

# Summary of group work

Session F3: communication of science to the public

- **Context:** The SSPH+ Foundation Board decided to complement the SSPH+ Strategy 2023-27 with a new transversal focus, relevant to all three strategic pillars (research; training; science to policy/practice), namely to engage in the communication of public health sciences to the public. This decision calls for a concept and implementation plan which needs to integrate communication lessons learned from Corona Immunitas and the pandemic, the SSPH+@Expo project as well as the fundraising perspective.
- **Objective:** The workshop shall identify ideas, challenges, open questions and possible steps and strategies to be considered in the development of a “SSPH+ Communication Concept”. Participants shall discuss this new strategic focus also in light of current or future communication plans at their own institutions or among national or international constituencies to identify win-wins of collaborations. Discussion may also focus on whether and how communications strategies may specifically relate to the three strategy pillars of the SSPH+ mission (copied below).

# Link between SSPH+ strategy and communication strategy

- Better understanding SSPH+ strategy and knowledge of strategy
- Need to have overall strategy in order to develop communication strategy
- Increase SSPH+ visibility and link between overall strategy and communication strategy
- Who are the main stakeholders SSPH+ wants to reach?
  - How will we communicate with them?

# Thoughts about how SSPH+ currently communicates to the public

- What is the communication strategy?
- Faculty members communicate as individuals or on behalf of their institutions
- Engagement is on an ad hoc basis, e.g. Corona Immunitas videos on YouTube
  - What lessons from these experiences?

# How should SSPH+ adopt a communication strategy?

- decide if via intermediates or direct communication to individual  
... à group assumed 'via intermediates'
- develop communication strategy within your research plan
- Is every research interesting for public ?
- supporting office, that helps to communicate, constant follow of consistent info.
- make messages simple + use tailored messaging!  
( behavioral intervention...)

# Suggestions for communication strategy

- Strategy 1: Translate science into language of different constituencies/publics
- Strategy 2:
  - Translate public concerns into our language / projects
  - we are interested in concerns of the public and use it to guide our action
  - Invite, engage with public, ask about their concerns
  - In how far are researchers open to that?
  - UAS are already closer to public concerns?
  - What are current, short-term concerns of public? How to get them?
  - Public opinion polls; talk to journalist who know interests of public
  - Panels of public in different regions, different constituencies
  - Build on planned National “Citizen”/Public Cohort Study – also use these participants as a panel and invite them to suggest new topics to be researched / addressed by PH interventions; could be conceptualized/implemented as a continuous communication platform between PH research and the broader public
  - - Policy briefs
  - - story telling videos
  - - Communication is not only info dissemination- it is dialogue and exchange

# Aims for communication

- Visibility
- Sharing of academic knowledge
  - Report back research
    - Funded by public money therefore responsibility of researchers to do this
    - SSPH+ takes what is already produced and “translate it” into useful tools
- Sharing with information/science with public
  - Going beyond academia, public, civil society
  - Different areas of expertise bring in interdisciplinary views
    - Build off the fact we are based at academic institutions with areas beyond health
- What messages?
  - Output of science
    - Different formats of products
      - Which audience needs what product
        - Visual content (infographics, videos, etc.)

# Health literacy: who should we address?

- Individuals in public, intermediates like ;NGOs / leagues as distributors of information
- Lay summaries to study participants
- SSPH should talk to intermediates (e.g. universities, politicians at community/cantonal and National level)



# Challenges

- Coordination between members and SSPH+
- Defining the research agenda
  - FOPH, grants, specific requests
  - Versus priorities for SSPH+ and SSPH+ members (individuals and institutions)
- Funding
  - Overall research, e.g. SNSF
  - Communication activities
- Need to better communicate to members
  - SSPH+ Faculty
  - SSPH+ Partner institutions
  - SSPH+ University members
    - Justification as to why SSPH+ is important
    - Challenges in practice: Skepticism of journalists – because they may think scientists want to tell them their message

# Open questions

- Presentation of lessons learnt from EXPO and Corona Immunitas to further inform strategy
- Members of SSPH+ speaking on behalf SSPH+, how will this work?
- Limiting the range of topics
  - Will SSPH+ limit the range of topics included in communication, e.g. COVID-19, Noncommunicable diseases, Orphan diseases, etc.
- What are the contents to communicate on (look at the political agenda). Topics need to be chosen wisely, not too much, cannot be handled. Who should take a decision on what topics to communicate?
- How to find the right momentum? There should be good examples. One good example was the Manifesto on child public health at Public Health Conference 2019 that was well received by politicians and foundations.
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- Should we give recommendations? Or should we only present the pros and cons and simply inform? This is a very general question often debated also, for instance, in ethics councils: Should they only provide the pros and cons on the basis of various ethical theories or should they make recommendations? These recommendations in the field of ethics, however, cannot be valuable for all human beings given that we come from different cultural and religious backgrounds.