Covid-19 breakout has highlighted the pivotal role played by science in the society. Among the effects caused by pandemic, the acceleration rate toward digitalization process of information, including science communication, represents one of the most evident cases. Suddenly, one had to move from interactive educational approaches to distance learning education by the adoption of dedicated platforms within virtual rooms, searching for new forms of dialogue between the players: digital immigrants (baby boomers and x generation) and digital borns (y generation), more prone in the use of technological devices (i.e. smartphone, videogames).

This digital transformation process has let us reconsider the organization of our science communication events, including educational activities for the secondary grade school students. Therefore, the cycle “School meets the research” (1) has been turned in “Research goes to school”, which foresees synchronous meetings tackling important topics of interest for the society within a virtual space. From vaccination for healthcare of citizens to adoption of eco-friendly measures for environmental protection, from innovative technologies addressed to diagnosis and treatment of diseases to marine and antarctic biology. Digital transformation has led us also to participate to international events such as “European Biotechnology Week 2020” (2) through the implementation of the asynchronous meeting ”Doing BIOTECH: Healthcare that will come”, to allow teachers to use the educational tools according to tailored modalities and needs, exploiting alternative channels such as YouTube. In this context, the “hands on” approach, key element characterizing the visits at the research laboratories, has been substituted by video-tutorials performed according to the logic of screen, with the aim to catch young digital borns’ attention. Besides, being in streaming has allowed to start new collaboration programmes with schools based in other regions in Italy and again to participate into broader european communities such as “European Schoolnet” (3) tackling the innovative trends in education of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics).

Concerning the public engagement events, the management is more complicated because the “facetoface” factor, distinctive of the engagement events (two-way process), has to be reinvented using new formats and social media. Futuro Remoto 2020 and European researchers’ night - Meet Me tonight 2020 are currently ongoing experiments, although constrained to propose a format closer to a dissemination event (one-way process).

In this scenario, the risk is that part of the general public goes missed, because not confident with information and communication technologies. Therefore, the “spillover” of a high number of citizens to digitalization process represents the challenge to cope with getting science communication more inclusive and opened to everyone.


Keywords: Covid19, science communication, digital transformation, public engagement

Contacts: Giuliana Catara giuliana.catara@ibbc.cnr.it; Giuseppe Ruggiero giuseppe.ruggiero@ibbc.cnr.it

Website(s): http://www.ibbc.cnr.it/researchers/giuliana-catara/

Other: