CENTRUM NAUKI KOPERNIK

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Annual Report

Copernicus Science Centre — 2025

Strategic goals

S1. To offer a memorable, inspiring and friendly experience to more than one million visitors annually. 3

To provide visitors with comfortable visiting conditions, top-quality exhibits, interesting shows at a high-tech planetarium and engaging activities.

To reach out to local communities across Poland, with Copernicus exhibits and shows.

S2. To foster cognitive independence and collaborative skills. 23

To promote dialogue, with diverse participants, about challenges that lie at the intersection of science and society.

To create and disseminate solutions that transform education.

To develop networks of learning communities.

S3. To increase the participation of underrepresented individuals and groups in Copernicus programmes. 63

To remove barriers and include people at risk of social exclusion into the programme activities.

To build an inclusive organizational culture.

To make Copernicus a green cultural institution. 70

To reduce the carbon footprint of our operations.

To apply the “3R” principle.

To create a biodiversity park and make our environs greener.

S5. To ensure Copernicus financial stability and partnerships. 76

To raise revenue to ensure operations and growth.

To build partnerships that contribute to the Copernicus vision.

S6. To create a friendly and efficient organization. 82

To streamline operations and ensure better internal cooperation.

To ensure job satisfaction among the team.

Vision

People shape a world that is friendly to them and to nature, by developing and applying science.

Mission

We inspire people to experiment, understand the world, and take responsible action.

Values

We value science, integrity, openness, co-operation, care for the environment.

Executive summary

In 2025, the Copernicus Science Centre reaffirmed our position as a large and stable public institution, combining operational scale with responsibility and quality. It was a year focused on strengthening our foundations: visitor experience, cognitive independence, accessibility, green transformation, financial stability, and organizational maturity. The activities we pursued under each strategic goal contributed to a cohesive vision for the Centre's development, with a long-term focus on social impact. The summary below highlights key achievements under our six strategic goals.

Strategic Goal 1

To offer a memorable, inspiring, and friendly experience to more than one million visitors annually (across diverse social groups).

In 2025, we maintained a high-quality visitor experience despite significant operational constraints, including the temporary closure of the Planetarium until April. A total of 1,212,245 people visited us during the year, and the satisfaction levels they reported remained high – 97.9% for the Exhibitions and 98.6% for the Planetarium. We further strengthened our image as a destination for a broad audience – not just children – as reflected in a marked shift in public perception compared to 2018.

Our pursuit of this goal was supported by enhancements to the visitor experience. With the completion of the Planetarium's renovation, viewing conditions improved thanks to a new projection system, digital sound, and upgraded infrastructure – enabling more immersive shows. We expanded our programming with new films, live sky presentations, science talks, and musical events. A standout highlight was the temporary exhibition "Mirrors: Between Illusion and Reality," which combined sensory engagement with reflection on how we perceive the world around us.

Our impact extended well beyond our main location in Warsaw's riverside district. Through the SOWA Zone network and the "Science for You" programme, we reached out to local communities across Poland. In 2025, 50 SOWA Zones welcomed nearly 291,000 visitors, while our mobile exhibitions and planetarium visited 196 towns and cities, engaging over 81,000 participants. The newly upgraded ScienceBus further improved the durability and reach of these outreach activities beyond Warsaw.
We also celebrated the Copernicus Science Centre's 15th anniversary – a moment to reflect on our achievements and reaffirm our social role.

Strategic Goal 2

To foster cognitive independence and collaborative skills.
We continued to develop initiatives that strengthen people's capacity for independent thinking, critical analysis of information, and learning through dialogue and collaboration. We created spaces where scientific knowledge serves as a springboard for conversation – rather than as a set of ready-made answers – building public trust in science through direct interaction with researchers and joint experimentation.

Dialog-based and participatory formats played a key role. The "Przemiany" Festival and the Science Picnic became platforms for reflecting on pressing scientific and societal challenges, drawing in both families and adult audiences. In parallel, we expanded our "After Hours" Evenings for Adults and "Meet the Expert" sessions within the exhibition space – formats that encourage conversation and invite questions. At the same time, we helped researchers strengthen their communication skills and supported the development of citizen science projects.
A second pillar of this goal was working to create solutions to transform educational practice. At the Copernican Revolution Lab, we designed and tested educational kits and R&D programmes focused on important topics often underrepresented in formal education – such as climate change, microplastics, and artificial intelligence. Copernicus also served as a platform for identifying and supporting grassroots educational innovations.
A third area of focus involved developing learning communities built on collaboration and shared experience. Programmes such as the Young Explorer's Clubs, SOWA Zones, and ESERO created environments where students, teachers, and educators could pursue joint projects and build a stronger sense of agency.

Strategic Goal 3

To increase the participation of underrepresented individuals and groups in Copernicus programmes.
Broadening access and engaging underrepresented groups remains central to delivering high-quality educational experiences at Copernicus. We removed physical, sensory, and communication barriers to ensure our events and programmes were accessible to people with a wide range of needs – in close collaboration with partner NGOs. We also tested out new formats tailored to audiences less commonly seen among our visitors – particularly seniors and individuals facing social hardship. Our initiatives included programmes for children and youth at risk of exclusion, combining science education with the development of agency and collaboration skills. Internally, we continued building our team's competencies in diversity and inclusive communication.

Visitor satisfaction

Copernicus Exhibitions

97.9 %

Planetarium

98.6 %

Strategic Goal 4

To make Copernicus a green cultural institution.

In 2025, we made a shift from environmental declarations to systematic management of our environmental impact. For the first time, we calculated our full carbon footprint (Scopes 1–3) using the GHG Protocol, laying the groundwork for a decarbonisation strategy and data-informed operational decisions. In parallel, we developed a project to modernise our lighting systems and implemented measures to reduce emissions from transport and mobile education programmes.

We embedded sustainability principles into our day-to-day operations – from procurement to event organisation and team practices. Eco-design and material reuse became standard in exhibit development and workshop programming. A key milestone was the preparation of the Biodiversity Park project, which will transform the green space surrounding the Centre.

Strategic Goal 5

To ensure Copernicus's financial stability and partnerships.

We maintained financial stability that enabled the delivery of ongoing operations and the planning of long-term development. We diversified our revenue streams, relying on the institutional subsidy from our Organisers, self-generated income, and multi-year sponsorship and grant agreements, which ensured financial predictability. Preparations also began for the launch of a fundraising campaign.

At the same time, we expanded partnerships with both commercial and non-commercial entities – an essential element of advancing our vision. Hosting the ECSITE 2025 conference further strengthened our position as a reliable partner capable of delivering complex initiatives.

Strategic Goal 6

To create a friendly and efficient organization.

We continued to strengthen our organizational maturity, recognizing that employee wellbeing and operational efficiency are essential to fulfilling our public mission. We improved staff access to internal information and documents, streamlined communication, and enhanced interdepartmental collaboration.
We invested in team stability by supporting skill development, offering benefits, and building a stronger culture of feedback. An enhanced onboarding process improved the experience for new employees, while grassroots initiatives and shared learning helped foster a more cohesive organisational culture.

To offer a memorable, inspiring and friendly experience to more than one million visitors annually.

The Copernicus Science Centre remains a place where everyone – driven by their own curiosity – can explore the world and themselves through first-hand experience. Our exhibits, shows, workshops, and direct interaction with experts, educators, and other visitors allow people to discover, explore, build, and create – to make mistakes and to simply wander. However, our activities are not limited to our buildings in Warsaw, but in fact extend across all of Poland. For 15 years now, we have run educational programmes that have reached over 1,000 localities and 1.3 million people. Through collaboration with 50 partner centres under the SOWA Initiative (see p. 22), we ensure access to interactive exhibits and activities for residents of small and medium-sized towns. Our mobile exhibitions and mobile planetarium – part of the "Science for You" programme – reach even smaller localities, engaging local schoolchildren in hands-on experimentation. Overall, we strive to provide unforgettable experiences to over one million annual visitors in Warsaw and to local communities throughout Poland.

S1

Visitor attendance in 2025

1 212 245

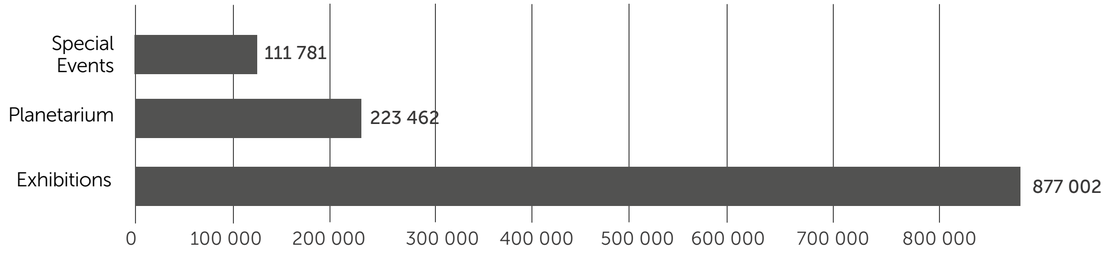
Exhibitions
877 002

Planetarium
223 462

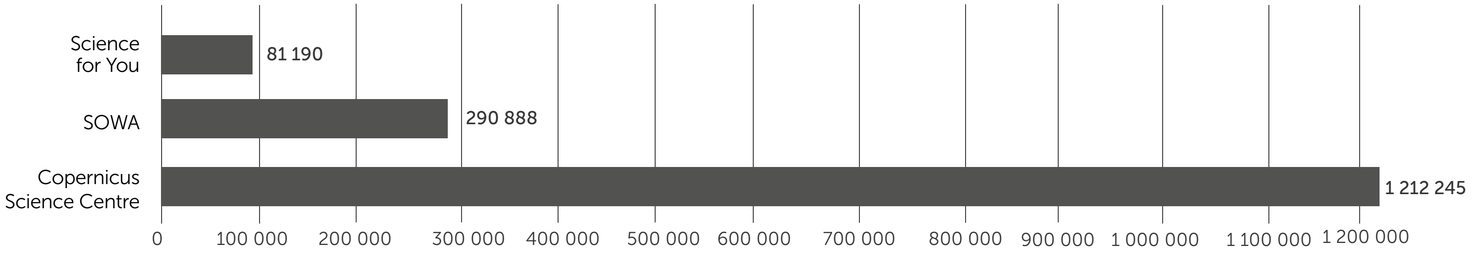
Special Events
111 781

Aside from visitors to the Exhibitions and Planetarium, an additional 111,781 participants attended special events such as the Przemiany Festival, “After Hours” Evenings for Adults, and events at our conference centre. Especially given that the Planetarium was closed for several months for renovation work (reopening in April 2025), these turnout figures are excellent – making us one of the most-visited science centres in Europe and indeed the world. We sincerely thank our guests for every visit and for 15 years of trust placed in us.

Visitors at Copernicus



Outreach Activity Participants



Our Visitors

In 2025, the demographic profile of our visitors remained largely unchanged. Women continued to be in the majority (64%), as were individuals with higher education (71%), and those under the age of 45 (79%). The age distribution of individual visitors to the Exhibitions also remained similar to the previous year's.

Striving to keep our offerings in tune with visitors' needs, we collect regular feedback on satisfaction, accessibility, opening hours, and the relevance of attractions and events to various groups. The insights we gather help us better understand our audience.

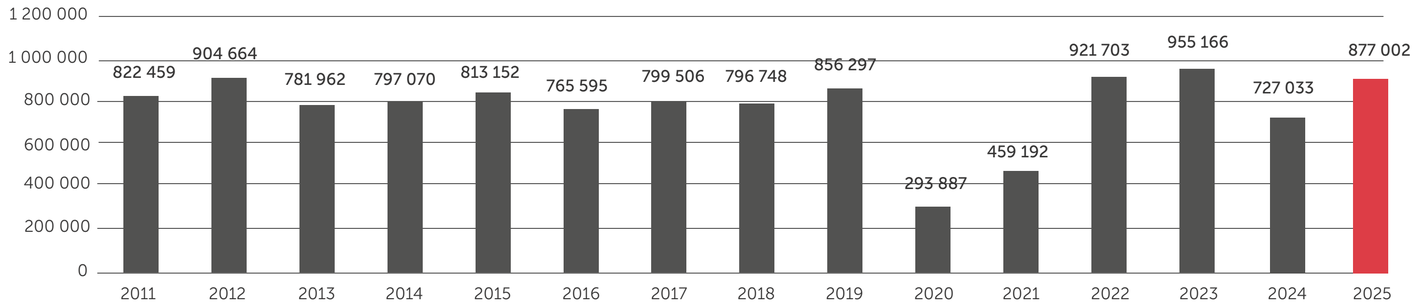
Visitor satisfaction has consistently remained high over the years. In 2025, 97.9% of respondents declared themselves "very satisfied" or "generally satisfied" with their visit to our Exhibitions, and 98.6% felt the same about the Planetarium. Satisfied visitors report that they are eager to recommend us to others: the recommendation rate was 76.2% for the Exhibitions and 86% for the Planetarium.

In a nationwide brand-perception study, 98% of respondents said Copernicus successfully sparks interest in science. 9 out of 10 people consider us a place that fosters modern education and builds trust in science. We are most often perceived as associated with *science* (61%) and *experiments/experiential learning* (32%).

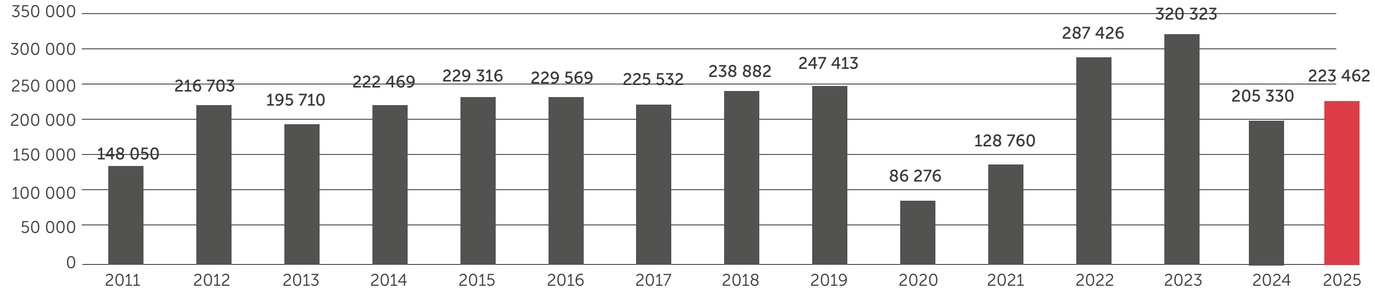
In 2025, not only were our Exhibitions and Planetarium highly popular, but our outreach activities also attracted considerable interest – particularly through the SOWA network (more on p. 22) and the "Science for You" programme (more on p. 24).

Compared to the 2018 study, there has been a significant drop in the perception that Copernicus is primarily an attraction for children (95% in 2018 vs. 51% in 2025). This suggests that our recent communication efforts targeted at adult audiences have been effective.

Visitor attendance at Copernicus exhibitions from 2011 to 2025



Visitor attendance at Planetarium from 2011 to 2025



Visitors by gender Copernicus Exhibitions

64% women

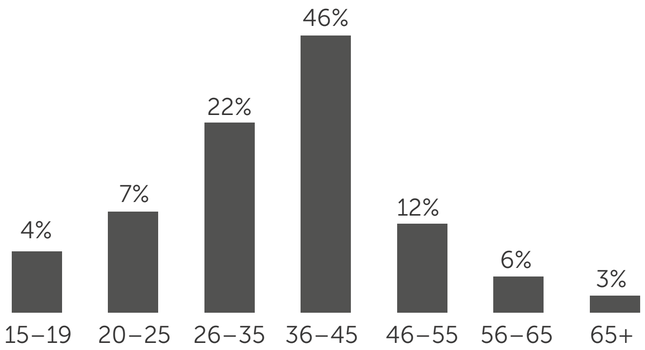
36% men

Visitors by gender Planetarium

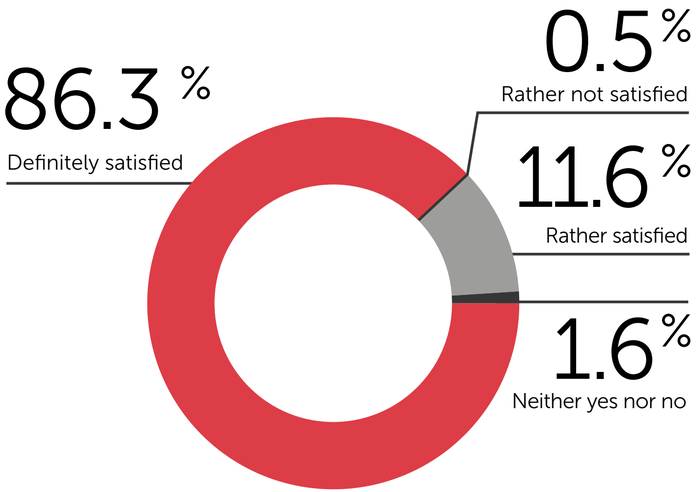
70% women

30% men

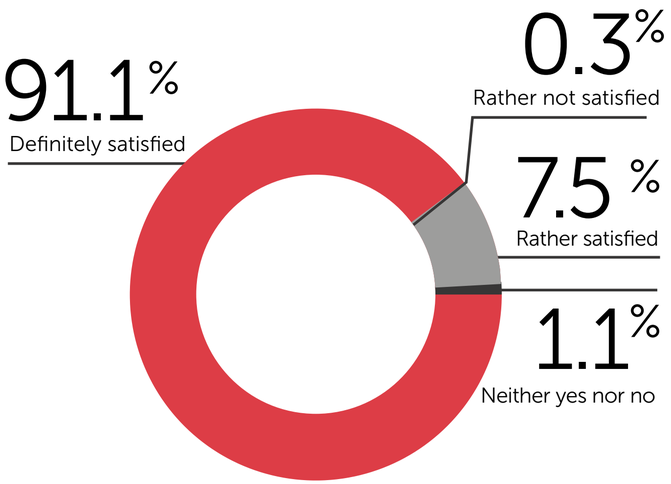
Visitors by age



Are you generally satisfied with your visit to the Copernicus Science Center?



Are you generally satisfied with your visit to the Planetarium?



On 5 November 2025, we celebrated our 15th anniversary!

We marked our 15th anniversary during the opening of the exhibition “Mirrors: Between Illusion and Reality”. We invited our founding institutions and long-standing partners – those who have been with us since the very beginning – to attend the event.

15 years in numbers

4 531	days the Copernicus Exhibitions have been operational
30 841	shows at the Planetarium
15 953 591	visitors and event participants

Our educational outreach programmes reached over 1,000 localities and 1.3 million people.

(77,000 – Young Explorer’s Clubs; 89,722 – ESERO; 725,000 – SOWA; 406,000 – “Science for You”)

1 775	exhibits built in our workshop
30 600	performances at the Robotic Theatre
30 000	performances at the High Voltage Theatre

Celebrating our 15th anniversary. From left: Wioletta Krzyżanowska – Mazovian Education Superintendent, Radosław Jasiński – Program Director at the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Renata Kaznowska – Deputy Mayor of Warsaw, Robert Firmhofer – CEO of the Copernicus Science Centre, Barbara Nowacka – Minister of National Education, Karolina Zioło-Puzuk – Secretary of State at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Katarzyna Lubnauer – Secretary of State at the Ministry of National Education, Paulina Piechna-Więckiewicz – Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of National Education, Andrzej Abramczuk – President of Plus, Ewa Kloc – Administrative Director of the Copernicus Science Centre, Marcin Garbarczyk – Vice President of Samsung Electronics.

We are grateful for the extensive positive feedback we received in 2025, both letters and social media posts.

"Here's wishing you continued success, inspiring exhibitions, innovative educational initiatives, and fruitful collaboration with the scientific community as well as with other science centres – in Poland and internationally. May the years ahead bring even more growth for Copernicus – a place that has become a symbol of Warsaw, offering everyone, regardless of age, gender, or education, a chance to feel like a true explorer."
Marcin Kulasek, Minister of Science and Higher Education

"We take great pride in the Copernicus Science Centre being one of Warsaw's most important educational landmarks. It's a place where children, young people, and adults alike can explore the worlds of physics, biology, technology, and art – all through engaging, interactive exhibitions and learning experiences."
Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw

"Copernicus is far more than a building packed with hundreds of fascinating exhibits – it's a vibrant space where science meets technology, creativity, and imagination. It turns learning into an adventure where anyone can feel like a true explorer. My congratulations on 15 years of impressive achievements and steady growth, which continue to shape the future of education in Poland."
Adam Struzik, Marshal of the Mazowieckie Region

"Your passion and dedication have made science more accessible, comprehensible, and fascinating. Today, the Copernicus Science Centre stands not only as a place to explore science but also as a symbol of modern education – grounded in experience, openness, and collaboration."
Wioletta Krzyżanowska, Mazovian Superintendent of Schools

"My visit to Copernicus is something I'll never forget. It was one of the most beautiful days I've had with my son – running from one science exhibit to the next, full of wonder. For a while, it let him escape the hard reality of our homelessness crisis."

"I still remember my first visit to Copernicus – I was in middle school back then. For a girl from a small town, walking into such a modern space felt like entering another world. 13 years later, I'm back – this time as a physics teacher."

"Even the building itself made a big impression with its bold design. I loved the Archimedes screw – I'd only seen it in books, but at Copernicus I finally got to try one out for myself. It's one of those moments that reminds you how science shapes the everyday lives of many people."

"I remember my first visit, 15 years ago. I was just passing through Warsaw. The Powiśle neighbourhood has always been close to my heart. The pendulum, the giant wheel, all those hands-on exhibits – you could touch everything. My inner child was in heaven, even though I was already very much an adult."

"8 November 2010 – a day that changed my life. Our first date was at Copernicus. The line to get in was *endless*, it was freezing cold outside – but things were just perfect. 15 years together, 10 years married. I swear this place brings good luck!"

The Medusa exhibit in the exhibition "Mirrors: Between Illusion and Reality"

Collaboration with Teachers

To improve access to our educational programming and make it easier for schools to organize visits, in 2025 we launched a new online reservation system. Until now, individual tickets could be purchased online, but all group bookings had to be made by phone. The new system shortens the time schools need to handle formalities, reduces the load on our hotline, and allows flexible payment within 7 days. This solution improves the experience for teachers and streamlines our operations – directly supporting our goal of making the Centre more accessible to educational institutions.

Schools were also able to take advantage of what we offer through a ministerial programme that provides funding for one-day school trips, combining a visit to a chosen institution with a workshop, artistic event, or interactive programme. Our options included touring the Copernicus Exhibitions along with one of the following options: workshops in the Thinkatorium makerspace, one of our Laboratories, the Edufactory fablab, or a Planetarium show.

We also welcomed students from Warsaw as part of the city's day-trip programmes for school and preschool children. The youngest visitors explored the "Bzzz!" exhibition. Older students experimented in "The Future is Today" exhibition, our Laboratories, and the Thinkatorium makerspace. Everyone had the opportunity to take a cosmic journey in the Planetarium.

We continue to develop new ways for schools to connect with Copernicus. To help teachers choose the most suitable activities for their classes, we reintroduced our free monthly meetings, known as "Teacher Thursdays". These sessions offer practical advice on how to plan a visit that makes full use of our educational spaces. We invite teachers of both STEM and humanities subjects, as well as other educators and individuals working with young people. After the session, all participants are welcome to stay for that evening's "After Hours" event for adults. In 2025, we hosted four such "Teacher Thursdays", attended by a total of 140 educators.

To provide visitors with comfortable visiting conditions, top-quality exhibits, interesting shows at a high-tech planetarium and engaging activities.

The Planetarium – back and better than ever

On 11 April 2025, we reopened the Planetarium after a renovation project that had begun in September 2024. The modernization included the replacement of the ventilation and air conditioning systems, as well as upgrades to the projection equipment and control systems. Thanks to these changes, we can now offer visitors even greater comfort and a more immersive experience.

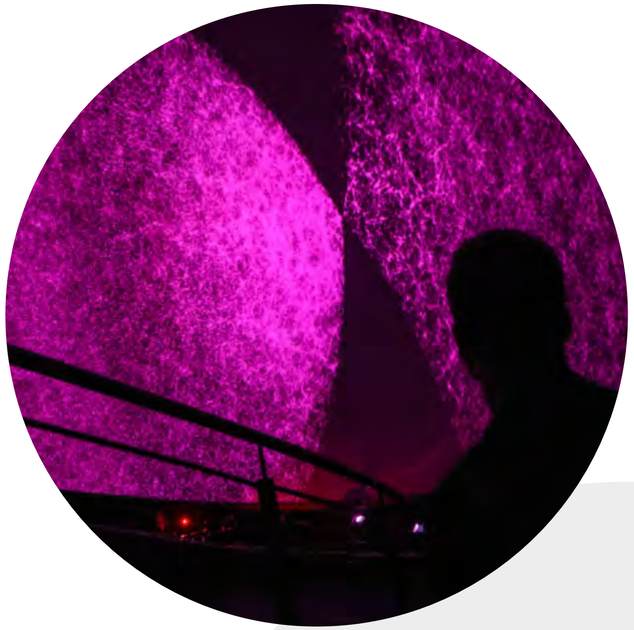
The most significant change is the complete replacement of the projection system. We swapped out our previous 5,000-lumen projectors for new models with double the brightness – 10,000 lumens. This results in sharper images, a wider colour range, and greater visual depth. Faster computers enable smoother animations, which significantly enhances the realism of shows – from 3D meteor showers and flights around black holes to simulations of atmospheric phenomena.

The effects of modernization are visible even in films our audiences already know. Thanks to the new system, they now appear almost as if they've been remastered. Overall, the Planetarium now offers a markedly higher standard of visual experience and an even more immersive cosmic journey.

Music lovers noticed the upgrade as well. Our sound system is now fully digital, equipped with tools such as noise reduction technology. Another feature that enhances the Planetarium's unique atmosphere is the addition of dome-edge lighting (known as *covelights*). These new lights make it possible to create colourful visual effects during science shows and concerts.

The new sky brought new films. Among them are two titles for younger audiences: "Dinosaurs: A Story of Survival", a journey to the age of giant reptiles and a chance to see what Earth looked like back then, and "Kitz the Cat's SuperMoon Adventure", set in the distant future and starring intelligent feline characters.

For older audiences, we premiered: "Destination Future: From Now to Eternity", a research-based exploration of how the universe might ultimately end, "Black Holes: Unknown Horizons", a film presenting the current state of scientific knowledge, prompting reflection on the nature of space, time, and gravity, and "Aurora: Lights of Wonder", a 360-degree film by Korean astrophotographer Kwon O Chul, who was the first in the world to capture the northern lights from multiple angles.



As always, each screening in 2025 was preceded by live sky presentations – "The Sky Over Warsaw", which guided audiences through the seasonal night sky. Each session included commentary on recent astronomical discoveries and steps forward in space exploration.
Evenings at the Planetarium were further enriched with "Straight from the Sky" talks with scientists, concerts, and laser shows.

The new projection system gives audiences the feeling of a 3D show.

The Planetarium's new video and sound quality can be appreciated especially well during concerts.

Concerts – featured artists

"Concerts Under the Stars"
Agnieszka Marucha & Aleksandra Dallali
Janek Traczyk
Aleksandra Bobrowska
Małgorzata Sajna-Mataczyńska & Jakub Haufa
HAVA Piano Duo
IKIGAI
Justyna Kreft

"Jazz Orbit" cycle
Anna Szczygieł & Dominik Rosłon
Light Star Guiding
Kuba Sokołowski
Grupa w Składzie:
Rafał Grząka

"Cosmic Live Electronic" cycle
ATAK quartet ("Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence" – accompanying event of the "Warsaw Autumn Festival").
Krzysztof Kicior, Tomasz Woźniak

"Supernova" cycle
INA WEST

Special Concerts
RGG & Robert Więckiewicz Planet LEM

"Straight from the Sky Lectures"

Topics and Experts

Polish Satellite Constellations
(Jakub Bochiński, PhD)

The Sun in Command: Exploring the Heliosphere
(Asst. Prof. Izabela Kowalska-Leszczyńska)

Gravitational Wave Astronomy
(Assoc. Prof. Dorota Gondek-Rosińska)

How to Find Meteorites in Poland
(Mateusz Żmija)

Astronaut Training
(Mateusz Harasymczuk)

A Polish Astronaut in Space – Behind the Scenes of Mission IGNIS
(Aleksandra Bukała, PhD)

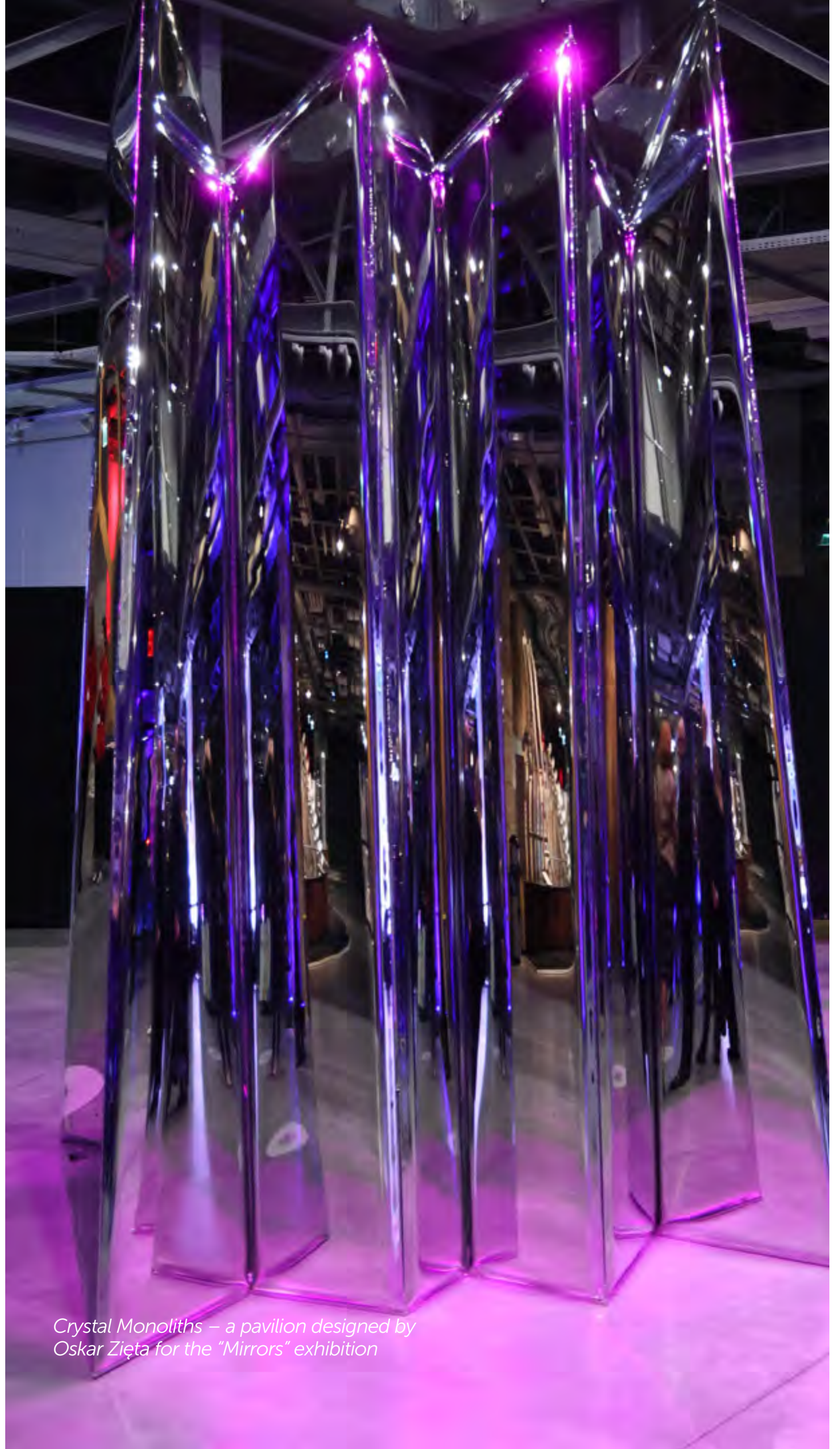
“Mirrors” Temporary Exhibition

At the special exhibition “Mirrors: Between Illusion and Reality”, visitors immerse themselves in a world of illusions, surprising reflections, and phenomena that can deceive the senses. The physics and mathematics behind these effects reveal how perception works and why we cannot always trust what we see. The exhibition was created by the Swiss science centre Technorama and has travelled to us from there. It opened in 2025 (replacing the previous temporary exhibition, “Poisons”), and will remain on display until the end of August 2026.

Dozens of interactive exhibits invite visitors to explore the science of light reflection, symmetry, distortion, illusion, and visual perception. Concave and convex mirrors, kaleidoscopes, mirrored arrangements, and unconventional spatial structures let guests investigate how the senses function, discover the principles of optics, and analyse what they observe. Visitors can see how mirrored images form and how the eye interprets them. They reflect themselves in kaleidoscopes, guide beams of light through mirrored mazes, and step into spaces filled with symmetry, infinite tunnels, and shifting reflections – where the boundary between reality and illusion becomes fluid.

The exhibition resonates with a wide range of audiences – from preschoolers laughing at the funny distortions of their own reflections to high school students navigating questions of identity. The exhibits encourage reflection on how we see ourselves and how others see us. Distorted images, inverted reflections, and optical illusions prompt deeper questions about what’s real and what’s perceived – both in the physical world and in society. Thanks to its interdisciplinary approach and the diversity of its exhibits, the exhibition appeals to teachers of many subjects – including mathematics, physics, computer science, biology, history, literature, and art. To support classroom learning, we offered curator-led tours and educational workshops to help teachers plan meaningful visits for their students.

The “Mirrors” exhibition features two works by Oskar Zięta, an artist and designer known for blending art with cutting-edge technology. Zięta developed a method of shaping steel using internal pressure, transforming metal into reflective, mirror-like forms. His contributions to this temporary exhibition included two installations: *Crystal Monoliths* and *Constellations 7.01*. Both pieces were created especially for this exhibition and will remain at Copernicus even after it concludes.



Crystal Monoliths – a pavilion designed by Oskar Zięta for the “Mirrors” exhibition

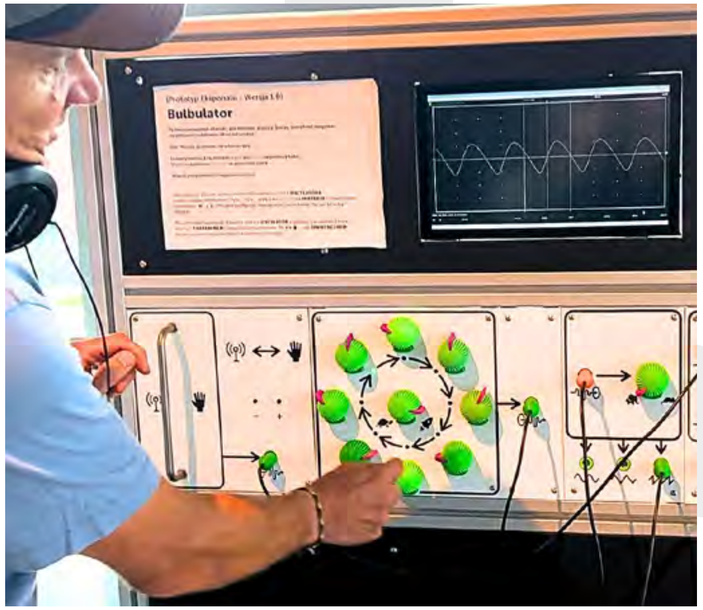
Photopolychrome

Permanent exhibitions

Several new exhibits have joined our permanent exhibitions. Near the ever-popular “Tessellation Station”, a new installation has appeared – inspired by a recent mathematical breakthrough. For over half a century, mathematicians searched for a single shape that could tile an infinite surface without the pattern ever repeating. In 2023, such a shape was finally discovered and playfully named the Einstein tile – named not actually after the physicist, but from the German *ein Stein*, meaning “one stone.” Our new exhibit, “Phantom”, invites visitors to create their own mosaic using this special shape and observe how a non-repeating structure emerges – even though it’s made from just one type of tile.

The “Soap Opera” exhibit helps explain the phenomenon of light interference, the “Bulbulator” lets visitors experiment with sound, while “Photopolychrome” is a mesmerizing exhibit that grabs one’s attention from the very first glance. Watching the colourful dance of polarized light, it’s hard to believe the main player here is nothing more than a piece of ordinary transparent plastic film. New research stations have also been added to the Living Lab (more on p. 40).

The “Phantom” exhibit



The “Bulbator” exhibit

Our Laboratories

Our laboratories completed their first year in a new, interdisciplinary format. On weekdays, we hosted school group sessions; on weekends, holidays, and during summer, individual visitors were invited to experiment on their own.

At the Planet Education Lab, we introduced two new school workshop scenarios focused on timely environmental topics and the human impact on nature. “Microplastics: Tiny Particles, Big Consequences?” explored how plastic waste affects our daily lives. Students learned about key sources of microplastics and observed *Daphnia* (water fleas) that had ingested them. Because these creatures are transparent, thin plastic fibres inside their bodies were clearly visible under the microscope. Participants also identified various types of plastic and examined insects capable of partially digesting polystyrene. The workshop scenario “Sealed Under Glass”, in turn, tackled global warming. Students investigated the effect of greenhouse gases on temperature and learned about the role of urban heat islands. Other sessions in the lab focused on human health, such as “Inner Army: It’s in Your Blood” and “From Sample to Diagnosis”. We also reintroduced “Genetic Mushroom Foraging,” a slightly modified workshop based on DNA sequencing of fungi, created in collaboration with the University of Warsaw as part of the citizen science project FunDive.

At the New Technologies Education Lab, students embarked on “Mission to Space,” where they designed and programmed their own robotic rovers using LEGO Spike kits. The workshop “The Art of Flying: Lighter than a Feather” (delivered in the first half of the year, in partnership with the Łukasiewicz – Institute of Aviation) gave students the chance to experiment with aerodynamics by testing different shapes in a mini wind tunnel.

In 2025, we conducted 1,110 school workshops with a grand total of 14,019 participants (fewer than planned). Conversations with teachers revealed that many found the 90-minute format too long. With limited time for their visit to Copernicus, groups attending lab sessions felt they had often missed the opportunity to explore the exhibitions. To improve the visitor experience, therefore, we decided to reduce workshop duration to 60 minutes – giving schools more flexibility and enabling them to take full advantage of all that Copernicus has to offer.

Individual visitors were invited to the laboratories free of charge to take part in a wide variety of activities, including robot programming, aerodynamics experiments, magnetic levitation, human anatomy, and medical diagnostics. At the end of the year, we also piloted a new activity introducing topics in geology. In total, our Laboratories ran 2,518 sessions, attended by 31,328 people.

The workshop scenario “Microplastics: Tiny Particles, Big Consequences?”

At cyanotype workshops, participants learn the basics of the technique before exploring more advanced variations.

In 2025, we launched the pilot edition of the "Scientists in the Copernicus Laboratories" programme. Our aim is to give visitors the opportunity to meet researchers first-hand, engage in conversation, and experiment together. We believe this initiative can help bridge the gap between scientists and the public, foster greater trust in science, and spark scientific curiosity among our youngest visitors. The pilot involved 15 scientists working in a variety of fields – including biology, quantum physics, neurotechnology, and the use of VR and AI in education.

Workshops at the EduFactory

The EduFactory is our educational fablab – a space that bridges science, art, and hands-on making.
I The EduFactory workshops develop technical, creative and collaborative skills, while engaging participants with broader societal themes such as sustainability, reuse and the relationship between science, technology and artistic practice. n 2025, the programme featured *art & science* and upcycling-themed activities that engaged visitors in creative work with a wide range of technologies and materials.

One highlight was our cyanotype workshops, which explored one of the oldest photographic techniques: exposing paper coated with iron salts to sunlight or UV light. As the light interacts with the emulsion, it changes colour and, once fixed, reveals a blue-and-white image. Participants carried out the chemical process themselves, creating unique monochromatic prints. Building on the basics, those who returned for more advanced sessions created cyanotype collages using plants and textiles, experimented with toning techniques, and explored how exposure time affects the final image.

The "Recovered Light" workshop series focused on building custom lamps using recycled materials. Participants crafted their own jar-lamps using discarded jars, wood scraps, wires, and lamp sockets – while learning how to use power tools and gaining basic skills in electronics and LED soldering (more on p. 77).

The "Freshly Stitched" series promoted textile reuse and introduced participants to sewing machines. They created tote bags, pouches, and backpacks – building technical skills and encouraging sustainable attitudes in the process.

In 2025, we also launched a pilot artist residency programme at the EduFactory. Our collaboration with artist Dorota Bronikowska led to new cyanotype workshop formats that incorporated image-toning techniques. These advanced sessions were enthusiastically received and laid the foundation for future developments. We plan to partner with the School of Form (at SWPS University) to explore the intersection of robotics and parametric design. A three-stage implementation project (involving technology testing, knowledge exchange, and an artist residency by Sara Boś) is expected to lead to innovative *art & science* workshops using robotic arms.

Teachers particularly appreciated the inclusive nature of the Thinkatorium workshops and the unexpected ways in which materials were used.

Thinkatorium for Children

In 2025, the Thinkatorium makerspace offered “Building Music Together”, a workshop designed for children in grades 1–3 of primary school. Over the course of 45 minutes, children worked in teams to construct a musical machine, developing manual dexterity, analytical thinking, and collaboration skills.

In spring, we introduced a second workshop for the same age group: “Building Bridges Together.” During this hands-on session, children built model bridges strong enough to bear a moving vehicle. Working in teams and using simple materials like PVC pipes, rubber bands, cardboard, and recycled parts, students explored different types of bridges – including truss, cable-stayed, and arch designs – and investigated what affects structural strength.

Throughout the year, the Thinkatorium makerspace welcomed many groups of children with various disabilities. These workshops supported the development of fine motor skills and social interaction. Working with such classes requires sensitivity and adaptation to the children’s needs. One “Building Music Together” session was attended by students with hearing impairments – the activity was accordingly adjusted so that they could experience the sound.

In September, at the invitation of the Ronald McDonald Foundation, we brought “Building Bridges Together” to the DSK UCK Children’s Hospital in Warsaw. More than 30 children staying in the hospital took part in the workshop.

Teachers surveyed about the programme particularly appreciated its inclusive nature and the unexpected ways in which materials were used. They were often surprised by how well the children collaborated in groups. Many noted the value of working on large-scale constructions and the opportunity for children to “create something real – not just learn the theory.”

In 2025, approximately 6,500 children and their caregivers took part in Thinkatorium workshops.

To reach out to local communities across Poland with Copernicus exhibits and shows.

We bring science communication to people living in smaller towns and rural areas – communities that often have limited access to science centres and museums. Our mobile exhibitions, “For Math’s Sake” and the ScienceBus, as well as our mobile planetarium, are welcomed with enthusiasm by schools across the country. “Copernicus on Wheels”, which includes family workshops and hands-on experiments, has become a regular programme feature in some SOWA Zones. In 2025, we launched more partner centres and travelled with our exhibitions to some of Poland’s remotest corners.

The SOWA Initiative

The SOWA Initiative is a partnership programme that enables local institutions to enrich their public offerings with a Copernicus-designed exhibition and activities that encourage independent exploration. Each SOWA Zone features around 20 interactive exhibits and a makerspace – a workshop area for hands-on building challenges. SOWA Zones are established throughout Poland (in towns with populations of up to 350,000), within existing cultural or educational institutions whose mission includes promoting science, technology, education, arts, or culture. The goal is to strengthen science capital among local youth, build 21st-century skills, and foster a sense of agency.

In 2025, we opened 10 new SOWA Zones, bringing the grand total to 50. Each one received a set of interactive exhibits and full workshop equipment. We also provide ongoing training, consultation, and technical support. While the exhibit sets are largely consistent, each SOWA Zone is shaped by the unique character and programming of its host institution. Our experience shows that hands-on experimentation is an excellent complement to the traditional activities of libraries, community centres, museums, and educational institutions. In 2025, SOWA Zones were visited by a total of 290,888 people.

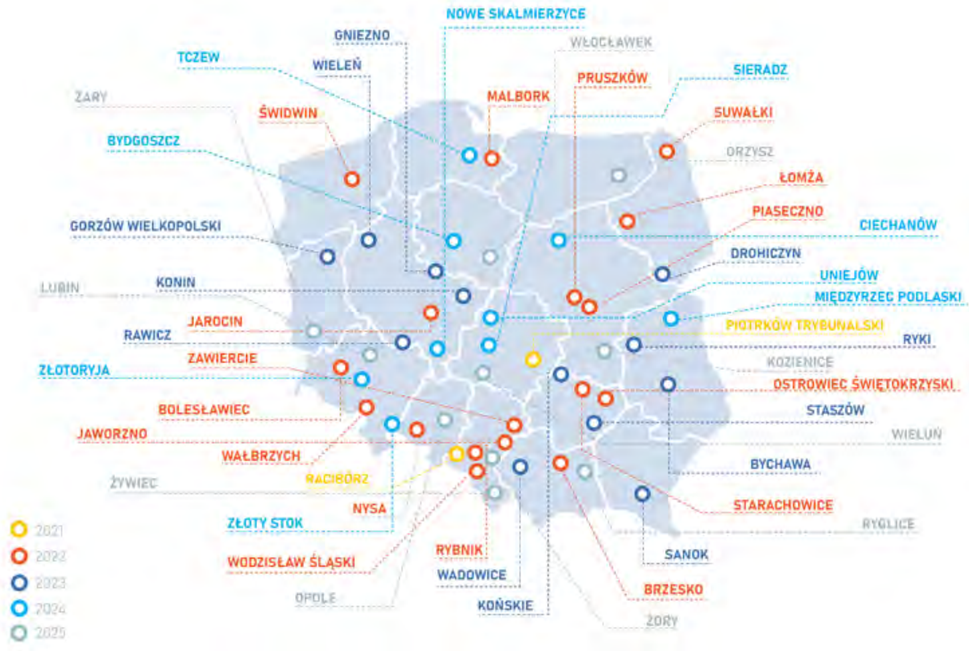
The tinkering challenges posed at the Thinkatorium makerspace can engross participants for quite a long time.

Students from local schools take part in opening celebrations at each SOWA Zone.

The "Human Puzzle" exhibit is one of the favorites at the SOWA Zones.

Our objective is for the SOWA host institutions to act independently (and also in collaboration with us) to organise science-related events, cooperate with one another, develop their own original projects, and support or carry out educational activities at schools across their regions. More on cooperation with existing centres on p. 59.
As we continue to expand, we also keep the existing SOWA Zones firmly in mind. In 2025, as many as 28 SOWA Zones received new exhibits. Of these, 21 zones were given 3 new exhibits each, while 7 zones received 9 new exhibits.

The SOWA zones opened each year since 2021:



The "SOWA – Zone's of Discovery, Imagination and Activity" initiative is funded through a grant from the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education, under agreement No. 1/CNK-SOWA/2021 of 2 March 2021, regarding the launch by the Copernicus Science Centre of 50 local SOWA Zones between 2021 and 2028.

The Youth Cultural Centre in Opole is home to over 60 studios and artistic groups. In addition to a cinema and three playgrounds, the centre now also houses a SOWA Zone.

The SOWA Zone in Żory was established under the umbrella of the Municipal Cultural Centre, which also manages the Museum of Fire. Together, these institutions will develop joint educational programming.

The Museum of the Army, Military Affairs and the Orzysz Region celebrated its 10th anniversary in November. Earlier in the year, in May, the museum became home to a new SOWA Zone.

The County Public Library in Wieluń has long shown that culture is not just about books, but also about discovering the wider world. The new SOWA Zone here is its newest attraction.

The Cultural Centre in Ryglice has long been a vibrant hub for preserving local traditions, folklore, and regional heritage. That same spirit of enthusiasm now extends to its new SOWA Zone.

The SOWA Zone in Lublin is uniquely located within the city zoo, where birds are prominently featured. Visitors can encounter cranes, ducks, geese, capercaillies, white and black storks, as well as various birds of prey.

The Kozienice Cultural Centre already hosts a cinema, a University of the Third Age, and the Children's University of Science and Culture. Starting in 2026, classes for the latter will be held in the new SOWA Zone.

The SOWA Zone in Włocławek is housed within the historic Old Brewery complex. The building has been beautifully restored and expanded over several years and now serves as an impressive setting.

The SOWA Zone in Żywiec is located right next to the railway station, making it a convenient and visible destination – especially for tourists passing through.

The opening of the SOWA Zone in Żary is part of a wider effort to revitalize the town square. It is managed by the Museum of the Silesian-Lusatian Borderland.

The “Science for You” Programme

The “Science for You” programme enables us to bring our mobile exhibitions (ScienceBus and “For Math’s Sake!”) and the mobile planetarium (PlanetBus) to students in smaller towns and villages across the country. Its goals include promoting engaging and hands-on approaches to learning, sparking students’ curiosity about the world, building interest in scientific advancement, and encouraging families to experiment together. Our visits extend beyond schools to include village community centres, libraries, and cultural institutions. There, we meet with children’s caregivers and educators during “Let’s Discover!” workshops. Every year, we also run the “Science for You” Competition, in which teams of primary school students and teachers prototype their own educational tools. For educators, we also offer a Prototyping School.

In 2025, we visited 196 locations whose residents have limited access to science centres. A total of 81,065 people took part in our activities.

The ScienceBus went on 60 trips, reaching 26,695 people. The PlanetBus travelled 59 times, hosting shows for 17,394 people. The “For Math’s Sake” exhibition headed off 57 times, being visited by 36,329 participants. The “Let’s Discover!” workshops (see p. 25) were held in 20 towns, with 647 participants. To reduce CO_2 emissions, on each trip we strove to reach several nearby locations in one go (more on this on p. 76).

The ScienceBus also visited three Polish schools abroad – in The Hague, Essen, and Zurich. We also took part in the “Summer with Polish Radio and TV” tour – with the ScienceBus in Zakopane, Elbląg, and Giżycko, and with “For Math’s Sake!” in Chorzów, Poddębice, Lublin, Mrozy, Tarnów, and Grudziądz. We joined the family science festivals in Chełm (the PlanetBus), Depułtycze Królewskie (the “For Math’s Sake” exhibition), and Lublin (both). The PlanetBus visited the Ministry of Science and Higher Education twice – for the “New Year with Science” event and, together with the ScienceBus, during the “Night of Museums”. The ScienceBus was also a highlight at the Children’s Day celebration in the gardens of the Prime Minister’s Chancellery, and at the Baltic Fair in Świnoujście. Meanwhile, “For Math’s Sake!” visited the Międzyrzec Days and the “Trail of Curiosity” Science Picnic in Nowe Skalmierzyce.

In 2025, we completed two years of work on the new ScienceBus. We prototyped and built new exhibits, selected and refined the most engaging experimental stations, and used 3D modelling to choose colours that stimulate activity without distracting attention. We also reduced the weight of the exhibits and simplified their setup so they can now be placed directly on school desks – making them more accessible for children who use wheelchairs. A lighter load also helps reduce the vehicle’s carbon footprint.

Awards in the “Science for You” competition were presented by Karolina Zioło-Pużuk, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and Robert Firmhofer, Copernicus CEO.

The robot AMI is the true star of the ScienceBus's new exhibitions.

The exhibits now feature a new look and color

The new ScienceBus nevertheless still retains certain visitor favourites – albeit with an updated appearance. Visitors will once again be able to assemble the "Human Puzzle", try to solve the "Brain-Teasers", and spin on the "Spinning Chair". New additions include the "Disappearing Cat" (leaving behind only a smile), "Catch Me If You Can" (a reflex game), mathematical "Stringographs", and "Caesar's Cipher" – perfect for budding cryptologists. A hit new feature is AMI, a humanoid robot and younger sibling to our AMEKA. Although this version is more compact – without a torso or limbs, making it easier to transport – her facial expressions are even more subtle and lifelike. Visitors will be able to hold conversations with AMI, who communicates using artificial intelligence.

The new exhibition comes in three complete sets (24 exhibits each, 72 total), allowing them to travel simultaneously to different locations. The first journeys are slated for 2026.

Updates have also come to the PlanetBus. It is now equipped with new software for running shows under the mobile dome, offering improved capabilities for visualising astronomical phenomena and celestial bodies.

During the "Let's Discover!" workshops, participants learn how to best support children during experimentation – in ways that encourage their sense of agency, independent inquiry, curiosity, and autonomy. Until now, these meetings were primarily attended by family members – parents and grandparents. In 2025, we adapted both the workshop scenario and the educational kit to meet the needs of professionals who work with children (educators, teachers, librarians, staff from cultural centres, and others who run activities for children). We added new experiments and increased the quantity of materials and accessories to better support hands-on exploration.

We ran 40 workshops in 20 locations – including schools, libraries, cultural centres, and SOWA Zones – across 12 provinces, focusing on small towns far from any science centre. A total of 647 people participated in the sessions, and we distributed 650 experiment kits.

To foster curiosity in primary school students and help them build 21st-century skills, we organise the nationwide "Science for You" Competition each year. The project is based on the idea that the best way to learn is to teach someone else. That's why students, with the support of their teachers, design and create educational tools, which they later use to explain chosen scientific concepts to their classmates.

In 2025, 52 teams signed up. Ten finalists took part in the "Educational Tool from Scratch" weekend workshop, designed to help them build their competition entries. Five teams were awarded prizes during a festive final gala, where they also presented their tools to visitors at our Exhibitions. Many of them described the competition as the "most exciting educational adventure" they had ever taken part in.

An interactive water treatment plant model built with bottles, sand, and stones, demonstrating basic principles of filtration.

Instruments for constructing triangles and projections of objects. (Primary School No. 5, Gliwice)

Sensory educational tools – a "magic box" for learning language through touch and crocheted images to construct using Velcro. (Primary School No. 3, Myślenice)

Cutlery made from casein – a protein derived from milk through a reaction with vinegar. (School and Preschool Complex, Pawłowice)

The "Centrifugator" – a device that combines creative play with physics. Using centrifugal force, students create colourful paint mosaics while learning about circular motion. (Piarist School Complex, Poznań)

Participants of the Prototyping Schools also presented their own educational exhibits to visitors at our exhibitions. The first edition, held in late June and early July, brought together 20 teachers and educators – including a staff member from the SOWA Zone in Bydgoszcz – who explored how to identify human-driven changes on Earth and their impact on our quality of life. They created five prototypes of interactive educational tools: "In Search of Lost Silence", "The Mystery of the Disappearing Carnation", "Canine Comfort Lab", "Mini Research Station", and "Reflections on the Vistula" – exploring, for example, which ambient sounds are calming, what living things can be found in a single drop of river water, and how to build a doghouse to maintain thermal comfort.

The second edition, held in September and October, was especially unique. Seventeen participants designed interdisciplinary teaching tools adapted to the needs of blind or visually impaired students. The five resulting prototypes – "A Heavy Map of the World", "Atomic Model", "LumiBlock", "PuzzleTiles", and "Atmospheric Vortex" – were initially tested by Piotr Warachowski, a blind student at the University of Warsaw and a journalist at Radio Kampus. The prototypes were then tested further at the School and Education Centre for Blind Children in Laski, by both early primary pupils and high school students.

The "Science for You" programme is a joint initiative of the Polish Ministry of Education and Science and the Copernicus Science Centre, financed under the grant agreement No. 1/CNK-NAUKOBUS/2020 dated 6 March 2020. In 2023, the programme supported the operation of the ScienceBus, PlanetBus, the "For Math's Sake" exhibition, and the 26th Science Picnic of Polish Radio and the Copernicus Science Centre.

To foster cognitive independence and collaborative skills.

In today's world, saturated with both true and false information and conflicting narratives – where social media use often fosters echo chambers and resistance to opposing views – the ability to independently seek, analyse, and interpret information, draw one's own conclusions, and solve problems is more valuable than ever. But independent thinking doesn't mean going it alone. On the contrary, collaboration is a powerful tool for learning and for developing better, more thoughtful solutions. That's why we draw attention to timely and complex issues, and create spaces for conversations among people with diverse perspectives. Together with scientists, we work to strengthen public trust in science, and together with educators, we co-create new ways of making learning more effective and accessible.

The ability to independently seek, analyse, and interpret information is more valuable than ever.

S2

To promote dialogue, with diverse participants, about challenges that lie at the intersection of science and society.

In 2025, two of our flagship events – the “Przemiany” Festival and the Science Picnic – served as platforms for dialogue and exploration. Both invite broad audiences to engage with scientific and social issues, reflect together, and exchange ideas. While each event has earned its reputation over the years, they serve distinct audiences: the Science Picnic is aimed primarily at families with children, while “Przemiany” is designed with adults in mind.

Empathy: A Sign of Weakness or Strength? The “Przemiany” Festival

The “Przemiany” Festival brings together scientists, artists, designers, activists, and the public to envision a future built on trust in science. In 2025, the festival explored the theme of empathy, looking at it from many angles – neuroscience, evolutionary biology, artificial intelligence, and ecology.

Natalia Kopytko, “The Place You Remember”

The festival opened with a keynote lecture by Prof. Tania Singer, a leading psychologist and social neuroscientist from the Social Neuroscience Lab at the Max Planck Society in Berlin. Her research on training the “social brain” shows that regular practice can bring lasting changes to brain structures involved in empathy, compassion, attention, and perspective-taking – leading to more kindness, openness, and prosocial behaviour in everyday life. Her talk illuminated the neurobiological foundations of these vital social skills.

The exhibition linked to the festival invited guests to expand empathy beyond humanity – to other species and entire ecosystems. Visitors encountered delicate dandelion sculptures, robotic coral reefs, and trees that will never bloom again. They observed wild chimpanzees, consulted a “monkey dictionary,” explored an intelligent beehive, and admired a tapestry inspired by insect mouthparts. A VR installation offered a unique opportunity to step into someone else’s shoes – to literally see and feel the world from another person’s perspective.

Lecture by social psychologist and neurobiologist Prof. Tania Singer.

Karoline Hjorth and Riitta Ikonen, „Eyes as Big as Plates”.

Małgorzata Gurowska, Agata Szydłowska (ZOE), Simone De Iacobis, Małgorzata Kuciewicz (CENTRALA), Kidzina.

Konrad Juściński, works from the series “Peaceful Wanderer”, made from dandelions.

Natalia Kopytko, “The Place You Remember”.

At the hands-on science stations, visitors could observe soil bacteria living in symbiosis with plants, or listen in on the sounds made by plants and fungi. Prof. Hazem Kalaji's team from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) even set up a plant clinic, where anyone could bring in a houseplant to be "diagnosed" using a device that reads EKG-like biophysical signals sent during photosynthesis.

The festival's panel discussions gathered experts whose work crosses disciplinary boundaries – from biology, the social sciences, and humanities, to engineering and law. During the session HOMO EMPATHICUS, Prof. Zanna Clay (Durham University), Prof. Tania Singer (Max Planck Society), and Jan Oleszczuk-Zygmuntowski (Kozminski University) explored whether survival actually favours the strongest or the most compassionate individuals. Another session, on care-providing machines, featured Prof. Halina Kwaśnicka (Wrocław University of Science and Technology) and Dr. Marcin Moskalewicz (Poznań University of Medical Sciences). On the topic of enforcing environmental protection, the discussion brought together Dr. Anna Barcz (Polish Academy of Sciences), Dr. Katarzyna Jasikowska (Jagiellonian University), Dr. Stanisław Kordasiewicz, and Dr. Wiktor Kotowski (University of Warsaw).

A recurring theme across many debates was trust – a cornerstone of empathy. Participants discussed whether we can (or should) trust others ("We Disagree – Now What?"), organisations that provide products and services ("Innovation in the Pharmaceutical Industry – A Leap of Faith"), and technologies that increasingly shape our lives ("CyberEmpathy Training").

5 682

individuals attended the "Przemiany" Festival 2025

Observing fungi at a Copernicus lab station

"The Machine to Be Another" – a VR installation that lets you see the world through someone else's eyes

Marco Barotti, Corals – kinetic sound installation

In the Living Library, visitors were able to "check out" a Living Book a real person to talk to.

A highlight of this year's festival was the introduction of the Living Library – a space for one-on-one conversations where visitors could "check out" people instead of books. These "Living Books" were members of minority groups or individuals at risk of discrimination – people who regularly face misunderstanding, ignorance, and social exclusion. The Living Library offered festival-goers a chance to bridge such gaps through open, honest conversation.

The festival programme also featured film screenings, concerts, and a café offering themed dishes and hands-on workshops. A total of 5,682 participants attended the "Przemiany" Festival 2025.

Festival exhibition. In the foreground: "Glossa" by Anne-Marie Maes

Festival café events featured first-hand meetings with artists.

Space rovers helped kick off the picnic.

We observed the Sun.

“Out of This World!” The Science Picnic

The Science Picnic of Polish Radio and the Copernicus Science Centre was once again a place for meaningful dialogue between science and society. Visitors could explore scientific phenomena on their own, ask questions directly to experts, learn about research methods, and experiment together. For scientists, it was a chance to present their research and hear feedback from the public, while institutions had the opportunity to test different communication formats and see which were most effective in helping attendees understand science.

This year’s Picnic took place against the backdrop of great anticipation: the then-upcoming historic voyage of Poland’s second-ever person in space – Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski – to the International Space Station. Not surprisingly, the main themes of the event were astronautics and astronomy. The green area around PGE Narodowy Stadium was filled with telescopes, satellites, rockets, space capsules, rovers, robots – and other scientific marvels related to the exploration of space. The Picnic, the largest open-air science event in Europe, brought together scientific institutions, universities, research institutes, museums and cultural centres, education-focused foundations, and student science clubs.

Guests began their interstellar journey by learning how astronauts prepare for spaceflight while still on Earth. They took part in astronaut psychological tests, trained with an analogue astronaut (a researcher who simulates astronaut missions on Earth) and tried their hand at precision tasks using professional astronaut gloves. There was even a chance to taste freeze-dried pierogi, specially prepared for the Polish astronaut – and included in the official cargo to the ISS.

9 hours. 690 demonstrations across 185 tents prepared by 152 institutions from Poland and abroad. More than 16 space rovers. 12 rocket stations. 9 stations with robots designed for Earth operations. 50,000 visitors. The 2025 Science Picnic truly was out of this world!

Participants had a chance to race mini-rovers.

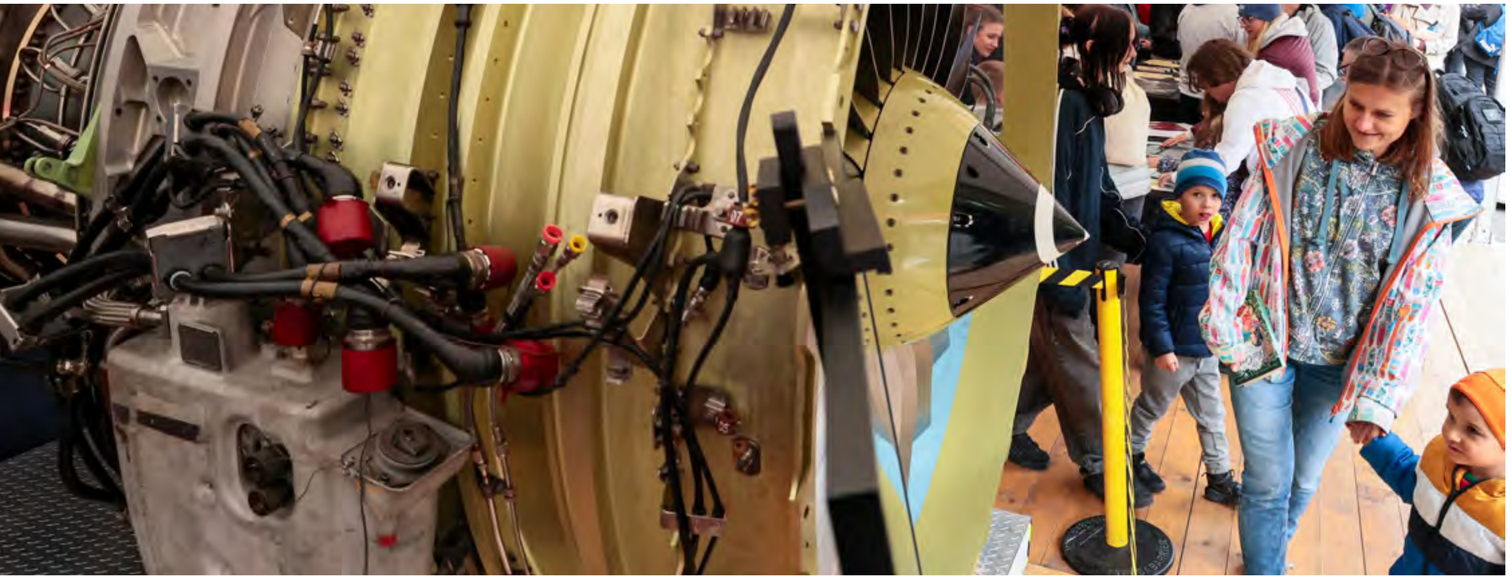
Science communicators from other European science centres took the stage.

Young Scientists
At the 2025 Science Picnic, 12 Young Explorer's Clubs (YECs) presented their experiments – with members coming from all across Poland (Czerwionka-Leszczyny, Katowice, Syców, Lututów, Wieleń, Plewiska) and abroad: Rustavi (Georgia), Boyarka, Lozova, Lviv (Ukraine), Gavar (Armenia) and Cluj-Napoca (Romania).

Visitors of all ages were invited to build their own model rockets, choosing from a variety of materials and launch methods – from fizzy tablets and water, to dry ice and boiling water, to balloon-powered or bottle-propelled designs. These hands-on engineering tasks provided a great opportunity to discuss the principles of flight and rocket propulsion. Guests also had a chance to peer inside a giant jet engine, and to watch a powerful rocket launch 5 metres into the air, descending gently by parachute. Participants investigated whether stowaways could hide aboard spacecraft, and met some of the earliest non-human astronauts: bacteria sent into orbit on early missions, tardigrades (known for surviving unprotected in the vacuum of space), and zebrafish brought to the ISS for scientific research. Throughout the day, astrobiologists shared insights into their emerging field.

Across many exhibition stands, scientists presented innovations designed to help humans survive in space. Visitors could learn about the Veggie system for growing plants in orbit and explore algae aquaculture, a more recent development that made its way to space during the IGNIS mission. Guests sowed seeds in simulated Martian soil, learned how a biological life support system works aboard the space station, and tried on a pressure suit worn by high-altitude pilots. They also saw astronaut trousers designed to simulate gravity and a biometric armband tested by Polish astronaut Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski on the ISS.

But the uncontested stars of the show were the rovers. Visitors marvelled at professional prototypes destined for Mars and Moon exploration, including the Legendary Rover (capable of transporting cargo and collecting soil samples), as well as student-designed vehicles like Scorpio7 and Kalman (which autonomously navigates terrain, drills into the surface, and collects geological material). Phoenix III was built to swap fuel cells, activate a reactor, and operate in challenging environments. The rovers' designers eagerly answered guests' questions, sharing their insights and enthusiasm. Also on display were devices whose counterparts are currently out there right now, drilling on Mars, flying to Jupiter, or measuring the gravity of the asteroid Dimorphos.



We peered inside a jet engine.

Hermaszewski's Capsule

One of the Picnic's top attractions was the capsule actually used by Mirosław Hermaszewski, the first Pole ever to visit space, back in 1978. Visitors were amazed that two people could fit into such a small vehicle – which also had to house life-support and control systems, temperature and atmosphere regulation, observation and radio equipment, sanitation, food and water supplies, and survival kits for emergency landings. The capsule sparked conversations about the early days of space exploration and the evolution of space technology.

The Soyuz 30 mission lasted 7 days, 22 hours, 2 minutes, and 59 seconds. During that time, the cosmonauts orbited Earth 126 times. On re-entry, the capsule hit the atmosphere at a speed 35 times the speed of sound, and its outer shell reached a scorching 1,750°C.

Visitors could observe the Sun through a special solar telescope, learn about historical astronomical tools, and discover how to build a radio telescope. They were taught how to tell the difference between ordinary stones and meteorites, and how to recognise zircons – crystals that reveal the Earth's age. Guests could also join the CREDO citizen science project, contributing to research on cosmic radiation.

Even for those less captivated by space, the Picnic still had plenty to offer: zones devoted to medicine, nutrition, film, literature, and nature, as well as modern vehicles and technologies used by firefighters, police, and correctional services. Classic science-show favourites made a return – including demonstrations with liquid nitrogen and non-Newtonian fluids – along with museum and archaeological exhibits, and a dedicated children's area full of hands-on exploration.

The 2025 Science Picnic was attended by 50,000 people. The largest visitor groups were women and people aged 31–40, who made up 30% of the audience. As in previous years, most guests came accompanied – either with children (41%) or with partners (35%). We also observed a notable increase in the number of visitors who came with friends – rising from 17% in 2024 to 27% in 2025. This change is linked to a higher turnout of people aged 21–30, who tend to spend time with peers.

Visitor satisfaction remains consistently high. In 2025, 92% of surveyed Picnic attendees reported being satisfied with their experience. The most valued aspects were the diversity of topics and exhibit stands (26%) and the large number of such stands (23%).

The 27th Science Picnic, organised in partnership with Polish Radio, was co-financed through the "Science for You" programme, supported by the Polish Ministry of Science and the Copernicus Science Centre.

“After Hours” Evenings for Adults

The “After Hours” Evenings for Adults are monthly events where adult visitors can enjoy the Copernicus Centre child-free, during convenient evening hours. Each edition offers access to our permanent exhibitions as well as special thematic content – making every such evening a unique experience.

These events also serve as a testing ground for science communication formats. We explore both currently “hot” and lesser-known topics that spark curiosity and foster dialogue across diverse audiences.

Adult guests discovered emerging scientific fields – such as archaeogenomics, which studies the history of species through genetic material. They had the chance to examine and test cutting-edge inventions designed for space exploration or for solving everyday challenges at home. Some evenings explored human behaviour under pressure, or focused on ways to practice and strengthen empathy. We experimented with event formats: there were lectures accompanied by live music, and even a talk with a live fashion show woven into it. Some evenings were held within the exhibition spaces; others took place outdoors on the summer patio.

The most popular edition of the year was the November Crime Scene Night, which transported guests to a reconstructed crime scene for forensic investigation. Visitors worked with experts to unravel criminal cases, explored the psychology of murderers, and learned how the brain of a psychopath differs from a healthy person’s.

In total, 7,659 people took part in “After Hours” Evenings for Adults in 2025.

Poisons

Love, Actually

The Future Written in Genes

On the Edge

Dress to Impress

Space Odyssey

The Other Side of Life

Crime Scene

Around the Table

Never before had so much music filled the halls of Copernicus! The Polish Radio Orchestra was the special guest for the December edition of “After Hours” Evenings for Adults. The full ensemble performed Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony, a wind quintet played under the stars in the planetarium, and a string quartet accompanied a talk by Kajetan Prochyra, the orchestra’s director. The tones of a vibraphone, oboe, and harp also echoed near the “Air Fountain”.

Models from Sudan presented garments worn by medieval Nubian elites – recreated by archaeologists, designers, and researchers based on frescoes from the Faras Cathedral, discovered in the 1960s by Polish archaeologists.

The Evening for Adults themed “Dress to Impress”

Science Speaks for Itself

According to a 2025 survey by SW Research on the prestige of professions, university professors rank among the most trusted professionals in Poland. So why is it that so many people still question scientific findings and research methods? Our "Science Speaks for Itself" programme set out to address two key issues influencing public attitudes toward science: improving how scientists communicate their work, and encouraging greater public engagement with science.

In the first call for applications, we received 83 submissions from researchers the country. From these we selected 25 participants (18 women and 9 men). After completing a short training, they began sharing their work with wider audiences. The group included PhD candidates, PhD holders, and advanced doctorate holders from research institutes and universities focused on economics, the arts, and technology. The largest numbers of participants came from Kraków (8 people), Wrocław (5), and Warsaw (4). Each researcher led four public sessions: two at the Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw, and two at selected SOWA Zones around Poland.

Talk Title	Researcher	Venues
The Bumpy Road to Immortality – How Are Materials for Body Implants Designed?	Adam Gryc, PhD	Copernicus Science Centre, SOWA Zones: Starachowice & Wadowice
The Human Body: A Walking Micro Power-Plant	Agnieszka Mirkowska, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Rawicz & Nowe Skalmierzyce
Do Bacteria Like to Diet? How Food Shapes Our Microbiome	Dr Agnieszka Razim	Copernicus, SOWA: Wałbrzych & Starachowice
Silence That Rings in the Ears – Music Therapy and Tinnitus	Agnieszka Sepioło	Copernicus, SOWA: Racibórz & Piotrków Trybunalski
From Idea to Pharmacy Shelf – The Story of a Drug	Agnieszka Zagórska, PhD, DSc	Copernicus, SOWA: Opole & Racibórz
The World of Electrons – What Do Lasers Reveal About Phenomena?	Aleksandra Szkudlarek, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Piotrków Trybunalski & Złoty Stok
Meet Your Microbiome Roommates	Alicja Wojciechowska	Copernicus, SOWA: Lubin & Złoty Stok
How Do Machines Learn – and Why Do They Make Mistakes?	Cyryl Leszczyński	Copernicus, SOWA: Bydgoszcz & Konin
How Can We Taste Martian Honey?	Dagmara Stasiowska, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Ryglice & Staszów
The Secret Album of Life – How to Photograph a Protein	Elżbieta Wątor-Wilk, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Ryglice & Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski
One Tiny Molecule, One BIG Problem – How Nanoplastics Affect the Brain	Emilia Grzęda, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Konin & Jarocin
Science Inspiration in Five Panels	Ewa Stefanik	Copernicus, SOWA: Jarocin & Nowe Skalmierzyce
Robots and Digital Twins – The Future of Physical Therapy	Piotr Falgryckowski, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Ciechanów & Ryki
The Frozen Orchestra of Life – Discovering Protein Secrets	Igor Kaczmarczyk	Copernicus, SOWA: Suwałki & Orzysz
The Sleeping Pill That Wakes You Up – Supporting Stroke Recovery	Katarzyna Szafrańska	Copernicus, SOWA: Wadowice & Piaseczno
How to Create a New Medicine? From Idea to Trial	Katarzyna Szafrańska	Copernicus, SOWA: Piaseczno
Astrocytes – Neurons' Wingmen: Do They Play a Role in Depression?	Magdalena Rutkowska, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Tczew & Międzyrzec Podlaski
Rivers: Sewers or Treasures? A Deeper Look into the Current	Marcin Wdowikowski, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Lubin & Międzyrzec Podlaski
Is There a Translator Here, or Is It Just Too Much? Interpreting in the Age of AI	Michał Górnik, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski & Ryki
"Couldn't It Be Put More Simply?" – Plain Language in Official and Everyday Communication	Michał Górnik, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski
Earth's Miniature Architects – How Marine Organisms Shape the Climate	Natalia Szymańska, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Gorzów Wielkopolski & Tczew
Feel It in Your Body – A New Perspective on Human Physiology	Olga Sierawska	Copernicus, SOWA: Świdwin & Gorzów Wielkopolski
Plant Hackers – Editing the Code of Life	Przemysław Kopeć, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Wałbrzych & Staszów
Winter Tires on Steroids – Designing Rubber for Use on Mars	Rafał Anyszka, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Konin & Piotrków Trybunalski
What Do Mythical Creatures Dream About? Mythology in Contemporary Art	Roksana Łajkosz	Copernicus, SOWA: Bydgoszcz & Piotrków Trybunalski
ChatGPT – Assistant or Manipulator?	Dota Szymborska, PhD	Copernicus, SOWA: Łomża & Piaseczno
Pricing the Priceless – How Data Reveals Secrets of the Art Market	Zuzanna Kamykowska	Copernicus, SOWA: Racibórz & Wadowice

The talks were also observed as part of a research study in which researchers analysed how different communication methods influence public attitudes toward science and scientists.

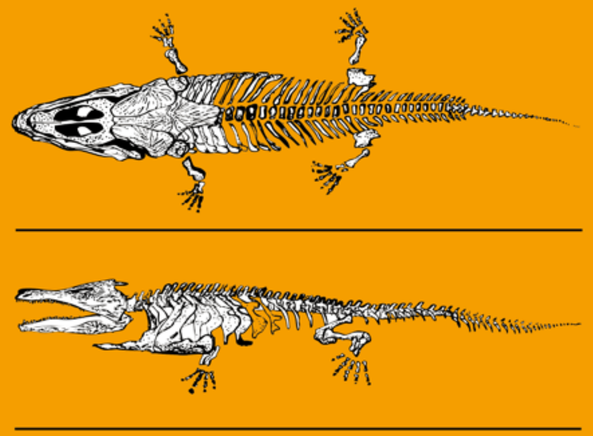
A key part of "Science Speaks for Itself" is a citizen science project in the field of palaeontology. Since November 2025, volunteers have been working on preparing the fossilized skeleton of a Mastodonsaurus – a massive prehistoric amphibian discovered in Miedary, Silesia, that lived around 240 million years ago. The team of volunteers is supervised by scientists led by Prof. Tomasz Sulej (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Paleobiology) and Wojciech Pawlak (University of Warsaw, Institute of Evolutionary Biology).

Preparing for this undertaking required significant logistical effort. We had to build a full-scale fossil lab in the exhibition space, equipped with ventilation systems, technical facilities, and all the necessary tools. Most importantly, we had to bring in a giant block of rock – sealed in protective plaster – that contains the amphibian's fossilized bones.

Interest in volunteering far exceeded our wildest expectations. By the end of 2025, we had received 1,436 applications – including from Paris (France), Tønsberg (Norway), and Rotterdam (Netherlands). We're in touch with everyone, as each preparation session is limited to a maximum of 2.5 hours (due to dust and the vibrations from the tools), and work takes place almost daily. Several bones have already been revealed, but the full skeleton is expected to be uncovered around June 2026. Once prepared, the bones will be used for scientific research into Earth's prehistoric life.

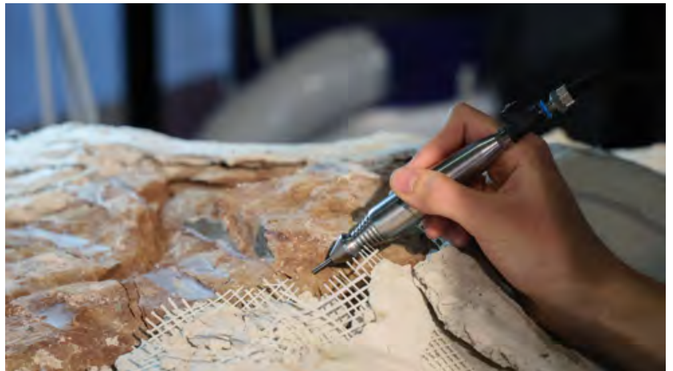
Citizen science extends the reach of research and helps build trust in science among participants. It also encourages lifelong learning. By engaging directly in scientific work, participants can deepen their interests and feel personally involved in the scientific process.

"Science Speaks for Itself" is implemented and funded as part of the Science for You program, a joint initiative of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Copernicus Science Centre. The program is funded under grant agreement No. MEiN/2023/DPI/3079, signed on 23 October 2023.



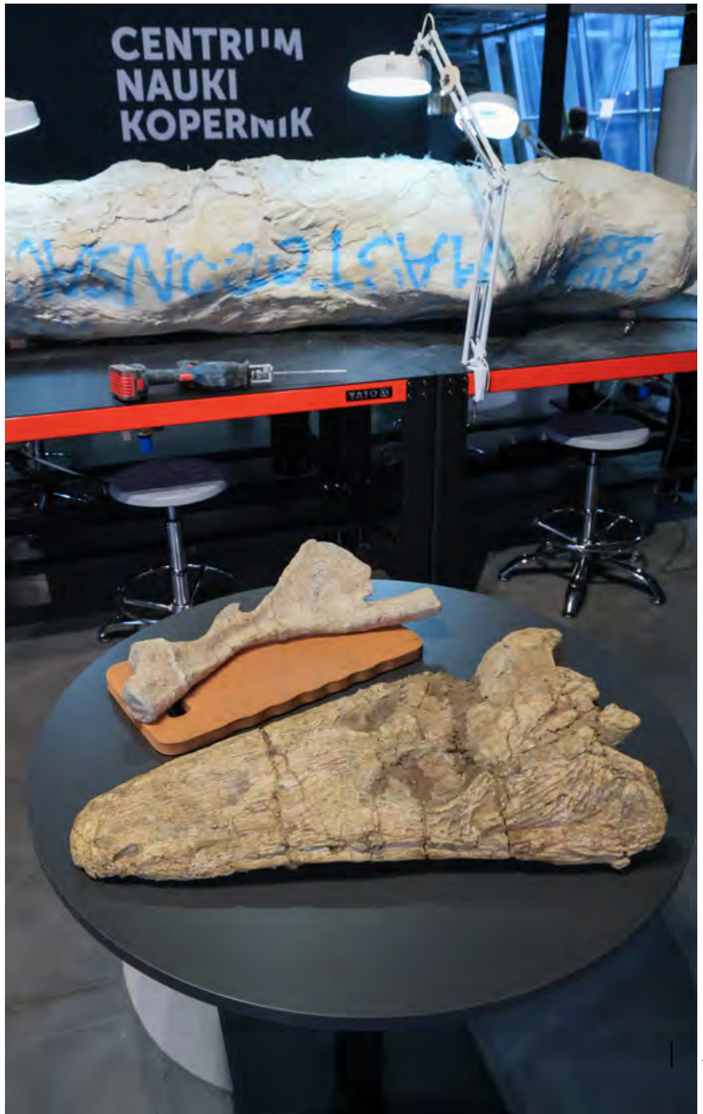
6m – the length of the largest mastodonosaurus

Volunteers using specialised tools for preparing palaeontological fossils.



A crane had to be used to transport the 1,300-kg fossil to the Copernicus Science Centre.

The mastodonsaurus fossil was brought into a specially prepared lab.



The Atlas Scientific Club from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) tied into the theme of the "Poisons" exhibition by showcasing snakes and scorpions under their care.

The Parasitology Scientific Club from the University of Warsaw presented their research involving ticks.

Meet the Experts

Our weekend "Meet the Expert" events within the exhibition space gave visitors the chance to talk directly with scientists, learn about their current research, and experiment together. In 2025, we hosted 28 such sessions. Most focused on topics related to biology and physics, but other fields were also represented – including beekeeping, archaeology, and board game design. The activities prepared by our experts attracted visitors of all ages and proved especially popular with families. For the scientists, these sessions were also a valuable opportunity to practise science communication in a live, interactive setting.

Agnieszka Stasiak, PhD, taught visitors how to identify poisonous species of trees and shrubs.

LivingLAB

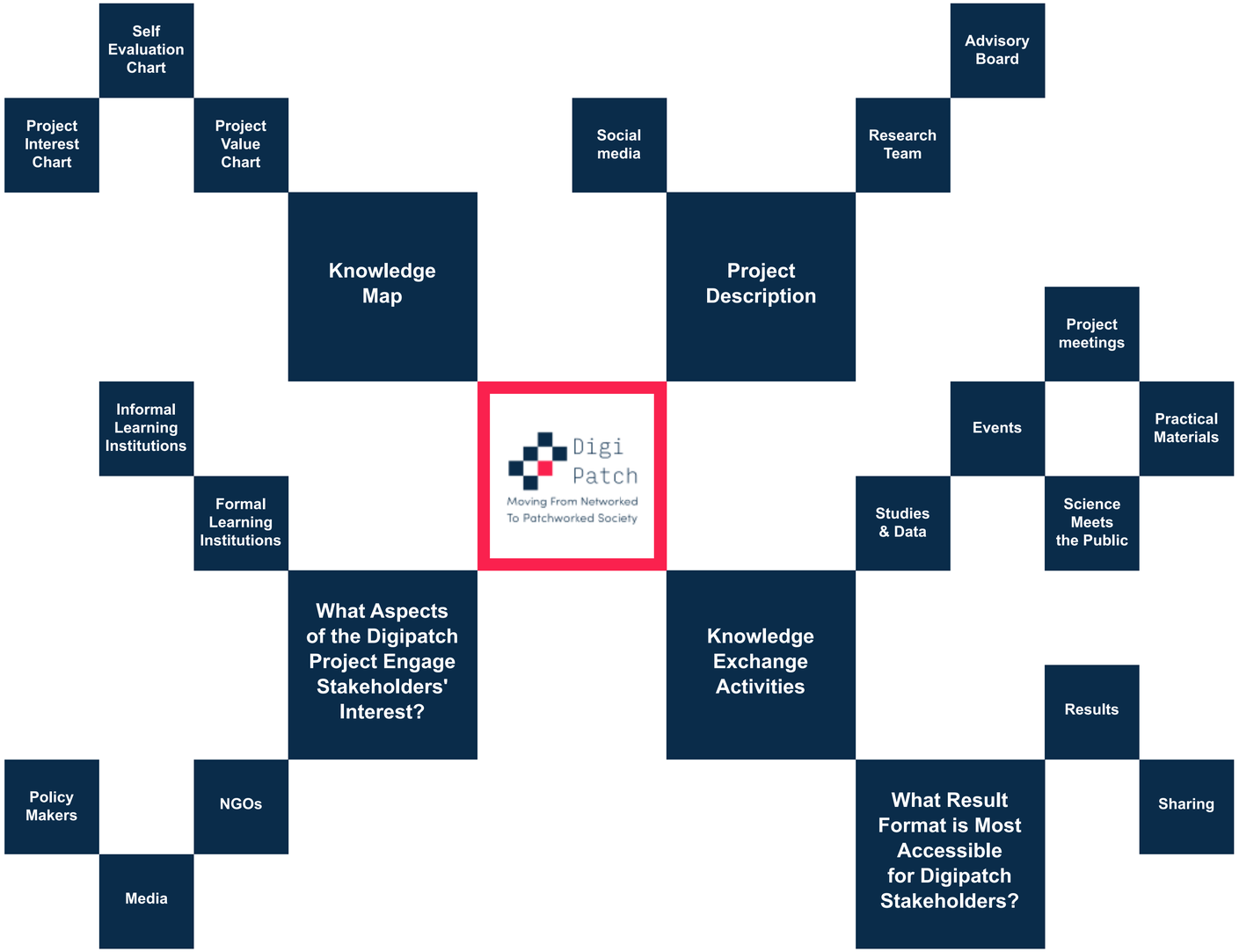
Our exhibitions also offer a great space for scientific research. Visitors from diverse backgrounds come here to experiment and learn new things. Researchers can study how people learn, using data gathered from interactive exhibits located in our LivingLAB space. This approach allows visitors to contribute to the creation of new knowledge and see up close how contemporary science is done.

One of our collaborators is Prof. Maciej Karwowski from the University of Wrocław. In 2024, he explored how artificial intelligence evaluates creativity. At his exhibit station, visitors created drawings that were then assessed by an AI model for creativity. Over the course of a year, Karwowski collected more than 100,000 drawings and AI-generated ratings.

In autumn 2025, the project was expanded with the involvement of Aleksandra Zielińska, PhD (University of Wrocław). At the new exhibit station, guests can now draw in pairs. The researchers are exploring how AI evaluations of creativity differ when tasks are done individually versus collaboratively.

In 2026, visitors to the LivingLAB will be able to interact with DebunkBot – an AI model designed to detect misinformation and help users distinguish facts from myths. The project is led Prof. David Rand (MIT), Prof. Dariusz Jemielniak (Kozminski University), Tom Costello (American University), and Gordon Pennycook (Cornell University).

Exhibits in the livingLAB.



DigiPatch is part of CHANSE (Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe), a joint initiative of 27 research funding organisations from 24 countries. Its main goal is to support international collaborative research focused on transformation processes – particularly the social and cultural dynamics of the digital age.

DigiPatch

The internet is home to countless micro-communities – groups of parents, sports fans, hobbyists, diet enthusiasts, or residents of a specific street. Members of these small communities often isolate themselves from others outside their circle. The international DigiPatch project explored how digital media platforms contribute to cultural and social change. Its goal was to understand how we are shifting from a classic "network society" to a more fragmented, patchwork-like reality – and what is driving these transformations. The project placed particular focus on cultural factors and examined how digital media affect people's thinking, perceptions, and everyday functioning, as well as the wider social consequences of these shifts.

At four interactive stations in our LivingLAB, visitors were invited to share insights about their online activity and their participation in various micro-groups. Over the course of the year, 86,638 people took part, generating a total of 4,154 hours of interaction. The data collected will now be analysed by an international team of researchers led by Prof. Małgorzata Kossowska.

In collaboration with the DigiPatch research team and science educators, Copernicus personnel developed a set of workshop scenarios exploring the formation of beliefs, the influence of social media algorithms on how we see the world, and the importance of open dialogue. These were piloted in schools and science centres in Poland, Spain, and Armenia. To support researchers further, we created a knowledge transfer map and a library compiling all collected materials and research outcomes. We also mapped the needs of key stakeholders – including NGOs, media, and public institutions from the UK, Spain, Sweden, Germany, and Poland – offering tools to help navigate the complex ecosystem of public expectations. These tools were presented at the CHANSE Cracow 2025 conference, where we also shared our educational scenarios and insights from the LivingLAB study.

Dream Designers

The goal of the “Dream Designers” competition (for school-aged children and adolescents) is to develop STEAM skills and project-based learning, promote interest in engineering technologies, and raise awareness of today’s environmental challenges.

In 2025, participants in the “Dream Designers” project created flying and driving models that could measure various environmental parameters. They also helped promote hands-on making and tinkering among younger students, participants of Universities of the Third Age, and children with disabilities.

The authors of the 10 most promising ideas received toolkits, model-making materials, and funding to build their prototypes. Five teams received awards. Among the winning projects were a remote-controlled compressed-air airplane (Primary School No. 94 in Warsaw), a wooden glider (Secondary School No. 2 in Dębica), rubber band–powered cars (Primary School No. 4 in Zelów), wind-powered vehicles (Primary School in Dłużec), and a single-track, air-powered train (Primary School No. 56 in Szczecin).

Posters for the "Dream Designers" competition invite participants to "build their own flying or driving machine".

The strategic partner of the "Dream Designers" competition is Boeing.

To create and disseminate solutions that transform education.

At the Copernican Revolution Lab – the R&D arm of the Copernicus Science Centre – we design and test innovative educational solutions. We work on topics that are both socially and scientifically important, such as climate change, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology. These areas are shaping the future but are still underrepresented – or entirely missing – in school curricula. Our activities are rooted in research and development. We prototype lesson plans, tools, and educational formats, then test them in practice in collaboration with users. Their involvement helps us verify our assumptions and refine the tools over time. We also work with public sector partners, researchers, educators – and at later stages, business partners – to scale up and share successful models. Many of our ideas are tested during laboratory classes before being shared more widely. Through the “Revolutions” Award competition, we also identify and celebrate innovative educational solutions developed outside of Copernicus.

School with Technology

In partnership with our strategic partner Samsung, we implemented the "School with Technology" project, aimed at supporting both formal and informal education in Polish schools through the use of tablets.

After earlier research, collaboration with teachers, and classroom trials, we completed the ORBIUM educational kit in 2025. ORBIUM leverages the potential of mobile technology to support student-led scientific inquiry. A total of 100 kits were distributed to 25 schools selected through a national competition that drew over 800 applications. Our researchers observed more than 300 lessons using ORBIUM, involving nearly 500 students.

The study found that ORBIUM supports innovative teaching practices, helps create a learning environment based on collaboration, and facilitates the use of mobile technology as a tool for research, observation, and experimentation. Insights from the pilot provide a strong foundation for refining the kit and expanding a teaching model based on experimentation, dialogue, and cooperation.

Key findings	Selected quotes
58% of students rated teamwork in ORBIUM lessons highly	*"Working with ORBIUM often requires group collaboration. Students learn to share ideas, negotiate, and solve problems together." – focus group teacher*
Over 60% of students reported very high engagement	*"No one was bored in any way. Everyone was involved. And that's great – sometimes in regular lessons, there's one student just staring out the window waiting for the class to end." – focus group teacher*
More than 75% found ORBIUM lessons more appealing than typical classes	*"When students walked in and saw the ORBIUM elements, they were excited and curious about what the lesson would involve." – focus group teacher*
64% considered the lessons engaging and meaningful – something they'd like to do again and tell others about	*"We'll definitely keep using the kits next year. We want to try every lesson in different classes because the kids were so curious. We'll also share them with our colleagues so they can use them too." – focus group teacher*
Most students found the tablets to be important, but not the most important	*"The tablet :) Students were incredibly engaged in their work... with just a regular atlas, it wouldn't have been half as fun." – teacher, Biodiversity lesson*

The "School with Technology" project is carried out in partnership with Samsung. At Copernicus, the research and development is led by the team at the Copernican Revolution Lab, our R&D centre specialising in education.

Activity Name	Description
Washing Fleece	An introductory experiment in which students “wash” fleece fabric to observe the release of microfibres.
Plastic: Fact or Fiction?	A quiz introducing synthetic materials, polymers, and the challenges of plastic waste.
From Plastic to Microplastic	Students learn about five major global sources of microplastic pollution and match physical samples to a bar chart of annual waste levels.
Hot Needle Test	A burn test used to verify whether the fibres from fleece are synthetic.
Microplastics in a Lake	A role-playing deliberation: students take on various stakeholder roles to solve a local lake pollution scenario.

This kit was created in partnership with Moje Bambino under a sponsorship agreement and will be available for purchase.

Microplastics Educational Kit

Combatting microplastic pollution is one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. While plastic itself is an incredibly useful material – driving innovation across countless fields – its waste breaks down extremely slowly, leading to the widespread presence of microplastics. These tiny particles pose a serious threat to both the environment and human health. Our Microplastics Educational Kit helps students understand this complex issue by exploring its causes, consequences, and possible solutions through hands-on activities and reflection.

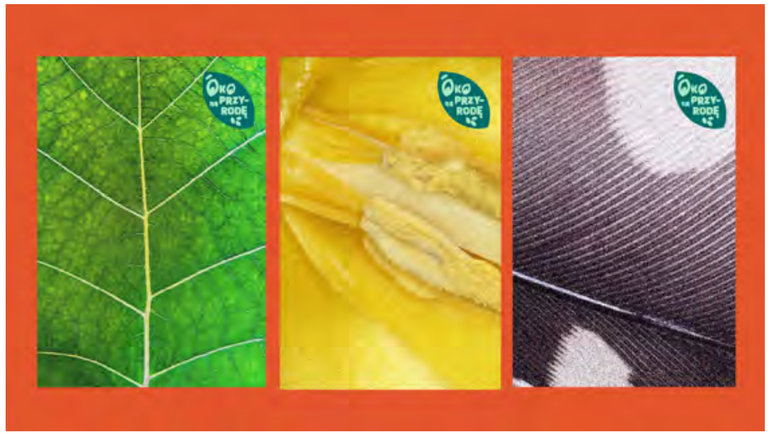
The Microplastics Kit comes in two versions, tailored to students in grades 7–8 (upper primary) and in secondary school. It includes a teacher’s guide with lesson plans and background materials on synthetic materials and microplastics, a multimedia presentation (slides and videos), all necessary materials for classroom activities (e.g. fleece samples, funnels and filters, microplastic source samples), student activity guides, a USB drive with printable resources (e.g. worksheets).

“Eye on Nature” – Outdoor Observation Kit

“Eye on Nature” is an educational kit designed for students aged 10–12. It supports first-hand observation of the natural environment in areas surrounding the school. The kit is designed for outdoor use and encourages independent fieldwork – observing plants, animals, and signs of life; comparing features; and documenting changes over time. Students use simple research tools to develop observation skills, ask questions, and draw conclusions based on their own findings. This hands-on, inquiry-based approach helps them explore biodiversity in a natural context while developing core scientific competencies.

The kit includes three thematic modules focused on different aspects of nature: herbaceous plants, trees, and invertebrates. It contains materials for teachers as well as other educators – including homeroom teachers, after-school instructors, and camp leaders. The content aligns with Poland’s new primary school science curriculum, set to launch for grades 4–6 starting in the 2026/2027 school year. The kit also comes with accessories: magnifiers, collection containers for invertebrates, lesson plans, observation cards, visual aids, and organism identification keys.

The aims to helps develop nature observation skills, promotes inquiry-based learning, and encourages exploration of biodiversity. During the prototyping phase, we tested the lesson plans with future participants and noticed that, while working outdoors, students often mimic their teacher’s behaviour – for example, how they pick up insects or handle plants. That’s why the final version of the kit includes dedicated resources on modelling attitudes and behaviours.



“Eye on Nature” was developed as part of the “Science for You” programme and will be distributed to schools visited by our mobile exhibitions.

The first observation activities sparked a lot of excitement among the children.

By the end of June 2028, the ZBADAI programme will have reached 200 schools, 930 teachers and educators, and 13,000 students. The teaching materials and training resources developed through the programme will be accessible to up to 6 million potential users via the ZPE platform.

ZBADAI Educational Programme

The rapid development of artificial intelligence is becoming one of the key forces shaping modern education and the way young people access information. As AI tools become more widely available, there is an increasing need to better understand how they work, evaluate the reliability of the content they generate, and use their potential responsibly. In response to these challenges, we launched the ZBADAI programme in December 2025 to support teachers and students in developing the skills necessary for responsible use of AI.

The programme promotes critical thinking and independent inquiry, while also fostering the ability to collaborate in an environment where digital tools are a natural part of both learning and communication. ZBADAI encourages students and teachers to see artificial intelligence not as a shortcut, but as a tool that can support learning – if used consciously, safely, and with purpose.

AI tools will become part of student-led research projects, used to carry out calculations, analyse data, work with images and audio, and organise information. The goal is not to automate the learning process but to strengthen students' capacity to ask meaningful questions, interpret results, and critically evaluate the answers they receive. Participants will explore a range of AI tools and learn about the principles of responsible, safe, and ethical use – especially the limitations of generative technologies: how they produce content, what types of errors can occur, and why it's essential to verify the outputs. AI does not replace learning – but when used wisely, it can help learners better understand complex topics, compare data, and organise their thinking.

Research project scenarios will be developed during a hackathon involving 30 teachers from across Poland. The event will also result in the creation of a dedicated AI course for teachers, aimed at building competence in the safe and effective use of AI in education. Teachers will learn how to facilitate inquiry-based learning with digital tools and how to design educational situations in which students analyse data, generate questions, and create their own solutions. In December 2025, we announced a call for teachers to participate in the hackathon.

The interdisciplinary research projects will connect science and the humanities, integrating subjects such as biology, physics, chemistry, and literature. These projects will be carried out by students from 100 primary and 100 secondary schools. The teacher training courses, lesson plans, and research project frameworks will be made available to all interested educators via the Integrated Educational Platform (ZPE).

ZBADAI is part of the initiative titled "badAI – an educational project", funded by the Polish Minister of Education under agreement no. MEN/2025/DK/1449 dated 27 October 2025.

Expert Panels

The lesson plans, activity concepts, and exhibit prototypes we create are regularly evaluated by future users – members of our expert panels. These small groups of individuals of various age (including young people, adults, and teachers) are invited to test out our ideas and share their feedback.

In 2025, our teachers' panel was particularly active. We drew on their knowledge and classroom experience to ensure our materials meet real educational needs. Panel members tested six new lesson plans and educational activities, including both familiar formats and brand-new lab-based sessions: "Microplastics – Tiny Particles, Big Impact," "Under the Bell Jar," and "Genetic Mushroom Foraging" (more on p. 18). The teachers' feedback helped us refine our approach to observation and discussion, and inspired us to add more engaging elements – like visual "seeds", reflective exercises, and group work. These changes boosted student engagement and improved understanding of key content.

We also piloted the workshop "Beyond the Senses," which challenges participants to design devices that extend human perception using microcontrollers. Panel members helped us evaluate how young people handle technical tasks, teamwork, and problem-solving. They also assessed the educational potential and user experience of VR headsets, which we're planning to incorporate into our PlanetBus programme.

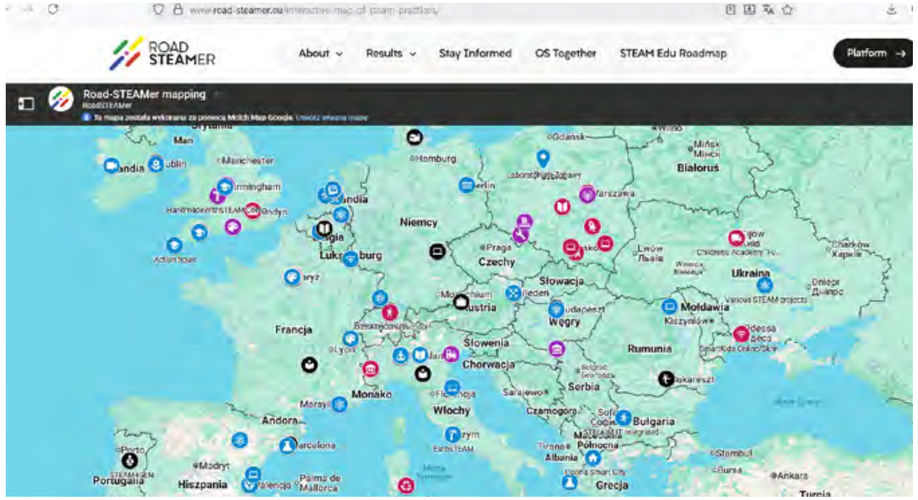
Testing workshop activities dealing with microplastics.

Qualitative Research: *Solve for Tomorrow*

Since 2021, we have been an educational partner in the "Solve for Tomorrow" programme, run by Samsung. The initiative invites secondary school students to develop projects addressing themes such as health, safety, climate, or social inclusion, applying the principles of *design thinking*.

We wanted to explore how participation in the programme impacts student development. In-depth interviews revealed that "Solve for Tomorrow" fosters collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking, while also boosting students' sense of agency and self-confidence. Respondents described these skills as useful not only for learning, but also in community activities and future careers. Many also valued the personal connections they made during the programme. The programme also influenced teacher attitudes – encouraging greater reflection and openness to working with students with diverse needs.

Finalists of the "Solve for Tomorrow" programme



Research Awards and Publications

Our work is firmly grounded in ongoing scientific research, which helps us test our assumptions, refine educational models, and reinforce Copernicus's role as a bridge between educational practice and academic inquiry. The findings are published in international journals and support our strategic goal of expanding and sharing knowledge about effective learning methods, science communication, and creative thinking. The following publications were authored or co-authored by Copernicus staff members:

[RoadSteamer] Roinioti, E., Cherouvis, S., Filipowicz, S., Addis, A., Chappell, K., & Karpouzis, K. (2025). A scoping review of STEAM policies in Europe. *Education Sciences*, 15(6), 779.

Trybulec, M., & Iłowiecka-Tańska, I. (2025). Are Interactive Exhibits at a Science Center Cognitive Artifacts?. *Foundations of Science*, 30(3), 651–675.

Iłowiecka-Tańska, I., & Potęga vel Żabik, K. (2025). Interaction with exhibits: The significance of instrumentalization. *Science Education*, 109(2), 448–479.

de Chantal, P.L., Beaty, R., Laverghetta, A., Pronchick, J., Patterson, J., Organisciak, P., Potega vel Zabik, K., Barbot, B. and Karwowski, M., 2025. Artificial intelligence enhances human creativity through real-time evaluative feedback.

Gierczyk, M., Karwowski, M., Paas, F., & H. Tai, R. (2025). STEM Workshop Learning: Content Load Effects on Cognitive, Interaction, and Emotional Outcomes. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 1–22.

Road-STEAMer

Road-STEAMer is a consortium operating within the ECSITE network, focused on developing policy recommendations for implementing effective STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) approaches in education across the European Union. The project aims to increase engagement with science by incorporating creative and artistic teaching methods. Together with other consortium members, we are identifying gaps in educational policy across EU countries, aiming to understand local needs and explore how STEAM-based learning can help address them.

In 2025, we contributed to the creation of a European map of STEAM initiatives, adding several Polish examples.

We also co-developed a framework of best practices for designing and evaluating STEAM-based learning activities.

eyeTeach

eyeTeach is a research and development project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme. It focuses on the use of eye-tracking technology combined with advanced artificial intelligence to support teachers in developing students' independent reading skills.

In collaboration with partners from 10 countries, we are building a pilot system that will allow teachers to observe – in real time – which parts of a text students find difficult, when their attention starts to drift, and which elements are engaging or tedious. The system will also provide insights into which teacher interventions are most effective in improving reading comprehension and learning outcomes.

In 2025, we conducted research into teachers' needs, expectations, and experiences regarding the use of eye-tracking and AI in the classroom. The data gathered will guide the development of a tool that addresses real-world educational challenges.

Project partners include institutions from 11 countries: University of Turku in Finland (project coordinator), University of Antwerp in Belgium, the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) and Blickshift GmbH in Germany, Intralíneas Educación SL and the University of Valencia – ERI Lectura in Spain, the University of Geneva in Switzerland, Open Universiteit Nederland in the Netherlands, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche – CNR & CNR CID Ethics in Italy, Lexplore AB in Sweden, AcrossLimits in Malta, and the Copernicus Science Centre in Poland.

The “Revolutions” Award

Through the “Revolutions” Award, we support the development and dissemination of innovative educational solutions with the potential to bring real change to teaching and learning practices. We look for initiatives that address current educational challenges and offer new approaches to learning – regardless of where they originate. The award allows us to identify impactful projects, increase their visibility, and support their further development and scaling. At the same time, it fosters a space for knowledge exchange between individuals and institutions committed to transforming education, helping to spread effective ideas more broadly.

For the second edition of the award, 230 initiatives from across Poland were submitted. An internal jury selected 10 finalists – five in the national category and five in the local category. The winners were announced at the final gala on 23 May 2025.

All laureates received financial awards (PLN 20,000 each in the national and local categories, PLN 10,000 for the special prize) and a unique, symbolic “Revolutions” statuette – representing the energy and balance required to drive educational innovation.

IInitiatives in the Final

National Category

“Menopause Transition Counselling” (Kulczyk Foundation): A continuing education course for midwives.

“Open to Change” (Zwolnieni z Teorii Foundation): A social campaign highlighting the need for change in the education system.

“School Living Lab” Educational Program (Code For Green Foundation): Students identify local environmental problems and design solutions.

“Turning Point” – Peer Support Saves Lives (OFF School Foundation): Youth lead school sessions on mental health.

“Know Your Rights in PJM!” (Dead Statutes Association, Deaf City Foundation): Educational videos in Polish Sign Language explaining student rights.

Local Category

“Youth Activity Centre in Krosno” (Krosno Art Exhibitions Bureau): A hub for youth initiatives and local activism.

“CITY (for) CHILDREN – KIDS HAVE A VOICE!” (TWORZĘ SIĘ Gallery of Art for Children and Youth): Exhibition and creative indicatives with children from Szczecin and surrounding areas.

“From Control to Responsibility” (Jan Matejko High School No. II, Siemianowice Śląskie): An innovative math teaching method based on formative assessment and teamwork.

“Idea Lab” (Happy Childhood Foundation – “Bliźniak” Youth Center No. 2): Regular technical workshops for children from socially disadvantaged families.

“Green Skills of the Future and New Technologies in the Metallurgy Sector” (Museum of Metallurgy in Chorzów): Prepares students with the skills to implement innovative, climate-friendly solutions, supporting the Green Deal and neutralizing the impact of heavy industry.

National Category Winner
The “Menopause Transition Counselling” course, developed by the Kulczyk Foundation in partnership with the Nation Council of Nurses and Midwives and the Warsaw Regional Chamber of Nurses and Midwives.

This initiative addresses a long-overlooked need for support during menopause by expanding the competencies of midwives to assist women across different life stages. The course fills a significant gap in medical education, potentially impacting hundreds of thousands of women in Poland.

“A revolution from within the system. Its thoughtful structure, bold subject matter, and scalability make it an inspiration for other sectors,” the jury noted, justifying its choice.

Local Category Winner
“Youth Activity Center in Krosno”, initiated by the Krosno Art Exhibitions Bureau.

This safe and inclusive space helps young people develop their passions, social skills, and relationships with peers and adults. They can relax, pursue artistic and civic projects, and receive psychological or mentoring support. It’s co-created by a cultural institution and local youth, with backing from the city government.

“The participatory nature of this initiative, meaningful involvement of adult mentors, and the thoughtful response to youth needs make it a model of effective educational social intervention,” concluded the jury.

Special Prize Winner
Adrianna Kaczmarek, Director of Rawicz Public Library.

Her work proves that attentiveness to individuals – their needs, potential, and dreams – is the key to success in education. She emphasizes collaboration, active listening, flexibility, and thinking beyond rigid structures. Thanks to her dedication, the local SOWA Zone was created.

“The Rawicz SOWA is a space for everyone – senior citizens, children, young adults, and those at risk of exclusion. Adrianna is an inspiration – anyone can see themselves in her story. It is thanks to people like her that transforming education becomes possible,” the jury emphasized.

Kulczyk Foundation accepting the award.

Founders of the Youth Activity Centre in accepting the local-category award.

Adrianna Kaczmarek, Director of the Rawicz PublicLibrary, winner of the Special Prize.

The 2nd edition of the “Revolutions” Award was supported by:
Main Partner of the “Revolutions” Award: KGHM Polska Miedź
Partner of the “Revolutions” Award: BASF
Supporting Partner of the “Revolutions” Award: Deloitte Foundation
Honorary Patron: Polish Minister of Education

To develop networks of learning communities.

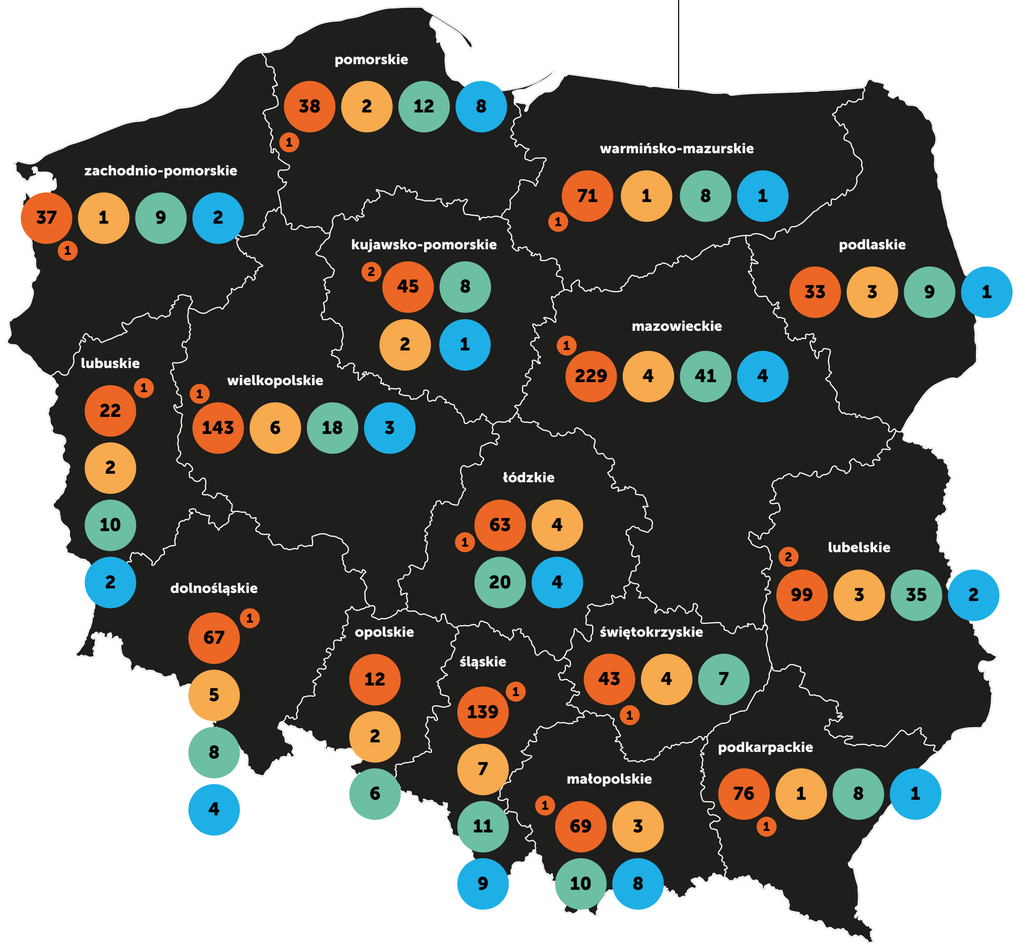
The quality of education largely depends on skilled and dedicated educators. Their potential increases when they join broader communities and collaborate through networks. Working together allows them to reach wider audiences, scale their impact, share best practices, and avoid repeating mistakes. That's why we support the development of multiple educational networks – and work to connect them with one another.

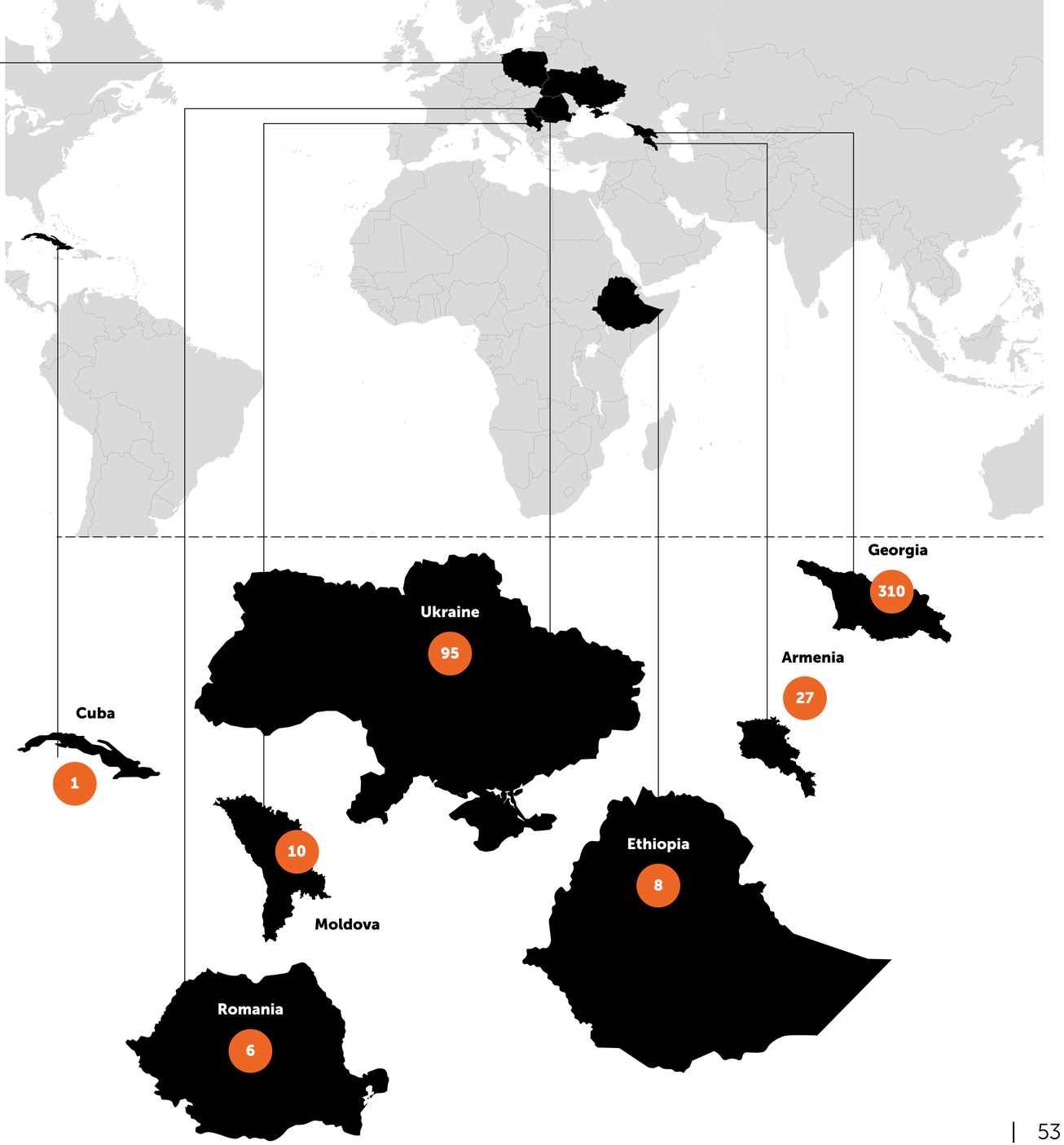
The Young Explorer's Clubs (YEC) network brings together educators and their students to explore the world through hands-on experimentation. We support teachers in setting up clubs, encourage collaboration, and promote joint projects across the network (more on p. 54).

The ESERO programme, developed in partnership with the European Space Agency (more on p. 62), includes national and international competitions, challenges, and workshops designed to inspire young people to pursue careers in science and engineering. ESERO Ambassadors are local educators who collaborate with one another. Many also run Young Explorer's Clubs, work in SOWA Zones, or lead their own outreach initiatives.

The SOWA network connects 50 sites across Poland (more on p. 22 and 59). These zones operate in towns of up to 350,000 people and are hosted by museums, libraries, cultural centres, and schools. The SOWA Zones co-develop original initiatives that span across regions and provide local communities with access to educational programmes developed by Copernicus Science Centre.

The "Science for You" programme (more on p. 24) ties these networks together – and often sparks new ones. The ScienceBus, PlanetBus and "For Math's Sake!" exhibitions travel to even the most remote areas of the country, igniting curiosity and interest in science and experimentation among children, educators, and future members of our growing community.





Young Explorer's Clubs (YECs) – 1,186 in Poland (+ 360 abroad)

YEC Regional Partners – 16

SOWA Zones – 50 partner centres (mini science centres in towns with up to 150,000 residents)

Science for You – 1,115 visits by the ScienceBus, PlanetBus, and "Let's Discover" family workshops

ESERO Space Education Programme – 49 ambassadors (educators working locally and collaborating with one other)

The Young Explorer's Clubs (YEC) International Programme

The Young Explorer's Clubs (YEC) are extracurricular education groups where children and teens learn about the world through hands-on experimentation. Club members explore under the guidance of mentors, developing knowledge as well as key skills like communication, logical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. As of December 2025, over 800 clubs were registered across Poland, with another 200 active internationally – in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Ethiopia, and Cuba.

The YEC network connects a wide range of learning communities: students, educators, and partner institutions in Poland and abroad. We support experience sharing within the network and ensure access to other Copernicus programmes. Our mission is to empower individuals to take initiative, learn independently, and learn from one another. In 2025, we focused particularly on strengthening international connections among clubs and partners.

Active Young Explorers

Each year, we invite clubs to the Copernicus & Polish Radio Science Picnic (more on p. 32), where they can showcase their own experiments, meet other young scientists, and take part in the event's many activities. In 2025, six clubs from Poland and six from abroad (60 participants in total) joined us. The preparations were serious business. "For months we just debated what to do. Everyone had ideas, and we had to combine them. Then we started buying materials, putting things together, and testing. We tested it on fourth-graders to see their reactions – they told us honestly what to improve," shared one club member. Taking part in a large, international event like this is an honour and a powerful learning experience. "The kids get to show what they've learned – that they're brave, capable, and willing to try even if not every experiment works. They know how to work as a team," said the mentor of the YEC club "Możesz WIECEJ" ("You Can DO MORE").

While the Science Picnic in Warsaw is a vast international gathering, smaller outdoor events also have a huge impact. We encourage clubs – and SOWA Zones – to organise their own. In Armenia, the 4th Science Picnic was held in Gavar, over 60 km from Yerevan, drawing clubs from across the country and crowds of curious visitors. In Georgia, the 12th edition of the Science Picnic in Tbilisi saw rapid growth: in 2025, over 40 YEC clubs participated, travelling from cities including Telavi, Poti, Kutaisi, and Kobi – some making 5-hour journeys to attend. In Warsaw, the 10th local edition of the YEC Picnic was held at our Planetarium, where 14 clubs set up outdoor stations. Visitors separated salt from pepper using a balloon, tested handmade rafts for buoyancy, observed water fleas under a microscope, and watched crystals form. Bees, fake blood, and a pencil set in motion without being touched all sparked plenty of excitement.

YEC Picnic in Warsaw

"YEC Champions" is a competition open to all clubs. Participants submit a project they believe they executed particularly well. In 2025, we awarded 17 clubs from six countries. Five Polish clubs received financial prizes (PLN 2000 each), and mentors from Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Romania, and Ethiopia were awarded in-kind prizes. The jury also commended the efforts of our Cuban partner, who is working hard to launch the country's very first clubs.

"YEC as a whole is one big interdisciplinary club – bringing together enthusiasts and multiple subjects. We can learn so much from one another. I picked up simple experiments from physics and biology that I now use in my geography lessons."
– Mentor of YEC "You Can DO MORE"

Research Projects in YEC Clubs

In 2025, we carried out two YEC research projects – "The Dice Are Cast" (focused on crystallization) and "The Big Bite" (focused on corrosion). Each club received a set of materials and expert support. The biggest challenge was formulating strong research questions, while the greatest joy came from hands-on experimenting. Over four months, 25 clubs from the Mazovia region grew crystals and studied what affects their shapes and symmetry. Meanwhile, 10 Polish and 12 Ukrainian clubs explored corrosion and tested different methods of metal protection. These projects helped mentors improve their ability to organize and lead scientific work, while young club members gained valuable research skills. They were also supported by three Ukrainian scientists – a biologist, a geologist, and a chemist – who found the experience so inspiring that they are now preparing their own original research initiatives to be run through YEC clubs. "The Big Bite" was co-financed by the Deloitte Foundation, which also provided clubs with research equipment and translation support.

What Have the "YEC Champions" Been Working On?

YEC Eksplorek, Sosnowiec (Poland)
Organised a five-day School Eco Festival titled "Let's Make Climate Happen" – a strong example of local collaboration that engaged the school community and neighbourhood organisations.

YEC Curie, Ostrzeszów (Poland)
Led an interdisciplinary research project "Do You Know What You're Breathing?", aimed at improving air quality and protecting community health.

YEC RAD-ośni Chemicy, Śniadowo (Poland)
Developed a peer-led project on water ecology that connected students across age groups, families, and the wider school.

YEC MediaSAT, Piotrków Trybunalski (Poland)
Implemented "Rover TEAM", a mentoring project in which older students guided younger ones in building a mini rover.

YEC Odkrywczy Maczek, Katowice (Poland)
Created "Cosmic–Eco–Mat", an educational escape room linking Polish and Ukrainian youth, including students with special educational needs and disabilities.

YEC Young Inventores, Lviv (Ukraine)
Brought Spanish into daily routines, showing great creativity and dedication in fulfilling their club's mission under difficult circumstances.

YEC KMV_TALUH, Ternopil (Ukraine)
Demonstrated high-quality scientific activity through an interdisciplinary research project that benefited local communities and students alike.

YEC Eruditi, Poti (Georgia)
Designed a smart noise-monitoring solution for their school and actively involved the public during a local Science Picnic.

YECs in Yerevan, Gavar, and Lchap (Armenia)
Promoted YEC values and improved the quality of science education within their schools and broader educational communities.

YEC Mozaik, Cluj-Napoca (Romania)
Pioneered science education in Romania by integrating a STEM-based learning approach.

YEC-MU, Tigray (Ethiopia)
Provided technical support for an entire STEM Education Centre and boldly pursued their teaching mission in extremely difficult conditions.

YEC, Tigray (Ethiopia)
Integrated STEM and lab-based learning into everyday practice while cultivating a strong mentoring culture.

Science Club Copernicus, Palacio del Segundo Cabo, Havana (Cuba)
Showed extraordinary commitment to science education under the most challenging circumstances.

Mentors and trainers

To help club mentors build their competencies, we continued offering YEC Academy webinars for both Polish and international participants. These sessions are an opportunity to share experience and best practices. In 2025, Ambassadors of Space Education (who also mentor YEC clubs) led sessions inspired by astronaut Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski's IGNIS mission (see p. 64), co-developing space-themed experiments that could be done in clubs. One webinar featured a YEC mentor who won our "Science Speaks for Itself" contest (see p.37). Other topics included "3D" teaching: "Didactics through Doing and Dialogue". In total, 10 webinars were held with 453 participants.

We also ran in-person training sessions called "Welcome to the Club!" for educators interested in starting their own YEC club. These workshops were held in Lublin, Niepołomice, Poznań, Piła, Zielona Góra, Warsaw, and Szczecin. Each session introduced the YEC model and shared practical tools for running a club. In total, 70 educators took part in the Polish workshops. We also ran an additional training in Glodeni, Moldova, for 20 educators. Half of them have already begun setting up the first Moldovan clubs, while the rest became trainers – a critical role for the future of the YEC network. Trainers help reach underserved areas, where limited internet access and challenging economic or demographic conditions can make participation harder. They run workshops for new mentors and, in collaboration with local partners, support the growth of YEC in their regions. There are now five national trainer teams: in Poland, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia.

The local government in Glodeni is not only strongly committed to developing YEC, but also hopes to establish the country's very first science center – a groundbreaking initiative for Moldova.

Training YEC mentors in Moldova and Georgia

During the YEC forum, we signed new agreements with partners from Moldova: Glodeni District Council, Glodeni Education, Youth and Sports Department, INFONET Alliance, and Junior Achievement Moldova. Together, they formed a consortium to support and expand the YEC programme across the country.

In Ethiopia, Tigray Development Association became a new partner, supporting Mekelle University in further developing the YEC network. These developments were made possible with the support of HumanDoc Foundation.

14th YEC Forum

Over 300 participants from 11 countries – Poland, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, Romania, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cuba, Israel, and (for the first time) Kyrgyzstan – attended the 14th International YEC Forum in November. Inspiring educators, teachers, and community leaders came together to share ideas, learn from each other, and build stronger bonds.

The theme was "Know-how, not somehow!" Every YEC club is different – shaped by its environment, members, and needs. But one shared goal unites us: the pursuit of quality. At the forum, we explored what "quality" really means in the context of a Young Explorer's Club. Highlights included the Inspiration Fair, the "YEC Champions" Gala (see p. 55), and a conversation about the book Changing Education, written by YEC programme coordinator Zuzanna Michalska, PhD..

We are also supporting the revival of a science center in Mekelle, Ethiopia, originally opened in 2020 at Mekelle University. Its work was interrupted by the pandemic and civil war before it could properly take root. The building was destroyed, and many staff members are still missing. Yet our partners in Tigray have not given up. They are determined to reopen the museum as a space of learning, connection, and hope. We are sharing our experience, tools, and ideas to help them rebuild a centre that works in their reality.

Partner network

The success of the YEC programme depends on a strong and engaged partner network. Regional partners work closely with clubs in their areas – cultivating local activity, mentoring educators, and fostering collaboration. Annual partner competitions provide funding to run local initiatives and promote the YEC model. In 2025, we held three such competitions, funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Deloitte Foundation, and BOŚ Foundation. Winning partners carried out a range of engaging activities, reaching over 1,000 participants.

Impact Study of the Young Explorer's Club Programme

The YEC programme influences not only its participants but also gradually transforms the way schools operate. This was confirmed by a 2025 study conducted by the Shipyard Foundation.

As many as 92% of mentors stated that participation in the programme had an impact on how they conduct their classes. They pointed to developments such as more frequent use of inquiry-based methods, increased emphasis on experimentation, greater student independence, and a stronger focus on trust and collaboration. Mentors also reported a shift in their teaching philosophy – moving closer to a constructivist approach. They regularly use the tools provided by the programme, rating them 4 out of 5 on average. A significant majority (87%) also collaborate with other educators, noting that building new professional and institutional relationships through YEC has increased both their job satisfaction and motivation for further development.

According to the mentors' responses, students also find YEC sessions engaging and enjoyable, regardless of their general academic performance.

The YEC network includes 29 partners: one strategic partner, 8 national partners across 5 countries, 3 nationwide partners in Poland, 16 regional partners across 15 provinces, and one international partner responsible for supporting the programme's development abroad (see p. 64).

YEC Partners

Strategic Partner
- Polish-American Freedom Foundation

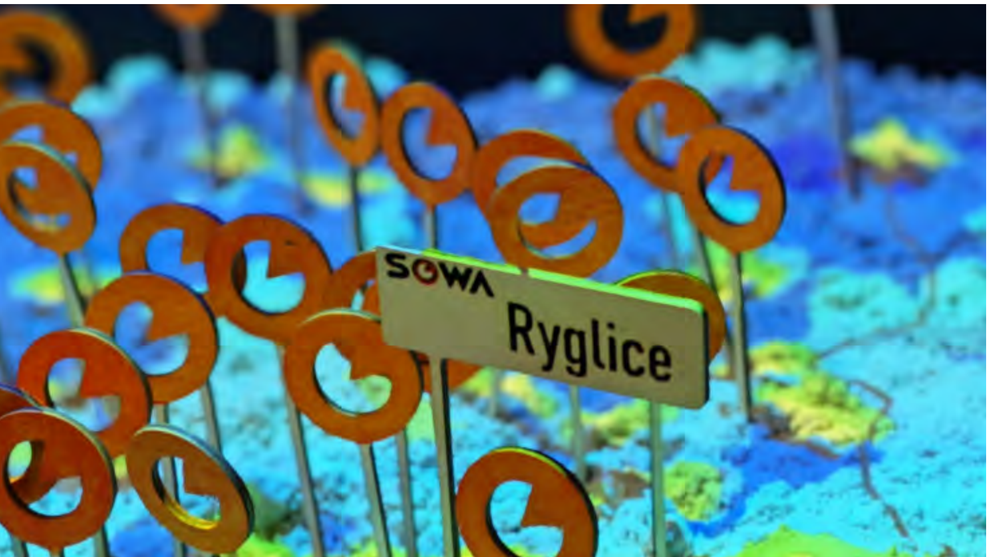
Poland-wide Partners
- Polish Association for Gifted Youth
- Polish-German Youth Cooperation
- Good Education Foundation

International Development Partner
- HumanDoc Foundation

Regional Partners – Poland
- Kepler Science Center – Planetarium Wenus (Zielona Góra)
- Kortosfera – University of Warmia and Mazury (Olsztyn)
- Centre for Craft and Dual Education (Kalisz)
- Lublin Teacher Training Centre
- Municipal Public Library (Piotrków Trybunalski)
- Teacher Education Centre (Bydgoszcz)
- Youth Astronomical Observatory (Niepołomice)
- State Academy of Applied Sciences (Chełm)
- Podkarpackie Teacher Education Centre (Rzeszów)
- Wrocław University of Science and Technology
- Pomeranian Teacher Education Centre (Gdańsk)
- Świętokrzyskie Teacher Education Centre (Kielce)
- Kazimierz Wielki University (Bydgoszcz)
- University of Silesia (Katowice)
- University of Białystok
- West Pomeranian Teacher Training Centre (Szczecin)

International Partners
- Ternopil Science Centre, Ternopil, Ukraine
- Glodeni District Council, Glodeni, Moldova
- Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia
- InfoNet, Chișinău, Moldova
- Jinishian Memorial Foundation, Yerevan, Armenia
- Junior Achievement Moldova, Chișinău, Moldova
- Lviv Open Lab, Lviv, Ukraine
- Minor Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine
- Mekelle University, Mekelle, Ethiopia
- Tigray Development Association, Mekelle, Ethiopia
- Oficina del Historiador de La Ciudad de La Habana, Havana, Cuba
- Scientifica, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- Living Bridge Foundation – SprakPro, Gevat, Israel

The network of collaborative links among SOWA sites.



Our educational networks intersect with one another, together creating a rich learning environment.

Many Young Explorer's Clubs (YECs) operate in partnership with SOWA Zones. Cities such as Piotrków Trybunalski, Starachowice, Rybnik, Staszów, Wodzisław Śląski, Wieleń, and Piaseczno proudly host their own YECs. Many of their mentors also serve as ESERO Poland Ambassadors.

SOWA Zones

The SOWA network currently includes 50 institutions (see p. 22). Alongside the development of exhibits, educational kits, and infrastructure, we're focused on building an active, well-connected community.

We encourage SOWA institutions to collaborate with one another and strengthen their ties with Young Explorer's Clubs, ESERO Ambassadors, and other Copernicus Science Centre education programmes. This interconnected approach supports knowledge-sharing, strengthens local initiatives, and unlocks the full potential of the network.

At Copernicus, we run a variety of activities within our exhibition spaces – such as science shows and hands-on workshops – that also translate well to smaller science centres. In 2025, we conducted 22 site visits, delivering staff training and helping local teams expand their programming. We chose locations strategically so that personnel from several nearby Zones could attend each session. These regional workshops helped deepen inter-Zone relationships, foster a sense of belonging to the network, and reduce the environmental impact of our travel.

We encouraged SOWA Zones to introduce "Copernicus on Wheels" experiments – simple, fast, and visually engaging demonstrations that require minimal materials and are ideal for beginners. We introduced this format to staff in Złotoryja, Pruszków, and Świdwin.

Family Workshops are a flagship format that continues to thrive in SOWA Zones. The idea of children and guardians experimenting together and finding answers to curious questions has been warmly received across the country. These workshops had already been adopted by 15 SOWA Zones; in 2025, we trained teams from 10 more locations. Facilitators can use our prepared scripts or create their own. For example, Złoty Stok runs a workshop called "Spark Your Curiosity" inspired by its local match factory, and Rybnik offers "How Coal Is Formed" at the historic Ignacy Mine, home to the local SOWA.

Strefa SOWA w Orzyszu

Stargazing activities are also gaining popularity at various Zones. In Uniejów, Konin, Suwałki, and Wodzisław Śląski, we hosted skywatching sessions while providing local educators with introductory astronomy training.

We also took part in community events, including the first anniversaries of the SOWA Zones in Złoty Stok and Tczew, the second anniversary in Gorzów Wielkopolski, and the Racibórz Discoverers' Festival. That event brought together representatives from across our education networks: the local SOWA, visiting Zones from Rybnik and Wodzisław Śląski, ESERO Poland Ambassadors exploring exoplanet atmospheres, local YECs, and our own team running the "Fashionable Bee" workshop. SOWA Zones also hosted our mobile exhibitions: "For Math's Sake!" visited Malbork, Międzyrzec Podlaski, Złoty Stok, and Ryglice, while the PlanetBus offered sky shows in six SOWA Zones. We also ran the "Let's Discover" workshop in at three SOWAs.

A major event for the network in 2025 was the "Trail of Curiosity" Science Picnic in Nowe Skalmierzyce. It featured 20 exhibitors, including 8 SOWA Zones. Kalisz university students led cyanotype workshops; the Polish Amateur Astronomers Society (PTMA) Warsaw branch and a mobile planetarium offered astronomy sessions; and a sensory zone kept younger visitors engaged. Local women's groups demonstrated how to make apple vinegar, beekeepers showed part of a live hive, and forest rangers talked about woodland ecosystems. Our team presented the "For Math's Sake!" exhibition, "Copernicus on Wheels," the "Polarization Puppet Theatre" workshop, phone-based microscopy, and shows like "Science Celebration" and "Captured Mind." More than 2,000 people attended, proving that meaningful science engagement doesn't need to be limited to big cities.

In 2025, we live-streamed two Evenings for Adults from Copernicus to SOWA Zones. Audiences in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Wieleń, Tczew, and Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski watched expert talks during "Power and Authority." The session titled "Crime Scene" reached 11 Zones SOWA locations. The highlight was a lecture by Jan Gołębiowski, a former police psychologist and expert in offender profiling. These livestreams weren't the only attractions. Local SOWA Zones also organized their own programmes with activities led by educators and experts. During "Crime Scene", visitors could meet with police officers, explore crime science in workshops, build composite portraits, practice fingerprint analysis, and play detective-themed games. Events across all SOWA Zones drew large, enthusiastic audiences.

We also invite SOWA Zones to join our conferences and special events. Guests from Bolesławiec, Bydgoszcz, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, and Ciechanów attended the "Lay Out, Let Out" conference (more on p. 66). In 2025, 10 YECs were active at SOWA host institutions. Teams from 15 SOWA Zones also participated in the Science Picnic in Warsaw.

The “Science Speaks for Itself” programme (more on p. 37) also became part of the SOWA network. It explores public trust in science – encompassing trust in scientists, institutions, and scientific knowledge. In 2025, 26 SOWA Zones hosted sessions with scientists involved in the project. Most researchers visited two different SOWA Zones, resulting in 50 meetings overall. Topics ranged from current research challenges to behind-the-scenes glimpses of scientific work.

We also launched a pilot exchange programme for SOWA staff. Five participants – from Rybnik, Konin, Nowe Skalmierzyce, Tczew, and Drohiczyn – took part.

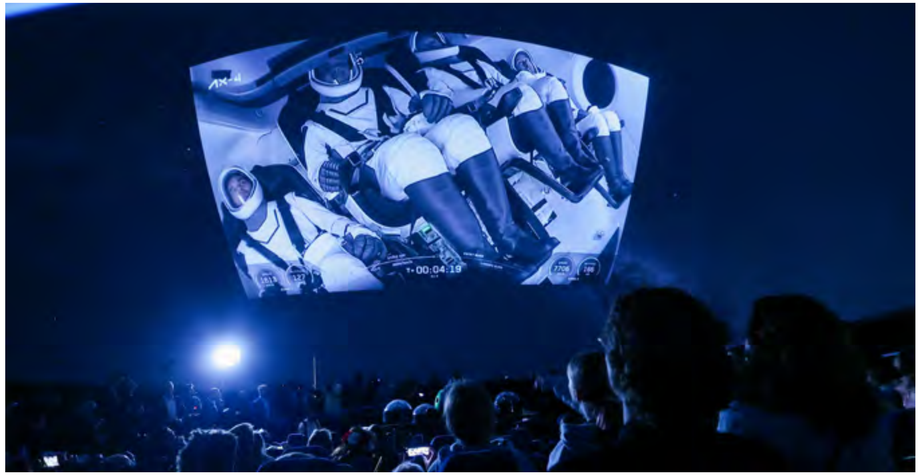
The year concluded with the 5th SOWA Forum, held at the Copernicus Science Centre in December. Over two days, educators from across the country came together to share ideas and gain new inspiration. We explored how to communicate science in ways that invite curiosity and keep audiences coming back. Topics included working with seniors, organizing “After Hours” Evenings for Adults, and integrating AI tools into everyday educational practice. ESERO presented its educational programmes and experiments. In total, 140 participants from 49 institutions across Poland took part.

ESERO Programme

ESERO is an educational programme of the European Space Agency (ESA), aimed at teachers and students at all levels of education. The Copernicus Science Centre serves as the coordinating office for ESERO Poland.
The programme supports science education by presenting STEM subjects through the fascinating lens of space exploration. Its goal is to inspire young people to pursue future careers in science, engineering, and technology.

We organise recurring competitions that give students a chance to carry out their own engineering and research projects. We also work closely with teachers, encouraging them to incorporate space-related themes into their lessons.

This year's activities were largely connected to the spaceflight of Polish astronaut Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski. And no wonder – he is a project astronaut of the European Space Agency, and ESERO is ESA's educational programme. We followed his journey from training to his safe return to Earth and Poland. In 2024, the official announcement of the goals, name, and logo of Poland's first technological and scientific space mission took place at our conference centre. In 2025, our Planetarium became the site of the official rocket launch livestream, shared with students, representatives of the Polish Space Agency and the Ministry of Development and Technology. We were honoured by the presence of Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who also joined for this historic moment.



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk watched the live launch of the IGNIS mission with us.

Annual ESERO Competitions for Children and Teens Held in 2025

CanSat – design and launch a miniature satellite that simulates a real space mission. 672 students participated (112 teams).

Moon Camp – design a sustainable base on the Moon.
560 students participated (132 teams).

Climate Detectives – investigate and address a local climate issue.
360 students participated (46 teams).

Mission X – complete physical and scientific challenges inspired by astronaut training. 1,340 students participated (70 teams).

Astro Pi Astro Pi – write code for a scientific experiment to be run in microgravity aboard the ISS. The latest edition is still in progress.

Polish astronaut Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski transmitting live from the ISS

The live link with the ISS was watched together with students by Marcin Kulasek – Minister of Science and Higher Education, and Copernicus CEO Robert Firmhofer.

Live from the ISS

During his 14-day IGNIS mission, Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski not only conducted 13 scientific experiments, but also led an extensive educational programme. Its aim was to expand knowledge about the space sector, develop engineering skills, and inspire children and young people to explore science and new technologies. These goals align perfectly with the ESERO team's mission of helping teachers bring space topics into classrooms. Naturally, we were eager to take part in the mission's educational efforts. In collaboration with the Polish Space Agency, we organised several student competitions – including a contest for the most interesting question for the astronaut and a challenge to design an educational experiment that could be conducted aboard the International Space Station.

While Uznański-Wiśniewski was in orbit, we connected with him live – twice. The first event was a press briefing. The second, on 8 July 2025, brought together 288 children aged 7–14 and 148 teachers. We hosted a full-day event, with the live ISS connection as its highlight. The Polish astronaut answered students' questions and performed selected experiments submitted to the contest. He demonstrated how water soaks into a microfiber cloth (and tried to wring it out), showed a spoonful of soap foam that held its shape for a long time, and brewed "space coffee" using a ruler. The students whose experiments had been selected could watch them carried out live – in microgravity. Throughout the day, participants learned about the IGNIS mission, the research being conducted on board, and the realities of working in orbit. There were also hands-on activities and workshops exploring careers in the space sector. Students tried astronaut training, learned how to solder, and designed lunar base concepts. Educational partners included the Polish Rocket Society, the Polish Amateur Radio Association, and various foundations and groups promoting astronomy.

Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski took a "Newton's cradle"with him into orbit and tested it in microgravity. The model was built by secondary-school students in Gniew, who won a competition inspired by a workshop with a Space Education Ambassador held at the SOWA Zone in Tczew.

Sławosz has also already paid us a visit in person, following his return to Earth. He made a surprise appearance at the ESERO Space Education Ambassadors' meeting (more on p. 64), and gave a keynote lecture during the "Space in School" conference (more on p. 64).

Space in School

This year's "Space in School" conference also tied into the IGNIS mission. The event focused on integrating space-related topics into both formal and informal education with children and teens. One of the highlights was a talk by Kinga Gruszecka, a policy expert involved in developing Poland's space strategy, who shared examples of discoveries and technologies originally developed for space missions – and now used in everyday products and services. The conference showcased the interdisciplinary nature of the space sector and the wide range of career paths it offers. Participants learned that in addition to technical and scientific skills, the industry also needs competencies in design, the humanities, languages, and social sciences. A key moment was a live session with Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski, who spent over an hour answering participants' questions. His talk was also live-streamed to SOWA Zones in Świdwin, Racibórz, Wałbrzych, Malbork, Złotoryja, Łomża, and Wadowice.

A spontaneous meeting with space education ambassadors.

ESERO Ambassadors

The ESERO Space Education Ambassadors programme supports the inclusion of space-related content in both formal and informal education. Now in its eighth year, the initiative connects a growing community of educators working in schools, foundations, and NGOs.

During the annual summer workshop at the Copernicus Science Centre, ambassadors met with Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski, who stressed the importance of education at the local level – especially in smaller schools and towns – and the role of showing young people the many career paths available in the space sector.

In 2025, the ambassadors led workshops in SOWA Zones in Wadowice, Bychawa, Tczew, Łomża, and Racibórz. In Piotrków Trybunalski, Wałbrzych, and Rybnik, workshops were also delivered by local ambassadors professionally affiliated with their local SOWA centres.

Lessons Out-of-this-World

Direct interaction between students and professionals from various branches of the space sector is a key part of supporting educational and career orientation. Through the “Lessons Out-of-this-World” project, we connected engineers, astrophysicists, programmers, and space medicine doctors with students across Poland. Teachers could choose a topic and invite an expert to speak with their class online. Lessons covered topics such as designing space stations, conducting experiments aboard the International Space Station, planning missions to Mars, and the challenges of human life in space. In 2025, a total of 236 “Lessons Out-of-this-World” took place – including two hosted at SOWA Centres in Bydgoszcz and Gorzów Wielkopolski.

A Space Adventure

This summer, 614 children from the Mazovian region took part in a “Space Adventure” – a full day of attractions at the Copernicus Science Centre and its Planetarium. They trained like astronauts, took on cosmic challenges together, explored exhibitions, and watched the film “Astronaut” at the Planetarium. The project was aimed at institutions running summer programmes for children at risk of exclusion (more on p. 71). For many participants, it was their first-ever visit to the Copernicus Science Centre. During the Planetarium show, the children learned how demanding spaceflight preparation is, what dangers await in space, and why – despite the risks – humans still dream of exploring the Universe. They also got to experience astronaut life for themselves – training both body and mind. Activities included solving puzzles in special gloves, jumping rope, and juggling in pairs. The challenges required cooperation, memory, coordination, and quick reflexes. The programme was based on the international challenge “Mission X: Train Like an Astronaut”, which encourages young people to follow their curiosity, explore science, and chase their dreams.

In the 10 years Copernicus has been running th ESERO programme, our initiatives have directly reached around 25,000 teachers and 70,000 students across Poland.

Justyna Średzińska, ESERO team member, was recognised for her work popularising space science among teachers, educators, and young people. She was listed in the TOP 10 (Science, Education, Space Popularisation category) in the report “Who is Who in Polish Space”.

“Lay Out, Let Out” conference

The impact of smartphones and online content on children’s development is an increasingly heated topic. Schools are banning mobile devices, and authoritiesin various countries are debating whether some platforms should be blocked altogether. This year’s Lay Out, Let Out conference, attended primarily by STEM teachers, addressedEisure72 one of the most controversial issues of the year: the role of digital technologies in education.

The event opened with a powerful debate titled “Digital or Analog School?” moderated by Copernicus CEO Robert Firmhofer. Speakers included Dr. Inez Okulska, an AI researcher and trainer, and Professor Jacek Pyżalski, an education expert from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. International voices also joined the conversation. Professor Halszka Jarodzka, a learning processes researcher, joined us from the Netherlands, while Professor Michał Kosiński, a renowned psychologist from Stanford University, joined remotely from the US. Another highlight was a panel on the future of the teaching profession, featuring Professor Małgorzata Żytko (University of Warsaw), Magdalena Swat-Pawlicka (School of Education), and Paweł Lęcki, a literature teacher and education columnist.

One of the most popular sessions was a workshop led by young trainers Jan Niziński and Kacper Szklarczyk, who offered insights into the most popular online spaces for children and teens. The conference closed with a unique debate on the future – featuring “AMI”, a humanoid robot from the ScienceBus exhibition.

Speakers and participants alike agreed that AI can support education – but at its heart, what truly matters are the real, warm, and supportive relationships between teachers and students. Nearly 240 people took part in “Lay Out, Let Out” in 2025, more than 100 of them joining us for the very first time. The event received an average rating of 9.15 out of 10.

Copernicus CEO Robert Firmhofer and Katarzyna Lubnauer – Secretary of State at the Ministry of National Education.

To increase the participation of underrepresented individuals and groups in Copernicus programmes.

The programming we offer is particularly appealing to two main target groups: families and school groups. We continue to develop it with our regular audiences in mind. At the same time, our aim is to engage new participants and provide them with valuable experiences. We take inclusive action to involve people at risk of social exclusion and remove barriers that may prevent individuals with additional needs from taking part in our activities. We are also exploring ways to design experiences that resonate with older teenagers, young adults, and senior citizens. Inclusivity within our team is equally important to us.

S7

To remove barriers and include people at risk of social exclusion into the programme activities.

All events held at the Copernicus Science Centre – including activities in the exhibition spaces, workshops, lectures, shows, and meetings – are interpreted into Polish Sign Language (PJM), and shows in the Planetarium are available with audio description. Visitors can also utilize the services of an online PJM interpreter at the exhibitions, ticket desks, and customer service point, as well as on the helpline. We publish Polish Sign Language content on our website to support visit planning, and share current programme updates via a sign-language newsletter. We are committed to ensuring that the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community are not only recipients of our activities, but also partners in creating an accessible institution. We collaborate with organisations and NGOs representing the Deaf community (including the Academy of the Deaf Foundation, Culture Without Barriers Foundation, Suita Association, and the Polish Association of the Deaf), co-developing our programmes and testing new solutions together.

To better accommodate visitors with sensory sensitivities, those on the autism spectrum, and older adults, we hold monthly quiet sessions during which we turn off loud exhibits and devices that emit intense or strobe lighting. A lower-intensity version of the High Voltage Theatre show is also presented.

Accessibility is a priority not only during regular visits but also at special and recurring events. We invite PJM interpreters to the Science Picnic, “After Hours” Evenings for Adults, and the “Przemiany” Festival. At the Science Picnic, we ensured wheelchair ramps led to our tent and adjusted table heights for ease of access. A rest area and sensory-friendly zones were also available. During the ECSITE conference (see p. 84), a designated quiet room was made available.

Our efforts to support people with disabilities were recognised in the “Accessible Warsaw” competition. We received two distinctions: one for our multisensory project “Multisenses of Copernicus – Hear, Touch, See”, and another for ongoing initiatives aimed at people with diverse needs (see p. 97).

The “Balance” activity set in the Thinkatorium makerspace presents an excellent challenge for visitors with visual impairments. A pair of adult guests (with minimal assistance from a carer) successfully balanced metal elements on a single nail.

As in previous years, we took part in the “Culture Without Barriers” Festival – an inclusive celebration of openness and diversity for all, regardless of type or degree of disability (or lack thereof), family circumstances, financial situation, place of residence, background, age, or gender. Festival guests could visit the Exhibitions free of charge, attend High Voltage Theatre shows, and take part in workshops. All tickets were claimed within just five minutes – a new record! Such enormous interest confirms that Copernicus is a welcoming place for all visitors, whatever their needs may be.

We maintain ongoing cooperation with foundations supporting people with disabilities, including the Synapsis Foundation, the JiM Foundation, and the Culture Without Barriers Foundation.

The first „Convention of the Heard” took place at Copernicus in 2025. Around 30 hearing-impaired participants from across Poland came to share their stories and encourage others to speak openly about their needs.

Including Underrepresented Groups of Visitors

In 2024, we began targeted efforts to increase the number of visitors aged 60+, currently the smallest demographic group among our guests. We focused on understanding this audience and their needs, identifying which of our activities appeal to them most, and conducting qualitative research and conversations. The findings revealed that many seniors are discouraged from visiting Copernicus due to the belief that there is nothing here for them, concerns about not being able to buy a ticket (due to anticipated queues or difficulties purchasing online), and anxiety about visiting alone in an institution without guides or suggested routes. Respondents indicated they would be more likely to visit if there were significantly lower admission prices, topics matched to their interests, and guided tours of the exhibitions.

For the first time, we joined the nationwide "Senior Weekend with Culture" initiative. As part of the event, tickets to our Exhibitions were available for 5 PLN, and seniors could visit independently or with a companion. They were also invited to attend a lecture by Przemysław Kopeć, PhD, entitled "Under Pressure: Plants, Photosynthesis and a Capricious Climate", as well as the "Przemiany" Festival, which took place at the same time.

We also took part in two outdoor events in Warsaw dedicated to senior citizens. At the Senior Days Picnic in Świętokrzyski Park, we presented the "Captured Mind" show and conducted hands-on experiments with participants. At the Senior Sports Olympics in Nowa Skra Park, we offered interactive challenges under the theme "Copernicus on Wheels".

To counteract exclusion, we provide free tickets for organised groups, and 5 PLN tickets for individual visitors in difficult financial situations. We also aim to include people with lower levels of social or educational capital in our activities.

Accessibility at Copernicus

- The website www.kopernik.org complies with WCAG accessibility standards.
- Tickets can be purchased via the migam.org app, and in-person conversations at ticket desks are supported by the MIGAM sign-language interpreting service.
- Programme details and practical information are available on our website in Polish Sign Language (PJM) (in the Exhibitions and Accessible Copernicus sections.)
- A sign-language newsletter provides regular updates in Polish Sign Language (PJM)
- Lifts, platforms, and toilets are adapted for wheelchair users; ramps are installed at the main entrance; ticket desk no. 5 is height-adapted; most exhibits are easily accessible; and there is a dedicated wheelchair space in the Planetarium.
- Tactile guiding paths and attention fields are installed at the entrances to the Exhibition and Planetarium buildings.
- Portable tactile maps are available at the ticket desks and in display stands in both buildings.
- Lift buttons in both buildings are marked with Braille.
- Assistance dogs are welcome.
- Magnifying lenses can be borrowed at the ticket desks for the duration of the visit.
- Selected exhibits offer audio description, accessible via QR code.
- Selected Planetarium films include audio description and subtitles in three languages.
- "Plan Your Visit to the Exhibitions" and "Plan Your Visit to the Planetarium" guides are available for autistic visitors and those with sensory sensitivities.
- Quiet spaces are provided away from the main Exhibition area and in designated corners of the Planetarium.

In response, we launched a pilot initiative in 2025. In September, we invited 100 seniors to take part in a specially designed visit, during which they were accompanied by a support person who helped them navigate the space, engage with exhibits, and enjoy the process of independent experimentation. This format was very well received. Visitors particularly enjoyed the exhibits in the Experimentation Zone, and the robots sparked great curiosity. Starting in January 2026, visits with carer support will become a permanent part of our programme.

Feedback shared by YEC members after an international integration meeting prior to the Science Picnic:

"We're all the same. We have the same ambitions – we want to show people what we do and do it as well as we can. Yesterday, I really enjoyed trying food from other countries. The whole experience was amazing. People are kind, and their cultures are incredible."

"It's something new that we're experiencing. We exchange ideas for experiments, and somewhere in the back of your mind a thought starts to grow – maybe we could create an international project with other clubs."

"When you meet someone from another country, you also get to know their culture, their language, and everything else."

"People came all the way from Georgia – that's really far from here. I'd never met anyone from there before. I heard that next year there will be clubs from Kyrgyzstan and Moldova too. It's a huge opportunity for people my age who want to get involved in science. You meet new people, you get new chances – it's a big deal."

In 2025, we held the Cosmic Adventure for the third time – our summer event for children and young people with limited access to hands-on science and modern technologies. Invitations were sent to institutions organising holiday programmes for children at risk of exclusion, including community centres and care institutions. A total of 614 participants joined us for a day of space-themed activities at the Copernicus exhibitions and Planetarium (see p. 65).

To encourage participation in the CanSat competition by students who might find it intimidating, ESERO offers the Online Summer School of Space Education. Teachers are introduced to the Arduino Uno system used for programming CanSats. At later stages of the competition, training sessions are held for full teams, helping reduce barriers (such as lack of access to scientific project opportunities) and supporting less experienced groups in building and programming their satellites.

The Young Explorer's Clubs (YEC) programme has, since its inception, reached out to children and teens at risk of exclusion for a range of reasons – whether due to living in small or very small towns, financial difficulties (the activities are free of charge), or lower academic performance (the programme is open to all, regardless of school results). Increasingly, children with special educational needs are also joining the clubs. They thrive in the club environment, which is free from the strict rules of school: participants are free to move around the space, talk, and work at their own pace. "I've worked with children on the autism spectrum and children with hearing impairments. Each of them finds a place for them in the Young Explorer's Club. Everyone takes responsibility for something: one might excel at scientific tasks, another at hands-on work, another at conversation and collaboration. They complement each other beautifully and feel accepted. Even if they don't understand something right away, they're able to explain it to each other," says the mentor of the "Young Scientist" YEC Club. The Maczek Discovery Club in Katowice brings together young people from Poland and Ukraine, students with special educational needs statements, and people with disabilities. Together, they created an educational escape room game, which won an award in the YEC Champions competition. Club members also produced a podcast series on science and industry, working in multicultural and multilingual teams.

Multiculturalism is embedded in the YEC network, with clubs being established all over the world. We strive to make the most of this diversity by creating opportunities for mentors and club members to connect and collaborate. A great example was the Science Picnic, which brought together clubs from Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, and Romania. At first, the young people were nervous about the integration meeting – especially about the language barrier. But those barriers quickly disappeared. Everyone had a great time: dancing, talking, sharing food from their countries, and getting to know one another. They discovered that we truly are one big YEC family.

Together for a Better Future

"Together for a Better Future" is a nationwide programme supporting intercultural integration through collaborative experimentation and construction-based learning. It helps to increase the educational opportunities and sense of agency among children and young people, while also developing the skills of teachers and educators in the YEC and SOWA networks.

In 2025, we completed the third edition of the programme, with an impressive 9,839 participants. Activities were held in SOWA Zones and Young Explorer's Clubs across the country – and even beyond Poland's borders. The programme included workshops, meetups, picnics, science festivals, and research projects.

Participants explored the science of corrosion, built musical instruments, and created communities ready to discover scientific passions and put creative ideas into practice together. In April, YEC clubs from the Mazovian region gathered for a grand finale. Children with migrant backgrounds, including refugees, came together with their Polish peers to share their passion for science, ideas, and experiences. At the club showcase, participants made postcards, experimented with everyday chemical elements found in kitchens, learned how to create a jar garden – even one without soil! They also explored the Solar System, black holes, and played in a band with preschoolers from the youngest YEC club.

The "Together for a Better Future" Programme was delivered in partnership with the UN Global Compact Network Poland and the Deloitte Foundation.

9 839

people took part in the third edition of the "Together for a Better Future" programme.

To build an inclusive organizational culture.

Sensitivity to the needs of others is reflected in our organisational culture, which is rooted in diversity and inclusivity. Thanks to our collaboration with the Centre for Vocational Counselling and Support for People with Intellectual Disabilities, our team includes ten employees with specific support needs, each assisted by a job coach. One member of our staff of "explainers" is supported by a personal assistant for persons with disabilities.

In 2025, we continued to foster an inclusive culture with the support of external experts. We reviewed internal documents and communication practices and gathered perspectives from staff across the organisation. We organised a webinar on diversity and inclusive culture, open to the entire team, as well as two workshops for management. These sessions focused on the role of leaders in fostering a workplace free from exclusionary behaviours, managing diverse teams, and applying inclusive language in day-to-day leadership practice.
In December, we hosted a public lecture a current hot topic in Polish language usage: "feminitive" noun-forms (*feminatywy*). We also ran the popular workshop "On the Path of Empathetic Communication", dedicated to Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Team members likewise took part in additional training on inclusive etiquette and best practices when supporting people with different needs, strengthening their capacity for empathetic and professional engagement.

To make Copernicus a green cultural institution.

Our strategy focuses on striving for climate neutrality, waste reduction, and smart resource management. We are creating and implementing a plan to reduce the negative environmental impact of our operations. We also aim to become a green leader among large cultural institutions.

We are creating and implementing a plan to reduce the negative environmental impact of our operations.

S4

To reduce the carbon footprint of our operations.

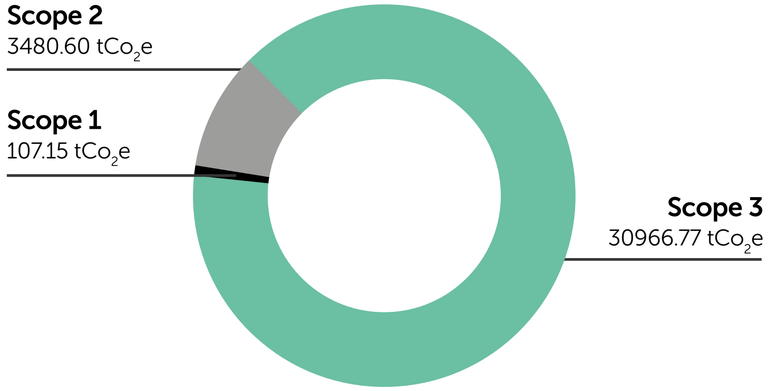
In order to develop an effective decarbonization strategy and begin implementing it, we calculated the current carbon footprint of our institution according to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG Protocol), covering three scopes of emissions. Scope 1 includes direct greenhouse gas emissions related to our activities (e.g., during exhibition operations, planetarium shows, and equipment usage). Scope 2 includes indirect emissions purchased electricity, heating, etc. Scope 3 includes other indirect emissions, such as those related to the purchase of raw materials, waste disposal, employee commuting, business travel, and the use of sold products. The third scope is the broadest and often constitutes the majority of the total carbon footprint — as it does in our case.

To reduce electricity demand and lower building operating costs, we will replace and upgrade energy-intensive general and exhibition lighting with energy-efficient alternatives. In 2025, a project for this initiative was developed. We also submitted an application to the Energy Regulatory Office for a certificate of energy efficiency, confirming a plan to conserve energy equivalent to 635.25 TOE (Tons of Oil Equivalent). One TOE equals approximately 11.63 MWh.

Indirect emissions are influenced not only by institutional policy but also by individual choices. That's why we talked with our team about sustainable development and how everyday decisions affect the environment.

In our internal newsletter, we addressed topics such as biodiversity, renewable energy sources, the importance of water as a limited resource, and the issue of plastic pollution. Employees could also participate in themed training sessions, including: "The Carbon Footprint of an Organization – How to Calculate It and Why It Matters," "Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities for Businesses," and the Green Museums Summit, which focused on sustainable development, environmental education, green design, and strategies for achieving climate neutrality. There were also outdoor activities, such as walks with an urban rewilding specialist (more on p. 79), during which we observed local biodiversity around Copernicus.

Copernicus' carbon footprint by Scopes 1, 2, and 3



Transportation choices – whether for business trips or commuting – also affect CO_2 emissions. Our headquarters is located in the city center – easily accessible by commuter train, bus, or subway (there are even stops named after the Copernicus Science Centre). We encourage team members to use public transport, and a new benefit – a subsidy for public and suburban transport tickets (more on p. 88) – may serve as additional motivation. When planning business trips, we avoid air travel on routes where rail alternatives of under 8 hours are available. For European destinations with direct rail connections or convenient transfers, we prefer to travel by train. We treat flying as a last resort and opt for low-emission ground transport whenever possible. We also avoid situations where several people travel separately by car to the same destination, instead of sharing the ride.

The ScienceBus, PlanetBus, "For Math's Sake!" exhibition, and "Let's Discover" workshops travel year-round, bringing exhibits and a mobile planetarium to small towns. We strive to visit two nearby locations per trip rather than just one, to reduce fuel consumption and minimize our carbon footprint. In 2025, the ScienceBus made 8 such trips, the PlanetBus – 10, "For Math's Sake!" – 10, and "Let's Discover" – 4. The new ScienceBus exhibition, completed in 2025 (more on p. 24), has become significantly lighter thanks to structural changes, which further reduces transport-related emissions.

Sustainable development goals can be pursued starting with public procurement. In 2025, we conducted 7 procedures in which environmental aspects were taken into account (in either the procurement description or the evaluation criteria) – including for the procurement of catering services and vehicle rental or purchase.

As co-organizers of the ECSITE conference (more on p. 84), we decided to forgo promotional materials and printed handouts. Additionally, the ECSITE network donated €10,000 from ticket sales to support the rehabilitation of the Krutynia Meadow, an enclave in the Masurian Landscape Park. This donation will support the efforts of the Wetland Conservation Centre to restore and preserve biodiversity.

The Copernicus ScienceBus visited the Polish school in Vienna, Austria.

To apply the “3R” principle (Reduce – Reuse – Recycle)

We build our exhibits in accordance with eco-design principles, using recycled materials. In 2025, eight out of the nine exhibits we created were made from recovered components. Their load-bearing structures came mainly from dismantled prototypes (including for the mathematics exhibition and “The Future Is Today” exhibition), aluminum profiles previously used in barrier construction, and unused HPL and plexiglass panels. The casing and monitor for “Caricatures” were salvaged from a previously prototyped exhibit that was eventually developed in a different form. The polarizing film used in “Photopolychromy” consisted of material samples originally obtained for R&D purposes. More about the new exhibits on p. 17.

We use the most consumable materials in areas where hands-on, construction-based activities take place — namely, in the Thinkatorium makerspace (more on p. 20) and the Edufactory fablab (more on p. 19). Our first choice is to use leftover materials from workshop work that can no longer be used for exhibit construction, such as small plywood and wood pieces, cables, electronic accessories, and textiles. Materials are also collected through staff donation drives and sourced from external partners (e.g., second-hand clothing stores and wholesale suppliers). We encourage workshop participants to bring in their own materials if they have suitable items at home.

During an open workshop for 250 ECSITE conference participants, we manually transformed approx. 18 kg of shredded office paper into handmade paper, which was then used to create souvenirs.

In 2025, the Thinkatorium makerspace primarily worked with durable, reusable elements, and 100% of consumable materials came from recycled sources. These were mostly post-exhibition materials such as scrap paper and plastics (e.g., cut-up balls and used springs). In the Edufactory fablab, reclaimed materials are used in activities like cyanotype workshops, where we make use of office-collected supplies such as partially used paper and decorative items. During the "Light in a Jar" workshops, participants created night lamps using unwanted jars and old cables, with lamp bases made from plywood scraps. In 2025, we reused 250 jars and 15 m^2 of plywood and wood in this way.

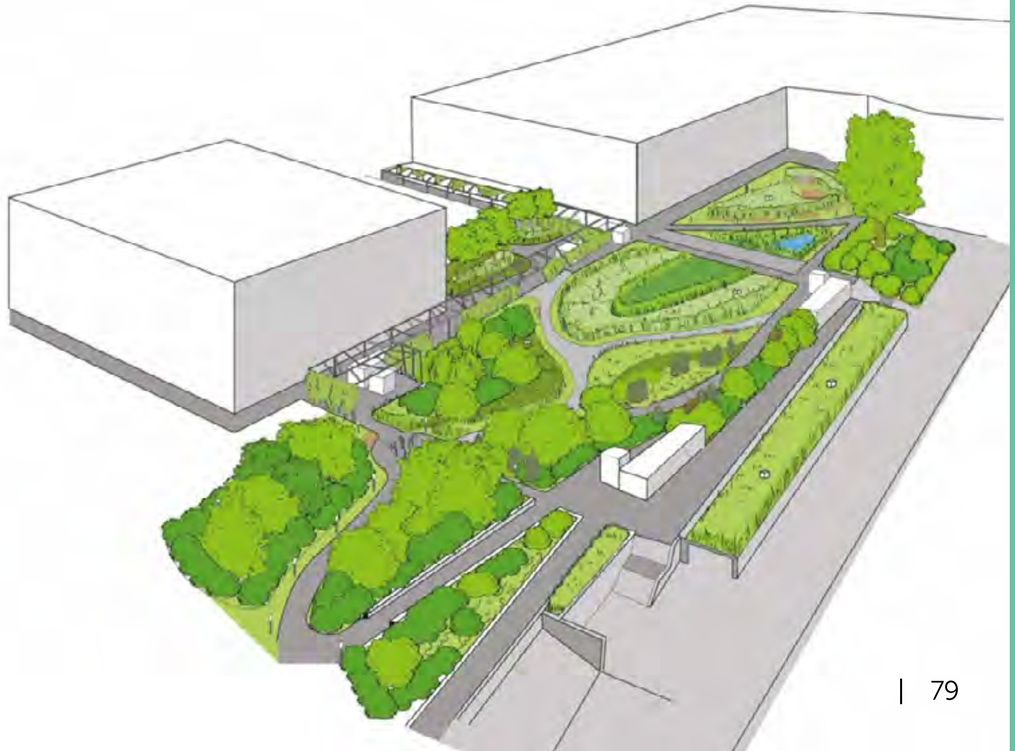
Textiles obtained from employee donation drives, second-hand clothing stores, and leftover scraps from wholesalers (a total of 40 kg) were used in the "Stitch by Stitch" workshops, where participants learned to sew and made their own drawstring backpacks or pencil cases. Additionally, 50 reusable bags were made from 20 m^2 of a promotional banner for the "Out of This World!" Science Picnic event.

We also require our catering service providers to serve food and beverages in reusable ceramic dishes. If single-use dishes are necessary, we expect them to be biodegradable. This approach helps us reduce the volume of plastic waste generated.

To create a biodiversity park and make our environs greener.

We aim to create a Biodiversity Park around the Copernicus Science Centre. Carefully selected plant species and land shaping with small retention basins will help minimize human intervention in the area. This small urban ecosystem will serve both for nature observation and for educational activities. The creation and future activities of the park will be overseen by our “urban rewilder” – a specialist in the restoration of natural ecosystems, who has recently joined our team.

In 2025, the City of Warsaw, as the authorized applicant, submitted a funding application to the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management (NFOŚiGW) under the action FENX.01.02 – Adaptation of Urban Areas to Climate Change, part of the European Funds for Infrastructure, Climate, Environment 2021–2027 program. The proposed project, titled “Biodiversity Park – climate change adaptation of the area around the Copernicus Science Centre” (Call ID: FENX.01.02-IW.01-001/24), was prepared in cooperation between the Office for European Funds and Development Policy of the City of Warsaw and the EU Projects and Grants Department of the Copernicus Science Centre. The application designates us as the entity authorized to incur eligible expenses, making us responsible for project implementation. The application is currently under evaluation by the NFOŚiGW, with a decision expected around the turn of January and February 2026.



To ensure Copernicus's financial stability and partnerships.

Financial stability is one of the key conditions necessary for fulfilling the mission of the Copernicus Science Centre. It enables not only the delivery of ongoing programme activities, but also long-term planning, maintaining high-quality educational and exhibition offerings, developing team competencies, and investing in infrastructure and new areas of activity. An equally important element of this strategic objective is building long-term partnerships, which enhance Copernicus's social impact and make it possible to pursue our vision in collaboration with other institutions.

The primary source of funding for the Centre's operations continues to be the institutional subsidy provided by the Organisers. However, the scale and nature of the institution's work require a systematic effort to secure revenues from other sources. Funding diversification is a deliberate strategy to reduce risk, increase the institution's resilience to external change, and build long-term stability – allowing for programme continuity and flexible responses to emerging challenges.

S5

To raise revenue to ensure operations and growth.

In 2025, we carried out initiatives aimed at securing funding for both the Centre's day-to-day operations and long-term development. Ticket sales generated PLN 33 million. Thanks to subsidies from the Organisers and the ongoing support of sponsors and partners, we successfully met our planned budget target and achieved total revenue sufficient to cover the institution's operational costs.

An important aspect of strengthening financial stability involves signing multi-year agreements. This approach allows for earlier planning of programme and investment activities and enables more efficient resource management. Sponsorship agreements, service contracts, and targeted subsidy agreements signed in 2024 guaranteed revenues of over PLN 21 million in 2025, supplementing the institutional subsidy. The amount from these sources guaranteed for 2026 stands at PLN 40.8 million.

In 2025, we launched a systematic effort to expand our funding sources through the development of a large-scale, multi-year fundraising campaign. A key element of this process was a feasibility study, based on in-depth individual interviews with representatives of the business sector and potential donors. The study was conducted by Social Impact Advisory and then analysed by Jan Kroupa of the Czech Fundraising Center. The analysis confirmed the real potential to raise around PLN 21 million in private funding over a three-year horizon.

At the same time, we held talks with prospective donors. Our fundraising campaign concept received positive feedback, with interest expressed in both financial support and long-term involvement in activities aligned with our social, educational, and scientific goals. The results form the basis for further work on the campaign's structure, schedule, and organisational and communications infrastructure. The major donor campaign is a strategic tool for strengthening the Centre's financial stability – complementing existing revenue streams and expanding our capacity to implement ambitious development projects.

To build partnerships that contribute to the Copernicus vision.

We continue to build partnerships based on shared goals, complementary expertise, and long-term engagement. These partnerships play a dual role: on the one hand, they strengthen the financial stability of our institution, and on the other – they make it possible to carry out projects that would not be feasible without cooperation or would have a significantly smaller reach and impact.

Many partners from the commercial sector have been working with us continuously ever since Copernicus first opened. Our 15th anniversary coincided with major partnership milestones with Samsung Electronics Polska, Plus, and BASF. Continued collaboration was also confirmed by Moje Bambino – our R&D partner, and the Deloitte Foundation, which supports educational programmes such as YEC and SOWA. The company BioClonerHealth extended its lease of the biological-chemical laboratory in the Copernican Revolution Lab for another five years, providing the Centre with a stable, long-term source of income and enabling the further development of research facilities.

In 2025, we also established new partnerships that expanded the scope of our activities and helped us advance our vision. Rekopol became the exclusive partner of the EduFactory fablab; InPost for Cities partnered with the Planetary Education Lab; and Vision Express supported the "Mirrors" temporary exhibition. These new partnerships are in line with our strategy of matching Copernicus's educational and social goals with the capabilities and resources of our partners.

The Copernicus Science Centre also cooperates with non-commercial organisations, such as the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, the "Shipyard" Foundation, the Deloitte Foundation, United Nations Global Compact, the Łukasiewicz Research Network – Institute of Aviation, and the Human Doc Foundation. Joint projects support our strategic objectives in education, research, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility.

Partners of the Copernicus Science Centre

At the end of 2025, we conducted a partner satisfaction survey, which confirmed the high quality of our collaborations. Partners particularly valued the quality of communication and service, our team's openness to their needs, and our reliability in fulfilling contractual obligations. Over 80% of respondents indicated that collaboration with the Copernicus Science Centre supports their company's strategic goals, especially in the areas of education and brand image. Compared to 2024, there was increased interest in partnerships focused on R&D and ESG, indicating further potential to deepen and expand our cooperation.

Strategic Partner and Supporting Partners

Samsung Electronics Polska
Strategic Partner of the Copernicus Science Centre
Main Partner of the Copernican Revolution Lab
Exclusive Partner of the Robotic Theatre
Partner for Temporary Exhibitions
Partner for the series "After Hours: Evenings for Adults by Samsung"
Partner for the "School with Technology" project

PLUS
Supporting Partner

Partners for individual spaces

BASF
Partner of the Planet Education Laboratory
Partner of the "Revolutions" Award

Łukasiewicz Research Network – Institute of Aviation
Partner of the New Technology Education Laboratory (until 30 Aug 2025)

Saint-Gobain
Investment Partner of the Copernican Revolution Lab

InPost for Cities
Partner of the Planet Education Laboratory

Rekopol
Exclusive Partner of the EduFactory fablab

Partners for Special Projects

Fundacja Deloitte
Partner for Educational Programs
Supporting Partner of the "Revolutions" Awards

UN Global Compact
Partner of the "Together for a Better Future" project

AstraZeneca Poland
Partner of the "Przemiany" Festival

Boeing
Partner of the CanSat and "Dream Designers" projects

Fundacja HumanDoc
Partner for the Development of the YEC Network Abroad

Polsko-Amerykańska Fundacja Wolności
Strategic Partner of the YEC Program

Fundacja BOŚ
Partner of the YEC Researchers Program

Vision Express
Partner for Temporary Exhibitions

KGHM Polska Miedź S.A.
Main Partner for the "Revolutions" Awards

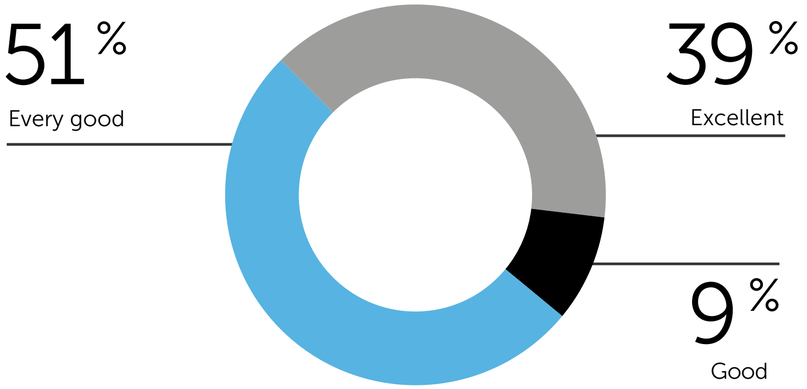
Science Picnic Partners
Polish Ministry of the Climate and Environment
National Centre for Research and Development
Polish National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
National Support Centre for Agriculture
Polish Nuclear Power Plants
Polish Air Navigation Services Agency

ECSITE – A Celebration of Science Centres

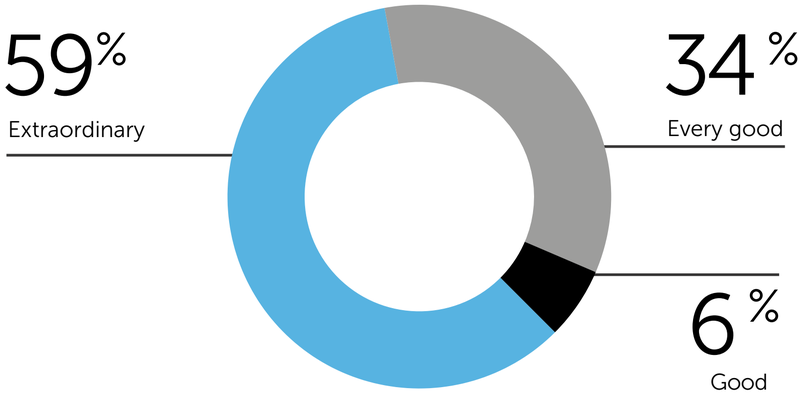
A key part of delivering on the strategic objective "To ensure Copernicus's financial stability and partnerships" in 2025 was the organisation of the ECSITE 2025 international conference – one of the world's most important recurring events dedicated to science education and communication. Major industry conferences are not only spaces for exchanging experience but also serve as strategic platforms for building relationships, which over time translate into project, institutional, and financial partnerships.

The 2025 event was actually the second time the Copernicus Science Centre hosted the ECSITE conference – a testament to the strong trust placed in us by the association's board and the international community of science centres and museums. Over three days, Copernicus welcomed 893 participants from more than 50 countries, including directors of institutions, experts, educators, exhibition designers, and representatives of companies in the fields of science, technology, and innovation. The conference programme featured 90 sessions, 6 workshops, and 2 plenary lectures.

How would you rate your overall impressions of the Ecsite 2025 conference?



How friendly and helpful were the event staff in 2025?



It focused on the key challenges facing science centres today: operating in a polarised world, communicating the climate crisis, the role of networking, and the potential of collaborative experimentation as a tool for social inclusion. These themes are closely in line with our strategic goals and further strengthened Copernicus's position as an institution actively engaged in the international debate on the role of science in society.

The conference was also an opportunity to present Copernicus's programmes, exhibitions, and R&D infrastructure to a wide audience of decision-makers and potential partners. Of particular note was the recognition of the Copernican Revolution Lab as a facility capable of leading international research and development projects and initiatives financed with European funds. ECSITE 2025 therefore also served as an investment in future partnerships and funding opportunities, directly supporting objective T2 and indirectly contributing to T1.
The very high ratings from participants confirmed the organisational success and collaborative nature of the event. For 39% of respondents, attending the conference was an "excellent experience," and 51% rated it as "very good." The quality of event services was also highly rated – 59% of participants described it as "exceptionally friendly and helpful." These results strengthen our reputation as a reliable and capable partner in delivering large-scale international initiatives.

The organisation of ECSITE 2025 contributed to consolidating the Copernicus Science Centre's position in the international network of scientific and educational institutions. In the long term, this event boosts our capacity to initiate and co-develop strategic partnerships, including projects requiring financial stability, institutional trust, and high-level expertise.

One of the ECSITE conference workshop sessions.

Mary Flanagan - artist, game designer and professor - delivering the Ecsite 2025 keynote on the power of play and creative engagement.

To create a friendly and efficient organization.

Ambitious goals require a committed team – people who understands and share Copernicus's mission, recognize the responsibilities stemming from the Centre's public character, enjoy good working conditions, and have access to the right tools. People who have a sense of agency in their work and find it fulfilling. We want Copernicus to become increasingly open to the voices and needs of its employees, evolving together with them. In 2025, we focused on improving access to documents and information, onboarding new employees, and strengthening interdepartmental collaboration.

SG

To streamline operations and ensure better internal cooperation.

In 2025, our intranet took on a new shape. We want it to become a key tool in everyday work – improving organization, facilitating interdepartmental collaboration, and enabling quick access to essential information. A new document hub was created, offering a central location where employees can now find up-to-date internal regulations, HR policies, procedures, the strategic plan, and the Centre's statute. Navigating the Copernicus intranet is made easier by a virtual employee assistant available via the Microsoft Teams app. It helps users quickly locate information, get answers to questions about work organization and administrative matters, and reach the right contacts and documents. One of the most important features of the intranet is the departmental pages. These make it easier to get to know one another, identify which teams are responsible for which tasks, and understand what individual staff members do. The pages are created directly by departments and reflect their unique character. So far, 11 such pages have been developed. The intranet also includes a media library with a catalogue of books available for borrowing across the institution, an events calendar, and a phone directory.

The efforts launched in 2024 to strengthen interdepartmental collaboration and improve internal communication have already yielded results. According to the "Engagement Barometer" survey (details on p. 89), 83% of respondents noted that some of the solutions being implemented at Copernicus are the result of cooperation between people from different departments. 89% know where to find the information they need for their work, and 65% feel that official communication channels keep them informed about current institutional activities. This last figure is 10 percentage points higher than in 2024.

Engagement Barometer

83%

of participants observed that some of the solutions implemented at Copernicus are the result of collaboration between people from different departments.

89%

of participants know where to find the information they need for their work.

65%

of participants acknowledged that official communication channels keep them informed about the current activities of our institution.

↗ 10 pts.

To ensure job satisfaction among the team.

Retaining a stable and experienced team is a major challenge nowadays. For employees to see their future with the organization, it takes more than competitive pay—it also requires real opportunities for skills development, pursuing individual interests, and working conditions tailored to diverse needs.

In 2025, we raised salaries across the entire team by 5%, helping us remain competitive in the Warsaw job market. Our goal is to ensure that salaries at Copernicus fall within the range of 80–120% of the market median for a given position in Warsaw. In 2025, 87% of our team's salaries fell within that range.

Many of our employees commute by train or public transport, so we introduced the option to purchase Mazovian Regional Railways tickets with a 35% discount—this applies to single, period, and network tickets. At the same time, we are working on subsidizing Warsaw public transport passes. These practical benefits support daily commuting choices and help reduce Copernicus's carbon footprint (more on p. 75).

In line with our strategy, we expanded our internal evaluation system by introducing upward feedback—employees assessed their managers' competencies in the "leadership" category. This addition brought a valuable team perspective into the evaluation process and became an important source of feedback.

Like many other employers, we are awaiting the adoption of national legislation implementing an EU Directive aimed at reducing pay disparities between women and men and promoting greater fairness in the labour market. We had begun preparations (including a pay gap analysis and planning corrective measures), but due to uncertainty about the final shape of the legislation, we paused the project. It will resume as soon as appropriate regulations are in place.

What's new for newcomers

- Exhibition walkthroughs with the Management Team
- Table talks with Management about working at Copernicus—set against the backdrop of our vision, mission, and values
- A dedicated intranet page for supervisors, featuring checklists, tips, and sample onboarding materials for departmental use
- An expanded intranet page for new hires, now including a Copernicus glossary, a building map, and a "who to contact for what" section

Engagement Barometer

One of the tools we used to monitor team sentiment was the "Engagement Barometer" survey. In 2025, it was completed by 73% of employees. According to the survey, 80% of respondents said they were satisfied with their work at Copernicus, 70% felt they had opportunities to develop their skills and qualifications, and 75% believed their job supported their personal growth (e.g. through learning new things). 93% saw our work as beneficial to the community, and 90% recognized Copernicus's strong position in the market.

In the latest edition of the survey, we paid particular attention to relationships between employees and their supervisors. 80% felt they could freely express their opinions in the presence of their manager, 74% considered them trustworthy, but only 66% felt appreciated by their supervisor. This is an area we intend to improve.

73% of employees participated in the survey.

80% of respondents declared they are satisfied with working at Copernicus.

70% said they have opportunities to improve their qualifications and develop their skills.

90% see Copernicus as having a strong position in the market.

93% consider our activities beneficial to the community.

Feedback collected from post-onboarding surveys

A New Welcome

Copernicus is a large and complex organization – with multiple departments, three buildings, and over 400 staff members. Navigating it on your very first day can be daunting. That's why one of our strategic goals for 2024–2025 was to improve the onboarding process for new employees.

In the first half of 2025, we collaborated with staff members from various departments and with different lengths of service to review what onboarding looks like in practice. As a result, we introduced new solutions designed to make joining the organization smoother and more welcoming.

The staff room in the Copernicus building has undergone a makeover! New furniture, kitchen cabinetry, and appliances have been installed, transforming the space into one that is more functional, modern, and comfortable.

Shared Free Time

Following a successful pilot in 2024, we continued the Employee Initiatives Program, designed to foster interdepartmental collaboration and strengthen team engagement.
Everyone had the opportunity to submit their own proposal for a recurring activity to pursue with fellow Copernicans who share similar interests. Seven activity groups were selected through a staff-wide vote.

We also produced an internal podcast, Ear of Copernicus, where we discuss current topics, share knowledge, and get to know each other better. Episodes covered a wide range of subjects, including building trust in science, the role of AI in our work, collaboration with artists, and the boundaries of outer space. In 2025, we recorded 17 episodes, featuring 25 guests from 12 departments.

Training and Development

In 2025, 100 people took part in 70 individual training sessions. The most popular topics included: Finance and Accounting, Labour Law, Legal Impact ,26 (on automation and digitalization in legal departments), Power BI (data visualization workshops), and Public Procurement.

We also organized 22 group training sessions. Some were so well received that they were held multiple times – such as Voice Projection (attended by 44 people) and Lifelong Learning (27 participants).

Members of our team are eager to share their expertise with others. This is especially valuable, as they can tailor trainings to meet our shared needs. In 2025, five such internal workshops took place: AI in Our Work: Skills That Will Matter Tomorrow (98 participants), Excellent Customer Service – Echocast (44 participants, 72 hours), How to Survive Until Help Arrives? (37 participants), LinkedIn – Basic and Advanced (32 participants), Giving Feedback (23 participants), Empathetic Communication (NVC) (18 participants).

Eight team members received funding for foreign language courses, and nine received support for university studies.

Employee initiatives

- **Trainer Circle**
  testing new tools and activity formats
- **The “Cramped Calves”**
  running group
- **Zumba workshops**
  warsztaty zumby
- **“Kickabout”**
  football team
- **“Three Acts”**
  group theatre outings
- **“Movement Wednesdays”**
  weekly physical activity sessions
- **Psychoeducational sessions on depression**
- **Stained glass workshops**

Our Team

As of 31 December 2025, 428 people were employed at Copernicus, including 387 as full-time staff. The average age of employees was 40. A total of 26 people were under the age of 26, while 62 team members were aged 50 and above. We employ 11 people with disabilities.
332 staff members have higher education degrees, 6 have post-secondary education, 64 have completed secondary education, 5 hold vocational qualifications, and 3 have only primary or lower-secondary education (no data available for 18 people). 16 members of our team hold doctoral degrees.

Prof. Łukasz Turski: In Memoriam

If I had to choose just one achievement from Professor Łukasz Turski's extensive legacy, I would say this: thanks to him, Polish science stepped down from its pedestal and entered into people's lives. It was he who truly led the "Copernican revolution" in the relationship between science and Polish society.

Writing this remembrance, I find it difficult to separate the professional and personal sides of our relationship. We worked closely together for over thirty years. First at Polish Radio, where the Professor led the educational board and appeared regularly on air. Then on the organization of the Science Picnic. And finally, on the creation and development of Poland's very first interactive science museum: what has today become the Copernicus Science Centre. In all of these ventures, the Professor was guided by the same mission – to bring science closer to people. To show how science helps us understand the world and how research results improve our lives: helping us stay healthy, supporting civilizational development, and making everyday life more engaging and enjoyable.

The Professor was a man of remarkably broad horizons. His erudition often left his conversation partners in awe. A brilliant theoretical physicist associated with the Centre for Theoretical Physics of the Polish Academy of Sciences, he was also an expert in U.S. political history, a lover of theatre and the fine arts, and a connoisseur of comic books and superhero films. No one could explain the workings of nature from a physicist's perspective quite like he could.

You could talk to him about the latest literary releases, get recommendations for the best chefs in Europe's capitals, or ask about new tech gadgets. He had the temperament of a beta tester – always buying and exploring new technologies. He also had a boundless collection of anecdotes that he loved to share.
Add to that a natural talent for public speaking and a quick wit, and it's no wonder the Professor was a sought-after commentator and columnist. He never shied away from public discourse. In fact, he believed that civic engagement was a scientist's duty. That's why you could often hear or read his uncompromising opinions – on anything from misguided parliamentary acts that sought to "alter the laws of nature" to errors in the nationwide school-leaving exams, which he ferreted out each year with meticulous care.

That's how I remember him from our time together at Polish Radio. When he pitched the idea of the Science Picnic, he was so animated and convincing that I could already picture the whole event in my mind. And indeed, just a few months later, there were colourful tents set up on Warsaw's New Town Square, with serious scientists freezing roses in liquid nitrogen and unearthing clay shards in search of ancient civilizations. The year was 1997. At the time, science was seen as hermetic, obscure, and frankly unnecessary. Scientists were viewed as either boring or eccentric – harmless or dangerous, depending on the latest film.

In March 2025, **Professor Łukasz Turski** – one of the founders of the Copernicus Science Centre and the Chair of our Programme Council from its inception until 2023 – sadly passed away in March 2025.

The Professor made an immeasurable contribution to the creation and development of our institution. His courage, strength, and determination – as well as his brilliant ideas, enthusiasm, and patience – were a constant source of support. They inspired us to keep searching, improving, and moving forward. Without his dedication, the Copernicus Science Centre would never have come into being – nor become what it is today.

The Science Picnic was the Professor's own idea. In short, it was about bringing scientists out into the streets – not to demand raises or protest unjust laws, but to meet people and convince them that science is fascinating, important, and needed. The tools were demonstrations, experiments, conversations, and personal interaction.

The idea turned out to be a hit – albeit not without initial scepticism from the scientific community. Understandably so – it was a true revolution in science–society relations. Here scientists had to use plain language; their authority no longer protected by academic titles, and anyone could ask any question – even the "dumbest" one. How, in such an unserious setting, could the seriousness of science be maintained? Today we know: this is precisely how you build public trust.

If one were to seek consensus in the scientific community about how best to popularize science, the idea of a science fair would probably rank near the bottom. But the Professor wasn't seeking consensus – he sought support to carry out his vision. He found it at Polish Radio. His charismatic leadership and the success of the first Picnic soon brought other major institutions on board, and the Science Picnic became a Polish specialty– emulated around the world. At the Picnic, science stepped off its pedestal and became something close to people.

It was at the Science Picnic that the idea for the Copernicus Science Centre was born. Although the concept was inspired by California's Exploratorium, it was the direct contact between scientists and the public that convinced policymakers – and ultimately shaped the vision for an original science museum, where visitors explore nature through hands-on experimentation at purpose-built stations.

The Professor championed this idea and went on to serve for 20 years – from 2004 to 2023 – as Chair of the Copernicus Science Centre's Programme Council. He influenced every major decision concerning the Centre. He brought ideas, evaluated projects with care, helped build partnerships, and offered solutions to challenges. He praised enthusiastically – and criticized sharply. He celebrated successes and warned against missteps. He could seefarther than the rest of us.

For the Professor, the Copernicus Science Centre was more than a successful institution. He often said we had built a rebel cruiser – like in Star Wars – that would carry the spark of revolution and change the fate of many galaxies. Yes, the Professor was a revolutionary, but also a true public servant. He wanted an education revolution – to heal the state. That's why he was so uncompromising in his fight against ignorance, foolishness, and injustice – regardless of the consequences.

Without the Professor, the Copernicus Science Centre would not exist. And if it did – it would not be what it is today.

As I write these words, countless memories flood my mind. A delightful conversation with then-Mayor of Warsaw, Professor Lech Kaczyński, about the achievements of Sokrates Starynkiewicz – a tsarist general and who served as mayor of Warsaw in the late 1800s, and who modernized the city's water and sewage systems (I had to rudely interrupt that conversation to present the Copernicus project, which Mayor Kaczyński ultimately approved). A fierce public argument with a far less distinguished representative of the same political camp, who set out to distort the Polish school system. A failed demonstration of exploding sausages – foiled because well-meaning Copernicus staff had bought the highest-quality veal sausages, instead of the regular kind. Morning radio commentaries that made me late to work because I simply couldn't stop listening. And his swift help in securing top medical care after I badly broke my knee while skiing.

But what I remember best are his meetings with teachers. Conference lectures that turned into hours-long chats. Endless conversations. Litres of tea shared. The Professor had great respect for teachers – not just those at universities, but also those in primary schools, in small rural communities. He knew and understood that the success of public education doesn't depend on systems, curricula, or technology – but on the most important person in the classroom: the teacher. He admired their perseverance, creativity, and resilience. In those moments, it was clear: while he was a scientist, a civic activist, and a revolutionary – he was, above all, a teacher.

Yes, that's how I'll remember him. As a teacher – loved by other teachers.

Robert Firmhofer

Program Council of the Copernicus Science Center

Prof. Aleksander Bursche, Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw – Chairman of the Board

Marjolein van Breemen, Director of the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden (Netherlands)

Catherine Franche, Executive Director of the European Network of Museums and Science Centres (ECSITE)

Agnieszka Jacobson-Cielecka, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Design at SWPS University in Warsaw, Programme Director of the School of Form

Prof. Dariusz Jemielniak, Vice-President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Head of the Management in Digital and Networked Societies (MINDS) Department at Kozminski University

Prof. Małgorzata Kossowska, Corresponding Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Head of the Department of Social Psychology, Institute of Psychology, Jagiellonian University

Maria Mach, President of the Polish Children's Fund

Prof. Szymon Malinowski, Founder and Editor of the Naukaoklimacie.pl website, Director of the Institute of Geophysics, Faculty of Physics, University of Warsaw

Mirella Panek-Owsiańska, Expert in CSR and social communication, Co-founder of the "Space for Girls" Foundation

Prof. Tomasz Sowiński, Institute of Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences

Barbara Streicher, PhD, independent science communication expert, Austria

Rosalia Vargas, President of the Portuguese National Agency for Scientific and Technological Culture "Ciência Viva" and Director of the Pavilion of Knowledge in Lisbon

Jędrzej Witkowski, PhD, President of the Board of the Center for Citizenship Education

Hanna Wróblewska, Art historian and exhibition curator, former Polish Minister of Culture and National Heritage (May 2023 to July 2025), former director of Zachęta National Gallery of Art.

Jakub Wygnański, President of the "Shipyard" Laboratory of Social Research and Innovation Foundation

Przemysław Wielowiejski, PhD, Retired academic lecturer, served as a director at the Copernicus Science Centre from 2006 to 2023

The Management of the Copernicus Science Centre

Robert Firmhofer – CEO

Irena Cieslińska – Programme Director

Joanna Kalinowska – Director for Development

Ewa Kloc – Administrative Director

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Ilona Iłowiecka-Tańska, PhD – Deputy Programme Director for Innovation

Katarzyna Młynek, PhD – Deputy Programme Director for Education and Science Communication

Barbara Juszczak – Deputy Administrative Director, Chief Accountant

The Copernicus Science Centre is a member of the following organizations:

European Network of Science Centres & Museums (ECSITE) (Joanna Kalinowka, Director for Development at Copernicus, is a member of the ECSITE Board of Trustees and Conference Programme Council)

Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) (Robert Firmhofer, Copernicus CEO, is secretary of the ASTC board, and Irena Cieślińska, Programme Director at Copernicus, is a member of the ASTC award committee)

SPiN Association (Robert Firmhofer is a member of the board)

European Science Engagement Association (EUSEA)

International Planetarium Society (IPS)

International Laser Display Association (ILDA)

EU ThinkTank

Polish Conference & Congress Association

Power of 4

Awards

The Senate of Dragomanov State University in Kyiv awarded our CEO, Robert Firmhofer, an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contributions to promoting universal access to science and his support for Ukraine – particularly for the Junior Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. The award recognized his efforts both as CEO of the Copernicus Science Centre and as a board member of ECSITE (the European Network of Science Centres and Museums) and ASTC (the Association of Science and Technology Centers).

We also received the "Child-Friendly Place" Certificate, which is awarded to institutions that show special care for children's needs, support their development, and provide a comfortable environment for both play and learning.

Copernicus CEO Robert Firmhofer also received the Prof. Maciej W. Grabski Distinction for his work in fostering public understanding of science. The award is granted by the Foundation for Polish Science (FNP).

In the Warsaw Accessibility competition (organized by the City of Warsaw), Copernicus received two distinctions:
– in the Accessibility Projects category, for "Copernicus Multisenses – Hear, Touch, See"
– and in the Institutional Activities category, for our ongoing initiatives supporting people with diverse needs.

The 28th Science Picnic, themed "Out of This World!", won the Parents' Award in the Logic category of the Słoneczniki 2025 competition (organized by the parenting portal CzasDzieci.pl).

The "Golden Paperclips" competition is a prestigious Polish award for outstanding Public Relations projects, organized by the Polish Public Relations Consultancies Association. Our educational kit, ORBIUM, received a Bronze Award in the Product PR category.

The Copernicus Science Centre is a cultural institution.

Its organizers are the Capital City of Warsaw, the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Polish Ministry of National Education.

Legal Basis

The Parliamentary Act of 25 October 1991, on "Organizing and Conducting Cultural Activities" (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 87), the agreement of 1 June 2005 on, establishing a joint cultural institution to be called the "Copernicus Science Centre" (as amended), and the Statutes of the Copernicus Science Centre, constituting Appendix No. 1 to the aforementioned agreement.

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