

**Parallel Session 21: Science week: evaluating experiences.**

**THE CHALLENGE OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF MADRID: THE SCIENCE OF CITIZENS**

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**Abstract**

The Regional Government of the Madrid has begun a Scientific Culture and Citizen Participation Programme essentially based on two events: the Madrid Science Fair and the Madrid Science Week, each of which bring together 120,000 citizens every year.

The success of these projects lies in the meticulous planning and the creation of networks with the scientific community: educational centres, universities, museums, research centres and companies.

The main goal is to bring science and technology closer to citizens and at the same time provide tools that enable them to understand where science fits into society.

**Key Words:** Scientific Culture, Madrid Science Fair, Madrid Science Week

**Text**

SCIENTIFIC CULTURE AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME FOR THE REGION OF MADRID: [www.madrimasd.org/culturacientifica](http://www.madrimasd.org/culturacientifica)

Why has the Regional Government of Madrid decided to launch a programme of Scientific Culture through the General Directorate for Universities and Research?

The answer to this question was clearly given by Philippe Busquin, European Commissioner for Research, who stated, "In a knowledge-based society, democratic governance must ensure that citizens are able to make an informed choice from the options made available to them by responsible scientific and technological progress."<sup>1</sup>

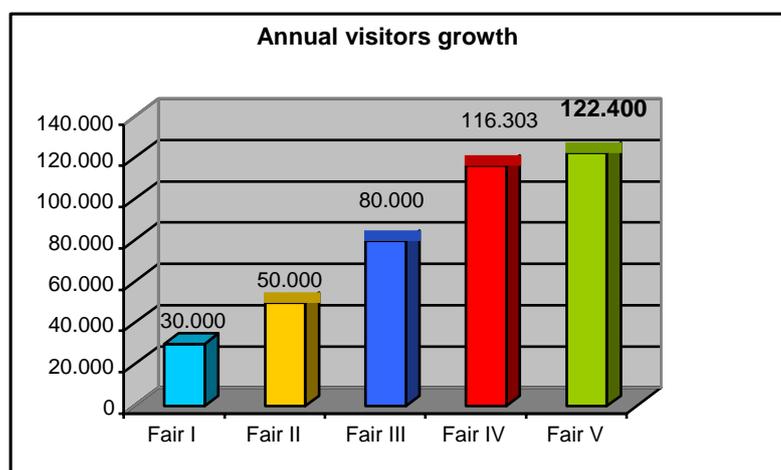
The following aims of this programme were defined in 1999 after seminars with teachers, directors, scientific museum curators, journalists and researchers.

- **Work** in each of the events, involving assistants in the actions.
- **Create networks:** Universities, Museums, Educational Centres, Research Centres and Companies.
- Match the **efforts of the practitioners of scientific culture:** the student, the teacher, the researcher and the businessman.

- Confer and transmit passion and credibility in the management of the Scientific Culture and Citizen Participation Programme on the part of the Administration.
- **Communicate** that science is not something unintelligible, that it can be fun, appealing and interesting in everyday life.
- Attempt to **furnish citizens with the tools** to enable them to see how science fits into society.
- **Improve** access to scientific information.
- **Enhance** scientific and technological culture.

MADRID SCIENCE FAIR: [www.madrimasd.org/madridporlaciencia](http://www.madrimasd.org/madridporlaciencia)

Over 4 days, from 10am to 8pm, at a venue covering 17,000m<sup>2</sup>, 2,000 “young teachers” from 4 to 18 years of age and more than 200 researchers tirelessly showed more than 400 experiments to 122,400 visitors. *See table 1*



*Table 1*

The fair congregated all those who wanted to contribute and had something to say about science in Madrid, with a global conception that in a single week brought together all the segments of society that can impart science, all with the same goals, all together:

- 66 educational centres, from infant, primary and secondary schooling
- 18 research centres
- 10 universities
- 8 museums and scientific dissemination centres
- 5 royal societies
- 8 Councils of the Regional Government of Madrid
- 7 representatives of Public Administration

- 16 companies related to science
- 3 exhibitions
- 1 auditorium holding scientific displays, conferences and films

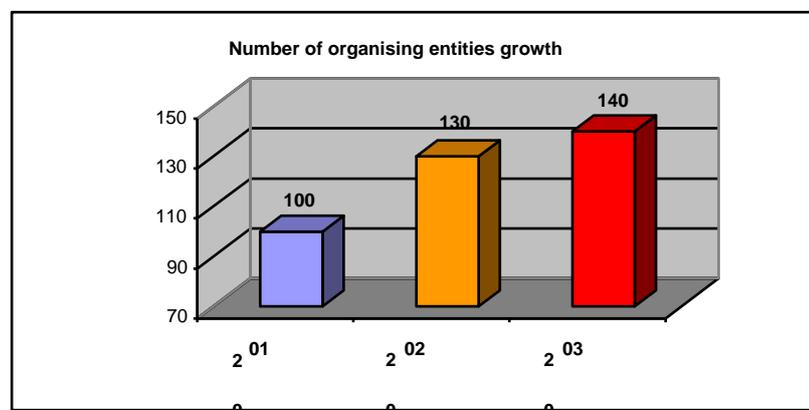
But the numbers do not tell the whole story. To enable science to be shown in a single physical space and providing equal conditions for young college students, university professors and scientists from renowned research centres, is almost unthinkable in a society as hierarchical as ours, yet this was the reality of the Fair with all participants doing their thing side by side one another.

MADRID SCIENCE WEEK: [www.madrimasd.org/semanaciencia](http://www.madrimasd.org/semanaciencia)

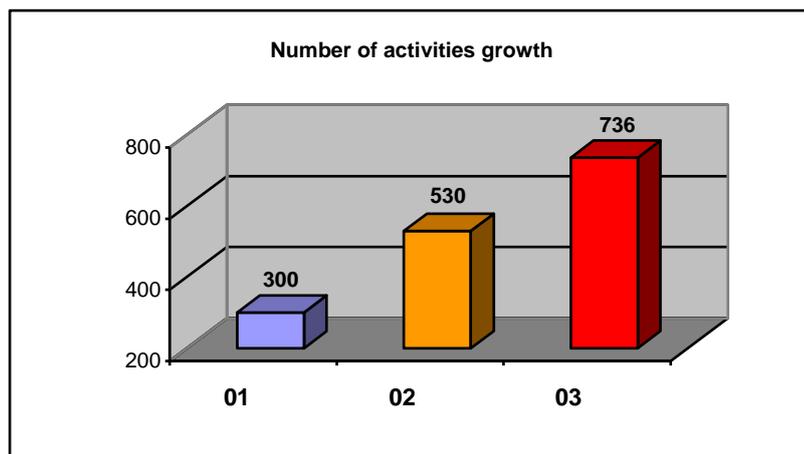
While the Fair brought together the whole scientific and business community at a venue over 4 days, the Science Week showed the rich scientific/technological reserve over 14 days, opening up research projects to the Region of Madrid.

140 public and private entities coordinated by the General Directorate for Universities and Research of the Regional Government of Madrid (see table 2) organised 736 activities (see table 3); a remarkable achievement in the panorama of scientific dissemination. “Who said there was no interest in science?”

- **182** Open doors and guided tours
- **326** Round tables and conferences
- **116** Courses and seminars
- **31** Didactic itineraries and excursions
- **48** Exhibitions
- **33** Films, awards and similar activities



**Table 2**



**Table 3**

The next Regional Research Plan (2005-2008) continues to consider the two events due to their important social impact. But the Government of Madrid considers it necessary to take a step forward and in addition to continuing to promote scientific education and culture, its objective is to draw up scientific policies that bring science closer to the citizens, strengthening the principle of responsibility and the ethical basis of scientific and technological activities.

Public Administration should take into account the social commitment to science.

The crux of the matter is getting the civil society to take part in the process of decision making, promoting full integration of women and stimulating discussion of issues regarding our future.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Commission. Science and Society Action Plan.  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/action-plan/action-plan\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/action-plan/action-plan_en.html)

