

Re-thinking Science Communication: Take-away Ideas for Citizen Science Initiatives

The relationship between science and society is evolving. Public and private institutions aim to be close to citizens in order to increase legitimacy, accountability and good governance. In parallel, science-informed decisions are also gaining momentum in advanced democracies.

These changes affect the working practices of scientists, policy makers, science communicators, journalists, and other practitioners. Such changes also impact how citizens relate to science and science communication.

WHAT

Citizen Science

Citizen engagement in science is a reality. People are involved as volunteers in the scientific process, commonly in data collection, but also in other phases, such as quality assurance, data analysis and interpretation, problem definition and the dissemination of results. The critical purpose of any citizen science project is to contribute to scientific research, but also empower citizens creating a collaborative effort between scientists and their community. It also promotes science literacy and critical thinking for an informed society, increases trust in science and contributes to defeating the fake news.

HOW

NEWSERA and the #CitSciComm Labs

The #CitSciComm Labs are the core activity of the NEWSERA project, aimed at unveiling the potential of citizen science projects as a communication mechanism for science and technology. The #CitSciComm Labs, composed of science communicators and data journalists, representatives of citizen science projects and their quadruplex-helix stakeholders, work on co-designing innovative strategies to better communicate. Each Lab is named after the addressed stakeholder and has local groups in Italy, Spain and Portugal.



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Citizen and society at large



Academic Scientists



Public sector and Policy makers



Industries and SMEs



Data and science journalists

Data and science journalists



STAKEHOLDER

Science journalists, who are specialized in information about science, and data journalists, who use data as one of the main sources of reporting. They publish scientific or data content in generalist and specialized media, digital or not digital.

The Challenges

Lack of trust

Select and share only verified and relevant information based on factual data and scientific knowledge. Develop a science communication that is balanced, evidence-informed and up-front.

Lack of training

Promote specialized citizen science workshops among reporters and media professionals.

Take-Away Ideas

1. Build alliances with data journalists

Citizen science projects can be an amazing source of information. Engage the community to work together with data journalists.

Partner with data journalists in joint endeavours (scientific issues can become a hot topic). They can push your project forward and improve visibility.

2. Share data and support evidence-informed public media

Engage with media in order to encourage them to convey science-informed messages and news. Citizen science can be very helpful with framing the data collection and fighting misinformation. Be aware that journalists always look for other voices and should always verify your data (they should maintain their journalistic accountability).

Create specific materials for journalists that offer solutions to public issues based on your research.

3. Tell the story behind the data

Promote storytelling and “don’t call it data”. Journalists tell stories and therefore there has to be an angle, a story and a solution that comes with the data.

Scientific data can be visualized and narrated through data journalism, but be patient! A long time is needed to have enough data to publish (1-2 years).

Prepare materials for journalists: video, tables with data, pictures, etc. A press kit is a good idea!