



UNLOCKING THE POWER OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION IN RESEARCH AND POLICY MAKING

CONNECTING RESEARCH,
GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY,
AND SOCIETY

ORGANISED BY



SUPPORTED BY



UNDER THE
AUSPICES OF



EVENT REPORT

PALACE OF THE ACADEMIES, RUE DUCALE 1, 1000 BRUSSELS

12 AND 13 MARCH 2024



July 2024

Report of the High-level Conference 'Unlocking the Power of Science Communication in Research and Policy Making: Connecting Research, Government, Industry, and Society'

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12771539

Lead Author: Rosemary Hindle (Science Europe)

Co-authors: Nicola F. Dotti, Theodora Famprikezi, Alexander Halksworth, Sophie Lemahieu, James Morris, Bregt Saenen (Science Europe), Cecilia Billgren Askwall (VR), Ynte Hoekstra (NWO), Sherylee Houssein (UKRI)

Editors: Lidia Borrell-Damián, Iwan Groeneveld (Science Europe)

Design: Iwan Groeneveld (Science Europe)

Science Europe would like to thank the following persons and/or groups for their engagement in and contribution to the conference programme and its development: Hayet Zeghiche, Lidia Borrell-Damián, Valentina Garoia, Alexander Halksworth, Iwan Groeneveld (Science Europe), Kim Barbé (FWO), Stéphanie Tuetey, Eric Winnen (FNRS), as well as the members of the Science Europe Working Group on Communication and its Chair, Annely Allik (ETAG).

Photo Credits

Page 3

© Science Europe/Iwan Groeneveld

All other photos © FNRS/Danny Gys

© Copyright Science Europe 2024. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and source are credited, with the exception of logos and any other content marked with a separate copyright notice. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.





Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Opening Session	
What is the Role of Science Communication at the Political Level?	5
State of Play of Science Communication	
What makes science communication crucial and urgent in today's complex and rapidly changing world?	6
What are the current priorities in science communication?	7
Deep Dives	
Communicating Science to Policy Makers	9
Ethics and integrity in communicating science with the public	12
Incorporating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Science Communication	14
EU Initiatives on Science Communication	17
The Political Role of Science Communication	
What are the Main Incentives and Barriers to Fostering Science Communication in Europe?	18
Deep Dives	
How Science Can Help Fight Against Disinformation and Misinformation	21
Science Communication and Artificial Intelligence	23
Conclusion	
Conclusions and Next Steps	26
Science Shows and Reception	28
Annexes	
Conference Programme	30
Science Communication Initiatives & Best Practices	35

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION IN RESEARCH AND POLICY MAKING

CONNECTING RESEARCH,
GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY,
AND SOCIETY

Introduction

TWO
Opening
new
horizons

SUPPORTED BY



UNDER THE
AUSPICES OF



The Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), the Fund for Scientific Research (F.R.S.-FNRS) and Science Europe co-organised the High-level Conference on Science Communication on 12 and 13 March 2024, under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This report presents a summary and synthesis of the keynote sessions and panel discussions which gathered 66 speakers and over 480 delegates in person and online, bringing together representatives from research funding and performing organisations; policy makers at European and national level; academia, industry, the media, and civil society organisations. The High Level Conference aimed to:

- foster a better understanding of the importance of science communication in research and innovation systems and shift the mindset of policy makers at the national and the EU level.
- highlight the role of science communication in providing timely evidence relevant to societal challenges and policy making, informing and engaging citizens, explaining the importance of public investment in research, and inspiring new generations.
- promote the development of institutional tools for researchers to better communicate research, such as toolkits and guidelines, training activities, incentives, and integration of science communication into funding schemes.
- build partnerships with science communication stakeholders, intergovernmental bodies, and media representatives to address misinformation as we navigate through an increasingly polarised, diverse, and volatile context.
- showcase successful science communication initiatives and best practices, including new and diverse forms of knowledge communication.

The [Strategic Conclusions](#) from the conference, published on 25 March, highlighted the following key messages:

- The importance of integrating science communication within research and innovation systems, advocating its prioritisation at national, European, and global levels.
- The need to enhance researchers' communication skills, combatting misinformation, and promoting public engagement through innovative approaches.
- The vital role of science communication in demonstrating the value of research investments and fostering public trust in the scientific process.

Specific recommendations to achieve these goals have been addressed to EU institutions, national governments, and research organisations. These include incentivising science communication, recognising science communicators as professionals, promoting AI literacy, and adopting core principles for responsible science communication as an integral pillar of research and innovation.

Science Europe would like to thank FWO and F.R.S.-FNRS, as well as the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Estonian Research Council (ETAG) for their invaluable contributions and support in the planning and organisation of the conference. It also thanks Brussels Alderwoman Mutyebele Ngoi for her warm welcome to the conference participants during the reception at Brussels Town Hall.

OPENING SESSION

What is the Role of Science Communication at the Political Level?

Speakers

Javier Moreno Fuentes

Vice-President of Science Europe and Vice-President for International Affairs of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)

Thomas Dermine

State Secretary for Economic Recovery and Strategic Investments, responsible for Science Policy at the Ministry of Economy and Employment

Joanna Drake

Deputy Director-General for Planet, People, and Science for Policy, DG RTD, European Commission

Bruno Blondé

President of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)

Etienne Gilliard

Director-General for Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Scientific Research, Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Marius Gilbert

Vice-Rector for Research and Valorisation at the Université Libre de Bruxelles

Moderator

Lidia Borrell-Damián

Secretary General of Science Europe

High-level representatives from the co-hosting organisations, representatives of the European Commission, the EU Belgian Presidency, and the Belgian higher education sector welcomed participants in a series of opening addresses. Speakers addressed the role of science in policy making, the symbiosis and interfaces between science and policy, and the shared responsibility for science communication to raise awareness and understanding of the scientific process and its outputs as key contributors to tackling societal challenges.

Javier Moreno Fuentes opened the conference by stressing the fundamental importance of science communication in highlighting the intrinsic value of science. He noted that, whilst it is important to explain to policy makers the role of science in designing effective responses to societal challenges and its contribution to a competitive economy, it is also necessary to communicate to society as a whole so that citizens understand and support its value.

The need to to rebuild trust and confidence in science was identified by **Thomas Dermine**. Public bodies have a responsibility to promote critical thinking and communicate the outcomes of their research clearly, so that society can benefit from the knowledge it has invested in. In this way, science communication plays a crucial role as a bridge between the art of politics and the execution of policy. Echoing Dermine's comments on researchers' moral and public duty to raise awareness and understanding of the scientific process, **Joanna Drake** highlighted how recent crises and the need to make informed decisions on the challenges that our societies face have brought science closer to policy making.

In reference to the prevalence of mis- and disinformation, **Bruno Blondé** marked the essential role of researchers in informing public debate and the need for communications training to ensure they are better aware of their impact. **Etienne Gilliard** further stressed the need to foster critical public discourse – especially amongst young people, multilingualism to reach different audiences, and respect for disciplinary differences and the different types of knowledge produced for the benefit of society.

The existence of social media “bubbles” and educational, economic, and social inequalities, are challenges that must be overcome to improve understanding of the research process, added **Marius Gilbert**, concluding the opening speeches.



SESSION 1 - STATE OF PLAY OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

What makes science communication crucial and urgent in today's complex and rapidly changing world?

The importance of science communication in research and innovation systems, the challenges faced by the research community, and successful strategies that have been put in place to enhance public engagement were highlighted in keynote speeches delivered by Maja Horst and Špela Stres.

Engaging the public through effective science communication is not only essential because of the many benefits it offers society, but also for those it offers research systems themselves, said **Maja Horst** in her opening remarks. She argued that the prevalence of vaccine skepticism and the widespread distrust of researchers and politicians amid the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic were not merely due to a lack of knowledge, but find their roots in peoples' values and identity. She encouraged researchers to regard the fundamental questions raised by societal actors as opportunities for learning, rather than as conversations to avoid: it is only from continued engagement that we can gain a better understanding on how to address such fears. She cited an example of changing attitudes to the building of wind turbines in Denmark, where opposition increased as local communities increasingly felt they were not involved in decisions regarding their installation. Therefore, when engaging with the public on science and addressing misconceptions, we should do so honestly. Furthermore, innovations are usually improved by including stakeholders more widely in the development and they should therefore be included in these discussions from an early stage, especially given the potential of technology to influence our future society.

Špela Stres outlined the many benefits of science communication: the potential to attract both people and funding to a given research area; delivering public appreciation for the purpose, benefits, and effects of researchers' work; increased opportunity for interaction and networking between researchers and other stakeholders; tackling misinformation and providing a reliable source of information to a broad range of audiences; and, crucially, to enable research-informed decisions and policy making. However, one of the most important objectives for science communication is to ensure the public understands the underlying principles and rules that govern scientific research and discovery. By providing us a better understanding of the world around us, improved decision making and more opportunities for collaboration, science communication develops the way we think and evolve as a society.

Speakers



Maja Horst

Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Aarhus University, Denmark



Špela Stres

Director of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

Moderator

Anu Noorma

Director General of the Estonian Research Council



What are the current priorities in science communication?

Speakers

Francesca Scianitti

Head of Public Engagement & Outreach, National Institute for Nuclear Physics (INFN), Italy

Anna Maria Fleetwood

Senior Adviser External Relations, Swedish Research Council (VR)

Alok Jha

Science and Technology Editor, The Economist, United Kingdom

Joana Magalhães

Science Communication Area Manager at Science for Change, Co-coordinator COALESCE project

Moderator

David Butz Pedersen

Professor of Science Communication at the Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Denmark

This panel discussion highlighted key priorities and strategies essential for effective science communication, to contribute to evidence-based policy making to tackle societal challenges, and build trust in science. Moderated by David Butz Pedersen, experts in science communication from research funding and performing organisations, and the spheres of citizen science and the media explored ways to better help researchers reach their audiences.

Panel Discussion

The need to reach out to different audiences to enhance the potential impact of an organisation's work on society was emphasised by **Francesca Scianitti**. She stressed the importance of fostering mutual understanding and the benefits of research using different languages and media, such as arts and music venues, to build narratives to disseminate scientific messages effectively.

Concerns about the challenges faced by democracies around the world and how science communicators and researchers can join forces to help address these challenges, were expressed by **Anna Maria Fleetwood** and **Joana Magalhães**. They highlighted the importance of researchers actively participating in public discourse about science, noting the role of science communicators to support and guide researchers in communicating effectively to avoid misinterpretation and to build trust.

The role of science communication in driving policy agendas and addressing societal challenges, particularly underscored during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, was emphasised by **Alok Jha**. He also raised the challenges of dealing with online harassment, while encouraging researchers to engage with honesty, transparency, and resilience. The discussion concluded with several key recommendations, including the recognition that effective science communication requires continual learning and practice. Moreover, there was a call for more incentives and acknowledgment for science communicators and for them to be equipped with evidence-based materials.



Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- Scientists and science communicators should collaborate more closely to promote the role of science and its importance for society, creating compelling and trustworthy narratives that can also counteract a decline in democracy.
- Science communicators should build bridges across different disciplines, also using the arts and music to create compelling and convincing messages and building better engagement and trust with their audiences.
- Incentives for science communication initiatives should be increased, and science communication should be recognised as a profession in its own right.
- Training to improve scientists' communication skills, including engaging with media, policy makers, and citizens requires long-term sustained investment.



DEEP DIVE 1

Communicating Science to Policy Makers

Speakers

Marc Vanholsbeeck

Head of Department Federal, Interfederal and International Coordination at the Belgian Science Policy Office

Hans Plets

Project Manager at the Einstein Telescope

Arko Olesk

Lecturer in Science Communication at Tallinn University, and Science and Education Advisor to the President of Estonia

Olga Polotska

Executive Director of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)



Gillian Markey

Communications Manager at the Health Research Board (HRB), Ireland

Moderator

Véronique Halloin

Secretary General of the Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS)

This session discussed the different purposes and methods of science communication towards policy makers, highlighted the main challenges, shared insights based on the panelists' roles and experiences and identified some key approaches to engage with policy makers successfully. Science communicators face many challenges when communicating to policy makers: developing a strategic approach targeted towards different audiences' needs, training researchers to bring evidence to policy makers in accessible formats, and building trust through long-term engagement are key elements for success.

Panel Discussion

Scientific research can support policy makers by offering rigorous evidence to enhance understanding of societal challenges and to assess the potential implications of the available options. However, it can also be focused on developing policies, resources and priorities for research, development, and innovation; setting and monitoring regulatory frameworks and legislation; or, the development of international partnerships. These different audiences require tailored approaches to meet their diverse needs, explained **Véronique Halloin**, who moderated the discussion. Objectives can change, added **Olga Polotska**, describing how the NRFU's communication strategy has evolved as a result of the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, becoming more defined and targeted to building relationships at European level.

It is important to develop long-term relationships to create understanding of the value and impact of science and secure enough resources, said **Gillian Markey**. In addition, different funding awards have been developed by the Health Research Board to support closer co-operation between researchers and policy makers from the start of the research process, and to support researchers to communicate their outcomes more accessibly.

It is also necessary to build a long-term narrative with policy makers (both politicians and civil servants) so they can address any questions that come up in the course of a project and feel comfortable taking the necessary decisions, stressed **Hans Plets**. He further emphasised the importance of openness and transparency, highlighting recent public communication initiatives with local communities possibly affected by the installation of the Einstein Telescope.



Communication is about framing the evidence in different ways to meet the needs of the specific audience, said **Marc Vanholsbeeck**. For example, politicians may be more focused on compelling ideas that link to their vision, while civil servants might be interested in methodologies, facts, and figures. He highlighted the importance of using communication to build bridges between scientists and policy makers. The 'Science for Policy Initiative' at BELSPO aims to appoint officers in each federal ministry to play a brokerage role between scientific expertise and policy making. This is in its early phase, but one ambition is that civil servants and researchers can co-design research questions together.

What are the main challenges encountered by the research community in their interactions with policy makers? Knowing the right mechanisms to get involved in the policy process and the most appropriate moment to act are particularly important, said **Arko Olesk**. Vanholsbeeck stressed the importance of making better use of existing knowledge from existing policy reports, which is not systematically available. Polotska emphasised the need to ensure that basic research is not overlooked in favour of applied research, which has become a particular challenge in Ukraine as it experiences a period of very limited resources.

Science communication should be an integral part of the research process and needs to be developed as a skill in its own right, agreed Arko Olesk and Hans Plets. The supporting mechanisms in research institutions also need to be established – not only to manage the technical management of communicating, but also development of the strategy, the audiences to be targeted, and the most appropriate formats. From a science communication point of view, we must build trust and constantly engage with policy makers so research outcomes are taken into consideration as part of informing an overall policy decision, Gillian Markey added.

Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- Communicating science to policy makers encompasses reaching out to a diverse range of audiences for a variety of purposes. These audiences require different approaches to meet their diverse needs.
- Researchers need to be trained how to bring evidence to policy makers in the formats in which they are most likely to be understood, and their contributions to science communication should be acknowledged.
- Communicating with policy makers is most successful when a strategic approach is adopted, which is integrated into the research process from the beginning of the project, and when the research question is co-designed between researchers and policy makers so that each groups' needs are taken into consideration.



- Successful communication is also based on the creation of long-term relationships, which allows policy makers to trust outcomes and provides researchers with the context in which the project is taking place.
- Clear roles are also important: researchers provide evidence, while politicians make the final decision, particularly when evidence on an issue is presented from different perspectives that may have different implications.
- Policy makers also have a responsibility to explain the policy-making process effectively, so that other actors such as the research community are clear how and where they should be involved. Systematic open access from politicians/policy makers regarding previous research can ensure better use of knowledge already accumulated.



DEEP DIVE 2

Ethics and integrity in communicating science with the public

A panel discussion on ethics and integrity in science communication brought together experts from academia and the media. Moderated by Thomas Evensen, the session discussed the responsibility of science communicators to provide accurate, transparent, and accessible information, particularly on contentious scientific issues. Emphasising the digitalisation of communication and the importance of citizen engagement, the panelists addressed the evolving landscape of science communication.

Panel Discussion

Communicating on science is an essential part of a scientist's role and universities can play an important role in ensuring science communication is adequately recognised, said **Frits Rosendaal**. Fostering responsible and diverse dialogue between researchers and the broader public is crucial. It is also important to communicate about the scientific method and its slow process to build consensus, and not just focus on easily digestible results and outcomes that paint an incomplete picture of what science does.

Pavla Hubálková agreed that science communicators should better portray scientific methodologies and processes, conveying the reasons behind good science taking time and dedication. However, to ensure an open and inclusive dialogue with the public, she did consider it important to ensure the topics are accessible, so people can develop a basic understanding of the principles involved. We should therefore also support journalists, educate scientists, and help them to shape accessible messages.

How can we ethically engage the public in research to enhance the quality and relevance of science? This requires a shift from basic communication to increased audience engagement, where citizens' knowledge is seen as a societal asset and potential for innovation. Reversed Science Cafés, which are discussion events where experts pose questions and listen to the audience's answers, are an example of how the balance of power between experts and the public can be changed, explained **Catherine Franche**. She also highlighted the need to include investment in science engagement in research funding. Rather than training researchers in science communication, she stressed the important role that professional science communicators can play to find the best way to shape their messages and keep exploring new formats.

Speakers

Frits Rosendaal

Professor and Head of Department Clinical Epidemiology at the Leiden University Medical Centre, and Chair of the LERU Research Integrity Group

Pavla Hubálková

Science Journalist at Charles University and WIRED.cz, Czech Republic

Catherine Franche

Executive Director of Ecsite, the European Network of Science Centres and Museums

Didier Viviers

President of the Royal Academy, Belgium

Moderator

Thomas Evensen

Special Advisor at the Research Council of Norway (RCN)



The role that academies can play in creating a culture of academic debate and ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach to science communication, to address issues that affect society as a whole, was highlighted by **Didier Viviers**. He echoed earlier comments on the responsibility of effectively communicating the uncertainties of scientific processes and ethical considerations.

In conclusion, the panelists agreed that by promoting transparency, accessibility, and collaboration, stakeholders can uphold the integrity of scientific communication whilst enhancing its societal impact. Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to ensure these values are incorporated into the responsible dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- Universities should reinforce their efforts in recognising and rewarding science communication.
- There should be more effort to communicate that science is a slow and iterative process, aiming to converge towards consensus, by confronting different ideas.
- For an effective public discussion on science, there needs to first be a basic understanding of the topic, which means that journalists need to make science accessible to the wider audience.
- Science communication needs to explain the context and method in addition to the final result. Improved understanding of scientific methods will help to garner public trust, and is part of an ethical approach to science communication.
- Creating a fund for science communication is one part of the solution to unlock its potential, but in parallel, it is important to mainstream it in research processes.



DEEP DIVE 3

Incorporating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Science Communication

Hans Willems moderated a session focused on the importance of incorporating equality, diversity, and inclusion in science communication, particularly in building bridges with the Global South and vulnerable populations in Europe. Beyond focusing solely on gender parity, they discussed the next steps to ensure equality for women and girls in science, the meaning of diversity in science communication and its practical application on the ground, along with measures to tackle anti-discrimination, including Open Access initiatives, providing valuable insights and actionable strategies for advancing equitable science communication practices.

Panel Discussion

Early engagement in research activities is a starting point for achieving more inclusive science communication, stressed **Tine Huyse**. Actively involving diverse communities in research efforts provides great potential for building bridges with the Global South and developing more appropriate research practices. Citizen science can be an inclusive and effective way of democratising science, she added. When done correctly, it can alter the dynamics between scientists and society, making science more inclusive and impactful. Co-design is seen as a crucial element, as this leads to more inclusive and culturally relevant communication campaigns. Diverse interdisciplinary teams are also essential for creating such campaigns.

The question of how to create inclusive learning environments as a prerequisite for inclusive research and innovation, was raised by **Jozefien De Leersnyder**. Stressing the need for intentional, reciprocal, and reflective communication practices, De Leersnyder also urged researchers to reflect on their own perspectives and biases when engaging in communication efforts, and to consider their target audiences when crafting communications messages. EDI is often an afterthought in educational contexts and should be integrated into research projects from the outset, before science communication activities are developed. In addition, being aware of regional sensitivities towards certain research topics, such as mental health, and involving local communities in the design of programmes could address these challenges.

Alison Meston highlighted the need to approach diversity and inclusion measures from a human rights perspective, alongside practical measures such as the use of automatic translation tools and clear visual

Speakers

Tine Huyse

Senior Biologist at the AfricaMuseum, Belgium

Jozefien De Leersnyder

Research Professor at the Centre for Social and Cultural Psychology, KU Leuven, Belgium

Sabine Costagliola

Member of the FNRS Gender Working Group, FNRS Research Director at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Alison Meston

Director of Communications at the International Science Council

Didier Boone

Head of the Prevention Service, Unia, Belgium

Moderator

Hans Willems

Secretary General of the Research Foundation Flanders



aids to ensure that communication outputs are accessible to a wide range of audiences. This would prioritise inclusivity and increase the impact of research and innovation efforts. Sharing insights from interviewing exiled scientists, she emphasised the importance of platforms and infrastructure to support collaborations. Diversity in science was underscored as crucial, with a need for oversight and collaboration with diverse advisors. Aftercare was highlighted as an important aspect, along with the necessity to distill messages without losing the core scientific content, and being open to new and unexpected audiences.



The need for a dual approach to tackle discrimination both reactively and proactively to create a more inclusive research and innovation system, was stressed by **Didier Boone**. He outlined the principles of inclusive communication: awareness of assumptions, identifying audience needs, understanding and engaging with the communities and audiences being targeted to discover commonalities, and adapting communication strategies accordingly. Boone stressed the importance of communication practices that are accessible, comprehensible, and adaptable to diverse needs, thereby fostering greater inclusivity.

Recognising the interconnections between solving EDI issues and improving science communication, **Sabine Costagliola** highlighted the potential for creating more applicable and sensitive communication practices that resonate with diverse audiences. She also underlined the lack of communication training for researchers and the importance of role models. Better representation of women in research and communication activities could also improve how science is communicated to diverse audiences, she added.

Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- A comprehensive framework for inclusive communication should be developed that encompasses awareness and sensitivity, defining target audiences, discovering universal messages, and adapting messages to specific needs.
- Diverse and inclusive representation in research activities should be promoted to cultivate awareness and sensitivity among research teams, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of science communication initiatives.
- Citizen involvement in research projects should be encouraged as a means to democratise research and science communication. Building community engagement can increase investment in research outcomes and facilitate a more receptive society that appreciates their role in supporting scientific research.

- Plans for inclusive communication should be included in research proposals, with resources and access to experts in developing these inclusive communication strategies provided as needed. Research organisations should actively facilitate training and awareness-raising initiatives to promote inclusivity in science communication.
- The importance of role models, training, and awareness raising in creating inclusive research environments conducive to effective science communication should be highlighted. Research institutions should empower their staff to become advocates for inclusivity, and provide them with opportunities for skill development in inclusive communication practices.



DAY 2

EU Initiatives on Science Communication

Speakers

Annely Allik

Head of Department of Science Communication, Estonian Research Council

Lidia Borrell-Damián

Secretary General of Science Europe

Jo Brouns

Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy & Agriculture

Alessandro Allegra

Science for Policy Coordinator at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission



The importance of making scientific evidence accessible and understandable to a diverse audience and the strength that unity brings from the collaboration across Europe was noted by **Annely Allik** in her introduction of the session. She also highlighted the work of the Science Europe Working Group on Communication and its efforts to foster collaboration between its member organisations.

Her remarks were echoed by **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, who stressed the important role scientific research and communication can play in drafting of informed policy. Science Europe recently published '[Guidance on Science for Policy Activities](#)', developed by its Working Group on the Green and Digital Transition, which may also be relevant to the broader policy and research communities in addition to research funding and research performing organisations.

The need for scientists to maintain high levels of interest and trust in their work through effective communication was again emphasised by **Jo Brouns**. He highlighted the value, rather than obligation, of science communication, stressing its essential role in research culture and innovation.

Effective science communication goes beyond simply broadcasting information; it entails engaging the public in co-creating knowledge and ensuring that scientific knowledge is properly funded, useful, accessible, timely, and subject to continuous interaction, said **Alessandro Allegra**. Individuals should possess the required skills and knowledge, both on the scientific side and in policy making, to strengthen science for policy-making efforts. Stressing the importance of coherence in policy development in the context of ongoing efforts within the [European Research Area policy agenda](#) and the EU '[Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe](#)', he mentioned initiatives led by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) that aim to map skills and needs to enhance competences in this area.

He also outlined key areas for further action, including supporting science through additional funding, incentives for researchers to engage in communication with the public, updating the social contract between research and society, and developing competencies in science communication. The European Commission also plans to establish a community of practice for science communication through the [COALESCE project](#).



SESSION 2 – THE POLITICAL ROLE OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

What are the Main Incentives and Barriers to Fostering Science Communication in Europe?

This session convened experts at European and national level to explore the evolving landscape of science communication, addressing its challenges, trends, and incentives to develop effective strategies. The dynamic exchange of insights and experiences, moderated by Hayet Zeghiche, emphasised the role of emotional engagement, transparency, and audience participation in bridging the gap between the scientific community and the public, especially in the context of the growing digital media landscape and the rise of mis- and disinformation. Panelists highlighted the importance of professional training and fostering a deeper public understanding of the scientific process and its governance.

Panel discussion

The panelists identified several main trends, including the increasing recognition of science communication as a professional field requiring specific skills, training, and ethical considerations; the use of digital platforms and social media as crucial tools for expanding reach and fostering direct engagement with the public; and, the importance of integrating insights from various fields to develop more effective science communication strategies.

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic moved science communication from being interesting to imperative and put greater focus on the need for responsible science communication to combat the rise of mis- and dis-information, said **Carthage Smith**.

Tony Lockett pointed out the “communications gap” in the [2024 Edelman Trust Barometer](#): it found that 77% of those surveyed trusted scientists the most, but 45% felt that they did not know how to communicate with the public. He identified four reasons for this gap: lack of time, recognition, resources, and the lack of a common language for scientists to effectively communicate with non-specialists.

A common failure to engage with under-represented groups inclusively and address the needs of specific audiences, was further highlighted by **Birte Fähnrich**. She noted that current strategies often overlook the importance of audience participation, reflecting science communication’s reliance on the “deficit model”, simply believing that more information will boost scientific literacy. She emphasised the importance of applying evidence-based approaches to science communication and

Speakers

Carthage Smith

Senior Policy Analyst and Lead Co-ordinator, OECD Global Science Forum

Tony Lockett

Head of Communications at the European Research Council

Birte Fähnrich

Adjunct Professor at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Fabrice Imperiali

Director of Information and Communication at the French National Research Agency (ANR)

Alex Verkade

Head of Communications & Positioning at the Taskforce for Applied Research SIA, the Netherlands

Joana Lobo Antunes

Head of Communication at the Instituto Superior Técnico, Portugal

Moderator

Hayet Zeghiche

Senior Communications Consultant at Science Europe





translating research findings into practical strategies for enhanced public engagement, as well as supporting scientists to deal with negative interactions on controversial issues.

The difficulty to identify researchers who are both willing and able to communicate science effectively is another challenge, noted **Fabrice Imperiali**. Many science communication initiatives are just not very good, agreed **Alex Verkade**. He added that there is a lot of research on science communication that is little known and used. Together with **Joana Lobo Antunes**, he advocated the need to recognise science communication as a professional field requiring specific skills, training, and funding, and establish centres of excellence for science communication that can facilitate sharing of best practices and collaborative efforts beyond borders.

Recognising the important contribution of science communication, the European Research Council now includes public engagement and outreach (beyond publication in academic journals) when assessing research proposals, said **Tony Lockett**. He also noted a change of emphasis in communications departments in many institutions and universities, who are starting to move to a model in which they facilitate, coach, and support scientists to communicate more effectively. The French National Research Agency is obliged by law to devote 1% of its funding to science communication projects, shared Imperiali.

In his closing remarks, Smith identified six principles for responsible science communication: transparency, inclusivity, integrity, accountability, respect for autonomy, and timeliness. He also suggested that governments should take specific actions to support science communication, such as developing guidelines for government scientists, building capacity, preparing for crises, incentivising scientists, and promoting scientific and digital literacy from an early age as a foundational step towards a more informed and engaged public. Enhancing public engagement activities to improve the visibility of the process of science and the importance of fundamental research is also key, said Lobo Antunes, as this is the bedrock of the scientific discoveries on which our society depends.

Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- Research should explore how science communication that is emotional and relatable can influence public understanding and attitudes towards science, particularly in counteracting misinformation.
- Further investigation is needed into the governance of scientific communication and the potential for critical introspection within scientific institutions and their impact on public trust.

- Policies should support platforms and fora where scientists, journalists, and the public can critically engage with scientific processes and findings, fostering a culture of openness and debate.
- Policy makers should implement strategies that aim to improve media literacy among the public, particularly focusing on the ability to discern credible scientific information from misinformation.
- Institutions should offer training programmes for scientists to improve their communication skills, including how to effectively convey emotional and poetic aspects of science to engage broader audiences.
- Efforts should be made to shift the focus of science communication from just sharing findings to explaining the process of scientific inquiry, emphasising the questioning role and the iterative nature of science.
- Efforts should be made to shift the focus of science communication from just sharing findings to explaining the process of scientific inquiry, emphasising the role of questioning and the iterative nature of science.



DEEP DIVE 4

How Science Can Help Fight Against Disinformation and Misinformation

Speakers

Alina Bărgăoanu

Member of the Advisory Council of the European Digital Media Observatory, Romania

Elena Campos Sánchez

Severo Ochoa Center for Molecular Biology, Spain

Caspar Hirschi

Professor of History, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Jon Roozenbeek

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cambridge Social Decision-Making Lab, United Kingdom



Moderator

Zandra Thuveesson

Senior Communications Officer, Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (Formas)



How science can be harnessed to counter the proliferation of dis- and misinformation and uphold the integrity of public discourse was the theme of this session, moderated by Zandra Thuveesson. From assessing the position of science communication in the current landscape to examining the research community's responsibility in fostering scientific literacy during crises, it scrutinised the potential of science communication in rebuilding public trust in science and strengthening democracies. Emphasising the pivotal role of Open Science, panelists deliberated on how to leverage scientific communications in a 'post-truth' era.

Panel Discussion

Caspar Hirschi outlined how technological advancements have revolutionised access to audiences in an evolving landscape of information distribution. Communication technologies have a 'dual nature', allowing them to democratise information dissemination, but also to enable censorship and control. Science journalists have a key role to play as true professionals in disseminating scientific information, and he advocated strategies to empower them to deliver a better-informed society. Reflecting on science communication during the pandemic, he noted that there was initial success in the discussion of evolving information and policy decisions, but that it was followed by a lack of clarity, particularly regarding the framing of policy decisions as dictated by science – rather than being political decisions variably informed by science. He concluded that public memory needs to be refreshed to ensure preparedness for future crises and he advocated a more serious and critical public discourse around scientific research to establish trust.

A transformed public sphere, characterised by hyper-connectivity and information overload, has the potential to erode trust and exacerbate societal tensions, argued **Alina Bărgăoanu**. The potentially paradoxical nature of public trust in science, juxtaposing these high trust levels with the prevalence of trust in individuals similar to oneself is commonly used as an effective basis for spreading misinformation, she added. Moreover, there is a crisis of political representation in many western democracies, made worse by the pandemic, with many feeling better informed but yet less heard or politically visible. Public distrust in institutions during the pandemic was exploited, she continued. Combating science disinformation requires addressing deficiencies in the

functioning of the public sphere, as well as strategies to tackle peoples' increased susceptibility to conspiracy theories the longer they spend on social media.

Hyperconnectivity and social media usage could, however, also be framed as extensions of traditional human communication – albeit on a larger scale, said **Jon Roozenbeek**. He noted the deliberate targeting of mis- and disinformation to disrupt consensus-building in the public forum, and underscored the critical need to understand and counteract the goals of campaigns aiming to undermine public discourse and building consensus. While levels of literacy have increased, there is room for improvement by employing creativity and engaging media formats to better penetrate information echo chambers. Roozenbeek also acknowledged the limitations of literacy alone in addressing polarisation, stressing the importance of systemic solutions to counteract the influence of misinformation.

Challenges in communication on medical issues within Europe also contributed to mis- and dis-information, added **Elena Campos Sánchez**, advocating policy measures to regulate misleading pharmaceutical claims. She identified the need for further refinement and restriction of claims to prevent the dissemination of misinformation and the importance of policy interventions to address this issue.

Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- Nuanced communications strategies that incorporate improvements in media literacy and critical thinking are needed to tackle mis- and disinformation, and combat false narratives.
- Comprehensive approaches are needed to address the underlying systemic issues contributing to trust deficits and polarisation in society more broadly, creating an environment where public understanding can be further improved, and democratic values are strengthened.



DEEP DIVE 5

Science Communication and Artificial Intelligence

Speakers

Pedro Russo

Professor of Astronomy and Society, Leiden University, the Netherlands, and Director of Ciência Viva, National Agency for Scientific & Technological Culture, Portugal

Ann Nowé

Professor and Head of Laboratory, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

Mirko Bischofberger

Lecturer at EPFL, ETH Zürich and University of Zürich, Switzerland

Roland Jakab

Chief Executive Officer of the Hungarian Research Network (HUN-REN)

Karel Luyben

President of the EOSC Association



Moderator

Didier Goossens

Head of Communications at the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)

This session, moderated by **Didier Goossens**, offered the opportunity for an in-depth exchange of views and opinions on how to best make use of Artificial Intelligence in science communication. The panelists discussed the use of AI-generated content in research, its contribution to mis- and disinformation in science communication, the development of an accountability and regulatory framework on the use of AI, and its benefits for the research community.

Panel Discussion

Although AI is presented as a very new development, the term first appeared in a proposal for a summer school in 1956, asking if we can model human intelligence so precisely that it can be executed by a computer, explained **Ann Nowé**. The first wave of AI development was based on creating systems of logic; this was followed by a second wave of research that looked at creating hardware modelling the brain and software to model how intelligence is generated, built on many layers. The major challenge has been understanding and developing smarter techniques to train these large networks to replicate more complex behaviours and developing connectivity between different systems and technologies.

The concept of FAIR data (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable) is at the heart of the ethical use of AI, as the quality of the data determines the quality of the outputs, said **Karel Luyben**. The most important ethical consideration is to be open about its use, he added. To be able to use AI, science communicators should have at least a minimal understanding of the difference between machine and deep learning and supervised or non-supervised learning, as well as knowledge of the different tools available, added **Mirko Bischofberger**. He advised science communicators to learn how to prompt and experiment with its different uses for science communication.

Special programmes showcasing the best ways to use AI in practice are also needed, said **Roland Jakab**. The Hungarian Research Network's AI Ambassador Programme aims to create a community of researchers to promote and share examples the ethical use of AI. A central co-ordination team will provide first-line support for researchers on the latest AI tools and answer their questions. Likewise, the Vrije Universiteit Brussels has set up a AI Experience Centre, explained **Nowé**, to show the application and limits of AI tools and the inner workings of its algorithms. However, while scientists should engage and communicate



about their work, it is also important to manage expectations of what AI can and cannot do, especially when working with the media, she added.

The development of AI tools can be compared to the transformation of communications in the early 2000s, said **Pedro Russo**, referring to the emergence of new channels and social media that enabled scientists to communicate directly with their audiences and create new clusters of information. However, many of the issues such as fake news and the erosion of our democracies have not been solved as we enter a new era of machine-generated content (sometimes referred to as Web 4.0), which will only add to the problem of mis- and disinformation. It is essential that research institutions, universities and funding agencies are part of the discussion to guarantee the quality, accuracy, and reliability of scientific content. Although the EU acted quite speedily on the development of the AI Act, science communicators should also support policy makers to have the foresight to act more swiftly in this fast-changing environment. While AI tools should be included in education systems so that the potential and limitations can be understood from an early age, more research into its potential impact is also needed – see the concerns about the use of social media. Bischofberger, however, argued that the issue is not the use of AI or social media itself, but the more general problem of communicating science to society in a way that better tackles mis- and disinformation. He advised to only use AI for the topics on which you already have expertise, which can ensure quality and help spot “deep-fakes.”

Luyben added that it is the responsibility of the person or organisation producing data to ensure their quality and accuracy, and to be clear who is the gatekeeper of the information and what is expected from them. He pointed out the failure of the big technological platforms to self-regulate, and highlighted the system of interoperability of data being developed by the EOSC. However, ultimately it is the responsibility of each institution to ensure the reliability of their data.

How to tackle ‘fairness’ is high on the agenda of AI research, but there is no single definition of what is considered to be fair in a certain context, said Nowé. Therefore, there needs to be a discussion of how fairness is defined, measured and implemented, based on the ultimate goal of each AI solution. She added that the [European Code of Conduct on Research Integrity](#) already includes a chapter on the use of AI.

Moreover, while AI can also help us to determine the extent of the problem of bias, sometimes the problem is with the data itself. Institutions need to develop their own codes of conduct, said Jakab; the community being created by the Hungarian Research Network will constantly discuss the ethical and responsible use of AI in research activities. He suggested the possibility of developing AI applications that highlight the biases, giving further inputs for the discussions on fairness.



Summary

The following conclusions and possible ways forward can be drawn from the discussion:

- Research institutions and science communicators need to do more to understand AI, the various concepts, and possible uses.
- Good examples of responsible use of AI, such as the Hungarian Research Network's AI Ambassadors programme, should be promoted.
- Transparency is crucial for the responsible use of AI, especially in a very fast evolving scenario.
- Research organisations and science communicators should engage with AI and test its use in safe environments to understand the fundamental elements.



Conclusions and Next Steps

The High Level Conference on Science Communication was a landmark event, bringing together research organisations, policy makers, academia, industry and civil society to highlight the importance of open, ethical science communication in research processes, exploring the opportunities and challenges this entails.

The following main conclusions came out of the presentations and discussions at the conference:

- The position of science communication should be better embedded in the framework of research systems and processes from the outset, so that it becomes an integral part of all stages of the research life cycle, creating a research culture that values transparency and public engagement.
- Science communication should be recognised as a distinct field of expertise and research, and collaboration between researchers and communicators should be improved to enhance the accessibility and understanding of research results, as well as general understanding of the scientific process.
- To ensure better recognition and support for science communication in research environments, it should be incentivised through funding support for dedicated communications training, and integrated and acknowledged in research career structures.
- Adopting a set of core principles based on transparency, inclusivity, integrity, and respect for autonomy in science communication is necessary to address current challenges and foster public trust.
- Promoting scientific literacy from an early age and better communicating the boundaries of scientific processes is crucial in highlighting the importance of the pursuit of knowledge through fundamental research and the concept of science as a public good.
- As communication enters a new era thanks to the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence, it is necessary to promote and develop AI literacy and data transparency to ensure it is used ethically and responsibly.

Next steps

The main findings of the Conference were reflected in the [Strategic Conclusions](#) published on 25 March, addressed to European Institutions, national governments, and research organisations. The conclusions build on Science Europe's 2022 [Position Statement on Science Communication](#), which set out a vision, a series of principles, and framework actions to reinforce the collective capacity to communicate



research more effectively. This statement was published as part of Science Europe's objective to strengthen the role and contribution of science in tackling societal challenges.



Science Europe and its Member Organisations reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the integral role of science communication in research and innovation in the Strategic Conclusions, and will continue to advocate its inclusion from the outset in research programmes and processes. Practical guidance with recommendations on how to achieve this, is planned to be published by Science Europe in 2025.



The importance of integrating science communication into research systems and processes more comprehensively is also being included in Science Europe's advocacy and activities. For example, our recent [video](#) in the #TalkingScience series highlighted our members' public engagement initiatives, focusing on research ethics and integrity. Science communication was one of five pledges in the "[Vote For Science](#)" campaign for the 2024 European Parliament elections, and the renewal of the mandate of the European Commission, setting the legislative agenda for the next five years.

Greater support for science communication is a shared responsibility at national and European level. Science Europe will continue to work with EU and national policy makers to highlight its importance in fostering informed, engaged, and supportive audiences, which in turn can lead to better decision making, increased funding, and a stronger, more resilient society capable of addressing the complex challenges we face.

Science Europe will also continue to build a community of national communications professionals across Europe to reinforce the collective capacity to communicate research more effectively and enhance public understanding and trust in the scientific process, so that scientific advancements are understood, valued, and used for society's collective good.

Science Shows and Reception



Both days of the conference featured a science show during the break to demonstrate the impact of alternative forms of science communication.

Both **Rakett69** and **Mr. Science's Take Off** do a lot of work to popularise and communicate science in Estonia and Luxembourg, respectively. Science Europe thanks both of them for their participation in the event.





The first day of the conference ended with a reception at the Brussels Town Hall, featuring statements from Brussels Alderwoman **Lydia Mutyebele Ngoi**, FNRS Secretary General **Véronique Halloin**, and Science Europe Vice-President **Javier Moreno Fuentes**.

Science Europe thanks the Office of the Mayor of Brussels for hosting the conference reception in the Gothic Hall of the Brussels Town Hall, and Alderwoman Mutyebele Ngoi for her contribution.



ANNEX 1

Conference Programme

TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2024

Palace of the Academies, Rue Ducale 1, 1000 Brussels

12.00–13.00 Registration & Welcome Lunch

Opening Session

13.00–14.00 What is the role of science communication at the political level?

- **Javier Moreno Fuentes**, Vice-President of Science Europe and Vice-President for International Affairs of the Spanish National Research Council
- **Bruno Blondé**, President of the Research Foundation Flanders
- **Thomas Dermine**, State Secretary for Economic Recovery and Strategic Investments in charge of Science Policy at the Ministry of Economy and Employment, Belgium
- **Joanna Drake**, Deputy Director-General for Planet, People, and Science for Policy at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission
- **Etienne Gilliard**, Director-General for Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Scientific Research, Wallonia-Brussels Federation
- **Marius Gilbert**, Vice-Rector for Research and Valorisation at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Member of the expert group to the Belgian authorities during the COVID pandemic

Moderator: **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General of Science Europe

14.00–14.30

Session 1 – State of Play of Science Communication

What makes science communication crucial and urgent in today's complex and rapidly changing world?

- **Maja Horst**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Aarhus University, Denmark (*online*)
- **Špela Stres**, Director of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (*online*)

Moderator: **Anu Noorma**, Director General of the Estonian Research Council

14.30–15.15

Coffee Break & Rocket69 Science Show

15.15–16.15

What are the current priorities in science communication?

- **Francesca Scianitti**, Head of Public Engagement & Outreach, National Institute for Nuclear Physics, Italy
- **Anna Maria Fleetwood**, Senior Adviser External Relations, Swedish Research Council
- **Alok Jha**, Science and Technology Editor, The Economist, United Kingdom
- **Joana Magalhães**, Science Communication Area Manager at Science for Change, Co-coordinator COALESCE project

Moderator: **David Butz Pedersen**, Professor of Science Communication at the Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Denmark

16.15–17.30

Deep Dives

These parallel breakout sessions will dive deeper into a particular aspect of science communication with experts in the field.

1. Communicating science to policy makers

- **Marc Vanholsbeeck**, Head of Department Federal, Interfederal and International Coordination at the Belgian Science Policy Office
- **Hans Plets**, Project Manager at the Einstein Telescope
- **Arko Olesk**, Lecturer in Science Communication at Tallinn University, and Science and Education Advisor to the President of Estonia
- **Olga Polotska**, Executive Director of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (*online*)
- **Gillian Markey**, Communications Manager at the Health Research Board, Ireland

Moderator: **Véronique Halloin**, Secretary General of the Fund for Scientific Research – FNRS

2. Ethics and integrity in communicating science with the public

- **Frits Rosendaal**, Professor and Head of Department Clinical Epidemiology at the Leiden University Medical Center, and Chair of the LERU Research Integrity Group
- **Pavla Hubálková**, Science Journalist at Charles University and WIRED.cz, Czech Republic
- **Catherine Franche**, Executive Director of Ecsite, the European Network of Science Centres and Museums
- **Didier Viviers**, President of the Royal Academy, Belgium

Moderator: **Thomas Evensen**, Special Advisor at the Research Council of Norway

3. Incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion in science communication

- **Tine Huyse**, Senior Biologist at the AfricaMuseum, Belgium
- **Jozefien De Leersnyder**, Research Professor at the Center for Social and Cultural Psychology, KU Leuven, Belgium
- **Sabine Costagliola**, Member of the FNRS Gender Working Group, FNRS Research Director at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
- **Alison Meston**, Director of Communications at the International Science Council
- **Didier Boone**, Head of the Prevention Service, Unia, Belgium

Moderator: **Hans Willems**, Secretary General of the Research Foundation Flanders

19.00–21.00

Networking Reception at Brussels Town Hall

Short statements from:

- **Lydia Mutyebele Ngoi**, Alderwoman of Brussels
- **Véronique Halloin**, Secretary General of the Fund for Scientific Research – FNRS
- **Javier Moreno Fuentes**, Vice-President of Science Europe and Vice-President for International Affairs of the Spanish National Research Council

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2024

08.30–09.00 **Welcome Coffee**09.00–09.30 **EU Initiatives on Science Communication**

- **Annely Allik**, Head of Department of Science Communication, Estonian Research Council
- **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General of Science Europe
- **Jo Brouns**, Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy & Agriculture (*video*)
- **Alessandro Allegra**, Science for Policy Coordinator at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission

09.30–10.30

Session 2 – The Political Role of Science Communication
What are the main incentives and barriers to fostering science communication in Europe?

- **Carthage Smith**, Senior Policy Analyst and Lead Co-ordinator, OECD Global Science Forum
- **Tony Lockett**, Head of Communications at the European Research Council
- **Birte Fähnrich**, Adjunct Professor at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany (*online*)
- **Fabrice Imperiali**, Director of Information and Communication at the French National Research Agency
- **Alex Verkade**, Head of Communications & Positioning at the Taskforce for Applied Research SIA, the Netherlands
- **Joana Lobo Antunes**, Head of Communication at the Instituto Superior Técnico, Portugal

Moderator: **Hayet Zeghiche**, Senior Communications Consultant at Science Europe

10.30–11.00

Showcasing successful science communication initiatives & best practices

Members of Science Europe from across the continent will present their successful science communication initiatives and best practices in a 3-minute pitch format.

Forskning.se – Open Science for everyone // Swedish Research Council (VR)

Katarina Bjelke, Director General and **Cissi Askwall**, National Co-ordinator

Rocket your Audience // Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ)

Marko Košiček, Science Communication Coordinator, and **Petra Buljević Zdjelarević**, Head of Public Relations and Communications at the Ruđer Bošković Institute

Research in the spotlight // Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)

Adriana Rotar, Head of Communications Department

Visindavaka // Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís)

Davíð Fjölfnir Ármannsson, Communications Officer

Experiences and methodology from Formas communication // Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (Formas)

Zandra Thuvesson, Senior Communications Officer, and **Johan Bryggare**, Communications Strategist

‘Politics meets Research’ Pairing Scheme // Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)

Didier Goossens, Head of Corporate Communication, and **Jean-Paul Bertemes**, Head of Science in Society

SNSF Data Portal // Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

Jun Sarbach, Head of Institutional Communications & PR

Building a strong foundation for Science & Research Progeny in Estonia // Estonian Research Council (ETAG)

Karl Kaur, Senior Specialist Science Communication, and **Kiiri Lättekivi**, Senior Specialist Organisational Communication

Science Communication: when it comes to fundraising... // Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS)

Eric Winnen, Communication and Public Affairs Director

Engaging audiences through compelling stories and rich content // Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)

Joana Ferreira, Head of Communications

Facilitators: **Dario Lečić**, Advisor for Monitoring Project Impact, Croatian Science Foundation, and **Hayet Zeghiche**, Senior Communications Consultant at Science Europe

11.00–11.45

Coffee Break & Mr. Science Show

11.45–12.45

Deep Dives

Parallel breakout sessions in which we dive deeper into a particular aspect of science communication with experts in the field.

4. How science can help fight against disinformation and misinformation

- **Alina Bărgăoanu**, Member of the Advisory Council of the European Digital Media Observatory, Romania
- **Elena Campos Sánchez**, Severo Ochoa Center for Molecular Biology, Spain
- **Caspar Hirschi**, Professor of History, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland
- **Jon Roozenbeek**, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cambridge Social Decision-Making Lab, UK (*online*)

Moderator: **Zandra Thuveesson**, Senior Communications Officer, Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development

5. Science Communication and Artificial Intelligence

- **Pedro Russo**, Professor of Astronomy and Society, Leiden University, the Netherlands, and Director of Ciência Viva, National Agency for Scientific & Technological Culture, Portugal
- **Ann Nowé**, Professor and Head of Laboratory, Free University Brussels, Belgium
- **Mirko Bischofberger**, Lecturer at EPFL, ETH Zürich and University of Zürich, Switzerland
- **Roland Jakab**, Chief Executive Officer of the Hungarian Research Network
- **Karel Luyben**, President of the EOOSC Association (*online*)

Moderator: **Didier Goossens**, Luxembourg National Research Fund

12.45–13.00

Conclusions

- **Véronique Halloin**, Secretary General of the Fund for Scientific Research – FNRS
- **Hans Willems**, Secretary General of the Research Foundation Flanders
- **Anneli Allik**, Chair of the Science Europe Working Group on Communication and Head of Department Science Communication at the Estonian Research Council
- **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General of Science Europe

13.00

End of Conference



ANNEX 2

Science Communication Initiatives & Best Practices



At the conference, Science Europe Member Organisations presented various science communication initiatives that their organisations run or are involved in, which can serve as inspiration and overview of best-practice examples.

In addition to the examples listed below, which were presented during the pitch session at the conference, a [YouTube playlist](#) is available that presents further initiatives from Member Organisations.

Forskning.se – Open Science for everyone

SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL (VR)



Swedish
Research
Council

Making research easy to find, understand, and use is the mission of [forskning.se](#). Hosted by the Swedish Research Council, supported by other research funding organisations, and co-created by the public, journalists, universities, research institutes, academies, and authorities, this national web-based initiative collects, explains, and shares research result with the Swedish public.

Rocket Your Audience

CROATIAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION (HRZZ)



HRZZ
Hrvatska zaklada
za znanost

A custom-made [crash course for scientists](#) on how to communicate with the public both directly and via mainstream media and social networks. The programme is adapted to its users' topics and communication needs. It is not just offered to researchers at their institute, but to the entire scientific community.

Research in the Spotlight

EXECUTIVE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH,
DEVELOPMENT, AND INNOVATION FUNDING OF ROMANIA (UEFISCDI)

'[Research in the Spotlight](#)' is a video podcast, currently in its third series, that allows researchers to present their work to the general public, talking about their challenges and their results. The videos increase the visibility of researchers to journalists and the public, allows researchers to act as ambassadors for their thematic area, and serve to inform the public about the research being done.



Vísindavaka

ICELANDIC CENTRE FOR RESEARCH (RANNÍS)

A multi-day science festival with numerous events, [Vísindavaka](#) is the largest science communication event in Iceland with over 6,500 visitors in 2023. Its goal is to share the wonders of science and research to people of all ages, and inspire them to learn more, be curious, and spark interest to consider scientific research as a career opportunity.



Formas Communications Call

SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
(FORMAS)

The Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development grants €1.5–2 million to around ten science communication projects per year through a [dedicated call](#). Projects may include games, podcasts, museum exhibitions, visual and sculptural art, soundwalks, blue colonies, visualisation projects, or documentary films. These projects build on interaction, dialogue, and collaboration to strengthen knowledge and counteract disinformation.



'Politics meets Research' Pairing Scheme

LUXEMBOURG NATIONAL RESEARCH FUND (FNR)

Luxembourg implemented a [pairing scheme](#), matching researchers with politicians and providing them with the opportunity to get to know each other and learn about each other's environments. This was so successful that it led to the creation of a growing research service, with the pairing scheme moving from a 'getting to know each other' stage to a 'sharing knowledge' one.





SNFS Data Portal

SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (SNSF)

The [SNSF Data Portal](#) provides daily updated figures on all the research projects that it funds, allowing for fully transparent access to its activities. It provides raw data on how many projects and researchers it funds, key figures, statistics, and information about these projects, as well as 'data stories' that always contain up-to-date numbers to inform the public.



Building a Strong Foundation for Science and Research Progeny

ESTONIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL (ETAG)

The Estonian Research Council supported three physics students who wanted to set up a science show to promote interest in STEM among younger generations. This led to the creation of the science competition TV show [Rakett69/ Rocket69](#), which is currently in its 14th season, and has grown into a complete science hub, including science camps and a spin-off science competition among schools across Estonia for younger children, 'Rocket Junior'. Highly popular, the show has popularised science in an entire generation.

Science Communication: when it comes to fundraising...

FUND FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (FNRS), BELGIUM



[Télévie](#) is a long-standing collaboration between public TV and radio in Belgium and FNRS to raise funds for cancer research, having collected €240 million and having funded 2,700 researchers over the past 35 years. Mobilisation continues to grow each year, and is the result of good collaboration, the creation of a community of philanthropic organisations, and active (social) media engagement.

Engaging audiences through compelling stories and rich content

FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (FCT), PORTUGAL



FCT focuses its science communication on informing, explaining, and engaging. It does so by using three strategies: to show the faces behind the science, to showcase success stories, and to leverage current themes and the media agenda. Examples are its campaign on women and girls in science, its 'Year in Review' videos, and the daily television show '[90 Seconds of Science](#)'.

Science Europe is the association of major research funding and research performing organisations in Europe. It envisages an ERA with optimal conditions for robust education and R&I systems. It defines long-term perspectives for European research and champions best-practice approaches that enable high-quality research for knowledge advancement and the needs of society.

Research Foundation – Flanders stimulates and financially supports fundamental scientific research, strategic basic research, clinical scientific research, the purchase of large-scale and medium-scale research infrastructure, and the management of large computing capacity in Flanders. It subsidises fellowships and research projects, infrastructure, travel grants and international scientific co-operation.

The Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS) mainly supports fundamental research conducted in the French-speaking Belgian universities by granting and managing research grants and fellowships, while providing credits and equipments, as well as individual and collective research projects.





Science Europe

Rue de la Science 14
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 226 0300
Email office@scienceeurope.org

Web www.scienceeurope.org

 @ScienceEurope
 Science Europe



Research Foundation – Flanders

Leuvenseweg 38
1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 512 9110
Email communicatie@fwo.be

Web www.fwo.be

 @FWOVlaanderen
 Research Foundation Flanders



Fund for Scientific Research

Rue d'Egmont 5
1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 504 9211
Email communication@frs-fnrs.be

Web www.frs-fnrs.be

 @frsFNRS
 F.R.S.-FNRS