

PLATFORM OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND COMMUNICATORS ENGAGED IN SCIENCE (PLACES): **Building the European city of scientific culture**



Why PLACES?

Contemporary societies rely on science and technology for economic growth, political stability, social well-being and progress. Science influences everything we do as human beings. Yet, the interaction between science, politics and citizens is frequently insufficient and sometimes non-existent.

It is time to enhance the three-way conversation between science, policymakers and society in Europe. PLACES is the facilitator of this conversation.

Policymakers must be able to easily gather scientific information they need to make informed decisions. Citizens need to understand how science and society are linked and be able to provide input in science-related decisions. There must also be dialogue between citizens, scientists and politicians to fully grasp the personal and social behavioural changes required for living in the 21st Century.

Environmental sustainability, ageing populations, healthcare, social security, drinking water, agriculture, biodiversity, transportation, clean energy, education policies, innovation for economic growth – this is only a snapshot of the topics inextricably linking science to society.

The process

City Partnerships will foster functional interactions between local stakeholders to develop effective science communication policies.

City Partnerships arise from science communication institutions forming alliances with local policymakers. There are currently 67 City Partnerships in PLACES representing 27 European countries. These cooperative relationships will

yield Local Action Plans targeting science communication policies in European cities and regions. City Partnerships will also grow to involve media, non-governmental organizations, universities, research institutions, companies, and more.

Local Action Plans (LAPs) will target key challenges in cities, using scientific problem-solving.

LAPs are strategic visions that will inform science communication policy at the local level for many years to come. Developments of LAPs are led by City Partnerships and they address science and technology-related issues relevant to their respective city or region. This is why citizen consultation is also a key step in drafting LAPs.

Pilot Activities will test innovative approaches to communicate science-based solutions in cities.

Pilot Activities will be developed in connection with Local Action Plans, to test innovative practices on how to address controversial or problematic local issues in a way that actively involves citizens.

getting together in Europe

Annual Conferences, Science Cities Workshops, training opportunities and Thematic Working Groups will bring PLACES stakeholders together in a united effort.

Annual PLACES conferences:

2011: will feature a policy symposium;

2012: creative workshops with recommendations for Pilot Activities and a focus on gauging science communicators' expectations;

2013: practical guidance about implementing science communication policies.

2014: the final conference will present the main outcomes, activities and recommendations of PLACES.

Science Cities Workshops are meetings used for discussing the development of local science communication policies.

Training workshops are for civil servants from all levels who want to learn how to incorporate science communication into their work.

Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) will foster high-level discussion about how science communication policies and activities connect to the Europe 2020 targets: Employment, research and development, climate change and energy, education, and poverty. The groups will promote exchanges between City Partnerships that differ in experience but have similar local contexts - and vice versa.

The PLACES Stakeholders Assembly operates at the European level to provide expert insight and analysis on project outputs. The Assembly is an external and specialized voice in PLACES composed of non-governmental organizations, journalists, universities, research centres, and others.

It all comes together at the PLACES OPEN web platform (www.openplaces.eu) – the workspace where all parties gather to plan, develop and exchange.

The PLACES OPEN web platform is a meeting place for people working on PLACES as well as a “science in society” resource centre.

The OPEN platform is just that – open. It’s for people from any number of projects or networks who want to contribute to PLACES.

Surveys, reports and assessments will document European realities of how local actors and science interact and yield recommendations for future policies.

This wealth of data about science communication policies, science communication actors, as well as impact assessments of their activities and associated policies, will be synthesized into reports. These reports will contain recommendations for building effective science communication policies in European cities.

PLACES will conclude in 2014 with local and EU-level blueprints for how to build European Cities of Scientific Culture.

The actors

PLACES PROJECT COORDINATOR:

Ecsite, the European network of science centres and museums, is a 21-year-old organization linking science communication professionals in more than 400 institutions in 50 countries. Ecsite connects member institutions through projects and activities and facilitates the exchange of ideas and best practice on current issues. www.ecsite.eu

PLACES PROJECT LEADERS ARE:

European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN) is a network of more than 90 European regions which facilitates knowledge exchange, joint action and project partnerships between its members with the aim of strengthening their region’s research and innovation capacities. ERRIN also aspires to influence EU policies in order to make them respond better to the needs of European regions. www.errin.eu

European Science Events Association (EUSCEA) is the platform to exchange experiences about the organisation of informal science learning events in Europe. Science Communication Events stimulate science interest among citizens, inspiring dialogue and forming a basis for future European competitiveness. www.euscea.org

The Observatory of Science Communication – Universitat Pompeu Fabra is a special research centre studying the various stages of the process of conveying scientific and technological knowledge to society and analysing the relationship between science, media and society. The centre was formed in 1994 with a commitment to being at the forefront of research, teaching and knowledge transfer in the study and analysis of processes involved in the transmission of scientific, medical and technical knowledge to society. www.occ.upf.edu

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Sixty-seven science communication institutions and ten European regions are currently involved in PLACES.

WHO CAN JOIN?

Any science communication institution can establish a City Partnership, register in the PLACES OPEN platform (www.openplaces.eu) and contribute to the PLACES community.

Contact Antonio Gomes da Costa, PLACES Coordinator, or Emma Wadland, Ecsite Communications Officer and Webmaster, at: info@openplaces.eu

