



Is there a need for a code of ethics in science communication and Communicating Uncertainties on Climate Change?

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The EMS Media team recognises that:

- Scientific knowledge is valuable for society, but it also becomes fragile in a media-dominated society where the distortion of facts clouds the validity of the information.
- The use of scientific titles in communication normally brings expectations of high standards regarding the information content.
- Freedom of speech is fragile in the sense that it can be diluted by a high proportion of false information.
- The value of scientific and scholastic titles is degraded when they are used to give the impression of false validity.
- Science communication is powerful, and implies a certain responsibility and ethical standard.
- The scientific community operates with a more or less tacit ethics code in all areas touching the scientists' activities.
- Even though many scientific questions cannot be completely resolved, there is a set of established and unequivocal scientific practices, methods, and tests, on which our scientific knowledge rests.
- Scientists are assumed to master the scientific practices, methods, and tests.
- High standard in science-related communication and media exposure, openness, and honesty will increase the relevance of science, academics, and scientists in the society, in addition to benefiting the society itself.
- Science communication is important to maintain and enhance the general appreciation of science. The value of the role of science is likely to increase with a reduced distance between scientists and the society and a lower knowledge barrier.
- An awareness about the ethical aspects of science and science communication may aid scientists in making decisions about how and what to say.
- Scientists are often not trained in communication or ethics.
- A set of guide lines may lower the barrier for scientists concerned about tacit codes to come forward and talk to the media.

Recommendations:

- The mass media should seek more insight into scientific knowledge, history, principles, and societies. Journalists and artists should be encouraged and receive support to attend the large scientific conferences organised by e.g the EMS, EGU, AMS, and the AGU. National meteorological societies can contribute by promoting the idea of media participation, e.g. through statements and letters of opinion to news papers, in TV and radio. They can point to media awards and best-practice examples (such as the Norwegian collaboration between the national broadcasting corporation and the meteorological service yr.no.)
- Tacit ethics codes and expectations from scientists should be spelled out. The role of scientists should be clear, and national academies and member organisations are encouraged to provide a clear list of expectations.
- Statements drawing on the authority of science should have a basis in well-established and unequivocal scientific practices, methods, and tests. This means, for instance, that analysis and statistics must conform to well-established robust methods, avoiding 'cherry picking' and the misrepresentation of data. The information should also – to the greatest possible degree – be based on open source and transparent methods and data.