

JuB for Ecsite

October 2019, version 4

Contributing to Spokes – A quick guide

1. A little about Spokes

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 2,200 professionals around the world through an email campaign.

Find [all issues here](#) and thematic bundles of articles called [Spokes collections here](#).

“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, past Chairperson of the Spokes Editorial Committee,
announcing our ambitions when the magazine was launched in 2013

The breadth of topics and stand points presented in Spokes reflect the rich conversations we have as **science engagement professionals** and the wide scope of our **public engagement work**. In 2019 for instance we covered pseudoscience, staff motivation, equity, science shows, EU policy, colonialism in the museum context or tinkering paradigms; and featured futurologists, academics, botanists, feminists, pricing specialists and many others.

Spokes combines in-depth articles and interviews with news from the Ecsite office and community, 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.

Usual Spokes structure:

- One 'IN DEPTH' article – see [example here](#)
- And/or one 'LOOKOUT' article (3-5 interviews) – see [example here](#)
- And/or one 'PORTFOLIO' (a sort of slideshow) – 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 possible exceptions linked to specific fields of expertise or skills.

The Editorial Committee put this little guide together in order to advise potential authors – we hope you'll find it useful.

2. Contributing to Spokes

Every year the Editorial Committee launches a specific call for article pitches and readers' suggestions – this is the best possible moment to submit ideas and we set up a special form for it. There is / was a call planned for **autumn 2019** ([here](#)) and another one for **summer 2020**. Watch out for announcements in Spokes.

2.1 For readers: suggesting article ideas

Is there a science engagement topic you'd love to read an article about? What issue do you feel you're missing a robust overview of? What sorts of case studies would fuel your own practice? What inspiring author would you like to read in your favourite professional magazine?

The Committee is always keen to hear new ideas. The ideal moment is the call mentioned above, but you can still send your suggestions the rest of the year to communications@ecsite.eu.

2.2 For potential authors: submitting an article pitch

Are you sitting on a body of knowledge or experience that you would feel ready to write up? Do you want to shake your peers or challenge them? Are you a small group of practitioners and/or researchers who'd like to contribute a case study? Are you a good writer? Then you might be one of our next authors. We welcome ideas for In Depth, Lookout and Portfolio articles.

Outside of the annual call mentioned above it is still possible to send an article idea: 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. You will be hearing back within a few weeks (bear with us, we have a monthly call).

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
- Articles in the following field, for which we have recurring gaps in Spokes: marketing, operations, HR, digital media.
- Case studies drawn from a diversity of organisations and countries
- 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 [all issues here](#) and thematic bundles of articles called [Spokes collections here](#))

Formats

- **In-depth articles** are 2,000 – 5,000 words long (excl. references). You have a lot of stylistic 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. All articles need at least 3-4 attractive high quality visuals (pictures and/or videos)
- **Lookout pieces** are series of interviews of 500-800 words each (examples [here](#) or [here](#)). They are a good format for group efforts. The Editorial Committee can help find other interviewees and sees the questions before all interviews, making sure readers get the most out of the piece.
- **Portfolio** is a relatively new format aimed that stories better told in pictures than words (see example [here](#)). A portfolio needs 6-12 visuals, which can be either still pictures (1920pix wide minimum) or videos pulled from YouTube or Vimeo. Each slide has a caption of max 500 characters incl. spaces.
- 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.

2.3 Writing your article: the process

1. If your idea is accepted, the Committee will suggest an upcoming issue and you can start working, **liaising with a designated Committee member** who can help with angle, case studies, references etc.
2. Six weeks before publication: **submit your article for review**, together with pictures (at least 3-4 pictures, minimum 800 x 800 pix).
3. 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.
4. Five days before publication: you can't change anything anymore. Time for the Ecsite team to work on the **final final layout!**
5. Publication day: **open your inbox and celebrate**. Don't hesitate to **spread and share** your publication! Spokes is available to all.
6. 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.

2.4 Contributing case studies or experiences

The Spokes Editorial Committee regularly puts calls out in Spokes when looking for case studies for upcoming pieces. Read Spokes to stay tuned.

2.5 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](#).