

SiS Catalyst: Children as Change Agents for Science and Society

A European Mobilisation and Mutual Learning Action Plan

Why SiS Catalyst?

The pace of change: In a fast-changing technology based world, the potential of all young people is in demand to keep pace with the grand challenges that arise for society. Technology is developing exponentially and our ability to communicate globally is becoming commonplace – but our institutions of learning are not keeping up with these changes.

Building a culture of engagement and listening: SiS Catalyst is based on the very simple idea that present decisions in science and education are significant for tomorrow's citizens, students and researchers – who are children and young people at this time. The project is about the global change in education culture that we need to embrace for our future, through addressing the fundamental question of how we include children in the dialogue between society and the scientific and technological communities.

The role of Higher Education: We believe that Higher Education and science organisations have a leading role to play in the global changes occurring – as hubs for creativity and vehicles for social justice. This ambitious project supports science organisations to better engage with young people and to successfully establish strong ties from the earliest age possible - in particular to target those who are currently unlikely to progress to Higher Education because of their social, cultural or economic background.

Mobilise institutional learning: Building and improving an active dialogue with young people requires innovation both on practical and strategic level. This modernisation leads to learning programmes and outreach activities which resonate with a young audience – and to institutional development which reflects the future demands of society. SiS Catalyst promotes the overall understanding that we need to treat young people not only as consumers of educational programmes, but as contributors as well. At the heart of this is collective learning at institutional level. SiS Catalyst takes supportive action to develop capacities and policies for this ambitious strategy.

Children as Change Agents: The experience that children have of society is hugely valuable in developing outreach and awareness programmes - delivered by universities, schools, science festivals, museums and other SiS intermediaries throughout Europe and beyond. SiS Catalyst creates awareness among institutions of learning that young people are a relevant audience to be listened to. This engagement must also be reflected within the governance and institutional development in order to be sustainable. This acknowledges the role which young people have in the modernisation in all spheres of science education: They are Agents of Change!

What is SiS Catalyst doing?

A pan-European action plan for mobilisation and mutual learning

This four year FP7 Science in Society consortium of 34 partners and advisers from over 20 countries is one of the first Mobilisation and Mutual Learning (MML) Action Plans supported by the European Commission – leading to new ways of doing research and developing technologies which encompass societal needs and concerns.

This action plan includes well-deliberated activities and instruments to:

- Encourage more science-related institutions to develop programmes for children and young people
- Refine existing SiS programmes to facilitate social inclusion through interdisciplinary working
- Support SiS practitioners and newcomers with a comprehensive Practical Guide which explores case studies at institutional, regional and national levels
- Initiate mutual learning from best practise through a tailor-made Mentoring Programme
- Foster exchange of expertise within semi-annual conferences in 8 European major cities, including senior experts and policy makers
- Raise awareness and commitment for the overall concerns through repeated declarations, endorsed by experts, practitioners and decision makers on institutional and governmental level
- Track, compare and communicate the impact of SiS activities for children and young people by ways of standardised monitoring instruments both on individual and institutional level – as vehicles for strategic and political alignment
- Provide a replicable model for dialogue building with young people and its sustainable institutionalisation
- Develop supportive instruments for key players in institutional innovation and change processes to get the best acknowledgement for their endeavours

- Enhance the role of students within SiS interventions through the development of different scenarios for their involvement
- Consider the aspect of ethics within all SiS interventions for children and young people by targeted expertise and guidelines
- Make young people aware of existing SiS programmes and educational opportunities by ways of a gateway to every university in the world

Through its members, associates and advisors SiS Catalyst is well linked with:

European Children's Universities Network (EUCU.NET), European Access Network (EAN), European Students' Union (ESU), International Association of Universities (IAU), European Association for the Promotion of Science and Technology (EUROSCIENCE), European Union of Science Journalists' Associations (EUSJA)

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