

Call for Abstracts

Science Communication in Europe: Diverging Paths, Shared Challenges

11th Annual Conference of the Science Communication Division of the German
Communication Association (DGPuK)

14–15 September 2027 | Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria

Website: <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cmc/events/SciCommInEurope>

Science communication has gained institutional and policy relevance in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland – and across Europe (Davies et al., 2021; Entradas et al., 2023; Ojeda-Romano et al., 2022). This has been accompanied by an expanding range of expectations regarding what science communication should contribute to society (Besley et al., 2016, 2026; Davies, 2022; Scheu & Olesk, 2018; Toomey & Elliott, 2026): from providing access to evidence-based information and addressing mis- and disinformation to strengthening epistemic agency, fostering tolerance, facilitating public participation, and supporting democratic resilience. Many of these expectations respond to transformations and challenges that transcend national borders, including changing media environments, artificial intelligence and digital platforms, shifting patterns of trust and epistemic authority, political polarization, and pressures on science and academic freedom (Altenmüller et al., 2024; Cologna et al., 2025; Hendriks et al., 2015; Reif et al., 2025).

At the same time, science communication across Europe – as across the globe – is embedded in distinct national, regional institutional, cultural, and political contexts (Gascoigne et al., 2020; Schiele et al., 2012; Trench & Bucchi, 2021). Consequently, similar challenges meet different institutional structures, practices, and traditions of science communication across countries and regions (Fischer et al., 2025; Massarani et al., 2023; Mede et al., 2025). Fischer et al. (2025), for example, distinguish between ideal-typical science communication ecosystems characterized by stronger public-service orientation (e.g., Scandinavian countries, Germany, and France), market orientation (e.g., the UK, the Netherlands, and the USA), state-centered communication (e.g., China, Russia, and Turkey), and more fragmented types (e.g., Pakistan, Colombia, and Ghana). They maintain that even within Europe, ecosystems differ considerably. Additional variation occurs within individual countries, where regional and local political conditions shape how science communication is organized and practiced (Scheu, 2024). This interplay between shared challenges and context-specific conditions raises fundamental questions for science communication research: Which expectations and goals are shared across contexts, and which are context-specific? How do institutional structures, resources, and political conditions enable or constrain science communication in responding to current challenges? And how do answers to these questions differ across national, regional and institutional contexts?

Against this backdrop, systematic exchange across national research communities appears increasingly necessary.

The conference therefore invites scholars to explore similarities, differences, and interdependencies. It seeks to strengthen exchange and cooperation between and within research communities and to advance a more comparative and transnational understanding of science communication research and practice, in line with the comparative perspective of the co-hosting Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies (CMC) at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Media and Communications at the University of Klagenfurt. The hosting institutions are located in Vienna and Klagenfurt, which are central nodes between Western and Central Europe and also have close ties to

research and practice in Northern and Southern Europe. Therefore, the conference will be particularly interested in European-level perspectives, but also welcomes perspectives on both more granular (regional) and more international (global) levels.

Europe, then, serves not merely as a geographical frame, but as both a comparative lens and a collaborative space. As a comparative lens, a European perspective can help identify shared challenges and different pathways, sharpen our understanding of the conditions under which science communication develops, and critically examine how distinct science communication ecosystems shape the interfaces between science and society across countries and regions. As a collaborative space, the conference aims to strengthen the European science communication research community. It provides a forum for expanding international networks, developing joint research perspectives, initiating collaborative research projects and funding proposals, and establishing sustainable cooperation across countries and institutions.

Topics

We invite theoretical, empirical, methodological contributions, as well as contributions to scholarly debate, addressing **science communication in Europe**, across and beyond higher education and research, journalism, politics, industry, and society more broadly. Across all thematic areas outlined below, contributions may focus on science communication at **transnational, national, regional, or local levels**, including **comparative perspectives** across these different contexts.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- 1) **Science communication ecosystems, institutions, and infrastructures:** Contributions may examine how science communication is organized, including relevant actors, organizations, institutional structures, policies, and infrastructures. We particularly welcome studies mapping and comparing science communication ecosystems and identifying similarities, differences, and interdependencies across contexts.
- 2) **Changing environments of science communication:** Contributions may address the interactions between broader societal, political, technological, and media transformations and science communication in Europe. Relevant topics include changing media environments, digitalization, platformization, and artificial intelligence, as well as misinformation, polarization, contested knowledge, shifts in epistemic authority, and the changing relevance of scientific expertise.
- 3) **Audiences, stakeholders and relationships with science:** Contributions may explore *audiences* and their relationships with science across European contexts, including similarities and differences in the segmentation of audiences, their attitudes towards science and science communication, and their patterns of engagement. Relevant topics include inclusion and exclusion, underserved or structurally excluded audiences, and the conditions that shape relationships between science and different publics. Contributions may also address relationships and *interfaces between science and other societal stakeholders*, including policy, civil society, industry, and other societal actors. Relevant topics include scientific policy advice, knowledge exchange, stakeholder engagement, and the conditions shaping interaction, cooperation, and mutual responsiveness between science and different societal institutions and groups. Contributions presenting and critically reflecting on good-practice examples for reaching, engaging, or involving different audiences or stakeholders are also welcome.
- 4) **Comparative research, collaboration, and methodological perspectives:** Contributions may reflect on the opportunities and challenges of comparative and cross-national science communication research, including methodological innovations, collaborative research designs, data and research infrastructures for comparative research, and strategies for studying similarities, differences, and interdependencies across contexts.

Open Panels

We welcome submissions to open panels on other current topics in science communication research. The conference thus provides space both for engagement with its European focus and for presenting cutting-edge research reflecting the broader diversity of the field.

Submission Formats

- Paper presentations (approximately 15 minutes as part of a panel) – particularly suitable for completed research projects with substantive results. Presentations will be followed by a shorter time slot for discussion of findings and implications.
- Work-in-progress presentations (approximately 10 minutes as part of a panel) – particularly suitable for ongoing research projects. These presentations are intentionally shorter in order to allow more time for conceptual, theoretical, and methodological discussion and feedback.
- Panels (usually 3–4 thematically connected contributions) – should provide an overarching comparative perspective and bring the individual contributions into dialogue through a common framing and joint discussion.
- Interactive formats (e.g., Fishbowl discussions, World Cafés) – suitable for collaboratively exploring emerging topics and discussing current questions in research and/or practice.
- Posters – suitable for ongoing research projects. Poster session, beginning with short pitches by all presenters, followed by ample time for in-depth discussion of individual posters.

Submission Guidelines

Abstracts should be submitted in anonymized form as **Extended Abstracts** in **English** between 15 November 2026 and **15 March 2027** via: <https://www.conftool.net/SciCommInEurope2027>

Extended Abstracts may contain a maximum of **6,000 characters**, including spaces, footnotes, figures, and tables, but excluding references.

Length of panel submissions increases according to the number of individual contributions. In addition, panel proposals should include an overarching abstract of no more than **2,000 characters**.

We accept submissions of **work that has not previously been published or presented at a conference**.

Authors will be informed about acceptance by end of **May 2027**.

When submitting, please indicate:

- Is the contribution considered for the **conference theme** or for an **open panel**?
- Are you willing to change the presentation format in case of acceptance (e.g., paper to poster)?
- Is the contribution **led by a PhD student**?

Review Criteria

All submissions will undergo an anonymized peer-review process and will be evaluated by at least two reviewers according to the following criteria:

- originality, innovation, and/or contribution to the advancement/consolidation of the field
- relevance of the research question to the field of science communication
- theoretical grounding and conceptual clarity
- methodological appropriateness and quality
- clarity, comprehensibility, and conciseness of presentation

For interactive or other innovative formats, adapted or additional criteria may be applied, placing greater emphasis on aspects such as interactivity, participation, and experimental approaches.

Language

The conference language is English. To support linguistic inclusivity, presentations should be delivered in English, while slides may include content in other languages.

PhD Workshop, 13 September 2027

The workshop will provide PhD researchers working on science communication with an opportunity to present and discuss their ongoing work and receive feedback from peers and senior scholars.

Further information and a separate call for the PhD Workshop will be circulated by the early-career network of the Science Communication Division of the DGPK.

Organizing Team

Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies (CMC), Austrian Academy of Sciences,
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The conference is co-organized by **Friederike Hendriks** and **Niels Mede**, chairs of the Science Communication Division of the German Communication Association (DGPK), and **Lennart Banse**, **Selina Beckman** and **Lena Zils**, representatives of the division's early-career researchers.

Questions and further information

For questions, please contact the organizing team at: SciCommInEurope@oeaw.ac.at

Conference website: <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cmc/events/SciCommInEurope>

We look forward to receiving your submissions and to welcoming you to Vienna in September 2027!

Literature

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