



Science communication – a new language

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The 21st century poses many challenges before contemporary scientists such as : pursuit of scientific excellence, securing national and international funding, increasing project cooperation with private sector, intellectual property protection, but besides all the aforementioned, contemporary scientist should possess soft skills such as: research management and communication skills. Today, communication is considered a strategic function by the majority of organizations which interact in our social system. There are different communication channels targeting different audiences; business executives, politicians, public officials and general public. For scientists, it is a new language to learn. However, dialogue with society is essential. Feelings towards science still reveal a fundamental ambivalence between fascination and fear. And where there is any ambivalence, not much is needed for a positive perception to become negative. Learning to write a scientific paper or give a lecture at the scientific conference is part of every scientist's training. Public communication has different requirements; it follows different norms and above all, it takes place in a different context. Scientists must try to make their work interesting to the public. The RBI Open Days, popular scientific lectures and laboratory tours are just some of the many events organized by the Ruđer Bošković Institute in order to promote science and knowledge in general.

Lectures given by presenters at the Round Table and especially discussion afterwards demonstrated importance of communication between science and public, but also emphasized a gap present in this communication. While much effort is given to address a "general public" through organization of popular scientific events, successful communication with business executives and politicians is still rare. Knowing how to communicate means, knowing how to transform what scientist want to say into what the listener wants to know. While science often explains the familiar things in terms of the unfamiliar and uses specialized language and terminologies, communication requires the use of a shared language, and first of all, identification of audience's problems. Scientists need some help in this "new world". There are many workshops, tutorials and publications provided by the European Commission and others, a kind of "survival kit for scientists". There are also many popular scientific events organized in Croatia, where students and scientists can practice and improve their communication skills. So, there will be less and less excuse for, "not-so-good communication" between science and public in the future.

