

ExoWorlds Spies: a research project as a vehicle for outreach and education

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Abstract

Understanding worlds beyond the Earth is a key issue for humanity and concerns everyone, not only the scientific communities. We present the project ExoWorlds Spies, a research project for monitoring transiting exoplanets.

We strongly believe that research and science is an effort that everyone can take part. For this reason, in the context of our project, members of the public including also students of schools and universities and help towards answering fundamental questions of science and society: Are there other planets like the Earth? Could they host life? Is there any other type of life? Today, the general public can get involved in the effort of answering the above questions through citizen science projects.

In our project, members of the public and students can contribute by obtaining or analysing data from small ground-based telescopes. We have developed a user-friendly data analysis tool, the Holomon Photometric Software (HOPS) and a dedicated website for the project, in order to disseminate the material and the tools to as many people as possible. The website includes audiovisual material, information on the project, data analysis tools, instructions, observational data and graphics. All sources are online, free, and available for everyone both in English (and Greek). In order to approach various audiences from the public and more effectively communicate with them, we created also a social media platform (a Facebook page).