



## Improving Co-operation between NGO's, Universities and Science Shops

### PRESS INFORMATION

#### For immediate release

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**To strengthen the interaction between research institutions and society, INTERACTS aims at improving cooperation in science, research and development of small to medium NGO's with universities through intermediaries such as science shops<sup>1</sup>.**

The growing need to create a culture of socially acceptable science, research and development and to make them accessible to citizens creates new challenges to policy makers. How can the RTD system become more accountable? What are the potentials of interaction through intermediaries such as science shops to increase awareness of the mutual benefits of cooperation between universities and small to medium NGO's? What are the expectations for future cooperation between NGO's and universities? What are the functions NGO's and individual researchers expect these collaborations to perform? What are the changing needs and opportunities for this type of cooperation?

INTERACTS is a pioneer cross-national study by organisations and institutions from seven different countries collaborating across disciplines to identify necessary changes in structures and routines in the RTD system for improving the future interaction between NGO's, researchers, and intermediaries like science shops. Bringing together the results from different countries will allow a broader picture to emerge concerning past experience with impact of science shops, future expectations and policy relevance. Thereby, INTERACTS contributes to the strengthening of the interaction between research institutions and society and gives more in-depth understanding of processes and effects of knowledge production.

<sup>1</sup> Science shops provide independent, participatory research support to NGO's on a demand driven and affordable basis. Thereby, science shops promote and support public access to, and public influence on, science, research and technology.

Most science shops are university-based, while others are independent research institutes. Most of them – university- and non-university-based ones alike – act as intermediaries between universities and NGO's and mostly engage students for doing research, thus enhancing the students' skills in putting science to practical use. Others are independent research institutes where professional researchers do all research work.

According to estimates about 70 science shops exist in Europe alone. Most of them are located in the Netherlands, from where the idea of setting up science shops spread to Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxemburg, Romania, and the United Kingdom since the 1970's. In their respective countries, science shops are known under different names such as "Wetenschapswinkels" (The Netherlands) and "Wissenschaftsläden" (Austria, Germany). Science shops also exist in the USA – where they are called Community-Based Research Centers -, Malaysia, South Africa and South Korea.

INTERACTS is realized in five steps:

1. The State-of-the-Art Report provides an overview of political and institutional conditions for the co-operation between small to medium non-governmental organisations (NGOs), science shops, and universities in Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Spain, and Romania. This report serves as a basis for the next two steps, the case studies and the participatory workshops.

2. The case studies examine the expectations from and the practical experience with interaction between NGOs, scientists, and science shops and produce an inventory of the impact direct co-operations mediated through science shops had on NGO's, researchers and science shops.

3. Future expectations and perspectives for co-operation between NGOs, scientists, and science shops are discussed by NGO representatives, researchers and policy makers in participatory workshops in each of the seven partner countries. Together with the State-of-the-Art Report and the case studies, these discussions produce an inventory of operational options and challenges, and necessary changes for improving the future interaction between NGO's, researchers, and intermediaries like science shops. Giving voice to a broader range of stakeholders democratizes Science and Technology policy.

4. The final report identifies potentials and barriers of the research and development system to enable effective and sustainable co-operation and presents policy recommendations and strategies for improving conditions for future co-operation between NGO's, researchers and intermediaries such as science shops.

5. In a last step, the INTERACTS findings are disseminated at national and international workshops and conferences.

### **INTERACTS Consortium**

The INTERACTS consortium brings together expertise from seven different countries. The researchers cover a broad range of disciplines within the humanities, the natural sciences and the social sciences.

INTERACTS is coordinated by the Science Shop at the Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby, assisted by Institut für gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Forschung, Bildung und Information (FBI) and Wissenschaftsladen Wien - Science Shop Vienna.

- The Science Shop at the Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby, Denmark
- Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR), The Netherlands (*subcontractor to the Science Shop at the Technical University of Denmark*)
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- Pax Mediterranea s.l., Sevilla, Spain
- Liverpool Hope College, Department of Sociology, United Kingdom
- Liverpool University, Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work Studies, United Kingdom
- InterMEDIU Information, Consultancy and ODL Department at the "Gh. Asachi" Technical University of Iasi, Romania