



The Fiasco Fest: What a party-workshop can do for a more failure-friendly research culture

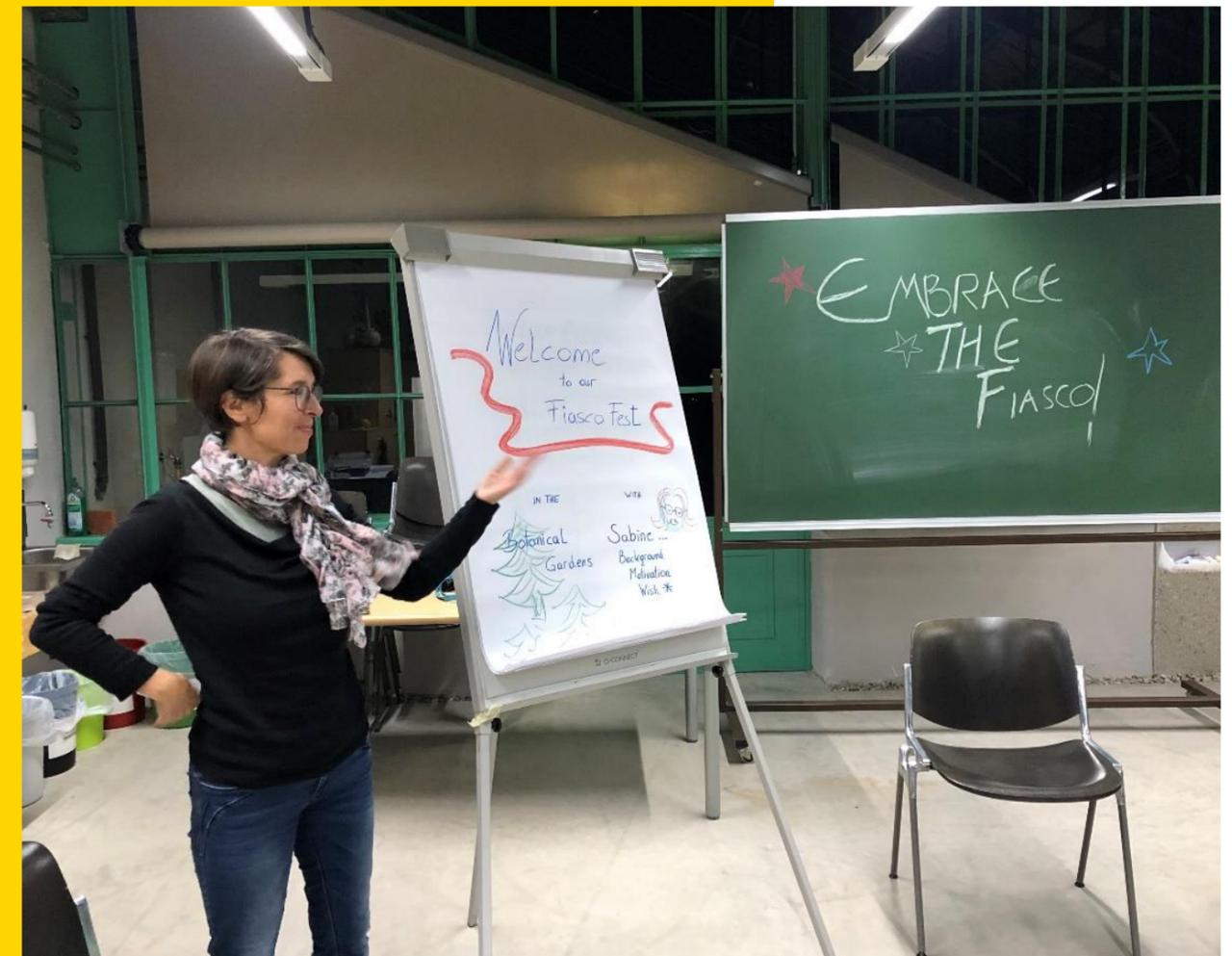


Talk for Careers
Advisers supporting
Researchers in Europe
CARE Meeting
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Who came up with it?

Sabine Bergner, researcher in psychology at University of Graz



Why do we do it?



Because the PostDoc Office intends to be “a protected space where postdocs can critically reflect on their career path, get support for the next steps, and recharge the batteries”

(anonymous feedback from our website)

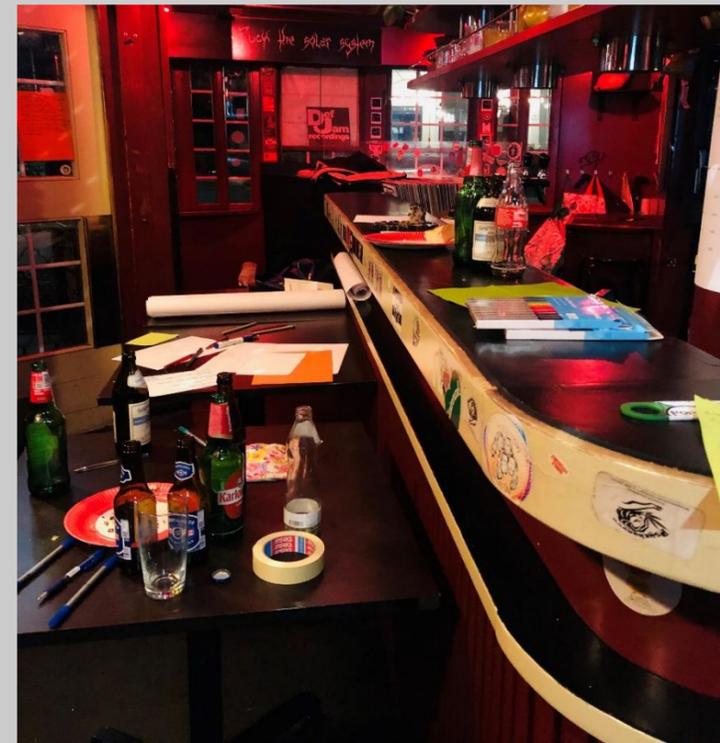
It allows participants to

- become aware that career setbacks are often the result of systemic failures, not personal inadequacy
- experience sharing about their work in an environment where people are kind to each other and are supportive and encouraging
- build supportive, self-organized peer networks
- become better at appraising setbacks and reacting appropriately
- develop more awareness of personal resources to handle setbacks



Photos from 2022, 2023 and 2024 Fiasco Fests: Botanic Garden's Historical Glass House and Kombüse Graz Bar: Burning the Fiascos, Mingling after the workshop, Set-up of chair circle, twilight exhibition, workshop materials in the bar space

What does it look like?



2+ hour workshop



Participants:

- Up to 20
- Interdisciplinary & ideally from different universities
- Shared characteristics, such as temporary contract, being early-career, female scholars, etc

Setting:

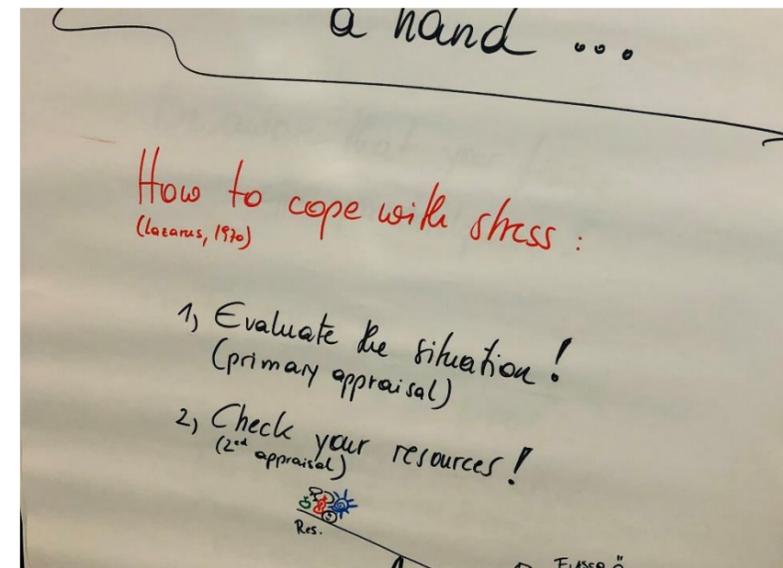
- Festive atmosphere in an unusual location (e.g. glass houses in Botanic Gardens, Night Club)
- Drinks and snacks provided from the start, if possible: music, joyful decoration
- Chair circle, flipchart holder
- If available: exhibition space, i.e. glass partition walls
- Space for going outside and mingling (can encourage participants to exchange phone numbers and form support groups)

Components of the Fiasco Fest



Official Arqus Innovation Fund Pedagogy Playbook (facilitation manual) with detailed instructions coming soon!

- setting the scene
- TOP & FLOP CV (i.e. work-related things you are proud of on one side, collection of fiascos on reverse side), exhibit on glass walls & walk-through
- working out together what main characteristics are that make something appear as a work-related fiasco
- lecture/discussion of physical and mental sensations associated with “crisis”-type situations (typology, phases, potential), psychological tools re/ coping: primary appraisal, secondary appraisal
- exercise in which insights are used on one of the participants’ fiascos („handle your next fiasco with care“)
- burning fiascos in a fire pit
- mingling



Project, Podcast, Repository



Fiasco Fest Goes Arqus Project:

[Fiasco Fest Goes Arqus](#)

Podcast Episode about aspects of failure:

[\(Episode 97\) Navigating Failure in Academia - Research Culture Uncovered](#)

Forum of Failures and Fiascos Repository: Tools and activities that support the development of an error-friendly research culture: [vHGOcpBje9iSTPTrTs91-keep | Riseup Pad](#)

- Feel free to share links to programmes, workshops, measures, podcasts, & texts you know here!

