Eu-SPRI 2026 - Early Career Event - 9th June 2026, Valencia
Imagining Futures:
How can Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation contribute to grand challenges?

Final report to Eu-SPRI

Title: Imagining Futures: How can Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation contribute to grand challenges?

Location: Valencia, Spain

Date: June 9th, 2026

Organising Committee: Oksana Udovyk, Paula Otero, Cédric Gossart, Laura Soto Díaz, Sara Sanchez Lopez, Paula Garcia Silvan, Erika Sánchez Rodriguez, Alejandro Fernandez del Rio.

Number of early career attendees:

- **Total**: 25
    - **Eu-SPRI:** 20
        - Alliance Manchester Business School: 1
        - Fraunhofer ISI: 1
        - LISIS – INRAE: 1
        - Politecnico di Milano: 1
        - TU Dortmund: 1
        - University of Manchester: 2
        - University of Sussex: 4
        - Ingenio: 1
        - University of Vaasa: 1
        - Utrecht University: 7
    - **non Eu-SPRI:** 5
        - Gothenburg University: 1
        - Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf: 1
        - Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT): 1
        - University of Porto: 1
        - Wageningen University: 1

Summary of event

The Eu-SPRI 2026 Early Career Event, held in Valencia on 9 June 2026, explores how research in Studies of Policies for Research and Innovation (SPRI) can contribute to addressing grand societal challenges. The programme combines theoretical reflection with practical discussions on research careers and practices. Participants engage in creative activities discussion their research and contributing to a collective Reflection and Imagination Wall. The event is organized into four sessions. The first examines SPRI research contributions to grand challenges and the epistemological foundations of the field. The second addresses ethical and ecological issues in research, focusing on generative AI and collaborative approaches. The third encourages reflection on the PhD and early-career research experience, discussing expectations, well-being, and good research practices. The final session explores future research careers through a roundtable and discussions with academics and practitioners, ending with a reflective exercise imagining participants' future roles in society. Overall, the event fosters critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and career development among early-career researchers.

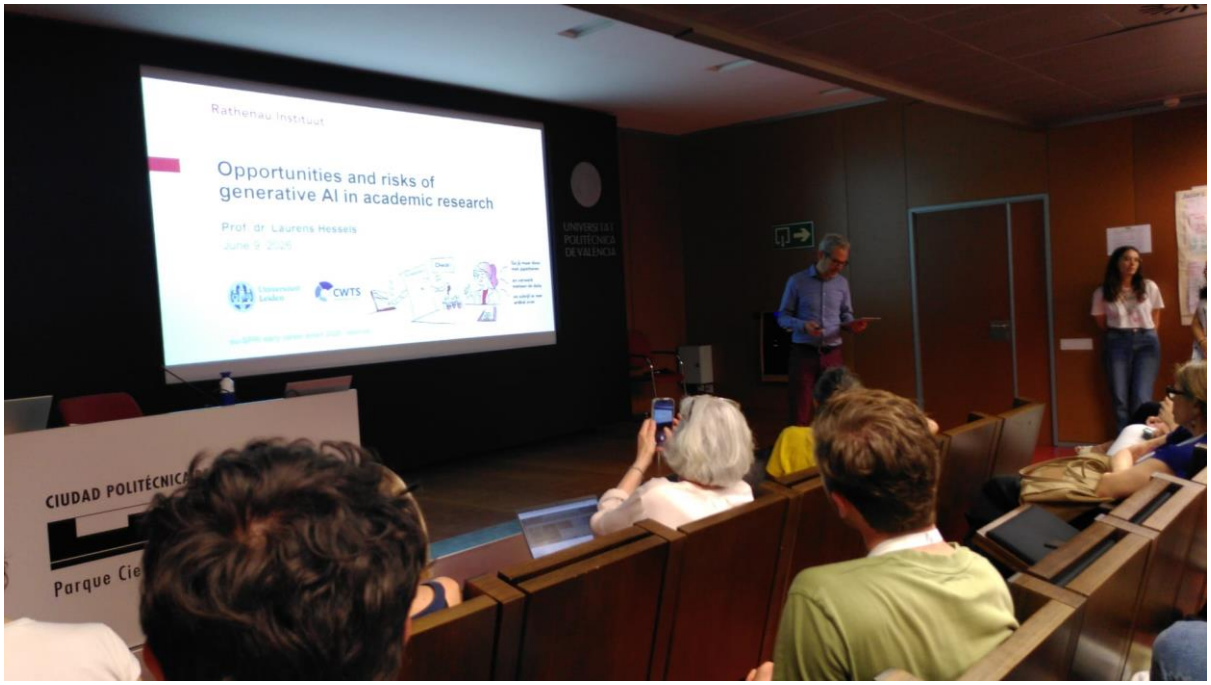
Timetable

Time	Topic	Location	Presenters
9:00 - 9:30	Registration & welcome coffee		
9:30 - 9:45	Introduction to the Event & to Eu-SPRI	Salón de actos CPI	Davide Consoli, Sandra Boni, Jordi Molas Gallart
9:45 - 10:00	Ice breaker	Salón de actos CPI	Organisers
10:00 - 11:30	**Session 1** Contributions & epistemologies of researchers in SPRI	Salón de actos CPI	Müge Özman
		Sala Imagina	Asuncion Lera St. Clair
		Sala Cambia	Bonno Pel
11:30 - 12:00	Coffee Break		
12:00 - 13:00	**Session 2** Ethical & ecological issues of research approaches and tools	Salón de actos CPI	Laurens Hessels Marta Rivera
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break		
14:00 - 15:00	**Session 3** How do we relate to our PhD or research project?	Salón de actos CPI	Paula Otero Andy Stirling
15:00 - 15:30	Coffee Break		
15:30 - 16:45	**Session 4** Where is my research (career) going?	Salón de actos CPI	Victoria Pellicer-Sifres Raquel Luján Soto Lidia García-García Oksana Udovyk
16:45	Closing of day: Group photo	Salón de actos CPI	All
19:30	Early Career Event drinks & dinner		

Full programme: https://euspri2026.webs.upv.es/index.php/earlycareer/
(all sessions were animated by early career researchers from the organising team)

Photographs

Welcome desk with volunteer Frank van der Most & coffee served by veggie catering Vegetas.



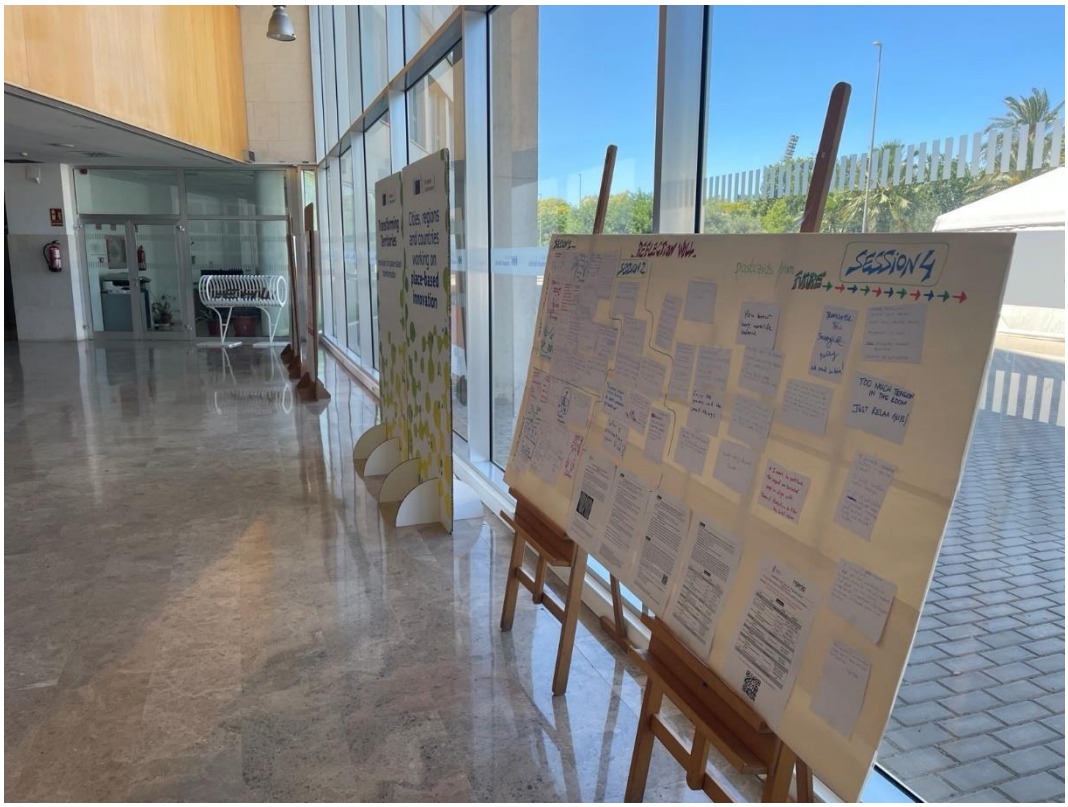
Pr Laurens Hessels (Session 2)

Pr Marta Rivera (Session 2)

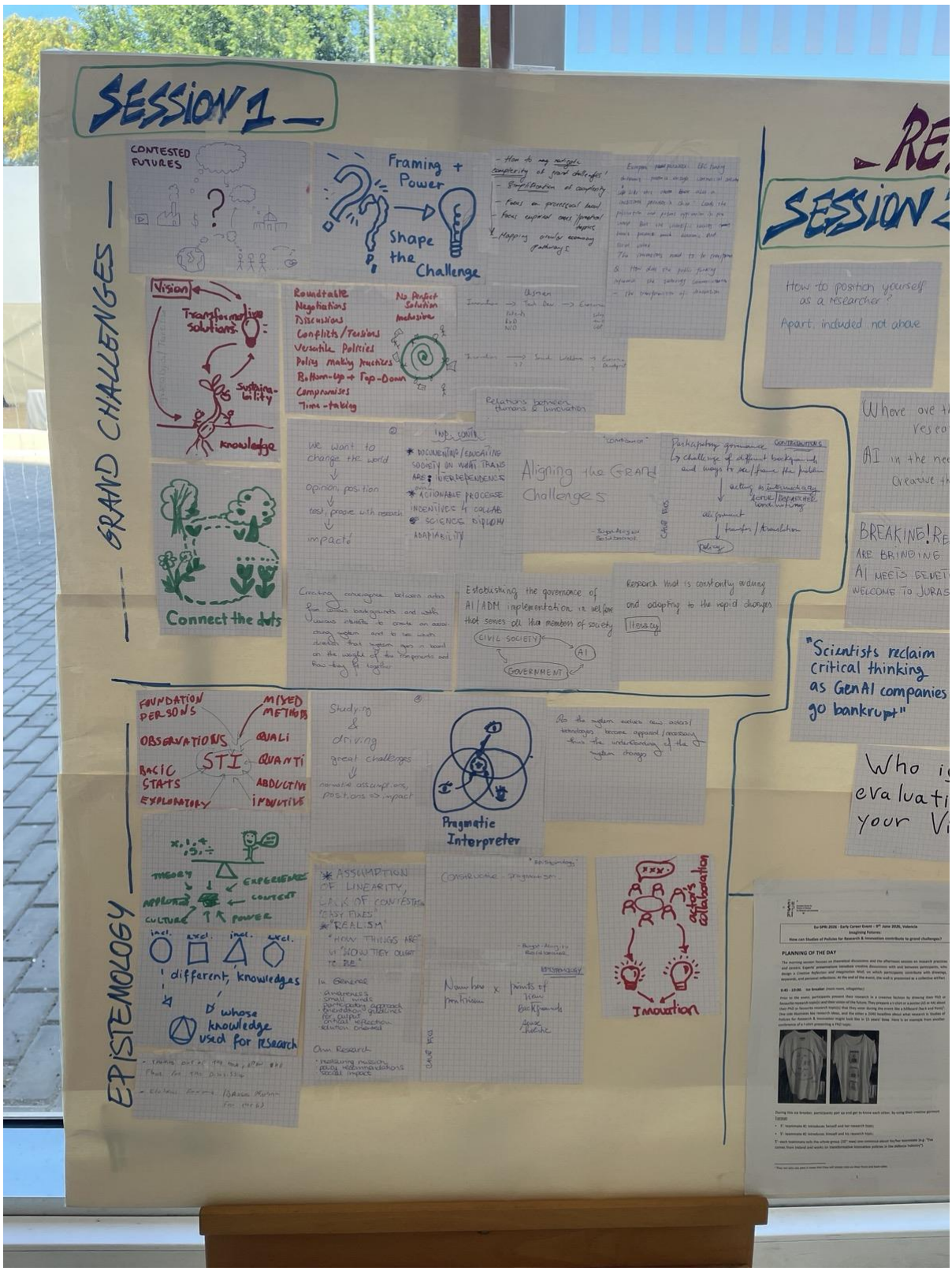
Roundtable Session 4

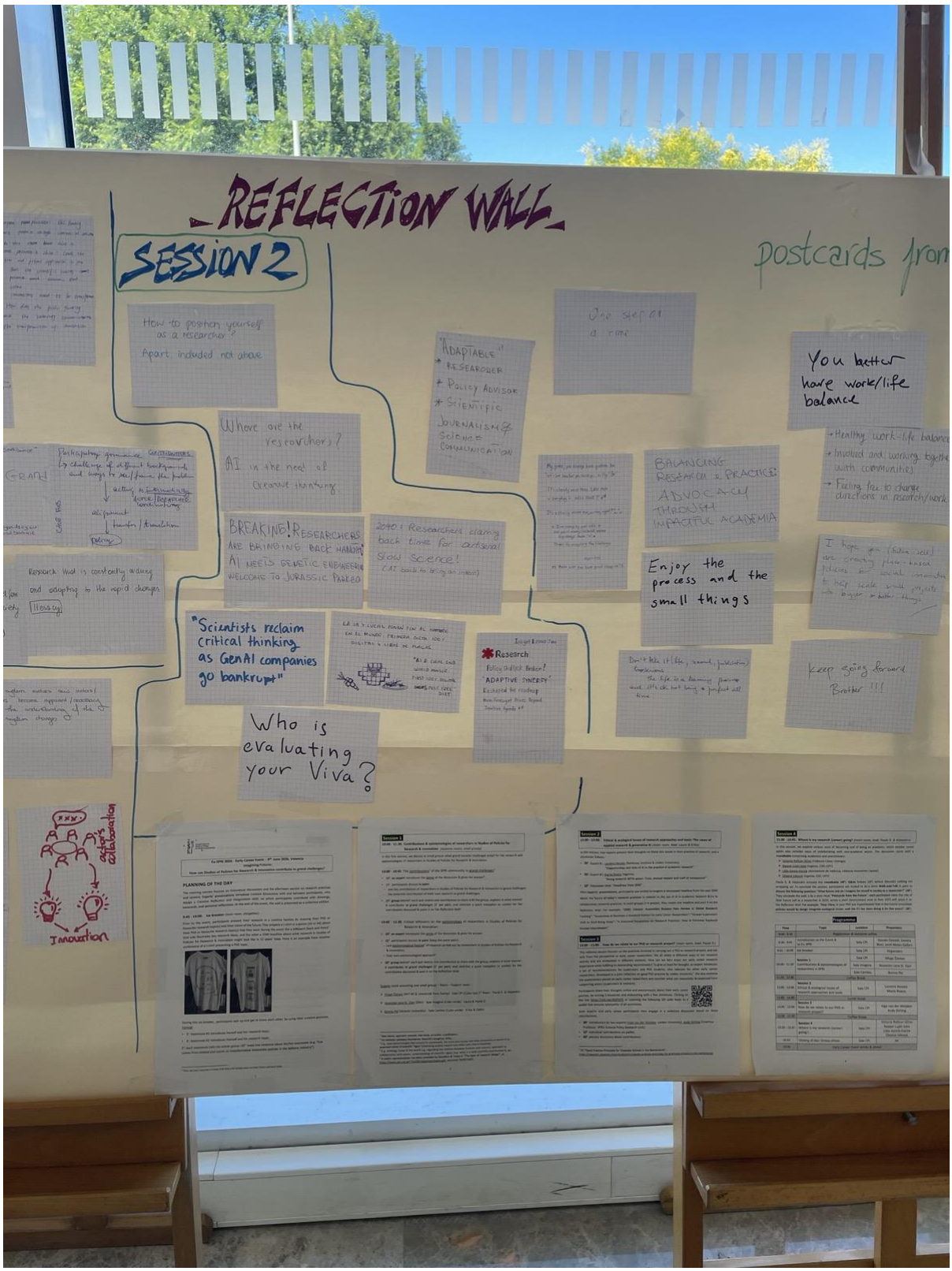
Small groups discussions (Session 2)

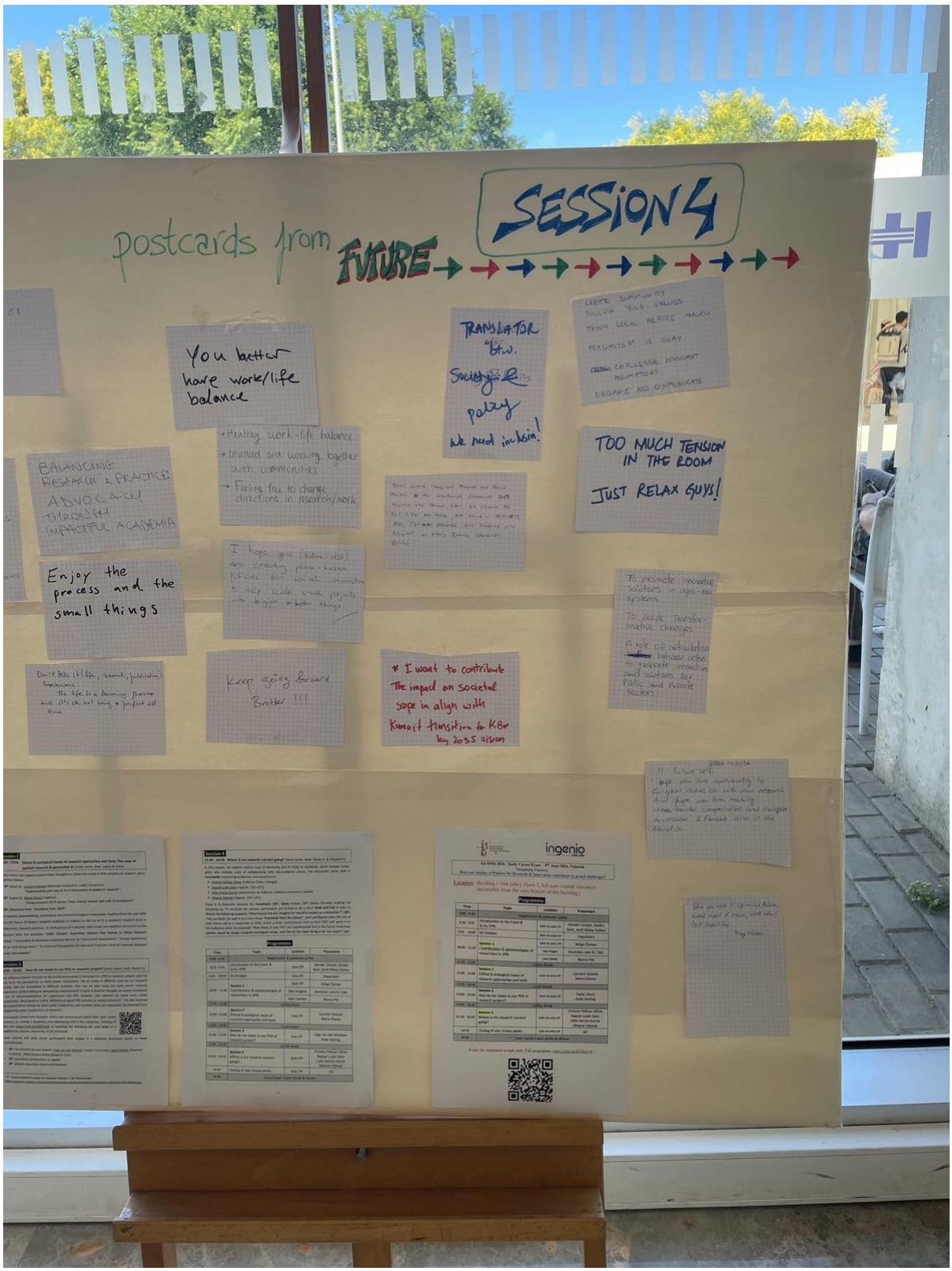
After experts' presentations, participants are invited to imagine a newspaper headline from the year 2040 about the future of today's research practices in relation to the use of AI in academic research &/or to collaborative research practices. In small groups (3-4 people), they create one headline and post it on the *Reflection Wall*. For example: "2040: Citizens' Assemblies Replace Peer Review in Global Research Funding"; "Generative AI Becomes A Standard Mentor for Early Career Researchers"; "Human Supervisors Shift to Well-Being Roles"; "A Historical Perspective on Research Practices: How AI Personas Replaced Human Interviewees".



Reflection Wall displayed in the main conference hall (see details below)


SESSION 1
GRAND CHALLENGES
EPISTEMOLOGY
CONTESTED FUTURES
Framing + Power
Shape the Challenge
Vision
Transformative solutions
Sustainability
knowledge
Roundtable
Negotiations
Discussions
Conflicts / Tensions
Versatile Politics
Policy Making Practices
Bottom-up + Top-Down
Compromises
Time-taking
No Perfect Solution
Inclusive
Connect the dots
We want to change the world
opinion, position
test, prove with research
impact
Aligning the GRAND Challenges
Participatory governance
Pragmatic Interpreter
Establishing the governance of AI/ADM implementation is welfare that serves all the members of society
CIVIL SOCIETY
AI
GOVERNMENT
Research that is constantly evolving and adapting to the rapid changes
Heraclitus
"Scientists reclaim critical thinking as GenAI companies go bankrupt"
FOUNDATION PERSONS
MIXED METHODS
OBSERVATIONS
QUALI
STI
QUANTI
BASIC STATS
ABDUCTIVE
EXPLORATORY
INTUITIVE
THEORY
EXPERIENCE
CONTEXT
CULTURE
POWER
different, knowledges
whose knowledge used for research
ASSUMPTION OF LINEARITY, LACK OF CONTESTED FACTS
"REALISM"
"HOW THINGS ARE VS "HOW THEY OUGHT TO BE"
In General
Our Research
Innovation
actors collaboration
How to position yourself as a researcher?
Apart, included not above
BREAKING! RE
ARE BRINDING
AI MEETS GENET
WELCOME TO JURAS
Who is evaluati your Vi
PLANNING OF THE DAY


REFLECTION WALL
SESSION 2
postcards from
How to position yourself as a researcher?
Apart, included not above
"ADAPTABLE" RESEARCHER
* Policy Advisor
* Scientific Journalism & Science Communication
One step at a time
You better have work/life balance
Where are the researchers?
AI in the need of Creative thinking
BREAKING! RESEARCHERS ARE BRINGING BACK HANDS-ON AI MEETS GENETIC ENGINEERING WELCOME TO JURASSIC PARKED
2040: Researchers claiming back time for artisenal Slow Science!
(AI tools to help an intern)
BALANCING RESEARCH & PRACTICE
ADVOCACY
THROUGH
IMPACTFUL ACADEMIA
Healthy work-life balance
Involved and working together with communities
Feeling free to change directions in research/work
Enjoy the process and the small things
I hope you (future self) are creating place-based policies for social innovation to help scale small projects into bigger + better things
"Scientists reclaim critical thinking as GenAI companies go bankrupt"
Research
Policy Impact Bridge!
'ADAPTIVE SYNERGY'
Research Methods
Don't take it (life, research, publication) too serious. The life is a learning journey and it's ok not being a perfect all time
Keep going forward Brother !!!
Who is evaluating your Viva?
Research: Must be constantly arising and adapting to the rapid changes
Messy!
Innovation
actors collaboration


postcards from FUTURE
SESSION 4
You better have work/life balance
TRANSLATOR "btw."
policy
We need inclusion!
CREATE COMMUNITY
FOLLOW YOUR VALUES
THINK LOCAL BEFORE MACRO
PRAGMATISM IS OKAY
CHALLENGE DOMINANT ASSUMPTIONS
ENGAGE AND COMMUNICATE
TOO MUCH TENSION IN THE ROOM
JUST RELAX GUYS!
BALANCING RESEARCH & PRACTICE
ADVOCACY
THROUGH
IMPACTFUL ACADEMIA
+ Healthy work-life balance
+ Involved and working together with communities
→ Feeling free to change directions in research/work
Enjoy the process and the small things
I hope you (future self) are creating place-based policies and social innovation to help scale small projects into bigger + better things
Keep going forward Brother !!!
* I want to contribute The impact on societal scope in align with Kunnoit transition to KBE by 2035 vision
To generate innovative solutions in agro-food systems
To guide transformative changes
A role of articulation between actors to generate innovation and solutions for Public and Private sectors
Don't take it (life, research, publication) too serious, the life is a learning process and it's ok not being a perfect all time
H. Future self
I hope you are contributing to European scales on both your research. And hope you are making great bonds, cooperation and laughter accumulate. I'm also in the direction
ingenio

Social media

- First LI post: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/c%C3%A9dric-gossart_euspri2026-sciencepolicy-researchpolicy-activity-7392644193040642048-nbws
- Pre-event LI post: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/c%C3%A9dric-gossart_programearlycareervprintpdf-share-7467633080976080896-_p4z
- Closing LI post: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/c%C3%A9dric-gossart_euspri2026-sciencepolicy-researchpolicy-activity-7471154795949625344-oDUk
- BS post from Ingenio director on D-day: https://bsky.app/profile/dc74ct.bsky.social/post/3mntqkaxcjk2k
- BS announcement post: https://bsky.app/profile/cedgos.bsky.social/post/3m52trrdow225

Feedback from participants was excellent, as demonstrated by conversations and paper feedback forms (cf. appendix); a rewarding outcome of many hours of work from the organising team.

Budget and expenditure

Type of expense	Details	Unit-cost	Units	Event Assistants	Total invoiced
Catering (2 coffee breaks + lunch & service)	Vegetas	50,6	1	40	**2024**
Dinner	ECE dinner June 9th (El Aprendiz)	46	1	31	**1426**
Accommodations Eu-SPRI participants	Accommodation early career from Eu-SPRI (2 nights)	65	2	20	**2710**
Speakers (travel costs + hotel)	Laurens Hessels				**628**
	Bonno Pel				**524**
					7312

Total claimed: 7312 €

Causes of the 18% increase:

1) In the initial budget (6200€) only 25 participants had been budgeted, we had not included the expert guests and the organising team (40 people in total for catering).
2) We had to pay 5 single rooms instead of doubles (10 participants shared a room) since one participant had to sleep alone for health reasons and 4 participants chose not to use our hotel, hence the hotel switched to single rooms that are more expensive.

Blog article

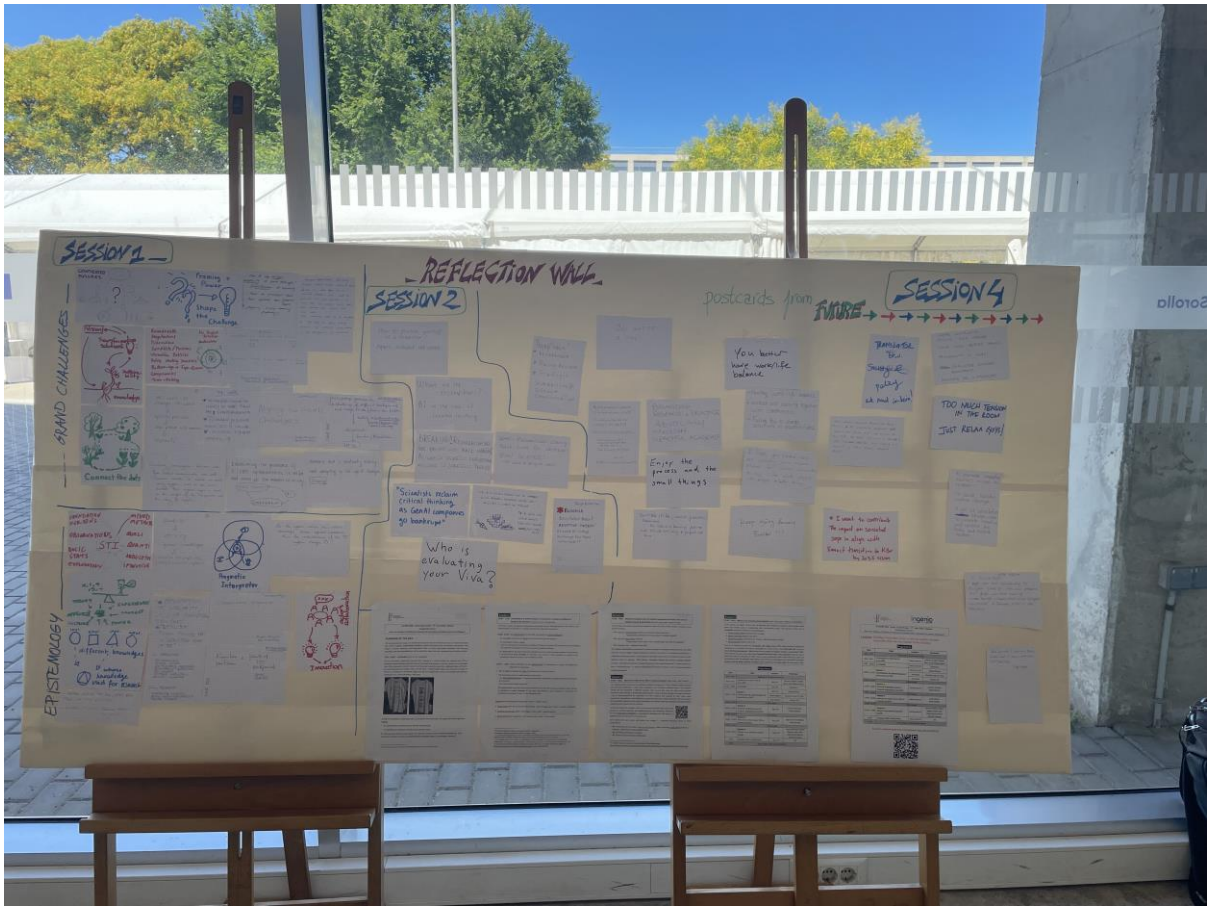
- 2 pictures (one from work, one from socialising): cf. above photos.
- 150 words of text, saying what done with which audience, how, where and when.

In Valencia (Spain), on 9 June 2026, 25 early career researchers joined Eu-SPRI's Early Career Event. Together with academic guests and policy practitioners, they explored in a reflexive and participative manner how research in Studies of Policies for Research and Innovation (SPRI) can contribute to addressing grand societal challenges, and produced a collective Reflection Wall. It comprised four sessions animated by early career members of the ECE organising team. During the first one, participants discussed in three small groups guided by three senior experts (Asun Lera St. Clair, Bonno Pel, Müge Özman) the contributions and epistemological foundations of SPRI research as well as their own. In the second session, they listened to Laurens Hessels about the use of AI in research and to Marta Rivera about the underpinnings of participatory action research. The third session on the PhD and early-career research experience was introduced by Paula Otero and Andy Stirling, followed by a debate building on touching anonymous testimonies written beforehand on a padlet by the participants. The final session explored future research careers through a roundtable and discussions with academics and practitioners, ending with a reflexive walk through which participants envisaged their future roles in society that they posted on the Reflection Wall that was displayed in the main hall of the whole duration of the Eu-SPRI conference.

Appendix: summary of paper feedback forms (70% response rate)

- 84% of respondents found the four sessions useful or very useful (S1: 87%; S2: 87%; S3: 80%; S4: 82%).
- 72% agreed or strongly agreed:
  - that the event encouraged meaningful discussions (82%);
  - that they gained new perspectives on research and innovation policy studies (81%);
  - The interactive activities (Reflection Wall, discussions, exercises) were valuable (63%);
  - The event helped me reflect on my future research and career (60%).
- 79% would recommend the event to other early career researchers.

- **What was the most valuable aspect of the event:**
  - Networking with other ECs and speakers
  - You are not alone in this journey
  - S4 since we could hear about different life paths
  - The lecture in S1 when we were in small groups
  - The discussion on epistemologies
  - The role of researchers for future research
  - The role of AI in the PhD research, very interesting for the ECE event on AI in October
  - Networking; getting to know other participants' topics; discussions in pairs (though mostly generally about the topic because the task instructions weren't very clear)
  - Future career and AI
  - The connection between experiences in real world and life with academics.
  - I liked it, that it was not an event with presentations. It was just about helping us to be reflexive, and talk in an informal way about our research.
  - Exchange of ideas, facilitate to think, encourages you to share your work, project, experience in a sincere manner.
  - Reflecting about our positionality, values and where to be in the future.

- **What could be improved for future Early Career Events:**
  - More diverse ways of discussing, more creative exercises, outside e.g.
  - More interactive, use what we have prepared (the shirt) & Reflection wall
  - More engagement between the participants; work on something together (also content-wise); less lecture style
  - I would prefer to have less exercises like imagine the future and more actual discussions
  - The setting of the room, it was harder to join the discussion
  - Maybe use microphone & make a construction activity of some topics
  - Clear communication of what is happening in which session, what the topic, task and expected outcome is (especially S1)
  - Add more about career from industry maybe not everyone wants to pursue academia
  - Email / address / location; engagement, it felt like a lesson not a workshop; discussions were very limited.
  - The first few sessions were slightly disorganised, I think a bit more structure would be valuable.
  - I really enjoyed the event
  - Maybe some instructions could have been more clear
  - Ice breakers could be diversified.
  - Nothing.

- **Additional comments:**
  - S1: more definitions and theory
  - S3: smaller groups
  - Interactive activities: clarify what they can do with the results produced out of them.
  - Do this form online
  - Excellent food
  - Participation engagement; Organisation and logistics email of info was not provided; The session started late.
  - Thanks to all.
  - The food was really nice 😊. I really liked the last panel just with women.
  - Thank you for this organisation, many inspirations!
  - The food was amazing!