COMMUNICATION GUIDE

What the Communication Office does

The School’s Communication Service is run by Sissa Medialab.

The Service is concerned with designing and planning SISSA’s communication activities by defining the means, instruments and actions needed to achieve different objectives and goals. In addition to institutional communication, the Service is also in charge of the external communication of events and scientific activities organised or carried out by SISSA’s researchers and staff.

SISSA’s communication activities mainly deal with:
* Scientific activities
* Institutional activities
* Events organised by the School (meetings, conferences, workshops, seminars, etc.).

Standard communication tools are:
* Promotional/educational material such as brochures, fact sheets, presentations, posters and flyers, leaflets, photos and videos, etc.);
* The website and social media containing up-to-date images and information to ensure the dissemination of information;
* Press office activities (press kits, press releases, media contacts, interviews, relations with other press offices, press conferences, press reviews, etc.);
* Institutional reference material (information sheets, CVs of governing bodies, etc.);
* Periodic newsletter containing all the news and articles published over the previous month.

How to request the service

The Communication Service enables SISSA researchers and staff to communicate relevant news to a non-specialised audience. The news may concern three different areas:

* results of scientific research
* events (conferences, workshops, seminars, etc.)
* funding or awards
In order to notify the Communication Service of an event or news item users should contact the Office by using the online *Form* posted on the SISSA website (www.sissa.it).

The *Form* can be found in the restricted area “For researchers and SISSA staff” under “Communication and Press”, which can be reached from the main menu.

This section of the site is restricted and to access it you need to log in by entering the username and password of your SISSA account.

The *Form* should be completed by filling in as many fields as possible, and identifying first the type of event being announced (scientific publication, a workshop, an event, etc.). The purpose of the *Form* is to provide the office with clear and standardized preliminary information, which will be stored in a special internal archive and will help to ensure a more effective personal contact.

After having received the announcement, the Communication Office will contact you to jointly define communication objectives and strategies. Based on the type of event to be publicised, the most appropriate tools and actions for reaching the target audience will be identified.

In other words, arranging a press conference or a press release might not be the most suitable action for all events (in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness). Sometimes it is more productive to use other channels and produce specific materials. The tool to be used depends on the case.

Apart from some special and urgent situations, the Communication Office is unable to guarantee any effective action unless the request *Form* has been received at least one week before the event.

Any communication or dissemination activities not previously concerted with the Communication Office and carried out independently risk damaging the School’s brand identity, as well as the work of the Communication Office and relations with the media.

Still in the section "For researchers and SISSA staff" of the SISSA website, several ready-made materials and templates for institutional communication are available for download (pdf).

The same section also contains the School’s brand identity Handbook with guidelines on the use of the SISSA brand and graphic elements (some guidelines are binding, such as the use of the logo).

To guarantee and be able to plan communication activities, all events, publications or activities should be reported in a timely manner, i.e. as soon as the definitive details become known. You should consider that the office’s work is subject to a “technical” lead time or to time constraints related to communicative or planning strategies.
**Educational/promotional material**

Sometimes it is appropriate to develop communication materials such as flyers, brochures, posters, etc. The choice is not random but it fulfils specific requirements, which are also detailed in the brand identity handbook. Graphics must be functional to the type of message being conveyed and the intended audience, as well as being consistent with all the other official material.

The time needed to produce the materials (layout and printing) depends on the case.

The Communication Office should be promptly notified of any public events (at least 2 weeks before the event is to take place).

**Website and social media**

The Communication Office is in charge of both the SISSA website and the School’s social network accounts.

Right from the homepage, the website has been designed to give wide exposure to all School news, divided by type. Each page has been formatted to be suitable for printing and can be saved as a pdf file by clicking on the appropriate icon.

SISSA is also present on the social networks, and in particular on the following platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Flickr and Youtube, which contribute to diversifying and enhancing external communication.

**The press room**

Among all communication activities, a central role is played by the press room, which is responsible for relations with the mass media. This is a delicate task that implies in-depth knowledge of how the different newspapers work and what the priorities of journalists are. Information about SISSA activities is not always publicised through press releases or press conferences but, depending on the case, other communication channels may be used. Assessment of the manner and methods of SISSA’s external communication is an integral part of the press room’s duties, as detailed in SISSA’s mandate.

As regards scientific publications, these should be announced as soon as the paper has been accepted by the journal, and therefore well before its publication. This way, the Communication Office will be able to draft an effective press release jointly with the SISSA researchers involved in the research, clearly respecting the embargo dates and maintaining confidentiality until publication.

Except in special cases, it is best not to issue joint press releases with other centres or institutions participating in the research: each centre has its own press office that aims to give visibility to the centre’s own researchers, pursuing its own communication strategies and styles (clearly, all the other centres involved are always mentioned in the SISSA press release).
The task of the Communication Office is to facilitate the public’s understanding of research carried out by SISSA, while maintaining a high scientific standard of the information given.

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