

Closing Remarks

Crowd4SDG Final Conference – 17/3 2023

Francois Grey

Thank you, Katharina for your kind words.

Thank you for taking over the responsibility for Crowd4SDG in the middle of the project, due to organisational changes in Brussels.

Your predecessor as Project Advisor for Crowd4SDG, Colombe Warin, was with us yesterday.

When I got to know Colombe at the beginning of our project, I remember telling my colleagues how lucky we were to get such an enthusiastic, open-minded and helpful project advisor.

Well, I can say earnestly that with you Katharina, we've been lucky twice in a row.

This is not just me being polite.

Katharina, you have a professional background in development initiatives in Africa.

So when we told you about the many excellent projects that young Africans have developed thanks to Crowd4SDG, you were open-minded enough to understand why that is important, not just for Africa, but also for Europe and from a global perspective.

And what we've heard from speakers this morning, emphasizes the impact that the Crowd4SDG will continue to have, in particular for Africa but ultimately for the whole world, long after the project is finished.

A project like Crowd4SDG is not just about results. It's about people, so I would like to ask all the partners present in the room to stand up now:

From CERN: Alexia, Claudia, Jimmy, Katarina, Laura, Ole, Pablo and Romain

From CSIC: Jesus and Oguz

From POLIMI: Barbara and Carlo

From UNITAR: Anais, Elena, and Madina

From UPC: Camille, Marc and Olga

From UNIGE and UZH: Rosy, Amudha, Jose

Of course, there are many other colleagues from our institutions who have helped us reach this Final Conference. So for them as well as for you who are standing, let's give a big round of applause, please.

Thank you.

As we transition to lunch, I would like to leave you with some food for thought, which you can think about while eating the food.

Yesterday and today, we heard many times about how the world wide web was born at CERN, over 30 years ago.

We heard the name of Tim Berners Lee mentioned several times.

But I'd like to remind you that the web was not designed by an institution, nor was it made by a single person, Tim Berners-Lee.

It required his genius, for sure. But it required his genius to be situated in an organization, CERN, where his colleagues and managers were open-minded and generous enough to let him develop an idea about information management. As Tim's boss, Mike Sendall, famously wrote in the margin of his first proposal: **vague, but exciting**.

But Tim Berners Lee didn't just have a great idea. And he didn't just write a great proposal for how to implement that idea. What really mattered is that at CERN, he had colleagues who helped him make a real working prototype. And that prototype ignited a global technological revolution.

I know about this history of the Web because one of the colleagues who helped Tim Berners Lee, Ben Segal, is with us today. Ben is a mentor of mine of many years, and he has taught me a lot about why prototyping really matters in innovation.

Ben was also a key driving force at CERN behind the creation of Citizen Cyberlab, a partnership between CERN, UNITAR and UNIGE, over a decade ago, of which Crowd4SDG is just one of the many fruits.

I mention Ben because, after a whole morning of hearing about how important youth is for the future of citizen science and tackling the SDGs, and seeing how talented and passionate our youthful winners are, it's important to remember that when we talk about youth, it is not just about looking youthful on the outside, but about being youthful on the inside.

What you have witnessed this morning is that if young innovators are encouraged and nurtured by older mentors and institutions that are open-minded enough, these young people can turn good ideas into great pitches. And I hope that soon, they will turn those great pitches into practical prototypes.

Because even if their innovations won't necessarily change the world as much as the world wide web did, those innovations can still change the lives of many people in communities that need help, whether it be in downtown Rome or in rural Nigeria.

So as this morning of talks and discussions comes to a close, I'm delighted that this afternoon will focus on hackathons about prototyping new tools and methods with these young people and for their communities.

And with that thought, please enjoy the food!