

JuB for Ecsite

September 2016

Contributing to Spokes – A quick guide

1. A little about Spokes

[All issues here](#)

Ecsite is the European network for science centres and museums – you'll find more about the network's mission and activities [here](#).

Spokes is Ecsite's monthly online magazine. **Available to all** on the Ecsite website, it is also shared with 7,000+ professionals around the world through an email campaign. [@SpokesEcsite](#) on Twitter relays news throughout the month and promotes each issue.

"Spokes' ambition is to be an open forum for creative discussion - a physical and virtual meeting place where ideas and opinions are shared.

Spokes starts dialogues. Spokes is forward-looking. It is more focused on where the science engagement world is going next than on what happened yesterday, moving from factual analysis to a new understanding of future developments. It is a reliable fount of information in a sea of news and quasi-news. It supports concrete action by publishing "news and information you can use".

Spokes tells the story behind the story, providing meaningful context and empowering individuals and institutions. Spokes links the different media Ecsite is currently using by creating a platform for inspiring content."

Maarten Okkersen, Chair of the Spokes Editorial Committee

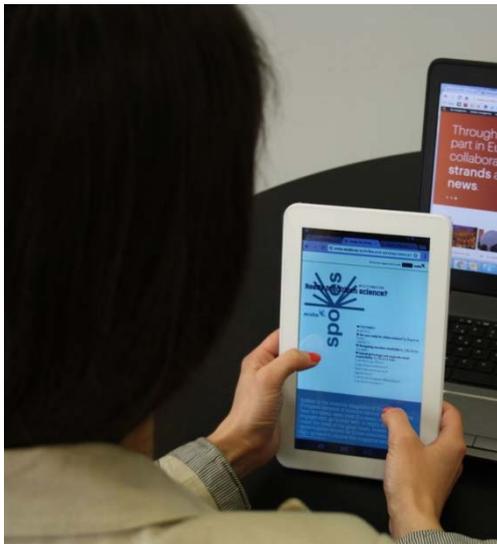
The breadth of topics and stand points presented in Spokes reflect the rich conversations we have as **science communication professionals** and the wide scope of our **public engagement work**. In 2015 for instance we covered personalised visitor journeys, seductive science, Responsible Research and Innovation, initiatives for and with refugees or powerbrands; and featured museum hackers, university lecturers, citizen scientists, exhibition developers and many others.

Spokes combines in-depth articles and interviews with news from the Ecsite office and Ecsite thematic groups, the latest from EU science policy, announcement from members, good reads and opportunities... Targeted at busy professionals, its ambition is to be both informative and entertaining. Spokes doesn't use peer review, but an Editorial Committee selects article proposals and works with authors to ensure that articles present high quality information in an engaging way.

Each Spokes issue's main page gets an average of 1,200+ unique page views, a figure that has been regularly rising since Spokes went digital in April 2015.

Usual Spokes structure:

- One 'IN DEPTH' article – see [example here](#)
- One 'LOOKOUTS' article (3-5 interviews) – see [example here](#)
- A 'COLUMN', written by Ecsite representatives or guests – see [example here](#)
- Half a dozen news sections, presenting summaries of hyperlinked items published on the Ecsite website (news, good reads, opportunities etc)



Spokes reader



Spokes Panorama - 2015 edition

Spokes comes out around the 15th of each month. Note: there are actually 11 Spokes numbers per year, with July-August combined in a summer issue out beginning of August.

Since 2015, Ecsite publishes a yearly paper compilation of articles first published online, called Spokes Panorama. It is sent to Ecsite Full members and VIPs.

Spokes has an Editorial Committee, whose Chair is nominated by the Ecsite Board. Committee members are co-opted by other Committee members. They are staff of Ecsite member organisations, with a few exceptions linked to specific fields of expertise or skills.

2. Contributing to Spokes

2.1 Writing an In-depth article

Do you have a hot idea, experience or opinion you'd like to share with the science engagement community? Are you a good writer? Then you might be one of our next authors.

Process

1. **Pitch your idea** to the Editorial Committee: send about 300 words to communications@ecsite.eu, outlining your main ideas, angle and the examples or experiences you will be drawing on. We advise you not to submit a fully written article. There are good chances that the **Committee will have suggestions** to make your article idea more engaging for Spokes readers: a different angle, another case study you could draw on etc.
2. You will be hearing back within a few weeks (bear with us, we have a monthly call). If your idea is accepted, the Committee will suggest an upcoming issue and you can start working, **liaising with a designated Committee member**.
3. Four weeks before publication: **submit your article for review**, together with pictures.
4. Ten days later: the Editorial Committee **sends its feedback to you**. You then work on iterative versions until both you and the Committee are happy.
5. Three days before publication: you can't change anything anymore. Time for the Ecsite team to work on the **final final layout!**
6. Publication day: **open your inbox and celebrate**. Don't hesitate to **spread and share** your publication! Spokes is available to all.
7. Spokes Panorama: if your article is elected by the Editorial Committee to feature in our yearly **paper publication**, we'll of course let you know and send you a copy.

Good time to pitch ideas: toward the end of the calendar year. The Editorial Committee holds a planning meeting each January to plan issues ahead. However there still are a few slots available after that.

Great Spokes articles include one or more of these ingredients

- Edgy topic, recent trend in science engagement
- Idea or practice from neighbouring field that will inspire the science engagement community to see issues from a different angle or try new ways of working
- Case studies drawn from a diversity of organisations and countries
- Little-written about topics related to the daily business of running a science engagement organisation
- Academic papers re-worked by their authors into a more informal format

What won't work

- Articles based drawn from a single organisation or project, unless absolutely outstanding
- Sales pitches

- Topics we've already published articles about recently (check issues [here](#))

Format

- In-depth articles are 2,000 – 4,000 word long (excl. references)
- Style: you have a lot of freedom. Past articles have included almost-academic publications like [this one](#) or [this one](#); opinion pieces like [this one](#); more journalistic pieces like [this one](#) or [this one](#) – and [this article](#) even came together with a playlist.
- Each In-depth article needs at least 3-4 attractive high quality visuals (pictures and/or videos)
- Spokes uses British spelling
- Spokes is an online publication: do include hyperlinks when relevant
- Authors deliver a text file and images. The Ecsite team then takes care of layout into the digital Spokes template.

2.2 Suggesting article ideas

Do you think you have an interesting example or idea you'd like to share, but not quite enough material for an In-Depth article? Or is there a science engagement topic you'd love to read an article about?

Send your suggestion to communications@ecsite.eu, the Committee is always keen to hear new ideas. Some of our 'LOOKOUTS' pieces for instance see the light thanks to the suggestion of one of the future interviewees themselves.

2.3 Contributing case studies or experiences

The Spokes Editorial Committee regularly puts calls out in Spokes when looking for case studies for upcoming pieces. See for instance [this list of topics](#) published in June 2016.

2.4 For Ecsite members: relaying your news

Do you know that as a member of Ecsite you and your team can publish news and events about your activities directly on the Ecsite website, in the "[Members share](#)" section? Some then get relayed in the Spokes magazine.

You will find everything you need to know about publishing a news [here](#).