

Q1. Who can sign the Budapest Manifesto?

A1. Everybody can, including natural persons. If you are not belonging to a Regional or City government, your first and main commitment should be to involve the public authority of reference in your territory and “convince” them about the opportunity of signing the Manifesto and becoming members of the NeSTI network.

Q2. Why a network not an association?

A2. We felt the need for a very light form of aggregation, where content prevails over rules of engagement. Something that does not need to exist as a legal entity per se, has no board, chair or secretariat, does not require a membership fee, can be entered and exited at free will... (Of course, we will try hard to keep you interested and “bound” to it, but that’s another story ... Just stay tuned, and we will surprise you!)

Q3. If this is not a formal membership, why do you ask for our signature then?

A3. Signing up to the Budapest Manifesto is a commitment, and a commitment requires a signature. In addition, we need to build EU-wide visibility fast, if we want to demonstrate utility and ultimately achieve impact.

Q4. Ok, but how do you plan on keeping us involved and informed of your initiatives?

A4. Well, at this very moment we count on the resources provided by the EU TC CEE project CentraLab and its official portal (www.centralivinglab.eu) to act as a hub of connections and a disseminator of good practice across Europe. By mid 2013, the project will hold its next big conference and that will be the first opportunity for all of us to meet in person.

Q5. Isn't this a duplicate of other existing initiatives?

A5. We don't think so, of course. Time flies and in the past few years, a lot of things have happened – from the financial crisis to the “boom” of social innovation – that shed a different light on public administrations and their role and capacity to ignite broad socio-economic processes that do help provide collective services or design better policies. Most of these processes require the critical mass of a Region's or big City's population to manifest themselves effectively and lead to concrete results. However, since the human being is always the same, why don't we take stock of past success or failure stories and try to make a step forward instead of restarting from scratch? We don't see a network with such a mission in the panorama of EU-wide and international cooperation at the moment.

Q6. Why this focus on Smart Specialisation then?

A6. We see this as a very promising field to make our goals and recommendations visible and more graspable around. Regions have to react quickly (by mid 2013) on this front according to the information we have at hand. The EU guidelines speak about the requirement of Smart Specialisation Strategies being “shared” not simply (im)posed from the top to the bottom of the pyramid. We suggest turning this – potentially hard to fulfil – condition into an opportunity for sound improvement of both the effectiveness and the efficiency of policy making.

Q7. That's why you bring eParticipation into the picture right?

A7. Correct. We have had the chance to be part of another successful EU CIP project, Parterre (www.parterre-project.eu), where state-of-the-art technologies have been demonstrated in

their potential to create local community networks (Living Labs if you prefer) to contribute to the design of more inclusive and socially acceptable policy platforms. Now the Regional Government of Tuscany committed to freely redistributing the knowledge and technology trialled in about 30 cases of citizens and stakeholders consultation across Europe so far, to other EU public sector organisations, under the sole condition of not-for-profit utilisation. At least this can be an opportunity worth exploring we believe.

Q8. And what do you mean by a Living Lab?

A8. The Living Lab concept basically implies taking research out of the laboratory and into the real world. The territorial type of Living Lab goes further to directly engage citizens, businesses, local authorities, etc. in a co-design process to collectively define and build new policies and strategies for local and regional development. The CentraLab project, like its predecessor MedLab, is exploring just how this approach can make a positive impact on regional policies in all fields, and its ten pilot projects are applying the Living Lab method to initiatives ranging from energy efficiency to transportation. The European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL, see www.enoll.org) brings together 320 Living Labs from six continents, and has formally endorsed the Budapest Manifesto.

Q9. What does all of the above have to do with innovation policy?

A9. Again, due to the dramatic changes occurring recently in the overall policy scenario , innovation is not only the last and only chance for Europe to return to a more secure, sustainable and inclusive path of development, but also a challenge that cannot be met in isolation by the business or the government sector alone. By calling for the shared design (or co-design if you like) of innovation policies, we want to bring the freshness and imagination of people's ideas into a picture where it seems that not many of the old approaches are still valid.

Q10. How can I do this? That is totally new stuff and I got lost while reading the text above.

A10. One of the main aims of this network is to realise capacity building of civil servants and policy makers in a cost effective way, by transferring the evidence and information about the background processes rather than simply the results achieved. We can be overambitious, but again we see little around that goes in this same direction at the moment in Europe. Given the severity of the crisis, now is the moment to dare; hopefully the rest will come later on.

Q11. What will your next steps be?

A11. "Our" next steps you mean? ;-) Well, we are already in the process of contacting and interfacing with DG Regio and DG Connect to find the best positioning of NeSTI in the broader context of EU innovation policies. Then there is the mid-2013 conference of the CentraLab Project to organise in such a way as to become an event with high visibility and strong impact. In the meantime, we warmly welcome suggestions and contributions from our current and prospective members, and we are now looking for the best ways to ensure this will happen.