

Round-table discussion on session 4

Dissemination, education, communication

8 June, Wednesday

Chair: *Edit Hoyk*

Rapporteur: *Judit Sábitz*

Compiled by *Gabriella Szépszó*

Wrap-up presentation

(by *G. Szépszó*)

Summary of the presentations in the session

- Development of local capacity: two projects under the Programme for Adaptation to the Climate Change in Hungary (R. *Virág-Prokai*)
- Getting across our message about climate change (R. *Benestad*)
- Experience from the media (M. *Tóth*)
- Climate in education – university level (J. *Mika*)
- Local level adaptation strategies (L. *Antal Z.*)

What we learnt?

- High importance of the professional and scientific supervision of the training materials for users and local decision makers (R. *Virág-Prokai*)
- The way of speaking with people, to push the relevant message is different from the way scientists are thinking (R. *Benestad*)
- Media draws the attention to the hot issues, but has superficial view (R. *Benestad*)
- Importance of personal contacts (R. *Benestad*)
- Sound knowledge to build up trust: understanding the basics of the climate change (greenhouse gas effect etc.) (R. *Benestad*)
- Plain text, narratives and pictures with education instead of “too objective” numbers and graphs (R. *Benestad*)
- Lots of elements of climate change (could) appear in education of natural sciences (e.g., greenhouse gas effect, regional climate and its change) (J. *Mika*)
- Paradigm shift is needed: new social and economic background (L. *Antal Z.*)

Raised questions

- How to communicate with the impact researchers, experts about issues in climate change research?
 - How to explain them, for instance, if your model does not reproduce some climate characteristics well?

- How to communicate the uncertainty?
- How to train them to use and handle this information?
- What to do with the new and improved results?
- How to communicate with the “general society” about climate change?
 - How to communicate uncertainty to the society?
 - Is there any difference in awareness of the population as well as in the way of communication (e.g., children, adults, inhabitants in cities or countryside)?
- Communication with the media:
 - How to attract them to be interested in our event? (See the briefing event.)
 - How to explain complex issues (e.g., climate variability and climate change), results, uncertainties?
- Communication with sceptics? Communication about the arguments of sceptics?
- Who is the proper person for communication of the results?

Main points of the discussion

R. Benestad, A. Horányi, H.O. Hygen, S. Krakovska, P. Skalák, G. Szépsző

1. Keeping attention of the users and society on new results:

- In Czech Republic and also in Hungary, a general problem is that after some projection results are available for the users and the society, they feel they have a complete view and knowledge about the climate change, therefore, they do not need new and improved information. In this region, it is challenging to explain for the society that adaptation is a never-ending story, **new outputs allow us to make more and more sophisticated impact studies and conclusions.**
- Nevertheless, **it is important to update our knowledge and results as regularly and quickly as possible** even if it takes time and energy and even if it is not that interesting part of science. If we have a reasonable climate projection system (used by the impact studies as basis and input), next generation of the results will not differ significantly from the previous one, but will add more and more details.
- It is not the case in such a small system like NAGiS (National Adaptation Geo-information System) in Hungary, which currently has a 2-member ensemble for climate projections. Essential task was in the EEA-supported Programme to develop new climate scenarios for Hungary. In the framework of the RCMGiS project, the same regional climate models were used as earlier, but with new model versions and new emission scenarios. The current simulations produced completely different results from that of experienced earlier regarding the precipitation change over Hungary (i.e., earlier summer drying, recently more precipitation). Such kind of “development” is difficult to be explained for the users, on top of that, it is a research topic to understand its background even for the meteorologists. As conclusion, it can be said, that **the 2-member projection ensemble has to be extended with further members to be able to serve more appropriate information about the uncertainty.**
- In some cases, the communication of one RCM results can be easier than taking results of more models. Uncertainties always cause difficulties, but **users have to learn to live with that and moreover, to use efficiently this information.**
- The most important is to **have a right methodology for modelling and communication**, as well. If the limitation of our knowledge and the uncertainty of the projections (and also of the impact assessments) are continuously communicated together with the results,

users and society learn their right interpretation as well as that of the new results (even if they are in contradiction with our former knowledge in certain aspects).

- Climate change communication can be considered as making a sculpture. First a draft version is ready, then it is refined step-by-step to provide additional details until the final product is achieved (although you can always refine it more, if you wish). Users should be ready to get new details or even reconsider details, which were already on place.

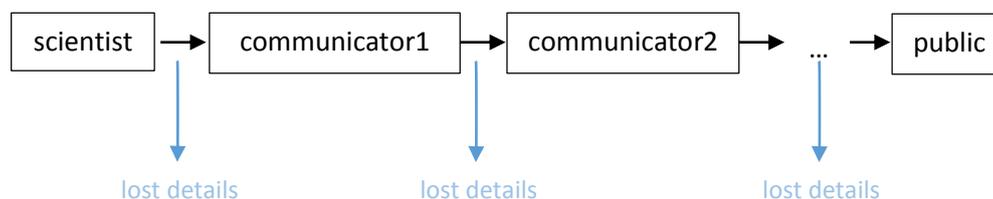


Making a sculpture: from the draft version towards the final product with additional details.

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2. Profession of communication:

- Not only the way of communication, but also its object and subject are important issues. It is essential to **take into account in advance who and how will understand the message**. It is almost useless to handle the users and provide training (presentations) for them as a “mass”. **The most effective way is to talk to them personally and individually, users by users** and induce **dialogues instead of monologues or simple data provision**. To handle the users and the general society in smaller groups takes considerable resources and time, but this is the best way to get across our message and information.
- To share information and **talk with the general society and decision makers about a scientific topic is slightly different from the language of scientists** (even from the language used between scientists with largely different background). Sometimes it requires additional efforts than just “presenting the results” (e.g., well-designed figures, blogs instead of high impact journals).
- Scientific results are communicated often by a communication expert and rarely by the scientist, especially at large institutes and organizations or in “training campaigns”. It can lead to lost, confusing or too superficial information. Level of the information fidelity can be considered as satisfactory around 80 %. **The best interpreter of the professional results is the scientist** – of course, not every scientist has the time and capability to keep a constant dialogue with the media and society. The scientists should continuously train communicators about the details of their science. Communicators should be eager to learn more and use the information provided by the scientists.



Information fidelity in the communication chain from the scientific results towards the public.

Conclusions

- It is important to update our knowledge and results as regularly and quickly as possible, as they allow us to make more and more sophisticated impact studies and conclusions.
- The most important is to have a right methodology both for modelling and communication. The uncertainties in the projections should be always communicated in order to “prep” the users for any change of message if the new results are different from the old ones. In that case users and society are able to live with the continuously developing and uncertain character of the scientific results.
- Communication always needs significant resources, which should be properly planned in any climate change projects.
- The most effective way to push the message and information is to target small groups of the users and the society instead of “everybody” and to initiate rather an interactive dialogue with them instead of a one-way monologue.
- To talk with the general society and decision makers about a scientific topic is slightly different from the manner of discussion between scientists, it requires additional efforts than just “presenting the results”.
- The scientist has unavoidable role in the communication chain, at least on the level of supervision. The best interpreter of the professional results is the scientists who was some affinity to present their findings.