

## Recommendation 2

(regarding the identification of societal and public sector needs):

Qualitative approaches to identify societal and public sector needs are a valuable method to help outlining public sector innovation activities, which are demand-driven and need-based.

However, care has to be taken that the needs identification follows a crowdsource approach and contains validation and prioritization processes. The caveat of this qualitative approach (to produce only a subjective, but meaningful representation) should be borne in mind.

needs identifications are the following:

The first phase (desk-based/secondary research) highlighted the critical role of a *crowdsource approach* (shared between the consortium and the expert committee) in carrying out a desk research deeply rooted in the relevant literature for identifying needs as well as for highlighting societal and public sector trends and challenges. This phase also played a pivotal role in identifying innovation solutions to meet the innovation requirements of public sector for each need and extracting information about relevant examples and case studies across Europe. This helped to situate our results in the current EU initiatives and projects that work on similar issues of public sector innovation and societal trends/challenges/needs.

The subsequent phases (2 and 3) assisted our efforts at triangulating data and information from different sources and *verifying the authenticity* of the information collected through multiple sources. Finally, phase 4 was vital to further *prioritize* and *contextualize* needs and potential solutions.

One aim of SONNETS was to identify current and emerging societal challenges and trends that will have to be tackled by the public sector and subsequently analyse and map these challenges to the different policy domains in order to identify public sector innovation requirements.

The research methodology for identifying societal needs comprises of four key phases: In the first phase, a **literature review** has been undertaken. During this phase, the needs of society, businesses and the public sector have been identified and summarized to a long list of needs, which subsequently has been clustered, revised and refined. The first phase also aimed to highlight the current societal trends and challenges relevant for each stakeholder group. In the second phase, **experts' interviews** were used to validate and prioritize these needs. The third phase consisted of a **focus group** to fine-tune and refine the results and develop possible innovation actions that could be employed to meet those needs. Finally, in the fourth phase a set of **validation activities** were conducted in the four countries involved in the project (Italy, Spain, Greece and Germany) and also via an online consultation. The main objectives were to understand the relevance of the needs identified at local level, identify potential contextual barriers or key success factors for implementation and finally to single out which policy domains were most relevant for the solution of the identified problems.

From a methodological standpoint, the **key lessons learned** throughout the process of



It is important to highlight **two caveats** of this process. The first has to do with the fact that a *qualitative approach* was selected. Thus, the representation of reality depicted should be considered similar to a painting, that is to say: a subjective yet meaningful representation of reality without any ambition of statistical representativeness. The second has to do with the *prevalence of Southern European countries* in the consortium (three out four). Such unbalance influenced in the perception of the public sector emerged from the consultation activities conducted.