation, enhancing of impact, and/or further establishment of existing projects.

The funds provided can be spent on personnel costs, equipment, consumables, travel, subcontracting to other entities, and indirect expenditure (calculated as 25% of the total direct costs), in accordance with Horizon Europe guidelines.