

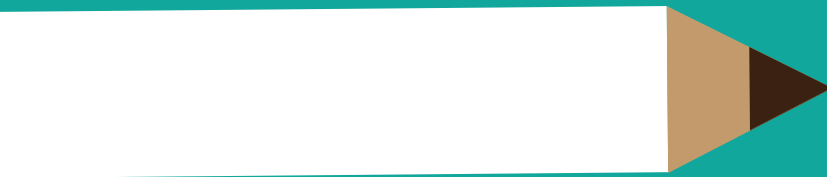


ENJOI - ENgagement and JOurnalism Innovation for Outstanding Open Science Communication This project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation program under Grant Agreement n°101006407



ENJOI

Policy Brief



How to support a healthy communication environment?

Effectively combating global challenges with good science communication and journalism

Recommendations

The recommendations result from the engagement of various experts and stakeholders in the four countries that are the project's core focus: Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium. ENJOI was particularly interested in the situation of the Southern European countries. A perception confirmed by ENJOI findings is that these countries do not have the same access to resources, independence, and possibilities in the media and, in general, in the information environment of Northern countries.

This Policy Brief, thus, includes suggestions, observations and ideas shared, discussed, and summarised during the whole project with a circular cascade validation process and consolidated with a dedicated ENJOI Policy Event in Brussels at the end of the project. The recommendations are organised in five thematic areas:

ENGAGEMENT, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

1

Diversity is the best peaceful weapon against polarisation and discrimination. Diversity is a fundamental theme and has become a need on several levels. The media should respond to the requests from the diverse communities and cultures within their audience and bring them into the content production process. They should listen to their readers or listeners and apply diversity as a guiding principle and engagement strategy in the whole life cycle of information. This way, the engagement wouldn't be intended only as a make-up strategy but as an additional value to be intertwined within the entire design, craft and delivery process of the science communication outputs.

One of the ways to do this is by adopting the lens of intersectionality, becoming aware of the increased difficulty and disadvantages some people experience when accessing information and, in general, science education and science communication due to the overlapping of different discriminating and unequal determinants, be their gender, socio-economic origin, cultural or racial discrimination and so on.

Furthermore, in recent years, a much stronger reflection has finally occurred within the scientific community concerning the colonial contribution to the set-up of the contemporary scientific system. Recognising the European colonial past and working towards a genuine discussion of the consequences and the possible compensations and/or measures to overcome it is just an initial crucial step. Younger generations of European citizens are very vocal about this and reject a portrait of the science ecosystem as a very neutral one. At the same time, it actually has a long and, in some cases, controversial history that needs to be recognised. Furthermore, real engagement can add value and substance to communication outputs. Science journalism could take inspiration from investigative journalism, where the need to test hypotheses or verify facts has led to a much stronger involvement and engagement of communities of readers and listeners, who are sometimes pivotal to confirming information at a local level.

In synthesis, support and particular attention should be given to communication initiatives, projects and activities that respect some or all of these six criteria:

- are based on requests from diverse communities and cultures (responsiveness)
- apply diversity as a guiding principle (sources, contents, distribution model)
- engagement strategy in the whole life-cycle of information
- adopt the lens of intersectionality
- deal with the impact of colonialism on the scientific ecosystem
- explore more solutions/approaches to enable people to act.

2 OPEN SCIENCE AND OPEN ACCESS

Transparency and accessibility of scientific data and results are values that we can no longer afford to ignore. The entire scientific process must be made open and accessible, and open data should be the rule in any institution.

The issue of open access to data and publications is an area in which the European Commission has already shown interest and commitment, taking the first step in creating the Open Research Europe (ORE) platform. The platform currently hosts results and publications related to European projects (Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe), for which it has implemented a completely transparent and accessible peer-reviewed publishing system. It is also possible to publish results after the funding is finished. Every publication has an associated index to facilitate the evaluation of researchers and their publications. Lack of openness and transparency are related to enough risks and damages.

When institutions do not make data publicly accessible, they leave room for the creation of false news, false interpretations, and, above all, distrust of science itself. It's vital to keep working on transparency and force it by asking all the platforms to have a code for transparency or to make sure they describe their process.

In summary, there are three actions that policymakers and funders should enact:

- making open data the rule for every institution
- rewarding a fully open and transparent science communication process
- adopting a code for transparency to be used by all platforms and media.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Interestingly, this section generated the most interest and received the most contributions during the ENJOI Policy event in Brussels, with many suggestions from the participants.

Training is defined as the core of high-quality science communication and science journalism, and it is also crucial to developing critical thinking. However, it is currently a fundamental weakness in the journalism sector. Many generalist journalists are sent to cover science topics, particularly during crises and emergencies. But their training in scientific subjects

and science-making processes is very scarce. There is a certified need for journalists who understand science and can interact with scientists.

A starting point should be establishing a connection with journalism schools, most of which lack science training in most countries. It is also crucial to provide lifelong, high-quality training for journalists. At times when the advent of innovative environments and new technologies is an ongoing challenge, content and information producers need to learn how to deal with them at any stage of their career. Recent new challenges are also taking the stage, such as the emerging role of AI tools and how they can integrate and support journalists' roles rather than substituting them.

It is essential to support mutual collaboration between journalists and researchers to help them realise that they need each other to continue doing their jobs in the best possible way. For this to happen, the role of policy is to foster training and collaboration between all interested parties.

Universities and research institutions should bring on board journalists who can be critical towards science, and researchers should be more open and responsive to societal needs and expectations, fostering mutual trust with the citizens through the aid of journalists. Journalists can bring and share societal issues with scientists to make them more aware of people's needs and views. Collaborative schemes between scientists and journalists also require recognising the communication efforts in the scientists' career advancements. That is where policy could be a critical game-changer. It could promote training and even support the recruitment of science journalists in the newsrooms of non-specialised media and establish mechanisms to recognise and evaluate scientists' communication work.

Finally, science journalists should be involved in defining the funding grant schemes to ensure proper consideration and attention are given to the project communication activities and societal information needs.

In synthesis, six recommendations are suggested to support the growing capabilities of present and future journalists:

- science journalism to be included in every journalism school
- institutions to employ trained science communicators
- lifelong high-quality training to be made available for journalists
- recognition of the value of communication in scientists' career advancement
- setting up visiting programs, in-residence fellowships
- fostering collaborative long-term projects involving scientists and journalists

4

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Local communities deserve special attention within the recommendations. However, there is at least an apparent clash between this need and that of describing the future impact of a communication plan. Private investors and even public funders demand impact be measured quantitatively through numeric indicators. Particularly in digital communications, this

requirement is often translated into numbers of people reached, impressions, shares, etc.

Many small communities will never make big numbers, yet they need someone to produce information for them. Therefore, there should be alternative and more sensible ways to measure impacts when working for small, marginalised communities. In this respect, the ENJOI final recommendation is to look at scaling replicability with a cautious eye.

Also, an important point relating to local communities and the inclusivity and diversity aspect is that there is no universal approach to innovation and communication. As was strongly highlighted during the ENJOI Policy event, what is innovative in one environment might be far from attainable in another. Although specific standards might seem to be the same everywhere, in reality, the lack of funding, the enormous differences in infrastructure among urban and rural areas as well as among countries even within the European region, and the way the media system is organised and the role it plays in the public arena make it very difficult for many journalists and communicators to apply the same standards and to be measured by the same indicators.

Therefore, three concrete measures should be taken to support access to high-quality scientific information for local communities:

- adopt measures of impact based (also) on qualitative indicators
- make scientific information fully accessible to non-educated, hesitant or disadvantaged people and groups, regardless of their quantitative relevance
- test a different approach to scaling and replicability.

SUSTAINABILITY

5

Making a project economically feasible and sustainable is one of the most significant issues all content and information producers must face. After the training issue, economic sustainability was the most discussed by the participants at the ENJOI Policy event in Brussels. It involves policy, economics, and culture and directly affects the quality of the content produced. The need for economic support concerns all realities.

Having adequate financial support is vital to guarantee the correct process behind content production. Smaller or independent journalistic projects often lack structural funding and thus struggle. The risk in this case is that they end up looking for money in the private sector, where they have to deal with conflicts of interest, which, in turn, penalise transparency.

Writing or talking about science topics is not a one-directional process that goes from scientists to journalists to society; it needs a few back-and-forth interactions, which are expensive and time-consuming. This process is too often sacrificed and simplified to allow for a coarser production of content prioritising quantity over quality: that's where (political and economic) support for independent journalism can make the difference.

Among the most common solutions for sustainability, membership is one of the most cit-

ed. In general, a community involved in producing content for a media outlet might also be happy to support that particular media economically. There are several cases in which engagement was crucial in the survival of some investigative journalism outlets, and the same could happen for science journalism. However, it is not always a feasible strategy, mainly when serving low-income communities of readers/listeners.

Other solutions already in place are the syndication with other media (that is, produce content for one's outlet but also sell it, sometimes revisited in different formats, to others) and the production of content for third parties such as white papers and reports that contain information in a non-journalistic format, translations or copy editing. At the same time, many prominent media outlets and legacy media tend to make intensive use of pre-produced materials, such as press releases and other press kit products, without adding any additional work. This practice, prevalent when covering science topics, translates into an offer of scientific information that is never crafted in response to the needs of a community and is, often enough, merely focusing on news, results, and curiosity-driven facts.

Funders and experts participating in the ENJOI Policy event highlighted that the solution that would probably grant more independence and the ability to work in-depth on a science story is to get funds from public money, either through the European funding schemes or those established by national foundations.

Another route to explore and implement is having funds directly from solid and well-supported scientific institutions. Recognising the need for high-quality science communication might convert into initiatives supporting journalists' work. An exciting project exploring the possibility of supporting journalists and at the same time contributing to their training and understanding of the science system is the ERC recently funded Frontiers project, which offers the science journalist community in Europe the opportunity to have fellowships and spend quite a significant amount of time (from three to six months) in a Lab to have an in-depth knowledge of a specific scientific field.

The focus is on the most complicated sciences, the ones more difficult to explain, such as basic science, which is farthest from a practical application. The idea behind the project is also that of a cross-pollination to see if having a journalist in a laboratory also influences the way scientists work.

Finally, policymakers need to be informed about the media and independent content producers' situation. With the massive crisis in the media sector, there are no longer independent editors. Hence, a significant portion of the content published in daily newspapers is paid by private entities who might have an interest, for instance, in greenwashing or social washing.

The four final indications for policymakers and funders are the following:

- projects based on engaged communities
- public funding for structural development - avoiding the need to rely on funding from private sources
- provide infrastructural resources to communities that are not attractive enough for market players (rural, non-urban, etc)
- support small-scale and flexible projects testing new approaches.

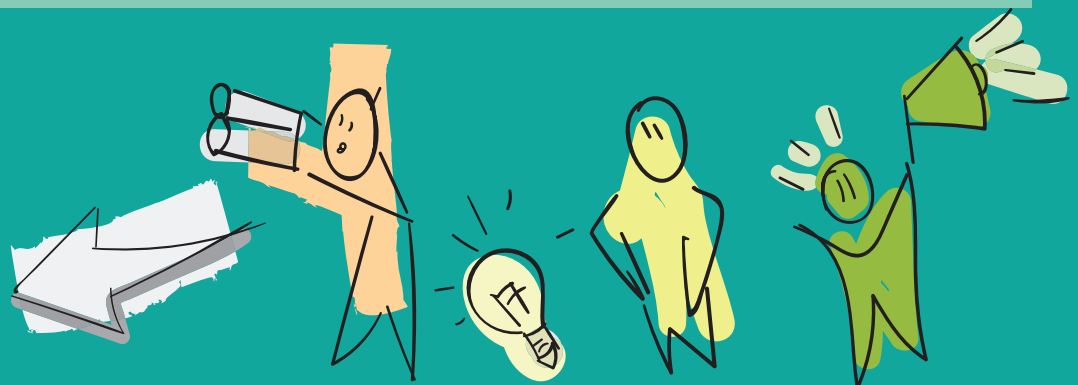
The involvement and active participation of policymakers, funders, regulators, and leaders of international institutions in validating and integrating the policy recommendations has allowed the ENJOI consortium to develop some new and relevant indications that might be applied in future policies and the design of grant schemes.

The most relevant and innovative recommendations concern strongly fostering the engagement of users, audiences, and local communities in the entire communication process. Engagement, inclusiveness, and diversity should never be used just as flags but as significant approaches to crafting a science communication action that might impact people's lives.

A pretty innovative aspect that emerged from the ENJOI process was calling the European scientific community for recognition of its position of relative power due to historical reasons that have their roots in the colonial past. Throughout the project, there has been a request to craft a new discourse about possible changes to be implemented in the future regarding the consideration of non-European perspectives that need to be involved in the discourse about science. If this is not merely a communication problem, it is undeniably an issue that must be considered in any communication strategy and development.

Although there are more and more opportunities for journalists to become acquainted with the scientific world, there is still an enormous need for training at any level, from young journalists in schools to mid- and advanced career journalists who need to be constantly updated both on the results and the new frontiers of the scientific enterprise and on the technologies and tools that are shaping the communication environment. However, the most complex and critical challenge is the resources.

The economic aspects remain complicated and insecure, and particularly when looking into independent media and content producers and Southern European ecosystems, the need for support remains the absolute priority. Innovative approaches should be designed and taken at the institutional level to grant an existence and a future to a healthy, transparent and reliable communication ecosystem.



Conclusion

The involvement and active participation of policymakers, funders, regulators, and leaders of international institutions in validating and integrating the policy recommendations has allowed the ENJOI consortium to develop some new and relevant indications that might be applied in future policies and the design of grant schemes.

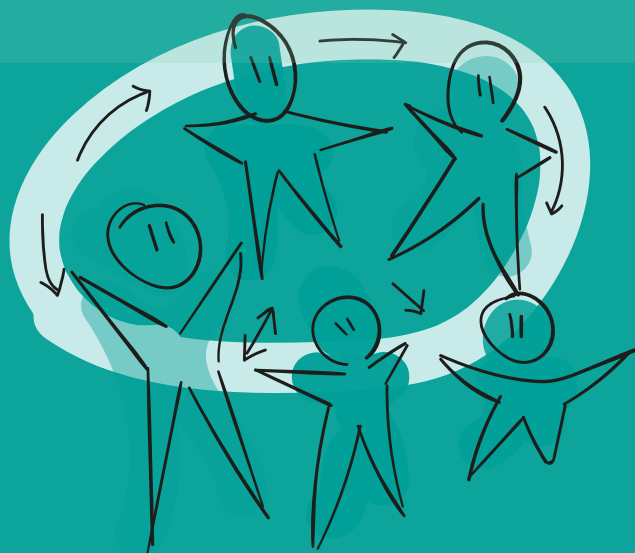
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ENJOI



WHAT

Provide a new set of Standards, Principles and Indicators, and tools to improve science communication and journalism, and for guiding people in producing, consuming and sharing scientific information

WHY

With a particular focus in the Southern European region, ENJOI is the answer to the urgency that emerged during pandemics and environmental crisis of improving science communication and journalism in a systematic way

WHO

Italy, Portugal, Spain and Belgium; civil society, policy makers, industries, academics, journalists and researchers as stakeholders

WHERE

ENJOI Website; ENJOI Manifesto for Outstanding open science communication; ENJOI Observatory

WHEN

ENJOI project 2021-2023 and its heritage in the ENJOI Observatory beyond the project lifetime

HOW

By means of engagement and participation of stakeholders in the whole process of definition of SPIs and tools: we combined literature analysis, expert consultations, media landscape research, co-creation design and implementation with a variety of stakeholders.

Consortium

formicablu – coordinator, Bologna

Catalan Association of Science Communications (ACCC) - Barcelona

Science for Change - Barcelona

Stickydot - Bruxelles

FCiências.ID - University of Lisbon

University of Twente



formicablu



UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

ENJOI

www.enjoiscicomm.eu

📍 ENJOI project
Zenodo: ENJOI SciComm
info@enjoiscicomm.eu



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