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INSPIRING ERA EXCHANGE EVENT ON ERA ACTION 14

# Closer to Citizens

Past, present and future of R&I public engagement at the EU level



Maria Mecenero  
Policy Officer, ERA, Spreading Excellence and  
Research Careers, DG R&I, European Commission

# 3 QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

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1. **Why** should we bring science closer to citizens?

2. **What** has been done so far?

3. **How** can we make it more impactful in the future?



# Trust in science & citizens' engagement

*“**Societal responsibility:** striving to be responsive to society’s needs to expand collective capacities and achieve greater societal impact and to increase trust in science and innovation by engaging stakeholders, local communities, and citizens in the design and implementation of research and innovation policies and by ensuring that policies are agile and able to adjust to unexpected challenges.”*

COM(2021) Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe, 2021

# What are we doing?

## ERA Policy Agenda Action 14 – Bring science closer to citizens

**Aim:** Increase societal responsibility, trust and commitment in science and innovation by engaging stakeholders, local communities and citizens in the design and implementation of R&I policies and solutions.

### 4 components:

1. **European Science in the City:** science activities throughout the year and related events/activities for 365 days
2. **EUCYS:** The European Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS)
3. **EU TalentOn:** The European Contest for Young and Early Career Researchers
4. **ESOF:** The EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF)



# What are we doing?

## European City of Science (Leiden 2022 and Katowice 2024)





# European City of Science Leiden2022

365 days  
curious

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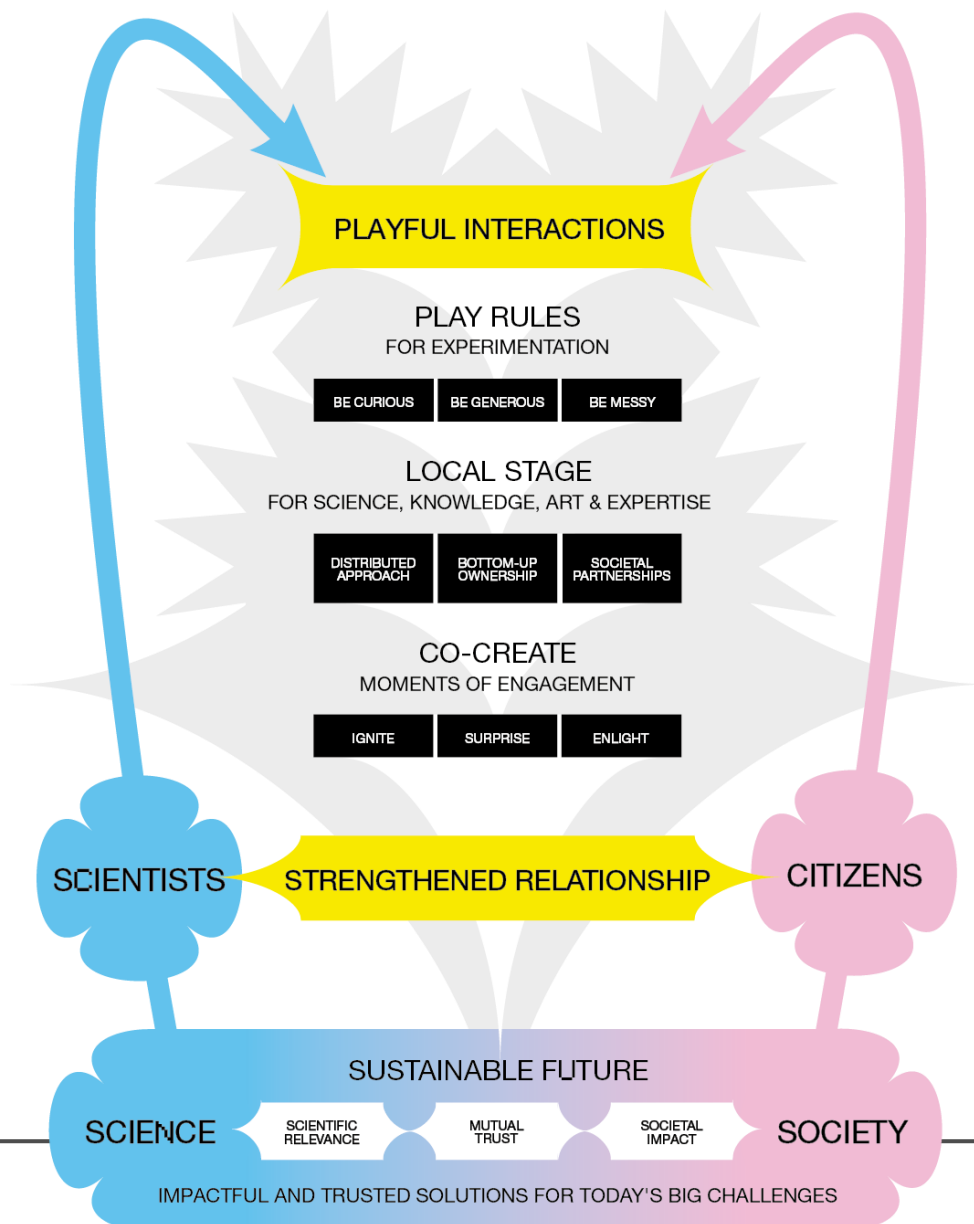
# Leiden European City of Science 2022

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3E5

the 1<sup>st</sup> European  
365 days-science-festival,  
connecting science with society,  
covering the spectrum of *human knowledge*:  
science, expertise, arts and craft,  
for anyone with a curious mind!



# THE LEIDEN2022 MODEL FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH SCIENCE

A new, scalable, co-creation method to spark playful interactions between scientists and citizens, aimed at connecting science with society



[www.modelleiden2022.nl](http://www.modelleiden2022.nl)



Highlight

# KnOWLEDGE throughout the NEIGHBOURHOODS



European  
City of Science  
Leiden2022



# Knowledge throughout the Neighbourhoods

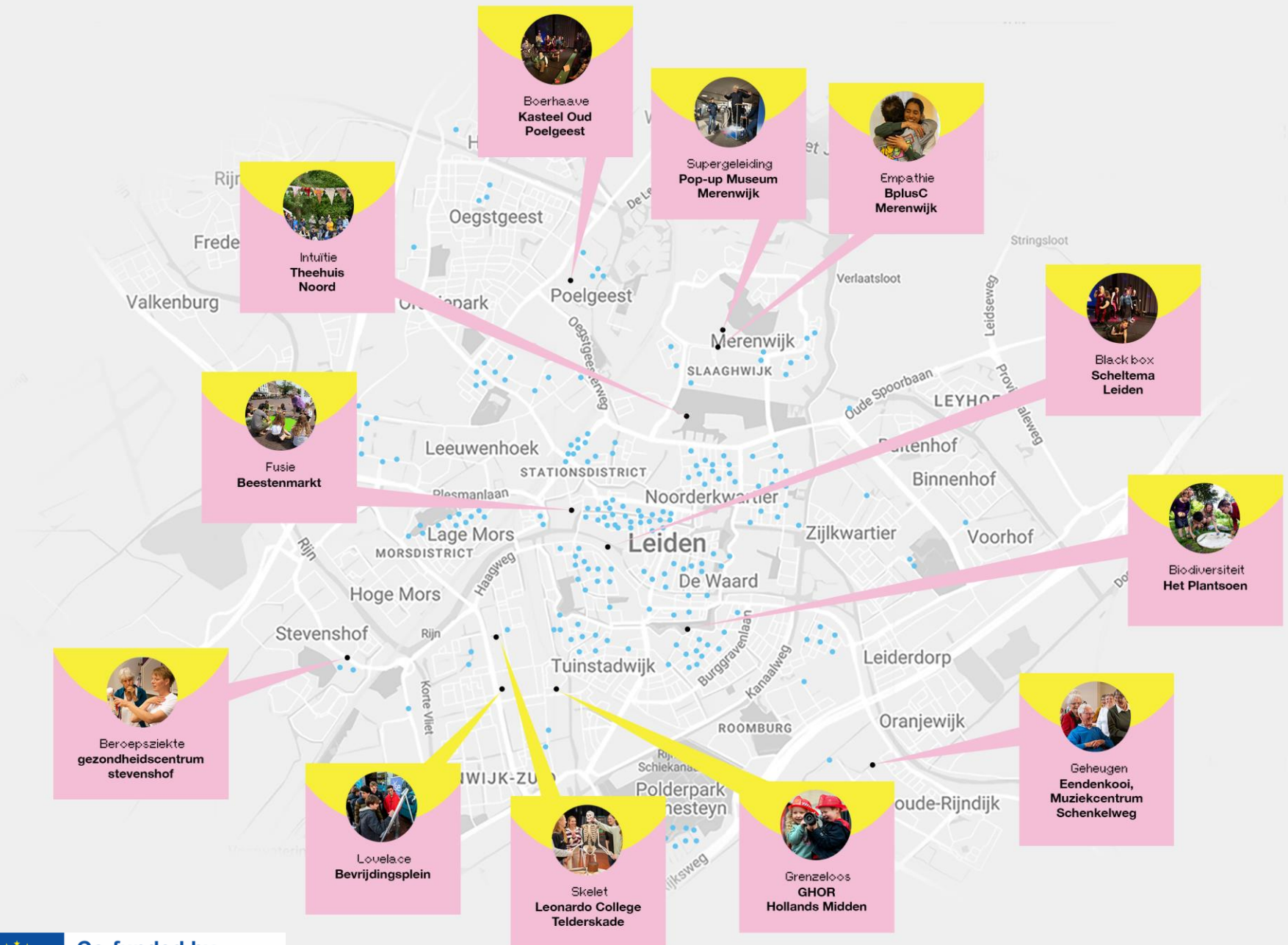
A TOPIC A DAY

206 activities

199+ owners-of-the-day

23.000+ participants

101 districts



**RESULTS LEIDEN2022**

# 365 days connecting science with society

**RADIO WEETLUST**  
 365 radio shows **410** guests and **numerous** fans!

**P.O. BOX 71**  
 600+ Questions asked by citizens  
 206 Provided answers  
 52 Scientists  
 60 YouTube videos  
 100.000+ Twitter views

**KNOWLEDGE THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBOURHOODS**  
 365 topics-of-the-day  
 206 local activities  
 23.509+ participants  
 199+ owners-of-the-day  
 101 neighbourhoods in Leiden & region  
 134 partners  
 3 TukTuks  
 8.4/10 appreciation rate



**ESOF 2022 - EUROSCIENCE OPEN FORUM**  
 10<sup>th</sup> edition  
 119 scientific sessions, plenaries, keynotes & workshop  
 6 live-only, 48 hybrid, 63 online  
 3.138 delegates from 87 countries  
 494 speakers from 54 countries  
 7.5/10 appreciation rate

**EUCYS**  
 33<sup>rd</sup> edition  
 65.000 participants 132 finalists  
 87 projects from 32 countries  
 8.4/10 appreciation rate delegates  
 9/10 appreciation rate jury

100+ congresses & symposia  
 2000 participants, 13.000+ delegates

**BRANDING LEIDEN2022**  
 1222 QR-logo's distributed  
 61.035 QR-logo's scanned

**COMMUNICATING LEIDEN2022**  
 161.819 website visits  
 5382+ social media community  
 1,541,480+ social media impressions  
 43,786+ social media engagement  
 113,590+ social media video views  
 2,8% average engagement rate

**FINANCING LEIDEN2022**  
 7.2 million euro budget  
 4 million co-funded by the European Commission  
 37 Financial Partners, 4 Founding Partners



## European City of Science Leiden2022

Many thanks to 1000s of local, national and European, known and anonymous, formal and informal partners. Together, we brought Leiden European City of Science 2022 to life.

**450.000**  
 MOMENTS OF ENGAGEMENT (VISITS, PARTICIPANTS & UNIQUE VISITORS)

1000+ activities with a huge **COMMUNITY BONUS**

**EU TalentOn**  
 1<sup>st</sup> edition  
 5 EU mission arena's  
 700+ applicants, 104 participants  
 41 nationalities, 28 countries  
 26 teams, 26 buddies  
 20+ experts  
 8/10 appreciation rate  
 8,5/10 appreciation rate incl. buddies

**NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS**  
 21 events  
 25+ local citizens assemblies  
 1 Ministry of the Future



# LEIDEN2022 RESULTS

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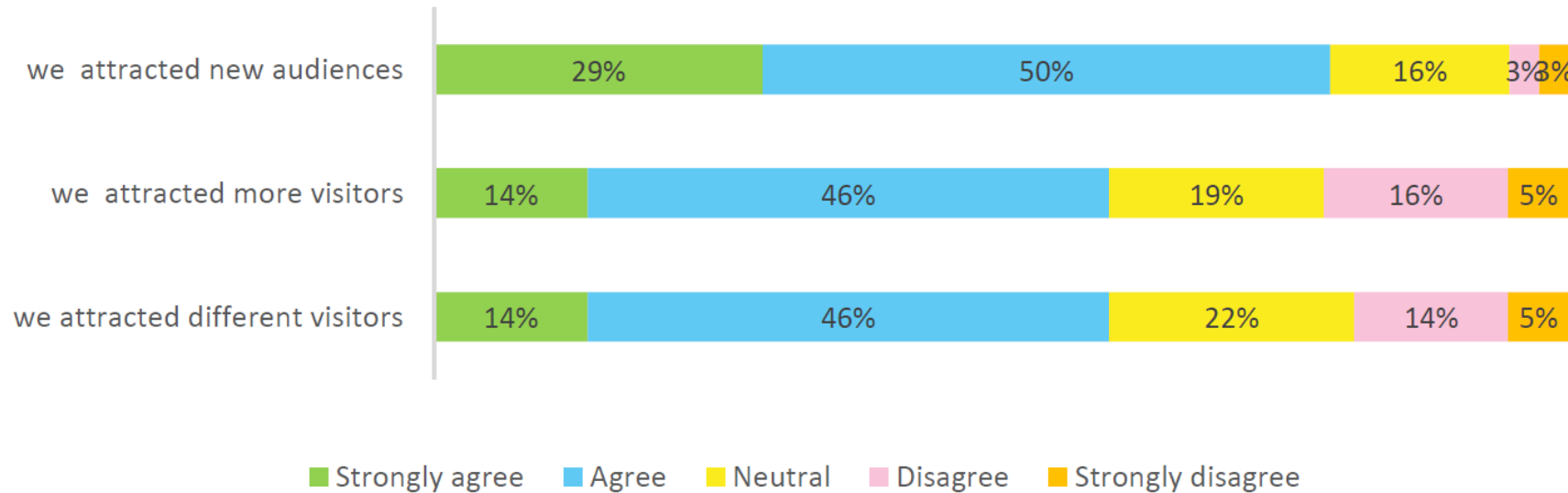
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# RESULTS: NEW AUDIENCES & VISITORS

## Engagement in Leiden2022 and attracting visitors

*Due to our contribution to Leiden2022 ... (local cultural and social organizations)*



# What are we doing?



## European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS)

**Science competition** that brings together first prize **winners of national science contests** for school science projects to compete for prizes and awards.



Each year brings together talented students from 40+ countries



14-20 years-old students



Highlights scientific student achievements and attract young people to careers in R&I

# What are we doing?

## European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) – Contest Organisation

- EUCYS is organised by the European Commission in direct cooperation with the Member State's Host Organiser
- It is open to EU Member States, countries associated to Horizon Europe, Neighbourhood policy countries and countries with Science and Technology agreements with the European Commission
- The hosts of the last editions of EUCYS include: Katowice, Brussels, Leiden, Salamanca and Sofia
- In 2022 and 2024, EUCYS took place as part of the European City of Science Programme
- The 36th edition of EUCYS in 2025 will take place in Riga





# What are we doing?

## European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) – Subjects and Prizes

- Disciplines of science and technology in which projects are submitted include: biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, engineering, IT, environmental science, medicine, social science
- The main prizes are the core monetary prize offered by the European Commission: 4 first prizes of €7000, 4 second prizes €5000; 4 third prizes €3500
- Honorary prizes associated and special donated prizes: LIYSF, SIYSS, visits to EIROforum research labs, JTC, CBE



# EUCYS – Participation

Past EUCYS

- Brussels
- Copenhagen
- Helsinki
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- Valencia
- Stockholm
- Prague
- Salamanca
- Budapest
- Lisbon
- Tallinn
- Amsterdam
- Leiden
- Bratislava
- Berlin
- Luxembourg
- Vienna
- Sofia
- Stockholm
- Prague
- Salamanca
- Budapest
- Lisbon
- Tallinn
- Amsterdam
- Warsaw
- Bratislava
- Zurich
- Seville
- Bergen
- Vienna
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- Sofia
- Stockholm
- Prague
- Salamanca
- Budapest
- Lisbon
- Porto
- Milan
- Dublin
- Thessaloniki
- Warsaw



**140-150  
contestants**

**40  
nationalities**

**2k-5k  
visitors**

**90-100  
projects**

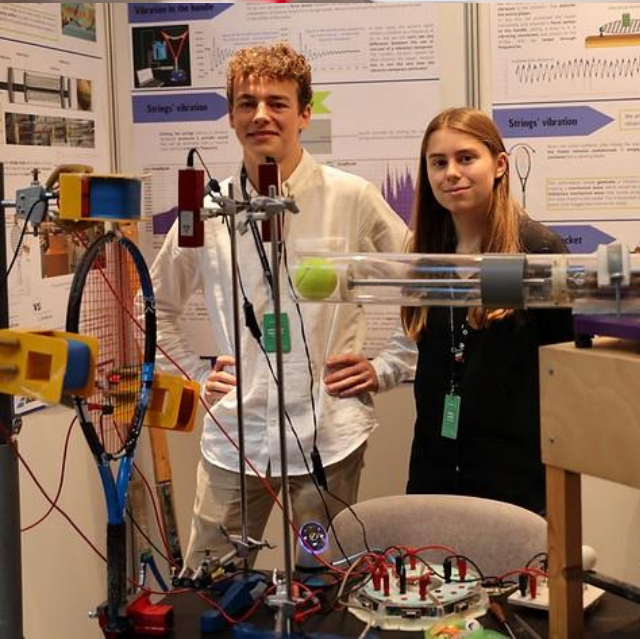




# Students at their stands







# What are we doing?

## EU TalentOn

**Science competition** that brings together **early-career researchers** to work on **scientific solutions to societal challenges**.



Every 2 years brings together researchers from the EU and beyond



Early career researchers (21-35 years old, Master, PhD etc.)



Attract researchers to careers in science and promote opportunities in academia, industry and start-ups





# What are we doing?

## EU TalentOn – Contest Organisation

- The first pilot edition took place on 14 – 18 Sept 2022 in Leiden and the second edition took place on 9 – 14 Sept 2024 in Katowice
- Participants work into small teams of four and are divided in 5 Mission Arenas, linked to the 5 EU Missions.

**01 ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

**02 CANCER**

**03 CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES**

**04 RESTORE OUR OCEANS & WATERS**

**05 SOIL DEAL FOR EUROPE**

- They receive the necessary tools to create innovative and marketable solutions, and have the opportunity to follow workshops, company visits, lectures, master classes, personal guidance and cultural experiences.



# What are we doing?

## EU TalentOn – Prizes

In 2024, EU TalentOn winners were awarded:

- 1) Main prize (EU TalentOn Winner):  
12 000 EUR
- 2) First prize per each Mission Arena:  
7 500 EUR
- 3) Second prize per each Mission Arena:  
4 500 EUR
- 4) Special prize – EU TalentOn  
Community Award: 3 000 EUR





# EU TalentOn – Participation



700+  
applications

26 teams

100 +  
participants

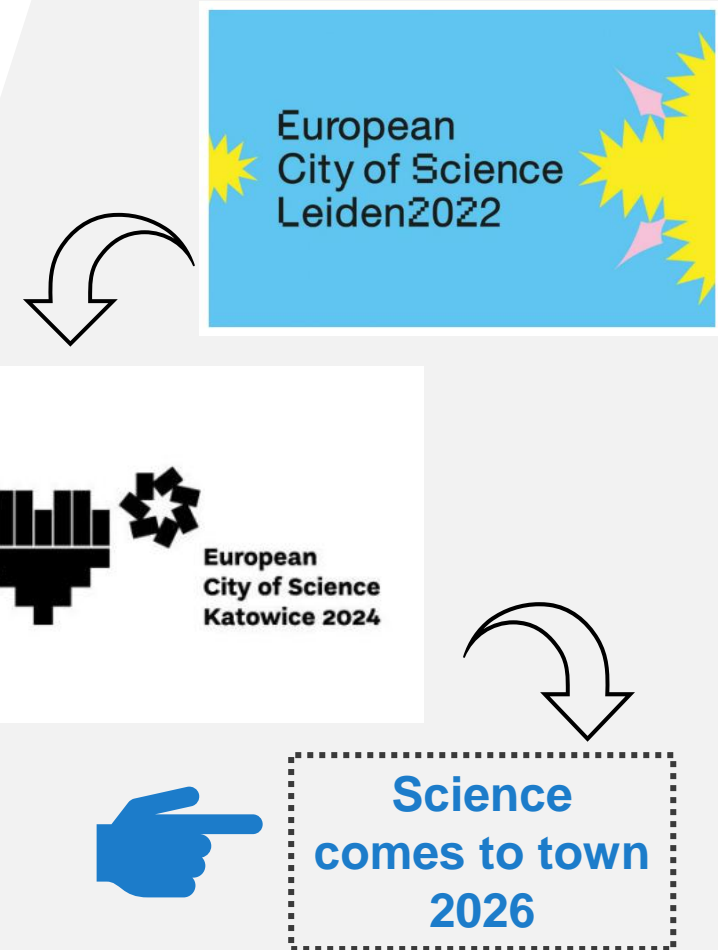
37  
nationalities



# How to improve?

## From European City of Science to Science comes to town

- How to widen the scope of our biggest science communication initiative?
- How to maximise the impact and improve excellence?
- How to ensure that EU funds are invested effectively?



# How to improve?

## Science comes to town – Expected outcomes

A **small group of at least 3 cities** that jointly design and implement a **vibrant and engaging year-long programme** of activities, connecting local **R&I communities** with **citizens** and **stakeholders** around the topic of science and its role in society.

### Expected outcomes:

- **Programme with a robust concept and brand** promoting R&I in Europe and fostering dialogue and exchange on science and its role in society.
- Improved **science communication** by showcasing the latest R&I developments and through experimentation with connecting citizens and scientists.
- Enhanced **discussion and debate** on the future of science and R&I policy in Europe with stakeholders and citizens.
- Improved appeal of younger generations to **careers in R&I**.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-02-02

Call opening / closing:  
**15 May 2024 / 25 September 2024**

Type of action: **CSA**

Budget: **EUR 6 million**

Indicative number of projects: **1**

# How to improve?

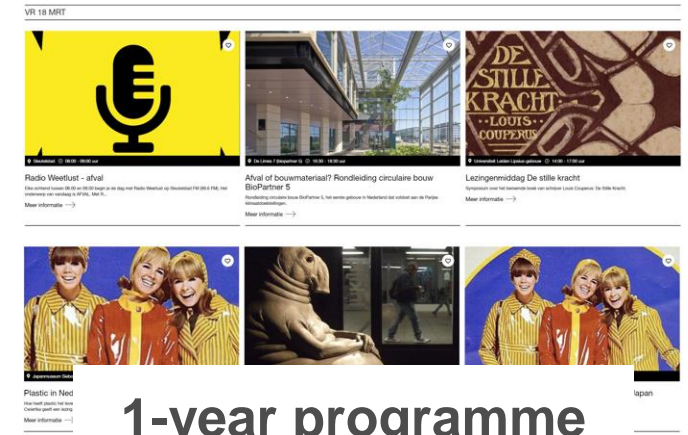
## Science comes to town – Key components



**The European Union  
Contest for Young  
Scientists:  
EUCYS 2026**



**European Union  
Contest for early-  
career researchers:  
EU TalentOn 2026**



**1-year programme  
of events and  
activities**

# How to improve?

## Year-long programme – Concept

A **year-long programme** of interactive and engaging events and activities that highlight the contribution of science to society and the results of R&I projects.



Communities at local,  
regional and  
European level



Involve different ages,  
social groups and  
stakeholders: students,  
researchers, citizens,  
policymakers, business  
and third sector.



Increase the  
understanding, uptake  
and impact of R&I in  
society and showcase  
the richness and  
diversity of the European  
scientific landscape

# How to improve?

## Science comes to town – Scope

### Make-up of the consortium:

- At least **3 cities of 3 different Members States and/or Associated Countries**, with the majority being in Member States.
- **Consortium partners:** Legal entities that can represent the host cities and/or join them in designing and implementing the activities.
- **City authorities:** Commitment letters from cities.
- **R&I dimension:** Universities, research organisations etc.

### Important aspects to keep in mind:

- Develop **concept and brand**.
- **Experiment** with interactive and engaging formats.
- **Open science**, citizen science, science education, public engagement.
- Develop **synergies**: other events & activities, incl. European Researchers' Night and Researchers at School initiative.
- Encouraged to design and implement activities that **reach communities** beyond the ones in the cities directly participating (e.g., satellite events).

# How to improve?

## Science comes to town – Programme

**Concept for the annual programme** in the proposal:

- Vision for content: focus, scope of activities, preliminary programme
- Outreach strategy
- Contribution to long-term vision for the cities

## Programmed activities & resources

- 1 Events funded partially or fully by the grant (e.g., EUCYS, EU TalentON)
- 2 Activities funded partially or fully by the grant (e.g., the overall coordination and communication activities)
- 3 Activities and events financed by the cities (e.g., already established activities of the cities and other partners).

# How to improve?

## Our priorities

**Boosting public engagement and science communication,** also supported by indicators measuring effectiveness and impact

**Strengthening the link between science and society** at the local, regional and national level, taking into account citizens' needs

Increase scientific literacy and awareness of EU R&I initiatives and their impact to **raise trust in science**

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# THANK YOU!

