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5G EXPOSURE, CAUSAL EFFECTS, AND RISK PERCEPTION THROUGH CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

7 STEPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SCIENTIFIC ADVOCACY



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The role of scientific evidence in policymaking is undeniable. However, policy formulation and other political processes and how to pursue successful advocacy are not necessarily familiar to scientists. This document aims to provide essential recommendations for scientists to effectively engage with public authorities, policymakers, and other relevant actors in decision-making. Scientists can and must have a pivotal role in shaping evidence-based policies that have a positive impact on public policy.



1 Understanding the landscape

Before engaging with policymakers, it is imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of the political, social, and economic context in which decisions are made. This includes **identifying key actors in the process**, understanding their priorities, and recognizing potential challenges or obstacles. By understanding how the political process in a broad sense works, a scientist can **tailor the messages and strategies** to resonate with the specific concerns and goals of decision-makers and other actors involved (citizens, stakeholders).



2 Establishing clear objectives

For time efficiency and effectiveness, it is key to establish clear objectives before contacting public authorities. These can be either a policy reform (to influence a policy in a particular way), increased awareness (aiming at future development), or increased funding opportunities. You need to **present these objectives clearly to your interlocutor** including your scientific contribution to the field and the policymakers' objectives. While some objectives can be measurable (quantitative), others might be qualitative.



3 Assessing the best time for engaging

Once you understand the political landscape, it is important to assess when to initiate the dialogue, which in most cases is **the earlier the better**. If a policy initiative is already planned, there might be a public consultation period before a proposal is made. In this period, scientific contributions together with other stakeholders' inputs are incorporated into the process. Suppose the objective is to initiate a debate that is currently not in the political or public debate. In that case, you might consider which factors can give additional visibility to your request (a scientific congress, an international day, the appointment of a new government official, or any other to try to step in into the public agenda).

Rarely advocacy efforts are restricted to one limited-time framework. It is rather a long-term process, where you should look at the changing policy landscape and assess the achievement of your goals and keep policymakers informed of your research results that might be relevant. You can do so by looking at some metrics, such as funding allocations, policy awareness, or proper policy changes.

If you cannot plan or are not aware of a political initiative until late in the process, there is no need to panic. Instead, you can devote some of your time to reaching out to relevant policymakers as soon as you can.



4 Communicating effectively

Communication is key to a successful advocacy strategy. Tailor your messages to be clear, concise, and **accessible to non-experts**. Avoid using jargon and use relatable examples to illustrate the impact of your research on public health. When scientific terms are required, try to explain them as thoroughly as possible. Adapt your communication language and formats to the expected audience. Policymakers receive a significant amount of information from stakeholders and public authorities. Therefore, **prioritise short and graphic reports or briefings with bullet and action points**, ideally no more than one or two pages. Offer evidence-based recommendations and link them with their political agendas where possible.



5 Ways to communicate with the right actors

Horizon Europe's projects and clusters now present their results through policy briefs and other deliverables, which most of the time are included in the project proposals. These represent a very good opportunity to present the project/cluster members, their research lines and the project/cluster objectives and milestones. These deliverables will be distributed to policymakers by mail and in any project/cluster event. The **mapping of policymakers** should be considered part of the deliverable itself.



6 Thinking in the long-term: Building lasting relationships

Establishing long-term relations is key to having good access to the relevant policymakers on time. Policymakers and other actors in the process value scientific evidence to base their policies, therefore to be known by them can provide you a competitive advantage to influence decision-making. For that purpose, **feel free to share with them your latest studies or invite them to conferences** you are organising, even when you do not have any particular request at the time. If you do not know a policymaker adequate for the occasion, do not hesitate to ask those who you know.



7 Building coalitions and alliances

Collaboration with like-minded organizations, advocacy groups, and fellow scientists can **amplify your influence and strengthen your advocacy efforts**. By forming coalitions and alliances, you can pool resources, share expertise, and present a unified front when engaging with public authorities. This collective approach enhances the visibility and impact of your advocacy initiatives. As a scientist, academic organisations and associations are a great starting point, but civil society organisations such as NGOs or industry associations might have common interests with you if your research is relevant for their area of work.

Conclusion

Engaging with public authorities and policymakers is a **dynamic process** that requires persistence, effective communication, strategic thinking, and planning. By following these key recommendations, scientists can leverage their expertise to advocate for evidence-based policies that positively impact public health within the context of the Horizon Europe project's health cluster.



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