

Barcelona Science

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Topic: Citizen science and social innovation

Type of initiative: Programme / project

Implementation scale: Local

Responsible agents: Research managers

Location: Barcelona / Catalonia / Spain

Keywords: open data, governance, open knowledge, crowdsourcing

Start and end date: 2007 - 2023

Sustainability: Completed with active legacy

Summary

Barcelona Science was a municipal programme launched in 2007 and consolidated through the *Barcelona Science Plan 2020-2023* to connect research, science culture, education, citizen participation and social innovation. Its legacy continues through the Office of Citizen Science and the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.

Promoting organizations

The *Barcelona Science Plan 2020-2023* was led by Barcelona City Council, through the Sixth Deputy Mayor's Office for Culture, Education, Science and Community and the Department of Science and Universities, created in September 2020. The Office of Citizen Science acted as the operational structure for the citizen science strand.

Objectives

The *Barcelona Science Plan 2020-2023* was formulated as a municipal roadmap to provide Barcelona with its own science policy and strengthen its position as a city of science and knowledge. It built on a trajectory that began in 2007 with the Barcelona Science programme, which promoted initiatives such as the [Science Festival](#) and [EscoLab](#), and continued in 2012 with the creation of the [Office of Citizen Science](#). The plan structured this evolution through a cross-cutting strategy, defined with municipal areas, and organised around four axes, fifteen objectives and fifty-one actions (

[Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020](#)).

Its objectives combined international positioning, research oriented towards urban challenges, science culture and citizen participation. The first axis aimed to increase Barcelona's visibility as a European city of science and strengthen alliances. The second sought to connect the scientific ecosystem with municipal needs, support research on urban challenges and promote open and accessible knowledge. The third axis proposed strengthening science culture by and for citizens, expanding the programmes of the Office of Citizen Science, and promoting living labs, action research, science education and dissemination activities in neighbourhoods, schools and public facilities. The fourth axis linked science, art, innovation and society through co-creation, transfer and collaboration among scientific, social, economic and cultural stakeholders ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020](#)).

Following COVID-19, the plan was reformulated as *Rebooting the Barcelona Science Plan 2020-2023*. This update incorporated contributions from the scientific and university ecosystem, the Pact for Barcelona, advisory councils and an open participatory process. The reformulation reinforced the idea that local science policy should contribute to social and health recovery and consolidate a more open, inclusive science connected with urban problems ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2021](#)).

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

The direct beneficiaries are Barcelona residents, educational centres, public facilities and social groups involved in science culture and citizen science activities. Universities, research centres and the local administration also benefit from the collaboration channels created by the initiative.

Results

- Consolidation of a municipal policy connecting research, education, science culture and citizen participation, building on a trajectory that began in 2007 with the Barcelona Science programme ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2023](#)).
- Development of programmes such as the Science Festival, EscoLab, the Office of Citizen Science, the City and [Science Biennial](#), the [Hypatia Prize](#) and research calls on urban challenges ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2023](#)).
- Formalisation of the Barcelona Science Plan 2020-2023 as a roadmap with 4 axes, 15 objectives and 51 actions, later expanded with new actions oriented towards post-pandemic recovery ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020](#); [2023](#)).
- Consolidation of the Office of Citizen Science as a coordination mechanism. In 2022, it had 18 active projects in its community of practice, and the school programme involved 540 students from 13 schools in 7 citizen science projects ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022](#)).

- The current website reports more than 14,000 residents and school students involved and more than 10,000 data points collected for scientific research ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.](#)).

Challenges

The main challenge was to sustain a cross-cutting municipal science policy in a context marked by COVID-19, which required the reformulation of objectives and priorities. Challenges also remained in coordinating municipal areas, the scientific community, public facilities and citizens; ensuring territorial and social inclusion; and consolidating open, interoperable data that could be useful for public policy in citizen science projects ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2021](#); [2022](#)).

Interest and transferability

The interest of Barcelona Science lies in its capacity to articulate, at municipal level, a science policy connected with urban life. The initiative shows how programmes for science dissemination, science education, citizen science, action research and collaboration with universities, research centres, cultural facilities and social groups can be integrated into a public strategy aimed at bringing scientific knowledge closer to citizens and incorporating participation into responses to urban challenges.

Its transferability is partial and must be adapted to each city's context. Replicating a science festival or an office of citizen science is not enough; a research ecosystem, proximity facilities, municipal coordination and political continuity are also required. Its legacy can be seen in the continued operation of the Office of Citizen Science and its later integration into the 2024–2027 Strategic Plan for Science and Innovation, which maintains citizenship, science culture and education as lines of action ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2024](#)).

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