

# FALLING WALLS ENGAGE HUB ARGENTINA

Science Engagement in Latin America: a successful Falling Walls Engage Hub Argentina paralleled by our first #Sciethon2020 to Hack the Future of Science Engagement



## The Falling Walls Engage Hub Argentina

The launch of the Falling Walls Engage Hub Argentina, jointly organized with our local Falling Walls Engage Hub partner, Fundación Ciencia Joven, was an opportunity to discover the vibrant Science Engagement scene in Latin America. Fundación Ciencia Joven, a foundation promoting STEM education among youth in Chile, Argentina and Latin America, brought in their unique expertise for this event.

The Falling Walls Engage Hub Argentina was attended by 25 academics, specialists, innovators, researchers, and directors of science communication institutes from 15 countries from Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. It provided an opportunity to

discuss the state and landscape of Science Engagement in the region, to showcase different projects and share experience from different countries.

“I’m very excited to be part of this event and talk to people from Latin America (...) We usually have gatherings with countries that don’t share exactly the same problems as us in Latin America, so it’s really interesting and important for me.”, said Cintia Durán, a Finalist of Falling Walls Engage 2019 and Director of Tlaloque in Mexico.

### **Lessons Learned from Latin America**

An important aspect in fostering public policies for Science Engagement is to take existing public attitudes towards science into account. Rodrigo Tapia, Head of the Science and Society Division of the Ministry of Science and Technology of Chile, and Diego Vargas, Head of the Sectorial Planning Unit of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications of Costa Rica, shared key insights on the social perception of science in Chile and Costa Rica.

In addition to comparing national surveys, both speakers suggested possible pathways to strengthen the link between science and society. In Chile, the funding of science museums and the creation of adapted content for digital platforms were cited as new avenues for action.

### **From Science to Political Participation**

Further, we explored the relation between science communication and political participation through the research of María Eugenia Fazio, Professor of Public Communication of Science and Technology at the University of Quilmes, Argentina, and Yuriy Castelfranchi, Professor of Sociology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

In a presentation rich of insights, both academics stressed the importance of building scientific citizenship through interdisciplinary work, public policy and innovative communication strategies.

Starting from the example of Brazil, Prof. Castelfranchi highlighted the limitations of a “myth versus truth” approach in communicating science to the public. He argued for new pathways to engage citizens with science. Diversity, inclusivity, co-production, and shared decision-making were identified as key dimensions in building a steady scientific culture in society.

## A Co-Learning Experience

All along the Hub sessions, participants were invited to learn from each other and network through break-out rooms and a Case Clinic activity. The latter allowed them to explore a challenge they encounter and wish to solve in smaller groups.

“I think I like this Engage Hub, coming from Africa, we do share lot of challenges and opportunities with Latin America, so it was a very good engagement point, and one that will resonate with everything we talk about here in Kenya.”, commented Stephanie Okeyo, a Falling Walls Engage 2019 Finalist and founder of Under the Microscope.

In addition, the event was punctuated by lively group discussions and cultural activities, including a tango performance by Argentinian dancers Lucía Gutiérrez and Guillermo Vivas, and a music performance by the Argentinian musician José Simón.

## #SCIETHON2020: an Exceptional Online 48-Hours Marathon with +100 Participants to Hack the Future of Science Engagement



In order to jointly tackle challenges in the field of Science Engagement, together with Fundación Ciencia Joven we organized the #Sciethon2020 from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> of August.

This online marathon gathered 150 participants from 26 countries with one objective: “Hacking the Future of Science Engagement in Latin America”. Over 48 hours, participants set out to solve 13 challenges in teams to come up with solutions on how to strengthen the link between science and society.

We had great support from regional partners: The Pan American Development Foundation, Red Pop, Impact Hub Latam and the UNESCO Oficina Regional de Ciencia y Tecnología para América Latina y El Caribe. The Sciethon plenary sessions were moderated by two social innovation experts, Christina Hunn and Paula Gutiérrez, who guided, motivated, and accompanied the teams throughout the weekend.

The 13 challenges focused on timely topics, such as scientific reliability, misinformation, inclusivity, and the promotion of women in STEM. Each of the 20 international teams was assigned a mentor, which had the task of providing guidance and motivating their troops over the course of the marathon.

### **Collaborative Work in Diverse Teams**

The commitment of Science Engagers, their capacity to assess local contexts, to come up with innovative solutions, and organize themselves in highly diverse teams was a huge factor in the success of this event.

The cultural differences allowed participants to learn from one another and think beyond borders. For Marcello, one participant from Brazil, this turned out to be an advantage to resolve his challenge: helping people to take decisions based on scientific facts.

“Our team is very diverse, so sharing experience from our daily life and what we know is very good to be able to consider or own beliefs, and that of people from different cultures.”, he said.

Age difference was also a noticeable aspect in the Sciethon, with many participants being in their early twenties or younger. This not only allowed youngest participants to learn from more experienced members, but also to take ownership of their projects.

“The diversity in our group has been really good and has allowed us to go beyond the “adult-centrism” that you normally find in scientific communication and in the scientific community.”, said Diego, one participant from Chile.

Another mixed team, the “Power Brokers”, included members from Chile, Argentina, Indonesia, Kenya, Turkey and Oman. With their diverse national perspectives, the team imagined an online science-policy platform to enable mutual understanding between scientists and policy makers.

### **Three Winning Teams and Countless Ideas**

After 48 hours of hard work and inspiring exchanges, the teams submitted their solutions in the form of a short presentation and 2-minute video.

Three winning projects were chosen by a jury of experts:

- “InformApp”, a platform providing reliable sources for decision-making;
- “STEMos Unidas”, a collaborative network for women in STEM areas;
- “VerifiComCyt”, an information verification platform.

In addition, a Honorable Mention was given to Ayllú, a collaborative platform designed to help parents inspire a scientific interest in the family. How? Through a website combining an online library of scientific content and curated events and local initiatives from NGOs in the STEM field.

Each team was rewarded with a mentoring acceleration programme from [Impact Hub LATAM](#) in order to continue designing their prototype as a team in the next weeks.

### Closing Ceremony



The results of the #Sciethon2020 were announced on Tuesday September 1<sup>st</sup> in a public closing ceremony, which was hosted by the Argentinean TV presenters of the programme *La Liga de la Ciencia*, María Eugenia López and Andrés Rieznik. During the ceremony, the Argentinian stand-up show comedian Javier Garcia de Souza offered a personal and humorous account of his own scientific journey.

The ceremony gave us the opportunity to close this journey and to celebrate the joint efforts of all teams, mentors, jury members and partners.

If you have missed it, check out the live-stream in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on Youtube. To discover more about all the projects of the winning teams, check out their videos on [the Sciethon website](#).

## Context

**Falling Walls Engage** is a global platform promoting breakthroughs in Science Engagement. Our mission is to spread scientific literacy outside the scientific community and engage broader non-expert audiences with science. The programme fosters co-learning among Science Engagement practitioners, offers an international platform for discussions and exchange, and aims at promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of science in society.

Furthering Science Engagement requires looking not only at fresh approaches and innovative formats involving non-scientists, but also at currently unrecognized initiatives led by scientists outside the academic field. To accomplish this, Falling Walls Engage has launched independent network nodes worldwide, **the Falling Walls Engage Hubs**.

Already active in six countries, the [Falling Walls Engage Hubs](#) aim at connecting the local and regional scientific community with international Science Engagement initiatives and the global Falling Walls community. The Hubs translate into a series of events, conferences, and workshops fostering the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices across disciplines and borders.