

Outcomes

Communicating for scientific academies

Co-creating the first annual European training workshop for professionals working on communications for scientific academies

Friday 30 June 2023

Context

As professionals working on communications at scientific academies across Europe, we face challenges in our work. How do we best engage with our audiences? What tools can help us connect research to policy? When it comes to complex topics, what good practices do we need to keep in mind?

SAPEA brings together expertise from over 120 academies, young academies and learned societies in more than 40 countries across Europe. These organisations vary greatly in their scale and context, each facing their own particular challenges, but there are also many common challenges that each unit faces. By sharing our experiences, we can inspire and learn from each other, network together and integrate good practices into our daily work.

30 people attended a first workshop online where we discussed some of the challenges we face and ways we could address them collectively. These outcomes will feed into a training workshop in October 2023 where we will work to develop the relevant skills and capacities, exploring experiences and good practices from across Europe and building the basis for a stronger European community of communications professionals across scientific academies.

The workshop was facilitated by the SAPEA team and structured as follows:

- Intro: Meet the SAPEA team and hear about the October training workshop
- Icebreaker: Getting to know colleagues from across European academies
- Sharing challenges: Sharing and hearing from colleagues about the challenges they face in their work
- Identifying highest priority challenges: Using an online tool to come to an agreement about key challenges to be addressed in our training workshop, and discussing the outcomes

Outcomes

The greatest common challenges identified by the group are shown below, along with the number of votes each received. Please note that participants could vote for as many challenges as they liked. Some added a short text to describe the challenge. The full set of challenges can be seen here.

- Identifying my audience (18 votes)
- In order to tailor the message effectively
- Make message interesting and understandable (17 votes)
- How to reach the most people (15 votes)
- How to communicate our research to non-academic audiences (13 votes)
- Help others understand that communication means lots of work, time & resources (12 votes)
- Limited time and human resources (12 votes)
- Not enough audiovisual skills (11 votes)
- To get the attention of the media.
- Strategic planning and implementation (11 votes)
- Make time available and get the team together.
- How to use strategically (and implement in practice) paid social media campaigns (11 votes)
- Have time for more strategic thinking (11 votes)
- When there are several events/activities going on at the same time, you only have time to do the tasks, sometimes leaving other aspects out.
- How to measure impact (10 votes)

Other challenges mentioned included starting a communication strategy from scratch, reaching wider audiences, contact with policy makers, misinformation, the challenging variety of topics and audiences, engaging researchers, use of AI, neutrality, lack of motivation, stakeholder management, lack of media channels, decision-making processes and constraints around messaging.

Analysing the outcomes, the SAPEA team identified a number of the biggest challenges that could be addressed in the October training workshop:

- Identifying audiences
- Social media
- Audiovisual: videos
- Audiovisual: podcasting

Other challenges could be addressed in future training workshops.