



The need for Science Communicators as intermediaries to bridge the research-policy gap

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The political and scientific water communities ultimately strive for the same goal, namely finding solutions to current water-related issues. Yet, collaboration between the two is still not where it could and should be. In this presentation, we will explore reasons for lacking collaboration and necessary steps on both ends. We will furthermore shed light on a third important actor of great importance in this context: the Science Communicator.

We will present lessons learnt from our manifold experiences in transferring research results into policy recommendations and feeding them into the policy process on global, European and national level. We will present examples of, among others, the Horizon 2020 project IMPREX (IMproving Predictions and management of hydrological Extremes) and the research programme GRoW (Water as a Global Resource) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. IMPREX is a research project working on improved hydrological short- and medium-term predictions including dedicated tasks to support transfer of research results into policy and practice. GRoW was launched in support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and comprises 12 projects involving more than 90 institutions from research, business and practice. Together they work on innovative approaches to global analyses and local solutions for sustainable water resources management in more than 40 case studies world-wide. The GRoW research projects are accompanied by GRoWnet, a four year project dedicated to networking and transfer of research results.

We will demonstrate concrete examples of how we approach our role as science communicator in IMPREX and make the research results heard in the European political debate, e.g. around the Fitness Check (reassessment) of the Water Framework Directive and which steps we are taking to reach stakeholder groups. Experience shows that bridging the gap needs solidifying the large-scale relevance of small-scale results in a way that makes it understandable also for non-experts as well as a profound understanding of the political processes and current topics of interest to identify the right “gateways”. This shows, it is not only an added value to integrate science communicators into the process but also highlights that efforts by both, the research and policy communities, are needed to bridge the gap: Researchers need to consider the relevance of their results in a broader context repeatedly. Whereas the policy community needs to reach out to the science community more distinctly in discussing appropriate measures and needs to work on making entry points for scientists much more self-explanatory. GRoW shows that one approach never fits all; depending on topics, regions and target-groups different approaches are necessary to bring research into practice and policy. Furthermore the GRoW consortium is actively thinking about how collaboration between researchers and policy makers can be improved on a global level, and advocates for building-up an international science-policy platform that enables policy makers to draw from evidence-based results and scientific knowledge, more easily.