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REVIEW

# How citizens view science communication: pathways to knowledge

**Reviewed Book**

Moreno-Castro, C., Krzewińska, A. and Dzimińska, M. (Eds.). (2024).
*How Citizens View Science Communication: Pathways to Knowledge*.
Routledge

**Reviewed by**

**Massimiano Bucchi**

**Abstract**

The book edited by Moreno-Castro, Krzewińska and Dzimińska intends to "contribute to the general discussion on the public perception of science, the issue of information overload, trust in science sources and the most effective ways of communicating science information". The book presents the main results of the CONCISE project funded by the European Commission. In 2019, just before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, five public consultations were conducted with citizens in Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Portugal, involving a total of 497 citizens. Four specific topics were at the centre of discussions and consultations with the citizens involved: vaccines, climate change, GMOs, "complementary and alternative medicine". The European study is documented in detail in the book and conveys the impression of a well thought-out, organised and concerted set of activities. The list of authors includes several well-known researchers in the field of science communication in Europe.

**Keywords**

Citizen science

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Chapter 1 outlines the general structure and methodology of the project. The most interesting chapters are potentially chapter 2, "What do citizens want? Science communication in the eyes of the public"; and chapter 4 "The trustworthiness and reliability of science information channels and sources in the public's view".

Authors of chapter 2 identify through the discussions "a multi- layered understanding of science communication, in which the transversal dimensions of information accessibility and validity and the public's understanding of and engagement with science coexist and are often entwined. They also find relatively small differences among citizens of the five countries involved in the study.

The results outlined in chapter 4 confirm once more that citizens' trust in experts (and official and governmental sources, the authors add) is consistently high across countries, with some differences among the four specific topics. The chapter concludes by emphasising the importance of "understanding how citizens build trust in science", a question which remains largely open.

Chapter 3 focuses on how citizens evaluated the consultation experience itself; together with the first chapter, it is a recommended reading for those who wish to organise similar experiences.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to discussing how science communication is perceived with regard to two of the issues considered, i.e. climate change and GMOs. As the authors themselves recognise, these are rather different issues in terms of content, context, topicality and trajectories in public discussions, which does not help comparison and drawing significant conclusions. Also, the book does not make available a comparable analysis of the two other issues discussed in the project, vaccines and complementary and alternative medicine.

It is a pity that the book does not offer a final section with more general conclusions where the interpretation of results could have been expanded further beyond the specific scope of the CONCISE project. For example, it would have been interesting to look at the project results in the light of the pandemic and post-pandemic social and communicative context: could the results have been different, in which way, and why?

It would also have been interesting to reflect on the project methodology and results in a broader global context: e.g. to what extent they reflect general trends, or more specific trends in European countries? This aspect could have been discussed more in depth, also with the help of the international advisory board that was part of the project.

Finally, a follow-up on participating citizens could have provided further relevant insights on the impact (and potentially multiplying effect) of the consultations themselves.

Nevertheless, "*How Citizens View Science Communication*" stands as a relevant and detailed document of an international collaborative science communication project and experience, offering interesting elements for the understanding of public perception of science communication.

## About the author

Massimiano Bucchi, professor of Science and Technology in Society and Director of Master SCICOMM, University of Trento, has been visiting professor in Asia, Europe, North America and Oceania. He is the author of several books (published in more than 20 countries) and papers in journals such as *Nature*, *Science* and *PLOS*. Among his books in English: *Science and the Media* (Routledge, 1998); *Science in Society* (Routledge, 2004); *Beyond Technocracy* (Springer, 2009; published also in Chinese, 2016); *Newton's Chicken. Science in the Kitchen* (World Scientific, 2020); *Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology* (3rd ed. 2021, ed. with B. Trench, Routledge). From 2016 to 2019 he was editor-in-chief of the international journal *Public Understanding of Science*.

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