

## **How long will we live? Can computers feel?**

Scientific research on life expectancy and sensory experiences in dialogue with society

Vienna, September 2017 – Within the framework of the EU project ERC=Science<sup>2</sup> the Association ScienceCenter-Network gave insights into international research projects of the European Research Council (ERC) to the Austrian audience by participating in two science festivals in Vienna. Altogether more than 13,000 visitors could get in touch with the pan-European media and communication campaign on the topics of longevity and sensory experiences.

### **Current projects of European frontier research**

On Friday 15 September, research projects funded by the ERC were presented at the Science Festival of Lower Austria in Vienna. Around 10,000 visitors, among them many children and families had the opportunity to enter the information booth of the ERC=Science<sup>2</sup> project and find information about new approaches to research on Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Facilitated by science communicators of the Association ScienceCenter-Network visitors engaged in lively discussions on different factors that are crucial for the individual life expectancy.

At the European Researchers' Night on 29 September the Science<sup>2</sup> booth gave insights into ERC-funded research on senses and sensory technology and robotics. Mina Vasileva, and Christina Artner, two young scientists involved in ERC-funded research at IST Austria, presented their projects on hormone and signaling systems in plants, raising the question with visitors whether plants have “senses” too.

Sensory perceptions as well as sensory technology were literally made tangible to more than 3000 visitors of the event in various numerous hands-on activities provided by the partners of the ScienceCenter-Network, among them a self-made spectroscope to detect the colours of light, a “sensory”-suitcase, optical illusions, and an innovative sensor glove were developed by students from the University of Applied Arts Vienna, young scientists from [kat]alab and Laber's LAB.

### **Promoting the Dialogue between Science and Society**

The importance of public dialogue on science and technology and its impact on the society is emphasized by Helga Nowotny, former president of the ERC and member of the scientific advisory council of the ScienceCenter-Network. “Breakthroughs in science and their long-

term progress are the result of basic research. In the meantime, a grant by the European Research Council stands for a gold standard in scientific quality, recognition and impact", Nowotny underlines the importance of the ERC and adds: "The ScienceCenter-Network has managed to build on the current results of this research and at the same time making this research accessible to the general public by involving students in hands-on science communication. The young generation plays a decisive role in shaping the future of society, so we should be slightly optimistic: Thanks to the far-sighted activities of the ScienceCenter-Network, young people are not only attracted to science and technology, but learn how to shape the society of tomorrow through practice, argumentation and dialogue."

**More information about the project:**

[www.sciencesquared.eu](http://www.sciencesquared.eu)  
[www.facebook.com/ScienceSquaredbyERC](https://www.facebook.com/ScienceSquaredbyERC)  
[www.science-center-net.at/index.php?id=751](http://www.science-center-net.at/index.php?id=751)

**More information about the science festivals:**

Forschungsfest Niederösterreich:

[www.noegv.at/noe/Wissenschaft-Forschung/Forschungswochen\\_Niederosterreich.html](http://www.noegv.at/noe/Wissenschaft-Forschung/Forschungswochen_Niederosterreich.html)

European Researchers' Night:

[be-scienced.eu/de/](http://be-scienced.eu/de/)  
<http://be-scienced.eu/gallery-2017/>

The **Association ScienceCenter-Netzwerk** explores the development, implementation, use and impact of science centre activities. It coordinates the network of the same name, acts as an information hub and manages public relations for more awareness of science center activities in Austria. Currently, the ScienceCenter-Netzwerk unites 175 partners from the fields of museums, research, business, education, design, art and the media. **[www.science-center-net.at](http://www.science-center-net.at)**

**The Association ScienceCenter-Netzwerk would like to thank his supporters:**

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**The project ERC=Science<sup>2</sup> is supported by:**



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission  
Supporting top researchers  
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This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 672302).

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