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CHILDREN SPACE CONGRESS: WHEN THE YOUNG ONES ARE IN CHARGE IN LA CITÉ DE
L'ESPACE...

Abstract

La Cité de l'espace is the main Science Centre in Europe dedicated to space and astronomy, welcoming 300 000 visitors every year.

Since 2009 la Cité de l'espace organizes every year a "Children Space Congress" in its premises. During the school year, a mentorship is created between PhD students and the participating classes, on a specific topic related to space. At the end of the year, children and their mentors participate to the Children Space Congress, where they present their findings to their pairs.

The congress is organized in a very professional way, with prestigious key note speakers –usually astronauts– opening the day, sessions organized in formal meeting rooms, and the usual conference bag, badges and goodies handled to the students.

The success of the Children Conference lies on the fact that students are the ones in charge of providing knowledge to their pairs, and that they feel that they are taken seriously, whatever their social origin. The other key point is the strong partnership established between the Ministry of French Education and the University of Toulouse.

In 2017, the Congress will be taken to a national level with other cities organizing a Congress in partnership with la Cité de l'espace: Paris, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, and Lyon.

The paper will present the Children Space Congress, its methodology, the different aspects that were essential to its success, and we will discuss the possibilities to expand this concept to an international level.