ANNUAL REPORT

*making open the default*

Highlights

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Foreword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Accelerating Progress: SPARC Europe Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>1. Strengthen Open Access, Open Scholarship/Open Science, and Open Education policy in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>2. Advocating for Open in research and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>3. Enabling more equity in Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4. Promoting diversity in publishing Open research and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6. Help sustain the Open infrastructure/service ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Faces behind SPARC Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2023 has been an exceptional year as SPARC Europe has accelerated progress in Open Access, Open Science/Scholarship and Open Education by supporting evidence-based policy-making, capacity building and knowledge exchange, and increasing attention on sustainable infrastructures.

In 2023 SPARC Europe continued to support an empirical approach to policy-making, seeking evidence to inform our policy advice and advocacy for change. We share that knowledge so that others can build their own policies and approaches upon the same evidence. We made significant efforts to understand our stakeholders by defining preconceptions, challenges and needs, before defining our messaging and improving our processes for gauging how to better engage with our communities to create meaningful and impactful change. Crucially, as our research output has increased, we’ve created systems and processes around the methods of conducting research and understanding our stakeholders that we can replicate, and that are proving useful to our partners. We believe that this will support community development and action and will increase the positive impact of Open Science and Education.

This year our extensive research included a landscape report (downloaded more than 2.5 thousand times) as the outcome of research conducted by Project Retain as part of the Knowledge Rights 21 programme, providing a close view into the current landscape of non-legislative policy practices affecting researchers and authors in the authors’ rights and open licensing domain. Using this research, we generated a significant information campaign, ‘Retain your Rights’, seeking to provide institutions, national OS policymakers, and publishers with policy implementation guidelines as a strategy to improve open access, and encourage researchers and institutional policymakers to raise awareness of the need for retaining rights and open licensing. We also published a study on policy developments in open education in Europe showcasing national and institutional leaders in this area. We led collaborative research into how to financially sustain Diamond OA publishing for the EC-funded DIAMAS project and investigated commitments to OA books amongst funders and research performing organisations with others in the PALOMERA Project.

Our research and reports were crucial to our further expanded outreach, building capacity and knowledge exchange a continuing priority. We often used newly published reports to generate discussion at events on copyright, open education and OA publishing, and held workshops providing rich strategic and practical information about open textbooks, policies, tools and platforms. SPARC Europe continued to be knowledge facilitators and conveners of CoNOSC for around 25 national Open Science policymakers in Europe, taking deep-dives into research assessment, copyright and open science monitoring to help policymakers move forward based on good practice and lessons learnt from across Europe. Furthermore, we were pleased to see how the European Network of Open Education Librarians
Lastly, one of the highlights of the year was our opportunity to contribute to the Global Summit on Diamond Open Access, which was organised to reflect on the current Diamond OA publishing system and consider how to develop and sustain a solid scholar-led not-for-profit Diamond OA publishing ecosystem. We are thrilled that UNESCO will now host a new global federation of Diamond OA, and SPARC Europe hopes to take an active role in making this a success through DIAMAS, SCOSS and more.

Many of the seeds we have sown over the years have sprouted in 2023, and we look forward to tending to these in 2024.

Vanessa Proudman
Director, SPARC Europe
Accelerating Progress: SPARC Europe Strategy 2021–2024

We are now in the third year of our 2021–2024 Strategy, first published in January 2021. The SPARC Europe Board developed the initial Strategy in consultation with our key partners and libraries. We will be working on a renewed strategy in 2024.

Through our current Strategy, we envision a more equitable, diverse, sustainable, and Open Science and Education ecosystem. The strategy has six major goals:

1. **Strengthen Open Access, Open Scholarship/Open Science, and Open Education policy in Europe, and align where possible.**

2. **Advocate for Open in research and education.**

3. **Strive to enable more equity in Open so that all those who wish to publish and share research and education resources openly are better enabled to do so.**

4. **Promote diversity in publishing Open research and education.**

5. **Raise the impact of publicly funded research by reimagining the way that Open research is rewarded and incentivised.**

6. **Help sustain the Open infrastructure/service ecosystem.**

The strategy gives us a clear direction for the future. Our Annual Report is organised around these strategic goals, showing projects and events that SPARC Europe engaged in over the past year to achieve the ambitious objectives outlined in the strategy. These objectives will continue to be important for SPARC Europe in the upcoming year.
Progressing OS policy with Europe’s Open Science national policymakers

SPARC Europe continues to facilitate CoNOSC – the Council for National Open Science Coordination – as we have since 2021. The membership continues to grow, now numbering 24 European countries from all corners of Europe. In 2023, CoNOSC policy focus areas were as follows:

- Rights Retention
- CoARA’s principles in practice – moving beyond declarations
- Building publishing capacities, including the ORE case
- Read and publish agreements, the current and future state of affairs, and how to move beyond transformative agreements/arrangements
- Equity (inclusive and equitable OS/dialogues with other regions)

SPARC Europe and the CoNOSC Board designed CoNOSC activities around these priorities. During the year, SPARC Europe facilitated CoNOSC policy meetings, the first of which was in April, discussing the new OS Draft Council Conclusions, with an EC update on OS ERA actions, member policy updates, and how to support open infrastructure with SCOSS. In June, the CoNOSC Members Meeting was held in-person at the Royal Irish Academy, with deep-dive discussions into the future of OA publishing, and copyright, including rights retention. In November, we looked at national Open Science monitoring strategies from Denmark, Finland and France, and were updated on the EOSC observatory and clinical trial transparency efforts. We were also honoured to be invited to a small international expert group to analyse draft principles for OS monitoring and to discuss how to develop an international OS monitoring community. We look forward to taking this further in 2024 to support a more aligned OS monitoring framework to be able to better measure policy impact.

Shaping the future of OA book policymaking through PALOMERA

SPARC Europe is a partner of the PALOMERA project, the HORIZON Europe-backed initiative dedicated to developing and implementing Open Access (OA) book policies. PALOMERA participants have been deeply involved in initiatives to understand the landscape of OA Book policymaking, and in 2023, SPARC Europe undertook research into OA book policies.
Collectively, PALOMERA participants researched Open Access policies and strategies in almost 40 European Research Area (ERA) countries. Together, we reviewed over 450 national, regional and local policies from European universities and research funders to better understand current policy commitments to books. We also fed into the design of a new survey and also conducted over 40 in-depth interviews together with other partners.

Early in 2023, we also built on work to understand our stakeholders better in the DIAMAS Project, and applied a similar strategy for PALOMERA. As a result of discussions, later in the Spring, the OABN conducted stakeholder consultations with publishers, librarians, and infrastructure providers which generated insights about the practical challenges and aspirations regarding OA book policies. PALOMERA also established a dedicated Funder Forum where funders can meet to discuss the ins and outs of open access book policies.

Additionally, we hosted the first in a series of joint webinars with PALOMERA and two other EC projects DIAMAS and CRAFT-OA in which we discussed a shared vision for community-driven pathways to equitable scholarly publishing. Further stimulating knowledge exchange, we initiated cross-project fireside chats to encourage all project partners to share their experiences and opinions on topics of immediate new interest.

**Insights into developments in European Open Education institutional policymaking**

In September, after drawing insights from leading policymakers, participants of the 2021 and 2022 SPARC Europe Open Education surveys, and other industry experts, we published the *Insights into developments in European Open Education institutional policymaking* report. In this we explored the question of how Open Education (OE) policymaking can shape the future of European Higher Education, considering the factors driving the OE policy movement forward and the barriers holding it back.

The report was designed to provide an accessible summary for those considering whether to develop a policy of their own, setting out some of the different approaches across Europe. It includes takeaways for institutions, senior decision makers and policy-makers; and advocates for adopting existing policies, collaborating beyond institutional and national boundaries, and building supportive coalitions.
2. Advocating for Open in research and education

Knowledge exchange to increase OA books

SPARC Europe prioritises engagement activities that help foster collaboration in support of OA, and to connect with and better serve our OA communities. We are firm believers in the Open Access Books Network, which we helped set up, and whilst we could not get as involved as we would have liked to this year due to staff changes, we still made progress through the PALOMERA project. In 2023, the OABN prepared a series of online events with the aim of gathering feedback and kicking off a collaborative approach to better OA book publishing. Mid-year, OABN launched a survey with the aim of getting to know their growing network and their areas of interest better.

In September, OABN celebrated everything achieved in the 3 years since launch, having attracted 499 members, 1,439 Twitter followers, and 354 mailing list members; and having hosted 33 engaging events and published 49 blog posts.

Between series such as The Voices, which SPARC Europe facilitated and encouraged the community to discuss possible policies for OA books; the Mythbusters, designed to dispel some of the most common myths about open access; and the OA Books Workouts, where scholars shared their experiences with innovative OA books projects, the OABN has grown into an essential platform for exchanges about all things OA books. They have an important role in engaging with the OA books community for the PALOMERA Project and are now an OPERAS Special Interest Group.

ENOEL members striving to advance OE

Thanks to continued support from the Hewlett Foundation, in 2023 our educational librarian outreach programme through the European Network of Open Education Librarians (ENOEL) remained robust. At the beginning of the year, we continued our Open Mic podcast series, diving deeply into the third area of action from the UNESCO Recommendation OER: encouraging effective, inclusive, and equitable access to quality OER. We then completed our exploration during 2023 with the fourth area of action: Nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER. All episodes are available on @ENOELforOpen YouTube Channel playlist.
To enhance the effectiveness of each podcast episode, we organised Open Education Café sessions, inviting OE champions to discuss each UNESCO Action Area and provided opportunities for the library community to ask key questions about how to advance their implementation locally and collaboratively. Recordings are collected in the playlist Open Education Café.

ENOEL presented at different OE Conferences during 2023, including OER23, OE Global 23 and OpenEd 23, sharing librarian contributions to advance OE in Europe.

In June, we focused on taking the next step, from raising awareness about OE to upskilling librarians and other OE actors. SPARC Europe’s ENOEL launched a series of virtual workshops entitled “Embrace the Open” to collaboratively learn about key Open Education topics on a more practical level, using case studies and examples to engage in reflective discussions on the challenges and opportunities of OE issues as we build the OE skillset. Learning about developing OE processes has been key. Members of the ENOEL act as facilitators and instructional designers for each workshop, preparing the work plan and the educational materials and defining the learning outcomes and approaches.

The first three workshops in the series offered an introduction to open textbooks, focusing on the why and how of their integration into course design. ENOEL invited participants to consider how to launch an Open Textbook pilot and what the librarian’s role might be in this process. In the September workshop, participants discovered tools and platforms utilised in open textbook publishing.

Recordings of workshops and events are available on @ENOELforOpen YouTube Channel playlist ENOEL Workshops and the resources, including slides and workshop plans, are shared in the SPARC Europe collection in Zenodo with a CC BY licence to encourage reuse and adaptation as a resource and as a practice. Members and participants are adapting these materials to their local contexts, needs, and boundaries.

In 2023, an ENOEL working group continued to focus on encouraging peers to engage in conversation with practitioners working on Open Science. Their aim is to collect input on how to make OE and OS progress more closely and thrive together, break silos and transform efforts sustainably on a practical level. This important activity will continue in 2024 and a report will collect insights and challenges we intend to address as a community.

In the winter of 2023, we also launched our annual survey to gain more insights into Open Education (OE) practices in Higher Education institutions in Europe. We look forward to sharing results in 2024.

SPARC Europe also developed its Open Education strategy for the next 3 years together with the ENOEL using a participatory approach in involving those who will implement the strategy. This strategy will be published in 2024. It has the following goals and will largely rely on members of the ENOEL to achieve them:
• **Support OE policy development** and encourage investment in OE in Europe’s academic institutions for its sustainability.

• **Raise awareness of the value** of OE, OER and OEP and **stimulate action**, including certain practices such as open textbooks as an essential and effective pedagogical tool.

• **Advocate for the recognition and reward of OE** people and practices.

• **Build capacity and upskill librarians** to become even more effective in supporting their teaching staff and students in OE.

• **Facilitate DEI-rich OEP** across all corners of Europe.

### 3. Enabling more equity in Open

**Retain your Rights!**

SPARC Europe is one of Knowledge Rights 21’s three partners, alongside LIBER and IFLA. The three-year programme supported by the Arcadia Fund was formed to promote access to knowledge for study, research, and culture for all through its work towards “the long-term copyright reform that benefits library users and researchers in the 21st century.” We are thrilled to see how KR21 has grown significantly in 2023 with 20 national legal experts now forming a new network of new copyright coordinators, all actively learning from KR21 projects and launching action across Europe as a result of our KR21 efforts. We are seeing many evidence-gathering projects making headway to inform copyright reform in Europe on secondary publishing rights, open norms, e-lending, technical protection measures, contract override or ebooks, and we finalised Project Retain in 2023, which focussed on rights retention and open licensing. This step toward a more equitable landscape for scholarly publishing pushes to reform the way institutions and authors manage their publishing rights to enable Open Access and access to knowledge for all.

In June, SPARC Europe published a landscape report as the outcome of research conducted by Project Retain, examining the current landscape of non-legislative policy practices affecting researchers and authors in the authors’ rights and licensing domain. It has so far been downloaded 2,700 times; one of our most popular outputs.

In October, we launched our ‘Retain your Rights’ information campaign, which sought to provide institutions with implementation guidelines on rights retention policies as a strategy to improve open access, raise awareness and encourage action. Using research findings from the Retain Project, we clarified the main concepts and provided guidance with arguments, tools and resources. These included checklists demonstrating how to
implement a rights retention policy for institutional policymakers and national policymakers; and another providing steps for researchers to take to retain their rights.

We also hosted several webinars, including “Rights Retention. Be the next mover! How to implement a policy supporting rights retention and open licensing in your institution”, which built on the report findings. The webinar attracted over 170 attendees. The rights retention year ended with us being on a panel on the topic hosted by the European University Association (EUA) with a similar amount of attendees: vital to reach policymakers at Europe’s research performing organisations. We were thrilled to see that 5,000 people followed the Rights Retention and Open Licensing campaign on social media. We concluded the social media campaign by creating the Rights Retention Helper, which contains selected policies, other supportive resources and guidelines and key reading for institutional policymakers. This includes a short glossary entitled Do you speak Rights Retention and Open Licensing? containing the main concepts related to Rights Retention and Open Licensing.

This work was underpinned by diligent stakeholder management work, which has now been replicated to support the other projects of KR21 to help them define preconceptions, challenges and needs, before defining our messaging and designing action plans. We are pleased to see others seeing the benefits of this work.

From here, we will continue our efforts at the national level, and engage with countries that have demonstrated an interest in taking action in rights retention as a means of achieving Open Access partly as a result of our work.

**Strengthening the European repository network**

Strongly functioning repositories are important for the progression of open science, given the need for consistent machine and human immediate access to a wide range of research outputs from multiple domains and languages. In January SPARC Europe announced our intention to participate in developing a joint strategy to strengthen the European Repository Network, alongside COAR, LIBER and OpenAIRE.

In the spring of 2023, we published a survey of the European repository landscape. The resulting landscape report found that collectively, European repositories acquire, preserve and provide open access to tens or possibly hundreds of millions of valuable research outputs and represent critical, not-for-profit infrastructure in the European open science landscape. However, in order to ensure the European repository network is fit for purpose and able to support the evolving needs of the research community, certain areas need to be strengthened. This evidence will inform a joint strategy to reinforce and enrich Europe’s repositories in the coming period, and we look forward to fleshing this out further in 2024.
4. Promoting diversity in publishing Open research and education

DIAMAS: Starting to build capacity in Europe to support Diamond OA publishing

After the 2022 launch of DIAMAS – the European Commission-funded project aiming to build capacity among European institutional partners to develop institutional Open Access publishing models – SPARC Europe continued to lead targeted engagement activity for the project during 2023 with the overarching goal of raising awareness and involving stakeholders from the OA Diamond journal publishing communities. We helped partners plan a range of activities for 2024 to better ensure we provide meaningful outputs and results by engaging stakeholders in design or evaluation processes. This included gathering feedback from stakeholders, e.g. engaging publishers and service providers in the development of the new EQSIP quality standard through focus groups and an important open consultation.

SPARC Europe has been leading the work package on Exploring and supporting the sustainability of institutional publishing with a primary focus on increasing understanding of institutional publishing costs, funding and business models and challenges for their institutions. Throughout the year, we helped build capacity on the topic by discussing the term ‘financial sustainability’ in the light of different domains, cultures and languages in Europe and reflected on recent related research projects since most of these PIs are part of the project. Work package partners also carried out desk research, resulting in a Zotero bibliographic database.

Our questions and concerns relating to costs, in-kind contributions, funding and revenue models were raised in the April DIAMAS landscape survey. This survey saw over 700 responses from OA journal service providers, university press managers and library publishing service providers and its report will be published in early 2024. The work package also issued its own in-depth financial sustainability survey, which garnered over 50 responses. Various focus groups and interviews will complete this research, which will underpin our recommendations and tools for funders and Diamond OA publishers and service providers going forward.

In October, SPARC Europe was invited to attend the first Global Summit on Diamond Open Access. Participants reflected on the current Diamond OA publishing system and how to develop and sustain a solid scholar-led not-for-profit Diamond OA publishing ecosystem.
The event’s rich global representation reflected the variety of Diamond OA flavours that come from a wide range of cultural, economic and social contexts. Despite some differences, all agreed that the collective goal is to strengthen Diamond OA worldwide, that we are far stronger together and should join forces, organise, technically interoperate, and pool our resources as we build a global Diamond OA federation whilst respecting autonomy and local interests.

We were invited to share how we might fund Diamond publishing worldwide, also using the SCOSS mechanism in the short and longer term. We encouraged governments to consider introducing a national Open Science fund managed by a range of key stakeholders and encouraged funders with grants to provide longer-term contracts to provide more financial security and above all to keep overheads down to prevent the need for OS infrastructures to secure multiple small short-term grants. We also announced that SCOSS will focus on supporting research funders, agencies and charities AND promote Diamond OA infrastructure in 2024 to make the funding Diamond OA process easier for them in 2024.

UNESCO will now host this new global federation of Diamond OA, and SPARC Europe hopes to take an active role in making this a success. We have already started raising an understanding and awareness of the OA Diamond landscape and how to sustain it as one of the authors of the first comprehensive study of its kind, the 2021 OA Diamond Journals Study and its Recommendations. We will continue to build on this work in the EC-funded DIAMAS Project as WP leader on Sustainability. We will continue to support our DIAMAS colleagues as they create quality standards, toolkits, guidelines or policy recommendations, striving to ensure that OA Diamond stakeholders are involved where they need to be throughout the project. We are of course therefore keen to contribute to the development and life of the global Diamond OA federation to help OA Diamond thrive in Europe and worldwide. Please read the Conclusions and Way Forward of the Summit and Towards a federated global community of Diamond Open Access.

6. Help sustain the Open infrastructure/service ecosystem

Raising funds and strengthening infrastructure for Open Science through SCOSS

SCOSS, a SPARC Europe initiative dedicated to raising funds to sustain Open Science Infrastructures, brought a total of fifteen core not-for-profit infrastructures to the SCOSS suite of services or SCOSS Family. In November, SCOSS launched its 5th pledging round with Research Data Alliance and Software Heritage.
The SCOSS Family or OS infrastructure Community of Practice now includes AmeliiCA, arXiv, DOAJ, DSpace, DOAB, Dryad, OAPEN, OpenCitations, LA Referencia, PKP, ROR, and RDA, Redalyc, Sherpa Romeo and Software Heritage.

Whilst helping raise much-needed funds for them, in 2023 we encouraged the SCOSS Family to share experiences on POSI principle assessments, collectively developing talking points for the importance of open infrastructure, exploring longer-term partnerships with funders and mapping out who is technically connected to whom in the larger OS ecosystem. We hope that this will strengthen relationships with open infrastructures worldwide and solidify, further mature and sustain the open ecosystem as a whole.

We hosted many meetings and discussions during the year across the globe, looking at OS infrastructure ambitions, sustainability changes and funding needs. We ended with the first SCOSS Family event where we reflected on how SCOSS infrastructures have progressed through SCOSS support and fit into the larger OS infrastructure ecosystem in November as the SCOSS Board shared where SCOSS is going next.

To date, over 5.8 million euros has been pledged to sustain Open Science Infrastructure so far. 2023 saw impressive commitments from many library consortia, libraries, and one research council. We hope that these commitments to open infrastructure will continue for years to come.

**Shaping the future of OA books through Open Book Futures**

In April, SPARC Europe announced our partnership in a new project – Open Book Futures – created to ensure a more sustainable future for Open Access books and expand community-owned OA book infrastructures. Open Book Futures, led by Lancaster University, will develop and support organisations, tools, and practices that enable academics and the wider public to make more and better use of books published on an Open Access basis. It will build on the work of the renowned COPIM Project, shaping the future of OA books. The project is funded by Arcadia and the Research England Development fund.

Open Book Futures, which will run April 2026, will ensure that a wide range of voices have the opportunity to shape the future of OA book publishing. SPARC Europe looks forward to contributing to the development and implementation of this vision in the coming years.

**Financially sustaining EOSC over time**

SPARC Europe has been a member of the EOSC Financial Sustainability Task Force since 2021. In November, we published our high level proposal for long-term financial sustainability of the main building blocks of EOSC: EOSC-Core, EOSC-Exchange and the Federation of Data & Data Services as defined in the FAIR Lady report “Solutions for a Sustainable EOSC”. The statement specified requirements of the future EOSC legal entity, and outlined eight recommendations for the funding of EOSC, presenting estimates of the possible future costs of EOSC. 2024 will see the taskforce publish its more extensive report on the topic.
Faces behind SPARC Europe

This work could not have been done without the following individuals in particular:

**Aricia Bassinet** is a librarian at the University of Lorraine in France. She assists researchers and doctoral students in the creation of open access journals, research data management and bibliometrics. She recently had the chance to discover SCOSS and supported communications in 2023.

**Paola Corti**, Open Education Community Manager, who joined the SPARC Europe team in February 2021, manages the Hewlett Foundation-funded project, which helps implement the UNESCO OER Recommendation. Paola is the always-energetic engine behind the European Network of Open Education Librarians.

**Caroline Fardell** provides administrative support to SPARC Europe. She’s been working with SE since autumn 2022. Caroline lives on a farm in rural Suffolk in England and enjoys spending time with her dog and her pony.

**Mieke Grooten** has been supporting SPARC Europe since 2017. Mieke built the SPARC Europe, SCOSS, and OpenScholarChampions websites and continues to maintain them and help SPARC with new website needs. Designing things makes Mieke happy.

**Camilla Haycock** started providing administrative support for SPARC Europe in July 2023. She lives in Suffolk, England, and enjoys singing in many choirs and walking her two collie dogs.
Elizabeth Joss-Bethlehem consulted SPARC Europe on communications in 2022 and 2023 and is the owner of WordWorx in the Hague.

Bianca Kramer provides SCOSS Community Strategy & Support. She works as an independent advisor, research analyst and facilitator at Sesame Open Science. For SCOSS, she works with participating infrastructures to develop strategies for achieving funding goals. She focuses on strategy & community-building for SCOSS.

Mariël Lam designed the current logo of SPARC Europe, SCOSS and ENOEL. She likes the idea of sharing in Open Education and ENOEL to create better opportunities for everyone.

Kirstine McDermid supported SPARC Europe with our social media channels in 2023. When her head is not deep in all things OA, you might find her writing fiction, swimming or walking in the woods.

Agata Morka, Communications Officer and SCOSS co-ordinator, joined SPARC Europe in March 2021 and left in 2023. She divided her time between implementing SPARC Europe’s communication strategy and coordinating and supporting SCOSS.
Jon Treadway, the Founder and Director of Great North Wood Consulting, helped SPARC Europe with various research projects in 2023. He will contribute his analytical skills to more SPARC Europe research projects in 2024.

Mariska van Harn and Robert Pel have been involved in the financial administration and annual accounts of SPARC Europe since May 2022. They help SPARC Europe extract valuable information from the financials and present that in an efficient, visually appealing way using business intelligence software to help SPARC Europe going forward.

Vanessa Proudman, Director of SPARC Europe, is working to make Open the default in Europe. Vanessa tries to make sure that there is a true spark in every SPARC Europe project.

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