

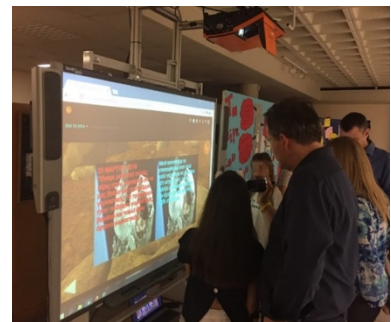
Greek STEM Students Celebrated Mars Mission with Virtual Visit to Biosphere 2

The 'STORIES of Tomorrow' project, funded by a \$2M European Union Commission grant, has generated a unique digital story-telling platform to engage middle school students from around the world in planning a trip to Mars. The goal of the imaginary **Mars Mission** is to increase interest and proficiency in science, engineering, technology, math, design, exploration, computer science, and more. Biosphere 2 is an iconic source of valuable information about closed systems, ecosystem function, bioregeneration, nutrient cycling, and many other topics valuable for travel and colonization involving Mars or other parts of our Solar System. (Click for [summary video](#))



After more than 6 exciting months of digital space exploration, including travel to the red planet, colonization of Mars by designing and building Mars shelters, many hands-on experiments, and planning iterative rover missions on the Mars surface, crafting models of the solar system and creating stories that showcase the full creativity and spirit of their age, the students of the 5th grade at **Ellinogermaniki Agogi** (www.ea.gr) in Greece celebrated their successfully completed Mars Missions. Together with their teachers, more than 150 students presented on May 3, 2018 to their parents and to the public their work and the **digital e-books**, created with images, videos, sounds, and animations in the STORIES story-telling platform (<http://www.marsstories.eu/>).

The students invested time and effort within and outside of their classrooms to design and **plan their Mars Missions as complete stories**, worked in groups to craft and design their rockets and buildings on Mars, and found solutions to maintain life on the red planet. They had to overcome all the challenges that space travel entails and together with their teachers and scientific experts come up with creative solutions that would allow for a viable settlement on Mars.



A true highlight of the wrap-up event was a **virtual visit and live-broadcast with Biosphere 2** (<http://biosphere2.org/>). Staff at Biosphere 2 provided a short tour and explained to the students the importance of the work that scientists are doing to better understand the atmosphere and ecosystem functions on Earth. The young Greek students used the opportunity to interact directly with the scientists and staff, asking them about the potential suitability and impact of their work for future Mars Missions.

The activities of the students were part of the **Horizon2020 project "Stories of Tomorrow"** which is funded by the **European Commission**. More information about the project can be found here: www.storiesoftomorrow.eu. US collaborators include UA Biosphere 2 and Drs. Jill Castek and Bruce Johnson in the UA College of Education.



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