

JCOM Masterclasses: first course about to start



How to facilitate debate about controversial scientific and technological issues

From **September 1st to 5th** the first of the four **JCOM Masterclasses**, educational programmes aimed at an international audience and held by international experts will take place. For the 20 selected participants the course represents a unique opportunity to better understand the relationship between science and society and learn new methods to promote debate between scientists and the general public, such as discussion games and science cafés.

If, for genetic reasons, we were facing a very high risk of contracting severe diseases some time in the future, would we really want to know? How do we feel at the idea of being observed at all times through new technologies? Or again, are we prepared to feed on insects to solve the world hunger problem and reduce pollution and CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere?

These are some of the difficult questions that developments in science and technology research are forcing our society to face and, while it's true that communicating science is difficult, getting the public engaged in the debate on its applications is even more difficult. Courses and master's courses aiming to train new graduates in science communication have existed for years, but now



for the first time an international school has been established, for the first time and in Trieste, for scientists and professionals who want to gain greater expertise in this field.

From **September 1st to 5th**, in fact, the first of the four **JCOM Masterclasses** will be taking place. This is a new top-level international educational project that brings together the main science institutions of Trieste: SISSA, ICTP, Elettra-Sincrotrone and ICGEB, as well as involving the Association of Registered Architects, Planners, Landscape Architects and Conservers of Trieste.

The 20 participant selected for the course entitled "Facilitating the debate on scientific and technological progress" have varied backgrounds and include researchers in physics, life sciences, mathematics, as well as professionals working in the fields of communication, computer science, museums and science centres. The participants come from various parts of the world - Brazil, Cameroon, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal and Burkina Faso – in part thanks to the scholarships offered by ICTP, ICGEB, SISSA and Sissa Medialab.

For five intensive days starting on September 1st, course participants and teachers will meet in the ICTP classrooms at the Adriatico Guesthouse of Miramare. The aim of the course is to present some innovative communication methods that can be used with children, youths or adults to promote discussion on difficult and controversial scientific issues, through science cafés, discussion games and other participatory techniques.

Among the course leaders of the first module are **Luisa Massarani**, Brazilian science journalist and director of the science museum and science centre network of Latin America, **Barbara Streicher**, Executive Manager of the Austrian network for science communication, and Trieste-born but Holland-based **Andrea Bandelli**, who has been collaborating, for more than 30 years, with several museums in Europe and North America by developing international science communication projects (all course leaders are available for possible interviews).

The three other courses (each course is independent) will take place between the end of September and mid-November. From September 15th to 19th the JCOM Masterclasses will be devoted to the development of temporary and permanent exhibitions, from September 27th to October 31st to setting up museums and science centres, and from November 10th to 14th to communicating current research.

For this first edition, despite the availability of only 100 places no less than **276** applications were received, from **54** different countries.

More in detail...

The courses are organised by Sissa Medialab, and supported by SISSA, ICTP, ICGEB and Elettra-Sincrotrone, with the collaboration of the Association of Registered Architects, Planners, Landscape Architects and Conservers of Trieste, Ecsite and RedPop, the European and Latin American network of science museums and science centres, respectively.

In the international science communication scene, the **JCOM** logo stands for quality: the Journal of the Communication of Science, the first online journal in the field of science communication, was founded in 2002 by SISSA, and is a point of reference worldwide for anyone studying and working in the field.

USEFUL LINKS:

- JCOM Masterclasses: <http://JCOM.sissa.it/masterclasses>
- Info on Andrea Bandelli: <http://www.bandelli.com/>
- Info on Luisa Massarani: http://ianas.org/capacity_building/Bios/Brazil.pdf
- Info on Barbara Streicher: <http://www.ecsite.eu/members/directory/science-center-netzwerk>

IMAGE:

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