

Event on societal impact and partnerships: How to make your research matter?

Impact
Alliantie

On 13th October members of more than 20 organizations gathered to exchange thoughts and experiences on the topic of evaluating and organizing impact in larger partnerships. The event, jointly organized by Evaluating Societal Impact (ESI) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam and the national impact-network The Impactalliantie took place in the Garage Rotterdam as part of the Open and Responsible Science (ORS) fall campaign at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Surrounded by contemporary art on the topic of borders ('Horizon, interrupted') over 70 attendees had the chance to broaden their own horizons by thinking together about ways to realize impact ambitions.

Over the past two years, like-minded people connected through the Impactalliantie online, laying the groundwork for this event. The gathering at the Garage was the first in-person meeting in which the network, ESI, and their guests connected and engaged in dialogue, reflection, and insightful explorations on the topic of societal impact. The open space at the garage, the dynamic format and the focus on exchange enabled the opportunity to facilitate dialogue and the creation of synergies among the participants inspiring a fruitful and thought-provoking afternoon.

The Impactalliantie is a knowledge network concerned with the societal impact of scientific research, focusing on organization and evaluation of impact through knowledge exchange and collaboration. The network is open to diverse organizations, such as research institutions, research funders, governments, consultants, and intermediary organizations, bringing together knowledge and experiences from different sectors and disciplines.

The project on **Evaluating Societal Impact (ESI)** at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) supports the development of an approach for impact evaluation that is embedded in a deliberate, goal-oriented process. ESI helps EUR employees demonstrate, describe, and share the impact, learning and value that they make for society.



Impactful dialogue to strengthen the impact network

With the goal of facilitating and furthering the conversations on the impact of science and education, the participants shared and learned from each other's experiences, perspectives, and good practices. Following an introduction by Professor Arwin van Buuren, (academic lead of the EUR project Evaluating Societal Impact) and Leonie van Drooge (co-initiator of the Impactalliantie), the participants split into smaller discussion groups. The roundtable discussions explored impact related topics, including ways to realize, recognize, and assess impact, as well as engage stakeholders. A key component of the afternoon was the shifts in the nature of scientific work, focusing on open science and autonomy. A second round of dialogues was inspired by the suggestions of the participants and gave more room to reflect upon impact collaboratively and from different perspectives. The afternoon concluded with a drink, the opportunity to follow up on loose ends, and connect with the diverse impact community.

Main takeaways: Amplifying impact & strengthening partnerships

The open space gave way to a dynamic and successful afternoon, which focused on complex considerations to understand, assess, and increase the societal impact of the scientific community. People examined their institutions and reflected upon the space and the infrastructure for impact. With conversations about the scientific career trajectory, its incentivization, and the question of diversifying the outputs of knowledge production participants sought ways to sharpen the focus on impact.

Beyond that, new organizational structures and roles for impact-related work are needed to ensure adequate stakeholder management and impact monitoring and evaluation. To create the organizational foundation for impact driven work, sufficient time, space, and flexibility are key requirements to embrace the changing landscape of academia. Simultaneously academia should recognize diverse career paths and ways of creating impact. Another takeaway is a mixed-method approach to measuring and evaluating societal impact, allowing for qualitative narratives and storytelling to strengthen the culture of research quality.

Throughout the engaging afternoon, a common thread highlighted the collaborative nature of societal impact, knowledge production, and the event itself. Discussions concentrated on meaningful engagement of wide-ranging stakeholders that are impacted by and enrich research and education. For this we need to cultivate long-term relationships based on shared ambitions and common language to amplify a mindset of co-creation.

Stay in touch to make your impact

In the future, ESI will continue to facilitate an impact-driven Erasmus University. If you want to learn more about the activities of ESI have a look at the [website](#). Finally, feel free to join the [LinkedIn community](#) of the Impactalliantie to access the large, national network of diverse professionals with a common interest in centering societal impact in research and education.

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