



How to train doctoral students in science communication

Presentation of a new framework

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Johan Schnürer, SUHF expert group on collaboration

Anna Maria Fleetwood, Swedish Research Council

Jonas Stier, Mälardalen University

Magnus Boström, Örebro University

Anna Jonsson, Lund University



Background

Lena Hed

Communication Strategist

Swedish Research Council



Anna Maria Fleetwood
Senior Adviser, External Relations
amf@vr.se
Twitter: @AM_Fleetwood

“I think it is incredibly important to inform and engage the broader general public in what research can achieve for the development of society, when the research is funded by taxpayers’ money.

Katarina Bjelke
Director General, Swedish Research Council



Science communication

The role of the Swedish Research Council

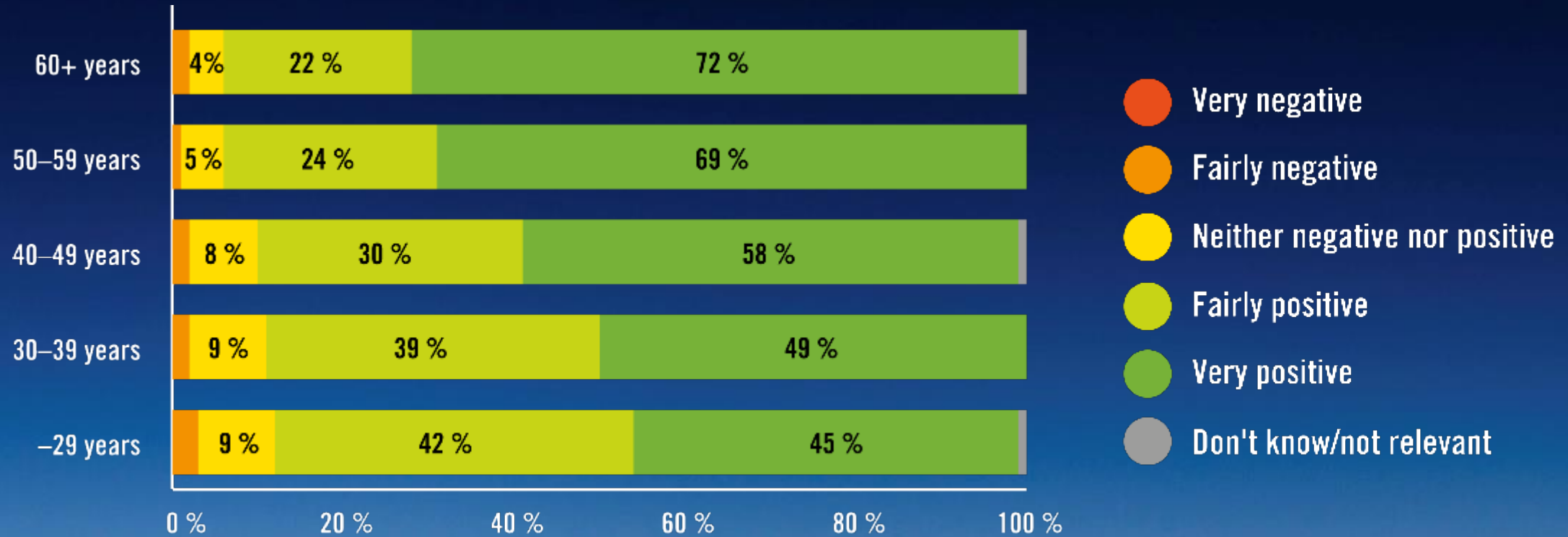
We have a national responsibility for coordinating communication about research. Together with other research funding bodies and higher education institutions, we stimulate dialogue between researchers and society as a whole.



Purpose of the project: inspire HEI:s

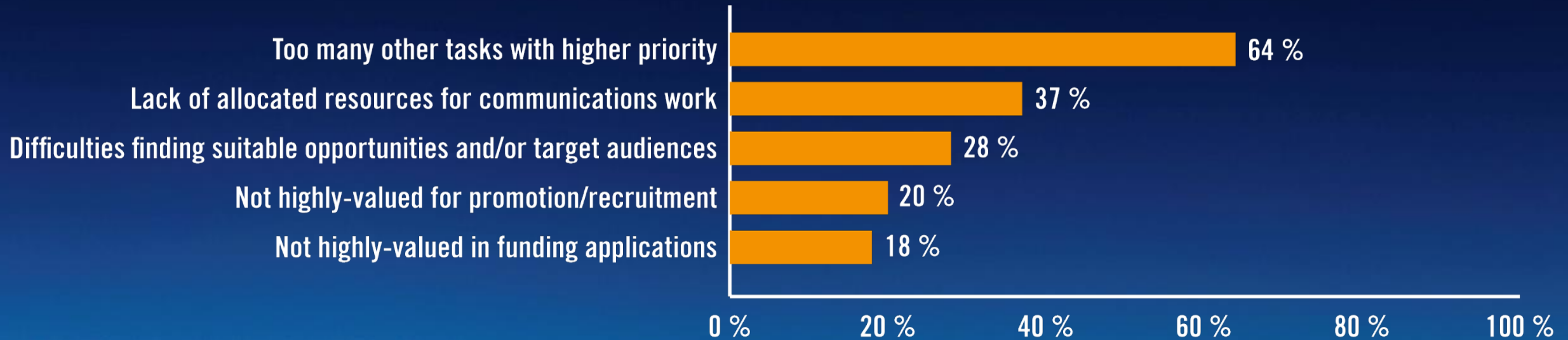
Today, a thought-through framework for communication training is often lacking from third cycle higher education.

Overall, what is your personal attitude to communicating your research with the outside world?



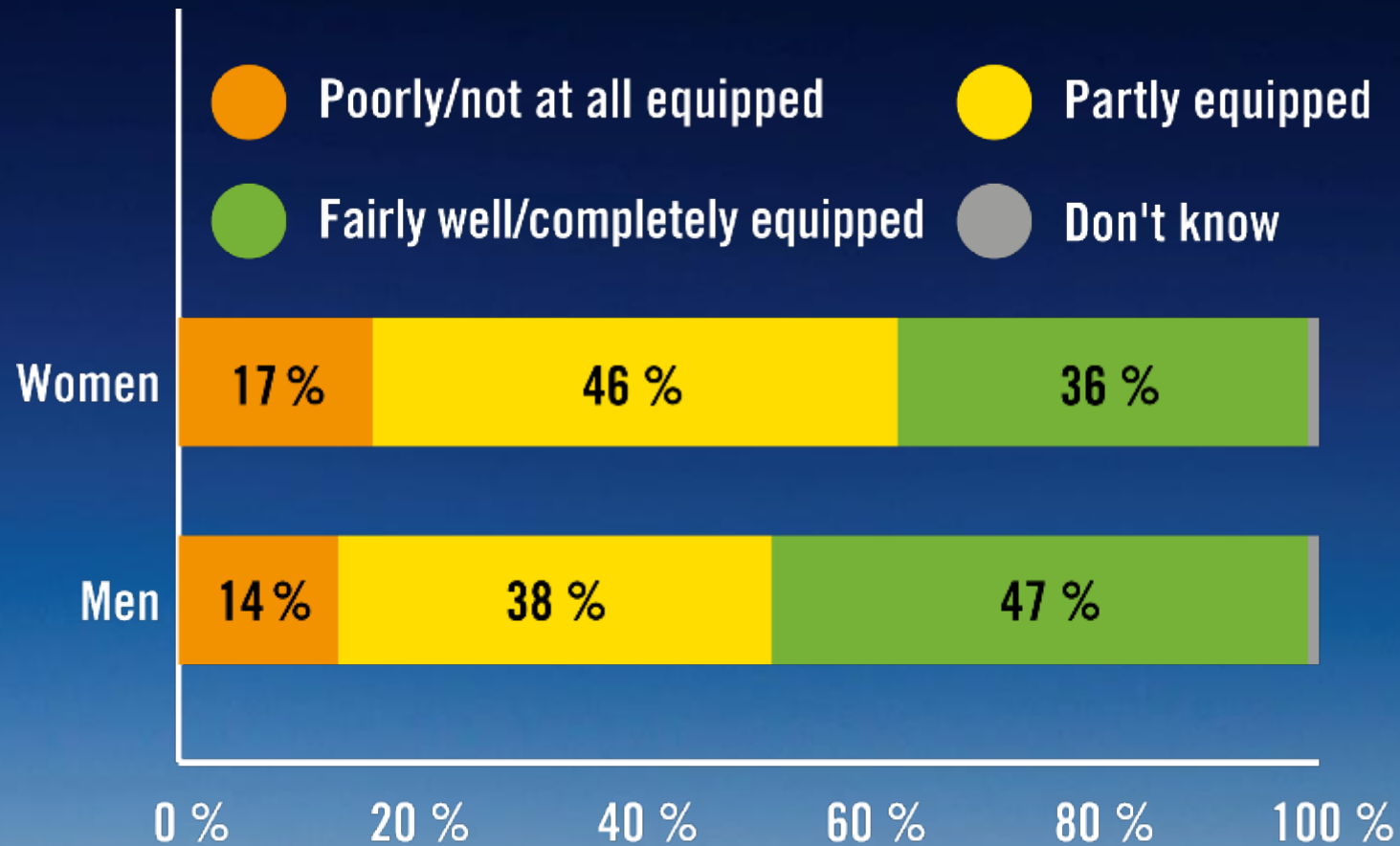
(Figure 4, VA Report 2019:8)

What are the biggest barriers you face when communicating your research with the outside world? Select *up to three* (3) options..



(Figure 22, VA Report 2019:8)

Overall, how well equipped do you feel you are to communicate your research with the outside world?



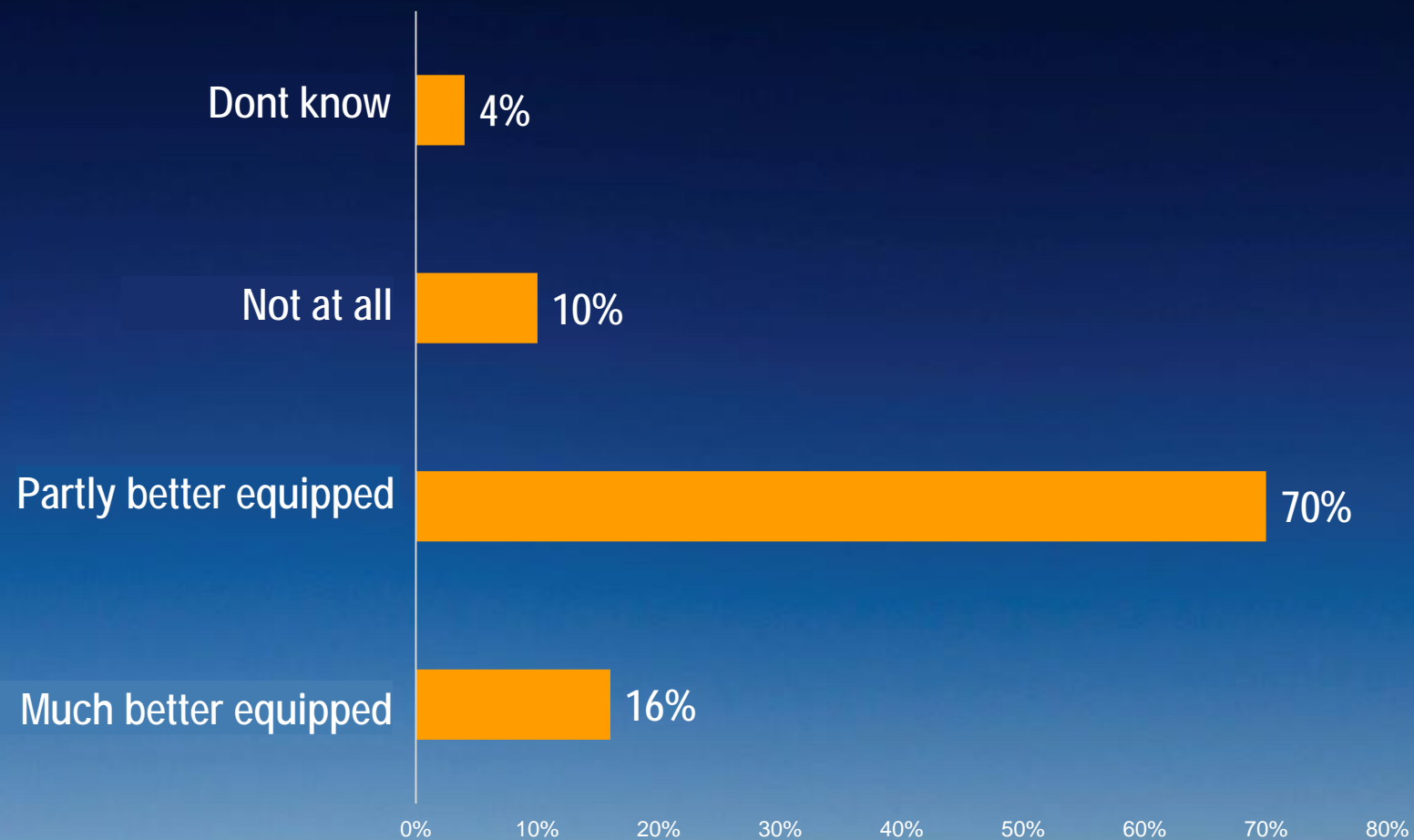
(Figure 19, VA Report 2019:8)

Have you ever undertaken any course/training on how to communicate research with the outside world?

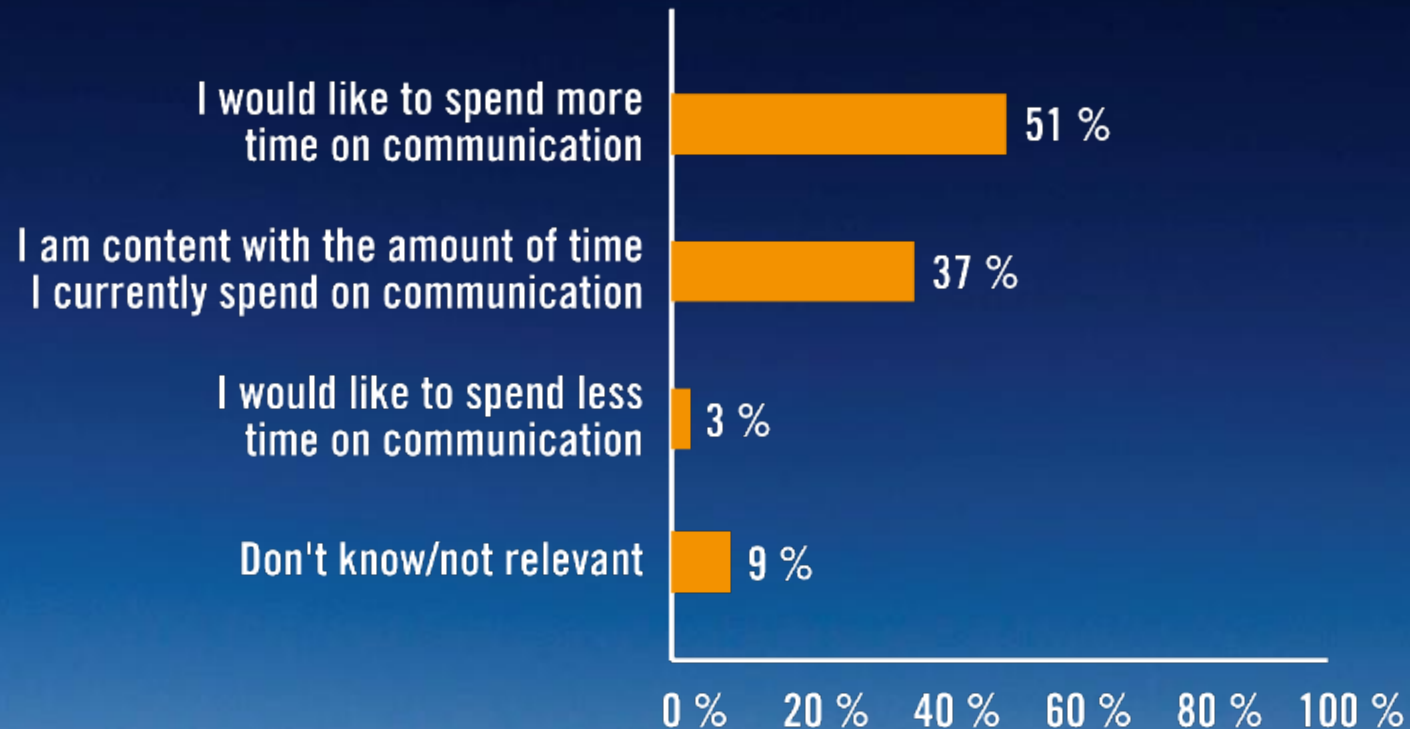


(Figure 23, VA Report 2019:8)

You answered that you have taken part in some kind of communication course. Do you feel that this made you better prepared or equipped to communicate?



Would you like to spend more or less time than you currently do communicating your research with the outside world?



(Figure 29, VA Report 2019:8)



Key findings

- **Researchers want to communicate!**
- Support and training are needed.
- Female researchers need it more than male researchers – according to themselves.
- Suitable opportunities to communicate are lacking.

RESEARCHERS' VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION AND OPEN SCIENCE IN SWEDEN

*English
Summary*

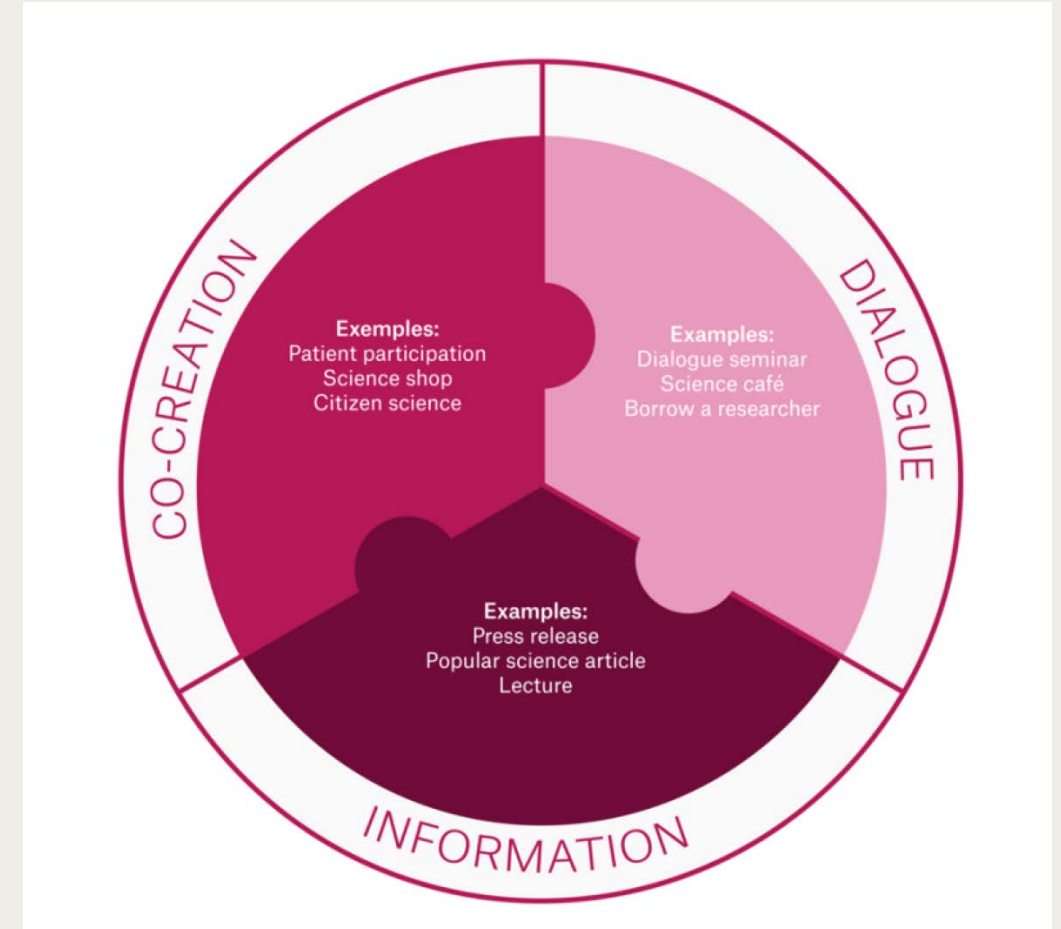




Three forms of science communication

Often used in parallel:

- Information
- Dialogue
- Co-creation



Above: See examples of the three forms of science communication



Content in three parts

Pilot course & Report

Each part mixes theory and practice and involves different competences

Researcher's role in society

- Forms of Sci-comm.
- Open Science
- Norms & ethics
- The role of the Academy
- Dilemmas and joys
- Value and purpose
- Knowledge resistance
- Personal communication strategy

Planning and integrating sci-comm.

- Logics of markets, media, politics, and communication
- Different media
- Rhetorical perspective
- Target groups
- Communication plans

Practical exercises

- The news agenda
- Oral presentation
- Collaboration with stakeholders
- Debate article
- Social media
- Wikipedia
- Collaboration with Dept. of Communication

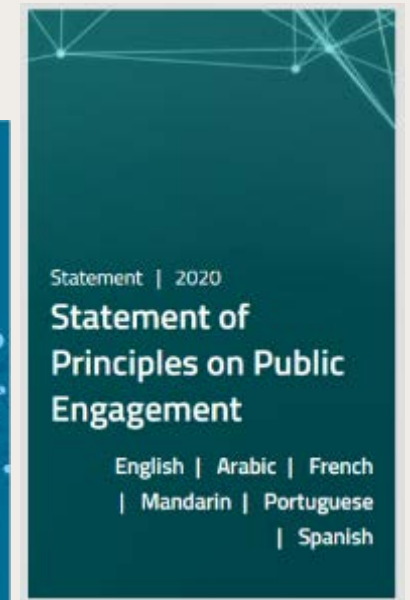
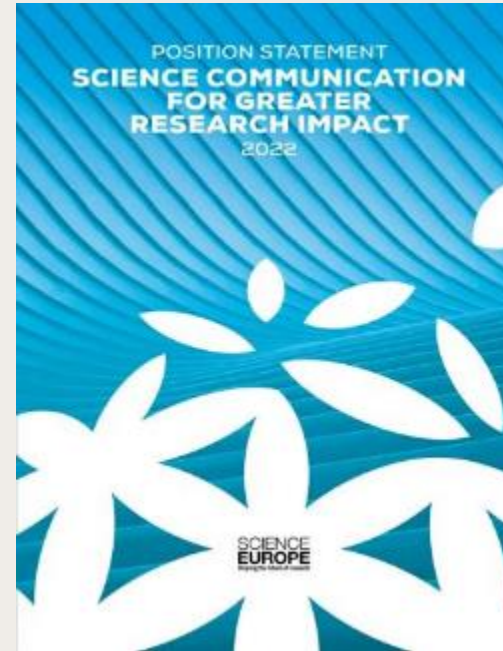


Part of an international trend

Communication as an urgent and relevant part of science

- UNESCO
- Global Research Council
- Science Europe

Policy documents as guidance and guidelines for communication and interaction between academia and society.





Pilot course for doctoral students at Örebro University autumn 2021

Magnus Boström, Professor of Sociology,
Örebro University

The team



Sara Arvidson
Head of Communication



Linda Harradine
Research Communicator



Magnus Boström
Sociology Professor



Åke Grönlund
Informatics Professor



Maria Ojala
Associate Professor in
Psychology

A pilot in three parts

- Open for all research areas
- Target group: those close to dissertation
- Communicators and lecturers working together
- Working with the PhD-student's current research
- 7,5 higher education credits
- In English

Part 1: The role of the researcher/research in society

- What does research communication mean?
- The importance of researchers in the public debate
- The importance of research communication for the quality of research
- The logics of research versus the logic of public communication (balance between integrity and the need to reach out)
- Challenges and dilemmas (polarized debate climate, knowledge resistance, threats etc.)

Part 2: Planning the communication

- The importance of planning the communication throughout the research process
- Create a communication plan
(purpose, message, target group analysis, channel selection, etc.)
- What are my most important target groups in my research?

Part 3: Practical exercises

- Writing a press release
- To be interviewed
- Creating own movie clips (Youtube)
- Hold short interesting presentation (rhetoric)
- How does the media work (how do journalists think)
- How to act in social media and how to use Wikipedia to reach out etc.
- How to write a debate article

Lessons learned – positive outcome

- It was valuable with doctoral students from different subjects and scientific fields.
- It was valuable with collaboration between the researchers and the communications department.
- The structure with three parts worked well.

Lessons learned – to improve

- More teaching needed for part 2 and 3, e.g. working with pitch and communication plan
- More room for feedback and time to revise after feedback
- Variation in oral/written communication (e.g. debate article vs. reflection piece)

Lessons learned – to be considered

- Keep focusing on the later stages of the PhD education
- A substantial budget is needed for a course like this
- Well functioning administrative resources are needed
- On-site education is required for best outcome
- Reasonable expectations



Reflections and recommendations from the Expert group

Anna Jonsson

Associate professor Organizational Studies

Lund University



Reflections

- A need for boundary-spanning conversations
 - Understanding science communication
- Preconditions within academia
 - Strengths and weaknesses
- Preconditions outside academia
 - Opportunities and threats



Recommendations

- Problematise and reflect on the meaning of communicating science
- Varying needs depending on discipline and purpose (adjust format)
- Science communication is/should be part of the research process (different roles)
- Benefit from competence within and outside the organization
- Develop courses based on current research and professional experience
- Research and practice combined
- Prioritise later-year doctoral students