

Press release

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Kiel, Brest and Split will be the EU ambassadors for science 2026

The EU initiative „Science comes to town“, endowed with €6 million, has been awarded to the joint proposal “UNITES” by the cities and regions of Kiel, Brest (France), and Split (Croatia). This was developed with significant support from the EU Grants Office of Kiel University. The Kiel-Brest-Split team submitted the only successful application as announced by the European Commission on Tuesday, 18 February 2025. The three partner regions benefit from the strong support of the European University of the Seas (SEA-EU) alliance as well as more than 70 institutions that will collaborate next year to deliver an exciting 365-day science programme packed with highlights and interactive events.

EU Commissioner for Startups, Research, and Innovation, Ekaterina Zaharieva congratulated the winners by emphasising that that: “Science, research and innovation is not just about discoveries; it’s about people. Whether it’s bringing research to the heart of our cities, helping early-career scientists build their future, or turning ideas into real-world solutions, these initiatives matter. By connecting citizens with science and researchers with new opportunities, we are shaping a Europe where innovation is part of everyday life.” As an international media partner, Brussels-based Science|Business is supporting this prestigious project.

Kiel and KielRegion: Strengthening Trust in Research

Kiel’s Mayor Dr Ulf Kämpfer is delighted with this recognition and aims to increase trust in research in the Baltic Sea region: “Together with our partners in Brest and Split, we are demonstrating the strength of our innovation ecosystems, which are driven by research in our regions and across Europe. This strength unfolds particularly when we reinforce trust in science with initiatives like Science comes to town and make its findings accessible to all citizens.” Ulrike Wielatt, Managing Director of KielRegion emphasises: “The funding approval for Science comes to town is fantastic news for Kiel and the region! In addition to the Science Summer (formerly the Festival of Science), an even larger, Europe-wide science communication project will come to KielRegion in 2026. My thanks go to the scientific institutions whose outstanding work has made this possible, thereby enhancing the visibility of science in the region.” Both institutions are responsible for the overall project management and the implementation of events in Kiel, including the European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS), which is organised in collaboration with Stiftung Jugend forscht e. V.

Split: Promoting Science-Based Decision-Making

In addition to reinforcing trust in science, the project partners aim to promote science-based decision-making. Addressing the complex challenges of our time with solid and verifiable facts creates sustainable solutions and helps to –lead informed societal or political debates. The city and university of Split are also committed to this goal: “Science is not only the foundation of progress but also the most beautiful human endeavour – it drives us to explore, opens doors to new insights, and helps us understand the world we live in. Split’s success in the *Science Comes to Town* initiative is proof that we are building a society that values knowledge, research, and innovation. This project brings science to the heart of our city and allows citizens to experience it in a new and exciting way.

We will work closely with the University of Split, as well as with the cities of Brest and Kiel and numerous domestic and international partners, to make science more accessible and beneficial for all. We will especially encourage young people to embrace the beauty of exploration, critical thinking, and scientific curiosity.

With great pride, we will co-host this prestigious European programme in 2026 and transform Split into a hub of knowledge and scientific exchange," says Ivica Puljak, Mayor of Split. A highlight of the Croatian "Science comes to town" year will be the opening ceremony. 11 Croatian partner institutions support the whole project.

Brest and Brest Metropole: Encouraging Innovation from Research

Promoting and retaining talent in our regions will be a crucial element in combating skills shortages. Therefore, the project partners are also firmly committed to fostering young scientific talent. Among the many activities in Brest, the EU TalentOn competition for young researchers will be a key event. "I am delighted that the UNITES project, led by Brest, Kiel and Split, has been selected as part of the European "Science comes to town" call for projects. This partnership demonstrates the dynamism of the SEA-EU European university alliance, of which the University of Western Brittany is a member, and the strength of the twinning between the cities of Brest and Kiel. Here in Brest, we are very committed to the scientific approach and its rigour in understanding the world around us. Sharing this knowledge from research with all audiences is essential. The UNITES project will enable the organisation of numerous scientific research awareness-raising activities by Brest Métropole, Océanopolis and the Brest-Iroise Technology Park, as well as all associated partners. 2026 will undeniably be the year of science in our region for everyone: adults, young people, schoolchildren, students and researchers, as well as policy makers and businesses," says François Cuillandre, Mayor of Brest and President of Brest métropole. Among the 26 French partners are the technology park Technopole Brest-Iroise and the Oceanopolis.

Background: "Science comes to town"

This call builds on the previous initiative 'European City of Science', which named a European city as the capital of science every two years. The last European City of Science was Katowice (Poland) in 2024. It contributes to the European Research Area and to the Pact for R&I; in Europe, which highlight the importance of social responsibility and active citizen and societal engagement in research and innovation (R&I;).

All Project Partners at a glance:

German Partner Institutions: Business Development Agency; Campus Business Box e.V.; CineMare Meeresfilmfestival; Citti-Park Shopping Mall; City of Kiel; Cooperative State University; Europa Union Schleswig-Holstein; GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel; German Aerospace Center (DLR); GREEN SCREEN Festival; Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein; IPN - Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education; Kiel Chamber of Commerce; Kiel Institute for the World Economy; Kiel Marketing e.V.; Kiel University; Kiel University of Applied Sciences; KielRegion GmbH; Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology; Muthesius University of Fine Arts and Design; State chancellery of Schleswig-Holstein; Stiftung Jugend forscht e.V.; The Bay Areas e.V.; TransMarTech Schleswig-Holstein; University Hospital Schleswig-Holstein; University Society Kiel; Wissenschaftszentrum; ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics

French Partner Institutions: ADEUPa, Agence d'Urbanisme de Brest-Bretagne; Biotech Santé Bretagne; Brest Métropole; Brest'aim (Océanopolis); Brest Surf Film Festival; Bretagne Développement Innovation; Bretagne Vivante; Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Brest; Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie du Finistère / World Trade Center Brest; Conservatoire Botanique National de Brest; Côte Ouest; Eau Du Ponant; EPAGA - Bassin versant du fleuve de l'Aulne et de l'Hyères; IFREMER - Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer; IMT Atlantique; Labocéa; Le Fourneau; Les Ateliers des Capucins; Pays de Morlaix - Blue Valley; Petits Débrouillards; Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique; Syndicat de Bassin de L'Elorn; Technopôle Brest-Iroise; Université de Bretagne Occidentale; Ville de Brest; Watch the Sea

Croatian Partner Institutions: Center of Excellence of the Split-Dalmatia County; Fotoklub Split; Grad Split; Institute for Adriatic Crops and Karst Reclamation; Kino Klub Split; Institute of Oceanography & Fisheries; Marko Marulic City Library Split; Sailing Club Zenta Split; Society of Technical Culture of the City of Split; The University of Split; Association for Robotics "Inovatic"

International Partner Institutions: NORD University; Science Business Publishing; University of Algarve; University of Gdansk; University of Malta; Parthenope Univ of Naples, University of Cadiz

contact for scientific information:

KielRegion GmbH:

Thomas Pilz

+49 431 55 600 113

t.pilz@kielregion.de

Sünje Fock

+49 431 55 600 148

s.fock@kielregion.de

City of Kiel:

Department of Science

Claudia Eulitz

+49 431 901 3028

claudia.eulitz@kiel.de

Kerstin Großmann

+49 431 901 1539

kerstin.großmann@kiel.de