

**The role of scientific news agencies in expanding knowledge – public participation  
and decision making in scientific and technological themes**

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Over the years, news agencies have been set up and consolidated as an essential service for diffusing information amongst media channels, thus being able to meet the demand for qualified data in a fast and reliable manner. The status granted to news agencies by this practice is that they function as information sources, in terms of quantity and quality: information that can be used by a vast range of communication vehicles both in large urban centers and in more remote regions. Bearing this in mind, and aiming at possible answers, we propose the discussion of some aspects and questions, such as:

- What are the guidelines and what is the current journalism practice like in scientific news agencies?
- As far as the veracity and velocity of news are concerned, do those agencies follow the same journalism principles present in other communication vehicles?
- In the case of news referring to science and technology – often times resulting from research that is partially or integrally funded by public institutions – is more relevance attributed to information reliability and the way journalistic texts are produced in news agencies?
- How should the media coverage of scientific themes consider aspects known to be intrinsic to science and technology, and related to issues such as controversy,

obsolescence and innovation, as well as to government programs and public policies aimed at fostering the scientific production?

- Does the practice adopted by news agencies allow for a journalistic treatment of the news that includes a broader view of scientific processes?
- How should we deal with the fact that scientific investigation, conducted either by academia or businesses, implies public investments and results in applications that potentially interfere throughout society?

As far as science and technology media coverage is concerned, those aspects deserve further and deeper discussion, especially with regards to sources, data checking, deadlines for news dissemination, and gauging and qualifying public opinion after its publication.

We also propose to discuss the theoretical knowledge and the practical mastery of journalists throughout this process, which involves source prospecting, news production, subscription mailing lists, reproduction by other vehicles, thus determining the way information reaches the public.

Taking all this in consideration, it is thus important to determine the extent to which the agency itself is going to pitch different media channels, both print and electronic, which use such services and act not only in relaying but also in elaborating on the news.

While searching for possible answers, another aspect to be discussed by the round-table is the influence exerted by scientific news agencies in the communication processes related to the theme, whose outcome may vary across societies with different levels of scientific production and dissemination.

For the discussion, we suggest that the round-table be composed of representatives from scientific news agencies or institutions with a related role, besides vehicles that traditionally rely on the work done by agencies, in order to address different perspectives in this production flow and information relaying.

To discuss this issues, we suggest three participants for a round-table at PCST-2014:

- Representative from Agência FAPESP (São Paulo, Brazil)

- Representative from Dicyt (Salamanca, Spain)
- Representative from SciDev.Net (London, UK)

### **FAPESP: Supporting science in São Paulo since 1962**

The São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), one of Brazil's leading funding agencies for science and technology, began its operations in 1962. FAPESP is a public institution funded by the taxpayers of the State of São Paulo. Its mission is to foster scientific research in all fields of knowledge by awarding scholarships, fellowships and grants to investigators linked to higher education and research institutions in the State of São Paulo, Brazil.

The foundation aims to advance the frontiers of knowledge by training of world-class researchers and offering support for academic and application-oriented research. In 2012, FAPESP invested approximately US\$ 500 million in research projects.

São Paulo has 41 million people, accounts for 34% of Brazil's GDP, graduates 45% of the nation's PhDs and produces 50% of Brazilian science. FAPESP is funded by 1% of all São Paulo state tax revenues. In 2012, FAPESP invested approximately US\$ 500 million. The State of São Paulo is also responsible for 52% of Brazil's scientific articles published in international journals.

In its 51 years, FAPESP has granted approximately 112,000 research scholarships – from undergraduate to post-doctoral levels and provided funding for 96,000 individual and thematic research projects. The support is given to researchers in all areas of science, as well as technology, engineering, arts and humanities.

The Foundation also supports research in areas considered strategic for the country through multi-year programs focused on investigation into current topics, such as global climate change, biodiversity and bioenergy.

### **Agência FAPESP – News Agency of the São Paulo Research Foundation**

FAPESP conducts a series of ongoing actions for dissemination of science and technology, including a news agency. Agência FAPESP is an online news agency that has been providing its more than 105,000 subscribers—including researchers, foundation directors, universities, research institutes, politicians, journalists and the general public—

with scientific information for 10 years. The free e-bulletins are transmitted daily to subscribers via e-mail including news and feature stories on science, technology, scientific policy and events linked to scientific production in São Paulo and Brazil as a whole. Foreign subscribers receive a weekly edition in English with the top stories of the week.

Created in 2003, the Agência FAPESP is a service of the São Paulo Research Foundation, FAPESP, consisting of a free electronic news agency and daily newsletter, in Portuguese, and weekly newsletter, in English, distributed by e-mail to a broad and diversified readership formed by researchers, the heads of funding agencies, universities, research institutes, politicians, journalists and others interested in science and technology. The site and the newsletter contain news, interviews and special coverage on issues concerning scientific and technological policy and information about new research discoveries developed in Brazil.

The 10 countries with more readers Agency FAPESP in English are: United States, United Kingdom, India, Netherlands, Germany, Canada, France, Australia and Spain.

FAPESP is an independent public foundation with the mission to foster research and the scientific and technological development of the State of São Paulo, Brazil.

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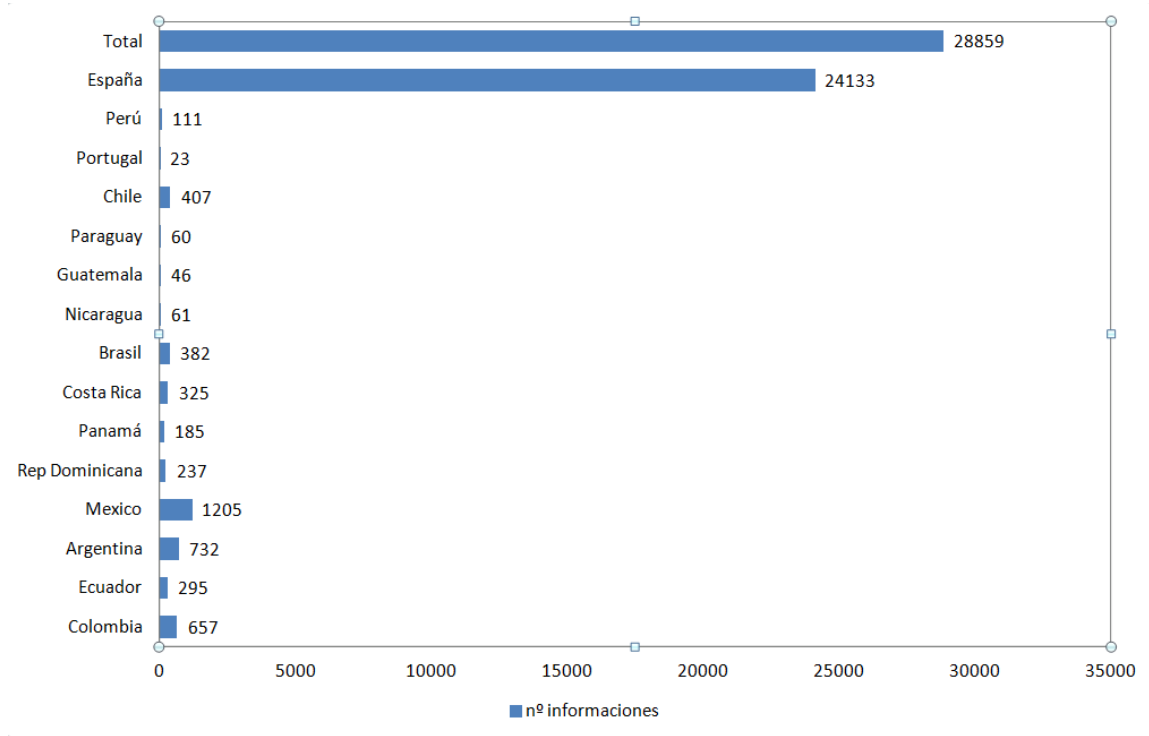
An edition in Spanish will be prepared soon. To receive free newsletter, it takes to register at the website, in the address [www.agencia.fapesp.br/en/subscribe](http://www.agencia.fapesp.br/en/subscribe). Agência FAPESP can be found online in English, at [www.agencia.fapesp.br/en](http://www.agencia.fapesp.br/en).

### **DiCYT Agency: Ten years of scientific news**

The Iberoamerican Information Agency for Science and Technology ([www.dicyt.com](http://www.dicyt.com)) is an international initiative with more than 182 institutional partners (Conacyt (Mexico), Colciencias (Colombia), Unicamp, Univesp (Brazil) or the Argentinian Ministry for Science, Technology and Productive Innovation, among many others) which promotes the diffusion of scientific news in local contexts, in order to facilitate the identification of developing opportunities, and to encourage collaborative work. The project has received the support of the Spanish National Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) and the Spanish international Cooperation and Development Agency (AECID) and was chosen in 2008 by the Spanish Minister for Education and Science as a consultant partner to take part in the creation of the National System for Scientific Information. Nowadays the agency is a regular content provider for the Spanish National Scientific information Agency- SINC.

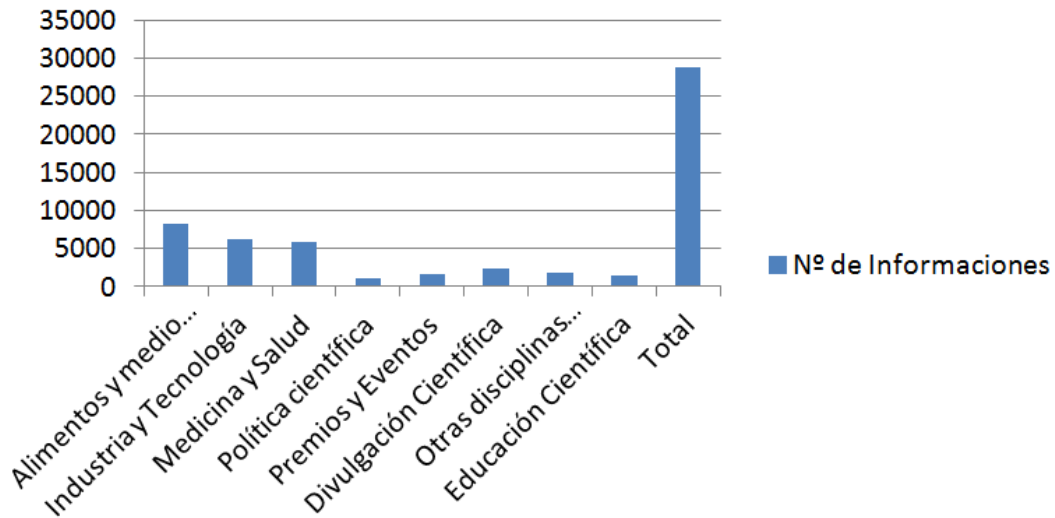
DiCYT was founded in 2004 and it became an international project in 2006 thanks to the financial support of the Spanish International Cooperation and Development Agency,(AECID). Since then, the agency has published more than 30.000 news, it's website received about 70.000 visits per month, and It's social profiles in Facebook and Twitter has **2.782** y **4.174** followers respectively.

The next figure represents the geographical distribution of the news production per countries.



The following figure shows the news distribution per matter

### Nº de Informaciones



Since 2008 the agency also publishes part of its information in Portuguese and English, and the percentage of items produced by DiCYT that have been published by broadsheets media has increase from 38,2% in 2004 to 68,6% in 2014.

Under the leadership of the professor Miguel Ángel Quintanilla, in the last three years DiCYT has become a very active institution in the field of the evaluation of scientific culture projects. It has been chosen by FECYT to evaluate the Spanish National Grant Programme for Scientific and Innovative Culture; It also has technically coordinated FECYT's National Strategy for the definition of an indicators panel, suitable for the evaluation of the researcher's and institution's contributions to the spread of scientific culture, the edition of the The Scientific Cultural Unit's white papers (<http://comcired.fecyt.es>), and has taken part in various international projects in the field of public engagement such as the Iberoamerican Agenda for Science and Technology (<http://www.empirika.org/agenda-ciudadana/>), or the coordination of EMPIRIKA, the Iberoamerican Science and Technology Fair ([www.empirika.org](http://www.empirika.org)).

In the field of promoting Knowledge transference DiCYT has proven to be a useful actor in order to improve internationalization, and institutional cooperation, so that it's activities has contributed to the creation of four iberoamerican consortiums for 7PM projects, and 22 enterprise/university collaborations.