

# Italian participatory research initiatives

June 25, 2021

**A conference in Florence brought together the main national actors involved in "science helpdesks", initiatives that aim to make citizens an active part of scientific research**

On **June 23**, the **University of Florence** hosted the conference [Lo Sportello della Scienza e della Sostenibilità dell'Università di Firenze ed esperienze collegate](#), dedicated to the presentation of a series of participatory research initiatives carried out across Italy. The focus of the meeting was centered above all on the structures known as "science helpdesks" (in English **science shops**), which aim to carry out scientific and humanities-social sciences research projects based on proposals made by citizens. In recent years, also thanks to the increase in European projects dedicated to these topics, several initiatives of this kind have also sprouted in **Italy**, whose tradition in this area had been rather scarce in the past.

Among these initiatives there is also "La **Bottega della Scienza**", the science desk opened by **Fondazione Bruno Kessler** in 2018, as part of the science communication project [Cittadini per la Scienza](#), funded by **the Autonomous Province of Trento** and that has recently ended. The Trentino helpdesk experimented with an innovative form of participatory research, placing schools at the center of the scene: it was in fact the students of some Trentino high schools who "became researchers", carrying out research projects based on proposals made by citizens and by the same schools, under the supervision of researchers from FBK and other research bodies in the area. In its two editions, **7 research projects** were carried out, with **5 schools involved** and a total of **over 140 students, 15 teachers and 11 researchers** involved.

"La bottega della Scienza" is one of the four Italian science shops included in the **RISS association (Italian Network of Science Helpdesks)**, started in early 2020, which gathers the national organizations engaged in participatory research. The longest-running helpdesk is the [FOIST](#) Laboratory of the University of Sassari, which has been active for some time in research and social promotion activities with local communities. The [University of Florence's Science and Sustainability Helpdesk](#) and the **University of Brescia's** [WatShop](#) have seen the light more recently, mainly focused on environmental and sustainability issues: both initiatives are included in recently concluded European projects, [InSPIRES](#) and [SciShops](#) respectively.

The Florence conference, which **combined online and face-to-face talks** (for FBK, **Matteo Serra**, coordinator of “La bottega della Scienza” participated in person), represented an important opportunity to present the main results of all these initiatives, offering a general overview of the state of the art of participatory research in Italy.

#### PERMALINK

<https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/italian-participatory-research-initiatives/>

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