

Europlanet – Impact of outreach activities to date and looking ahead to a sustainable future

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Abstract

The Europlanet 2020 Research Infrastructure (RI), a 10M€ project funded through the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 programme, supports Europe’s planetary science community through the provision of services, access to facilities, new research tools and a virtual planetary observatory. Europlanet 2020 RI was launched on 1st September 2015 and runs through to 31st August 2019. The project’s Impact Through Outreach and Education (IOE) activities have aimed to engage the widest possible community with the work of Europlanet 2020 RI, and to involve the public, the media, policy makers, educators and students with the ongoing adventure of planetary science and the people that work in the field.

The EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2019 offers an opportunity to review and reflect on the outcomes and impact of Europlanet 2020 RI’s activities, and look ahead to outreach plans for the new Europlanet Society.

1. Introduction

Outreach has been a core part of Europlanet since its foundation in 2004. In each of Europlanet’s EU FP6, FP7 and Horizon 2020 funded programmes, around 10% of the total budget has been dedicated to outreach and engagement with external communities. The focus of the outreach strategy has been to support and enable new and existing outreach providers within the planetary community through training, sharing of best practice, resources, funding and tools.

2. Outcomes

Outreach and education outcomes and impact from Europlanet 2020 RI include:

Animations: Science Office, on behalf of Europlanet, has produced 5 animated videos about Europlanet and other planetary topics, 3 of which have been translated into French, German, Italian and Spanish. Europlanet videos have had over 60,000 views on Europlanet and Science Office channels (YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo)

Best Practice: we have organised 3 workshops and convened or co-convened 11 sessions comprising over 100 oral and poster presentations at EPSC and EWASS to share best practice in outreach, education and policy engagement related to planetary science.

Educational resources: we have contributed 3 new collections and 3 upgraded collections of planetary-themed educational resources to the IAU’s astroEDU platform.

Evaluation Toolkit: We have developed an Evaluation Toolkit with 14 tools (plus a number of variations) to enable organisers of outreach activities to evaluate the impact and outcomes for participants. The toolkit is available online and as a printed resource.

Funding: We have provided 60,000€ funding in seed-funding grants to 8 outreach projects in the planetary community across 8 European countries.

Media and Social Media: We have issued over 80 press releases on planetary science topics and results from Europlanet activities and meetings, resulting in coverage in over 60 countries worldwide and inclusion of Europlanet facilities in 2 major documentary series. We have an active presence on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Policy: We have organised 2 dinner debates and an exhibition in the European Parliament, interacting with over 300 policy-makers.

Prizes: We have awarded an annual Europlanet Prize for Public Engagement to

enhance the status of outreach as a core activity within the planetary science community.

Training: By the end of the project, we will have provided hands-on training for almost 150 early career scientists, amateur astronomers and outreach providers through summer schools and workshops.

Webinars: We have held 21 live webinars on cutting-edge planetary topics, watched by hundreds of school students and teachers.

3. Future Activities

In 2018, Europlanet launched a new Society to provide a sustainable structure to support Europe's planetary science community. The Society will provide a permanent home for many of Europlanet's outreach initiatives, overseen by an Outreach Education and Policy Working Group comprised of outreach representatives from the Europlanet Society's 10 Regional Hubs.

In March 2019, Europlanet submitted a further bid to the European Commission for an advanced research infrastructure, Europlanet 2024 RI. The outreach focus in this proposal is to build infrastructure for education, outreach and policy engagement within the community through a cascaded programme of training and support based around the Regional Hubs. The result of this proposal should be known by the EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2019.

4. Acknowledgements

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