

European Campaign “Fascination of Light”

Project no. 035053

Summary Report

The interactive travelling exhibition “Fascination of Light” is part of a campaign aiming at the promotion of education and training in optical technologies in Germany. In view of the European need for highly qualified young specialists which will even grow in the coming years, the campaign tries to help spread information and knowledge in schools and professional training, and to inspire fascination and interest in a broad public audience, in order to fully exploit the societal and economic chances of optical technologies in IST.

The exhibition “Fascination of Light” specifically addresses children, students and teachers and is based on a multidisciplinary approach where photonics and their pervasiveness in every-day life can be actively experienced through interactive, hands-on exhibition pieces, illustrative material and multimedia stations, functional models, visual aids, posters and simple experiments, which may provide inspirations for teaching.

With the support of the European Union the exhibition was displayed in ten European cities where partners in the EC Integrated Infrastructure Initiative LASERLAB EUROPE are established. An additional partner in this project is the Network of Excellence in Micro-Optics (NEMO) which contributes its educational kit in micro-optics.

The overall aims of the project are

- to foster public understanding of science and technology related to IST and photonics;
- to raise awareness for the practical, societal and occupational potential of (photonics-based) ICT;
- to stimulate educational initiatives and provide educational support related to IST and photonics;
- to contribute to a highly qualified (next-generation) workforce in photonics-related science, research and development,
- to provide a platform for the visibility of the host institutions within their specific European regions and their general importance to the society.

From May 2006 until December 2008 the exhibition was displayed in ten European cities, where more than 18,000 school children (about 32,000 visitors in total) in nine European countries had the opportunity to visit the exhibition. Due to careful planning, ten displays were made possible, i.e. two more than originally foreseen. Thus, about 5,700 additional school children had the chance to visit the exhibition. The individual events were:

- Berlin, Germany, 13 May – 1 June 2006 (opening in connection to the “Long night of science” in Berlin)

- Athens, Greece, 28 June – 5 July 2006 (during the Greek Science and Technology Week)
- Brussels, Belgium, 5-18 March 2007
- Bordeaux, France, 24 March – 22 April 2007
- Paris, France, 28 April – 10 May 2007
- Amsterdam, Netherlands, 3 October – 18 October 2007 (during the ‘Nationale Wetenschapsweek’)
- Prague, Czech Republic, 31 October – 8 November 2007 (during the Week with Science and Technology)
- Warsaw, Poland, 14-28 November 2007
- Dublin, Ireland, 1-15 April 2008
- Barcelona, Spain, 12 November – 03 December 2008

Related event:

Thessaloniki, Greece, 8–16 September 2007 at the 72th Thessaloniki International Fair. Following the great success of the exhibition in Athens during the first year of the tour, the Greek Ministry for Research and Technology rented the exhibition. The event was organised with the assistance of FVB.MBI and IESL-FORTH.

Over the entire duration the exhibition reached a European audience of almost 32,000 visitors of which more than 18,000 were school children in registered school classes who benefited from guided tours through the exhibition in small groups. Almost 7,000 brochures in the different host country languages have been distributed during the exhibitions, mostly to teachers and other multipliers. The specific teachers’ events as well as the material distributed to teachers and multipliers ensure that a much larger audience will be reached.

Many reports on local school homepages or on the homepages of local education portals or on other web-based information portals following the events reflect the success of the exhibition among the target group. All events were covered by newspaper reports and many events attracted TV or radio coverage. Also the project website was well received and successful requests for pages per day were 151 on average.

An impressive example of the success of the European tour of the exhibition was the event in Prague where the exhibition was presented as a major event on the ‘Week with Science and Technology’ and was massively advertised. The guided tours were booked out several weeks before the start and during opening times for the broad public people were queuing to get a guided tour through the exhibition. Also in Dublin, Warsaw and Barcelona the exhibition was booked out within weeks. Due to the huge success the organisers of the Barcelona event are planning to build a reduced version of the Fascination of Light that could be shown permanently at their facility in Spain.

The photonics educational kit provided by NEMO – Network of Excellence on Micro-Optics had been integrated into the exhibition and specific teachers’ events were held during the exhibition to introduce the educational kit and its use in schools to local teachers and multipliers.

In each location opening events were organised with talks given by representatives of government, politics and/or industry who are responsible for research and/or education. The media and the target groups or, depending on the nature of the event, the broad public were invited to the opening. The host facilities also provided information on their fields of research and their involvement in European and regional cooperation and most institutions offered additional tours through their laboratories.

Information and documentation material in the languages of each host country was prepared and distributed and may be found on the project webpage:

- The web site (www.fascination-of-light.net) provides general information about the project, the exhibition, all events and the organizing participants, gives details about the topics covered by the exhibition and explanations in a language suitable for children and offers a section with experiments that children may perform. The website was continuously updated and is now available in English, French, Dutch, Czech, Polish, Spanish and Catalan. Explanations of the topics of the exhibition as well as the description of experiments in the “Web-Lab” for children are available in these languages.
- A flyer giving an overview of the exhibition was produced in print and/or in pdf format in English, Dutch, French, Czech, Polish, Spanish and Catalan.
- A brochure compiling the exhibition posters and a number of simple experiments for children was produced in Greek, Dutch, French, Czech, Polish, English, Spanish and Catalan.
- An announcement poster for children was produced in Greek, Polish, English, Spanish and Catalan.

More information about and impressions of each event may be found at <http://www.fascination-of-light.net>.

Project duration: from 01/05/2006 to 31/12/2008

Project coordinator: Wolfgang Sandner
Forschungsverbund Berlin e.V., Max Born Institut

The Coordinator's Office:
Daniela Stozno, Assistant to the Coordinator
Julia Michel, IT Assistant

Max Born Institute
Max-Born-Str.2A, D-12489 Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 30 6392 1508
Fax: +49 30 6392 1309
Email: stozno@mbi-berlin.de, michel@mbi-berlin.de
<http://www.fascination-of-light.net/>