



Co-design methodology defining coherent engagement of stakeholders

CASRI Deliverable 6.1

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How to quote this document

Firus, K., Dorato, S., Dictor, M.-C., Korhonen-Kurki, K., Lyytimäki, J., Maring, L., Rijken, B., Bartke, S. (2024). Co-design methodology defining coherent engagement of stakeholders throughout WPs2-5 (CASRI Deliverable 6.1). Project DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3030/101131520>



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CASRI

Collaborative Action coordinating and enhancing systemic, actionable and transversal Sustainability Research and Innovation

Deliverable number	6.1
Deliverable name:	Co-design methodology defining coherent engagement of stakeholders throughout WPs2-5
WP / WP number:	WP6: Co-Design, communication, exploitation
Delivery due date:	30/06/2024
Actual date of submission:	31/08/24
Deliverable description:	Methodology for a consistent stakeholder involvement in CASRI, assembling planned methodologies for different project phases and steering the contacts to stakeholders through the partners being National Contacts.
Dissemination level:	Public
Lead author:	Katja Firus
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Internal reviewers:	CASRI Core Group

Version	Date	Issued by	Description	Summary of changes
0.1	31.07.24	T 6	First complete draft	n/a
0.2	12.08.24	T 6	Second draft	Revised based on internal review comments
1	31.08.24	T 6	Final revised version	Revised based on CASRI Core Group comments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is presenting the methodology for a consistent stakeholder involvement throughout the different phases of the CASRI project for developing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) among the involved Environmental Protection Agencies.

The document is meant to present the bottom-up approach to an interested public and also to serve as a guiding document for the CASRI partners and their National Contacts.

KEYWORDS

Co-design process, Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, Stakeholder Engagement

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ABBREVIATIONS

D	Deliverable
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Environment Agency
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
ES	Environment and Sustainability
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IAB	International Advisory Board
IG EPAS	Interest Group Sustainability Research and Solutions
MS	Member State
Ms	Milestone
NC	National Contact
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NKS	National Key Stakeholder
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
R&I	Research and Innovation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP(P)I	Science Policy (Practice) Interaction or Interface
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda
TL	Team Leaders

Co-design methodology defining coherent engagement of stakeholders

1. Introduction

This report is presenting the co-design methodology applied in the Horizon Europe CASRI project aimed at a better cooperation of research focused national Environment Protection Agencies (EPAs) and stakeholders in the European Research Area (ERA). Such a co-design methodology is meant to be a guidance tool for the EPAs and other CASRI partners and stakeholders to provide a common understanding of the ideal project implementation. Notwithstanding, this document is not a strict recipe, but allows for flexibility reflecting institutional constraints and taking into account topical developments.

This guidance aims for a coherent engagement of stakeholders throughout the project. CASRI's aim is to collaboratively develop, in a bottom-up approach, an Environment and Sustainability (ES) focused Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) to identify systemic, actionable and transversal ES Research and Innovation (R&I) needs, that need to be addressed to ensure a sustainable development in Europe in times of multiple crises. The SRIA is meant to become a guiding document for the national EPAs involved in the project. The overall goal is to stimulate collaboration, including common funding, with regard to the identified important topics in the upcoming years by the involved EPAs and interested stakeholders. It is meant to be complementary with the European ES R&I funding frameworks (in particular Horizon Europe and future framework programmes).

The methodology builds on the co-design methodology that was applied in the EU Horizon 2020 funded project INSPIRATION¹ and has been adapted to the specific purposes of CASRI. It closely follows the overall CASRI funnelling approach (cf. Chapter 2) and is composed of four phases:

- (1) Comprehensive national reviews to gather, on a national level, demand-driven systemic, actionable, transversal ES R&I needs for the SRIA (cf. Chapter 4.1).
- (2) Identification of transnational commons by grouping the information in the national comprehensive reviews to achieve an overview of the transnational shared systemic - actionable - transversal ES R&I demands and experiences according to common themes and to prioritise them (cf. Chapter 4.2).
- (3) Match of prioritised topics and funding opportunities (i.e. in public and private programmes) and identifying funding gaps (cf. Chapter 4.3).
- (4) Implementation Actions for common research funding plans and, if possible, during the project timeline, implement first common research calls (cf. Chapter 4.4).

These phases are important building blocks of the CASRI project and correspond to the formal project work packages, which are structuring the project activities.

¹ INSPIRATION developed a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for land use, land-use changes and soil management in a co-design process. See also: <http://www.inspiration-agenda.eu/at-a-glance.html>

The report also describes the different stakeholder categories (Chapter 3.1) planned to be involved in the co-design and their roles (cf. Chapter 3.2) and presents the timeline (cf. Chapter 5) as well as the monitoring of the co-design process (cf. Chapter 7). An important aspect of the stakeholder involvement is to keep the most important stakeholders interested and engaged throughout the co-design phases. The plan for this is described in Chapter 6, which is closely linked to the overall project's Communication, dissemination & exploitation plan (D6.2)².

This document has two main target audiences: the **CASRI partners, in particular the National Contacts** (NCs) to have a guide for their stakeholder engagement activities; and **external-to-the-project stakeholders** for transparency **and for interested actors** for sharing with them an approach for a commonly designed SRIA that might be useful also for other fields of research and innovation, beyond environment and sustainability themes.

2. The CASRI funnelling approach for co-designing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and its implementation

Building on the EU-funded project INSPIRATION (cf. Bartke et al. 2018) (cf. Chapter 1), CASRI applies a funnelling approach to gather information on research needs and opportunities to prepare their implementation.

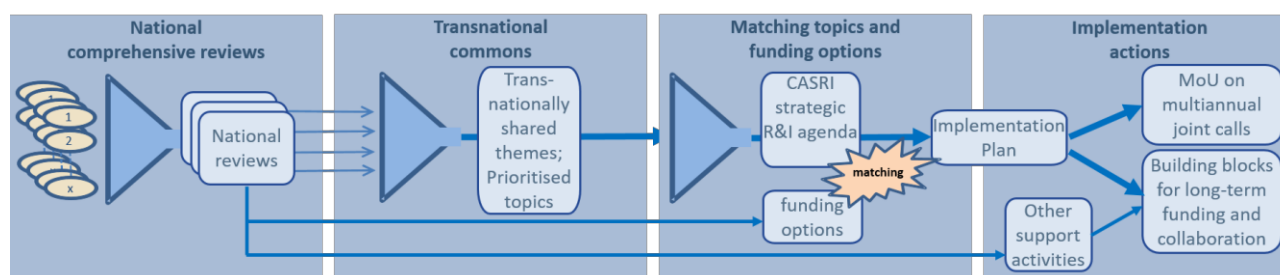


FIGURE 1 – THE CASRI APPROACH

First, the CASRI National Contacts (NCs) in each participating country [only in the indicated regions]: Austria, Belgium [Flanders], Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom [Wales] and Spain [Basque region] as designated Associated Partner (cf. Chapter 3.2.2) collect data on environmental and sustainability research and innovation needs and current status in their country. This includes funding opportunities and ways to support the use of research findings. This data is reviewed and organised in workshops, producing reports at the national/regional level.

Next, transnational common themes are identified. CASRI focuses initially on four main themes to cluster R&I topics, each coordinated by one theme leader (cf. Chapter 3.2.3). This shared research informs the Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA) and indicates funding needs and opportunities.

Then the project brings together policymakers and funders to discuss priority topics and funding mechanisms. This could involve joint funding calls or aligning existing programmes. Lastly, CASRI

² Bartke, S., Dorato, S., Firus, K. (2024). Communication, dissemination & exploitation plan. CASRI Deliverable 6.2. Project DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3030/101131520>

lays the groundwork for future collaboration beyond the project duration, allowing new parties to join and updating the agenda accordingly. From the very beginning, CASRI has been designed to feed into the EPA Network Interest Group on Sustainability Research and Solutions (IG EPAS), so that the results can support effectively the main objective of CASRI, i.e. the collaboration of the research oriented EPAs.

Throughout, the project engages with funders and policymakers to stay informed and tackle ES policy needs in a comprehensive manner. This includes also the close collaboration with the European Environment Agency (EEA) to ensure that project activities are impactful.

Rationale for using the funnelling approach

The EPAs need to identify a meaningful focus for their networking activities. The funnelling approach is designed to systematically narrow down a broad array of inputs into a focused and coherent SRIA, which can guide the networking of the EPAs and further ERA stakeholders. This method is particularly effective in contexts where diverse perspectives and priorities need to be integrated, such as in the CASRI project, which next to the EPAs involves multiple stakeholders from different countries and sectors. Several advantages can be seen in applying the funnelling approach in comparison with other approaches, i.e. the development of a SRIA only based on published literature or by just adding already developed agendas of the participating EPAs. The rationale behind this approach includes:

1. **Inclusive engagement:** By starting broad, the approach ensures that a wide range of stakeholders are involved, capturing diverse needs and perspectives.
2. **Systematic prioritisation:** The structured process helps in systematically narrowing down broad inputs into focused research priorities, improving clarity and coherence. It provides a structured mechanism to distil broad inputs into specific, actionable research priorities, supporting clarity and focus.
3. **Enhanced relevance:** By involving stakeholders throughout the process, the SRIA is more likely to address real-world challenges and be accepted by its intended users.
4. **Co-ownership:** Continuous engagement of stakeholders at multiple stages helps build a sense of ownership and commitment to the final SRIA, which is crucial for its implementation.
5. **Iterative refinement:** The approach allows for iterative refinement, where initial broad ideas are progressively narrowed down through stakeholder feedback and expert synthesis, improving the quality and relevance of the agenda.

In CASRI this is completed by two premises:

- **From broad to targeted involvement:** The funnelling approach helps to establish breadth in needs for Research and Innovation by involving stakeholders from different parts of society as knowledge providers and user, but then focuses in particular on funders to ensure the implementation of the SRIA and with this to progress the research of identified ES topics.
- **Flexibility:** CASRI partners and National Contacts (NCs) have a significant stake in ES R&I development, being in most cases the national Environmental Protection Agency. As mandates and foreground of EPAs vary between countries, the NCs adapt the presented methodology to their national and institutional setting and authority. This might mean i.e. differences in the variety of societal actors involved, or the number of interviews done due to

recent similar activities. However, the overall intention to gather a broad picture of research needs and topics are to be ensured by each NC.

Comparison with other approaches: A top-down approach, where research priorities are set by a central authority, may lack the inclusivity and stakeholder buy-in of the funnelling approach. It can be quicker but often misses out on the nuanced needs and insights from the ground. One-off consultations with stakeholders might not capture the evolving nature of research needs and lack the iterative refinement process, potentially leading to a less robust SRIA. Also, approaches focusing solely on disciplinary inputs might fail to capture interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research needs, which are increasingly important in addressing complex societal challenges.

In summary, the funnelling approach for co-designing a SRIA, as used in the CASRI project, offers a structured, inclusive and iterative process that effectively integrates diverse stakeholder inputs into a focused and actionable research agenda. This approach is particularly advantageous in contexts requiring broad consensus and interdisciplinary collaboration. It is hopefully an effective method to spur co-ownership of the EPAs involved in CASRI to collaborate and implement the prioritised common themes and identify means to do so, including the engagement with relevant stakeholders.

3. CASRI stakeholders

Before starting the co-design process, the stakeholders to be involved need to be identified. The categories below should be covered in order to get a comprehensive picture for a bottom-up Environment and Sustainability Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (E&S SRIA):

- Research and innovation funders.
- Knowledge providers.
- Knowledge users.

Selected persons in these categories are involved at different moments in the co-design and they have diverse roles. They can be separated into “external-to-the-project” stakeholders giving input and advice to CASRI (the National Key Stakeholders (NKS) and “selected NKS”), “internal-to-the-project” stakeholders, i.e. CASRI partners as National Contacts (NC) and Theme Leaders (TL), as well as a mix of “external and internal-to-the-project” stakeholders, as the International Advisory Board (IAB).

Reflecting the main objective of CASRI, i.e. to better link ES R&I focused Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs), EPAs on its own are an important stakeholder entity.

The CASRI stakeholders were partly identified based on the screening and selection made during the preparation of the CASRI project and partly during the first months of the co-design process (cf. Chapter 4.1) with regular updates throughout the process. General criteria as i.e. gender and diversity in the group or areas of expertise and backgrounds have been tried to be applied and was done in line with the CASRI “Ethics, gender and diversity plan” (D1.2) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules.

3.1 General stakeholder categories

Stakeholder categories have been identified to guide and monitor a broad and comprehensive representation of stakeholders. Multiple stakeholder categories might apply for some stakeholders,

i.e. an organisation is managing ES R&I programmes while also performing research and using results for further purposes, i.e. Information of the public or for policy advise.

3.1.1 Research and innovation funders

Identification

Research and innovation funders, programme directors and managers in the participating countries are significant stakeholders and, thus, are to be involved in all phases of the co-design. They are selected based on their ability to manage, fund or get funded research programmes and projects, so i.e. European and national research funders, research programme directors or programme management agencies addressing ES R&I aimed at systemic, actionable and transversal knowledge in general or focused on knowledge for policy-support, i.e. for sectoral/ministerial policy goals. They should also have a multi-level vision of research and innovation, local, European and even international, and of the systems used to fund these. The NCs make a first selection in their country of funders that are active along the CASRI themes.

Role in the project

Research and innovation funders participate in the national comprehensive reviews (Phase 1) as NKS (cf. Chapter 3.2.1), giving input from their experience on funding options in their country. A selected number of key funders are also to be involved in the following phases of the co-design: the identification of transnational common themes, the development of the European E&S SRIA as well as the CASRI implementation activities and funding of ES R&I projects or implementation actions.

On national level, interviews are conducted with them, in particular on the programming and funding landscape in the respective country. Depending on the analysis of the questionnaires, and in particular the funding part, additional interviews of funders may be conducted to get an as complete picture as possible of funding at different levels (local to international) and on the four themes chosen by the CASRI partners (Resilient, net-zero, circular production systems; Biodiversity and climate; Sustainable urbanisation; Energy transition) and potentially others identified in the national comprehensive reviews.

3.1.2 Knowledge providers

Identification

The participating EPAs and alike (research) organisations in CASRI are knowledge providers in most cases. Next to these, other knowledge providers in the field of ES R&I are to be involved, in particular in the national comprehensive reviews (Phase 1). The identification of knowledge providers is done by the NCs (cf. Chapter 4.1.1) and is mainly aligned along the four CASRI themes to give some focus.

Also, some specific knowledge providers on the aspect of Science Policy (Practice) Interaction (SP(P)I) are identified for participating, by investigating specific EU networks on SPPI. They can be invited to the national comprehensive review, in case that other NKS do not have enough insight in SPPI aspects.

Role in the project

Knowledge providers on the CASRI themes and SPPI participate in the national comprehensive reviews as NKS, giving input based on their specific expertise on ES R&I needs and based on their experience on funding options and the SPPI situation in their country.

A selected number of key knowledge providers can also be involved in the following phases of the co-design: the identification of transnational common themes, the development of the European E&S SRIA as well as the CASRI implementation activities. Knowledge providers interested in participating in R&I projects under the CASRI SRIA / funding are not involved in stages that could cause a conflict of interest or give them an unfair advantage from non-public information.

3.1.3 Knowledge users

Identification

Demand or end user-driven in CASRI means focusing on the demands of those who are responsible or feel committed to tackle the societal challenges of environment protection and sustainability transition as related to the CASRI scope and themes, i.e. end-users of knowledge in politics, business, society. These parties could benefit from solutions and improve opportunities and/or take better informed decisions on measures to take, in order to meet systemic global challenges, including contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and environment protection, at (trans-) national level by using the knowledge resulting from implementing the CASRI SRIA. The NCs (cf. Chapter 3.2.2.) identify exemplary knowledge users focusing on the CASRI themes. They can be national or European policymakers, landowners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), citizen groups, industry, etc.

Role in the project

Knowledge users on the CASRI themes participate in the national reviews as a National Key Stakeholder (cf. Chapter 3.2.1), giving input from their experience on ES R&I needs, funding options and the SPPI situation in their country. A selection of the knowledge users is also involved in the validation of the transnational commons for the SRIA or when planning the implementation of the SRIA.

3.2 CASRI Stakeholder Roles

3.2.1 National Key Stakeholders

Identification

CASRI National Key Stakeholders (NKS) are directly involved in the co-design process for the SRIA. They are a mix of knowledge ‘producers’, ‘end-users’ and ‘funders’ described before in Chapter 3.1.

Out of these three groups, the CASRI National Contacts (NCs) select approximately 20 NKS from their respective country. This number might be adjusted for partners if equivalent alternative sources of relevant information is at hand. For the selection, the NCs are asked to consider the following **suggested profile** for each suitable NKS. They:

- are recognized and knowledgeable persons in their field of profession.
- have a good overview on opportunities and challenges related to ES R&I in general and/or in a specific area of interest for CASRI (i.e. the CASRI themes and/or cross-cutting themes like Science Policy Practice Interaction (SPPI)).
- have a clear vision on, and insight in required solutions and knowledge demands (short & long term).
- are well-positioned and are participating in relevant network(s) to support the implementation of potential CASRI activities and the SRIA.

The NKS selection in total per country should represent **3 dimensions**:

1. **Coverage of** as many of the **CASRI themes** as possible (at least 3). However, the limited number of NKS and the complexity of the themes might make it difficult to cover each topic in depth. Thus, the focus should be on those NKS that can address dimensions of the CASRI premises of ES R&I to address Global Challenges and SDGs (systemic, actionable, transversal) rather than specific sectoral or disciplinary insights of a theme. Notwithstanding, recognising the overall goal of CASRI to link EPAs, a focus on only two themes by a CASRI EPA partner is accepted if this is due to a specific thematic mandate of the EPA in question (i.e. this EPA would not be able to support ES R&I outside its core domains).
2. **Balanced distribution** and representation of individuals deriving from the funders (1/3), end-users (1/3), and knowledge providers (maximum 1/3) (cf. also Table 1).
3. **Diversity** to enable a broad and inclusive representation (i.e. age, gender, socio-economic backgrounds, geographical spread over the country).

The CASRI NKS shall be identified by the NCs (cf. Chapter 3.2.2) through: (1) making a long-list of relevant organisational and individual contacts and networks; (2) increase the list through “snowballing”: asking i.e. colleagues on CASRI themes and (potential) NKS for their relevant contacts; (3) approaching authors from relevant documents (i.e. SRIAs) identified in the desk study. The identified potential NKS are then be approached and those willing or able to participate become a NKS and added to a NKS registry. The involved NKS might change over the project’s lifetime. From the experience of the INSPIRATION project (cf. Chapter 1), some NKS step out and other relevant NKS might be attracted over time.

Each NKS is provided with GDPR information and asked to give written consent that information collated through their engagement can be used in CASRI.

Selected NKS: After the national comprehensive review, approximately four NKS per country are asked to continue in the transnational phases of the co-design. These NKS are identified based on:

- Coverage over the most important CASRI themes as identified in the specific country.
- Represent research funders/ programme owners and managers.
- Willingness to be/remain active through the co-design process. The selected NKS should feel dedicated to the CASRI objectives and be able to spend time/energy in the co-design process.

TABLE 1: GENERAL NKS CATEGORIES (CF. ALSO CHAPTER 3.2.1) AND EXAMPLES

Knowledge users	Funders	Knowledge providers
<p>ES practitioners and policymakers that either work on identified themes or could benefit from the knowledge and solutions (knowledge demand side) such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians and policymakers on different levels (national / regional / local) 	<p>ES R&I funders, programme owners and managers such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National/regional ministries/ authorities responsible for defining, financing or managing R&I programmes carried out at national or regional level 	<p>ES R&I and transformation experts in politics, research, society, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPAs of European countries not involved in CASRI • Scientific research institutions, universities, research

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs and other representatives of society • Interest groups representing business and economy (i.e. green finance) • Professional associations (i.e. planners, developers, advisers) <p>Commercial enterprises (large, small and medium enterprises including industry and multinationals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research councils, funding agencies or other national or regional organisations that implement R&I programmes under supervision of programme owners • Directors and managers of ES R&I programmes, even if not intended for public R&I support, i.e. tendered research tasks for policy advice of ministries/authorities • Private R&I funders, such as foundations, banks, (re)insurance, PPP (Public Private Partnerships) 	<p>institutes and networks in CASRI-involved countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPPI experts • National science academies, and other societies and organisations in CASRI-involved countries • National partners in relevant multilateral initiatives, i.e. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES)
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Role in the project

All NKS participate in the comprehensive national review, giving input from their experience on ES R&I needs, funding options and the SPPI situation in their country. They are interviewed by the NCs in a first step. In a second step the NKS are invited to a workshop to synthesise, review and prioritise the countries' inputs for the CASRI ES R&I needs, SPPI experiences and funding options.

Selected NKS, four per country, are also to be involved in the transnational phases of the co-design: the identification and verification of transnational commons, matching topics and funding opportunities and implementation activities. The selected NKS ensure a quality and relevance check. Some might become ambassadors of the CASRI network supporting its dissemination and exploitation.

3.2.2 National Contacts

Identification and appointment

CASRI National Contacts (NCs) are appointed expert representatives of official consortium members in the 13 participating countries that started CASRI. They were identified during the proposal writing or at the start of the project. NCs are either national Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs), environment ministries or expert organisations. CASRI has been and remains open to associate new partners that are interested to participate and that would follow the CASRI approach - as a result, the Basque country in Spain become an Associated Partner of the CASRI consortium and appointed an NC. Table 2 provides an overview of the NCs, represented countries and organisations and type of organisation.

TABLE 2: OVERVIEW ON NATIONAL CONTACTS

Country [region]	Name	Organisation	Type
Austria	Camilo Molina Kathrin Röderer	EAA - Environment Agency Austria (Umweltbundesamt Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung)	National agency

Belgium [Flanders]	Kathleen Van Heuverswyn Marleen van Steertegem	VLO - DOMG - Flemish Region, Department Environment and Spatial Planning (Vlaams Planbureau voor Omgeving)	Regional agency
Bulgaria	Ina Aneva	BAS - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Българската академия на науките)	National science academy
Finland	Eeva Karjalainen	Syke - Finnish Environment Institute (Suomen ympäristökeskus)	National agency
France	Dominique Mathieu-Huber Bastien Breton	MTECT - Ministry of Ecological Transition (Ministère de la transition écologique et de la cohésion des territoires)	National ministry
Germany	Stephan Bartke Sonja Otto	UBA - German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt)	National agency
Ireland	Darragh O'Neill	EPA IE - Environmental Protection Agency Ireland	National agency
Italy	Raffaella Alessi	ISPRA - Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale)	National agency
Montenegro	Sanja Varajic	ME - Ministry of Economic Development	National ministry
Netherlands	Mariësse van Sluisveld	PBL - Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving)	National agency
Slovakia	Boris Lipták	SAZP - Slovak Environment Agency (Slovenská agentúra životného prostredia)	National agency
Switzerland	Gabriela Wülser (SCNAT) Elisabeth Schubiger (SCNAT) Pierre Queloz (FOEN)	SCNAT - Swiss Academy of Sciences (Akademie der Naturwissenschaften Schweiz) FOEN - Federal Office for the Environment	National science academy National agency
UK [Wales]	Christopher Collins	NRW - Natural Resources Wales	Regional agency
Spain [Basque country]	Ander Elgorriaga	<i>iHobe - Environmental Management Public Agency of the Basque Government (currently in the phase to become Associated Partner to CASRI)</i>	Regional agency

Role in the project

In each of the participating CASRI countries/regions, NCs are in charge for the implementation of the national comprehensive review in their respective country, i.e. the NC identifies the NKS (cf. Chapter 3.2.1) and conducts the desk study, NKS interviews, NKS workshop and national report. Throughout the project, NCs link NKS and the project, in particular the four selected NKS to ensure the co-design of the SRIA and link it to the funding landscape (funding institutions & mechanisms).

3.2.3 Theme Leaders

Identification and appointment

In the preparation of the project, CASRI partners chose four themes that they defined as particularly relevant in terms of innovative ES R&I in terms of systemic, actionable and transversal contributions to address the global challenges and SGDs. These are: Resilient, net-zero, circular production systems; Biodiversity and climate; Sustainable urbanisation; Environment and nature friendly energy transition. To support the identification of transnational commons, each topic is supported by one expert from the CASRI consortium.

TABLE 3: OVERVIEW ON THEME LEADERS

Name	Organisation (short)	Theme
Mariësse van Sluisveld	PBL	Resilient, net-zero, circular production systems
Kaisa Korhonen-Kurki	Syke	Biodiversity and climate
Karl Eckert	UBA	Sustainable urbanisation
Helmut Gaugitsch	EAA	Environment and nature friendly energy transition

Role in the project

The Theme Leaders support the Core Group through 1) delivering an overview of transnational shared demands & experiences (and by which country) resulting from the NC national inventories, grouped under common themes; 2) communicating back to the Core Group for the identification of transnational commons on the status of integrations and in the phase of matching topics and funding opportunities for recommendations and priorities for the SRIA.

3.2.4 International Advisory Board

Identification and appointment

An International Advisory Board (IAB) is helping the overall co-design process with expert advice. The IAB is composed of four experts and plays a key role in the quality assurance, dissemination and exploitation of CASRI. In selecting the IAB members, also the three dimensions for NKS selection were considered, i.e. expertise in several CASRI themes, balanced distribution regarding stakeholder categories, and diversity.

Members of the IAB are (in alphabetical order of surname):

- **Prof. Hans Bruyninckx, PhD (Belgium/EU)**, former Executive Director of the European Environment Agency 2013-2023. Expert UN-International Resource Panel. Expert in European and international environmental policy, governance of environmental issues and sustainable development.
- **Prof. Stefan Reis, PhD (Germany)**, Head of Division “Environment and Sustainability” at DLR Projektträger. Advises on strategies and programmes; plans, implements funding

programmes; evaluates impact for German Federal and State Ministries, European Commission, science organisations and foundations.

- **Henriette Spyra (Austria)**, Director General Innovation & Technology at the Ministry for Climate, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation & Technology. Experience in the research, technology and innovation sector. Previously head of science at Environment Agency Austria, positions in Austrian Institute of Technology, AustriaTech.
- **Päivi Tikka, PhD (Finland)**, Director of Division of Strategic Research at Academy of Finland. Extensive experience on research funding development in the field of sustainability.

Role in the project

The role of the four IAB members is to: 1) formulate recommendations and guidance on the SRIA development and implementation models; 2) support the elaboration of the SRIA and funding programmes with existing knowledge and experience; 3) present challenges for the project through the identification of potential emerging needs; 4) where possible, strengthen the SRIA implementation by up-taking the identified R&I needs into their own institutional roadmaps; 5) assist the CASRI project for the dissemination and the use of the project outputs.

The IAB regularly meets as part of the annual meetings as well as bi-annually online in order to provide transversal support to the bottom-up approach for each step of the project.

3.3 Specific group/role: Environment Protection Agencies and alike institutions

Identification

As the CASRI project aims to link research focused EPAs in Europe with stakeholders of the European Research Area (ERA), it is obvious that EPAs and alike institutions are further key actors. Most important for CASRI are the EPA Network and IG EPAS.

The EPA Network is an informal alliance of Heads of EPAs from 38 European countries, including the European Environment Agency (EEA). This network, established in 2003, brings together knowledge producers, regulators, researchers, and policy advisers to enhance environmental protection efforts and strengthen the collective environmental agenda. The diverse roles and national contexts of its members allow the network to explore various approaches to European environmental legislation and address common concerns. By sharing best practices and insights, the network significantly benefits its member agencies' operations. It engages stakeholders through ad hoc meetings, events, and statements, and collaborates closely with other environmental networks like the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) and the European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA). The network's voluntary, informal and flexible structure enables it to adapt to evolving needs while minimising environmental impact through web-based meetings.

The Interest Group on Sustainability Research and Solutions (IG EPAS) is part of the EPA Network and was established in 2022 to enhance strategic research collaboration among EPAs and between the EPA Network and its partners. IG EPAS supports national contributions to policy priorities across Europe that seek urgent, transformative sustainable changes in society and the economy. It focuses on integrating science and policy to generate actionable evidence for the

European Green Deal and Just Transition policies, as well as the United Nations Agenda 2030 goals. By leveraging the unique capacities of EPAs, IG EPAS aims to improve knowledge creation on systemic, actionable, and transversal levels, addressing future research and innovation questions. The group provides a platform for mutual exchange and learning, supports transdisciplinary research collaborations, and facilitates strategic and operational collaboration with shared goals. Activities include stakeholder meetings and contributions to the R&I Days. Members include representatives from 13 European countries and the European Environment Agency, with the German Environment Agency and the EEA co-chairing the group. The CASRI project and IG EPAS have a strong overlap of partners, but is not identical. IG EPAS initiated the CASRI project as a mean to support its collaboration.

Other EPAs: CASRI is also welcoming other EPAs or alike partners to join. Notably, contacts have been established with the US EPA.

Role in the project

The role of the EPA Network and IG EPAS is to help CASRI partners understand the needs of EPAs and to help exploit and disseminate CASRI results to the members of IG EPAS, the EPA Network and beyond. Therefore, they are regularly updated and involved through the coordinator and the Associated Partner EEA.

CASRI and IG EPASs partners identify building blocks for long terms collaboration of research focused EPAs and stakeholders of the ERA, in particular other R&I funders and institutes driving ES R&I.

4. Involvement of stakeholders throughout project

As described in the previous Chapters, the various CASRI stakeholders are involved at different moments in the co-design process. This is outlined in more detail for each phase below.

4.1 Comprehensive national reviews

The comprehensive national reviews are divided in three steps: (1) National Contacts (NCs) guidelines and National Key Stakeholders (NKS) selection; (2) Collate information on national level: desk study and NKS interviews; (3) Review and synthesis of the collected information.

4.1.1 National Contact guidelines and National Key Stakeholders selection

The NCs identify relevant NKS in their country, coming from different backgrounds and with overview on the CASRI themes (cf. Chapter 3.2.1).

How the NC work is to be performed, is described in more detail in NC guidelines, which were elaborated based on the INSPIRATION project (cf. Bartke et al. 2018 and Chapter 1) and made available to the NCs through the internal CASRI internal workspace. They were presented to the NCs on several occasions, i.e. at a dedicated workshop during the CASRI kick off meeting in March 2024 and at regular online meetings.

The identified NKS per country are listed in an NKS registry at the internal CASRI workspace. The registry is a spreadsheet collating information on the single contacts per country. The registry collates information on the name of the person and its organisation, the category of stakeholders (funder, knowledge user or producer), the type of organisation (i.e. public authority, university, business/ industry, NGO) and if the contact is an expert in one or more of the CASRI themes. It also

foresees information about the status of the NKS involvement, i.e. if interviewed or if chosen as “selected NKS” for involvement beyond the national comprehensive review. The registry is a living document where NCs update information in regularly. All other information, i.e. email or telephone contacts, should only be added if the contact gives a written informed consent, i.e. contacting of NKS is done only through the respective NC in this phase. The collected information in the NKS registry gives an overview on the status of the NKS involvement and should ensure that CASRI works with a balanced group of NKS in terms of expertise, background and diversity.

4.1.2 Collate information on national level: desk study and National Key Stakeholders interviews

NCs collate information by performing a desk study on CASRI themes, existing and promising funding schemes, and in parallel, by interviewing the selected NKS to complement this information, together with relevant aspects on Science Policy Practice Interaction (SPPI).

For the interviews, a questionnaire was developed and discussed at the start of the CASRI project and then discussed and tested during a dedicated workshop. The template is divided in an introduction and three main sections: 1) E&S R&I state of the art, needs and gaps 2) funding state of the art and outlook, 3) Science Policy Practice Interfacing. After the refinement and release of the final version, the NCs translate this questionnaire to their own language for the interviews to be conducted usually in native language.

The NCs have monthly online meetings, focusing on specific aspects (such as the Science Policy Interface-special provided by the EEA) and procedures to exchange experiences (such as the NC meeting that goes into any improvements of the interviewing procedure and/or questionnaire and reporting of results).

A template for the national (interim and final) reports is the basis for the NCs to document the review and synthesis of the collected information. These draft reports are reviewed by the coordinating partner and optionally by the Core Group³, to identify any striking differences between countries i.e. level of detail, any missing CASRI themes, etc.

4.1.3 Review and synthesis of the collected information

All NKS of a country are invited to a national workshop for reviewing, synthesising and prioritising the gathered information from the desk study and interviews (the draft national reports). A guideline for the set up for the workshops is made available to the NCs. The NCs adapt this, so it fits to the national situation of the participating countries.

After the workshops, the national interim reports are being updated and finalised and delivered to all CASRI partners on the internal CASRI workspace. The coordinating partner for the comprehensive national reviews combine them to one report “National comprehensive reviews on ES R&I needs, funding, SPPI” which is then reviewed by the Core Group and the IAB. The NKS are in this stage asked to do a final revision of their specific country-chapter of this report.

The above mentioned report is due in November 2024 and acts as a basis for the following phases of the co-design.

³ The Core Group is the management board of CASRI representing the Coordinator, Work Package Leaders, Theme Leaders and core partners.

4.2 Identification of transnational commons

The overall goals of co-design and stakeholder involvement activities of this phase are to ensure that interpretations on transnational commons correspond with the original data from the national comprehensive reviews, to ensure that all relevant key materials are included (especially related to insights emerging outside the national cases) and to provide a coherent and useful basis for the matching between topics and funding opportunities (cf. Chapter 4.3). Importantly, stakeholder involvement provides opportunities for a critical assessment of the feasibility of the initial four CASRI key themes and potential additional themes, helps to identify ambiguities that need to be clarified, and provides additional justifications for the selection of themes, topics or issues that should - or should not - be included as transnational commons.

4.2.1 Understanding transnational shared demands - involvement of selected National Key Stakeholders in the national comprehensive reports analysis, evaluation and synthesis

The content of the national comprehensive reports is analysed, evaluated and synthesised by the CASRI partner leading the transnational commons identification phase, supported by the Theme Leaders (TLs), who guide the analysis on their specific CASRI theme (cf. Chapter 3.2.3). The themes are aimed at addressing systemic, actionable and transversal premises and to focus the national level data collection through interviews and desk studies. Based on the initial screening and content analyses of the national comprehensive reports, the feasibility of the four CASRI themes and any new and/or cross-cutting theme are assessed by the TLs, involving the four selected NKS per country (cf. Chapter 3.2.1). For this assessment, responses are collected by email with a concise draft presentation (leaflet or slides) providing a provisional summary of how the four themes were received and what potential new (i.e. cross-cutting) themes emerged from interviews and desk studies. The task considers in particular the societal relevance, the ability to contribute to important challenges and the future responsiveness of the selected topics. The assessment verifies or leads to adjustments, additions or re-groupings of the proposed themes leading to the final set of common themes. The common themes are verified by the CASRI Core Group and the IAB.

4.2.2 Transnational commons - co-creation workshop for evaluating initial results

Based on the full content analysis of the national comprehensive reports, a co-creation workshop is organised to evaluate the initial results on transnational commons. The content analysis is used to evaluate and synthesise key issues and topics under the identified themes, resulting in an initial overview of the transnationally shared demands. The co-creative in-person workshop evaluates the results through a plenary session to present the outcome, followed by a session aimed at verifying and prioritising main impacts to make per CASRI theme and complement potentially missing ES R&I topics, aims and funding options.

Besides the CASRI Core Group (including all TLs), NCs and IAB, the selected NKSs are invited to participate in order to reflect the themes and topics initially identified, also contributing to build co-ownership for the processed topics and themes. Additional stakeholders (especially potential funders), also from other countries and European/international institutions, are planned to be invited

based on suggestions from the Core Group. A balanced distribution of stakeholders deriving from the ES R&I policy making, funding and knowledge producing and demand sides is sought. The result of the analysis and the workshop is compiled in a report, containing an enriched, updated and prioritised overview of the transnational shared ES R&I priorities.

4.2.3 Towards transnational coalitions

The report on transnational shared ES R&I priorities is jointly evaluated in a Core Group / IAB meeting. The aim is to verify results on transnational commons. The principal criteria for verification are (1) level of identified common interest and potential to establish transnational funding; (2) anticipation of knowledge demands and pressing policy questions for the future, i.e. targeting on time horizons 2030/2050/2100 (re-evaluating the CASRI premises systemic, actionable, transversal). The agreed upon topics, priorities and potential coalitions enter the next phases of the co-design, the matchmaking process.

4.3 Matching topics and funding opportunities

4.3.1 Develop the CASRI Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

This phase builds on the identified common themes and topics to produce a comprehensive and prioritised CASRI Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). This document outlines the urgent, medium, and long-term transnational-shared ES R&I priorities, detailing specific objectives, types of activities, and anticipated scale of efforts required for effective implementation.

A preliminary step involves mapping on-going and foreseen actions co-funded by European Partnerships and Horizon Europe Missions, facilitated through collaboration with European networks, including EPAs. This mapping aims to align EU actions with transnational ES R&I priorities, identifying knowledge gaps which are currently under-represented or overlooked - this process mirrors the reviews at national levels in phase 1 (cf. Chapter 4.1).

To ensure thorough representation and integration of diverse perspectives, a one-day workshop is organised with the project partners, including the IAB. This workshop focuses on reviewing R&I objectives identified at the national and European level, assessing gaps, and translating recommendations into more actionable R&I questions to ensure that the knowledge gaps and priorities are considered in the CASRI SRIA. In the case of identified gaps, some additional surveys and/or targeted interviews are conducted with selected funders recommended by the NCs to gather further insights. The outcomes of these surveys/interviews are shared with the selected NKS, especially the funders, for a final check and integration into the SRIA.

The finalised SRIA outlines themes, potentially structured into sub- and crosscutting themes, descriptions of topics, keywords, and highlights expected impacts related to SDGs and Global Challenges. It also considers drivers and enablers to support the implementation of the strategic agenda. This document, finalised and approved by the CASRI Core Group and the IAB, is published as the “CASRI Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)”.

4.3.2 Match SRIA topics with existing funding options

In a next step, the focus is on mapping and aligning the SRIA themes and topics with existing funding opportunities at different levels (regional to international). The process begins by analysing the

funding section of the national reviews (cf. Chapter 4.1) to identify the different institutions, programmes, funding tools and instruments relevant to the four CASRI themes, involving both EPAs and alike organisations participating in CASRI and (other) potential funders.

To achieve this, existing R&I programmes at European and international level are compiled and analysed in terms of objectives, programme structure (eligibility conditions) and the possibility of joint calls for projects in close co-operation with the participating EPAs and Themes Leaders. This detailed analysis, based on interviews and desk studies, makes it possible to further identify areas that are poorly or not at all covered by a funding instrument. A draft mapping report is then reviewed by IAB members to gain critical point feedback. If gaps or inconsistencies are identified, additional NKS interviews are conducted to refine the analysis.

Finally, CASRI partners organise meetings and contribute to a workshop (as part of Implementation Activities described in Chapter 4.4.) with potential ES R&I funders and policymakers to discuss collaborative opportunities for addressing identified funding gaps. The final outcomes, including all feedback, is compiled into the report “Map of funding opportunities for ES R&I”. This report is EU-classified and not public, reflecting potential concerns of potential SRIA stakeholders about the confidentiality of strategic insights, sensitive negotiation positions, preliminary and evolving nature of the information and data privacy and compliance.

4.4 Implementation activities

4.4.1 Co-design of the SRIA implementation plan

The SRIA Implementation Plan is a crucial step in transforming the SRIA into actionable steps. In this phase, CASRI creates a detailed work plan based on the SRIA and the funding opportunities report (cf. Chapter 4.3), outlining key actors, activities, timelines and resources.

Collaborative work plan development

The development of the work plan is guided by principles of variable geometry, flexibility, and responsiveness. This approach allows partners to join on their specific priorities, using their preferred mechanisms and instruments. This ensures that the implementation remains adaptable to changing circumstances and can respond effectively to emerging challenges. The work plan is co-created with input from key actors, including ESR&I funding EPAs and National Key Stakeholders (NKS), ensuring that all relevant perspectives are integrated.

The activities to be included in the work plan encompass a wide range of potential collaborative efforts such as co-funded or aligned research calls, knowledge transfer initiatives, practitioner mobility programmes, capacity building, and the provision of access to research and innovation infrastructures. Additionally, demonstration and innovation actions, as well as science-policy interfacing and public awareness efforts, are integral to the implementation strategy. The co-design process also involves the establishment of metrics to evaluate the success of these activities, ensuring that progress can be effectively tracked and adjusted as needed.

A key milestone in this task is the organisation of a workshop involving the CASRI Core Group, EPA funders, the IAB, and, if feasible, external partners. This workshop serves as a platform for discussing the proposed implementation plan, gathering feedback, and recommending any necessary adjustments. The revised recommendations are documented in a report which provides a finalised plan for the SRIA implementation.

Memorandum of Understanding: Securing Long-Term Collaboration

To facilitate the long-term implementation and execution of the SRIA, this phase also involves the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for multi-annual calls within three years. This MoU outlines the processes for implementing these calls, focusing on areas of mutual interest for co-funding EPAs and other potential funders identified in the previous step (cf. Chapter 4.3). The MoU is classified as EU Confidential to protect strategic interests and ensure that sensitive negotiations with funders and policymakers remain in a trusted environment.

4.4.2 Institutionalising the IG EPAS

The co-design process focuses on establishing a sustainable structure for the ongoing collaboration of EPAs and alike organisations beyond the CASRI project. It aims to institutionalise the Interest Group on Sustainability Research and Solutions of EPAs (IG EPAS), ensuring that the collaborative efforts initiated under CASRI can continue and expand over time.

Defining the IG Structure and Strategy

The co-design activities begin with reviewing the purpose, scope and objectives of the IG EPAS, including the roles and responsibilities of its members, the frequency of meetings, and the decision-making processes. This foundational work involves extensive collaboration with all CASRI and IG EPAS partners to ensure that the IG's structure is robust and capable of sustaining long-term efforts.

Next, the co-design process extends to establishing partnerships and developing strategies for collaboration with other organisations and networks that share similar interests in ES R&I. By identifying the IG EPAS's governance structure, required resources and potential funding, the task ensures that the group remains dynamic and effective in driving forward its objectives.

The co-design process culminates in a workshop where CASRI partners and EPA Network partners review and discuss the identified building blocks, joint activities and instruments for collaboration beyond the CASRI project.

4.4.3 Co-development and execution of joint projects and activities

As third element of implementation, CASRI partners focus on co-designing and executing joint projects and activities that support the uptake of ES R&I, particularly in regulatory and policy contexts.

Identifying and shortlisting activities

SPPI activities from national reviews and transnational outcomes are identified and shortlisted in collaboration with the IAB, ensuring that the selected activities are aligned with both national priorities and transnational goals.

A list of potential joint projects is co-developed, including objectives, target groups, and expected outcomes. At least three activities/projects are selected based on their impact and feasibility. These activities may include webinars on ES R&I topics for policymakers, knowledge transfer activities, joint research projects and demonstrator projects showcasing the benefits of ES R&I results.

Execution and evaluation of activities

The execution of the selected activities/projects is closely monitored, with outcomes evaluated and documented in a report. This provides insights into the effectiveness of the co-designed actions and offers recommendations for future initiatives.

5. Timeline

The CASRI co-design process is planned to be implemented within 32 months with a duration of the single phases as follows:

- (1) Comprehensive national reviews: 11 months (from January to November 2024);
- (2) Identification of transnational commons: 11 months (from October 2024 to August 2025);
- (3) Matching topics and funding opportunities: 12 months (from May 2025 to April 2026);
- (4) Implementation Actions: 16 months (from May 2025 to August 2026).

As described in Chapter 4, each phase is divided into several activities, involving different stakeholders at various stages. An overview of the timeline of the different activities, indicating the types of stakeholders involved can be found in Annex 1.

Other elements relevant for the timeline:

- The CASRI Core Group meets online every two to four weeks. It reviews the status of progress and decides on taking adjustments if needed.
- Evaluations on the ongoing activities take place during the regular Core Group and overall project meetings (one online and one face-to-face meeting per year). A final evaluation is planned to be undertaken at the concluding project meeting in summer 2026.
- IAB meetings are foreseen bi-annually (online or in person as part of/ back-to-back to CASRI meetings).
- There is a strong link with the IG EPAS, which meets monthly, and with the EPA Network, which meets twice a year.

6. Keeping stakeholders engaged

Throughout and beyond the co-design process described in Chapter 4, CASRI aims to build up a community of interest around the development and implementation of the ES SRIA and the long-term collaboration of R&I focused EPAs and their stakeholders. All National Key Stakeholders (NKS) involved throughout the co-design, National Contacts (NCs), the International Advisory Board (IAB) and the IPG EPAS and the EPA Network are invited to further engage in CASRI as ambassadors by initiating or contributing to discussions, by providing ideas or gaining insights.

The continuous engagement of the NKS, in particular of selected NKS, is steered by CASRI partners (and in particular by the NCs and partners coordinating one of the phases), and takes place during face-to-face meetings (i.e. in national workshops of NCs with all NKS, in meetings foreseen on common themes or implementation activities with selected NKS or on funding options with funders and EPAs). It is also planned to be supported by a CASRI LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12905562/> to which all stakeholders are invited and which offers a space for discussions, and sharing of resources on CASRI themes and Science Policy Practice Interaction (SPPI) in general; and (2) a LinkedIn newsletter, informing stakeholders regularly on CASRI updates, highlights and insights⁴.

⁴ The tools are described in more detail in the Communication, dissemination & exploitation plan (CASRI Deliverable D6.2)⁴.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of the co-design is monitored by the CASRI Core Group and in particular by the responsible CASRI partners leading the single phases. The National Contacts (NCs) and International Advisory Board (IAB) activities are monitored through their participation in regular (online) meetings and contributions. The National Key Stakeholders (NKS) involvement, in particular in the national comprehensive review phase, is monitored through the (project internal) NKS registry (cf. Chapter 3.2.1). In this registry, the NCs update the information about the status of the NKS involvement on a regular basis, so that project partners always have an up-to-date overview. This is then proceeded also in the following phases of the co-design where the contributions of the selected NKS are tracked. The NKS registry allows to draw some statistics for reporting about the different phases. In terms of collection and storage of information, the NKS registry follows General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and is in line with the CASRI Data Management Plan⁵.

The involvement of the different stakeholders in terms of content is monitored by the CASRI partners leading the respective phases through collecting the contributions and reporting them to the Core Group. The Core Group reflects about experiences and results and, in case necessary, adapts the co-design methodology. A qualitative evaluation of the co-design is foreseen by the Core Group, drawing conclusions and learnings for further co-design processes of Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas.

Advise by the International Advisory Board (IAB) in the regular annual meeting and in ad hoc consultations further supports monitoring and evaluation.

8. Concluding remarks

This report outlines the co-design methodology used in the Horizon Europe coordination and support action CASRI, to engage stakeholders in creating an Environment and Sustainability Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). This SRIA aims to identify and to prioritise research and innovation needs over the next several years at both national and international levels, guiding national Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs) which aim to improve their collaboration with one another and with the stakeholders of the European Research Area. CASRI seeks to stimulate funding for critical environmental and societal challenges in Europe, aligning with European R&I funding frameworks, particularly Horizon Europe and its next generation.

Stakeholder involvement is crucial, with a detailed plan to keep key stakeholders engaged throughout the project. The report includes a timeline, a monitoring process, and strategies for maintaining stakeholder interest.

The implementation of the methodology framework for co-design in CASRI, will be regularly evaluated by the CASRI Core Group and IAB. These evaluations will allow for adaptations of activities in the detailed planning of CASRI. Lessons learned will be valuable for other projects or initiatives developing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas (SRIA).

⁵ “DMP - Data Management Plan (CASRI Deliverable D1.1)“.

9. References

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Annex 1 Detailed work plan

	2024												2025												2026							
Project month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dez	Jan	Feb	Mrz	Apr	Mai	Jun	Jul	Aug
Phase 1	Comprehensive national reviews																															
NC guidelines and NKS selection																																
Collate information on national level: desk study and NKS interviews																																
Review and synthesise the collated information																																
Phase 2													Identification of transnational commons																			
Understanding transnational shared demands																																
Transnational commons																																
Towards transnational coalitions																																
Phase 3													Matching topics and funding opportunities																			
Develop the CASRI SRIA																																
Match SRIA topics with existing funding options																																
Phase 4													Implementation activities																			
SRIA implementation plan																																
Institutionalising the Interest Group (IG) of EPAs																																
Identifying, executing joint projects and activities to support uptake of ES R&I results																																

National Contact (NC) ● National Key Stakeholder (NKS) ● Selected NKS ● International Advisory Board ● CASRI Core Group ● Theme Leaders ●



Collaborate ■ Innovate ■ Sustain ■



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