

Report



1. Date and time: 8/12/2020, 10:45 - 12:15
2. Title of the session: **Learning from the legacy of miscommunicating climate science**
3. Format: Ideas Lab
4. Facilitators: **Robert Watt** (Communications Director and Head of Strategic Policy Engagement, Stockholm Environment Institute), **Laura Smillie** (Policy Analyst, European Commission – Joint Research Centre)

Main topics discussed

The main objective of this Ideas Lab was to encourage participants to develop ideas for better communicating about the climate crisis, regardless of whether their job involves communicating about climate science.

Participants were divided into two groups to focus on two different key audiences:

1. Young people
2. Communities living in industrial regions

They were encouraged to take into account the main issues around climate science communication, such as:

1. framing
2. bias
3. uncertainty
4. online environment
5. knowledge being locked up in boxes
6. the myth of rational decision-making

The session included participants from different backgrounds: EU agencies, youth organisations, trade organisations and academics.

Solutions proposed

A number of ideas came up during the discussions.

1. Importance of being transparent when communicating about climate science. There is no point in selling a utopia.
2. Importance of being local. With respect to industrial regions especially, messaging will be more effective if it does not come from Brussels or a capital.
3. Importance of having a trusted messenger, which is a difficult task.
4. Building local education and cultural institutions. This complements points 2 and 3.

Take-away messages

Climate science communication is not a task that we should shy away from, even if our jobs are not directly linked to it.

There has been a clear failure in communicating climate science, which has exacerbated denialism and pseudo-scepticism.

We should look at the failures of the past to try and see how we can convince specific groups of the importance of climate action. For that, a one-size-fits-all message simply will not do.