

Input to the Roundtable on Transdisciplinary Approaches for Excellence

Excellence and impact can (often) be increased by interdisciplinary approaches in science, so how can we increase that?

How to increase excellence by transdisciplinary approaches?

Transdisciplinary research links case-specific knowledge with abstract knowledge and thereby enhances the context-sensitivity of science. In addition, transdisciplinary research that strives for societal problem solving induces reflections on how to assess excellence. E.g. it raises the question when an assessment of rigor by peers should be complemented by an assessment of the societal relevance of research by stakeholders. Transdisciplinary research aims for social learning processes between scientists and ‘extra-academic’ experts such as policy-makers, professionals, reflective practitioners and indigenous communities. Social learning processes foster social-dynamic, reflective and methodological competencies that can enhance excellence, also in disciplinary endeavours.

How to increase impact by transdisciplinary approaches?

Transdisciplinary approaches develop knowledge and practices that promote common goods – goods for the public that contribute to societal problem solving. They strive to produce three types of knowledge: systems, target, and transformation knowledge. The latter is expected to induce change towards a (co-created) target state.

Transdisciplinary approaches use co-production as a mean to increase impact. In early phases of the research, experts from research and practice meet to frame the problem, develop research questions and discuss expectations regarding the impact. In later stages, the problem is jointly analysed and pathways for impact are jointly developed. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of complex problems and a solid development of feasible and effective solutions.

Supportive principles, toolkits and networks to aim for scientific rigor and societal relevance

- Learn more about [guiding principles](#) of transdisciplinary research in the MOOC “Partnering for Change: Link Research to Societal Challenges” (bit.ly/tdmooaccess)
- Find tools and resources to make informed decisions about interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research under www.shapeidtoolkit.eu. This toolkit addresses individual researchers, but also research organisations, research funders/policy makers and societal partners
- Join the community of transdisciplinarians at the Network for Transdisciplinary Research ([td-net](#)) and the global [ITD-Alliance](#)
- Read the recommendations of the [OECD Report](#) on “Addressing societal challenges using transdisciplinary research”. E.g. for assessment of transdisciplinary research, it is recommended to consider several components: rigour, but also citizen feedback, or logistical efficiency. The report states clearly that assessment should involve the stakeholders’ perspectives
- Read more about how to co-produce knowledge: www.transdisciplinarity.ch/toolbox

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