Terms of Reference
Smart CSOs Community Members and Supporters

Version March 2017

1. The Smart CSOs Lab in a nutshell
The purpose of the Smart CSOs Lab is to catalyse new civil society strategies aimed at the Great Transition to a new political-economic system. This is based on the assumption that issues like climate change, mass extinction of species, inequality and mass migration are strongly rooted in the failing economic system and its governance.

The mission of the Smart CSOs Lab is to foster a growing learning network of activists/CSO leaders, funders and researchers aiming to build effective civil society strategies for the Great Transition.

The Smart CSOs Lab operates according to a number of guiding principles:

Connecting transformative knowledge
Valuable knowledge from theory and practice often sits in silos and is not effectively used by practitioners and activists. Since its beginning, the Smart CSOs Lab has connected cutting-edge academic and practical knowledge that can be considered transformative, i.e. useful from a strategic perspective for catalysing the type of change that can support the Great Transition.

Connecting diversity
At Smart CSOs Lab we prize diversity, in particular of viewpoint, gender, ethnicity and culture. As activists (not unlike other human beings) we tend to sort ourselves into rigidly like-minded groups – and stay there. As a result of how we use social media we stay in our echo chambers and are less and less exposed to diverse views. But the Great Transition demands that we listen to and understand the plurality of perspectives. The best solutions emerge from here.

Experimentation
Smart CSOs operates under a 'Lab philosophy'. This means that it is an open place where people come together to learn, develop and test ideas and ways to transform civil society organisations and their projects and campaigns. All of these are aligned with the mission of the Lab: the development of effective civil society strategies for the Great Transition.

Collaboration
Systemic change requires collaboration among different actors. The Smart CSOs Lab helps to build meaningful and trustful relationships between individuals and organisations. However, we must be mindful that collaboration can be time and resource intensive. We always aim to identify and bring on board the most relevant collaborators to fulfil our purpose and objectives.

Space for respectful free debate
The Smart CSOs Lab aims to be a space for free debate, dialogue and reflection where challenging views shall be voiced in a respectful but open manner. All voices shall be heard and listened to.
2. **Who can become a member of the Smart CSOs Community?**

The Smart CSOs Community is a growing network of activists from across civil society, as well as researchers and funders. The Smart CSOs Community is formed of **individuals** who are committed to and actively engaged in the purpose of the Smart CSOs Lab and their role as change agents, and who want to help civil society play a stronger and more effective role in supporting and catalysing systemic change.

1. Community members **have an active interest and participation in civil society** either by working in a civil society organization or being active in a social movement, as a researcher/academic with an academic interest in civil society, or as a citizen with an active participation in civil society.

2. Community members **actively participate in the Smart CSOs Lab’s activities**. They have at least once participated in a Smart CSOs workshop/conference and are committed to engage in the learning community more long-term.

3. Community members **share and are committed to the vision and purpose** of the Smart CSOs Lab and put efforts into promoting Smart CSOs objectives in their own work of activism in civil society.

3. **Community participation in Smart CSOs Lab**

Members of the Smart CSOs Community are:

- **invited to participate in the Smart CSOs core activities**, workshops and conferences (preferential to others but subject to limited places at some events).

- **regularly invited to help develop Smart CSOs core activities** (content, process and overall strategic direction). Upon request and with sufficient interest, annual member meetings are held to discuss the strategic direction of the Smart CSOs Lab.

- **invited to propose and start Smart CSOs working and discussion groups** on topics supporting the Smart CSOs core purpose.

- **supported on strategic questions** by the Smart CSOs core team (subject to capacity).

- **encouraged and receive support to spread the ideas and approaches of the Smart CSOs Lab** into new circles and networks (subject to capacity).

- **invited to contribute to the regular Smart CSOs newsletter** and blog on theory and practice.

- **included on an email group**, where they are encouraged to share relevant information\(^1\).

4. **Becoming a Smart CSOs Supporter**

Smart CSOs supporters realise that it requires a collective effort to support the Smart CSOs Lab’s activities and make a financial contribution to the Lab (organisational or individual).

**Individual Smart CSOs Supporters** make a suggested annual donation of 100 Euro to the Smart CSOs Lab. In order not to exclude those who are interested to become a Supporter, but cannot afford 100 Euro/year, a contribution of less than 100 Euro will be allowed in appropriate cases and according to personal arrangement.

**Organisational Supporters** are generally CSOs with core funding who are willing to financially support the activities of the Lab. We publish the logos of those organisations that contribute more than 1,000 Euro under the section of ‘Supporting Organisations’ on our website.

Smart CSOs Supporters receive a financial statement from the Lab on an annual basis.

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\(^1\) There may be further opportunities for online collaboration; the Core Team will use the email group to communicate about these as and when they arise.
If agreed, Smart CSOs Supporters (together with their affiliated organization) are included in the supporters list on the Smart CSOs website.

Supporter status can be cancelled for the following calendar year at any time within the current calendar year, latest 31 December.

5. Right of Exclusion

If the three conditions for being a Smart CSOs Community Member outlined in section 2 are not fulfilled, we reserve the right to deny or cancel Smart CSOs Community Member or Supporter status.