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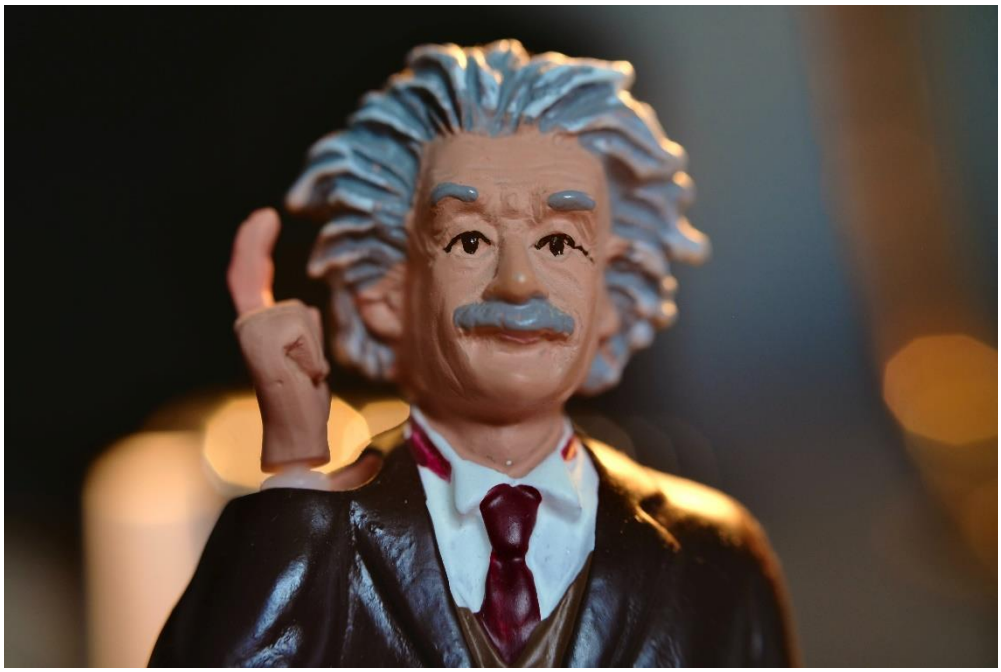
FETFX Recommendations Paper: Advising High-Risk Research Projects and Policymakers on Communicating Effectively



Basic, use inspired research holds the key to solving many of society's grand challenges - but to win support, strategic outreach, engagement and two-way dialogue are key

Research funded by the European Innovation Council (EIC) Pathfinder - Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) programme may hold the key to solving society's biggest challenges, but to do so, it requires support from a wide range of actors, from citizens, to governments, to industry. Facilitating this support calls for sustained, clear, targeted, and effective outreach and engagement, undertaken in service of building two-way dialogue between these audiences and projects, researchers, and policymakers alike.

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Inspired by discussions at the November 2020 Signals from the Future virtual workshop, which was co-hosted by the Horizon 2020 funded QUEST Project, FETFX has produced a comprehensive paper entitled 'Assessing Science Communication in the European Union's High-Risk Research Ecosystem: Recommendation Paper' aimed at researchers, project communicators, and EC policymakers. The paper comes at a time when the digital communication scape is more complex than ever; against this backdrop, high-risk research dissemination faces several challenges including, for example, the rise of misinformation and so-called 'fake news', depleted funding for science journalism, and researchers struggling to balance communication efforts with their work. But at the same time, it also offers several new and exciting opportunities and channels for researchers to connect with audiences in innovative ways.

EC and EIC policymakers can support science communication from a higher level, for example, by giving prominence to credible mediators, funding trainings for researchers to sharpen their communication skills, launching awareness campaigns to counter obstacles, and setting up networking and engagement opportunities. Effective communication will also strengthen innovation partnerships with industry to bring high-risk research results to the market and enhance Europe's scientific autonomy. As 2021 marks the launch of the full-fledged EIC, the most ambitious innovation initiative undertaken in the EU, high quality outreach and engagement can further maximise associated opportunities.

Sharpening their communication skills will empower researchers to take more active roles over digital media, fighting misinformation, targeting new audiences, and engaging in dialogue with different stakeholder groups. By better understanding who they are communicating with, researchers can incorporate appropriate levels of complexity and disseminate over the most direct channels to reach their intended targets.

In addition to describing the current situation surrounding science communication and dissemination, the recommendation paper includes a comprehensive list of good practices and tips for high-risk researchers, science communicators and policymakers. It further includes a discussion on the circulation of knowledge and talents in Europe's high-risk research ecosystem, and a short case study which examines Artificial Intelligence as an example of an emerging technology prone to misunderstanding and misinterpretation among mass audiences.

A recorded webinar related to the paper, in which recommendations for policymakers is discussed can be watched here.

You can view the recorded sessions from Signals from the Future here.

To read a copy, access the recommendations paper here.

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