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Every citizen a scientist? EU project changes the face of research

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Would you like to help researchers understand climate change, or discover how you can collaborate with thousands other people? EU-funded project SOCIENTIZE allows you to lend your skills and time to some exciting research.

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Date:

20/06/2014

Venue:

Speaker:

Partners from Spain, Portugal, Austria and Brazil are developing tools for citizens to participate in scientific experiments. You can contribute by giving information about your home's temperature or spotting cancer cells. This [#citizenscience](#) [2] initiative is present at Europe's largest general science meeting, the [Euroscience Open Forum 2014](#) [3] [@ESOF2014](#) [4], which starts this weekend in Copenhagen.

Vice-President of the European Commission [@NeelieKroesEU](#) [5], responsible for the [Digital Agenda](#) [6] says: *"New technologies are transforming science. They make research more open, collaborative, creative and closer to citizens. With [digital science](#) [7], people can both learn and participate in shaping the world around them. As SOCIENTIZE project's coordinator puts it: everyone can be a neuron in our digitally-enabled brain! With digital tools, you can be an actor, not only a beneficiary, of scientific progress"*.

[SOCIENTIZE](#) [8] [@socientize](#) [9] aims at involving citizens in science, showing the added value of collaboration and knowledge sharing through digital tools. It represents a common forum and network, promoting and hosting various experiments. It has already involved some 12,000 citizens in

different phases of research activities.

From mapping flu outbreaks to collective music creation

Among the various experiments promoted by SOCIENTIZE, [GripeNet.es](#) [10] asks citizens in Spain to report when they catch the flu in order to monitor outbreaks and predict possible epidemics.

On top of providing useful data, volunteers can also help analyse information. Experiments such as [Sun4All](#) [11] and [Cell Spotting](#) [12] ask citizens to label images of solar activity and cancer cells from their mobile phone or computer. Computers do not always offer a solution. With thousands of volunteers helping the effort and crosschecking large-scale data, researchers can progress more quickly.

Two weeks ago, SOCIENTIZE participated in the [Sónar](#) [13] festival in Barcelona with a [Collective Music Experiment](#) [14]. 200 people joined professional DJs and created musical patterns using a web tool. The initiative looked into the ways large groups of individuals produce creative results collectively. According to Fermin Serrano Sanz [@ferminserrano](#) [15], SOCIENTIZE's coordinator, *"this kind of event brings together a really diverse set of participants. The diversity doesn't only enrich the data; it improves the dialogue between professionals and volunteers. As a result, we see some new and innovative approaches to research"*.

€700,000 of EU funding is invested in SOCIENTIZE. The project is led by [Fermín Serrano Sanz](#) [16] from the [University of Zaragoza](#) [17] [@BIFI_Instituto](#) [18], Spain. The [ICT Cluster TECNARA](#) [19] [@Tecnara](#) [20], Spain, the [Museu da Ciência-Coimbra](#) [21] and the [Universidade de Coimbra](#) [22], Portugal, the [Zentrum für Soziale Innovation](#) [23], Austria, and the [Universidade Federal de Campina Grande, UFCG](#) [24], Brazil, participate in the project.

SOCIENTIZE is also active in policy recommendations, releasing in 2013 the "[Green paper on Citizen Science](#) [25]" and initiating in 2014 consultations for a "[White paper on Citizen Science](#) [26]".

Read the [SOCIENTIZE story](#) [27] (also in French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish).

Background

SOCIENTIZE is funded under the EU's [Seventh framework programme for research & technological development](#) [28] ([#FP7](#) [29] - 2007-2013). During the next seven years, similar projects will be funded under the new EU research and innovation programme [Horizon 2020](#) [30] [#H2020](#) [31].

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