

Workshop Report: *Science-Policy Interface for Scientists - An (Inter)national Perspective* (May 3, 2024)

EVENT OVERVIEW

On May 3, 2024, the [Swiss Young Academy](#), in collaboration with the [Geneva Science-Policy Interface](#) (GSPI) and the [Franxini-Project](#) by [Reatch](#), organized the workshop "Science-Policy Interface for Scientists: An (Inter)national Perspective" in Bern. This event was part of the [Swiss Young Network for Science Policy and Diplomacy \(SYNESPOD\)](#) project. Designed for early-career researchers from diverse disciplines, both within Switzerland and from partner organizations like the [Finnish Young Academy](#), the workshop offered an in-depth exploration of the science-policy interface from both international and national viewpoints.

The workshop featured sessions on global science-policy interactions, the intricacies of the Swiss political system, and strategies for effective communication with policymakers. It built on the foundations laid by two previous boot camps, conducted in German and French, and sought to further enhance the understanding and engagement of young researchers with the political system. A [report](#) from these previous sessions is also available online.

As the first SYNESPOD workshop offered in English, this event addressed the community's need for training opportunities for international scholars and delved deeper into the connections between the Swiss and international perspectives of the science-policy interface. Eager participants gathered at the Berner Generationenhaus at 9:00 AM for a full day of intensive learning and networking, concluding at 5:00 PM.

SESSIONS

Introduction to science for policy: a global perspective

The workshop began with an introduction to science for policy from a global perspective, led by GSPI Executive Director Nicolas Seidler. The session outlined the morning's objectives, followed by a lecture on multilateral policy and the role of science and research. Participants engaged in an interactive group exercise to explore the science-policy interface, and the session concluded with a review of the challenges and misfits in this field.

Engaging at the interface of science and global policymaking

The second session, led by GSPI Science-Policy Officer Dr. Mialy Rann, focused on engaging at the interface of science and global policymaking. Dr. Rann discussed models, mechanisms, and activities that span the boundaries between science and multilateral policy. Participants identified strategies that facilitate science-policy engagement through group exercises, shared their experiences, and worked on their current and future positions at the interface. The session ended with tips and resources, particularly drawing from Dr. Rann's experience and knowledge of the [International Geneva](#).

Science for policy in Switzerland: The Swiss Political System and Actors at the Interface of Research and Politics

The first afternoon session, led by senior research associate at the University of Zurich and Swiss politics' specialist Dr. Sarah Bütikofer, and Hannah Schoch, lead of Reatch's Franxini-Project, focused on the Swiss political system and actors at the interface of research and politics. Dr. Bütikofer provided a comprehensive overview of the Swiss political system, highlighting its unique characteristics. She emphasized the importance of knowing the right stakeholders for researchers to approach when advocating for their causes and the optimal timing for engaging in the policy-making process. Ms. Schoch discussed intermediaries at the science-policy interface in Switzerland, offering valuable insights into who can support researchers in their efforts.

Effective communication with policy-makers

Dr. Silvia Maier followed-up by leading a session on effective communication with policymakers. Notably drawing from her own input in the Swiss Young Academy Project

“Who Gets Heard?” and her expertise into the mechanisms behind how science and scientists resonate within the legislative sphere, she shared best practices on how willing researchers could better participate in the political discourse, offering valuable practical guidance on how researchers can better engage and communicate with policymakers and other stakeholders.

Interactive session and reflections

An interactive session encouraged participants to work in pairs on case studies adjacent to their areas of interest, underscoring the crucial need to tailor communication strategies to suit the audience when engaging in policy discussions on specific topics of expertise. Together, they defined the core issues and roles integral to conveying their message effectively, identified stakeholders and their (shared) interests, and outlined preliminary communication strategies tailored to each stakeholder group. Subsequently, they shared their key insights and newfound knowledge with the wider group, enriching the collective learning experience.

Conclusion(s)

The workshop concluded with a summary of the main learnings, providing participants with a clear understanding of the day's key takeaways and next steps in their science-policy engagement journey.

NEXT STEPS

Join SYNESPOD LinkedIn group

In response to the participants' interest in maintaining contact post-event, and in alignment with SYNESPOD's mission to foster connections among science-policy and science-diplomacy enthusiasts, a [SYNESPOD LinkedIn group](#) has been created. This platform is designed to help researchers stay informed, share insights, and continue collaborating with a community dedicated to advancing the dialogue between science and policy. To join the SYNESPOD LinkedIn group, don't hesitate to contact our team!

LEARNINGS

Post-event feedback from attendees emphasized the workshop's effectiveness in providing tangible experiences and insights for navigating the political landscape as a researcher. It also succeeded in fostering connections between researchers, aligning with the overarching goal of bridging science and policy. Participants praised the supportive organizations and institutions highlighted during the event, and they gained effective strategies for presenting scientific evidence to policymakers. Suggestions for the organization of future, longer, workshops allowing for even more interactive sessions and discussions to deepen engagement and understanding were made.

A new field

Participants expressed satisfaction that the science-policy interface is gaining more attention and coverage, with organized introductions to the topic becoming increasingly available. They welcomed this development and voiced appreciation for initiatives like the SYNESPOD project for addressing this important area and training researchers on how to better interact with policy-makers and understand existing institutions and opportunities.

- *"The science-policy interface is still an area on which little is taught to either scientists or policymakers, although it is of vital importance to both sides. That is why I congratulate the SYNESPOD project of the SYA and encourage all related events/actions that try to fulfill this need. I am grateful to have participated in today's event and look forward to learning more in the future. Thank you!"*
- *"This event is an important introduction to the science-policy interface/relations that I, as a scientist, never had before in Switzerland."*

A blended format: when theory meets practice

Participants valued practical tips and real-life examples for enhancing their learning experience and providing actionable strategies for pitching to and engaging with policymakers, appreciating resources for future reference and interactive sessions for hands-on learning. The blended format of peer learning and expert-led discussions was well-received, with worksheets and reflection exercises aiding in knowledge consolidation. Additionally, speakers received praise for their preparation, clarity, and engaging delivery.

Overall, they were commended for their expertise, helpfulness, and inclusivity, offering insightful and interactive presentations.

- *"It was a great balance between theoretical input, group discussion and practical tips from the speakers."*
- *"I particularly like that we were provided with concrete tips and advice that I can directly implement."*
- *"The blended format of peer learning and expert-led discussions were good. The worksheets and reflections were also useful."*
- *"The speakers were knowledgeable and open to future collaborations. I found their lectures to be very useful."*
- *"Presentations were very clear, with relevant information and frequent interactive sessions to keep our focus."*
- *"There was a diverse set of speakers, very qualified and complementary in their expertise."*

Peer-learning

Networking opportunities were also a highlight, with participants valuing interactions with fellow young professionals invested in the science-policy interface.

- *"I most appreciated the exchange with other young professionals who share the interest in the Science and Policy interface."*
- *"It was a great workshop that gave insights about engaging science and policy. I loved it very much. Interactive sessions were also amazing for learning from others from different backgrounds. As an enthusiast of interfacing for the SPI this workshop broadened my perspectives."*
- *"I particularly liked the variety of backgrounds of the participants and the eagerness of participants to connect."*

Who is who

Among the key takeaways mentioned, participants notably gained a deeper comprehension of vital elements such as understanding their audience, facilitating discussions, and leveraging existing institutions to garner support in the policy arena for effective communication of their research. They furthermore highlighted the importance

and eagerness in receiving recommendations for crafting and implementing actionable engagement strategies.

- *"When involved in the science-policy interface, knowing your audience can save you time and effort in reaching your goals."*
- *"Know your audience, know their interest. Facilitate. Learning by doing. Be aware of the misfits at the science policy interface. Leverage existing institutions, find your allies."*
- *"The Science-Policy interface is incredibly complex and multifaceted on multiple levels and navigating it requires active listening, empathy and taking a step back to facilitate exchange. Every stakeholder has their own interests and views, and it is essential to get everyone to the table and empower them to speak in the same language. The stronger our networks are, and the more we choose to reach out across disciplines and sectors, the more fruitful these exchanges will be - thereby hopefully bringing about the change we strive to bring."*
- *"I found the introduction to the actors by the GSPI for the international Geneva and by the Franxini Boot Camp for the Swiss multiple levels of national, cantonal and communal policy making extremely helpful. The many different mandates and levels of organizations make the space opaque, and these inputs make it easier to navigate whom to approach with which type of question or proposals for investigation."*
- *"Knowledge is one of the many inputs in the policy process but not the only one."*
- *"I learned how important it is to map my partner's interests."*

A career opportunity

In summary, attendees departed the workshop with a clearer vision of their next steps in the science-policy engagement journey. Many voiced enthusiasm for delving deeper into diverse roles within the interface, thereby enhancing the acknowledgment of evidence-based research's pivotal role in shaping policies and effecting positive transformations. All participants underscored the workshop's motivational and intellectually stimulating impact, equipping them with invaluable insights and guidance for expanded participation in the science-policy interface in their respective fields.

- *"There are multiple ways to get involved in the science-policy interface, which needs to be reflected on."*
- *"It's fundamental to understand how policy making works if you want to be part of supporting it."*

- *"It is important to know the different roles and types of work in this space. From there, I can gain experience/try things out during my doctoral studies to help inform what will work best for me after my program."*
- *"First, the workshop was very motivating and stimulating. Second, it gave me some ideas of directions to explore to increase my involvement at the science-policy interface."*
- *"I think in the field of integrative medicine and prevention, policy making can be very relevant in directing funding opportunities. One remarkable milestone was the inclusion of complementary medicine in the health insurances in 2009, since then, research in this field has increased steadily. By providing evidence through research, policy makers can make informed decisions for improving future healthcare systems."*
- *"There are many opportunities to be engaged in the science-policy interface and you can be strategic about how to position yourself."*
- *"I work with sustainable building materials, and I understand the level of transition needed within the building industry to achieve sustainability. The science-policy interface can significantly facilitate this transition. I've always been eager to learn more and explore how I can contribute as a researcher. The workshop provided me with valuable insights that will guide me in making informed decisions, as well as opportunities for networking, which will be beneficial in the long run."*
- *"I gained a better understanding of how the science-policy interface works, possible roles for me, and how find and communicate with the relevant actors"*
- *"I think the topic is really exciting, since I can see myself move more towards Global Health and policy making. Additionally, developing and extending my network is very important to me, irrespective of the career path that I will end up choosing."*

CONCLUSION

The SYNESPOD Workshop successfully provided early-career researchers with valuable insights and practical skills for engaging with the science-policy interface. Participants left with a deeper understanding of the complexities involved and strategies to effectively communicate their scientific findings to policymakers. The event fostered a collaborative environment, encouraging networking and the sharing of experiences among participants.

Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to all speakers, participants, and organizing partners for their contributions and active engagement, making the SYNESPOD Workshop a valuable and enriching experience for all involved.



Participants of the Science-Policy Interface for Scientists workshop in Bern on May 3, 2024



Impression from the Science-Policy Interface for Scientists workshop in Bern on May 2, 2024

ABOUT US

About SYNESPOD

The Swiss Young Network for Science Policy and Diplomacy (SYNESPOD) project aims to establish a platform for science policy and diplomacy through partnerships with (inter)national institutions, increasing the capacity, impact and visibility of the Swiss Young Academy and early-career professionals in Switzerland in addressing challenges toward sustainable development.

About the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences / Swiss Young Academy

The Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences are the largest scientific network in Switzerland. They are committed to promote an equal and progressive dialogue between science and society and advise politics and society on controversial issues. The Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences is an association of the [Swiss Academy of Sciences \(SCNAT\)](#), the [Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences \(SAHS\)](#), the [Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences \(SAMS\)](#), the [Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences \(SATW\)](#) and the [Swiss Young Academy \(SYA\)](#). It further comprises the centre of excellence for [technology assessment \(TA-SWISS\)](#) and the foundation [Science et Cité](#) as well as other scientific networks.

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