

# PDN



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Sebastijan Dumancic  
Co-organizer  
Summer School of Science  
Pozega, Croatia

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Dear Sebastijan,

I'm very happy to write a letter of support for the Summer School of Science. As you know, I was in Pozega for the S3 school in July and came away enthused and impressed. It seems a remarkably successful model in which students—all of them teenagers with little or no previous background in laboratory work—gain first-hand experience of what it is like to be a scientist.

At the start of the school, small groups of students select one of a number of research topics. The variety on offer is impressive and includes both the physical and biological sciences. This year for example students could have chosen (among other options): to look for extrasolar planets by processing astronomical data; to develop a computer program that predicts the chances that Portugal will win the 2018 World Cup; to analyze the genetic relation between different species of spiders using DNA sequencing; to test the ability of bees to recognize shapes and numbers (with field work and real bee hives). These are all fun topics, but ambitious: one does not expect young people with no prior experience to achieve great results in a few weeks. But, thanks to the talent and enthusiasm of the mentors, who are all scientists at an early stage in their career, each of the projects is credible and offers the possibility of real involvement. The students have first to acquire background knowledge on the topic and then learn relevant techniques before actually performing hands on experiments. What particularly impressed me (following short presentations made by the students on their projects) was how they were able to maintain their vision of the overall aim of the enterprise while grappling with the inevitable trivial setbacks and gritty minutia of real experiments. As you and I know, Sebastijan, this is one of the most important lessons one can learn about doing science.

The other thing the students learn during the school is how to work together in a team. There was a great spirit of sharing and comradeship within each of the groups and friendly rivalry with other groups. The overall atmosphere was friendly and intellectually stimulating and I'm sure most of the participants leave the school with fond memories of a most enjoyable episode. Many will also, surely, build on this experience and use it to guide a future career in science.

Congratulations on the great work you and your colleagues are doing!

Warm regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left of the first letter.

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