

A network dedicated to sciences dissemination: Scité

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Abstract:

The activities of the network Scité are destined for the schools and the general public and include laboratories visits, training periods, seminars, conferences, adult courses specially designed for teachers, etc. Since 2002, collaborations between universities and enterprises are enhanced and developed to bring to light the variety of jobs linked to science and the multi-disciplinary process leading to industrial application of scientific findings. Activities will include, enterprises visits preparation of CD and video support presenting “passionate” jobs, and the set up of interactive workshops for students. Systematic relations and interactions with scientific as well as global media are established and formalised. Activities enhancing such interactions include the development of media-universities interface assuring the quality and the adequacy of scientific information transfer and vulgarisation. Based on the wide expertise accumulated through recent projects, Scité Network develop innovative activities involving a wide range of actors: universities, enterprises, media, schools, general public

1 Introduction

Since 2000, French-speaking Belgian universities mobilized themselves for the dissemination of sciences through the creation of specific units. Their main objective was to be more efficient. Various activities for science dissemination were indeed already organised by several associations and institutions, including the universities. In order to valorise existing initiatives while stimulating projects at a higher level, the deans of the 5 faculties of sciences decided to create a network gathering the groups existing in each university: “Atoutsciences” (FUNDP, Namur), “ScienceInfuse” (UCL, Louvain-la-Neuve), “Inforsciences” (ULB, Bruxelles), “Réjouisciences” (ULg, Liège) and the “Centre de Didactique des Sciences” (UMH, Mons). This network is known as “Scité, catalyseur des sciences” (Scité, catalyst for sciences):

- Sci for Science,
- “Cité “is the french for “City”, because science dissemination makes part of the citizenship expected from universities,
- “Catalyseur”, because the network acts as a catalyst for sciences dissemination.

The constitution of such a network was made possible thanks to the financial support of:

- the French community government that launched the “Printemps des sciences”,

- the Région wallonne (DGTRE) supporting directly the activities of the network.

2 Printemps des sciences

This scientific vulgarization event is a week for sciences in spring, organised each year, around a single theme : water (2001), energy (2002), communication (2003), measurement (2004). It addresses a wide range of target people:

- children of nursery and primary schools, because it is a mistake to believe that children are unable to acquire scientific knowledge. Allowing them to approach scientific subjects in a realistic way, should help the development of the scientific approach.
- teenagers of the secondary schools, who remain however a specific public.
- teachers, who can, through the event, have access to scientific demonstrations that are not available at school.
- all adults (we all are laymen in the front of nowadays whole sciences) during the week-end.
- professors of high schools, for discussions about scientific dissemination, vulgarization, popularization methods.

The event is organised at the level of the whole Belgian French community. Locally, each university organises independent activities in collaboration with actors close to its own activities.

3 Common projects

In order to provide both a better perception of sciences for teachers, general public and journalists, and a concrete approach of scientific professions amongst the youth, the network organises two other main common projects: “Sciences au quotidien” (sciences for everyday life) that presents most useful aspects of science for daily life, while creating the need of a scientific approach. A class studies a daily life object, in collaboration with scientists of the university and relevant companies; visits of high technology companies.

4 Working in a network

It is important to notice that the constitution of the network allows each university to keep its own identity (accounting for previous activities and expertise), while organizing common activities. In order to set up an effective and efficient network, it appeared necessary to:

- account for constraints and opportunities in each institution,
- share experiences,
- set up common projects,
- maintain dialogue.

Such a network enables then to develop both a “proximity science” and a structured approach within the French community. This kind of collaboration could also be extended at the European level.

5 Conclusions

The network Scité fits perfectly within the thematic “sciences and society”. Indeed it focuses on the development of new activities of scientific vulgarisation while reinforcing and creating links between all producers and consumers of scientific information (universities, schools, enterprises, media, general public). Through the activities of vulgarisation, sciences and technology will become more accessible to all, thereby responding to the main bottleneck on the way to a European knowledge-based society. However, reaching such a goal implies necessarily the development of a European network working in synergy with local, regional and national initiatives. The network wish to develop such a horizontal integration and partnership at all levels. This collaborations will largely contribute to trigger a major momentum to give access to the knowledge-based society to all European citizens.