



A series of educational and promotional activities within COST Action TU1208 - GPR Roadshow

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The communication strategy of researchers normally includes presentation of activities and results in scientific conferences and on peer-reviewed scientific journals. Nowadays there is a huge amount of research going on, on really important topics, that actually never really gets to policymakers, professional groups or commercialization; at the same time, too many citizens do not understand how important science is for society, how research is crucial to find concrete solutions of global challenges, and how creating new knowledge and improving education is essential for increasing the quality of our lives.

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) researchers are not different than those from other scientific areas, when it comes to science communication behaviour; and yet, given the huge application potential of the GPR technique, there is so much that we can share with multiple interlocutors and at different levels. Our participation in the Horizon

2020 COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) programme, via the Action TU1208, gave us significant insights into the importance of explaining scientific findings to non-scientific audiences. Therefore, we organized a heterogeneous series of educational and promotional activities, which were mostly (but not only) carried out in less-research intensive countries of the European continent (Inclusiveness Target Countries); the overall science communication initiative was denominated “GPR Roadshow”. It raised a considerable interest in the various countries and was a catalyst for a series of new activities.

Part of the GPR Roadshow consisted in a series of communication events held in Portugal, Italy, Greece, Croatia, Serbia and Czech Republic from March 2016 to May 2017. The primary purpose of these events was to reach out to GPR stakeholders and potential new end users, at local, regional and national levels; a secondary goal was the education of interested students and citizens. Overall, 483 participants attended the events and had the opportunity to learn what is GPR, how this technique can be used for seeing the unseen, and what is the role of GPR in civil engineering works, archaeological investigations, and cultural heritage management (we mainly focused on these fields of application because the COST Action TU1208 project dealt with the use of GPR in civil-engineering). Feedback was collected after the events; participants expressed strong satisfaction, most often they asked the researchers to organize further activities and even to establish a regular series of events, to be held periodically, to keep the dialogue active and receive regular updates on the GPR research.

In parallel, a series of promotional and education activities were carried out in Estonia, which brought especially positive and tangible results. GPR is not very commonly used in Estonia and was an almost unknown tool among Estonian people, until a few years ago. Now there is an increasing interest in the use of GPR, not only for research but also for practical works in private and public sectors; indeed, the research groups owning GPR systems have been recently involved in a growing number of projects ordered by private enterprises or public authorities.