



ABOUT VA 2017



WHAT IS VA?

VA (Public & Science) is a non-profit Swedish organisation whose purpose is to promote openness and dialogue between researchers and society. Dialogue is a cornerstone of our democratic society and vital for ensuring that research leads to solutions to the challenges facing society.

We are a knowledge-based organisation that carries out studies and surveys, organises meetings and activities, and develops and tests new formats for dialogue. In addition, we collect and disseminate knowledge and experience, gained by ourselves and others, about public engagement and communication between researchers and the public. As an organisation, we also participate in societal debate via traditional as well as social media.

The organisation is funded through membership fees, project grants and a grant from the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research.

VA's MAIN AIMS

1. **Increase collaboration between researchers and society.**
2. **Increase knowledge and dialogue about:**
 - Public perceptions of research and research needs.
 - Prerequisites for research, methods and results.
 - Methods for science communication.
3. **Be a leading knowledge hub** for public engagement and science communication.
4. **Strengthen all aspects of engagement with society;** democratic, cultural, as well as for the benefit and education of society.

“VA builds bridges between research and the general public, which is in line with Young Scientists' efforts to create tools and platforms to help young people carry out their own research. Together we can create an environment, in which young people can develop their scientific interests and have a voice in research.

Anna Hedlund, Secretary General of the Swedish Foundation of Young Scientists.



VA (Public & Science) was founded in 2002 and its members consist of some 80 organisations, such as authorities, universities, businesses, adult education associations and research

funding bodies. In addition, it has a number of individual members. For information about membership of VA and an up-to-date list of its members, see www.v-a.se/membership



EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

Researchers' Night (*ForskarFredag* in Sweden)

On the last Friday of September each year, the public is invited to meet researchers and participate in hands-on activities, competitions, exhibitions, discussions and much more. In some 30 cities across Sweden, *ForskarFredag* shows that research is fun and relevant to our everyday lives. The project is coordinated nationally by VA as part of European Researchers' Night.

Researchers' Grand Prix

A contest in which researchers have just four minutes to present their research in an exciting, inspiring and easy-to-understand way. The audience and a jury jointly decide the winner. Regional heats are run in several cities around Sweden as part of Researchers' Night. The winners compete in a national final in Stockholm.

“ I think it's great that children get to participate in real research!
Matilda 10, who participated in the Researchers' Night mass experiment.

Science in Society

Since 2002, VA has been monitoring public attitudes to research and researchers. The project is a joint collaboration with the SOM Institute at Gothenburg University. Currently, we are exploring which factors affect the public's confidence in researchers and science. We are also investigating how research is reported in the media.

VA Day

VA's annual conference addresses current topics relating to the science-society interface, for example open science (2016), citizen science (2015) and responsible research and innovation, RRI (2014). The conference is open to all and includes keynote speakers, plenty of opportunities for discussion, as well as a few surprises.

“ It is the first time Swedish notice boards have been documented in this way. For us as researchers, the project would have been impossible without the help of the pupils.

Christopher Kullenberg, a researcher at University of Gothenburg on the 2016 Researchers' Night Notice Board mass experiment in which thousands of pupils participated.

JOIN OUR NETWORK!

Organisations as well as **individuals** are welcome to become members of VA. As a member you will receive regular communications and invitations to seminars and other activities. Benefits also include access to studies and expert advice on science communication. Members are invited to influence and take active part in our work. Our broad network provides opportunities for new collaborations.

Read more at www.v-a.se/membership

” *The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) funds research to create a safer society. Our work is driven by the belief that science is a natural part of society and that contact between scientists and society must be strengthened and developed. This is completely in line with VA's work and why we are members of VA.*

Per Sundström, Head of Research at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).

CONTACT US

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” *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond is a foundation that supports research in the humanities and social sciences, achieved partly by strengthening confidence in research. This is why we support VA and its work to measure public confidence in researchers and to develop new ways of communicating research.*

Göran Blomqvist, CEO of Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

” *RISE's research institutes create value and sustainable growth by collaborating with others to help solve problems affecting the business community and society. We want to promote our innovations so that they create value for us as well as for our clients and stakeholders. Our VA membership strengthens our science communication work.*

Mai Terras, Communications Manager, RISE AB.

CALENDAR 2017

- 10 May **Forum for science communication** in Gothenburg
- 18–19 May **Collaborations between Higher Education and Society**, conference in Helsingborg
- 18–20 June **VA session at NUAS** (the Nordic Association of University Administrators), communication conference in Bergen
- 4 July **Discussion seminar** at Almedalen in Visby
- 29 September **Researchers' Night** and regional heats of the **Researchers' Grand Prix**
- 18 October **VA Day conference** and **Annual General Meeting** in Stockholm
- 28 November National final of the **Researchers' Grand Prix**
- December Annual **VA Barometer** published

“ *At Örebro University, it is important to communicate our research and to be part of society. We want to contribute not only through education and research but also by taking in the knowledge and challenges that exist around us. It is, therefore, natural for us to be a member of VA and ensure that this happens.*

Johan Schnürer, Vice-Chancellor, Örebro University.

