

COMMUNICATION ROLE ON PERCEPTION AND BELIEFS OF EU CITIZENS ABOUT SCIENCE

# **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CONCISE RESULTS**

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreeement 824537

# CONCISE

### COMMUNICATION ROLE ON PERCEPTION AND BELIEFS OF EU CITIZENS ABOUT SCIENCE

### FUNDING H2020 SWAFS CLOSE TO 1.2 MILLION EUROS 2018-2021





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## **PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN NUMBERS**

CONCISE is a European project that aims to learn communication how affects citizens' attitudes about science. For that purpose, 500 people from very different walks of life were invited to share their opinions and experience at the CONCISE public consultations.





# CONCISE

What information channels do citizens use to get scientific information?

### How citizens are informed?

- Traditional media and digital media are the main channels for keeping abreast of science news.
- Television is by far the most frequent channel used in traditional media.
- In digital media, citizens mention more frequently the Internet "in general", followed by social media and search engines.
- In institutional science information sources, international bodies (WHO, IPCC, EC) and national governments are favoured by citizens over private organisations
- Citizens are **ambivalent about the quantity of information** to which they have access, claiming that there is both a lack and overload of information.
- Citizens are critical of the quality of science information, highlighting problems such as sensationalism, superficiality, bias, contradictions, politicisation and the circulation of fake news.
- Refer to the personal responsibility that communicators have in the correct treatment and dissemination of science news.





How citizens are informed?

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Opening spaces for **public debate**, addressing even the most controversial issues and emergencies in refer which science can offer useful advice.
- Providing support and incentives for primetime science programmes on public TV: documentaries, debates, interviews, etc.
- Providing science journalists with specialised training.
- Engaging with professional science communicators in government agencies and departments in order to encourage them to convey science-based messages and recommendations more efficiently.
- Increasing **public funding** for science and science communication, thus helping to avoid funding sources that may lead to conflicts of interest, interfere with the results or limit intellectual freedom.
- Giving a more central role to universities and public research centres in science dissemination, due to their image of impartiality, independence and public service





### The reliability of sources and channels

### • Levels of trust vary across countries and individuals.

- Proximity (family, friends, family doctor).
- Familiarity with the topic.
- Credibility of institutions (governments, universities) and scientists.
- Perception of vested interests (research funders).
- Digital media are often perceived as a channel with less reliable scientific information.
- Format and design are considered just as important as message content. A poorly articulated source is perceived as less precise.
- Strategies to verify information: assessing sources (who authored the study, who funded it, etc.), searching for confirmation on other channels and sources, triangulating information, using personal criteria such as their own experience, relying on common sense.









The reliability of sources and channels

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Working towards centralising validated and reliable information on controversial science topics, with the support of the S&T System and through databases, websites, fact-checking services or science shops.
- Making a greater effort to support and promote scientific journals, forums and spaces for scientific debate, since they are information sources that increase people's trust.
- Launching campaigns to raise awareness about misinformation and disinformation.
- Promoting programmes aimed at increasing the digital literacy of the public and developing evaluation strategies (how to deepen, debunk and triangulate information).



### Citizens' suggestions for improving science communication

- Scientific institutions and scientists should play a leading role in producing information and communicating scientific findings.
- **Television** should have a specific science section on the news, science programmes on primetime and invited scientists in programmes with high audience ratings.
- The education system should convey scientific information, but also to offer students a solid training in critical thinking.
- Science training for professionals, such as journalists, is also highlighted.
- The content of science news should be **factual and truthful.**
- Relevance of **practical knowledge in science communication**. Science news should include concrete actions that citizens can perform themselves and explain what personal consequences certain actions/issues may have.
- Demand for a **variety of formats**.
- Language employed should be **understandable, objective and adjusted** to the type of audience.





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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Motivating and supporting scientists and institutions, in their communication role, to disseminate scientific findings, through funding and regulation.
- Guaranteeing the availability of relevant information for all citizens on an equal footing by creating reference platforms that aggregate content on specific science topics in an accessible language.
- Including the transversal importance of science and scientific issues in all subjects during **compulsory** education and highlighting the relevance of the 'scientific method' throughout the educational path.
- Including more opportunities for discussing scientific issues and enhancing critical thinking skills in the curriculum at all educational levels.
- Supporting the creation of a network of onsite and virtual science shops that operate as myth-busters and places to verify news; this should serve as a 'defence system' for combating pseudoscience and for promoting scientific facts.
- Introducing clear labelling practices and scientific evidence-based certification for consumer goods (including GMOs in food, non-conventional medicines, etc.) to help consumers to make informed choices.

### THE PERSPECTIVE OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Including the requirement of science communication activities in the calls for proposals of scientific programmes.
- Launching dedicated calls for funding science communication activities.
- Promoting science communication as part of scientists' jobs.
- Including formally science communication activities as a criterion of value in the evaluation of scientists' careers (i.e., in Tenure Track).
- Providing 'rewards' for researchers participating in science communication activities.
- Earmarking specific resources for promoting **specialisation** in science communication.
- Establishing awards or recognitions to reward science communication actions and professional science communicators.
- Promoting the **stability** of these new science communication jobs in public science institutions.
- Promoting science communication as an **alternative career path** for people with scientific training, with a proper structure and rewards (in terms of wages and evaluation) system.



# CONCISE

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### **CONCISE WEBSITE**

HTTPS://CONCISE-H2020.EU

### **CONCISE SOCIAL MEDIA**

**f** You Tube

@ConciseEU

Concise European Project



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