

## Guidelines for participating researchers / contributors

The last Friday in September has been designated Researchers' Night by the European Commission. All over Europe hundreds of activities are organised to show how exciting and fun research can be. In 2015, activities were run in over 280 cities in Europe and neighbouring countries, reaching around 1.1 million visitors.

Researchers' Night was first run in 2005. In 2006, the Swedish activities were run under the common name "ForskarFredag" (Researcher Friday) and coordinated by the non-profit association VA (Public & Science). In 2012, the regional heats of the Researchers' Grand Prix contest became a part of Researchers' Night activities in a number of cities.

In 2016, Researchers' Night is organised with financial support from AFA Insurance, the European Commission via Horizon 2020, IKEM - Innovation and Chemical Industries in Sweden, the Swedish Steel Producers' Association, The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, LIF – the research-based pharmaceutical industry, the Swedish Association of Professional Scientists, the Oscar and Maria Ekman Philanthropic Fund, The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, SULF – the Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers, The Association of Swedish Engineering Industries, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Swedish Research Council, Vinnova – Sweden's Innovation Agency, the ÅForsk Foundation as well as many other local sponsors and organisers.

### Objectives and key messages:

***"Researchers are ordinary people with extraordinary jobs."***

Through direct contact with you, as researchers, visitors to Researchers' Night will get a realistic picture of what a scientist is and what research involves. Any stereotypes about "mad professors" will be challenged. One objective is to increase dialogue, two-way communication and interaction between researchers and the public.

### Target groups

The target groups are the general public, with a particular focus on children and young people.

*Tip:* Who will you be talking to? Is it children, teenagers, adults, prospective students or the elderly? If you aren't sure, find out from your local organiser. Think about who you are going to meet so you can prepare in advance.

*"Fun and inspirational to talk to the next generation of potential scientists?"*

### Adapt for the target group

You should *adapt the information* and how you *communicate* it to meet the needs of the target group. Know what you want to convey to the audience through the information that you give.

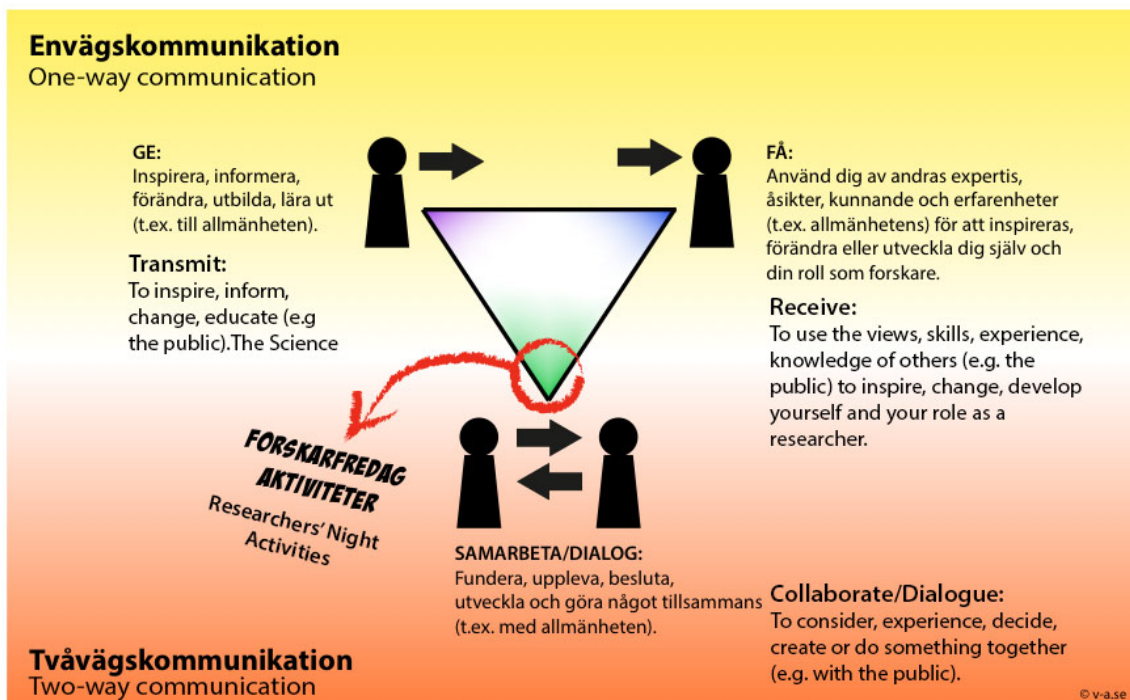
Your activity should always:

- Have an identified target audience.
- Meet the target group's information needs i.e. what you convey should be adapted so that it is understood by the target audience and contributes to their knowledge.
- Be presented in a way that appeals to the target audience and reinforces your message.

### Language

Adapt your language to the target audience. You are not among research colleagues. **Don't use specialist terms!** Tell them about the person behind the research, how you became a researcher and why you chose your field of research.

## The Science Communication Activity Triangle



Tip: Remember that it should be *you* as a researcher who is the focus rather than your research. Be prepared for questions such as Who are you? How much do you earn? Were you a swot at school? How do you know that? etc. Remember that your voice, how you sound, your clothes and your body language will all affect how you come across to different audiences.

### Two-way communication

The aim is to create *dialogue*, not to present something. See the diagram above.

### Approach

Get them interested! Why did you become a researcher? Why do we need research? Why yours in particular? The methods, how you work, are rarely of interest to the public.

- Take something with you that represents you as a researcher or possibly your research. Preferably, it should be something that the public or your target audience can relate to in their everyday lives.
- Give examples! Use concrete examples to explain something that is either abstract or very general. Progress from the known to the unknown.
- Do not use PowerPoint or scientific posters if they haven't been adapted for a public audience. Consult your local Researchers' Night organiser if you are unsure.

*"Exciting challenge to get young people interested in research"*

- Get the audience / visitors actively involved. Involve, ask questions or ask the audience/visitors for their opinion about something. Prepare a hands-on activity or quiz, something that engages your audience and creates a two-way dialogue.
- Don't be afraid to try new approaches or ways to communicate your research. E.g. Find new ideas at [www.scicommttoolbox.se](http://www.scicommttoolbox.se)

#### **And finally ... why should you participate?**

- To get new perspectives and ideas.
- To become a better teacher to your students.
- To learn how to explain what you actually do to friends and relatives.
- To increase your chances of getting funding.
- To increase the opportunities for trans-disciplinary collaborations.
- To advance your career.
- To be of benefit to society and industry.
- To get more people interested in research and higher education.
- For democratic reasons - to provide transparency and insight.
- Because it is a statutory duty (science-society interaction, the so-called third task).
- Because it is the public who pays your salary (if you are financed by public taxes).

*"I noticed that our PhD students gained a lot from the experience of communicating with high school pupils and explaining their complicated research in a way that they can understand!"*

#### **Read more:**

<https://forskarfredag.se/researchers-night/>  
[https://forskargrandprix.se/researchers-grand-prix-2016/  
\[www.scicommttoolbox.se\]\(http://www.scicommttoolbox.se\)](https://forskargrandprix.se/researchers-grand-prix-2016/www.scicommttoolbox.se)

***Thanks for participating in Researchers' Night and good luck!***

*"Really interesting to hear the thoughts of people who are not familiar with my area of research"*

*"You always learn something new when you meet other people, it is important for researchers to meet the public and be able to describe their research in a way they can understand.  
 It was inspiring to see how interested young people are in research."*

*"Beneficial to try to describe, in a simple way, what I do, and gave me new insights.  
 The public is more knowledgeable and interested than you think."*