

# Science Communication Strategy of Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

Research helps us understand the world and make it a better place: It provides explanations for complex issues and solutions to pressing problems, and it serves the purpose of finding truth. Today, in a time of various global crises and upheavals, it provides a basis for fact-based decisions. As a driver of progress, it is more relevant to our society than ever before. The researchers at Julius-Maximilians-Universität (JMU) make a substantial contribution in this context.

JMU defines the term ‘*science communication*’ as ‘*communication about research*’, that is: communication about researchers and their disciplines, methods and findings and about the research system and the fundamental principles of research themselves. Our communication activities target society, politicians, businesses, the media and other research institutions.

## 1 Objectives of JMU’s science communication activities

We see science communication as an important social responsibility: We want to share the findings of our researchers with the public and, by doing so, strengthen trust and enthusiasm for research. In addition, successful science communication is a key driver of the reputation of our university. We are taking specific measures to strengthen the public image of JMU and our ability to attract top domestic and international talent.

### Objective 1: Enhance our visibility

We work closely with the media and regularly publish news about new research findings, awards received by our researchers and other current issues. In addition, we connect our researchers with journalists looking for information from an expert source and, by doing so, systematically position them in the public arena.

### Objective 2: Strengthen our reputation

We work towards generating more attention for the University of Würzburg as an institution that delivers excellent and innovative research and teaching. This will help us attract outstanding researchers, qualified employees and talented students and win the attention of funding organisations and potential collaborators – which will open up new networking opportunities for our researchers.

### Objective 3: Strengthen people’s feeling of identification with our university, provide role models

We want to provide our employees and, in particular, young people with inspiring role models from the research community. This will spark their enthusiasm for research and strengthen their feeling of identification with our university. In addition, we want to encourage students and young talents to pursue a career in academia.

#### **Objective 4: Strengthen people's trust in research**

A growing scepticism about research findings and the systematic spreading of manipulative disinformation pose a threat to the stability of democratic societies. We believe that it is our responsibility to fight fake news with facts and to strengthen people's trust in research. We therefore not only communicate the results and findings of research activities but also explain how researchers work, what methods they use and who is funding their projects.

#### **Objective 5: Share our research with non-research audiences, get the public involved**

Research findings should be shared beyond the research community. Using tailored communication formats, we want to encourage dialogue between research, the business community, politics and society, to spark enthusiasm for the topics under investigation and to make research more accessible. We encourage members of the public to play an active part in research projects, and we provide easy-to-understand information about new research findings. In this way, we illustrate how our research benefits society and the economy.

## **2 Target groups and formats for science communication**

Our science communication activities target different external and internal groups: the general public, the media, school students and teachers, politicians, businesses and economic agents, research organisations, friends and patrons of JMU, employees, students, committees and our Uni Wü Community.

To ensure that we meet the specific communication needs of these groups, we tailor our messages to our audiences and deliver them through suitable platforms and channels.

This audience-centred approach is reflected in the **range of formats that we use at JMU for science communication**. These include:

### **For the media**

- Press releases and our weekly 'einBLICK' newsletter,
- Facilitation of contacts with JMU experts who can explain and contextualise topical issues,
- Meetings with the press and off-the-record conversations as well as
- Our annual press conference for the regional media.

### **For the public**

- Regular posts on different social media channels,
- Series of events as well as interactive formats for children and school students,
- Museums and numerous exhibitions,
- Events organised by the Botanical Garden,
- Communication formats used by the University Library,

- Our annual Science Slam,
- Our ‘Physics on Saturdays’ lecture series,
- Communication formats used by our ct.qmat Cluster of Excellence,
- Citizen science projects,
- Our ‘BLICK’ yearbook and
- Events organised by the Schelling Forum.

### For employees and the Uni Wü Community

- All of the formats listed above also provide our employees with information and help strengthen their identification with our university.

In addition, we use the following formats:

- The President’s podcast,
- The Professorium networking event for professors,
- Our alumni newsletter, our committee newsletter and circular emails to all employees on current issues.

## 3 JMU communication structure

The science communication activities of the University of Würzburg are being coordinated centrally by the **Press and Public Relations Office**. Covering a wide range of responsibilities, the Office employs staff in many different areas of expertise and includes experts in all relevant areas of science communication – from editorial work and marketing to social media and the website.

The Press and Public Relations team collaborates closely with research and teaching staff at JMU professorships and institutes of related disciplines, e.g. the Chair of Media Psychology, the Professorship of Business Journalism and Business Communication and the Institute Human-Computer-Media, who provide expert input.

In addition to the Press and Public Relations Office, there are other individuals and organisational units at our university that also communicate research-related topics to others: researchers, individual institutes and faculties, the University Library, the Uni Wü Community (our network of current and former staff members and students) office as well as students.

The Press and Public Relations Office provides the following services to all of them to support their communication activities:

- Advising on communication strategies,
- Media skills training,
- Short interview coaching sessions,
- Accompanying to meetings with the press (on request) and
- Assistance with developing and implementing new formats for science communication.

## 4 Measures to further develop science communication at JMU

JMU will further expand its science communication efforts, focussing on two key fields.

As part of our *external* efforts, we want to use tailored PR activities and develop new formats to reach a wider audience. At the same time, we want to further enhance the visibility of the University of Würzburg, both on the national and on the international stage.

As part of our *internal* efforts, we want to further enhance awareness among our researchers of the importance of science communication and to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills. We want to encourage them to start getting involved in science communication at the early stages of their careers already and to network more with each other.

### External efforts

- Starting in 2025, we will present our research each year at a **science mile at the Würzburg Stadtfest festival**.
- In 2025, a **knowledge wall will be installed in the market square in the Würzburg city centre**.
- Starting in 2026, we are planning to **participate in the Science Year initiative** in years with themes that match our research interests.

### Internal efforts

- In 2025, we will launch an **internal funding pot for science communication**.
- Starting in 2025, the new **JMU Communicator Award** will be given out each year to recognise outstanding achievements at JMU in the field of science communication.
- Starting in 2025, we will offer five **training courses on science communication** each year, which will be open to all of our researchers.
- Fostering the development of women in academia is a high priority for JMU. Starting in 2024, we will offer one female early-career researcher per year the opportunity to take part in the **ZEIT publishing group's Zia mentoring programme**.
- The **university-wide Professorium** networking event, which was introduced in 2023, will be held as a 'Crossover Professorium' focussing on two Faculties each from 2024 onwards. In addition, the Professorium will include a section on science communication.
- Starting in 2025, we will systematically use other **in-house events** to equip people with knowledge and skills in science communication.

- In mid-2025, we will launch a **new discussion platform for all of JMU's communications units**.
- A **newsletter on science communication** will be launched in early 2026.

## **5 Developing new ways of communicating science to others**

It will be crucial to the success of this strategic concept that all those at Julius-Maximilians-Universität who are responsible for communication and other relevant fields engage in regular dialogue. This dialogue will allow us to share experiences and make adjustments where necessary to reach our communication goals.

In view of the relevance that research has to our society, we are convinced that this strategic concept will create an important framework for promoting public acceptance and understanding of research-related topics in a permanent manner. Together, we will implement targeted and modern science communication strategies and, in this way, will help strengthen the dialogue between research and society.

Würzburg, 30 April 2025

Prof. Paul Pauli, President