



The **Department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs (DKBUZA) & Fayatbeurzen** invite you to attend their first conference for Flemish and international science communicators:

Connecting Flemish & International Science Communicators to Rethink the Public Engagement with Science

Friday, July 3, 2026 from 14:00 to 17:30.

Location: Marie-Elisabeth Belpairegebouw, Simon Bolivarlaan 17, 1000 Brussel

The event is free and will take place in English.

RSVP and register before 28-06-2026: <https://forms.office.com/r/jxAre38Vrf>

Programme

- 14:00 Arrival of invited Flemish & international science communicators
- 14:15 Opening remarks: **Bringing Flanders into the international science communication conversation** – Sophie Verbist, Coordinator Fayatbeurzen & Academic Diplomacy DKBUZA
- 14:20 **The importance of connecting the people who bring science and society together** – Wannes Vanoyenbrugge, Fayat Laureate & science communicator
- 14:25 **What challenges do communities currently face, and how can science communication be used to bring about positive change?** – Muminah Al-Islam, Director of London Moonsighters & Producer NASA IMAP
- 14:45 **The Flemish government's science communication policy plan in an international context** – Philip Van Avermaet, Head of Science Policy Division, Flemish Government
- 15:00 **Teaching about science outreach in university - does Flanders need a Master's programme in science communication?** – Katrien Kolenberg, Professor of Science Communication & Outreach at KU Leuven
- 15:20 **Turning a science communication idea into reality: starting, funding and sustaining your project** – Liesbeth Aerts, Founder BE SciComm
- 15:40 Panel: **How can Flanders build a stronger future for the science communication field?** – With representatives from VLAIO, FWO & the Flemish UNESCO Commission
- 16:15 Case study: **Communicating about Flanders' biggest science megaproject: The Einstein Telescope** – Daniel Mayerson, Researcher & Project and Educational Coordinator for Gravitational Wave Science
- 16:30 **Public discussion tables:** participants discuss the future of science communication in mixed groups
- 17:00 **Themed networking tables:** continue the conversation and make relevant connections
- 17:30 End



Wannes Vanoyenbrugge is a Fayat laureate and international science communicator: his short-form videos have already been viewed more than 100 million times. He is chairman of the Science Communication Society, which brings together British science communicators and financially supports research projects on science communication. He is bringing 30 science communication students from Imperial College London – the second-highest ranked university in the world – to this conference.

Sophie Verbist is Coordinator of Fayat Scholarships & Academic Diplomacy at the Department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs. Fayat scholarships support talented Flemish students who wish to continue their studies at a top foreign institution after their master's degree. Previously, she was a policy officer for multilateral cooperation. She is also a committee member of the Flemish UNESCO Commission and a board member of the Belgian-Luxembourg Fulbright Commission.



Muminah Al-Islam works in astrophysics and is committed to empowering marginalized communities worldwide. Thanks to the STFC Spark Award, she founded London Moonsighters, an organization she spoke about with over 400,000 listeners on BBC Radio. She collaborates with heritage institutions such as the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the International Astronomical Union, and the University of Cambridge to promote civic engagement. She is currently leading a project to engage over 10,000 African Muslims in astronomy.

Philip Van Avermaet is Head of the Science Policy Department of the Flemish Government. With his own scientific background, he has been involved in the strategy and implementation of science and research policy in Flanders for fifteen years. In this role, he is closely involved in the choices that help determine how science and science communication are supported in Flanders.



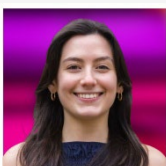
Reinhilde Weyns is Chair of the Flemish UNESCO Commission. UNESCO places a strong emphasis on bridging the gap between science and society, and in doing so, helps consider how knowledge can be made accessible, inclusive, and socially meaningful. Previously, Reinhilde worked for ten years as Head of Acquisitions and Network Manager at VRT, and was Director of RITCS School of Arts.

Kim Barbé is a communications advisor at FWO (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek). FWO is the main Flemish government institution that funds scientific research at universities and research institutions. FWO also reflects critically on science in its social context.



Daniel Mayerson is Institute Manager of the Leuven Gravity Institute. He is also a researcher and Educational Coordinator of Gravitational Wave Science in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at KU Leuven. He specializes in public outreach in his field and organized the Einstein Telescope Roadshow and podcast series.

Liesbeth Aerts traded her pipette for a pen after her PhD and postdoc on neurodegenerative disorders, becoming a science communicator. With *Beakon*, she is on a mission to help busy academics gain more visibility for their work, both among peers and among the general public. She founded *BE SciComm* to bring together like-minded individuals willing to push the local science communication field to a higher level.



Sophia Birch
Panel moderator
Director of Operations in the Science Communication Society



Rosanne Choong
Panel moderator
Projects Manager in the Science Communication Society, Imperial College Union



Katrien Kolenberg is a Professor of Science Communication & Outreach at KU Leuven. She is also a Professor of Astrophysics at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the University of Antwerp. Katrien is involved with ESERO Belgium, the ESA initiative that uses space exploration to get young people excited about science.

SPEAKERS

Round 1: discuss the future of science communication

MODERATORS:



Clara Carroll



Natalia Leo



Alexia Mihaila



Shweta Vasaya



Siobhan Khoo



Zhitong Li



Scarlett Victoria



Nada Soufi



Yejin Lhee



Rui Lim Wen



Gabby Ziobro



Marina Milsum



Eva-Mae Hart



Glynis Davies



Jodie Young



Yilin Zhang

After the lectures, participants engage in discussions in mixed groups about the future of science communication. They share experiences, challenges, and ideas. The moderators ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and write a report.

Round 2 & 3: thematic networking tables

Science communication as a social project



Arnaud Zonderman
Coordinator
SciMingo

Difficult themes such as climate & vaccines



Justine Viane
Editor-in-Chief
Factcheck.Vlaanderen

Science journalism



VRT NWS

Social media and digital storytelling



Catalina Sanchez
Influencer, President
Latin Women in Space

Museums and public spaces



Isabelle Du Four
Exhibition developer
Museum of Natural
Sciences

Your first science communication project!



Kelly Kirkland
Science Communicator,
Poet

Popular science writing



Liesbeth Gijssels
Editor-in-Chief EOS
Psyche&Brein
Author

Audiovisual Productions



T.B.C.

The science about science communication



Shweta Hegde
Founder
IndiaAsksWhy

TABLE HOSTS

After the first round, participants join two thematic discussion tables to continue the discussion, exchange experiences, and make relevant connections. The table hosts informally guide the conversation and ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.

Questions about this conference? Contact wannes@hotmail.be.