



Integrating More and Better Science Communication in Research Programmes

Strategic conclusions from the High-level Conference 'Unlocking the Power of Science Communication in Research and Policy Making'

The Research Foundation Flanders ([FWO](#)), the Fund for Scientific Research ([F.R.S.-FNRS](#)) and Science Europe ([SE](#)) 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 2024.

The [conference](#) emphasised the importance of integrating science communication in research and innovation systems, urging policy makers to prioritise its significance at national, European, and global level. It underscored the need to deliver timely evidence to address societal challenges across all disciplines, engage citizens, and advocate for public investment in research based on a [framework](#) of values.

Furthermore, it promoted the development of institutional tools to enhance researchers' communication skills; the recognition of science communication as a profession; strategies to combat misinformation in today's polarised environments; and showcased successful initiatives to inspire innovative approaches to improve public engagement.

Key Messages

It is imperative for organisations, researchers, and policy makers to enhance science communication to facilitate public understanding of and trust in the scientific process. This has become increasingly important at a time of heightened societal challenges and the proliferation of dis- and misinformation.

We must prioritise inclusive audience participation and better communicate the boundaries of scientific processes. Scientific literacy should be promoted from an early age, embedding the concept of science as a public good. Together, these will highlight the value of the pursuit of knowledge through fundamental research and the freedom of scientific inquiry. Effectively communicating the strong links between research, education, and innovation is therefore required.

Science communication is essential to delivering the message that funding scientific research is an investment, not an expense. It is necessary to integrate science communication initiatives strategically from the outset of research programmes and projects to showcase the value of research investments in addressing pressing societal issues, while also improving understanding of the research process itself.

We call upon European institutions, national governments, and research organisations to:

1. Incentivise science communication within research environments through better recognition and support. Funding support should be provided for dedicated training in communication skills; for the further integration of communication activities into career paths; and to foster national and international collaborative platforms to share best practices. Researchers should be recognised and rewarded for their efforts in science communication as part of research assessment systems.
2. Recognise science communicators as professionals who apply evidence-based approaches, and science communication as a distinct field of expertise and research. Collaborations between researchers and communicators are pivotal to ensure that research results are usable, accessible, and transferable to citizens and society at large and to build understanding of the scientific process within different audiences.
3. Promote and develop AI literacy and data transparency for the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in science communication. Trust in AI will depend on organisational engagement in issues of accountability, transparency, regulation, and bias to ensure this tool's ethical and effective integration into research and communication practices.
4. Adopt a set of core principles for responsible science communication based on transparency, inclusivity, integrity, accountability, respect for autonomy, and timeliness. This makes it necessary to address challenges such as transparency in scientific communication, fostering critical public discourse, enhancing media literacy, respecting disciplinary differences, multi-lingualism, and prioritising the critical thinking skills and trust of young people in science.

In conclusion, policy makers, research organisations, and communication professionals have a shared responsibility to improve their policies and practices in science communication, to enhance awareness of the way research works.

Science Europe and its Member Organisations reaffirm their [commitment](#) to advancing science communication as an integral pillar of research and innovation. We encourage policy makers to engage with the messages and recommendations delivered above to unlock the power of science communication in connecting research, governments, and industry to ensure that science remains accessible, transparent, and impactful, for the benefit of society.