BUILDING CITIZEN SCIENCE TOGETHER

WHY A UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE IS THE WAY TO GO

Floor Keersmaekers

EUTOPIA European University

vub.be/en/eutopia

PREMISE

STATE OF THE ART

‘Citizen Science’ as an umbrella term (ECSA)

Elusive nature

No size fits all: each project shaped by unique context

Unpredictability

The support of citizen science has much to gain

by peer learning and sharing experiences

within the framework of strong and fruitful networks.

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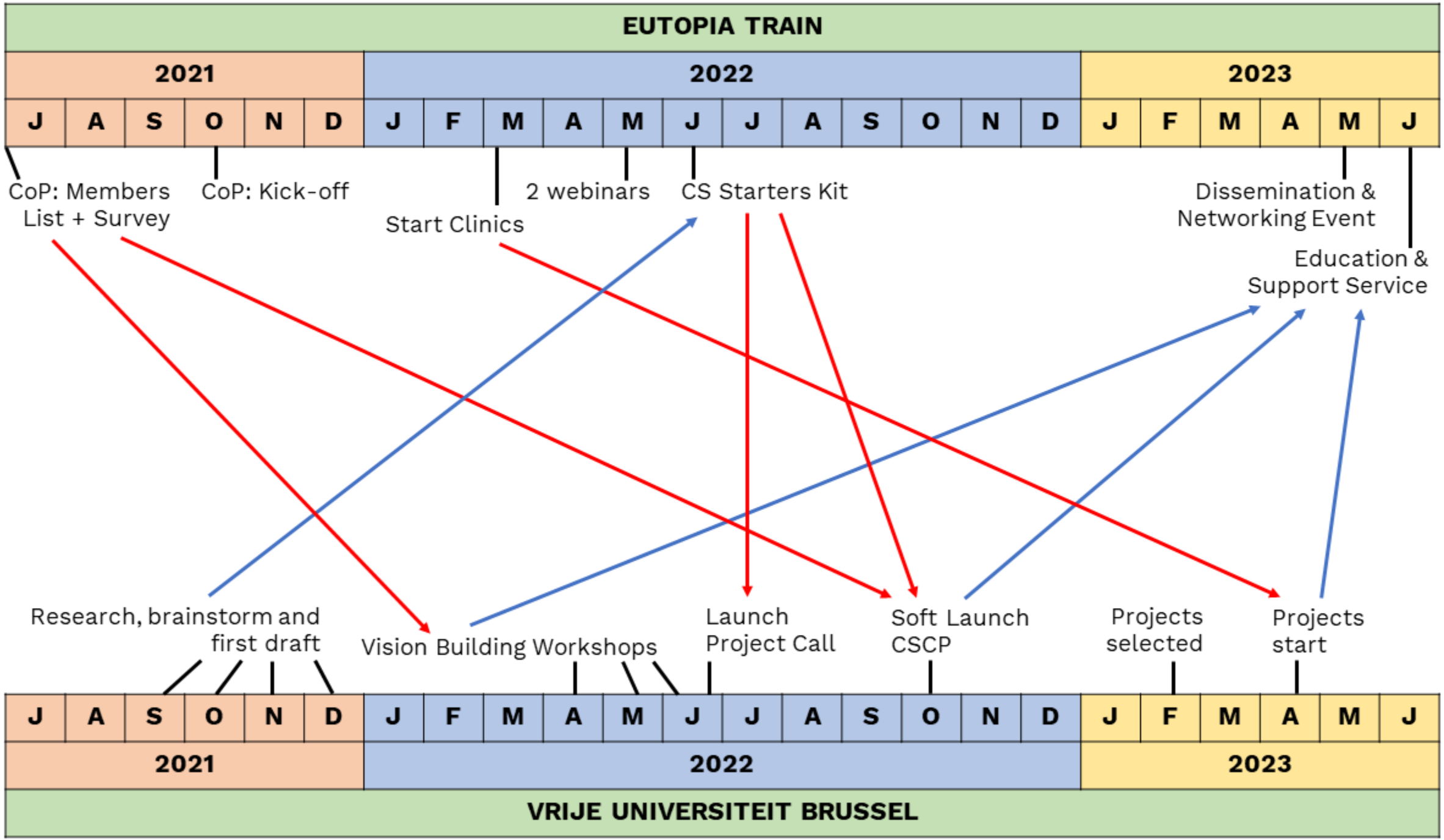
EUTOPIA TRAIN
2021
2022
2023
J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J
CoP: Members List + Survey
CoP: Kick-off
Start Clinics
2 webinars
CS Starters Kit
Dissemination & Networking Event
Education & Support Service
Research, brainstorm and first draft
Vision Building Workshops
Launch Project Call
Soft Launch CSCP
Projects selected
Projects start
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VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

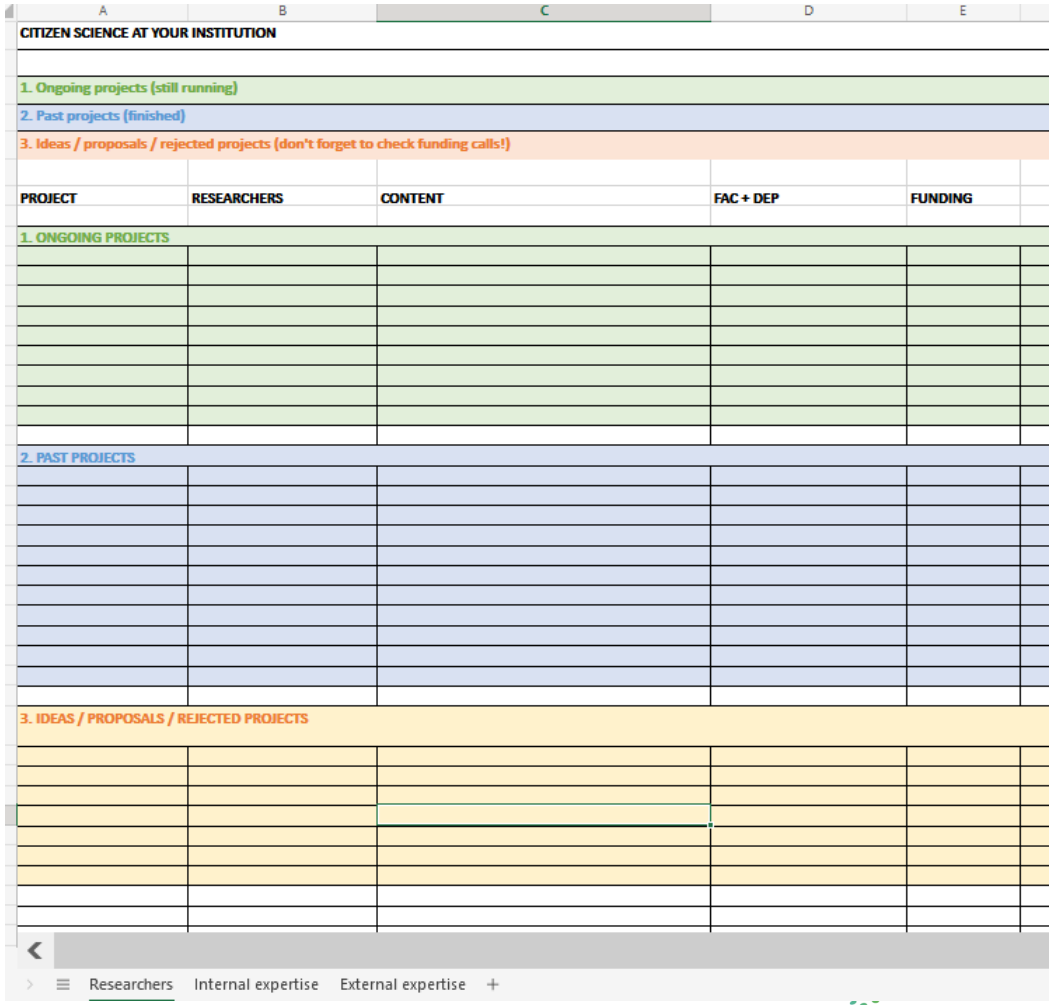
GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY NEED?

1st Milestone: June 2021

Citizen Science Community of Practice (CoP) created

- **Mapping exercise →**
- Survey on interests and needs
- Citizen Science Clinics



CITIZEN SCIENCE AT YOUR INSTITUTION

1. Ongoing projects (still running)
2. Past projects (finished)
3. Ideas / proposals / rejected projects (don't forget to check funding calls!)

PROJECT	RESEARCHERS	CONTENT	FAC + DEP	FUNDING
1. ONGOING PROJECTS				
2. PAST PROJECTS				
3. IDEAS / PROPOSALS / REJECTED PROJECTS				

Researchers | Internal expertise | External expertise

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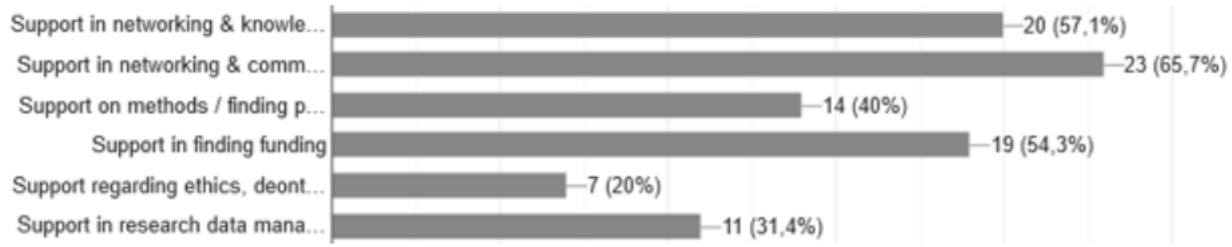
Are you currently engaged in Citizen Science / a Citizen Science project?

Regarding the support offered by your university in relation to Citizen Science, what could be improved?



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- **Citizen Science Clinics →**

- *Peer Learning Sessions*
  - *Strengthen (the work of) the CoP*
  - *Create supportive atmosphere*
  - *Spark opportunities for further cooperation*
- *Informal, feasibly timed, low effort*
- *Online, every 6 weeks*
  - *(not in July-August-September)*
- *9 in total*
  - *March 2022 – May 2023*

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2ND MILESTONE: EDUCATION (BASED ON SURVEY)

ENGAGING CITIZENS AND FINDING FUNDING / SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

	Chair **Tobias Reckling**, Coordinator of UNICA & the City working group and Knowledge Exchange Manager at the University of Vienna
13:30 – 13:40	**Welcome addresses** **Luciano Saso,** UNICA President **Michael Scott**, co-Director, Warwick Institute of Engagement
13:40 – 13:55	**Lucija Ažman Momirski,** Professor, University of Ljubljana / WeCount
13:55 – 14:05	**Sophie Staniszewska**, Professor, Warwick Institute of Engagement
14:05 – 14:15	**Carina Veeckman**, Senior Researcher & Project Manager at imec-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
14:15 – 14:40	**Q&A and Discussion**
14:40 – 14:45	**Wrap-up**

	Facilitators **Carina Veeckman**, Senior Researcher & Project Manager at imec-SMIT, VUB **Sven De Boeck,** Science Outreach Office, VUB/Bugs2theRescue
15:00 – 15:30	Introduction to several communication tools, illustrated by hands-on examples from various citizen science projects
15:30 – 16:10	**Interactive session** in Breakout Rooms PART 1
16:10 – 16:15	**BREAK**
16:15 – 16:45	**Interactive session** in Breakout Rooms PART 2
16:45 – 17:00	**Final wrap-up**

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2ND MILESTONE: EDUCATION (BASED ON SURVEY)

ENGAGING CITIZENS AND FINDING FUNDING / SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

	Chair **Tobias Reckling**, Coordinator of UNICA & the City working group and Knowledge Exchange Manager at the University of Vienna
10:30 – 10:35	**Welcome address and interactive session with Mentimeter**
10:35 – 10:45	***Citizen and societal engagement: A policy and programme priority for the European Commission*, by Katharina Buse**, Project Advisor, European Research Executive Agency (REA)
10:45 – 11:30	**Introduction of the panellists and panel discussion moderated by Tobias Reckling** • **Annelies Duerinckx**, Coordinator, Scivil (RVO-Society) - Citizen Science Flanders • **Jon Coaffee,** Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences & Director of the Midlands Graduate School, University of Warwick • **Marzia Mazzonetto,** CEO at Stickydot srl • **Florian Heigl**, Coordinator, Citizen Science Network Austria • **Katharina Buse**, Project Advisor, European Research Executive Agency (REA)
11:30 – 12:00	**Q&A with the audience**

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1ST DELIVERABLE: ONLINE CS TRAINING MATERIALS

CITIZEN SCIENCE STARTER KIT FOR RESEARCHERS

- Module I:

  Start to learn about citizen science

- Module II:

  Determine whether citizen science is right for your research

- Module III:

  Crucial design factors for a citizen science project

- Module IV: Practical and interactive module, due June ’23

  Templates /checklists, key considerations, case study, resources

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2ND DELIVERABLE: CS EDUCATION & SUPPORT SERVICE

WORK IN PROGRESS – DUE JUNE 2023 – CONTINUED WITHIN EUTOPIA MORE

For researchers	For supporting staff: Train the Trainers

• **SUPPORT:**
  • SPOC support system for specific questions
  • Introducing CS in courses and work with students
• (EDUCATION →) **AWARENESS:**
Convince/motivate researchers + networking
  • Trainings (→ EUTOPIA MORE 'Connected Communities')
  • 'Good Practices' Inspirational Events
  • Continue Clinics? Toolbox? Prize?
	• How to raise awareness on Citizen Science? > Need to find 'clients'
	• How to run a Citizen Science Clinic?
	• Workshops based on the Starters Kit

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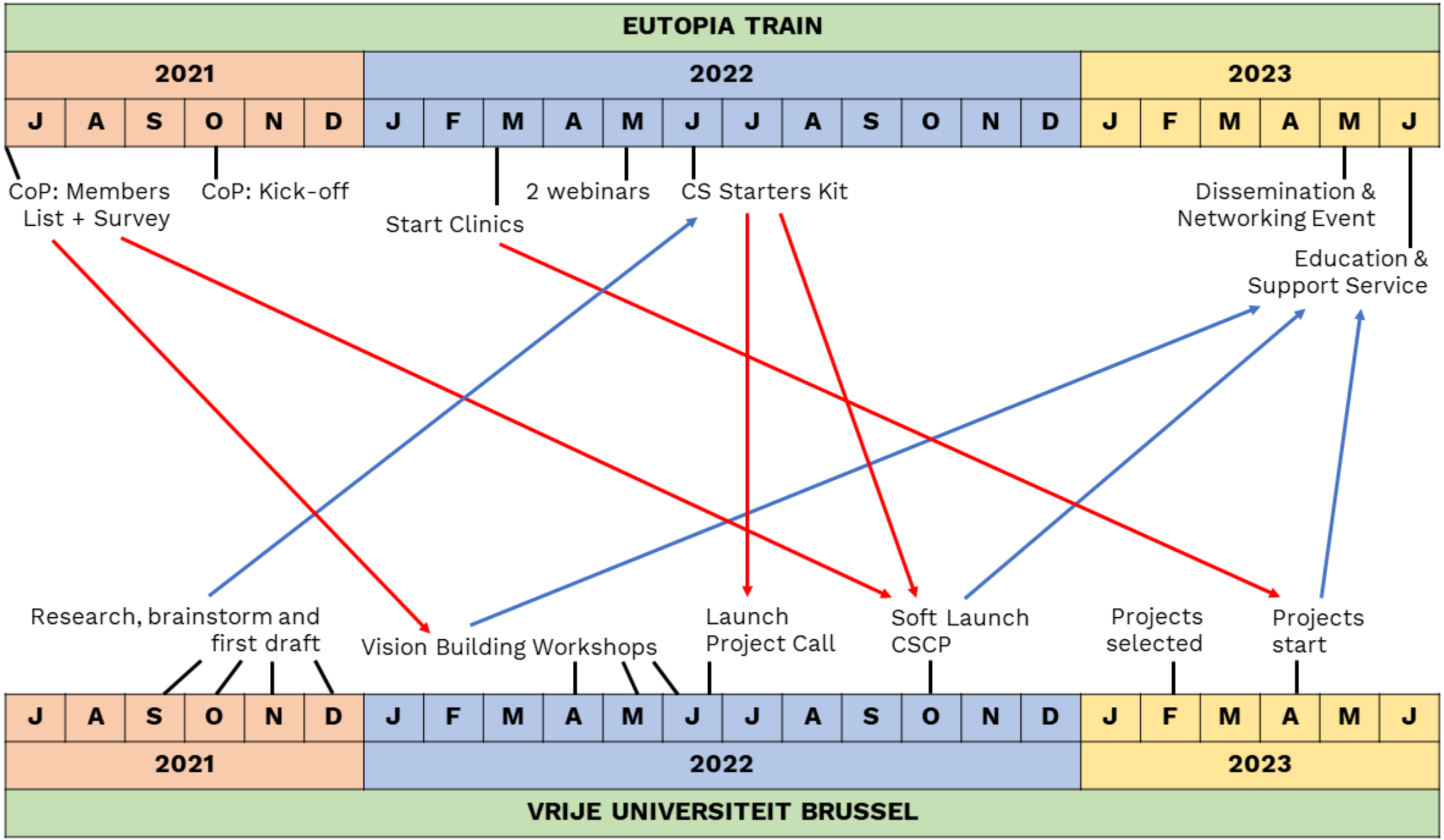
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STARTER KIT → PROJECT CALL

EUTOPIA → VUB

- Kit + Call launched June 2022
- Project call for 2 to 3 projects (18 months up to 4 years)
- Addressing transition issues in a metropolitan context (preferably Brussels), contributing to the SDG's
- Both interdisciplinary and intersectoral

→ February 1st, 2023: 2 projects selected

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COP + STARTER KIT → CS CONTACT POINT

EUTOPIA → VUB

Community of Practice

- Mapping → TARGET AUDIENCE
- Survey identifying needs and interests → SUPPORT
- Peer learning and networking → EDUCATION

Citizen Science Starter Kit → **WORKSHOPS**

- 1st Module ‘Start to learn about CS’ → INTRODUCTION
- 2nd Module ‘CS right for your research?’ → REFLECTION
- 3rd Module ‘Crucial design factors’ → PLANNING
- 4th Module ‘Checklists and templates’ → EXECUTION

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CS CLINICS → CS PROJECTS

EUTOPIA → VUB

- CS Clinic 1: Data Quality
- CS Clinic 2: Ethics
- CS Clinic 3: Project Management with different partners and different views on CS
- CS Clinic 4: Practicing CS as a PhD student
- CS Clinic 5: Citizen scientists and their motivations
- CS Clinic 6: Citizen science projects in (micro)biology
- CS Clinic 7: CS in Humanities vs. CS in Natural Sciences
- CS Clinic 8: How to engage citizens in different cultural contexts?
- **CS Clinic 9: 'Closing the Clinics': Lessons learned**

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RESEARCH + CSCP → CS STARTER KIT + E&S SERVICE

VUB → EUTOPIA

- **VUB Research for CS Starter Kit**
  - Find out what's already out there → LIBRARY offering resources
  - Find out what's missing → Input for Starter Kit
- **VUB Vision Building Workshops**
  - // CS E&SS Working Group Meetings
  - CS E&SS strategic goals, operational goals and KPI's
    - Framework for comparison
    - Defining common goals
- **VUB Supporting Citizen Science Projects**
  - Good practices and examples
  - Learning from experience

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CONCLUSION

BUILDING CITIZEN SCIENCE TOGETHER: WHY UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES ARE THE WAY TO GO

The support of citizen science has much to gain

by peer learning and sharing experiences

within the framework of strong and fruitful networks.

TO FINISH: Take-away messages

Lessons learned from the EUTOPIA TRAIN project

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CONCLUSION

CHALLENGES / THREATS

- **In general**
  - Not always easy finding
    - the right people to work with
    - common ground and vision
  - Network *can* be compelling (e.g. deadlines) → stress and/or no time for reflection

- **For EUTOPIA**
  - Citizen Science is not an equal priority in individual universities' policy
  - Likewise, the interest and expertise in CS with researchers can differ quite a bit < circumstances
  - Managing CoP

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CONCLUSION

OPPORTUNITIES / STRENGTHS

- **In general**
  - Exchange from within different contexts → enriches experience + stimulates collaboration
  - Individual networks → one bigger network; information travels faster
  - Increased impact, sustainability and reach of efforts, outputs and activities
  - ‘Compelling’ network → results and planning

- **For EUTOPIA**
  - Citizen Science Clinic Format
  - VUB as forerunner/driving force
  - Continuation in EUTOPIA MORE

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WHAT'S NEXT?

EUTOPIA MORE

WP5.2: Digital Transformation

- Task 5.2.3: Open Knowledge Advice, Support and Trainings

- Milestones and Deliverables:
  - MS27 Anchoring Open Science in the EUTOPIA communities and expanding the training portfolio (M36 = Nov 2025)
    - Description: Deepening disciplinary/community-adoption of Open Science practices

- Related Milestone:
  - MS15 Connected Communities implemented and activities in place (M36 = Nov 2025)
    - Description: Every year, 10 communities will be placed in the incubation stage. They have a lifespan of 3 years (so 30 communities active at same timepoint)
    - Description: During the first 6 operational months of the project, we will focus on finetuning the foundations for our Connected Communities => so no communities active in the first 6 months

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THANK YOU

citizenscience@vub.be

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