



# The SKA Observatory's communications strategy

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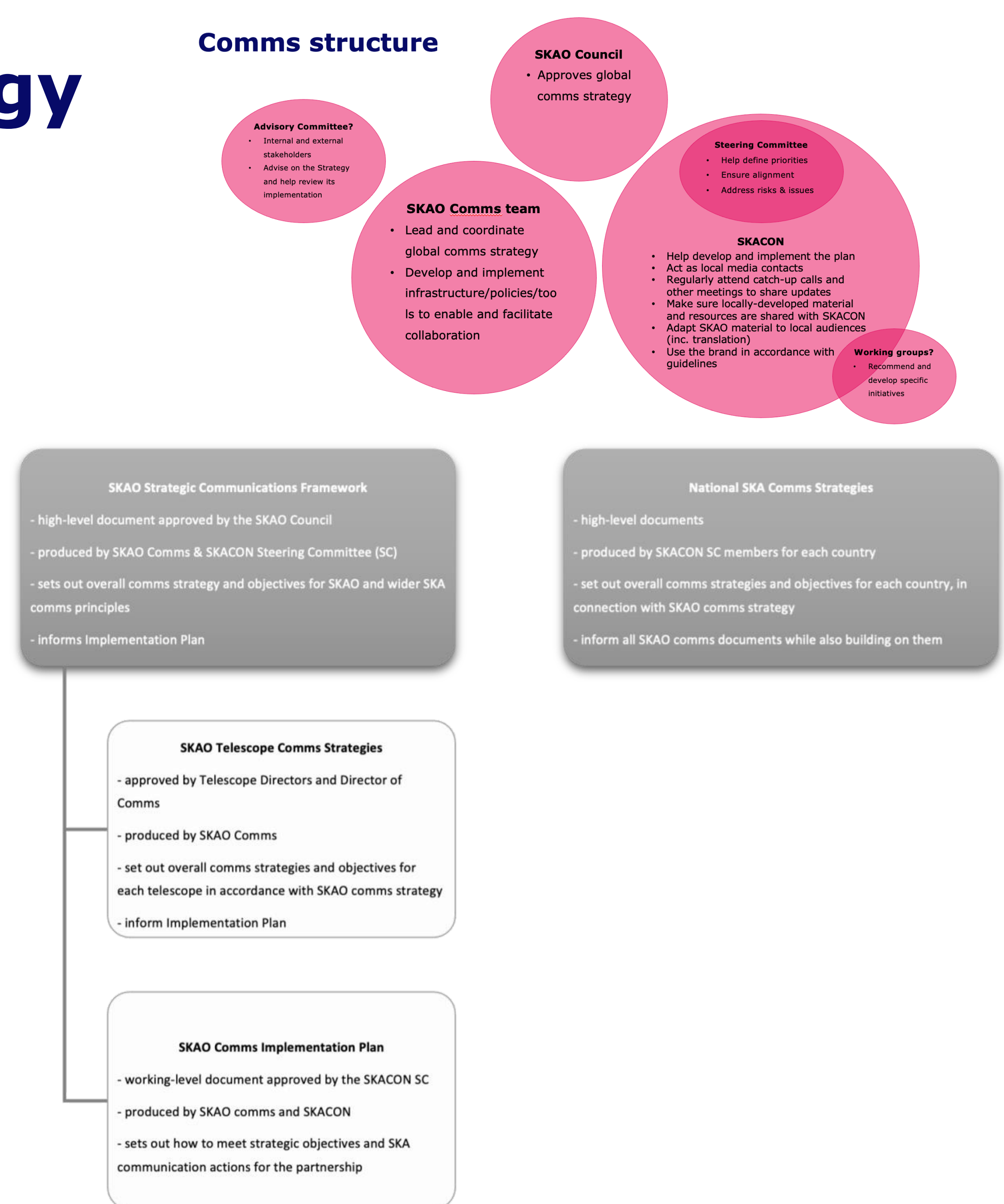




# Communications and strategy

- Since 2013...
- Setting up structures, tools, & resources to facilitate collaboration
- Across the SKA partnership - SKA Comms & Outreach Network (SKACON) currently 35 members from 15 countries with regular interactions
- At SKAO - 10-year funding & recruitment plan, now 13 FTEs across 3 countries
- Comms strategy co-developed with SKACON and approved by Council
- Focus on high-impact opportunities to secure support & international visibility
- High-level international events, stakeholders: SKAO
- National-level comms & outreach: local partners

## Comms structure



# The SKAO's overall communications objectives 2022-2029

1. Position the SKAO as a sustainable, responsible and impactful global Research Infrastructure that delivers transformational science and contributes to addressing societal challenges
2. Maximise communications opportunities stemming from the construction of the SKA telescopes and prepare for Early and Full Science by identifying, leveraging and promoting relevant developments and milestones across science, computing, engineering and procurement.
3. Continue to raise the international profile of the SKAO and grow a community of supporters and future users by sustaining interest, excitement and buy-in into the SKAO and its vision, mission and values



# Communications deliverables

## Objective 1 - impact

- Develop case studies of successful industrial involvement & innovation
- Maintain Member countries' confidence, engagement by highlighting how Member countries benefit from SKAO membership
- Promote impact and benefits at local (jobs, tourism, etc.) and international level (IP, spin-offs, science diplomacy, etc.)
- Team up with local partners to develop initiatives in the realms of outreach, education, astro-tourism, etc.
- Work with local communities on the development and promotion of Indigenous cultural heritage
- Support engagement with new Members and develop a 'Benefits package'
- Support and promote in-house and partner institutions' SKA activities towards sustainability
- Support and promote the SKAO as a highly desirable place to work
- Support the creation and promotion of an ethical, safe, equal, diverse and inclusive SKA Observatory, in line with the Observatory's values
- Support the identification of new funding streams to deliver SKAO programmes and activities

## Objective 2 – construction & science

- Capture various stages and contributions of construction audio-visually to build an archive
- Sustain momentum and cooperation with the engineering community within SKAO and at partner institutions
- Collaborate with procurement teams and industry partners to promote their successful involvement in the SKA project
- Sustain momentum with the scientific community and SRC network through the promotion of pathfinder, SRC developments, Science Data Challenges, etc
- Develop protocols to produce public-friendly appealing astronomical images and explore the possibility of public participation in SKAO science (e.g. citizen science)

## Objective 3 - visibility

- Identify and facilitate opportunities for communicating with member and prospective member countries
- Support partner countries with their international efforts to promote the SKAO and the SKA Project
- Support and encourage the participation of SKAO representatives at relevant events
- Partner with selected groups such as industrial partners, science communicators, education experts and others to leverage communications in terms of both reach and spend
- Nurture current and built relationships with key multipliers and influencers such as media to cover the SKAO and the SKA project
- Continue to build the SKAO brand and support its broad use and visibility
- Develop and conduct innovative STEM outreach activities, in partnership with key stakeholders





# Comms Implementation Plan

- Developed with SKACON
- 3 objectives
- 20+ deliverables
- 100+ actions
- KPI tracking

	Overall objectives	Area	SKAQ objectives	Telescope objectives	Actions	Owner	Audience	Deliverables	Status	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
1	Position the <b>SKAQ</b> as a sustainable, responsible and impactful global research <b>observatory</b> that delivers transformational science, brings benefits to its funders, and contributes to addressing societal challenges	Innovation	Develop case studies of successful industrial involvement, innovation stemming from SKA-related activities and infrastructure that benefits communities	Retain and reinforce high levels of engagement with key stakeholders, demonstrating the benefits of <b>SKAQ</b> to current and future stakeholders in the country (locally, regionally, and nationally) and internationally.	<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monthly coordination and communication with <b>SKACON</b> regarding upcoming contractual opportunities</li><li>• Dedicated section on impact &amp; contribution to the UN SDGs on the <b>SKAQ</b> website, with case studies of impact</li><li>• Work with industry to produce positive messaging about benefits of involvement, thus maximising comms resources</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ</b>	Council, governments, industry, future collaborators/ contractors	Case studies Media releases Communications products Digital content References in industry newsletters and technical publications	<b>in progress</b>	Number of case studies, communications products Media mentions Digital content produced and shared Number of stakeholder events organised
2					<b>SKACON</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular coordination between <b>SKACON</b> members and their country's <b>SKA</b> Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs)</li><li>• Build relationships with contracted industry in country to identify comms opportunities</li></ul>	<b>SKACON</b>	Council, government, industry	Communications products	<b>in progress</b>	Number of case studies, communications products
3					<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Published list of contracts awarded by the <b>SKAQ</b> and associated values on the <b>SKAQ</b> public website</li></ul> <b>SKACON/ SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dedicated country pages on the <b>SKAQ</b> public website highlighting each country's role, interests and benefits from membership of the <b>SKAQ</b> (e.g. contracts won, links to case studies, science being conducted, relevant media releases and stories published in <b>SKAQ</b> publications (e.g. Contact)</li><li>• Updated country factheets in English and official country language(s) highlighting the country's role, interests and benefits from membership of the <b>SKAQ</b></li><li>• Production of communications products (media articles, media releases, blog posts, etc.) on contracts awarded in countries</li></ul> <b>In Australia &amp; South Africa</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with local groups to identify communications opportunities to promote SKA-Low and SKA-Mid telescopes and their benefits</li><li>• Where applicable, work with local partners to be an influential and proactive voice in discussions around definition and development of astronomical strategy and offer in regions around the telescope sites</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	Council, government, general public, community	Public list of awarded contracts including values Updated country pages Updated country factheets Communications products Media coverage Site visits	<b>in progress</b>	Updated information on countries' membership benefits Media mentions Brand recognition and evolution over time Positive sentiment Outreach engagement Site visits and events organised
4	Support engagement with new Members and develop a 'benefits package' (including the identification of 'pull factors' such as engaging the scientific community in prospective countries) to attract new Members within the Framework of the Joint Science and Operations Taskforce	Economy	Maintain Member countries' confidence, engagement, hence financial support into the <b>SKAQ</b> by highlighting how Member countries benefit from <b>SKAQ</b> membership and assisting in positioning individual countries on the map as great and trustworthy partners to do (science) business with	Raise the profile of the <b>SKA</b> project in the country, highlighting the benefits that it will deliver, in the country and around the world, including science, jobs, resources, local opportunities in astronautics, and development.	<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop targeted communications products &amp; messaging for prospective member countries highlighting benefits of membership</li><li>• Ensure <b>SKA</b> resonance and visibility at key events in prospective countries (e.g. AUU GAs, regional astronomy meetings, <b>INC meetings</b>, <b>BIRC3</b>, etc.)</li><li>• Invite prospective country representatives to key stakeholder events</li><li>• Arrange site visits for prospective countries representatives</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ</b>	prospective member countries governments, scientific community, industry	dedicated communications products Participation in key events in prospective countries Site visits Invitations to stakeholder events	<b>in progress</b>	dedicated communications products produced Participation in key events in prospective countries site visits for prospective countries representatives Participation in stakeholder events
5					<b>SKACON</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support bilateral engagement with prospective member countries through diplomatic channels, science diplomacy, site visits, and joint events as appropriate</li></ul>	<b>SKACON</b>	prospective member countries governments, scientific community, industry	bilateral engagement with prospective member countries site visits at partners and in-country SKA-related facilities	<b>in progress</b>	inclusion of <b>SKA</b> on the agenda of bilateral engagement site visits for prospective countries representatives Joint events involving stakeholders from prospective member countries
6					<b>SKACON/ SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify local, national or supra-national funding streams and joint initiatives to deliver SKA-relevant outreach &amp; education activities and programmes</li><li>• Continue to deliver and take part in the AUU-<b>SKAQ</b> joint funding for <b>radio astronomy</b> outreach projects</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	Council, partner organisations, funding agencies, local community, Indigenous community	Funding opportunities identified Proposals submitted with relevant partners	<b>in progress</b>	New funding and/or partnership secured for outreach related activities Proposals funded & delivered
7	Promote impact and benefits at micro (local/indigenous SMEs around telescope sites & across <b>SKAQ</b> membership) and macro level (E-gov-eths, job creation, science diplomacy, etc.) to demonstrate the relevance of the <b>SKAQ</b> to society at large	Society	Promote impact and benefits at micro (local/indigenous SMEs around telescope sites & across <b>SKAQ</b> membership) and macro level (E-gov-eths, job creation, science diplomacy, etc.) to demonstrate the relevance of the <b>SKAQ</b> to society at large	Raise the profile of the telescope and the <b>SKAQ</b> with local communities and how it benefits them (through employment, the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, education, etc.) and aims to be a good neighbour.	<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highlight contributions of the <b>SKA</b> project to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in communications products (e.g. AUAS, <b>SDG5</b>, <b>UNESCO</b>, etc.), including through the use of specific case studies &amp; impact stories</li></ul> <b>SKACON/ SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highlight contribution of radio-astronomy and <b>SKA</b> pathways to the UN SDGs in communications products</li><li>• Highlight impact of the <b>SKA</b> project in local communities around the telescope sites through communications products, branding, and local events and interventions</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	government, local community, indigenous community, general public	Dedicated section of the <b>SKAQ</b> website Case studies Communications products Talks, outreach and engagement opportunities (e.g. sessions at conferences) Communications products (blogs/posts, articles, media releases, etc.) highlighting <b>SKAQ</b> and partner initiatives in local communities Mention of <b>SKAQ</b> and partner initiatives in local community interventions (open days, stakeholder meetings, etc.) Branding of community projects and initiatives supported by the <b>SKAQ</b> and partners	<b>in progress</b>	communications products produced highlighting contribution to the SDGs number of case studies published presence (talks, sessions organised, stand, etc.) at events & conferences on impact and science in society Local community awareness of initiatives funded or supported by <b>SKAQ</b> and partners Brander community projects and initiatives
8					<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to contribute to, support and promote initiatives in line with our values that seek to make the <b>SKAQ</b> a highly desirable place to work (transnational committee activities, <b>SKAQ</b> speaker series, diversity &amp; inclusion initiatives, etc.)</li><li>• Continue to work with HR on advertising roles and promoting the <b>SKAQ</b>'s working culture via social media channels and dedicated brochures (Working in Australia/ South Africa <b>SKA</b>), participation in recruitment fairs (<b>SDS</b>), etc.), advertisement of roles at conferences &amp; events, etc.</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ</b>	Prospective staff, current staff, students, local community	Internal activities & initiatives that support a strong workplace culture, diversity and inclusion, and mental health Participation in relevant "international days" which showcase our values, through outreach, events or social media Contribution to Diversity & Inclusion plans Communications products and content promoting <b>SKAQ</b> values/employer <b>value</b> proposition on relevant channels Communications products and content around culture, values, and living and working in communities around the telescope sites Case studies of current staff (written, video, social posts) with a focus on representing diversity Content promoting open roles on relevant channels Participation in recruitment fairs as required Staff engagement and outreach with prospective staff	<b>in progress</b>	Creation and engagement with relevant channels (e.g. LinkedIn) aimed at candidates Regular promotion of open roles and values on relevant channels Regular internal events & activities presence at careers fairs Media engagement opportunities for promoting <b>SKAQ</b> as an employer of choice Celebrate relevant UN International Days to maintain alignment with sustainable development goals
9					<b>SKACON</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote open <b>SKAQ</b> roles (via websites, newsletters, social media, etc.) to local audiences in country to help attract international talent</li><li>• Profile nationals working for the <b>SKAQ</b> to highlight career opportunities</li></ul>	<b>SKACON</b>	Prospective staff, current staff, students	Promotion of <b>SKAQ</b> and <b>SKA</b> project roles via communications channels Promotion of country's nationals involved in the project through digital products (videos, profiles, social media)	<b>in progress</b>	Promotion of open <b>SKAQ</b> roles on relevant channels Creation of profiles of nationals working for the observatory Promotion of existing <b>SKAQ</b> content of relevance to the country
10	Support and promote in-house and partner institutions' initiatives in line with the New Climate Agenda, and support and promote <b>SKAQ</b> initiatives aimed at carbon footprint reduction	Sustainability	Support and promote in-house and partner institutions' initiatives in line with the New Climate Agenda, and support and promote <b>SKAQ</b> initiatives aimed at carbon footprint reduction	Contribute to harmonious relationship with local and indigenous communities and, in cooperation with local partners, identify and initiate joint opportunities around the preservation and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and other aspects of relevance for the community	<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support the development and implementation of the <b>SKAQ</b>'s sustainability strategy</li><li>• Consider, highlight and advocate for sustainability in the production of merchandise &amp; print material (recyclable/reusable material, use of local suppliers, shipping, etc.)</li><li>• Organise events &amp; activities that promote sustainability (e.g. tree-planting, food, etc.)</li><li>• Monitor and report on the travel-related carbon footprint of <b>SKAQ</b> events (conferences, etc.)</li></ul> <b>SKACON/ SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publish dedicated communications products and content (articles, webpages, case studies, internal initiatives) around SKA-related sustainability initiatives (<b>SDGs</b>, computing, power, use of electric vehicles, etc.)</li><li>• Consider sustainable modes of transport in SKA-related travel</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	Council, government, staff, media, general public	locally-produced merchandise and print material that is recyclable/reusable reports on the travel-related carbon footprint of <b>SKAQ</b> events content highlighting sustainability efforts across the <b>SKAQ</b> and linking to values Promotion of <b>SKAQ</b> and partners' efforts on sustainability issues Using communications channels to highlight data that supports sustainability goals	<b>in progress</b>	sustainable merchandise and print material Events & activities with a sustainable focus communications products around sustainability themes
11					<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively promote and support indigenous cultural heritage and knowledge projects and initiatives (e.g. Shared Sky exhibits, community-driven astronomy, indigenous planetariums, language, etc.)</li><li>• Ensure inclusion of <b>Wagani</b> references and cultural heritage in <b>SKAQ</b> communications in accordance with the requirements of the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA)</li><li>• Promote awareness of "cultural tips" for staff and project-partners</li></ul> <b>SKACON</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure correct use of <b>Wagani</b> references (e.g. name of the observatory) in communications products</li><li>• Contribute to promoting indigenous culture and "SKAQ spirit" through art as an "international" "common language", working with embassies and cultural associations and institutions where relevant.</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	Indigenous communities, local communities, government, general public	Encourage <b>SKAQ</b> staff, collaboration staff and collaborators/contractors to participate in <b>Wagani</b> cultural heritage inductions delivered in <b>Australia</b> projects and activities relating to Indigenous cultural heritage and its celebration Shared Sky exhibitions Support/partnership to partners who are creating content on Indigenous issues "Cultural tips"	<b>in progress</b>	Number of participants completing <b>Wagani</b> cultural heritage inductions projects and initiatives supporting indigenous cultural heritage Engagement with Shared Sky exhibitions Positive relationship between <b>SKAQ</b> and local indigenous communities Correct use of language and references to the areas and communities by staff and partners
12					<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a Funding Allocation Committee across <b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b> and <b>SKACON</b> to oversee the <b>allocation</b> of <b>SKAQ</b> funding to local initiatives that support cultural awareness and development in the local areas and ensure it is spent for maximum impact</li><li>• Collaborate with partners and potential funders on supporting the development of astro-tourism in the regions around the <b>SKA</b> sites</li><li>• Participate in the development of local infrastructures aimed at tourism and visitors (e.g. visitor centres, exhibitions, information panels, etc.)</li></ul> <b>SKACON In Australia and South Africa</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue developing initiatives that support development and create opportunity in the local areas</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	local governments, local businesses, Indigenous community, tourism boards	Funding <b>allocation</b> committee Astro-tourism star chart guides/peripherals for sites visible from our telescope sites Content for visitor centres: exhibition materials including videos, photos and written assets, guidebooks, branded merchandise Media releases to generate positive press coverage of astro-tourism impact on Indigenous community through job creation, awareness of cultural heritage	<b>in progress</b>	Allocation of funds to local projects and initiatives by the committee Use of peripherals and resources promoting astronomy locally Visitor numbers and positive feedback from visitors News and industry coverage of new facilities Increased awareness of <b>SKAQ</b> and <b>radio astronomy</b> among visitors
13	Maximise communications opportunities stemming from the construction of the <b>SKA</b> telescopes and prepare for Early and Full Science by identifying, leveraging and promoting relevant developments and milestones across science, computing, engineering and procurement		Sustain momentum and cooperation with the engineering community within <b>SKAQ</b> and at partner institutions to promote construction milestones, support relevant events, etc	Document the full scope of the construction of the telescopes and associated activities, including international collaborations	<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitor reports</li><li>• Support the organisation of <b>SKA</b> planning events</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ</b>	Partner institutes, industry, contractors, general public	Source images, videos and other information from engineering community in <b>SKAQ</b> to ensure timely and accurate updates on <b>SKA</b> channels Provide materials for partners to support their communications activities around construction milestones (multimedia, liveable etc.) Continue to collaborate with <b>SKACON</b> to ensure both <b>SKAQ</b> milestones and construction activities within their institutions are documented and promoted.	<b>in progress</b>	Publication of articles, social posts, videos as relevant to mark milestones in construction Growing archive of multimedia content documenting construction Involvement in partner output and events relating to <b>SKAQ</b> construction
14					<b>SKAQ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produce multimedia assets that capture on-site construction activities for the telescope</li><li>• Look for opportunities to partner with documentary filmmakers to produce films covering construction</li><li>• Continue to provide and build up an accessible repository of multimedia material &amp; metadata using modern digital asset management (DAM) tools</li></ul> <b>SKACON</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with contracted industry to secure interviews and filming of manufacturing process in the country</li><li>• Profile contributors to explain the work they are doing with the <b>SKAQ</b> (e.g. software development, etc.)</li></ul>	<b>SKAQ/ SKACON</b>	Partner institutes, industry, contractors, general public	Maintain chronological Centre archive Time-lapse photography/videos of construction Case studies on construction milestones and background/timeline to their achievement Social media posts	<b>in progress</b>	Growing archive of material chronicling the construction activities Publication of multimedia content on on Centre channels (websites, Contact magazine, social media, Pulse) to mark key milestones and progress
15					<b>SKAQ</b>	<b>SKAQ</b>	Staff, industry, future collaborators/ contractors, journalists, general public	Digital content. Highlight in Pulse and Contact and where relevant on social media.	<b>in progress</b>	Publication and maintenance of list of contracts awarded on the <b>SKAQ</b> website





# Communications and SDGs

- Increasingly, RIs & projects are asked to justify RoI and benefits
- Contribution to UN SDGs key in highlighting broader impact of astronomy in society
- How? Show qualitative and quantitative data through story-telling e.g. impact case studies
- Participation in high-level events (e.g. UNESCO, UNGA, WSF, ESOF)
- Contract communications



2 minutes with...  
Hélder Ribeiro,  
CEO at ATLAR Innovation

Building the SKA isn't only about constructing the telescopes on site; construction contracts for hardware components, software development and computing infrastructure have been awarded globally. In Portugal, software company ATLAR was founded to support SKA construction. We caught up with CEO Hélder Ribeiro, who visited the SKAO's Global Headquarters in December.

“It's quite simple: the company would not exist without the SKA – it was born from big science. It gave us the stability to continue and our people have learned so much that now we are able to gain more projects

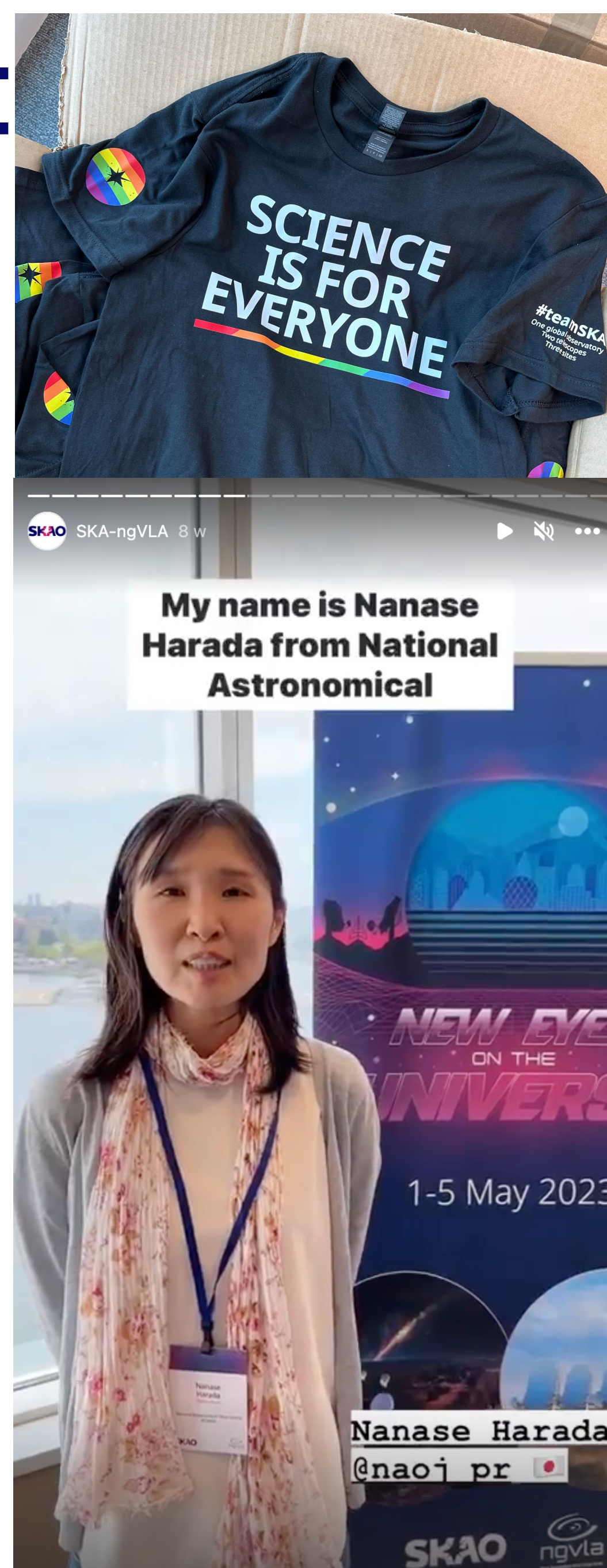
– Hélder Ribeiro Atlar CEO





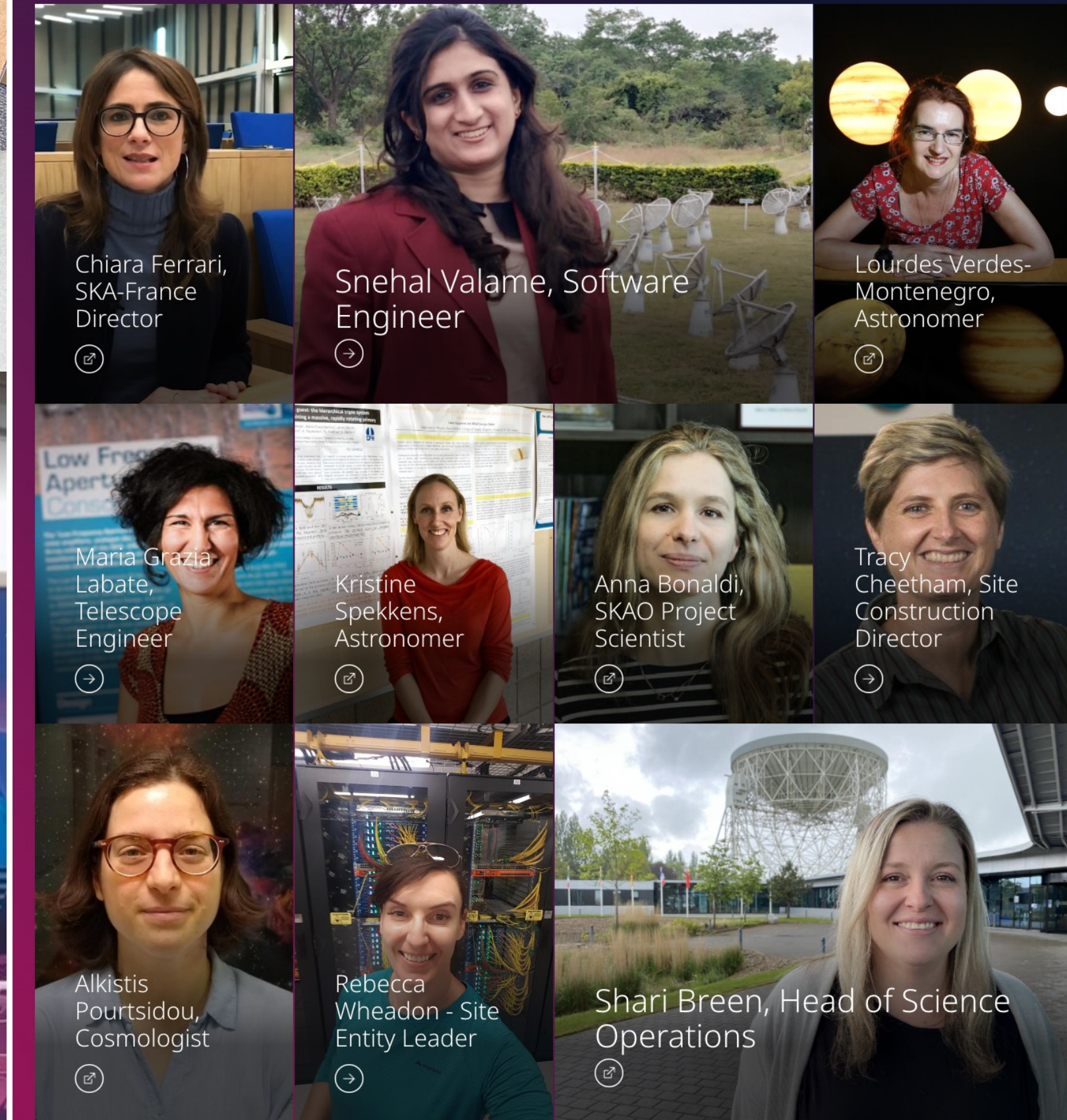
# Communications and EDI

- **Communications plays a key role in increasing visibility, creating awareness, showing support & facilitating access**
- **Representation & visibility:** Look at who we are featuring in quotes, interviews, outreach events, etc.
- **Showing support:** participation in specific initiatives eg international days
- **Staff awareness-raising via internal comms** (seminars, articles, workshops, etc.)
- **Accessibility of content & events**



## Women in STEM: in their own words

Hear from some of the Team SKA scientists and engineers based all over the world about how they got into STEM, what it's like working on a mega science project, and how the science organisations can improve the environment for women in the field.

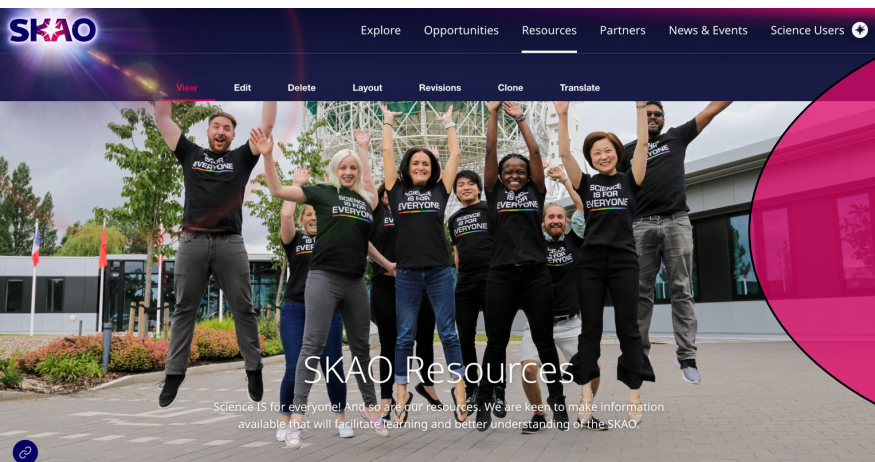




# SKAO comms activities



Multimedia  
production



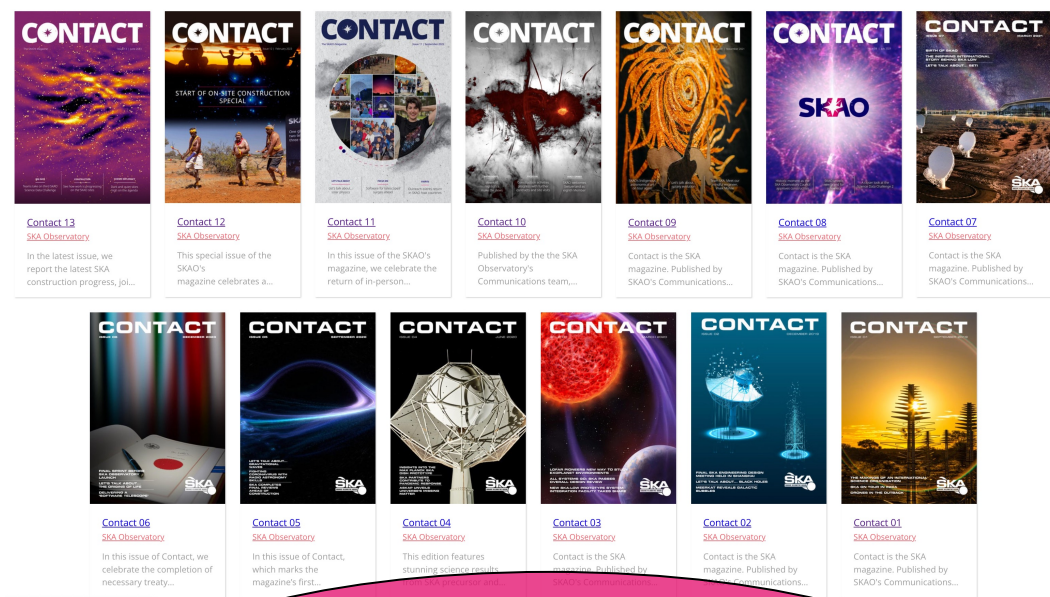
Online  
(website)



Social  
media



Local events



Publications



Promotional  
material



reports

**General audiences**

General public, voters, school kids, etc

**Key influencers**

Senior officials, Ambassadors, key industrial sectors, Chief Scientists, etc.

**Decision makers**

Government minister, Senators, Prime Ministers, etc



High-level  
visits

**Interest groups**

Scientists, industry groups, lobbyists, peak bodies, local communities, etc

**Multipliers**

Journalists (TV, press, radio), social media leaders, celebrities, science communicators, etc



Conferences



Special events



Special  
projects





# Some thoughts on SKA comms & outreach

- Role & support of member states & institutions crucial – Council approval, national comms strategy, resources, etc.
- Comms plays a key role in showing RoI (e.g. contracts, innovation, etc.); outreach in inspiring the public, etc.
- Different priorities in different countries – students, media, HCD, outreach, education, astro-tourism, etc.
- Key innovative projects & ideas needed – VR, AR, arts, etc. – and open-source material to share with partners & maximise use
- SKA project is global & multilingual - more content is needed in different languages
- Tracking essential to understand national & global impact of SKA comms





# What success looks like - a recent example from Switzerland

- Swiss-developed virtual experience and gamification of SKA-Mid
- Developed using EPFL resources & expertise
- Made available to SKAO for semi-permanent exhibit & events + international partners expressed interest
- Discussions to develop an SKA-Low version





*We recognise and acknowledge the  
Indigenous peoples and cultures that have  
traditionally lived on the lands on which  
our facilities are located.*



[www.skao.int](http://www.skao.int)