



a masterclass for explainers on participation and governance

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THE DOTIK PROJECT

Explainers (demonstrators, pilots, facilitators, mediators, etc.) are the human interface linking science centres with their visitors. Explainers can make the difference in engaging the public with scientific issues.

The Dotik project developed a training scheme aimed at enhancing the role of explainers in the science and society dialogue.

Dotik is the Slovenian word for contact.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING SCHEME

A training scheme was developed in a series of steps involving an "explainer panel" of nine explainers from the three partner science centres. Each of the step was carefully evaluated by the Dotik project group and the explainers themselves, to design the programme of the training school.

THE DOTIK TRAINING SCHOOL – A MASTERCLASS ON SCIENCE AND SOCIETY FOR MUSEUM EXPLAINERS

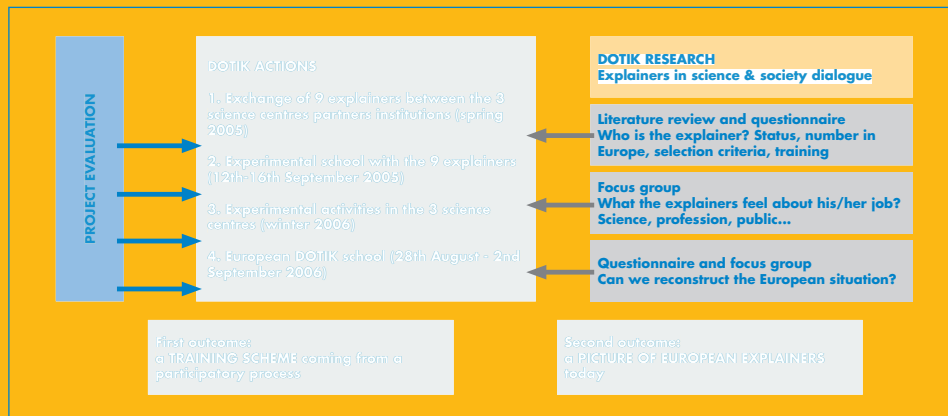
A. The explainers of the Dotik training school

It happened in Trieste, Italy in the premises of SISSA and Imaginario Scientifico Science Centre, and in Ljubljana at Hija Ekspertimov Science Centre, from August 28 to September 2, 2006.

50 explainers, 7 visitors and the explainer panel participated to the school, which was finally attended by 64 people from 24 countries. 18 facilitators/speakers delivered lessons and workshops during the week long training.

Lectures, practical workshops, long discussion, busking evening on a terrace by the sea, and many presentations from the students nourished an extremely intense week.

Participants per country	
Austria	1
Czech Republic	1
Estonia	1
Finland	1
Greece	1
Israel	1
Lithuania	1
Macedonia	1
Norway	1
Palestine	1
Ukraine	1
Belgium	2
Latvia	2
Poland	2
Portugal	3
Slovenia	3
Spain	3
Sweden	3
Denmark	4
Germany	4
The Netherlands	4
United Kingdom (3 tutors and 1 visitor)	8
Italy (3 tutors and 6 visitors)	15
TOTAL	64



B. Good practices : The Dotik training scheme; Trieste, August 28 - September 2, 2006			
Workshop/lecture	Description	Facilitator / speaker	Rationale
DAY 1			
Get together	Please bring a piece of your local, typical food or drink!		Break-the-ice, set an atmosphere of intercultural exchange
Introduction	Presentation of the DOTIK project and the organisation of the school	Dotik project group	Be very clear about the objective of the school; communicate what participants should expect.
Visit of 15 science centre	Group visit to the host institution	Imaginario Scientifico Staff	All participants work in a similar place...
Focus groups: Science, science centres and me	Focus groups in small group	Federica Manzoni (SISSA, IT) + facilitators	Lead explainers to explore their self-perception, and to establish a common ground on "who are we?"
Travelling through Europe – Role and professional status of the explainers	Presentation of results of a survey on explainers in Europe. Discussion in groups about roles and status of explainers.	Paolo Rodari (SISSA/Matlab, IT), Matteo Merzagora (SISSA, IT)	Make known what is known about explainers in Europe. Communicate diversity starting from the knowledge of the participants
DAY 2			
Spaces to communicate: How design can (or can't) stimulate exchanges and encounters between visitors	A workshop on how exhibit design induce different behaviours in the visitors.	Orna Cohen (Orna & Co., FR/IE) and Mikko Myllylahti (Helsinki, FI)	Show how exhibit design can hinder or foster dialogue, exchange among visitors, willingness to interact and debate, etc.
Social labs	Presentation of innovative approaches in exhibition conception.	Mikko Myllylahti and Orna Cohen	Present case studies on absolutely new roles for explainers.
Facilitating discussion using drama techniques	Presentation of methodology developed by Frank Barner and Graphic Science. Workshop with active participation of students.	Frank Barner (Jhu, UK)	An example and a workshop on how to spark and steer a discussion on controversial issues using drama techniques
Science demonstrations from the participants	Evening free tricks and demonstration from participants	All students	Have fun!
DAY 3			
Citizen science: new models of activities to involve the public in discussions and debates	Several groups trying out activities developed by ATBristol science centre	Rebecca Madrozo Amador, Chadia Gillette, Rachel Murray (ATBristol, UK)	A practical workshop on innovative ways to engage visitors in discussions on scientific topic.
From popularization to participation, from "science and society" to "science in society"	A lecture on science in society	Maurizio Bacchi (University of Trento and Olorette, IT)	Set the theoretical background
Explainers as best supporting actors: giving the visitor the leading role	A workshop on the interaction explainers-visitor	Antonio Gomes da Costa (Povilhão do Conhecimento, PT)	Place oneself in the skin of the visitor. Discover the potential of knowing how to ask questions to the visitors rather than just providing answers.
Presentation from participants	Several presentation from the students		Allow interesting experiences to be shared
DAY 4			
Culture Matters: using research to inform practice and practice to inform research	A lesson on how to take into account cultural differences and a workshop on visitors' studies	Sally Dunsing (King's College, UK) + Francesca Conti (Zadig-Roma, IT), Cristina Ferrati (IS, IT)	Show the importance of research for the practical activities. Show the importance for an explainer to have a background on visitors' studies and evaluation techniques
Science adventure in Hija Ekspertimov	A visit to science centres and a presentation of their activities	Milica Kac and Ljilja Vidic (Hija Ekspertimov, SC)	Examples of very appealing engaging methodology, and how it can be developed
DAY 5			
Europe, best practices in participation and governance	Lecture about governance and participation in science in EU policies	Philippe Galley (EU DG Research)	Provide theoretical background and refocus on the school main objectives
Deliberative Citizens Debates	A game to discuss controversial scientific issue	Andreas Bondell (Independent advisor, NI)	Example of a successful, practical way to engage visitors in dialogues
Identifying actions to stimulate debate and participation in controversial issues	Lecture and workshop about how to tackle hot, controversial issues in science centres	Giuglielmo Maglio (Fondazione ICS)	An example focusing more on the choice of scientific contents and the implications for explainers
DAY 6			
General discussion	General, heated discussion to collect input on how to proceed	Dotik project group	What do we take home? How to involve institutions? Where to go next? Preparing for "explainer's lobbying activities"

C. Seed for debate

The Dotik experience showed that:

There is a great need of better understanding the professional status of explainers. But do we really need to reach a common formal definition of the profession?

Exchange programmes for explainers in different countries can have an enormous impact. But do science centres have enough resources to finance such activities?

Sharing best practices of European level could have an extremely high impact. Is THE group within ECSITE the right tool to share experiences?

Masterclasses at European level are extremely fruitful for enlarging the horizon of explainers' potentials. But where to look for funding?

Explainers' knowledge of the visitors is very rarely collected by science centre management. How can we lobby for explainers to value their role within science centres?

Background in science and society, visitor studies, science communication, science education, informal learning, etc. could help explainers moving forward. How can this be embedded in training schemes?

THE group

Following the DOTIK experience, THE group (The public Human Interface Group) was born as the first ECSITE thematic group. In the first meeting of THE group at the ECSITE pre-conference (Lisbon, 30th May 2007) the role and professional profile of the explainers will be discussed, the road map for next three year will be decided, and there will also be a focus on practical workshops for explainers.

