

PROJECT DETAILS

Project title:	Sparks
Project acronym:	Sparks
Project URL:	www.sparksproject.eu
Project coordinator:	Maria Zolotonosa (Ecsite, the European Network of Science Centres and Museums, Belgium)
Project contact:	mzolotonosa@ecsite.eu
Project duration:	01/07/2015 - 30/06/2018
EU contribution:	3 498 839 EUR
No. of partners:	14 plus 19 third parties
Type of activity:	Coordination and Support Action
Programme:	Science with and for Society, Horizon 2020
Area:	Citizen Science / Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)



Gallery view of „Beyond the Lab“;
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The Sparks project: Sparking citizen science and RRI across the European Union

If you are visiting a museum or a science center these days, there is a chance that you come upon an exhibition set up by the Sparks project. This is even more likely if the exhibition is dealing with hot scientific topics taken up by citizen scientists. Because this is exactly what the Sparks project is about.

The Sparks project mainly consists of a travelling exhibition called “Beyond the lab: the DIY¹ science revolution” put together by the renowned Science Museum London. Its main objective is to engage the audience in responsible research and innovation (RRI) through the topic of citizen science. What makes the exhibition unique is that it tells the stories of so-called ‘DIY scientists’ who are experimenting, researching and even inventing – often hand in hand with professional researchers – and hereby contribute to better scientific solutions in line with actual needs of people.

The exhibition’s guiding theme “technology shifts in health and medicine” was chosen to

¹ The abbreviation stands for “Do it yourself”

reflect its great importance for European society. Since health is a topic affecting everyone, all citizens can easily connect to this theme. It furthermore establishes a direct link to one of the societal challenges of Horizon 2020 (Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing).

7 DIY stories, 3 artworks, 29 local case studies and numerous participatory activities

The exhibition contains seven different health- and medicine-related stories from DIY scientists from five European countries. The topics that the citizen scientists have been working on cover a wide range of current health challenges such as Parkinson’s disease, diabetes, air pollution, potential disease outbreaks and antibiotic resistance. Fascinating stories about developing portable labs the size of a laptop or setting up an organisation to share DIY medical solutions are also being told.

Together with these real DIY stories, four artists who position themselves at the border between art, science and technology

were selected to create three innovative artworks related to a possible health topic (solution) of the future. One artwork, for example, is a 3-D-printed headset in the shape of a unicorn horn² that keeps track of the attention of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to improve ADHD care. Another one engages with the idea of inhalable nano-gadgets that will block your appetite for junk food, further exploring the relationship between robots and humans³. The “creative disruptions” - in the form of artistic inputs and questioning – help to engage more stakeholders and to promote innovative ways to enter into communication and to gain new insights.

Every venue that hosts the exhibition ‘Beyond the Lab: The DIY science revolution’ also provides space for a case study/research from local researchers, thus embedding RRI in various local contexts and contributing to the project’s intention: to communicate Responsible Research and Innovation in an innovative

² Anouk Wipprecht ‘Agent Unicorn’

³ Jakob and Lea Illera ‘Be Bots’

SUCCESS STORIES

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If you would like to find out more about the Horizon 2020 programme part **Science with and for Society**, please visit <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/area/society>.

More exciting projects on the different SwafS areas such as RRI, gender equality or science education can be found on Cordis, the community research and development information service.

way, allowing the public to understand that important health challenges may be tackled more inclusively. What all 29 case studies have in common is that they demonstrate how RRI and public engagement are or can be applied in research in the field of medicine and healthcare. One case study has covered, for example, an interactive tool for diabetes education (in Ljubljana, Slovenia) and another one the relation between nutrition and dementia (in Bonn, Germany).

Last but not least, involving citizens is at the heart of the **Sparks** project and the travelling exhibition. Every time the exhibition is on display, a series of public

topic and to trigger interaction between citizens and researchers.

European-wide outreach ensured: Beyond the lab stops at 29 countries

The **Sparks** exhibition "Beyond the lab: the DIY science revolution" runs at four locations in Europe in parallel for at least two months. All countries of the European Union plus Switzerland will be covered during the projects runtime. Not surprisingly, such a great outreach is possible only with a large consortium and strong partnerships. The project coordinator is Maria Zolotonosa from ECSITE, the European Network for Science Centres and

The work of **Sparks** is not done with the travelling exhibition. It will be complemented by policy recommendations to feed research and innovation policies with societal inputs and to facilitate RRI. The policy document will bring the topics that the general public sees as relevant in the field of health and innovation to the policy makers' attention. To achieve this, for example, the participatory activities will be analysed on the basis of data collected from participants through questionnaires.

A project such as **Sparks** demonstrates the strengths of the Science with and for Society programme of Horizon 2020: it is a great example of how citizens can shape science for the benefit of all, how their beliefs, interests and expectations can be integrated and how new ways on how to do research and innovation can lead to innovation. It also shows how to successfully communicate these new approaches.

The project manager, Andrea Troncoso from ECSITE, points out that so far the **Sparks** exhibition has received very satisfactory attention from the public and the local media. By the end of 2016 the exhibition had been displayed in eight European countries (Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Luxemburg, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom), attracting more than 700,000 people to the exhibition and the side events. The **Sparks** exhibition will run until May 2018. To find out whether it will be shown at a place near you, please visit <http://www.sparksproject.eu> ... get involved, get inspired!



Gallery view of „Beyond the Lab“; © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum

events will take place which relate to local scientists and to the topics addressed by the exhibition. Participatory activities such as Science Espressos, Scenario Workshops, Pop-up Science Shops and Reverse Science Cafés are used widely to give citizens a voice, to communicate more effectively on the exhibitions'

Museums, which is based in Belgium. 33 institutions altogether - science centres, science shops, science institutes, universities, renowned international networks and organisations active in the scientific and creative fields - are involved as part of the development team and/or the local implementation team of **Sparks**.