

## From skepticism to public engagement: Countering politicization of science through outreach

These days, trust in science is increasingly politicized. What people believe to be true often depends more on their political views than on scientific evidence. This is concerning as it makes it harder to roll out policies based on science that are accepted by the wider public. In some cases, this might be deeply problematic. One clear example is the climate change issue:

*Despite scientific consensus, some groups dismiss climate research as politically biased or “left-wing”, which could undermine efforts to address one of the biggest challenges of our time. Furthermore, the politicization of science also creates split views on reality itself, which is likely to weaken social cohesion and fuel tension between different groups in society.*

To push back against this worrying trend, the DigiPatch team has engaged in several Knowledge Exchange Activities aimed to increase understanding for, and in turn rebuilding trust, in science. These activities bring scientists and the public together to share perspectives, ask questions, and break down complex topics in ways that make sense to everyone. It's a small but important step toward increasing understanding, restoring trust and making science a shared part of public life.

Specifically, we have within the DigiPatch team focused on two Knowledge Exchange Activities: [LivingLAB](#) and [Knowledge Exchange Scenarios](#). Starting with the LivingLAB, it comprises five research stations designed to accommodate a range of scientific projects. These stations are set up temporarily for different studies, letting scientists run experiments while engaging directly with visitors and showing them what research looks like in action. In other words, the visitors are introduced to the research process, offering an opportunity to observe and understand how scientific knowledge is produced.

The LivingLAB is right inside the Copernicus Science Centre, taking advantage of the steady stream of visitors to boost cutting-edge research and get the public involved. And it's working! Between January and May 2025, 8,602 visitors took part in the DigiPatch studies across all the LivingLAB stations, spending a total of 356 hours interacting with the research.

Turning to the Knowledge Exchange Scenarios, two scenarios linked to the DigiPatch project were developed, aiming to bring research into the classroom: “being online” and “how to avoid being manipulated”. Find the scenarios available in three languages via the QR-code below or following link: [https://digipatch.eu/?page\\_id=375](https://digipatch.eu/?page_id=375)



The scenarios are actively used by teachers and civic educators in Poland and Spain, demonstrating their practical relevance and cross-cultural applicability in educational settings. In addition to contributing to making complex research themes accessible and engaging for people, this also helps supporting teachers with practical tools for teaching media literacy. This is crucial; it can, for instance, be noted that in Germany, the majority (54%) of teachers report that they lack suitable teaching materials and plans for lessons that build digital skills and critical thinking. When these two scenarios were introduced, they sparked strong interest from teachers. In fact, even the Minister of Education in Armenia expressed interest in sharing the scenarios more widely.

*In summary, the DigiPatch Knowledge Exchange Activities have been a success, and we hope they will continue to be adopted and shared by those committed to fostering understanding of, engagement with, and trust in science.*

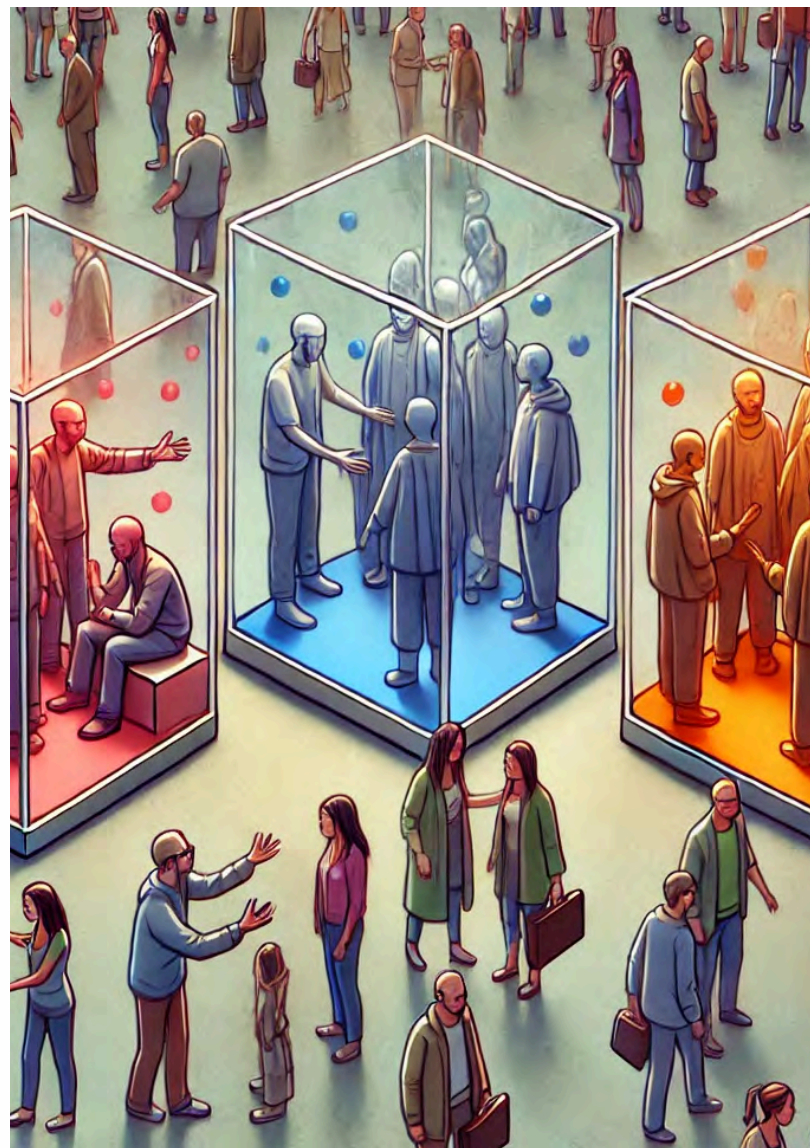


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