

Strengthening Public Trust in Science: **Analysing the challenges and identifying solutions**

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS (FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND)

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Introduction

The pursuit of scientific knowledge plays an essential role in tackling contemporary societal challenges such as health crises or climate change, and driving societal progress. Trust in science is therefore crucial for the development of evidence-based public policies and informed democratic decision making.




However, this public trust is increasingly being tested. Several factors contribute to this fragility: the proliferation of mis- or disinformation; the impact of recent global health crises; the emergence of new technologies – such as Artificial Intelligence – that can encourage the spread of suspicion, fear, or rejection of science. Other challenges include the blurring of boundaries between science, belief, and opinion; the emergence of high-profile scientific controversies, and the difficulties in effectively communicating the boundaries of scientific processes and complex results.

In response, the French National Research Agency (ANR) and Science Europe are working together to organise a conference to analyse the factors that erode trust in science and explore ways in which it can be rebuilt. This event will be an important step in identifying key levers for action and practical solutions to promote open, transparent and trustworthy science.

This conference is part of ANR's 20th anniversary celebrations.

Objectives

The objectives of the conference are to:

-  identify the factors that undermine public confidence in science, scientists and research institutions.
-  examine the dynamics between science, society and the media in the dissemination of knowledge, scientific debates and public engagement.
-  share best practices in science communication and public engagement.

The goal is to use the outcomes of the conference to develop concrete recommendations for research funding and research performing organisations and the media to enhance public understanding of the scientific method and raise policy makers' awareness of the importance to strengthen trust in science.

Target Audience

The target audience for the conference consists of elected politicians and policy makers, members of scientific communities and European funding agencies, journalists and science communication professionals, and representatives of civil society and the education sector.

Members of the Programme Committee

A Programme Committee has been convened to guide the development of the programme and ensure that the key themes are adequately addressed. The Committee comprises the following participants:

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
David Ros	Senator, Deputy Director, OPESCT	Senat
Michel Dubois	Senior Research Fellow Director	French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) GEMASS
Dame Wendy Hall	Regius Professor of Computer Science; Association Vice President International Engagement; Director of the Web Science Institute	University of Southampton
Marju Himma	Associate Professor of Journalism Studies	University of Tartu
Joana Magalhães	Science Communication Area Manager, Co-coordinator COALESCE Project	Science for Change
Carthage Smith	Senior Policy Analyst	Organisation for European Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Anca Toma	Former Executive Director	European Patients' Forum (EPF)
Annely Allik	Head of Communication, Chair of the Science Europe Working Group on Communication	Estonian Research Council (ETAG)
Anna Maria Fleetwood	Senior Advisor, External Relations	Swedish Research Council (VR)
Claire Giry	Chairman and Director General	French National Research Agency (ANR)
Lidia Borrell-Damián	Secretary General	Science Europe
Valérie Fromentin	Former Head of the Department of Human and Social Sciences	French National Research Agency (ANR)
Fabrice Imperiali	Head of Communication	French National Research Agency (ANR)
Rosemary Hindle	Communications Manager	Science Europe

Draft Programme

Thursday 11 December 2025

08.30–09.00 *Registration and Welcome Coffee*

09.00–09.25 **Welcome and Introduction**

This session will outline the objectives and themes of the conference, addressing the importance of building and maintaining public trust in science to support the pursuit of scientific knowledge to advance societal progress.

It will illustrate how trust can underpin the development of evidence-based public policies and democratic decision making, and the role of research funding and research performing organisations in these. Moreover, it will highlight how strengthening trust in the research process is essential to assist the public navigate misinformation, distinguish science from opinion and belief, and reinforce confidence in the integrity and rigour of research methodologies.

- **Claire Giry**, Chairman and Director General, French National Research Agency (ANR)
- **Francisco Javier Moreno Fuentes**, Vice-President for International Affairs, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC); Vice-President, Science Europe
- **Representative of the French Ministry of Research and Higher Education**

09.25–09.45 **KeyNote Speaker**

- **Kei Koizumi**, Former Principal Deputy Director for Science, Society, and Policy at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

09.45–11.00 **Session 1: Europe, Science and Society – Understanding the Trust Relationship and Factors Supporting Public Trust in Science**

This session will provide an overview of public trust in science across Europe, drawing on key findings from major European and national studies. It will explore how scientific knowledge and critical thinking are considered; ways of building trust; how trust levels vary across countries and demographic groups; and what this means for scientific literacy and public understanding of the scientific method.

The session will also examine the key challenges that undermine trust in science, eroding public confidence, as well as how trust in science is shaped by cultural institutions, the media, and social networks.

Presentations and moderated panel discussion on the following themes:

- Drawing on your experience and/or the research you've been involved in, how would you describe the current state of public trust in science across Europe and globally?
- What in your view is the most important factor influencing trust in science?
- What does this mean for understanding of, and communicating the scientific method, and scientific literacy?

Speakers

- **Martin Bauer**, Professor of Social Psychology and Research Methodology, London School of Economics
- **Agata Gurzawska**, Cluster Lead - Ethics, Human Rights and New Technologies, Trilateral Research

Additional speakers to be confirmed

Moderator

Michel Dubois, Senior Research Fellow, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS); Director, GEMASS

11.00–11.30 *Coffee Break*

8.1.30–12.45 **Session 2: Trust in Science under pressure in an Era of Controversy and Disruptive Technological Change**

This session will explore how moments of controversy, uncertainty, or rapid technological change affect scientific credibility. It will examine the dynamics of trust in selected scientific domains, and why some scientific theories gain public and political traction while others are contested or ignored.

In particular, it will examine how policies in other areas such as research ethics or scientific integrity, contribute to building and maintaining credibility.

Presentations and moderated panel discussion on the following themes:

- How do controversial scientific advances or technological breakthroughs influence and impact public trust in science?
- What is the role of different actors in addressing challenges of bias, reproducibility, or conflicts of interest?
- How can researchers and institutions better communicate uncertainty and complexity?

Speakers

- **Dame Wendy Hall DBE**, Regius Professor of Computer Science, Associate Vice President (International Engagement) and Director of the Web Science Institute at the University of Southampton
- **Didier Pourquery**, President, The Conversation, France

Additional Speakers to be confirmed

12.45–14.00 *Lunch*

14.00–15.30 **Session 3: Strengthening Trust through Public Engagement**

This session will explore whether and to what extent public trust depends on the belief that science serves the public good and where and how such alignment between science and values should occur, and what happens when these values conflict. It will highlight the importance of open dialogue, media engagement, and participatory research in fostering greater trust between the scientific community and society.

Presentations and moderated panel discussions on the following themes:

- Which values are essential to building and maintaining public trust?
- How can scientists and journalists work together to improve the accuracy, relevance, and impact of scientific reporting?
- What is the role of participatory and citizen science in improving public engagement?

Speakers

- **Jerry Sheehan**, Director, Directorate for Science Technology and Innovation, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- **Pampa García Molina**, Coordinator of the Science Media Centre, Spain

- **Mohamed Elsonbaty Ramadan**, Founder of SciCommAI; Co-founder of the Arab Forum of Science Media and Communication (AFSMC); Vice-president of the Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) Network

Additional Speakers to be confirmed

Moderator

Anna Maria Fleetwood, Senior Advisor, External Relations, Swedish Research Council

15.30–16.00 *Coffee Break*

16.00–17.15 **Session 4: Institutional and Policy Responses to Strengthen Trust in Science**

This session will explore how research funding and performing organisations and policy makers can actively contribute to building public trust in science. It will discuss their shared responsibility to promote transparency and integrity while helping researchers participate in the public debate without fear of abuse or intimidation. It will also identify effective institutional and policy solutions to strengthen public trust in science.

Presentations and moderated panel discussions on the following themes:

- How can research funding and performing organisations enhance public trust in science and support and protect researchers?
- How can research funding and performing organisations work with policy makers to strengthen the science-society dialogue to reinforce trust in science?
- How can research performing and funding organisations better engage with media to combat misinformation and ensure responsible science reporting?

Speakers

- **Antoine Petit**, President and CEO, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)
- **Anu Noorma**, Director General of the Estonian Research Council (ETAG)
- **David Budtz Pedersen**, Professor of Science Communication, Aalborg University
- **Karen Fabbri**, Deputy Head of Unit Science for Policy, Advice and Ethics, DG RTD, European Commission

Moderator

- **Carthage Smith**, Senior Policy Expert, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

17.15–17.30 **Conclusions and Next Steps**

Summing up the discussions of the conference and outlining the next steps.

- **Claire Giry**, Chairman and Director General, French National Research Agency (ANR)
- **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General, Science Europe