



The Geoscience Communication School (GCS): an interactive approach for sharing science

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In 2016 we have organized the first international Geoscience Communication School (GSC) with the purpose of promoting communication skills in scientists: communication not only meant for education but also designed to reach scientific objectives. We strongly believe that, in science communication, the practice and interaction are more important than frontal lectures so we facilitated the creation of a heterogeneous group. We supported the hotel room sharing between researchers with different backgrounds and we organized a social dinner the day before starting the school. The school was divided in 2 different modules: the first 4 days with general topics open to researchers of different disciplines and the last 2 days focusing on geosciences. We thought that having participants with different knowledge and background (in this school: biology, medicine, environment, remote sensing, meteorology, volcanology, seismology) would benefit the students to practice full time their communication skills since they all spent the school period together during the “lectures” and during the free time.

All the lectures were accompanied by laboratories and the students experienced concrete activities and were able to practice what they just learnt getting feedbacks directly from the lecturers and the general public. Some innovative laboratories were implemented for the first time during this school:

- with the “Poster Lab” each student presented a poster at the beginning of the school and the posters were corrected and improved at the end of the school by using scissors, white papers and colors;
- with the “Pick the victim Lab” the local people with different backgrounds and different education level, not involved in scientific activities were invited to the school to interpret the being “victims” of the school participants. It was requested to the victims to listen a quick students’ activity presentations and to be honest and frank telling them if they were using difficult terms and if they did not understand the concepts. The objective of this laboratory was to force the students to use plain language understandable by any type of audience. As an alternative, the researchers were free to go outdoor, in the town center, and they had to stop local people or tourists to explain them the research activity in a few minutes.

All the laboratories were successful and appreciated by the school students. Successful products came out from this school such as a video prepared for the EGU cinema 2017 and a song written (music and words) by a student with video recording and choreography done by the group. At the end of the school a survey was conducted within the researchers and the audiences to understand the strengths and the weaknesses of the event.