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Soapbox Science Brussels: an outreach platform for the promotion of Women in Sciences in Belgium

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In June 2021, the second edition of Soapbox Science takes place in Brussels. Soapbox Science is a public outreach platform that was initiated in London, UK in 2011 to promote women in science, and that was spread worldwide since then. Between 2011 and 2018, 40 cities hosted the initiative in not less than 8 countries over 4 continents, and in 2020, despite the pandemic, 56 events were organized in 14 countries around the world.

In 2019, the idea to endorse the organisation of a Soapbox Science event in Brussels was germinating in the head of a small group of scientists from two Belgian Federal Scientific Institutes. After about 20 months of exploratory work and of addressing the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, the first Belgian event took place in fall 2020, not in the centre of Brussels as initially planned, but as a virtual event live-streamed via YouTube and Facebook. The second edition of Soapbox Science Brussels will take place end June 2021, and the organisation is now much better prepared to adapt the format of the event (online or in the heart of Brussels following the standard format) to the latest developments of the regulations of the pandemic.

In this communication, we present the development of the Soapbox Science initiative in Belgium. We describe the motivations, challenges, issues and opportunities encountered throughout the process, and how Soapbox Science gradually takes its place in the Belgian context of the promotion of women in sciences.