#15
2020

convergences

Public communication in Europe | Communication publique en Europe



FOCUS ON

Venice plenary, December 2019

Meeting n° 100 of the Club of Venice
The impact of social media
Countering disinformation and fake news
Communications academies
Action Plan to promote cooperation between public communicators and the media sector
Shaping professionalism in communication

London 3rd StratCom Seminar, February 2020

Digital challenges and transformation
Rapid response platforms
Behavioural science
Running effective campaigns

Crisis Communication: Covid-19 pandemic

CLUB OF VENICE WEBINAR, June 2020: lessons learned
Coronavirus impact: the polarisation of migration narratives

Diplomacy in the digital age

Media development and media and information literacy

Digital deliberation in the spotlight



Club of Venice | Club de Venise

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Plan fixe sur un monde qui change …

Par Philippe Caroyez et Vincenzo Le Voci

« (…) ce sont nos gueux le solide, et nos monarques,
nos héros qui se gonflent, ne sont que l'ombre des gueux … »

William Shakespeare. Hamlet, acte II, scène II.[1]

Milan Kundera, qu'il faudrait *absolument* lire (ou relire) à l'aune de nos préoccupations professionnelles (il a tant et si bien écrit sur la communication, la propagande, le journalisme, l'image… et sur la vérité ou même la lenteur) disait qu'on se trouve toujours ridicule sur une photographie, alors que le temps n'y a pas forcément déjà fait son œuvre. Et de considérer qu'il n'y fait pas tout à cet égard et que sûrement une part de ridicule devait habiter la situation, nous invitant à toujours essayer de la saisir là où elle naît !

Le confinement est propice au rangement et, donc, à l'exhumation de documents anciens et oubliés. Ainsi émerge le premier numéro du premier « magazine du fonctionnaire » (d'un pays-membre), daté de mai 2008, qui contient un article titré « [Le pays] prépare l'impensable », (nous en étions à la grippe aviaire H5N1, très faiblement transmissible à l'humain) dans lequel on nous dit tout de ce qui se fait et de ce qui se passerait en cas de pandémie à venir… et qui ressemble fort à ce qui se passe aujourd'hui avec la covid-19.

Tout y est : les gestes barrières (hygiène, distance sociale… se laver les mains régulièrement, ne pas échanger de poignées de main et assurer une bonne hygiène lorsque l'on tousse ou éternue), l'interdiction d'assister à un concert ou à un match de football…

Et l'avertissement est clair « Personne ne sait quand viendra la prochaine pandémie. La seule chose dont on est sûrs, c'est qu'elle viendra » et la promesse est précise « Comme la plupart des autres pays, [le pays] se prépare au pire »… et nous pouvions, en effet, être rassurés avec les mesures prévues : la continuité de l'activité, des campagnes d'information dans les écoles qui ne seraient fermées qu'en cas d'absolue nécessité – l'enseignement devant fonctionner comme en temps normal et, même, un vaccin pour chacun dès le début de la pandémie (sic)…

Il s'agit bien de communication interne à la fonction publique… nous étions en 2008 !

***

Les « *règles élémentaires* » de la communication de crise font consensus. Tout doit être en place par anticipation, avant que la crise ne se produise : les équipes, les plans, les méthodes, la coopération et les partenariats, les réseaux… C'est quand la crise peut apparaitre ou survient, qu'il faut être prêt et s'adapter à sa spécificité et aux différentes contingences.

Il faudrait évidemment que le politique fasse preuve de la même anticipation, ce qui n'est toutefois pas acquis dans la mesure où cela suppose des décisions et des investissements dont la nécessité n'est pas immédiate et qui, de plus, peuvent se heurter aux coupes budgétaires à courts termes. La crise sanitaire de la covid-19 n'a fait que multiplier les exemples en la matière : désinvestissements dans les soins de santé, ses personnels et les hôpitaux publics, sous-équipement suite à des restructurations, déséquilibres régionaux, absence de stocks de nature stratégique (masques, vêtements de protection…)… et les conséquences dommageables que nous avons vues et subies.

Il en est sûrement de même pour tout retard, hésitation, incohérence, contradiction, polémique… même si l'exceptionnel devrait susciter quelque indulgence.

Or, toutes mesures prises par une autorité demandent la plus large adhésion, qui ne peut se fonder que sur les niveaux d'acceptation et de confiance dont elles bénéficient. D'autant en situation de crise, même si la nature, l'importance et la gravité de celle-ci semblent l'emporter…

Nos services de communication sont eux-mêmes tributaires de cela et de la confiance dont ils bénéficient de la part de leurs publics, au travers de leurs actions et communications.

Les conditions de cette confiance sont connues : crédibilité, transparence, neutralité/impartialité, explications/motivations (souvent appuyées par des experts indépendants) et pédagogie, empathie/proximité (compréhension des « situations vécues » et des ressentiments), maintien du lien (disponibilité/permanence), réactivité et agilité… auxquelles s'ajoute la légitimé d'une institution, voire de son « visage ». Encore, bien sûr, faut-il se faire entendre et ainsi utiliser des canaux éprouvés de communication et y développer des actions d'information inclusives et en phase tant avec les contingences générales qu'avec les situations particulières des publics ciblés.

Mais les *communicateurs* de crise vous dirons que rien n'est jamais vraiment acquis et que c'est pour eux une conquête à chaque fois recommencée et méritée, qu'un rien peut remettre en cause.

Il faut ainsi veiller, analyser et agir… et être attentif à ceux qui peuvent profiter à tout moment d'incertitudes ou de retards pour perturber l'écosystème de l'opinion publique en affirmant, notamment, l'impuissance de nos gouvernements démocratiques, présentée comme l'étant *par nature*. Mais à eux aussi de saisir le moment pour entendre les demandes de

1 Traduction d'Yves Bonnefoy. Gallimard. Folio classique, p. 102.



la société civile, sans se réfugier, précisément, derrière cette impuissance qui découlerait de l'incertitude et de la complexité des faits… pour que le « monde d'après », mille fois évoqué, ne devienne pas comme une incantation clamée dans la crise et vite abandonnée, comme une promesse électorale en période de non-élection, pour que les héros du jour ne deviennent pas les oubliés de demain (« héros le 22 mars, zéros aujourd'hui » affichaient sur leurs casernes les pompiers de Bruxelles, après les attentats terroristes)…

« *L'idéologie* – affirme Václav Havel dans 'Le pouvoir des impuissants' – *en créant un pont d'excuses entre le système et l'individu, enjambe l'abîme entre les buts du système et les buts de la vie…* »[2].

C'est pour cela que toute action de communication (de crise ou pas, d'ailleurs) demande à être bien étudiée avant d'être décidée et à être monitorée en continu dès son lancement. Nous disposons ici (du moins en théorie) d'une batterie de moyens (état de l'opinion publique, pré-test, focus groupes qualitatifs, monitoring des médias sociaux, suivi des questions posées via les call centers, analyse des médias classiques et des réactions des leaders d'opinion et « influenceurs »…) et de techniques (comme celles liées aux études des comportements) qui ne sont toutefois pas toujours exploitées, faute de temps, de moyens (puisque certains d'entre eux sont onéreux) ou par absence de préoccupations allant en ce sens, il faut bien l'avouer !

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On se rappelle peut-être de ce ministre venu (au début de la crise) dire à la télévision : mais que se passerait-il si chaque jour un spécialiste venait dans le journal télévisé annoncer le nombre de morts de la grippe ou d'un accident de voiture ?

Il a toutefois négligé LA canicule… au cours de laquelle des personnes seules et âgées, jusqu'à dans les « maisons de repos » (bel euphémisme pour ne plus dire « asile »), ont déjà, en son temps, payé un lourd tribu dans une certaine indifférence et l'inaction au départ des autorités publiques.

Contrairement à ce qu'ont fait quotidiennement la plupart de nos services, y compris en s'adressant directement au public, voulait-il dire qu'il faudrait taire le nombre de décès (ne pas le communiquer ou, du moins, le communiquer « à distance ») pour ne pas générer de panique ? C'est sûrement ce qui s'est passé un temps, dans certains pays ; c'est aussi ce qui peut encore se passer dans certains d'entre eux ! Après l'indice « Big Mac » pour le pouvoir d'achat, peut être pourra-t-on se servir d'un indice « covid-19 » pour mesurer le degré de transparence des autorités d'un pays, voire leur niveau de démocratie ?

En pareilles circonstances, les médias (au sens large) lorsqu'ils sont libres ne permettent aucun faux fuyant des autorités !

Rarement, d'ailleurs, nous aurons vu, sur une aussi longue période, un « dialogue » (certes à distance et « médiatisé ») si intense et si permanent (fait d'une « juxtaposition » de vécus, d'annonces, de questionnements, d'opinions et de commentaires) entre citoyens, acteurs socioéconomiques et culturels, scientifiques, professionnels de la santé, corps intermédiaires et autorités… via la presse et les médias, eux-mêmes y jouant un rôle de par leurs actions.

Tout est médiatisé. La situation du jeune sans ordinateur confiné dans un modeste appartement sans possibilité de s'isoler et l'enseignant plein d'une parfaite bonne volonté qui peaufine ses cours à distance et qui s'inquiète … des élèves qui décrochent ; infirmiers/ères fatigués d'une journée harassante, qui ne sont plus les bienvenus dans leur immeuble et médecins qui manquent de masques; ceux qui connaissent le chômage temporaire qui pourrait basculer vers un licenciement économique et le cabaretier ou le restaurateur qui compte les jours avant une inévitable faillite et les GAFAM qui accroissent encore leurs pouvoirs et leurs bénéfices ; le ministre qui se perd dans les propres règles édictées par son gouvernement, quant au nombre de personnes qu'on peut rencontrer ; les sagas des masques promis par les autorités, mais qui tardent à arriver et à être distribués ; la conférence de presse attendue depuis des heures, qui se tient finalement à plus de 22h avec un powerpoint fouillé qu'il en est illisible destiné aux journalistes présents,

2 Václav Havel, The Power of the Powerless, in "Living in Truth", ed. Jan Vladislav, Faber and Faber, 1989, p. 44.

mais qu'une audience record regarde en direct … et chaque jour, la litanie des chiffres et du nombre des décès.

Même si on peut légitimement s'interroger sur ce qui en restera, en termes de changement et notamment (de notre point de vue) de relations avec les autorités publiques et de débat public, dans ce rôle et ces actions il faut souligner l'immédiateté, la réactivité et la force de diffusion (et donc l'influence) dont peuvent bénéficier les médias et que les communicateurs publics n'ont pas ou pas sans eux !

Et cette immédiateté est à coup sûr, dans ce cadre, aussi un enjeux de la communication publique et pour elle.

Non qu'elle soit une panacée, non que la communication publique doive, comme la communication politique, être « dans le débat », mais surtout qu'elle doivent être **agile**. C'est-à-dire épouser, à tous moments, les contours tant des décisions publiques prises à tous moments que les interstices dans lesquels doivent se glisser ce qui les rendent accessibles et compréhensibles par les concernés, qui sont multiples et avec une pluralité de rôles.

C'est la quadrature du cercle … d'autant qu'apparait ici plus d'une communication publique et, bien sûr, plus d'un intervenant institutionnel dont il faut espérer la bonne coordination :

- la « communication gouvernementale » (à différents niveaux selon l'organisation institutionnelle du pays, voire souvent en cascade) qui indique (explique et justifie) les mesures prises, le plus souvent en termes d'interdictions/autorisations, de mesures de soutien (par la suite, coulées dans un arsenal législatif et règlementaire) et, lorsque c'est possible (!), d'orientation ou de perspective ;
- … la communication « de suivi » des autorités publiques qui en découle et vise à présenter et expliquer plus en détails les mesures et décisions prises, qui fait aussi le point sur la situation et rappelle les mesures de sauvegarde ;
- une communication « statique », qui reprend et diffuse les informations de base (les gestes « barrières », principalement, du moins au départ, suivis d'instructions issues des décisions officielles prises en matière de confinement et déconfinement progressif et phasé) ;
- une « communication de crise » (dynamique) qui vise à suivre de près la situation, son évolution et les mesures prises, à monitorer leur perception et leur observance et à produire et orienter la communication adéquate dont le but ultime est d'obtenir les comportements souhaités et nécessaires.

Dans ce cadre, l'agilité nécessaire et pourtant indispensable n'est pas chose évidente (il en est de même de la coopération/coordination qui en est l'une des conditions). Souvent les décisions dont ils s'agit sont prises et communiquées directement à la presse, et donc au public (souvent en même temps, sans discernement), sans implication des services de communication. C'est à un point tel que l'autorité en vient, parfois, à confondre « conférence de presse » et « allocution publique »…

Souvent aussi nos modèles institutionnels (quels qu'ils soient) reposent – dans ces circonstances spécifiques – à la fois sur la prise de décisions le plus généralement centralisée, mais pas toujours, et sur leurs mises en œuvre du niveau central mais également par des pouvoirs (régionaux, locaux…) ou des acteurs (système hospitalier, système scolaire, réseaux de pharmacies, médecine libérale…) décentralisés, sans que du temps leur soit donné, sans parfois de préparation, de concertation… et souvent sans production et mise à disposition de supports et de contenus adéquats d'information.

Il est certes régulièrement urgent d'agir, mais ici l'immédiateté des annonces publiques, sans préparation et accompagnement en aval, peut être contreproductive et affecter la confiance des publics et leur adhésion.

Pis, ces mesures ont souvent déjà « fuité »… dans la presse et, encore, elles sont commentées à chaud faisant que le commentaire puisse l'emporter sur l'information et la troubler et ce d'autant que les mesures annoncées par les autorités publiques peuvent présenter un caractère général ou de principe que chacun s'efforce de ne voir qu'au travers du prisme de sa réalité « sectorielle » ou personnelle.

Souvent, encore, les services de communications sont cantonnés à la « communication statique » que nous évoquions : produire après coup quelques affiches, des spots tv et radio… qu'il sera difficile de « faire vivre » (et surtout actualiser) dans le « système de la publicité » (encore engoncé dans ses rigidités de production, adaptation et règles de réservation)… alors que même les règles des marchés publics, souvent rigides, permettent plus de souplesse qu'on ne peut l'imaginer en de telles circonstances.

Seuls les sites internet (avec, notamment, leurs « FAQ »), les call-centers (avec leurs scripts de réponse actualisés en permanence en fonction des décisions et du suivi des questions et préoccupations exprimées) et les réseaux sociaux publics permettent cette agilité nécessaire, même si la fracture numérique apparait ici avec une acuité particulière.

À cet égard, il importe de ne pas négliger deux aspects :

- la fracture numérique n'est pas uniquement liée à l'âge, mais encore à certaine situation sociale ;
- le poids des acteurs économiques « traditionnels » (régies, journaux, radio, TV, …) en la matière qui mettront tout en œuvre (dont le lobbying politique) pour tirer à eux, d'autant

en situation de crise (y compris économique), les revenus de la publicité des autorités publiques … qui se comptent en millions d'euros !

Finalement, le « problème » de l'agilité communicationnelle publique pourrait bien être qu'elle prend et devra emprunter des voies nouvelles qui impliquent une organisation adaptée, des modalités opérationnelles renouvelées et des supports nouveaux, « légers » et relativement peu onéreux, et qui supposent de la part des autorités publiques, y compris de leurs autorités politiques, et de nos services de communication une « agilité organique » à laquelle ils ne sont ni habitués, ni préparés…

Cette agilité est d'autant plus cruciale (et risquée) qu'elle devra, vraisemblablement, assumer un changement dans les relations avec les opérateurs traditionnels de la communication, des médias et de la presse et, nécessairement, assumer et garantir une large part de dialogue avec les citoyens et d'échanges.

Dans le cadre de la crise que nous connaissons, beaucoup doivent se réinventer (entreprise, artisan, télétravailleur, secteur culturel…)… pourquoi la communication publique y échapperait-elle ?

Mais rien n'est sûr… et la tentation d'inertie est vraisemblablement grande. À moins que les changements ne nous soient imposés de l'extérieur, venant d'élément contingents ?

- Les événements ont fait émerger au premier plan une « fonction publique de proximité », dite « de première ligne » (hôpitaux publics, services publics d'aide…), qui le dispute à la fonction publique administrative, souvent vue comme lointaine, hésitante, bureaucratique, détachée des « réalités du terrain »…
- Les circonstances et singulièrement la capacité et le temps de réaction des autorités ont aussi fait naître de nombreuses initiatives dites « citoyennes » qui constituent de véritables « actions de service public » supplétives (confection et distribution de masques, aide aux personnes isolées…). Bien que dans une moindre mesure, ces initiatives ont également concerné le domaine de la communication, précisément en informant sur ces initiatives ou, par exemple, en faisant la promotion des producteurs et artisans locaux. Même les firmes d'affichage et certaines marques ou agences en sont venues à faire de la « communication d'intérêt général » (pour ne pas délaisser le terrain, pour ne pas laisser leurs panneaux à l'abandon et nus, démontrant aussi le besoin de permanence du système de la publicité, et/ou viser à accroitre leur capital de sympathie en soulignant leur engagement sociétal… à tarif réduit).
- L'action de l'autorité publique, sa cohérence (l'absence de contradiction, la clarté et la logique des mesures et décisions, …) et sa performance (la mise à disposition de masques, de tests, …), même son évaluation en continu, sont devenues (comme jamais sur une période aussi longue) l'objet d'une attention permanente, principalement de la part des médias, et personne n'échappe au besoin – ou à la sollicitation – de se positionner. Ces « indicateurs » qui affectent le niveau de confiance dans les institutions semblent être devenus des préoccupations, qui peuvent aussi concerner la communication publique, …
- Certaines dimensions institutionnelles dont nous nous étions accommodées sont mises à mal (dans un double mouvement de recentralisation-redécentralisation)…

Ce sont là divers aspects qui peuvent affecter nos organisations et qui devraient alimenter la réflexion sur notre rôle et nos actions de communication.

Il faudra certes mettre, comme toujours, de la distance entre nos actions et leur évaluation finale, mais il est néanmoins nécessaire d'avoir dans nos organisations cette capacité d'auto-évaluation permanente, cette indispensable distance critique, qui ébranle les certitudes et nous forcent à voir si nos messages sont bien perçus et nos canaux performants. En situation dite de crise, et celle de la covid-19 est exemplaire par son caractère exceptionnel, cette « distance » est de plus en plus réduite, qui nous force à concevoir et à devoir mettre en place une communication qui s'adapte quasi de jour en jour.

Selon l'évolution de la situation (rapportées tant par les autorités, les médias que par les spécialistes), selon les décisions qui sont envisagées ou prises, selon les commentaires plus ou moins autorisés, la communication se doit d'être particulièrement « accompagnante », réactive et, donc, agile.

Vœux pieux ? Qui sait…

Souvent, comme toujours, la communication publique *fait ce qu'elle peut*.

Bien qu'elle ne soit pas sans précédents historiques, il faut toutefois souligner que cette crise est en quelque sorte inédite à l'époque de ce qui la rend « première » : la mondialisation galopante, la communication débordant de toutes parts… et le fait qu'elle touche l'Homme « sans honte » (à l'inverse du HIV) et qu'elle pourrait, même si rien ne l'indique ou que peu l'évoque, s'installer comme une composante durable de nos écosystèmes perturbés. Nos collègues britanniques, qui ont définitivement le sens de la communication efficace et de la formule qui l'accompagne, n'évoquent-ils pas le « *covid way of life* » et la « *1,5 meter society* » !

Freeze-frame on a changing world...

By Philippe Caroyez and Vincenzo Le Voci

Face à ce monde qui change, face à la crise, la communication publique aurait-elle été défaillante ?

Un communicateur public, spécialiste de la communication de crise au sein d'un centre fédéral de crise, que nous avons sollicité, accepte de parler de ce qu'il fait, mais refuse à ce stade de faire un bilan, une évaluation. C'est respectable, du moins prudent.

Un épidémiologiste, reconnu pour sa réflexion sociopolitique et morale globale sur cette crise, qualifie la communication étatique d'infantilisante, sans appel à la responsabilité individuelle... Comme c'est précisément ce que généralement nos services ont voulu éviter et tenté de mettre en avant, la remarque interpelle. Sa constatation se fonde sur la perception qu'il a de l'ensemble du discours public, de la communication d'ensemble des autorités face à la crise ; en ce sens, il a encore souligné une absence de transparence des motifs des décisions prises et, donc, d'explications.

Même si des efforts d'évaluation et de monitoring sont consentis, lorsque l'heure des bilans sera venue (on évoque çà et là des commissions d'enquête, indépendante ou parlementaire ; des plaintes ont même été introduites en justice), il est certain que la communication publique et, notamment, l'action de nos services seront *appelés à la barre*.

L'essentiel, comme dans toute cette crise, est sûrement que le politique et nos autorités sachent reprendre en main les enjeux capitaux d'un monde qui change et que nous sachions les accompagner et nous redéfinir...

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"Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows...."

William Shakespeare. Hamlet, Act II, Scene II.[1]

Milan Kundera – a must-read (or re-read) author, in the light of our professional concerns (so much and so well did he write about communication, propaganda, journalism, image, as well as on truth and even slowness) – stated that we always think we look ridiculous in a photograph, whether or not time has had a chance to do its work. This suggests that the passage of time is not entirely to blame and that there must have been something ridiculous in the situation itself, which prompts us to keep trying to work out what it was.

The lockdown brings an opportunity to tidy up, while in the process digging out old and forgotten documents. And so emerged the first issue of the first 'civil servant's magazine' (of an EU Member State), dated May 2008, containing an article entitled '*[Country X] prepares for the unthinkable*' (this was when we were in the midst of the avian flu H5N1 outbreak, a virus with a low rate of transmission to humans). The article details everything that was going on then, and describes what would happen in the event of a future pandemic, eerily familiar words in the light of the current COVID-19 outbreak.

It's all there: the preventive measures (hygiene, social distancing, regular hand washing, not shaking hands, taking precautions when coughing or sneezing), the ban on attending concerts and football matches, and so on.

And the warning is clear: «No one knows when the next pandemic will come. The only thing we are sure of, is that it will come.» There is also a specific pledge: «Like most other countries, [country X] is preparing for the worst.» Rest assured, a raft of planned measures will be implemented: businesses will keep running, there will be information campaigns in schools, which will only be closed if absolutely necessary (the education sector will continue operating as normal), and there will even be vaccination for everyone at the start of the pandemic (sic)...

This was an internal civil-service communication... from 2008!

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The '*basic rules*' of crisis communication are generally agreed upon. Everything must be in place in advance, before the crisis hits: teams, plans, methods, cooperation and partnerships, networks, and so on. When the crisis happens, you have to be ready to adapt to the specific circumstances and to a range of contingencies.

Obviously, politicians should be equally forward-thinking, but this is far from guaranteed as it means making decisions and investments with no immediate necessity, potentially in the face of short-term budget cuts. The COVID-19 health crisis has highlighted numerous instances of this – reduced investment in healthcare, healthcare staff and public hospitals, under-equipment as a result of restructuring, regional imbalances, inadequate stocks of strategic kit (masks, protective clothing, etc.) – with the harmful consequences that we have seen and experienced.

The same can no doubt be said of any delay, hesitation, inconsistency, contradiction and wrangling, although some allowance does have to be made for exceptional circumstances.

However, all measures taken by an authority need to meet the broadest possible support, and this can only be based on the levels of acceptance and trust that they enjoy. That is especially true in a crisis situation, even when the nature, scale and gravity of the crisis may seem to override this concern.

Our communications teams are in a similar position, being dependent on the trust of their audiences which they build up through their actions and communications.

The conditions required for such trust are no secret: credibility, transparency, neutrality/impartiality, a willingness to explain/account for decisions (often backed up by independent experts) and to inform and educate, empathy/proximity (understanding people's feelings and the realities of their lives), engagement (being available/accessible), responsiveness and agility. The legitimacy of an institution, or its 'public face', are also key. Getting one's voice heard is important too, of course, and that means using proven communication channels to roll out inclusive information campaigns in line with both the general circumstances and the specific situations of target audiences.

But *crisis communicators* will tell you that nothing can really be taken for granted, and that their job is a series of battles where each victory has to be earned afresh and can be jeopardised by the merest trifle.

They must therefore watch, analyse and act… and be on the lookout for those who, at any time, could take advantage of uncertainties or delays to disrupt the ecosystem of public opinion, for example by proclaiming that our democratic governments are not only powerless, but *inherently* powerless. At the same time, however, they need to be able to seize the moment by listening to the demands of civil society, without sheltering behind the 'powerlessness' which the uncertainty and complexity of the facts may appear to engender. This is the only way to ensure that the often-evoked 'post-crisis world' doesn't become merely a slogan chanted during the crisis and quickly abandoned, like a pre-election promise, and that today's heroes are not forgotten tomorrow (see the slogan displayed by Brussels firefighters outside their fire stations following the 2016 terrorist attacks: 'Heroes on the 22 March, zeros today').

«*Ideology*,» says Václav Havel in 'The power of the powerless', «*in creating a bridge of excuses between the system and the individual, spans the abyss between the aims of the system and the aims of life…*» [1]

That is why any communication action (whether in a crisis or not) needs to be carefully studied before being signed off and then monitored continually from the outset. For this we have at our disposal (in theory at least) a raft of means (opinion polls, pre-testing, qualitative focus groups, monitoring of social media, monitoring of questions asked to call centres, analysis of traditional media and reactions of opinion leaders and 'influencers', etc.) and of techniques (such as those used in behavioural studies). However, these are not always exploited, due to a lack of time or resources (some being expensive) or – admittedly, in some cases – a lack of interest.

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1 Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in Living in Truth, ed. Jan Vladislav, Faber and Faber, 1989, p. 44.

You may remember the minister who appeared on TV at the start of the crisis asking what would happen if an expert were to go on the news every day to announce the number of fatalities from flu or road accidents.

He had obviously forgotten all about the 2003 heatwave, when elderly people living alone, and even those in 'care homes' (the euphemistic term for 'old people's homes'), paid a heavy price for the initial indifference and inaction of the authorities.

Did he mean to suggest that the number of deaths should be kept quiet (i.e. not disclosed, or only disclosed indirectly) so as not to generate panic – in other words, the reverse of the approach adopted by most of our teams on a daily basis, which also included direct communication with the public? This was undoubtedly how things used to be done in a number of countries – and may still be the approach taken in some! Following on from the Big Mac index for purchasing power, maybe we could use a COVID-19 index to measure the transparency of a country's authorities, or their level of democracy?

In circumstances like those we are currently experiencing, the media (in the broad sense), provided it is a free media, doesn't let the authorities get away with double-talk.

Indeed, rarely have we seen such a lively, continuous and prolonged 'dialogue' (albeit conducted remotely and in the glare of the media) between citizens, socioeconomic and cultural players, scientists, health professionals, interest groups and authorities, consisting of a mix of personal testimonies, announcements, questions, opinions and comments and conducted via the press and media, which have also played a role in it through their own actions.

Everything receives media coverage. The plight of the young man without a computer, in lockdown in a small flat with no chance of any privacy; the well-meaning teacher who hones his remote classes and worries about his students falling behind; nurses exhausted after a stressful day's work who were made to feel less than welcome in their apartment block, and doctors without any masks; people enduring temporary unemployment, which could well end in redundancy; the café owner or restaurateur counting the days until the inevitable bankruptcy while the Tech Giants accrue yet more power and profits; the minister caught out by his own government's rules on the number of people you're allowed to meet; the sagas of masks promised by the authorities but which take forever to arrive and be distributed; the press conference delayed by hours, which finally takes place after 10 p.m. using a PowerPoint containing so much detail it is indecipherable, intended for the journalists present but actually watched live by a record audience… not to mention the daily litany of statistics and deaths.

While we may legitimately question what the lasting impact of all this will be, in terms of change and in particular (from our point of view) the public debate and the public's relationship with the authorities, the immediacy, responsiveness and communicative power (and hence the influence) of the media in this context has to be emphasised. It is something that public communicators simply don't have, or at any rate not without the media to assist them.

And this immediacy, in this context, is unquestionably also a challenge for – and to – public communication.

That is not to say it's a panacea, nor that public communication, like political communication, should get 'caught up in the debate'. The key thing is that public communication has to be **agile**. In other words, at all times must it take account both of the substance of the decisions taken by governments, and of the way in which those decisions can be made accessible and understandable for the many and varied people they will affect.

It is like squaring the circle… and made all the more complex by the existence of more than one type of public communication and, of course, multiple institutional actors – that are hopefully well coordinated. The different types of public communication are:

- 'government communication' (at multiple levels depending on the country's institutional structure, and often cascading), which sets out (explains and justifies) the measures taken, often in terms of what is and is not permitted, support measures (subsequently enshrined in a legislative and regulatory framework) and, when possible (!), guidance and future outlook;
- 'follow-up' communication from the public authorities, arising from the original communication and aimed at presenting and explaining in more detail the measures and decisions taken, as well as giving an update on the situation and reiterating the safeguard measures;
- 'static' communication, which reiterates and disseminates the basic information (mainly the preventive measures (at least initially), followed by instructions based on official decisions concerning the lockdown and the gradual, phased easing of restrictions);
- (dynamic) 'crisis communication', aimed at closely tracking the situation, how it develops and the measures taken, monitoring how the measures are perceived and observed, and producing and directing appropriate communication, the ultimate goal of which is to bring about the desired and required behaviours.

In this context, agility is essential but not easy to achieve (the same is true of cooperation/coordination, which is one of its prerequisites). The decisions in question are frequently communicated directly to the press, and therefore to the public (often at the same time, and thus indiscriminately), without the involvement of the communications teams – to such an extent that the authority sometimes confuses a press conference with a public address.

Often, too, our institutional models (of whatever kind) are based – in these specific circumstances – on a system where decisions are usually, but not always, taken centrally and then implemented both at the central level and also by decentralised authorities (regional, local, etc.) or actors (hospital system, school system, pharmacy networks, GPs, etc.). These decentralised players are not always given the necessary time to prepare and may not even be consulted, and the appropriate information materials and content are often not produced or made available.

Admittedly, in many cases urgent action may be required, but immediate public announcements, without preparation and support downstream, can be counterproductive and affect public trust and buy-in.

Worse, the measures have often already been leaked in the press, and then feverishly discussed, with the result that the discussion can overshadow the information itself and distort the message. This is especially true because the measures announced by the government may well be general or 'in principle' measures, which tend to be viewed through the prism of 'sectoral' or personal circumstances.

Communications teams are often only deployed for static communication: producing a few follow-up posters, TV and radio ads, etc. that are difficult to bring to life (and especially to keep topical) in the current advertising system (which is still hidebound by inflexible production and adaptation procedures and booking rules)... despite the fact that public procurement rules, though often rigid, allow more flexibility than one might imagine in such circumstances.

Only websites (in particular their FAQ sections), call centres (where response scripts are constantly updated in line with the latest decisions as well as questions asked and concerns expressed) and public social media allow for the necessary agility, although the digital divide is a particularly acute problem here.

In this regard, two aspects should not be overlooked:

- the digital divide not only affects people of a certain age, but also people in certain social situations;
- 'traditional' economic players (advertising agencies, newspapers, radio, TV, etc.) carry great clout in this area and will do everything they can (including political lobbying) to attract advertising revenues from public authorities, all the more so at a time of crisis (even an economic one). These revenues run into the millions of euros!

Finally, the 'problem' with agility in public communication could well be that it involves taking new paths that mean adapting organisational structures, overhauling operational methods and creating new types of 'lightweight', relatively inexpensive media, which require the public authorities, including their political authorities, as well as our communications teams to display an organic agility which they are neither accustomed to nor prepared for.

This agility is all the more crucial (and risky) in that it will likely entail a change in the relationship with traditional communication, media and press operators and will inevitably involve much more dialogue and interaction with the public.

The current crisis has forced many players to reinvent themselves (businesses, artisans, teleworkers, the cultural sector, etc.), so why should public communication be any different?

But nothing is certain... and inertia is likely to prove a great temptation. But what if change was imposed on us by outside contingencies?

- Recent events have brought to the fore a 'local public sector' of front-line services (public hospitals, public support services, etc.), contrasting with a government civil service often perceived as distant, hesitant, bureaucratic and detached from the realities on the ground.
- The circumstances and, in particular, shortcomings in the authorities' capacity and response times have also given rise to many grassroots initiatives performing supplementary public service actions (such as making and distributing masks and helping isolated people). To a lesser extent, such initiatives have also entered the communication arena, in order to raise awareness of the initiatives themselves or to promote local producers and artisans, for example. Even outdoor advertising companies and some brands and agencies have got in on the act by producing 'public interest messaging' (keen not to cede ground and leave their billboards abandoned and empty, thus also demonstrating the advertising system's need for continuity, and/or in a bid to boost their public image by emphasising their social commitment... at a discount rate).
- The action of the public authorities, their consistency (lack of contradiction, clarity and logic of measures and decisions, etc.) and performance (provision of masks, tests, etc.), even

their continuous evaluation, have become (in a way never seen before over such a long period) the subject of constant scrutiny, mainly from the media. Moreover, everyone feels the need to voice an opinion, or is asked to do so. These 'indicators', which affect the level of trust in institutions, seem to have become the focus of concern, and some of that concern may be directed towards public communication.

- Some of the institutional characteristics that we had become used to are now being undermined (in a dual process of recentralisation and re-decentralisation).

A number of these issues could have implications for our organisations and should feed into discussions of our role and our communication activities.

While it will be necessary, as always, to maintain a certain distance between our activities and their final evaluation, we nevertheless need our organisations to have that capacity for constant self-assessment, that vital critical distance that calls our certainties into question and forces us to check that our messages are getting through and our channels are performing effectively. In a crisis situation – of which COVID-19 is a classic example due to its exceptional nature – that 'distance' gets shorter and shorter, which forces us to design and implement a form of communication that can be adapted on virtually a daily basis.

Such communication has to reflect developments in the situation (as reported by the authorities, the media and experts), decisions planned or taken, and the comments generated (authorised or otherwise), which means that it must be highly tailored, reactive and hence agile.

Wishful thinking? Who knows...

Public communication will, as usual, *do the best it can*.

It should be stressed that this crisis, although not without historical precedents, is the first such crisis to occur in our age of rampant globalisation and mass, surround-sound communication. What also sets it apart is the fact that there is no element of shame for those affected (unlike with HIV, say) and that it could end up becoming a permanent part of our disrupted ecosystems, although there is little to suggest that this will be the case. Our British colleagues, who undoubtedly have a gift for effective communication and neat formulation, talk about the '*COVID way of life*' and the '*1.5-metre society*'!

So, in the face of this changing world, in the face of the crisis, has public communication been found wanting?

A public communicator who works as a crisis communication specialist at a federal crisis centre agreed to talk to us about his work, but refuses at this stage to take stock or make an assessment. Which is fair enough, or prudent at least.

An epidemiologist, renowned for his general socio-political and moral reflections on this crisis, describes government communication as infantilising, with no appeal to individual responsibility... Given that this is precisely what our teams were generally at pains to avoid and tried to highlight, the remark really hits home. His observation is based on his perception of public discourse as a whole, of the authorities' overall communication in response to the crisis. From this perspective, he also underlines a lack of transparency in the reasons for the decisions taken and, therefore, of explanations for those decisions.

For all the efforts at evaluation and monitoring, when the time comes to take stock (there is already talk in some quarters of commissions of inquiry, either independent or parliamentary; complaints have even been filed in court), there is no doubt that public communication and, in particular, the actions of our teams will be *called to the stand*.

As has been the case throughout this crisis, the most important thing is that our politicians and authorities can get to grips with the critical challenges of a changing world and that we can redefine ourselves in order to provide them with the support they need.

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Outcome of proceedings of the plenary meeting

Venice, 5-6 December 2019

The **100th meeting of the Club of Venice** took place in Venice on 5-6 December 2019, bringing together over 70 senior public communicators from EU Member States, institutions and bodies and countries candidate to the EU membership, as well as external communication specialists and academics.

Three main topics were addressed in this plenary:

- the impact of technologies on public communication, with focus on social media and on countering disinformation and fake news
- capacity/capability building (analysis of organizational models, communications academies and change management)
- the future of the media scenario (ecosystem) in Europe.

The participants were welcomed by **Fiorenza Barazzoni**, Director-General at the European Policies Department of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers, followed by representatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission in Italy and the Venice Municipality. Also the President of the Veneto Region **Luca Zaia** sent a greeting letter to the participants.

In his opening speech **Marco Peronaci**, Italian Minister Plenipotentiary at the Foreign Affairs Ministry and Special Envoy for Brexit, outlined the current geopolitical scenario and the crucial role for communicators in spreading timely, concrete and reliable information.

Kostantinos Alexandris, Secretary-General for Public Diplomacy at the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Greece, new member of the Steering Group of the Club of Venice and **Stefano Rolando**, President of the Club, addressed the audience on values at stake.

Stefano Rolando recalled three core objectives for the public communicator:

- the balance between institutional loyalty and a citizen-oriented service;
- the modernization and innovation of processes, through the transfer and exchange of knowledge and the enlargement of access to information
- the pursuit of professional principles inspired by the genuine European history values, promoted through a culture of explanation (not of propaganda or manipulation).

Moreover, Stefano focused on three key priority topics for Europe: the environmental challenges, migration and the European identity and welcomed the increasing synergies and work in partnership between the Club and external organisations (referring in particular to the recent 2nd workshop and high level event organised by the ICMPD in Athens to discuss migration narratives). Finally, recalling the recent project announced by the new President of the European Commission for a "Conference on the Future of Europe", he stressed the need for reinforcing cooperation among communicators in countering Euroscepticism and meeting citizens' demand for a Europe built on needs, dreams, expectations and responsibilities.

The first session of the plenary focused on **digital technologies and public communication**.

The debate, moderated by **Claus Hörr** (Director at the Press Office of the Austrian Federal Chancellery and member of the Steering Group of the Club), was opened by a key note from **Marco Ricorda**, communication specialist and advisor at the International Centre for Migration Policies Development (ICMPD), who highlighted the role of the social media as catalyser in a modern democracy. **Marco** outlined the potential impact of the institutional use of social networks and the need for governments and institutions to develop and foster cooperation with industries/tech companies in the fight against disinformation. In this context, he underlined that it is crucial to invest in information literacy as well as in fact-checking and in the added value of multipliers who could help amplify messages and spreading good values.

The panel elaborated on the major professional and technological developments of public communication in Europe. **Gernot Streitmeyer** outlined the main features of the Austrian inter-ministerial Stratcom platform focusing on monitoring and countering disinformation and fake news. **Thibault Lesénécal**, Head of the European Parliament's web communication unit, and **Louis Riquet**, Head of communication in the French government's Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs focused on the increasing impact of new technologies on the communication infrastructures and on planning capacities. **Imrich Babic**, Head of the Strategic Communication Unit at the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Slovakia, elaborated on work in progress in countering violent extremism and terrorism (media monitoring, detecting, data analysis and evaluation), sharing some reflections on his country's proactive role in this field, in particular in the agenda of the European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN), and elaborated on the importance to cooperate with international partner organisations (feedback on #WeAreNATO campaign) and to communicate in schools and through country-side public discussions. **Danijel Koletić**, President of the Institute for Integrated-Inclusive Communications for South-East Europe, stressed the need for appropriate web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) and for facilitating people with disabilities by integrating ad hoc provisions in the e-government strategies and in the training and education plans.

Katja Sare, Head of Public and Cultural Diplomacy at the Croatia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, illustrated how her country is completing the preparation twenty days ahead of its first mandate of Presidency of the Council of the EU, supported by 71% of population pronounced in favour of belonging to the EU and proud with the Rijeka being one of the two towns (together with Galway) taking the relay from Matera and Plovdiv as European capitals of culture. **Katja** also reminded the direct connection of two of the four main priorities of the Croatian Presidency (A Europe that is developing and A Europe that connects) with the capacity building strategies as crucial ingredients for a trustworthy EU's communication.

Finally, Katja was pleased to confirm that Dubrovnik will host the spring plenary session of the Club of Venice in 2020[1].

FOLLOW-UP

- Reinforcement of cooperation among national authorities and between national authorities and EU institutions, in particular on the exchange of information on tracking, neutralizing and evaluating activities countering disinformation
- Looking forward to the upcoming evaluation by the European Commission of the Code of Good Practice subscribed by 12 international industries/providers/social networks on countering disinformation
- Reinforcement of cooperation with the EEAS' Stratcom Division and with its Task Forces as well as with European platforms such as IPCR and its Crisis Communication Network (CCN)
- Increased cooperation with international organisations (SEECOM, ICMPD, DEMSOC etc.)
- Increased cooperation with the academic world in monitoring and reporting trends

The session on **governments' and institutions' challenges in the field of capacity/capability building** was moderated by **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice.

The key-note speaker **Alessandro Bellantoni**, Head of the OECD "Open Government" Unit, stressed the need to enhance cooperation between public administrations and civil society, increasing mutual support to help resolve contingencies (organizational gaps, structural insufficiencies) and strengthening communication structures to cope with the evolving societal requirements. To this end, he invited national authorities and institutions to keep exchanging know-how and best practice, engaging in Open Government plans and in collaborative projects to enhance analysis and planning capacities. The upcoming global survey on communication envisaged by OECD aims to facilitate the elaboration of strategic orientations and sustainable transformational doctrines in this field.

The debate also focused on the role of government academies and other international training practices in the field of communication and facilitated the exchange of proposals for future cooperation. As regards the governmental activities :

- **Erik den Hoedt**, Director of communication and public information in the Netherlands and member of the Steering Group of the Club, focused on the consistency in the education and training policies implemented in the Dutch administration for government officials and on the need to striking the right balance between investments on knowledge, skills and attitudes, with particular emphasis on empowering the analysts and bridging gaps between communication advisors and spokespersons;
- **Fiona Speirs**, Deputy Director of the British Prime Minister's Office of Communications, illustrated the training curriculum of a qualified public communication operator according to the UK standards, based on eight specific compulsory learning areas.

The capacity building panel also included the following contributions:

- **Nikola Hořejš**, Head of the international programs of the "Society and Democracy Research Institute" in Prague, focused on building upon the EU's and its Member States' strategic branding capacities, through a decentralised cognitive approach (national survey "EU as a brand - what do we want from the EU?", myth-busting and applied behavioural sciences, explaining tangible achievements and the impact on quality of life
- **Marian Cramers**, Director of Development at the "Democratic Society", indicated that, in this transition phase, today's challenging issues such as climate change or the digital

1 In May 2020, owing to the persisting limitations to cross-border transportation owing to the COVID-19 crisis, regretfully the plenary initially foreseen in early June in Croatia was cancelled and replaced by videoconferences on line, until termination of the worldwide constraints.



economy transcend borders and government's conventional strategies and traditional models for interventions. Hence, there is a strong call for seeking new collaborative forms of citizen participation that are not only adjusted to these challenges, but can offer a contribution in real terms. The concept of 'citizen participation' provides for a much wider awareness as well as a wider range of desired outcomes in the interaction. Advocating for more ambition in citizen engagement is crucial. Marian underlined that working collectively can help anticipate the public response and can make policy work in inclusive ways, de-risk investment in solutions and tap into the social and economic innovation that already lives within communities. In this context, Marian referred to the commitment of "The Democratic Society" in EIT Climate-KIC citizen engagement projects in 10 EU cities and 5 Western Balkan cities, in close collaboration with partners in fields like architecture and banking), to ongoing cooperation with the Citizen Assembly of Scotland and to expectations with regard to the Horizon Europe programme and the Conference on the Future of Europe (that will certainly involve citizens in far more substantial than a late-stage policy review).

- **Laure van Hauwaert**, Managing Director of "EU Institutions" at the WPP Government and Public Sector Practice, shared some feedback on strategic engagement, recalling the Leaders' Report on WPP's global research into the future of government communications, on the results of a follow-up survey carried out in 2019 and on the EU-INVEST campaign. Laure highlighted the motivating factors to engage citizens: relevance and proximity, and stressed the need to invest on citizen-centricity and on multipliers, broadening outreach through micro-targeting.
- **Fiorenza Barazzoni**, coordinator of the Office for the Internal Market, Competitiveness and General Affairs of the DPE, presented "eTranslation", an online instrument provided by the European Commission and integrated into the government website's content management system. The dual objective is to reduce translation times and costs and to ensure that the technical/operational improvements reflect the fulfilments envisaged at EU level with regard to the digital services provisions in all Member States. This project was included in the IV National Action Plan of the Open Government Partnership[2].
- **Robert Wester**, manager of Berenschot (Netherlands) proposed a scheme of five essential roles in the articulation of a modern institutional communication department / office, which should make use of strategic partners, specialized trainers for staff members, monitoring staff social media, experts in communication activities, "builders of alliances" with stakeholders. At the end, Robert conducted an online mini-survey among those present, to identify the dimensions and skills of the respective communication offices: an interactive program made it possible to graphically display the data processed in real time. A quarter of the structures were made up of 4-6 units, such as the Communication Service of the DPE.

FOLLOW-UP

- Activation of the ad hoc inter-disciplinary working group on Capacity Building established in Vilnius in June 2018
- Preparation of a seminar on Capacity/Capability Building (foreseen in autumn 2020), in cooperation with the OECD
- Mapping public communication academies and exchanging suitable models



2 The Open Government Partnership (https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/) is an international initiative launched in 2011 to support the participating States (currently 78) and local governments in setting up more transparent administrations that respond to citizens' needs. Italian participation in the OGP is coordinated by the Department for Public Administration, which has set up a working group to coordinate the drafting of the national OG action plan (foreseen every two years in line with the OGP guidelines).



In the session of the 2nd day of plenary, centred on the **future of the European media**, the debate entered the crucial question of the relationship between public communication and the media system.

The theme of the panel had been addressed by the Club in the plenary meeting held in Vilnius in summer 2018 as well as at the 2nd Stratcom seminar hosted by the British government in December 2018 ("*Truth, Tech and Trends - The issues that European communicators need to address in 2019*").

The three sessions of Venice plenary were interrelated because of the common objective: the need to tackle together the hybrid threats posed by global misinformation and cyber-sphere. There is a common thread that reveals the importance of defending common European fundamental values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, equality and democracy.

This panel was moderated by **Erik den Hoedt**. The panel discussed the relationship between democracy and the information system, the defence of media pluralism and the possibility of reforming the so-called "ecosystem". As indicated in the Vilnius Charter on strengthening resilience to disinformation and propaganda, the starting point is an objective assessment of challenges and risks in the different international geo-political scenarios. The exchange of best practice and the increased cooperation aims to inspire communicators to multiply their efforts and get associated in new initiatives in support of trustworthy information and independent media.

As anticipated in the plenary meeting held in Venice in November 2018, the key-note speaker, Euractiv's president **Christophe Leclercq** focused on the expectations with regard to the EU and its Member States' mobilisation in the evolving media eco-system. **Christophe** underlined that media challenges are democracy challenges and that the ideal development of the media landscape should be strictly interrelated with the consolidation of a true European public sphere. This scenario requires appropriate blending of traditional journalism-driven media concept and new realities such as the social media platforms, the diversification of civil society's degrees of involvement and the political commitment from national governments and European institutions in favour of a true cooperative framework. Disinformation and growing nationalism and populism can only be countered by seizing the *momentum* and strengthening cooperation. In Christophe's view, the democracy infrastructure(s) can be preserved, repaired and reinforced by adequate media strategies and platform regulation(s) (which are not to be intended as censorship), with a strong support from the European institutions (ref. to ad hoc competencies currently shared by four European Commissioners). Hence, the ned for a new EU Strategy for media 2019-2024, where policy makers and media stakeholders would "*move from fake news issues to policy solutions*" that could help quality press prevail. **Christophe** concluded by presenting the Stars4Media programme (a free exchange and training programme for "promising young media professionals", initially called "Erasmus4media", aiming to foster innovation in this difficult sector).

The Director of Communication of the Council of Europe, **Daniel Höltgen**, highlighted how, in terms of the defence of human and civil rights, the relationship with the media system is problematic, as it "makes more news" to repress bad behaviour than promoting cultures of values - a trend that must necessarily be reversed. For the Council of Europe, the meeting was also attended by the Director of the Venice office **Luisella Pavan-Woolfe**, accompanied by **Meglena Kuneva**, EU Ambassador to the Council of Europe and former European Commissioner for Bulgaria.

Oliver Vujovic, Secretary-General of SEEMO (South-East Media Organization) tells of thousands of cases of journalists, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, hampered in the exercise of their work. It is important that these issues are brought to the attention of a table of representatives of the institutional communication system. "There are cases - says Vujovic - in which appealing to the self-regulation of the journalistic profession is not enough".

Raffaella De Marte, Head of the Media Services Unit at the European Parliament, recalled several initiatives undertaken by the EP as media freedom advocate, in particular the activities of the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group and the EP Resolutions of May 2018 and October 2019, respectively on media freedom and pluralism (to support investigative and public media) and on Foreign electoral interference and disinformation (to stress the need for a legal framework against hybrid threats and for strengthening cooperation throughout the relevant platforms). She also referred, among others, to additional instruments in favour of young journalists and students (EU Generation Media Lab), media grants and the Creative Europe programme.





Klaus Dahmann, Deutsche Welle's Country Coordinator for Serbia and Western Balkans, focused on the DW Akademie's approach with regard to the "Young Media", to contribute to digging deeper into the challenges of digital propaganda, hate speech, dysfunctional media markets, low level of media literacy and lack of in-depth knowledge about the digital society's world. DW's initiatives (training, consulting, capacity building, mentoring, media monitoring, creating communities...) aim to motivate youngsters to fight against societal gaps and imbalances and to counter increasing disbelief and generalized distrust.

Danila Chiaro, ICMPD Project Manager, presented the 3rd edition of the Migration Media Award that took place in Valletta on 3rd December 2019 (after Malta 2017 and Tunis 2018), an initiative in the framework of the EUROMED Migration programme IV for the benefit of young journalists committed to fact-based narrative and objective reporting on migration. **Danila** also referred to the analysis carried out by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) on media coverage from both side of the Mediterranean on the migration trends, to understand the prevailing media narratives on migration that exist in different national contexts. She finally stressed the need for a sound knowledge of public attitudes and for strong synergies between media and public communicators.

Christophe Rouillon, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, invited the audience to capitalize on the post-European elections revamped spirit and to reinforce cooperation at all levels to work together for a better future for Europe. He underlined that it is crucial to communicate in a more comprehensible way and focus on concrete achievements, create more proximity with citizens and respond to their expectations, accepting criticism and refraining from adopting theoretical approaches. Political authorities, communicators and media should pursue the same objectives: to strive for democratic values and act and interact as reliable messengers towards their stakeholders.

Marco Peronaci, from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, elaborated on two main issues which may have somehow contributed to the pro-Brexit advocators prevailing over the "remain" voices:

- the Brexit case in relation to fake news and external interference (for example, the red bus widely publicising the alleged 350 M GBP paid every week by the UK to the EU at the detriment of the NHS, overlooking other important figures such as the rebate budget
- the case of Cambridge Analytica.

Guido Moltedo, Director of the online magazine *Ytali.com*, former director of communication of the Municipality of Venice, focused on the role of communicators in the field of environmental protection - recalling the statement by the new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen before the European Parliament plenary on 27 November: "Venice is underwater, vital question". The citizens of Venice have greatly appreciated those words and are now expecting concrete policies, measures and actions in this regard. The right balance must be struck between the preservation of Venice cosmopolitanism and diversity and the need to counter the negative impact of over-tourism. To safeguard Venice's future it will be crucial to disseminate correct information and change the narrative register", redeeming it from the grip of its current labels (a "Disneyland" flavour and a "sinking city" and re-evaluating its vitality and the influence of its cultural value.

Guido suggested that Venice hosts an agency or an EU Centre to study problems related to tourism and the climate crisis and invited the Club to support and promote his proposal.

Finally, **Pier Virgilio Dastoli** (President of the Italian Association of communicators of Public Administration and President of the Italian section of the European Movement) spoke specifically on the prospect of the Conference on the future of Europe, which will last two years and will involve the next four-five presidencies of the Council of the EU. Virgilio stressed the need for the key players to work transparently, in order to avoid discrepancies and lack of mobilisation experienced in the handling of the ratification process concerning the Constitutional Treaty signed in 2004. It will be necessary to create conditions for the effective participation of citizens, and the Club of Venice should play an important role in this regard.

Last but not least: during the plenary Stefano Rolando and Virgilio Dastoli commemorated **Domenico Lenarduzzi**, former Director-General for Education at the European Commission who passed away in recent days, paying him a tribute for his key role as "inventor" of the Erasmus program,



FOLLOW-UP

- As a follow-up to the Vilnius Charter on "Societal resilience to disinformation and propaganda in a challenging digital landscape", the Club adopted an **Action Plan to promote cooperation between public communicators and the media sector**
- The Venice Action Plan and the Vilnius and London Charters will continue to inspire the Club in enhancing the collaborative framework with:
  - Governments, EU Institutions and bodies and other international organisations (Council of Europe, NATO, OECD, OCSE)
  - EURACTIV and other similar platforms to promote sustainable initiatives aimed at strengthening synergies between media and public communication, in particular for the benefit of young stakeholders.
  - SEECOM, ICMPD, KAS, SEEMO and other external organisations engaged in activities countering disinformation and fake news
- Mapping existing Schools of Journalism and examine ground for cooperation with public communication in interrelated training options

Concluding session

Vincenzo Le Voci presented the 14th number of the public communication review of the Club "**Convergences**", that focuses on the plenary meeting organised by the Club in Montenegro in June 2019 (re-connecting Europe to its citizens; strengthening cooperation in resilience building; revamping communication on enlargement) and on the Brussels seminar on country's reputation and branding co-organised with the Belgian authorities of the Federal Chancellery in October 2019.

This new publication elaborates also on:

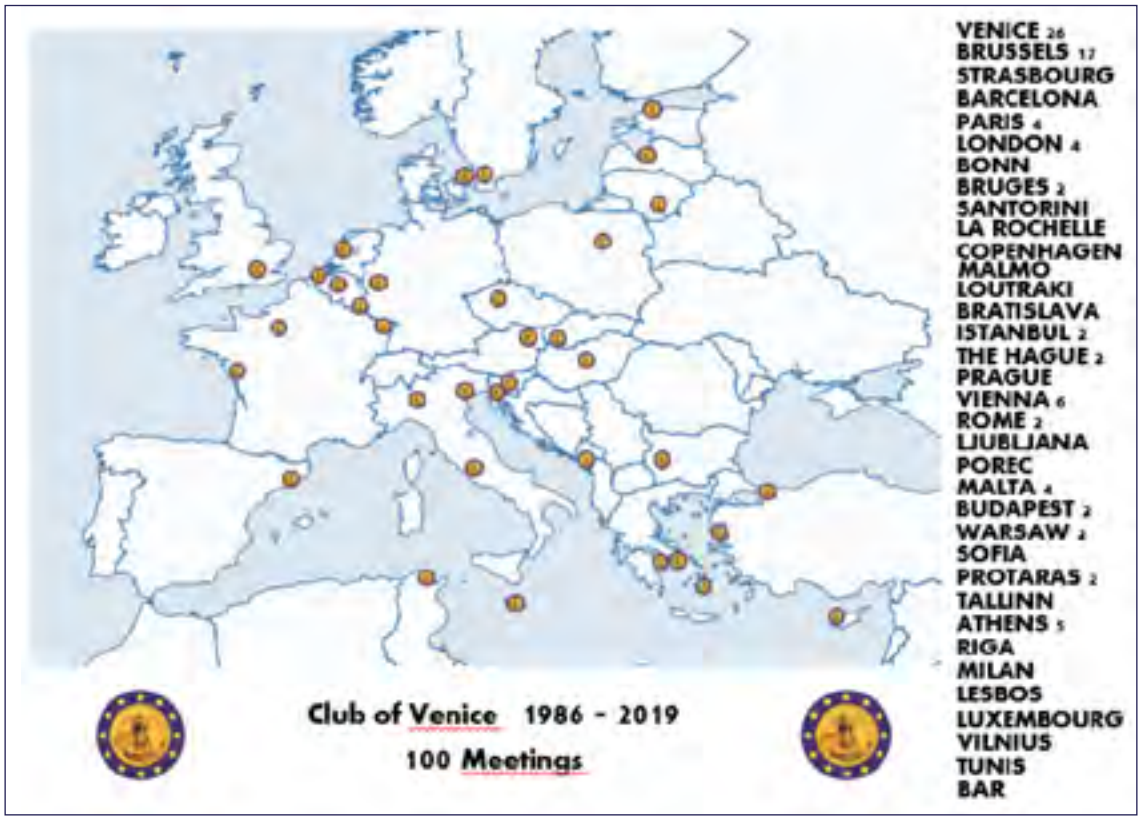
- communication meetings involving the Club as a partner, organised by the South-East Europe Public Communicators' Association (SEECOM annual Conference, focused on "Communicating to build trust in the Age of Populism") and the EMM4 workshop and high level round table organised by the International Centre for Migration Policies Development (ICMPD) focused on "pursuing dialogue on migration and facilitating objective perceptions"), held respectively in Belgrade in October 2019 and in Athens in November 2019
- the Europcom Conference organised by the CoR in Brussels in November 2019
- the 31st Cap'Com Forum held in Bordeaux in December 2019 and the EESC civsoc media seminar held in Malaga in October 2019
- the communicators' role on their way to the Conference on the Future of Europe
- civil society's added value and the participative democracy's role in communicating Europe
- digital literacy

Future meetings of the Club of Venice (2020)

- 6-7 February 2020: 3rd StratCom seminar (London, UK)
- 4-5 June 2020 (dates tbc): spring plenary (Dubrovnik, Croatia)
- September 2020 (tbc): seminar on capacity building, in collaboration with the OECD
- September – October 2020 (tbc) 4th EMM4 workshop on communication in the field of migration, in collaboration with the ICMPD (Africa)
- 3-4 December 2020, autumn plenary (Venice)



Annexes



Action Plan on synergies between public communication and the media sector

Venice, 6 December 2019

Guiding principles

- Vilnius Charter of 8 June 2018 on societal resilience to disinformation and propaganda in a challenging digital landscape
- London Charter of 17 March 2017 on the Strategic Communication Challenges for Europe

Strategic routes

- Following the guiding principles, we promote, facilitate and strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and Institutions in disseminating objective communication values, assuring impartiality and enhancing transparency
- We advocate independent media as an important pillar of any democratic system by facilitating its sustainability, contributing to the development of a culture of respect of press freedom and to providing a safe environment to produce quality journalism
- We welcome investigative journalism and strategies to safeguard freedom of expression and media pluralism and foster citizens' participation in the public debate through both digital and analogical platforms
- We encourage the exchange of feedback on the current challenges and on citizens' exposure to hybrid threats. We maintain focus on countering disinformation, propaganda and fake news as a common endeavour (cooperation with EEAS, IPCR and NATO)

Actions

- The Club will endeavour to facilitate synergies and cross-cooperation in:
  - the strategic approach in promoting media literacy, exploring cross-training opportunities and deepening thematic research through joint initiatives (such as projects carried out by schools of journalism and public communication)
  - mapping media trends and digital media regulatory and self-regulatory frameworks
  - fostering exchanges on and analysis of media monitoring trends and techniques
  - exploring ground for cooperation with universities and media observatories, media organizations and international agencies and platforms (EURACTIV Foundation, ICMPD, OECD, DEMSOC, SEECOM, ESCN, KAS and SEEMO)
  - pursuing the organization of thematic seminars focused on cooperation between public communication and media and pro-actively involving the Club ad hoc experts' working group on capacity/capability building

Quick Scan Strategic Communications

Brief report for the participants of the Club of Venice 2019
Based on the Berenschot stratcom model

By Robert Wester

Preface

How is the press and communication function managed? Which tools are used? What are the trends and developments? What will the communication department look like in the future? And how can you actually improve your communication function?

These and other issues are addressed by the Berenschot communications benchmark. We have ten years of experience with this benchmark in the Netherlands. Many organizations, mainly in the public sector, have participated over the years. This gives us an excellent insight in the latest strategic developments.

During the recent meeting of the club of Venice (December 5th and 6th), an informal network of communications managers from EU member states and institutions, we have asked the participants to interact on different themes. This brief report is a summary of this session.

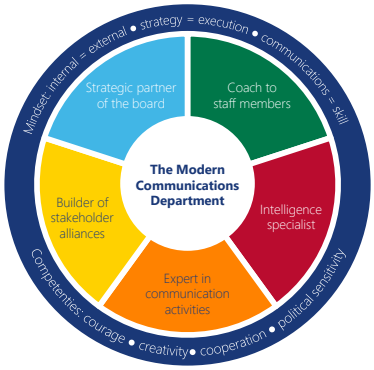
All mentioned data are indicative based on a quick scan but provide interesting insights in the challenges communications managers are facing in the member states of the European Union. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions concerning the insights or our approach to benchmarking.

Berenschot

Confidential 2

Our framework: a stratcom model based on the benchmark insights

Five roles for organising the modern communications department

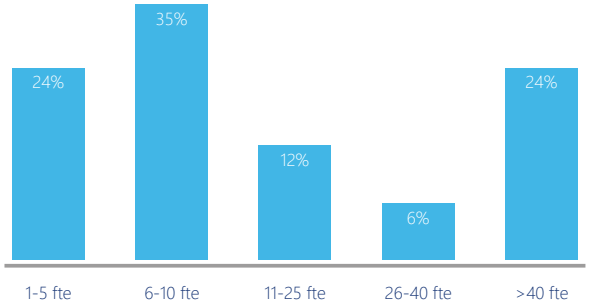


Berenschot

Confidential 3

The quickscan shows big differences in the size of communications departments over the EU

Question: please indicate the number of FTEs working for your communications department.

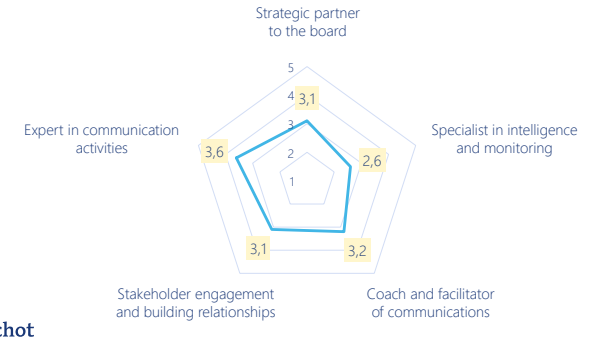


Berenschot

Confidential 4

Results indicate that the expert role is most established amongst participants

Question: Please give a self-assessment on each of the five roles of a modern communications department. How would you classify the current performance of your Communications department as ...



Scale:
1 = Not applicable
2 = Minimal
3 = Basic
4 = Proficient
5 = Excellent

Organisations expect a contribution on multiple levels: from delivering excellent day-to-day activities to building and maintaining trust

Question: What contribution does your organisation expect from the communications department?

20% — Delivering day-to-day communication activities that support all functions of the organization

18% — Dealing with the press: answering press questions, writing press releases and spokesperson

17% — Building and maintaining trust in the organization amongst key stakeholders

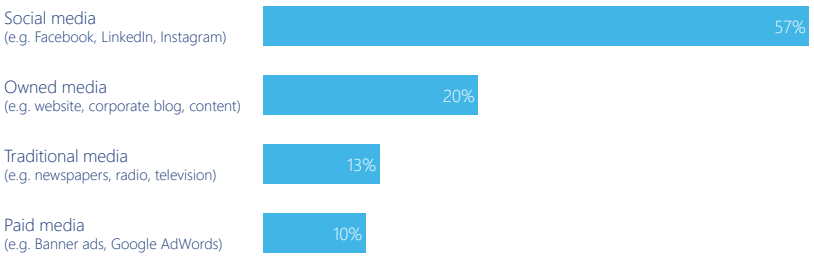
16% — Consulting and advising the board and top management of the organization

16% — Communicating the corporate strategy to stakeholders and interested publics

12% — Coaching all members of the organization and enabling them to communicate professionally

Participants foresee social media to become most important

Question: Which media type do you foresee to become most important in the years until 2022 in your communication activities with stakeholders?



Communication departments face various challenges in 2020

Question: What do you foresee to be the most important challenge for your department in 2020?



Recommendations based on the insights and the group discussion

Strategic communications and participative government are important for member states and institutions:

1. Strategic communications is at the top of European Commission's agenda. To achieve results such as Green Deal, public consent and stakeholder engagement are considered to be key topics
2. Member Sates are faced with the challenge to build and maintain commitment for the EU amongst their citizens. This requires communication efforts and a participative government
3. In turn, these challenges require capacity building – an investment in the size (number of communications professionals) and quality (professional level and scope) of communication departments:
   - Strengthening the strategic position of the communication department
   - Adapting technological tools and tapping into the potential of data
   - Investing in participation and stakeholder alliances

Berenschot

Confidential 9

Forecast: we will initiate a full EU benchmark study in 2020



"

The study provides a great overview of trends and developments.



"

Benchmarking enables us to increase the impact of our communication department.



"

The insights help us to further define our strategic contribution to the organisation.

Berenschot

Public 10



ROBERT WESTER is managing director EU at Berenschot consultancy. He has been leading the sector government and is strategy and communication expert. Wester has ten years of working experience as a consultant at Berenschot and has been working for 18 years as a communications or policy director for seven different departments of the government in the Netherlands.

Wester was principle advisor of Prime Minister Mark Rutte and King Willem Alexander in the Netherlands and responsible for all communication with respect to the abdication and investiture on April 30th 2013. He was also communications advisor to ministers, mayors and CEO's. He is an experienced spokesperson. He has been deputy director General at the ministry of General Affairs at the Government Information Service (2012-13); he was policy director with respect to the Labor Market policy at the ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (2006-2008) and director of communications at the ministry of Transport and Watermanagement (2000-2006).

Club of Venice - plenary meeting "Le sfide di Venezia e per Venezia"

Di Guido Moltedo

Venezia, 6-7 dicembre 2020

Questo mio intervento non può che iniziare dalle parole pronunciate da Ursula von der Leyen di fronte al parlamento europeo il 27 novembre scorso: "Venezia è sott'acqua, questione vitale".

Sono parole che i cittadini di Venezia, ma credo l'intera comunità internazionale, hanno molto apprezzato. Parole che vanno prese molto sul serio. Adesso, come si suol dire, alle parole devono seguire fatti, azioni, politiche concrete.

Mercoledì pomeriggio, chi era a Venezia, ha sentito ripetutamente la sirena dell'allerta acqua alta. Erano solo prove tecniche, per fortuna. Ma il suono inquietante ha fatto ancora una volta ricordare che un evento traumatico come quello vissuto nella notte del 12 novembre può nuovamente ripetersi. La sirena dell'allerta ricorda sinistramente la sirena d'allarme che annunciava l'imminenza di bombardamenti durante l'ultimo conflitto mondiale.

E sì, qui a Venezia siamo in guerra. Contro un nemico conosciuto, ma sempre più imprevedibile e minaccioso. È una guerra che non possiamo certamente combattere da soli. Le parole della presidente dell'Unione europea riconoscono finalmente che la salvezza di Venezia non riguarda solo la nostra città. La salvezza di Venezia riguarda il mondo. Salvarla significa salvare una parte considerevole del pianeta dalla catastrofe già troppe volte annunciata dal ripetersi di fenomeni climatici gravi, senza precedenti. Molte città costiere, in tutti i continenti, vivono l'incubo di vedersi un giorno, neppure troppo lontano, sommerse dal mare.

Venezia e la sua laguna, paradigma dunque dell'impegno per contrastare gli effetti sempre più insidiosi della crisi climatica. La difesa e la salvaguardia di Venezia vanno ovviamente garantite da una serie di misure, la prima delle quali è il ripristino di un equilibrio dell'ecosistema lagunare. Quindi niente più grandi navi da crociera, non solo di fronte a San Marco. Niente più grandi navi nella laguna stessa. Costruzione di un porto off shore fuori della laguna, per limitare al massimo l'ingresso di navi anche commerciali. Completamento del sistema delle barriere mobili, il Mose, ma, soprattutto, un enorme lavoro idrogeologico, per far sì che le paratoie siano sollevate il minor numero possibile di volte. Inoltre, stanziamenti per la manutenzione dei beni culturali, esposti più che altrove alla corrosione atmosferica e marina. Ancora: misure per contenere l'altra grave minaccia che sta sommergendo la città: l'*overtourism*.

Su queste questioni c'è da tempo un dibattito vivace in città e in tutti i luoghi e istituzioni in cui si discute del futuro di Venezia.

L'informazione su Venezia privilegia largamente e prevalentemente i suoi noti problemi e segue una narrativa che è la stessa ormai da decenni. E che può essere sintetizzata con due titoli celebri: *Morte a Venezia* di Thomas Mann e *Com'è triste Venezia* di Charles Aznavour.

I cliché dominano la narrazione delle vicende veneziane. Non si basano su dati falsi. Ma la loro reiterazione sembra l'unico registro possibile per raccontare questa città.

Chiunque lavori nel mondo dei media è preoccupato dalla diffusione incontrollata di fake news. Ma chi, giornalista, vive e lavora in una città come Venezia, ne segue le vicende, è preoccupato, forse perfino di più da un'*overinformation* basata su un pensiero unico che privilegia la drammatizzazione. Un'*overinformation* che vive di cicli della notizia molto intensi e sempre più brevi. Terminati i quali non resta più niente.

Venezia è stata sulle prime pagine dei giornali e sulle news tv di tutto il mondo per l'acqua alta eccezionale del 12 novembre. Sono arrivati reporter da ogni parte del mondo. E adesso? Venezia non può fare notizia solo quando e perché un'acqua alta eccezionale la mette in ginocchio.

La difesa di Venezia, la tutela del suo futuro, deve avvenire anche su altri piani di comunicazione, non legati necessariamente alle emergenze. Che pure ci sono e ovviamente vanno raccontate. Penso ai due gravi episodi delle navi da crociera che avevano perso la rotta nel canale della Giudecca, a giugno e luglio scorsi. Penso al ricorrente allarme per l'*overtourism*. O per la città che perde abitanti.

Certo, è vero, Venezia sta perdendo i suoi abitanti e molte attività "normali", diverse da quelle legate al turismo spariscono ogni giorno. Ma c'è ancora una parte consistente di popolazione resiliente. Che testimonia di una città ancora viva e attiva. È una vita urbana, però, quasi totalmente assente nei resoconti giornalistici, ancora di più nell'immaginario di molto visitatori.

A non pochi veneziani è capitato di essere fermati da un turista che chiedeva: a che ora chiude, la sera, Venezia?

Il rischio vero per Venezia è che sia cristallizzata nell'immagine di una città spopolata, quasi fantasma, ormai ridotta a parco tematico, una Disneyland. Una Disneyland di tanto in tanto minacciata nella sua stessa esistenza, minacciata di sprofondare per sempre sott'acqua.

Venezia deve lanciare un messaggio vitale. Deve uscire da una spirale che rischia di diventare la profezia che s'autoavvera. Se perde abitanti, occorre fare di tutto perché sia fermata l'emorragia dei residenti, e va insieme fatto di tutto per attirarne di nuovi, com'è sempre avvenuto nella sua storia.

Venezia è città con una storia di cosmopolitismo e di *diversity*. Può tornare a esserlo, unica condizione per avere un futuro.

Compito di una buona, corretta informazione, che aiuti davvero a ridare nuova forza a Venezia, è cambiare registro narrativo. Occorre uscire dal binomio meta iperturistica / città che affonda in cui Venezia è incastrata. Vanno narrate le tante storie d'iniziative, piccole e medie, che ne fanno una città ancora viva, attività non solo legate al turismo che pure esistono in città.

Venezia va raccontata come città dove è bello risiedere, è conveniente risiedere. Città totalmente pedonale, è uno dei pochi posti al mondo dove una giovane coppia può fare e crescere figli, con la soddisfazione di vederli giocare all'aperto senza problemi.

Se parliamo di Venezia come paradigma ambientale del nostro tempo, dobbiamo metterne in risalto il lato positivo, di città con un'elevata qualità della vita. Ed ecosostenibile. Contrastare i pericoli della crisi climatica implica un profondo cambiamento dei nostri stili di vita: i veneziani già lo fanno, hanno cominciato a farlo fin dalla fondazione stessa della loro città. Il passato di Venezia è il suo futuro. Ed è un modello per tanti centri urbani in tutto il mondo.

Venezia ha una grande tradizione produttiva, perfino industriale. La sua sopravvivenza, il suo futuro, non possono basarsi solamente sulla sua difesa fisica ma anche su un ambizioso piano che la rilanci come città produttiva e vivace.

Paradossalmente, ma non tanto, il dramma esistenziale di Venezia non è legato al rischio di essere sommersa dall'acqua. Le soluzioni per la sua difesa si troveranno. Il suo dramma esistenziale è piuttosto legato al pericolo crescente di essere sommersa dal turismo. Peggio del *waterflood*, c'è l'*overtourism flood*.

Questi due drammi, peraltro in qualche modo tra loro connessi, vanno studiati e affrontati con risorse, idee e strumenti idonei. Il loro studio può dare luogo a idee e iniziative perché siano contrastati, non come problemi solo locali, ma per la loro valenza universale in un pianeta stressato dalla crisi climatica.

In questo senso Venezia può essere la sede di un'agenzia europea che si occupi dell'industria turistica, ne studi e ne valorizzi ulteriormente le grandi opportunità e risorse che genera, ma ne studi anche gli enormi problemi di sostenibilità e di compatibilità che comporta per le comunità coinvolte, e individui gli strumenti adeguati di controllo, monitoraggio e contenimento. Così come può essere la sede di un'agenzia europea dedicata ai fenomeni nuovi creati dalla crisi climatica.

Su questi due terreni, o su uno di essi, occorre far sì che l'Unione Europea si attivi per Venezia. S'attivi per dare conseguenza e senso alle parole della Presidente della Commissione europea.

Il Club of Venice, che nacque qui, nel 1986, e che più volte si è riunito in questa città, può aiutare a dar voce a questa richiesta. Ed è quanto chiediamo qui ai partecipanti alla riunione odierna. Chiediamo che portino questa istanza nei rispettivi governi e presso l'Unione europea.



GUIDO MOLTEDO, founder and director of Ytali.com, a Venice-based on line pluralist magazine of culture and politics, followed for years the U.S.A. politics and was chief editor of the daily newspaper "Europa" and Vice Director of "Il Manifesto". He collaborated with "Le Monde Diplomatique" and with the "Harvard International Journal of Press/ Politics". He is the author of essays and biographies such as "L'altra America. Kerry e la nuova frontiera" (2004) and a monography on "Barack Obama. La rockstar della politica americana" (2007).

Club of Venice - plenary meeting "The challenges of Venice and for Venice"

By Guido Moltedo

Venice, 6-7 December 2020

My intervention can only begin with the words pronounced by Ursula von der Leyen before the European Parliament on 27th November: "Venice is underwater, a vital issue".

These are words that the citizens of Venice, but I believe the whole international community, have greatly appreciated. Words that must be taken very seriously. Now, as they say, words must be followed by concrete facts, actions and policies.

On Wednesday afternoon, those in Venice repeatedly heard the siren of the "high water alert". They were only technical tests, fortunately. But the disturbing sound has once again reminded us that a traumatic event like the one experienced on the night of November 12th can happen again. The warning siren ominously recalls the alarm siren announcing the imminence of bombings during the last world war.

And yes, here in Venice we are at war. Against a known enemy, but increasingly unpredictable and threatening. It is a war that we certainly cannot fight alone. The words of the President of the European Union finally recognize that the salvation of Venice is not just about our city. The salvation of Venice concerns the whole world. Saving it means saving a considerable part of the planet from the catastrophe already too many times announced by reoccurring serious, unprecedented climatic phenomena. Many coastal cities, on all continents, experience the nightmare of ending up one day, not too far away, submerged by the sea.

Venice and its lagoon, represent therefore a paradigm of efforts to combat the increasingly insidious effects of the climate crisis. The defence and safeguarding of Venice must obviously be guaranteed by a series of measures, the first of which is the restoration of a balance of the lagoon ecosystem. This would imply no large cruise ships around, not just in front of San Marco. No large ships in the lagoon itself. Construction of an offshore port outside the lagoon, to limit as much as possible the entry of ships, including commercial ones. Completion of the system of mobile barriers, the Mose, but, above all, an enormous hydrogeological work, to ensure that the sluice gates are raised as few times as possible. Furthermore, appropriations for the maintenance of cultural heritage, exposed more than elsewhere to atmospheric and marine corrosion. Again: measures to contain the other serious threat that is submerging the city: *over-tourism*.

There has long been a lively debate on these issues in the city and in all places and institutions where the future of Venice is being discussed.

The information on Venice largely privileges its known problems and follows a narrative that has been the same for decades. And which can be summarized by two famous titles: Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and Charles Aznavour's *How Sad Venice Can Be*.

The clichés dominate the narration of Venetian events. They are not based on false data. But their reiteration seems the only viable way to tell this city.

Anyone who works in the media world is worried about the uncontrolled spread of fake news. But those journalists who, living and working in a city like Venice, follow its events, are worried perhaps even more, by an *over-information* based on a unique thought that favours dramatization. An *over-information* that lives on very intense and shorter news cycles, at the end of which nothing remains.

Venice was on the front pages of newspapers and on TV news from all over the world due to the exceptional *acqua alta* of November 12th. Reporters came from all over the world. And now? Venice cannot make headlines only when and because an exceptional *acqua alta* brings it to its knees.

The defence of Venice, the protection of its future, must also take place on other communication levels, not necessarily linked to emergencies, that also exist and obviously must be told. Here I am thinking of the two serious episodes of cruise ships that had lost their way in the Giudecca canal, in June and July last. I am thinking of the recurrent alarm for over-tourism. Or of the city which keeps losing inhabitants.

Of course, it is true, Venice is losing its inhabitants and many "normal" activities, other than those related to tourism, disappear every day. But there is still a large part of resilient population, which testifies to a city still alive and active. It is an urban life, however, almost completely neglected in journalistic reports and even more in the imagination of many visitors.

Not few Venetians happened to be stopped by a tourist asking: what time does Venice close at night?

The real risk for Venice is that it is crystallized in the image of a depopulated city, almost ghostly, now reduced to a theme park, a Disneyland. A Disneyland occasionally threatened in its very existence, threatened to sink forever into the water.

Venice must send a vital message. It must come out of a spiral that risks becoming the self-fulfilling prophecy. If it loses

inhabitants, all that is necessary must be done to stop the bleeding of the residents, and all that is necessary must be done to simultaneously attract new ones, as it has always happened in its history.

Venice is a city with a history of cosmopolitanism and diversity. Reverting to that, is the only condition for having a future. The task of good, correct information, which would actually help to restore new strength in Venice, is to change the narrative register. It is necessary to escape the binomial hyper-tourist destination / sinking city in which Venice is embedded. The many stories of initiatives, small and medium, that make it a city still alive, which includes activities not only related to tourism that also exist in the city, must be narrated.

Venice must be told as a city where it is nice to reside, it is convenient to reside. A totally pedestrian city, it is one of the few places in the world where a young couple can make and raise children with the satisfaction of seeing them play outdoors without any problems.

If we talk about Venice as the environmental paradigm of our time, we must highlight its positive side, of a city with a high quality of life. And environmentally sustainable. Tackling the dangers of the climate crisis implies a profound change in our lifestyles: the Venetians already do it, they have started to do it since the very foundation of their city. Venice's past is its future. And it is a model for many urban centres around the world.

Venice has a great production tradition, even industrial. Its survival, its future, cannot be only based on its physical defence but also on an ambitious plan that relaunches it as a productive and lively city.

Somewhat paradoxically, the existential drama of Venice is not linked to the risk of being submerged in water. The solutions for its defence will be found. Its existential drama is rather linked to the growing danger of being submerged by tourism. Worse than the waterflood, there exists the over-tourism flood.

These two dramas, somehow related to each other, must be studied and addressed with suitable resources, ideas and tools. Their study can give rise to ideas and initiatives so that they are contrasted, not only as local problems, but because of their universal value in a planet stressed by the climate crisis.

In this sense, Venice can be the seat of a European agency which deals with the tourism industry, studies and further exploits the great opportunities and resources it generates, but also studies the enormous problems of sustainability and compatibility that it entails for the communities involved, and identifies the appropriate tools for control, monitoring and containment. Just as it can be the headquarters of a European agency dedicated to new phenomena created by the climate crisis.

On both these two terrains, or at least on one of them, the European Union must be active in Venice. It is time to take action to give consequence and meaning to the words of the President of the European Commission.

The Club of Venice, which was born here in 1986, and which has several times gathered in this city, can help to give voice to this request. And this is what we here ask to the participants of today's meeting. We ask that they bring this request forward to their respective governments and to the European Union.



Outcome of the 3rd StratCom Seminar

London, 6-7 February 2020

The third annual Club of Venice seminar on strategic communications took place in London on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 February 2020. With the dawn of a new decade, the seminar looked at the common challenges the profession will face in the coming years as well as the solutions to tackle them. While the sessions were designed to provoke a wide ranging debate, there was a particular focus on the need to confront disinformation.

Both speakers and attendees came from a mixture of national administrations, multinational institutions, media outlets and third party stakeholders. This gave the discussions a varied nature where different experiences and approaches were considered. This enabled participants to consider issues from different perspectives.

The seminar commenced on Thursday evening with an informal reception in the historic surroundings of the Lord Mayor's Parlor in the Westminster City Council building. Attendees were welcomed by **Alex Aiken, Executive Director of Communications, UK Government** who underlined the value of cooperation in finding innovative solutions to shared challenges. These sentiments were echoed by **Rytis Paulauskas, Lithuania, Director, Communications and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Club of Venice Steering Group member and Vincenzo Le Voci, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice**.

Providing an external perspective was **Alex Barker, the FT's Global Media Editor**, who spoke about the changing media landscape and the importance of government communicators reflecting these changed consumption patterns. **Femi Fagunwa and Olivia Bescoby, from the Government Communication Service**, showed how the UK is using digital analysis to ensure that communication is more impactful and responsive.

Friday's meeting was co-moderated by **Vincenzo Le Voci** and **Rytis Paulauskas**, who recalled the previous two successful StratCom seminars organised in London in 2017 and 2018 as well as the three Charters on Strategic Communication, capacity building and resilience to disinformation and the Action Plan on synergies between communication and the media sector subscribed by the Club of Venice in London, Vilnius and Venice in the last three years.

The opening plenary session centred on the current trends in both the media and government communications professions. The discussion focused on how media consumption is changing away from universal and traditional media into digital and polarised outlets. The need for communicators to reflect on this in their strategies and organisation, including:

- **Declining trust in the media**. Trust in the news has been consistently falling, with evidence to support this. Polarising events are affecting trust. People don't see their view reflected in the news, so do not trust. The media is no longer seen as representing ordinary people, but rather is perceived as part of the elite. The challenge for governments is to be seen as credible messengers by their audiences.
- **The rise of new platforms**. Digital is fragmenting consumption patterns, with younger demographics increasingly turning to social media over more traditional channels. There is a strong pivot to radio, specifically to podcasts. Podcasts are becoming a world-wide phenomenon. The challenge for governments is to ensure that they are employing the right people, with the right skills and strategies to ensure they are reflecting this pivot. Professionals should not be afraid to try new things.
- **Tackling disinformation**. In order to tackle disinformation, governments and institutions need to agree on a robust definition. There are multiple strands which are currently being incorrectly grouped together. We need to sharpen the term of disinformation so we can respond. There is no legal basis to ban misinformation but there could be for manipulative interference.

Contributions to this session came from:

- **Nic Newman**, Senior Research Associate, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RIS)
- **Lutz Guellner**, European External Action Service (EEAS), Head of the StratCom Division, Directorate for Inter-institutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy
- **Helen Bower-Easton** - Director of Communication, FCO, UK Government

The second plenary session was addressed by a mixture of member state, institution and external representatives. The session was primarily concerned with:

- The current national approaches to StratCom and orientations for the planned year(s)
- Career Framework, Functional Standards and Modern Communication Operating Models
- New models for National Security Strategic Communication
- The experience of Baltic States in tackling Russian disinformation
- The EU mobilisation - focus on the new EEAS, European Commission and European Parliament StratCom plans for the future

Contributions to this session came from:

- **Sarah Jennings**, Deputy Director, Strategic Communications

at the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

- **Rytis Paulauskas**, Lithuania, Director, Communications and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Club of Venice Steering Group member
- **Michael Hasper**, Germany, Head of Division for Communication, Directorate for Strategic Communication, German Federal Foreign Office
- **Christophe Leclercq**, Founder and Chairman, Euractiv Media Network
- **Daniel Ractliffe**, European Parliament Liaison Office in the UK
- **Tina Zournatzi**, European Commission DG Communication, Head of the Strategic Communication Unit

The introductory session was followed by four topic-based breakout sessions, held in two waves. This format allowed each of the four breakout sessions to be held twice, with different attendees and speakers at each session.

BREAKOUT 1 - Current trends in the use of analysis and application of behavioural science

This session looked at the current trends that are driving the change in the way government communications are applied and how to evaluate the effectiveness of public campaigns on behavioural changes. In particular, the speakers focused on the concrete changes they have made as a result of identifying these trends. These included:

- The recognition that behavioural science professionals from across Europe have identified the same insights but have developed different models
- Highlighting the need to develop quality guidelines on the use of insights in order to support communications activity
- Underlining the importance of understanding audiences (their contexts, motivations etc) rather than merely identifying them
- The importance of embedding high quality skills and training across disciplines and across borders
- The "cross-medial" approach (as an additional factor that could amplify success)
- The necessary synergies to develop coherent concepts and stronger and more dynamic strategies

Contributions to this session came from:

- **Marcel de Jong**, Netherlands, Senior Campaigns Advisor, Ministry of General Affairs
- **Taavi Toom**, External Communication Specialist, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former Head of Public Diplomacy, Estonia
- **James Dennison**, Research Fellow, European University Institute, Florence, Italy
- **Laura De Moliere** – Head of Behavioural Science for Transition Communication Centre, UK Government

BREAKOUT 2 - Rapid response platforms

This session, coordinated by **Marco Ricorda**, strategic communication expert from the International Centre for Migration Pollicies Development (ICMPD), looked at how governments are building capacity to enable them to detect and tackle disinformation and threats. In particular, reference was made to how rapid response platforms have been utilised in this effort. Contributions focused on the practical tools, techniques and training that have been developed. Examples included:

- The challenge of ensuring that systems for identifying and tracking disinformation are well integrated. There are barriers here because there is a lack of a common definition for disinformation.
- Across participants, there was agreement that there is a risk









of duplicating efforts and platforms. This can take from the efficiency of targeting a common problem.

- Practitioners need to ensure that there is action that emerges from the information coming from monitoring systems. Challenging disinformation is as important as identifying it.

Contributions to this session came from:

- **Lutz Guellner**, European External Action Service, Head of the Stratcom Division: East, WB and South Task Forces' activities
- **Elpida Chlimintza**, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Integrated Political Crisis Response/Crisis Comm Network (IPCR/CCN)
- **Ruslan Deynychenko**, Executive Editor, StopFake, Ukraine
- **Viktoras Daukšas**, Director of Demaskuok.lt (Debunk.lt)
- **Subhaijt Banerjee**, Head of Digital Transformation & Rapid Response Unit (RRU), UK Government

BREAKOUT 3 - Running effective campaigns

Similar to breakout two, the debate in this session narrowed in on how governments can run campaigns that are effective in driving behaviour change. Speakers provided attendees with case study examples of the campaigns they have run and how they highlight the trends under discussion. Key messages included:

- Recognising the growth in the prevalence of disinformation, communicators should look to embed resilience to this in their activity and teams
- When thinking about campaign development, communicators should be advocates for developing audience led rather than policy led campaigns.
- Robust evaluation is crucial and practitioners should ensure that there is a strong evidence base to all evaluation of the impact of campaigns.

Contributions to this session came from:

- **Alice Parker**, National Security Communication Team, UK Government
- **Chris Riley**, Head of Communication, NATO, on Communication Strategy
- **Ryan Schroeder**, Regional Press and Communication Officer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- **Kostas Kallergis**, European Parliament DG Communication, Inter-Institutional Cooperation in countering disinformation
- **Hannes Krause**, Estonia, Government Office, Head of Stratcom
- **Claus Giering**, European Commission DG NEAR, Head of the Inter-Institutional Relations and Communication
- **Ben Toombs**, Kantar

BREAKOUT 4 - Digital challenges and transformation

This session debated the challenges of building and expanding digital capacity in public sector communications. Speakers reflected on their experiences of utilising cost effective analysis and planning in building such structures. Considerations discussed included:

- Consider how we can move digital communications to the center of our communications strategy and convince stakeholders of the importance of proper investment of resources for desired outcomes.
- Paying due attention to the 'information ecosystem' (key for crisis communication) and to the possible development of guidelines or tool boxes in this regard.
- Consider how we can all be 'more human' and audience-led in our approach to communications, focusing on what our audiences are passionate about, communicating in language they will understand using channels they are familiar with.
- Consider how we can place data at the heart of our planning processes to produce targeted, impactful communication and then using data to ratify or amend our strategic approaches.
- Consider how we can be mindful of the negative impacts of embracing digital communications and mitigate any risks they present.

Contributions to this session came from:

- **Peter Heneghan**, Deputy-Director, Digital Communication, UK Government
- **Natasha Kizzie**, Google
- **Christophe Leclercq**, Founder and Chairman, Euractiv Media Network
- **Beth Wiltshire**, Communication Specialist, The Democratic Society (focus on initiatives Identifying causal mechanisms for illiberal, nativist and anti-democratic populisms - PACE project implemented in the framework of Horizon 2020)

The afternoon plenary was introduced by **Baiba Braže, Ambassador of Latvia to the United Kingdom** who addressed the audience on "Updating strategic communication and building alliances to counter hybrid threats", providing concrete examples from her previous work experiences and underlining that continuity and cooperation in this framework are the "*conditio sine qua non*" to achieve concrete results.

For the final session of the seminar, attendees heard from **Ben Page**, CEO of IPSOS-MORI who gave a presentation on trust: the current public perceptions of it and how it can be instilled, underlining that it is indispensable to put a greater focus on understanding when trust matters and what drives it.

Ben highlighted the parameters that can make the difference in strategic communication and generate and drive citizens' confidence in governments and institutions more than others: reliability, competency, the capacity to detect the different degrees of global discontent with the public authorities, the capacity to read through and capitalize on accurate trustworthy opinion polls, behaving responsibly, transparency, good leadership and good intentions.

Finally, Ben reminded the main lessons learned from both successful practice and "less positive" experiences:

- We should not be obsessed about trust, but invest on and expand knowledge and competence (in our communications about others, and in our communications themselves).
- We should increasingly support fact-checking and rebuttal of misinformation/fake news.
- We should communicate and explain things by using facts and stories which also appeal to logic and emotion (telling people the facts alone may not be sufficient to let them understand the impact of the news on their daily life and therefore may not help them form a clear and objective opinion).

Vincenzo Le Voci and **Rytis Paulauskas** concluded the seminar by thanking the UK authorities for their cooperation in the organisation of the event as well as all participants for their contributions and their engagement and interaction during the different sessions.

They also stressed the need to increasingly build upon literacy, knowledge, best practice, cooperation and co-creation as core ingredients for a professional behaviour and enhanced strategic communication capacities.

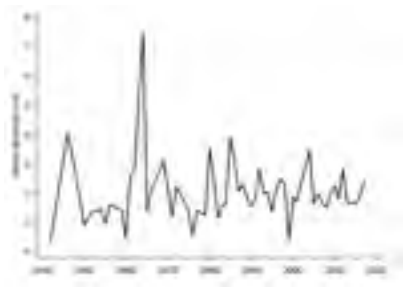
They finally informed the audience about the Club of Venice meetings foreseen in 2020 and invited them to contribute to the public communication review "Convergences".



Trust: the truth and public perception?

By Ben Page

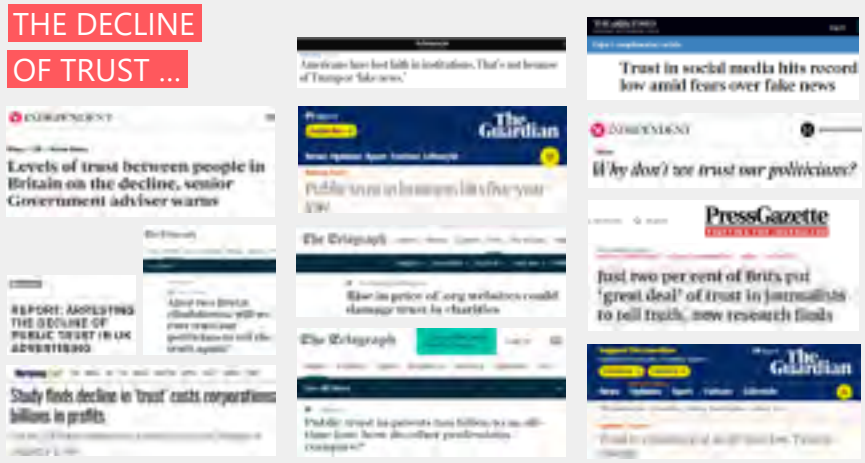
Accuracy of opinion polls – 1942-2017



..there is no discernible upward trend in polling errors in the past decade, although there are fluctuations. Further regression analysis ..confirms that there are no significant effects of time on polling accuracy, once the features of national elections polled in a given year are controlled for. In many ways, this absence of a clear trend since at least the 1970s is remarkable given the huge changes in survey methodologies that have occurred, for example with the transition from face-to-face random sampling to telephone quota sampling to online

Source: Professor Will Jennings, University of Southampton see http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/political-polling-and-digital-media-committee/political-polling-and-digital-media/written/69454.html

THE DECLINE OF TRUST ...

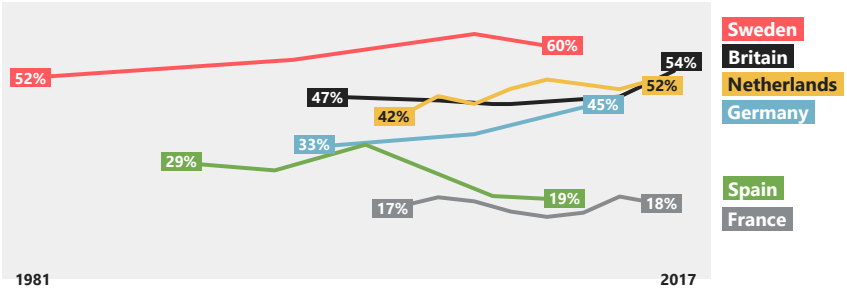


1.

There is no single, global crisis of trust. Some countries are showing rising levels of social trust in other people



IN SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, TRUST IS STABLE OR EVEN RISING ...

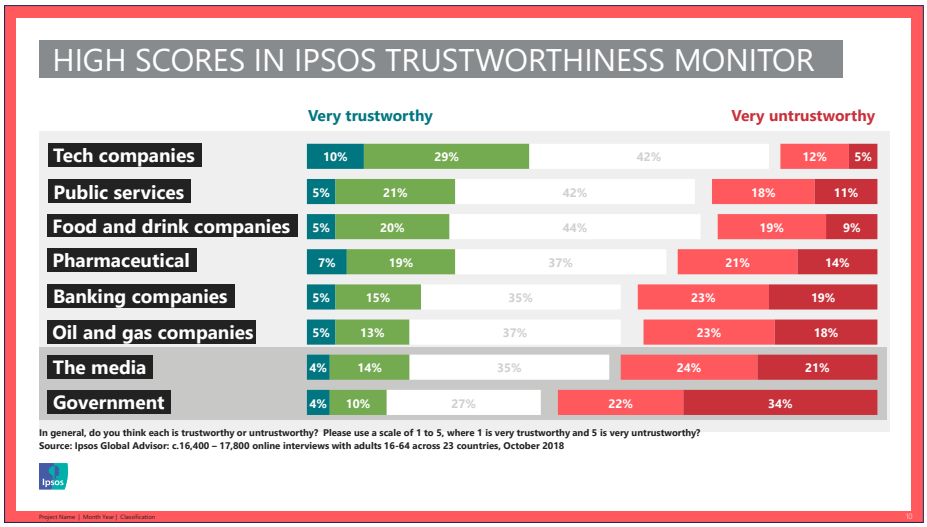


% most people can be trusted (World Values Survey); % People can usually/almost always be trusted (British Social Attitudes;% 7-10 Most people can be trusted (European Social Survey)

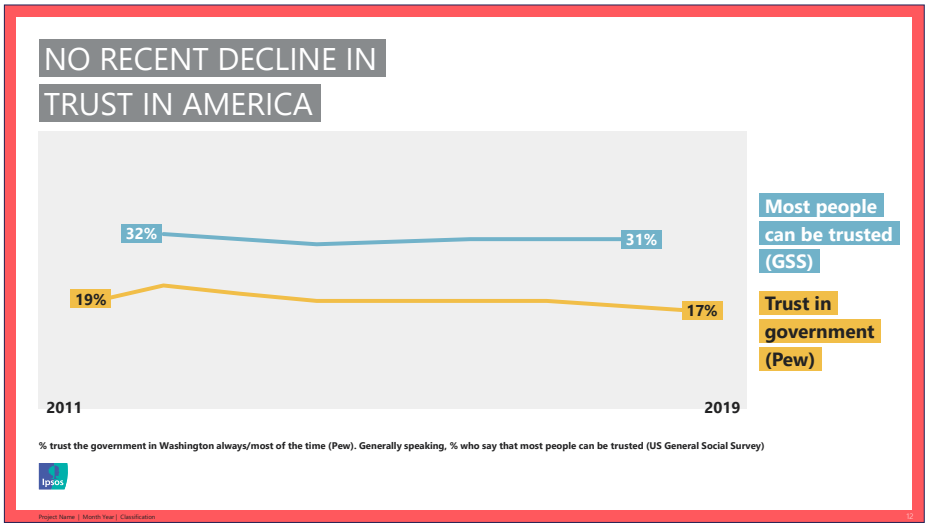


BEN PAGE is Chief Executive of Ipsos MORI. He became Chief Executive of Ipsos in the UK and Ireland in 2009.
He joined MORI in 1987 after graduating from Oxford University in 1986, and was one of the leaders of its first management buyout in 2000. From 1987-1992, Ben worked on corporate reputation and consumer research. Since 1992 he has worked closely with senior policy.

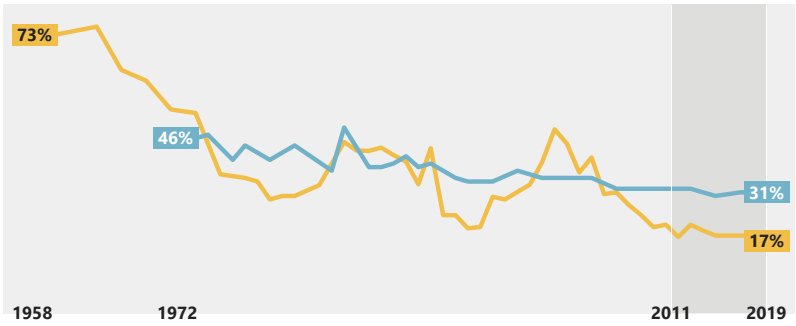








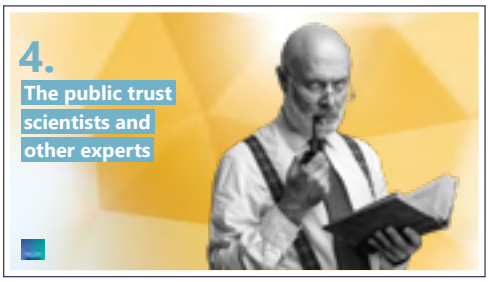
SAME DATA
– DECLINE IN TRUST IS A LONGER TERM PHENOMENON …



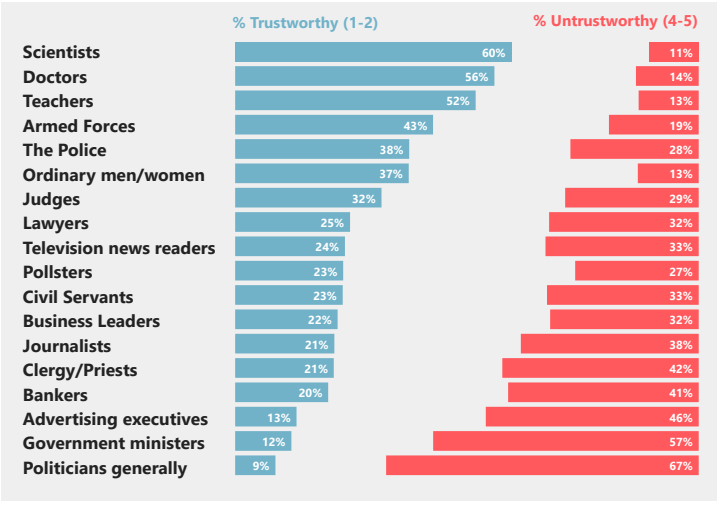
% trust the government in Washington always/most of the time (Pew). Generally speaking, % who say that most people can be trusted (US General Social Survey)

Ipsos

Project Name | Month Year | Classification 13



EXPERTS MOST TRUSTED GLOBALLY



Please look at this list of different types of people. In general, do you think each is trustworthy or untrustworthy in [COUNTRY]?

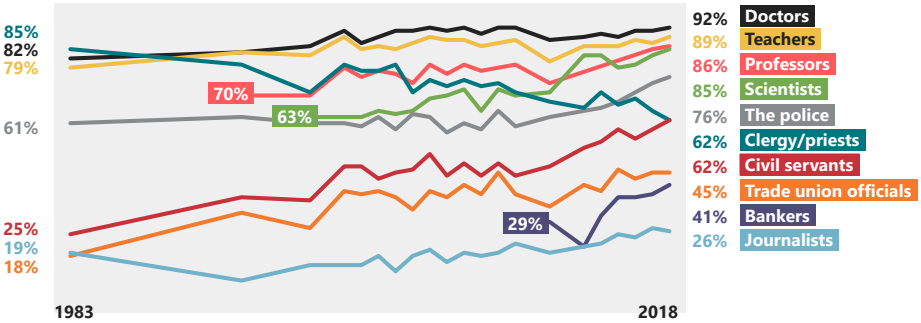
Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very trustworthy and 5 is very untrustworthy.

Source: Ipsos Global Advisor. 17,793 online adults, aged 16-64, October 2018

Ipsos

Project Name | Month Year | Classification 15

KEY MOVERS IN PUBLIC TRUST OVER TIME IN BRITAIN

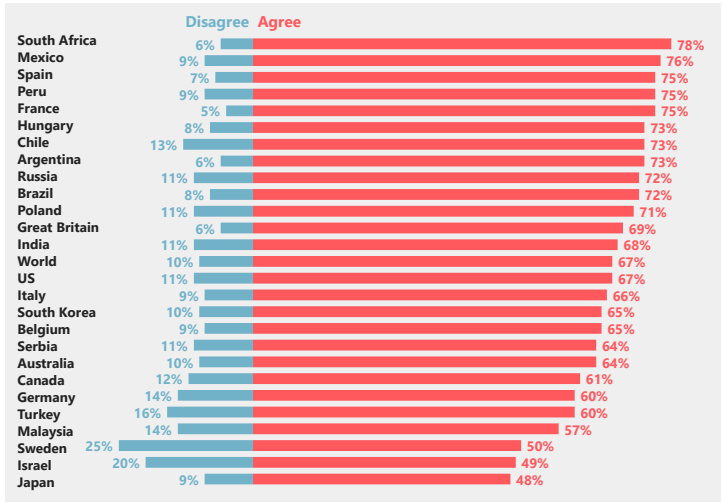


% trust to tell the truth:
Source: Ipsos MORI Veracity Index

Ipsos

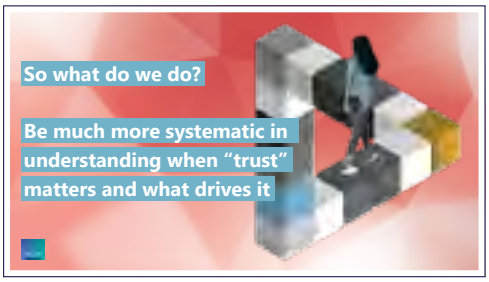
Project Name | Month Year | Classification 16

GLOBAL DISCONTENT WITH THE ELITES



"Traditional parties & politicians don't care about people like me"

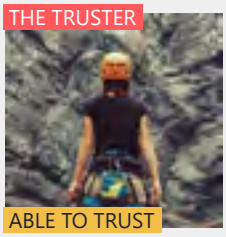
Source: Ipsos Global Advisor 20,000 online adults, aged 16-64 in 26 countries. Feb – March 2018



WE TESTED EIGHT DRIVERS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS OF INSTITUTIONS

Is it reliable/ keeps its promises?	Is it good at what it does?	Does it behave responsibly?	Is it open and transparent about what it does?	**ALL** are statistically significant correlants of "trustworthiness"
Is it well led?	Does it do what it does with the best of intentions?	Does it share my values?	Would it try to take advantage of me if it could?	

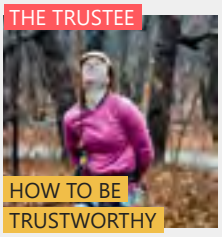
THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF TRUST ...



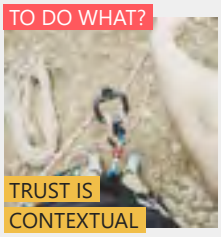
- Is vulnerable
- Is optimistic
- Has the propensity to trust



- Rational
- Emotional



- Be competent ... → ... at a particular thing
- Be reliable
- Have their best interests at heart (benevolence)
- Have a history of good behaviour (integrity)
- Have shared values



What Italians thought when they voted in 2018

How many immigrants?

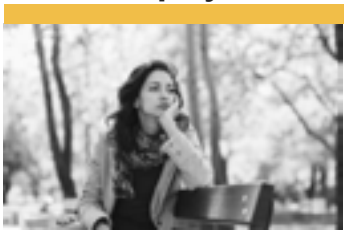


Perception: 30%

Real (2014): 7%

2018: 9%

How many unemployed?

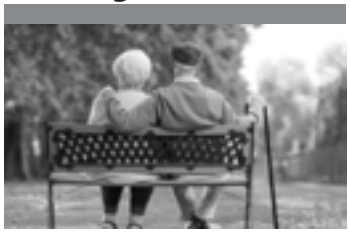


Perception : 49%

Real (2014): 12%

2018: 11%

How many people aged 65+?



Perception : 48%

Real (2014): 21%

2018: 22%

Ipsos MORI

#PerilsofPerception

23

Why are we so wrong?
Much more to our errors than numerical limitations
– one of key concepts: 'Emotional Innumeracy'…

We tend to focus on negative information…

34

If it bleeds, it leads…

FAKE NEWS

"The murder rate in our country is the highest it's been in 47 years, right?

You won't hear the press saying that."

Donald Trump

'Just out report: "United Kingdom crime rises 13% annually amid spread of Radical Islamic terror." Not good, we must keep America safe!'

Donald Trump

"Amid" is a word loved by fake news websites, to conflate correlation and causation. UK crime is also up "amid" spread of fidget spinners.

Fraser Nelson

Ipsos MORI

#PerilsofPerception

31

NO sign that any worse than past…

BUT online environment threatens our view of reality at new scale…

#PerilsofPerception

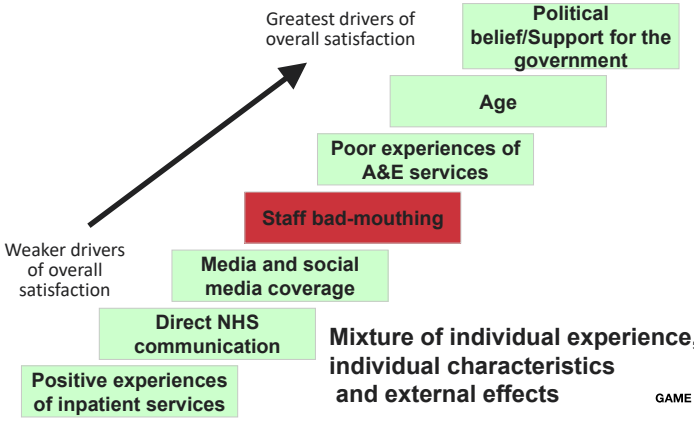
Our online life and reality…

- Russian Minister of Defence: information is 'another type of armed forces'
- But much, much broader than information disorder or fake news…
- Twin effects: our own filtering and unseen algorithms…
- More time on platform = more cash
- Surveillance is the business model of the internet – but means *confirmation bias is its currency*

Ipsos MORI #PerilsofPerception

Perils of Perception | 2018 35

Drivers of satisfaction with the running of the National Health Service



Mixture of individual experience, individual characteristics and external effects

GAME CHANGERS

37

Hmm, doesn't look hopeful…

I've been studying this stuff for about 45 years and I really haven't improved one bit…
Daniel Kahneman

Some individual-level approaches:

- start with assumption things are getting better
- avoid assuming you're utterly normal…
- …or focusing on the extreme
- actively unfilter your world

Ipsos MORI #PerilsofPerception

Perils of Perception | 2018 39

Some final thoughts…

- Don't obsess about trust – obsess about competence
- Support fact-checking, systemically, pre-emptively
- Facts and stories not opposites: use BOTH to explain
- We are NOT automatons, entirely driven by biases and tribal identities, and unwilling to change…

Ipsos MORI #PerilsofPerception

Perils of Perception | 2018 40

The COVID-19 pandemic is dramatically increasing the polarization of migration narratives. We can act before it distorts migration policy making

By Marco Ricorda

Ways of life. Ways to move.

COVID 19 has not only caused an unprecedented damage to the world's health systems and economy. It has significantly "infected" our societies with a sense of insecurity, fear and fragmentation[1]. Our current conceptions of human contact, exchange, trade, and discovery are wandering towards unknown directions.

In this transitory ideological dilemma, global conceptions of "home" are gaining new value. In his book "*Demeure*"[2], French philosopher Francois Xavier Bellamy explains the difference between "Somewheres" citizens, rooted in a specific place or community, usually a small town or in the countryside, socially conservative, often less educated – and those who could come from "Anywhere": footloose, often urban, socially liberal and university educated. This idea was first developed in a more specific British context by David Goodhart in "The Road to Somewhere"[3], where he explains that Somewheres are characterised by an unease with the modern world, a nostalgic sense that "change is loss" and the strong belief that it is the job of British leaders to put the interests of Britons first. Anywheres, meanwhile, are free of nostalgia; egalitarian and meritocratic in their attitude to race, sexuality, gender, and light in their attachments "to larger group identities, including national ones. They value autonomy and self-realisation before stability, community and tradition". One key element to consider in the analysis of the current migration narrative in Europe is, according to Goodhart, that Anywheres have ignored and labelled as xenophobic the discomfort that many people felt over the rapid ethnic change across the country." This caused a sentimental and emotional alienation of Somewheres, resulting frequently in admiration for new populist or extreme positions on migration. Inevitably, the COVID19 pandemic will further embitter this debate, not only by challenging the reasons for people to move and settle in new places but, even more dangerously, criticizing the values behind those reasons.

Everywhere the virus goes, it will affect the local way of life. Especially in Europe, where society draws its principles from the Enlightenment[4], where life is lived ordinarily on an intimate scale, where people bump shoulders on the street or in the café and friends great each other with kisses on the cheeks[5], this way of life will be affected greatly. People are now "told" or "highly encouraged" to hide inside their cities and neighborhoods[6], to "protect themselves" from friends, colleagues and even family. This situation makes the title of EU Commissioner for "Promoting our European Way of Life" Margaritis Schinas more timely than ever. Will we now need to protect, promote or renew what we call "European way of life" after COVID-19?

Stronger polarization

The crisis sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic has overshadowed existing migration debates in the Euro Mediterranean region. Yet, this very crisis is inextricably linked with mobility, movement and its governance. This pandemic reveals the actual complexities of migration debates, too often reduced to a simple polarized dichotomy: On one side, we have the highly emotional reporting of the humanitarian plight of desperate migrants who risk their lives on treacherous journeys. On the other hand, we have coverage that depicts migration as a threat to the security, welfare and culture of host communities. However, the reality of migration is a lot richer and full of positive stories and data than that.

In the media coverage and public discourse, migration is frequently presented as "out of control". Irregular migration, which makes up a tiny proportion of actual mobility, dominates the discussion, despite the downward trend in overall in asylum applications in comparison to the peak of migration pressure. The notion of migration perceived as a threat to host communities has become the norm around much of the region. Unfortunately, on the policy-making side not enough has been done to close the gap between public perceptions and the real figures and actuality of migration.

1 https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/15/world/europe/coronavirus-borders-fear.html

2 https://www.grasset.fr/livres/demeure-9782246815587

3 https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/22/the-road-to-somewhere-david-goodhart-populist-revolt-future-politics

4 https://www.politico.com/newsletters/playbook/2020/03/16/washingtons-race-against-the-virus-488591

5 https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-france-tells-citizens-stop-kissing-each-other-cheek-bise-2020-3

6 https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2020%2F03%2F14%2Fworld%2Feurope%2Fspain-coronavirus.html%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR1JgJJwgTXePcsEGRVpUwuZvKiJfm7gU8TxZUZyXrfN-BjmJtwqesNenUGY&h=AT22ToBAbeQI-_D1bxVOfIPzBdmZwnEAb2O8GFb7EFI-Sp2yxaNvZpDMEV7k25HL-FXZhQ9iuZ_ZerSXJGl_IaFmfWcDWMJ1UEl7MsLdjnyl-2WIqA5CamrZCuD9X2KMA-iOs

Images of vulnerable families crossing oceans on precarious boats and enduring winters in makeshift refugee camps have become ingrained parts of this narrative. It is important for all professionals in the field of migration to remind our audiences, from large conferences to family dinners, that this is not the full picture. The reality, root causes and trends of are very different and complex. Every time anyone falls into the tempting arms of simplification for the cause of visibility or inability to explain contributes to distorting this narrative.

The alarming surge in disinformation related to the Covid19 pandemic[7] prompts similar questioning. In both cases, public communication is facing tremendous difficulties in asserting scientific evidence and regaining control of the overall narrative. The coronavirus pandemic has only fanned the flames further. A number of political leaders have tried to capitalise on the disease's spread to fuel anti-migrant narratives and curb migrants' rights to protection[8] while references to the "Chinese virus" fuel a narrative of fear, discrimination and conspiracy. Migration evokes strong emotions[9]: it gets tangled up with suspicion of difference, hostility to anyone outside the "we" group. In an age of fake news and deliberate misinformation, migration is perhaps most susceptible to this distortion.

An unexpected change of narratives

The story of migration from Africa is typically told as an irreversible mass exodus[10] from conflict[11] or climate change[12], from social unrest to lacking resources. However, despite popular belief, in almost 30 years, the scale of the global migrant population has increased only marginally, from 2.9% of the global population in 1990 to 3.4% in 2017[13]. Migration patterns may have changed, but they have not significantly increased. African migrants account for only 14% of the global migrant population[14]: significantly less than migrants from Asia[15], which account for 41%, or Europe[16], which account for 24%.

As reported by ECPDM[17], two interesting and at times ironic, perceptions and narrative shifts have emerged during the fight against COVID-19 and the macroeconomic doom the virus has generated. The first relates to how tables have turned on migration and mobility between Europe and Africa, and to how the general "control and contain" attitude towards African mobility to Europe is currently reversed, albeit temporarily. The second is the realisation that limitless mobility within Europe and easy travel access to much of the rest of the world has been taken for granted when it was in fact a privilege.

European visitors and migrants in Africa shared their experiences of social rejection[18] and harassment[19], though this is occurring on a micro-scale and such anecdotes are more an anomaly than the norm. Nonetheless, these incidents mimic the sentiments we so often see in European populists' narrative towards migrants. In time of crisis, policy-makers have a particular responsibility in ensuring the credibility of public responses. This requires understanding first where and why institutional communication fails to convince. In this sense, the ICMPD's flagship policy initiative "Breaking Gridlocks and Moving Forward: Recommendations for the next five

7 https://euvsdisinfo.eu/eeas-special-report-update-short-assessment-of-narratives-and-disinformation-around-the-covid-19-pandemic/

8 https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/coronavirus-italy-matteo-salvini-league-migrants-sinophobia-chinese-a9364651.html

9 https://time.com/longform/migrants/?fbclid=IwAR1SfAafvAOuyP2dfr4P16DZ-3vJ0T4O_oKPVeW3nB1CnhyyuCjsMlVn0ohc

10 https://time.com/5563750/africa-global-migration/

11 https://time.com/4799804/central-african-republic/

12 https://time.com/5416793/climate-change-ban-ki-moon-trump/

13 https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.iom.sk%2Fen%2Fmigration%2Fmigration-in-the-world.html%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR08tDRIcrbYm5JrjP-myzddDUuBAueKEY7ODSac9zU8Y8ZOFPYx5NuMojbw&h=AT22ToBAbeQI-_D1bxVOfIPzBdmZwnEAb208GFb7EFlSp2yxaNvZpDMEV7k25HL-FXZhQ9iuZ_ZerSXJGl_IaFmfWcDWMJ1UEl7MsLdjnyl2WIqA5CamrZCuD9X2KMA-iOs

14 https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fs.mo.ibrahim.foundation%2Fu%2F2019%2F03%2F18193224%2F2019-Forum-Report.pdf%3F_ga%3D2.233019606.971969344.1554113433-1376135683.1539079664%26fbclid%3DIwAR25vYAL3q3sNSxynzjx6QuOsjhlA7xZBqaFuEkZcWfP_LdZ1OL-3QkF-dLA&h=AT22ToBAbeQI-_D1bxVOfIPzBdmZwnEAb208GFb7EFlSp2yxaNvZpD-MEV7k25HL-FXZhQ9iuZ_ZerSXJGl_IaFmfWcDWMJ1UEl7MsLdjnyl2WIqA5Cam-rZCuD9X2KMA-iOs

15 https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fs.mo.ibrahim.foundation%2Fu%2F2019%2F03%2F18193224%2F2019-Forum-Report.pdf%3F_ga%3D2.233019606.971969344.1554113433-1376135683.1539079664%26fbclid%3DIwAR1RdvfnFwrRDAbx3Er3x50NGKY8oNKWP6u6pxaFm8R9uel59c17kNoULTE&h=AT22ToBAbeQI-_D1bxVOfIPzBdmZwnEAb208GFb7EFlSp2yxaNvZpDMEV7k25HL-FXZhQ9iuZ_ZerSXJGl_IaFmfWcDWMJ1UEl7MsLdjnyl2WIqA5CamrZCuD9X2KMA-iOs

16 https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fs.mo.ibrahim.foundation%2Fu%2F2019%2F03%2F18193224%2F2019-Forum-Report.pdf%3F_ga%3D2.233019606.971969344.1554113433-1376135683.1539079664%26fbclid%3DIwAR3G2zhimtZzrE8g48nbBRKkVEd3H5SU2RB5BKC9WDYOW5a3CxYH-3GK9WUE&h=AT22ToBAbeQI-_D1bxVOfIPzBdmZwnEAb208GFb7EFlSp2yxaNvZpDMEV7k25HL-FXZhQ9iuZ_ZerSXJGl_IaFmfWcDWMJ1UEl7MsLdjnyl2WIqA5CamrZCuD9X2KMA-iOs

17 https://ecdpm.org/talking-points/turning-tables-african-european-narratives-time-corona/

18 https://twitter.com/sallyhayd/status/1240561333826920448

19 https://twitter.com/joanna_lng/status/1240706862070132736

years of EU migration policy"[20] calls for more transparency in migration communication as a way to reach out to sceptical demographics.

It is time to shift the conversation on from migration crisis to migration capital and Covid-19 is a good time to dig out good news[21]. The benefits of migration are directly proportionate to the visibility of positive stories about it and the great thing is that the vast majority of these stories are very beneficial to host communities.

There is unexplored potential, now more than ever, to discuss about "champions of migration": individuals, or groups of people, who have made a powerful contribution to their host society, and often country of origin, in ways that are not publicly recognized. They are men and women demonstrate exceptional ability in in different realms, from entrepreneurship to public service, from health to innovation, from academia to sports. Their experiences offer a counterpoint to stuck conversations about the burdens and pressure of migration. They are examples of potential being realised, opportunities being seized in ways that make them active members of their new city, region or country.

In most high-income countries, migrants make up a large share of health workers and are more likely to be on the frontline of the COVID-19 response[22]. **Furthermore**, "key workers"[23] **performing 'systemically relevant' jobs, like the example of formerly exploited** African migrants that have now set up a co-operative near Rome selling vegetables and yoghurt[24], **cannot be neglected**. Now societies appreciate the importance of these sectors more and show them the recognition and respect[25] they deserve but usually do not receive.

If these people were framed as "champions" not as "burdens", their potential to rebalance a hyper-distorted narrative would be impressive and beneficial for all policy makers. Too often, these stories remain limited to greatly written articles on international outlets, but hardly touch the hearts of citizens outside of great urban centre. Rarely such stories are advertised in local papers, TV stations or targeted Facebook groups. While these stories get international attention in communities that already embrace an open attitude towards migration, they remain buried in communities where the migration debate is the harshest. More accurate targeting (especially digitally) is fundamental to reverse this trend.

What can international organizations to tackle the polarization of the debate?

1. Let positive stories be heard

Migration is not an inherently negative phenomenon. For centuries, migration has fostered global trade links, shaped nations, fueled human endeavors and enabled skills and cultures to be shared across the globe. As world leaders recognized in the first-ever United Nations Global Compact on Migration[26] in December 2018, migration, "is a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development in our globalized world." Humanity has always been on the move. Migrations are the fabric of our shared existence and have strengthened continents, countries and communities for millennia. Migrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. Migrants are net contributors and demographics trends make clear that labour market demand for migrant labour will increase in the coming decade. Economically, they invent products, start companies and create jobs. Mobile foreign-born and technically skilled entrepreneurs are bringing about profound transformations in the global economy. Hence, it is important to talk about mobility and migration in a realistic and balanced way as a human condition that can affect us all positively and deliver progress in the region.

It is time to shift the conversation on from migration crisis to migration capital, from the perception of threat to the recognition of opportunity. Data on its own has proved to be a limited tool in responding to imbalances in perception. Real-life examples, human stories and symbols can provide a more relatable way to engage public opinion. Success stories, large and small have a vital role to play in shifting attention and salience from the negative to the positive side of this phenomenon.

20 https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/ICMPD-Website/2019/ICMPD_Breaking_Gridlocks_and_Moving_Forward_-_Recommendations_for_the_next_5_years_of_EU_migration_policy.pdf

21 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/03/ploughing-through-coronavirus-news-for-the-brighter-stories

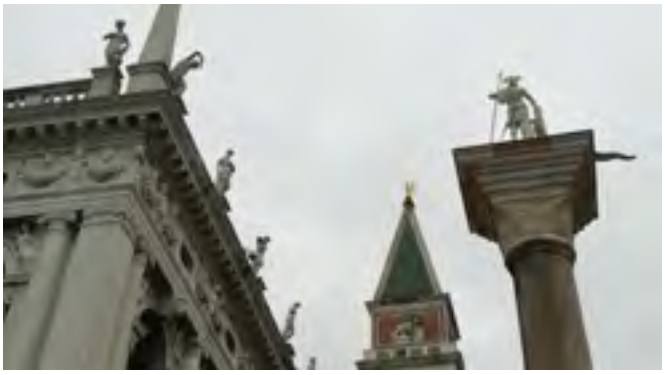
22 https://www.cgdev.org/blog/migrant-health-workers-are-covid-19-frontline-we-need-more-them

23 https://www.icmpd.org/news-centre/news-detail/expert-voice-too-important-to-be-neglected-refugees-in-europe-are-now-essential-to-keep-societie/

24 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/01/a-beautiful-thing-the-african-migrants-getting-healthy-food-to-italians

25 https://medium.com/@marta.foresti/an-ode-to-key-workers-5218d425ecbb

26 https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fundocs.org%2FA%2FCONF.231%2F3%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0ZDoUuW5ok6V5AvgibI5n0cQjCr65jKAOy4OuomI5zGrUt2pjLsBJTlhY&h=AT22ToBAbeQI-_D1bxVOfIPzBdmZwnEAb208GFb7EFISp2yxaNvZpDMEV7k25HL-FXZhQ9iuZ_ZerSXJGI_IaFmfWcDWMJ1UEI7MsLdjnyI2WIqA5CamrZCuD9X2KMA-iOs



The benefits of migration are directly proportionate to the visibility of positive stories about it. The great thing is that the vast majority of migration stories are very positive and beneficial to host communities.

Introducing "Champions of Migration"

In particular, we find that there is unexplored potential, now more than ever, to discuss about "Champions of migration": individuals, or groups of people, who have made a powerful contribution to their host society, and often country of origin, in ways that are not publicly recognized. Champions of Migration are men and women who demonstrate exceptional ability in in different realms, from entrepreneurship to public service, from investments to innovation, from politics to academia and from sports to arts. Their life stories and experience offer a counterpoint to stuck conversations about the burdens and pressure of migration. They are examples of potential being realised, opportunities being seized in ways that make them active members of their new city, region or country.

Their power lies in the profoundly personal ways they contribute to changing perceptions at the local level and provide a means to amplify their message in a wider context and promote a new balanced narrative on migration.

While displaying greatness, virtue and merit it is important to point out that migration is not a story of winners and losers. Members of the hosting community must not feel like they are "giving in" to a situation they cannot control or that their emotions and concerns are not taken into account by governments and policy-makers. Rather, they must be empowered to promote their way of life instead of feeling the need to protect it from an external threat. On the other hand, migrants must not feel like they are taking part in a competition where only a few exceptional members of their community are rewarded for doing things that receive attention, praise and media visibility.

Extremely successful migrants in sports, business, science and arts already have a powerful impact on public perception of people born outside their country of residence. But "champions of migration" is not a concept intended only to exalt the exceptional few at the expense of embracing the many. It is a concept that seeks to make the everyday accomplishments and contributions of migrants visible, human and relatable.

2. Analyse issue salience

As explained in "Impact of Public Attitudes to migration on the political environment in the Euro-Mediterranean Region"[27] as salience increases, both emotion and knowledge of the issue increase. Journalism that is well-informed, value-balanced and evidence-based is crucial to informing the public and creating an environment in which negative feedback loops are avoided. Emotional engagement is how media framing is likely to have the most influence on issue salience, and subsequent political behaviour. Polarisation results from individuals selectively choosing which information they are exposed to following emotional activation. This seems to be a self-reinforcing cycle.

The causes of variation in issue salience remain undertheorized and are rarely tested. Salience varies between individuals according to three factors: self-interest, social identification and values, whereas it varies across time according to 'prominent events or problems' that 'focus national attention.'

Higher salience causes activation of one's emotional systems and interest in the issue by citizens. Emotions activated via higher salience include anger, sadness, disgust, pride, hope, happiness, fear and sympathy. It is this emotional activation, which may be why individuals base their political behaviour on certain issues, this seems to be the case for immigration. There is a need for more detailed data on migration issue salience—not just the salience of 'immigration' but also particular aspects such as irregular immigration.

3. Fight disinformation

Unreliable and false information is spreading around the world to such an extent, that some commentators are now referring to the new avalanche of misinformation that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic as an "infodemic"[28]. In times of high fears, uncertainties and unknowns, there is fertile ground for fabrications to flourish and grow.

According to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)[29], Anti-migrant and far-right networks are exploiting the Covid-19 situation to spread disinformation targeting migrants, refugees and other vulnerable populations on- and offline, as well as explicit threats of violence. In such an environment, it is hardly

27 https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/ICMPD-Website/Impact_of_Public_Attitudes_to_migration_on_the_political_environment_in_....pdf

28 https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/un-tackling-%E2%80%98infodemic%E2%80%99-misinformation-and-cybercrime-covid-19

29 https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwjwyI_hv_LoAhWINOwKHYUrAQMQFjAAegQIAhAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.isdglobal.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F03%2FCOVID-19-Briefing-Institute-for-Strategic-Dialogue-27th-March-2020.pdf&usg=AOvVaw24gN9tLavhhvxkHapW_5WM

surpris¬ing that broader conspiracy theories are flourishing. The general use of the term 'coronavirus' for this specific outbreak has fed many conspiracy theorists, as the term is actually broadly used in epidemiology for a family of viruses, meaning that refer¬ences and patents relating to 'coronavirus' existed well before this specific outbreak in 2019-2020.

Conspiratorial narratives targeting migrants detected on social networks include:

- Suggestions that migrant routes, and in particular the ongoing situation on the Greece/Turkey border in Europe or the Mexico border in the US, will act as a vector for the virus to spread.
- Speculation that immigrant and minor¬ity communities in major cities will use the virus as an opportunity to riot.
- Migrants specifically are ignoring coronavirus lockdown rules and asylum seekers are rioting against quarantine and flying ISIS flags.
- Migrants are taking the opportunity of the pandemic to "invade Europe"

This surge in anti-migrants narrative is extremely dangerous. Beneath the spread of all "fake news," misinformation, disinformation, digital falsehoods and foreign influence lies society's failure to teach its citizens information literacy[30]: how to think critically about the deluge of information that confronts them in our modern digital age. Instead, society has prioritized speed over accuracy, sharing over reading, commenting over understanding. To truly solve the issue of disinformation we must blend technological assistance with teaching our citizens to be literate consumers of the world around them.

4. Cooperate with social media companies

As I openly advocated in a keynote at the latest Club of Venice plenary[31], the power to tackle disinformation is in the hands of social media companies but governments and international organizations have a role to play in pushing for stronger and firmer policies and laws to prevent the spread of disinformation.

- Fighting disinformation has to be a coordinated effort involving all relevant actors, from institutions to social platforms, from news media to consumers' associations. These must closely cooperate with online platforms in order for them to promote authoritative sources, demote content that is fact-checked as false or misleading, and take down illegal content or content that could cause physical harm.
- From the side of the institutions, three things can be done:
  - Increase the technological knowledge of policy makers. There is still an important gap between the institutions' knowledge of how social media work and the knowledge needed to effectively legislate to regulate the spectrum of action of tech and media companies. This is a good time to invest in related knowledge and expertise.
  - International organizations and governments have the legal, legislative and normative power and the political weight to push for responsible advertising. While internet companies have taken major steps in this direction[32], the ultimate legal framework for action must be led by governments.
  - We must not fall into the tempting arms of "fashionable hating" just because it may benefit our image. Many celebrities, including prominent European and American politicians are using Facebook as a scapegoat for their own inability to address the public, labeling it as some sort "disinformation-for-profit machine." Simply resorting to accusations, that paradoxically are often intended to get likes, views or engagement on the very platforms that are criticized, solves no issues.
- What can internet companies do? Social media companies are in the front line to tamp down coronavirus misinformation[33]. While Facebook has recently been criticized for its unwillingness to block false political ads[34], the company has had the most clear-cut policy on COVID-19 misinformation. It relies on third-party fact-checkers and health authorities flagging problematic content, and removes posts that fail the tests[35]. It also blocks or restricts hashtags that spread misinformation[36] on its sister platform, Instagram.
- For reasons of credibility and reliability, it is time that internet companies co-draft standards of practice like tv, radio and newspapers do. As mentioned before, this needs to be enforced by institutions and still today more legislative work is needed. In every industry, a company is liable when their product is defective. In every industry you can be sued for the harm they cause. Government can push to have social networks accountable when this happens, the power is in their hand. Companies should be more proactive in making this would-be-historic step a reality.
- **Enact coordinated and positive communication action now.**

30 https://www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2019/07/07/a-reminder-that-fake-news-is-an-information-literacy-problem-not-a-technology-problem/?fbclid=IwAR1nkY_6TUxQzPqgEwJHBR4yTuM6QZ7p6GA-la8qyYVm1p7tMfrklro8MBok

31 https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/dangers-uncontrolled-online-veracity-market-marco-ricorda

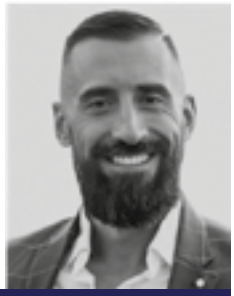
32 https://www.marketplace.org/shows/marketplace-tech/covid-19-content-moderation-social-media-disinformation/

33 https://theconversation.com/social-media-companies-are-taking-steps-to-tamp-down-coronavirus-misinformation-but-they-can-do-more-133335

34 https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/09/technology/facebook-political-ads-lies.html

35 https://about.fb.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus/#limiting-misinfo

36 https://about.fb.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus/#limiting-misinfo



ICMPD has long been leading the way in supporting the establishment of a more balanced narrative on migration especially via the The Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM)[37] and EUROMED Migration IV[38]. The former brings together experts and cities to contribute to improved migration governance at city level, including migrants' access to basic services and human rights. The latter supports EU Member States and the European Neighbourhood Instrument Southern Partner Countries in establishing a comprehensive, constructive and operational dialogue and co-operation framework on migration. These activities are implemented with a constant view to the cross cutting issue of reconnecting migration and knowledge. It aims to accumulate evidence-based knowledge, and establish effective communication, in order to contribute to a more balanced narrative on migration in the region. These efforts are today more important than ever and they must continue their work for better migration governance, better protection of migrants and better inclusion of the voices of host communities.

Organizations and government must work together to offer a dignified life to displaced people in a way that they can be active contributors to their host communities. They must make sure that great examples of success are well communicated and presented as a demonstration that cooperation, even in the toughest situations, is stronger than division. It is essential that we cooperate to prevent that hate-speech and inappropriate language poison relationships and divide people more than this pandemic is already doing. It is of the utmost importance that the lives of migrants are not considered political pawns or mere rhetorical bargaining chips.

We need clear, honest and open voices to start this new narrative. This pandemic represents an unfortunate but unmissable opportunity to start.

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Marco Ricorda is a political and institutional communication expert with strong expertise in social media and digital campaigning.
He is a political communication blogger, a public speaker and a twice nominated #EUinfluencer. He is the Communication Officer for the Mediterranean at ICMPD and formerly a Member of Cabinet for President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani, Head of Social Media for the ALDE group and Guy Verhofstadt, digital communication strategist for the European Commission and the economic think tank Bruegel.



37 https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/mtm-dialogue/city-to-city-mc2cm/https:/www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/mtm-dialogue/city-to-city-mc2cm/

38 https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/euromed-migration-iv/

Telephone helpline during COVID-19 epidemic in Slovenia

By Kevin Pelicon, Ivana Krajnc and Klemen Petek

With the emergence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Slovenia prepared to fight the outbreak of the disease itself as well as the spread of disinformation and fearmongering. To curb the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), it was essential for the public to be given understandable and trustworthy information. On March 9, 2020, five days after the first case of COVID-19 in Slovenia, the country established a national toll-free coronavirus telephone helpline available to population of 2 million citizens.

Operation of the helpline

The coronavirus call centre was founded by the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia, in cooperation with the Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Illnesses of the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, the National Institute of Public Health, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Administration. It operated seven days a week, from 8 am to 8 pm, and was available at a toll-free domestic and international phone number. To ensure competent responses, 66 mostly senior-year students of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ljubljana participated as call centre operators.

The medical students could permanently consult with specialists of infectious diseases, public health professionals and psychiatrists, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Civil Protection Services. Furthermore, experts from other ministries were available for interpretations of government measures, laws, and ordinances passed during the epidemic.

The call centre was heavily promoted at government press conferences by the government spokesperson Jelko Kacin, former MEP and ambassador. To highlight the current hot topics and to discuss the work of the call centre, Professor Mojca Maticic, MD, PhD was regularly invited to the press conferences. Professor Maticic, a specialist clinician at the University Medical Centre Ljubljana and a full professor of infectious diseases and epidemiology at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ljubljana, who served as a professional mentor for students in the call centre, also communicated with the public through national radio and TV. Call centre information and phone number were posted on the government website and many others, the call centre number also regularly appeared on television during news programmes.

A proactive approach

The advisers did not only passively provide information. They were actively looking for solutions to more complex and specific questions and integrated these inputs to provide citizens with detailed and precise answers.

About 98% of all the questions were solved on the spot. Among the most memorable were cases regarding challenging reunions of family members due to border and movement restrictions. In cases like that, consular services' support proved invaluable to the call centre's advisers.

Callers were also encouraged to submit suggestions and initiatives which were collected by the call centre staff and forwarded to legislators for consideration. A lot of callers' initiatives were included in new legislative measures (e.g. garden centres and construction and hardware stores were allowed to reopen earlier than planned). Such communication became an important barometer for tracking the public response to new measures and assessing the need for additional explanations, recommendations and instructions.

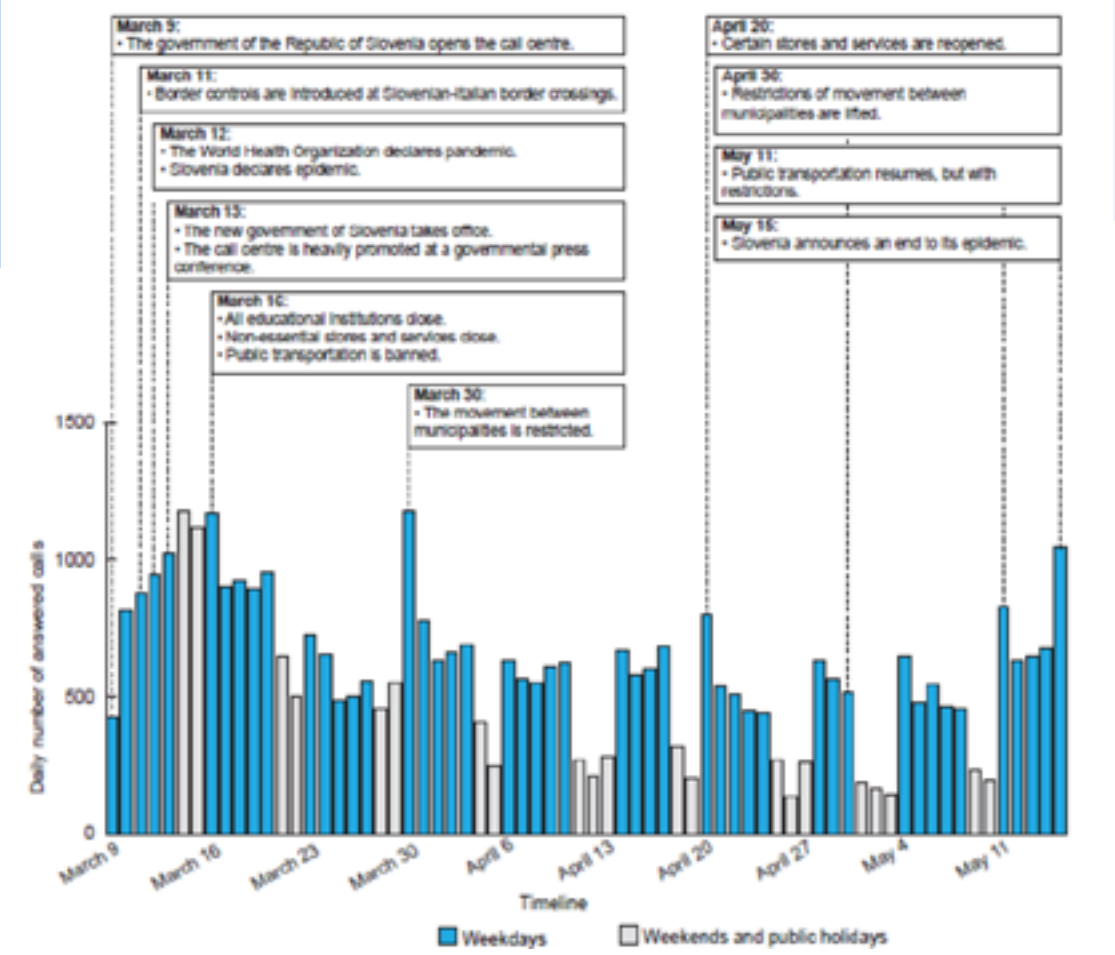
Call analysis

By May 15, 2020, the helpline advisers had already answered more than 40,000 calls. On an average weekday, this translated to 685 calls per day, while on weekends and public holidays the average number of answered calls was 380. The longest call lasted for about one hour and a half.

The content of the calls changed in parallel with the progression of the epidemic and government action. At the start of the epidemic, a considerable proportion of callers inquired about medical advice, questions about COVID-19 symptoms and preventive measures. As Slovenia introduced tighter restrictions towards the end of March, the focus of the queries shifted to measures such as restrictions on public movement. On March 30, 2020, when the government banned the passage of people between municipalities, the helpline represented one of the first points of contact for Slovenian and foreign citizens. It should be pointed out that psychological and psychiatric support available on the spot for the callers proved to be really useful as well.

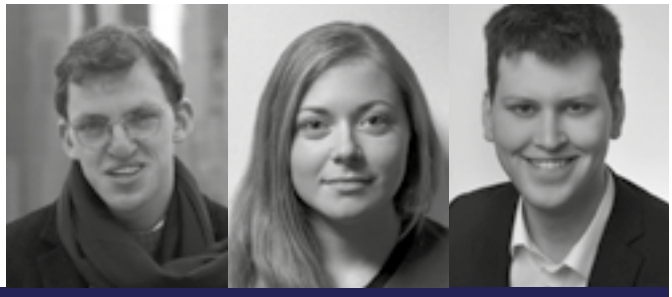
Conclusions

The call centre worked proactively and helped the government in shaping its coronavirus response by offering an insight into the citizens' needs and concerns. The decision to invite medical students as helpline advisers during the COVID-19 pandemic and to support them with expert consultants from various fields resulted in a success story which far surpassed all initial expectations.



The number of answered calls per day and important events during the epidemic

By May 15, 2020, the epidemiological situation in Slovenia had stabilised to the point where the country could announce an end to the COVID-19 epidemic and ease border restrictions and quarantine procedures for people entering the country. As the country entered a post-epidemic period and with some measures still in place, the call centre continued to operate. Informing and listening to citizens has proven to be one of the most powerful tools in the successful management of the COVID-19 epidemic in Slovenia to encourage appropriate awareness and stimulate behavioural changes of citizens for managing future health crises.



KEVIN PELICON, IVANA KRAJNC AND KLEMEN PETEK are senior year students at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ljubljana. All three were among 66 advisers at the Slovenian government coronavirus call centre. They were selected because they had already passed courses in infectious diseases, public health and psychiatry during their study. Additionally, they underwent intensive training in COVID-19, communication skills, phone etiquette, confidentiality practices, and consular services before they started to work at the call centre. Besides all gained knowledge they were eager to gather additional experience and were very proactive during their work as advisers. Ivana coordinated the students' schedules, Klemen was in charge of an up-to-date knowledge and information database and Kevin helped with the daily and other statistics.

Their academic mentor, professor Mojca Maticic, is a specialist in infectious diseases and internal medicine at the University Medical Centre Ljubljana and professor of infectious diseases and epidemiology at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ljubljana.

The role of communications

in sustainability & rebuilding brands during and after the corona crisis is paramount

By Stavros Papagianneas

Six communication lessons learned from the pandemic

Crisis is the mother of resilience. One of the main things I have learned through this pandemic is that we are far more resilient than we think. It is incredible how people are keeping their personal lives and their work moving forwards by using innovative ways to stay socially connected. I believe that humanity will come out of this more agile and stronger.

Caring is a part of our DNA. I saw many friends and stakeholders coming together to support communities. From creating masks and face shields to donating and delivering food to those in need. We have launched an appeal[1] and helped alleviate the shortage of equipment in residential homes in Brussels struggling to contain an increasing number of Covid-19 cases.

However, the current situation also entails a risk of widening social and economic differences in the world. Demand shifts and the capacity of the private sector to rebound will asymmetrically affect different countries. Many sectors are expected to suffer, notably through reduced turnover and employment.

Here is what we have learned so far:

The role of communications in sustainability and rebuilding brands during and after the crisis is paramount

What organisations are doing in times of crisis defines their brands and their image for many years to come. All that was considered as normal before the corona crisis - the "previous normal" of January 2020 - is gone. Forever. Investing now in building an innovative & sustainable strategy to come out of recession is of prime importance. Embrace the new normal and drive innovation into every aspect of business to exit recession on a growth trajectory.

PR/COMMS agencies will act even more as trusted constituents of the corporate communications team, and are absolutely needed during these times.

Digital will set you free

Never in the past has digital connectivity been so critical for a health crisis. The coronavirus pandemic has made us realise how heavily we depend on digital connectivity. The public is far more engaged and has more excellent and higher expectations. This is an opportunity for public and private organisations to reinforce public trust and reputation. They can learn how to be better prepared to manage rising complications of a global crisis, respond to it much faster and adjust their action and message so that it aligns with public good.

The coronavirus will either kill or cure the EU

It is early to assess the political repercussions of the corona pandemic in Europe, but decisions taken since February will have a profound impact. EU leaders have failed in communicating a shared vision, taking a real political commitment to reassure European citizens that the EU is there for them. Different European countries have taken a national approach, focusing less on solidarity and coordination If no solution is found fast to finance the reconstruction plan of Europe the coronavirus crisis will further damage the trust of citizens in the European Union and its governance.

Combating myths and disinformation

Why does misinformation flourish? Does all this fake news mean that people are extremely trustful, their anxiety making them receptive to the most flagrant rubbish? Many share fake news for fun, but the fake news about potential corona cures was most worrying during the pasts months.

The 2020 coronavirus has given rise to a flood of conspiracy theories, disinformation and propaganda, eroding public trust and undermining health officials. Nevertheless, fake news can also lead to a significant crisis, panic and hysteria. We saw many myths that the virus is a foreign biological weapon, the virus has been created in NATO laboratories, or it is a partisan invention or part of a plot to re-engineer the population. The EEAS[2] worked overtime to protect us from the Klingon invasion.

Show empathy and be authentic

Finally, I strongly believe that the coronavirus is a good opportunity for brands to show attitude and reach out to the people, not clients or consumers. Putting people above budgets and profits is very important. There is no doubt that companies are facing a large decline in revenues, but pushing sales at this time would be ineffective and even opportunistic. So, companies should play the long term game and invest in trust and reputation. It is time to learn how to create community values and principle focus points.

1 https://www.thebulletin.be/coronavirus-belgium-urgent-call-protective-equipment-donations-nursing-homes-brussels

2 https://euvsdisinfo.eu/about/

Government communication can better

Concerning government communication, we saw too much technical information and less motivation and empathy. In the fight against the outbreak, the population must respect government measures. A government cannot implement these measures through restrictions and law enforcement only. Motivating the citizens is vital. Good and clear communication is essential for doing this. That's exactly where things went wrong in recent weeks in a country like Belgium, for example. One the other hand, countries like New Zealand and Greece are navigating their communications well and have excellent results.



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Stavros has been a member of the Working Party on Information of the Council of the European Union. He is the author of the books : Rebranding Europe ; Powerful Online Communication and many articles in EU media like Euractiv, New Europe, Europe's World, L' Echo, De Tijd, Communication Director, Irish Tech News and Research Europe.
Stavros is a graduate in Communication Sciences from the VUB University of Brussels, and has given lectures in universities across Europe : University of Cantabria, University of Vilnius, University of Brussels (VUB), Institute of European Studies (IES), Thomas More University, Université Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne.

Countering Disinformation Trends

By Vincenzo Le Voci

An insight of the Study for the "Assessment of the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation"[1]

Report finalised under the shield of the European Commission Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT), Directorate I, Media Policy

The report contains general information on objectives, scope and methodology (research tools, analysis and limitations) and elaborates on the following key issues:

- the concept and definitions of disinformation and the related challenges
- the aim, scope and commitments stemming from The Code of Practice on disinformation
- the findings (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and considerations on the EU added value and sustainability)
- an insight of Member State level activities to counter disinformation (non-legislative and combined legislative/ non-legislative measures, and other measures
- the structural indicators/parameters.

At first sight, it is worth notice, among others, the following trends:

- only a few Member States have implemented legislative measures to combat the phenomenon. Most countries have favoured non-legislatives measures such as media literacy programmes or awareness campaigns.

  These "soft" measures aim to explain in a clear and, often, interactive manner what is false information, how to recognise it, and how to deal with it. They are directed at the general public, as well as at communication professionals. Some of the media literacy programmes are also implemented in school, high schools and universities.
- The majority of the national legislative measures that were implemented specifically to deal with disinformation were subject to intense debate as they were seen as too draconian by many experts.

  It is the case, for example, in Hungary, France and Ireland. In some Member States, such as Germany, a number of civil and criminal law provisions may be applicable to safeguard individuals or the public from fake news in social networks.
- From the analysis of the interviews carried out for this Assessment of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, a clear correlation was found between the enhanced European and international awareness around disinformation, the enhanced communication about the phenomenon and the fact that new important initiatives were taken at Member State level to fight disinformation. Seventy-five percent of the national authorities who replied to the survey estimated that the Code provided additional value to the national policy framework of their country to combat disinformation. Most of them also estimated that it enabled their country to better define disinformation in national measures and to put in place more national policies.

  The conclusions drawn from it reinforce the opinion that pan-European instrument and initiatives at Member State level are complementary to combat disinformation.

  National measures, either legislative or non-legislative are useful complement to the Code of Practice on Disinformation, as they enable to further raise awareness on disinformation at the national level and, in some cases, on the Code itself as it is directly mentioned in some of the media literacy programmes. A part of these national initiatives existed before the Code entered into force, but many of them were facilitated by the existence of the Code.

In the **Conclusions**, the considerations on the **EU added value** should induce government and institutions to pursue the collaborative approach adopted in this context. Trends are definitely encouraging.

- Although there is a divergence in opinion among stakeholders with regards to the effectiveness of the principle of self-regulation, there is wide acknowledgement that the Commission is right in pursuing a dialogue with the social media platforms.
- There is also acknowledgement that the Code constitutes a first and crucial step in the global fight against disinformation. In this sense, the Code shows European leadership on an issue that is international in nature.
- There seems to be a clear correlation between the enhanced European and international awareness around disinformation, the enhanced communication about the phenomenon and the fact that new important initiatives are taken at Member State level to fight disinformation.
- The Code has led to increased reflection among Member States with regard to activities to understand and combat disinformation. Some Member State authorities are planning/ undertaking activities relevant to the Code (e.g. planning disinformation strategies, preparing (better) monitoring of the phenomenon, etc.).
- There is also a consensus that disinformation is a topic where the EU has an added value and where it should continue to lead and coordinate action. The EU may also wish to consider providing a minimum set of standards for Member States to adhere. Mostly to ensure consistency, to create more bargaining power towards the platforms and because a large part of the threat comes from state actors outside of Europe.

1 The extracts of the Study are re-published in line with the reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) - allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

N.B. It should be noted that the study was carried out before the Covid-19 crisis and that the events that followed the Covid-19 outbreak were not part of the study remit. However, the fact that the pandemic has become the topic of a new wave of disinformation has reinforced the need for action.

Priorities for improving the Code

According to the study, the Code could benefit from certain key improvements.

- more consistent reporting adhering to certain minimum information standards could allow for an even better assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Code, especially if the reporting exercises focus on actual impacts and results of measures rather than mere statistics
- Independent auditing of the data delivered by the platforms in their reports could eliminate the debate on whether this data is correct and representative. This would ensure a level playing field in discussing the effectiveness of the Code and eliminate information asymmetries
- to improve the consistency of the implementation of the Code across Member State, it could be considered to set minimum standards for the platforms to adhere to in each Member State
- The Code could also guarantee a wider positive impact if it had a larger number of Signatories signed up to it commitments. Therefore, all efforts should be made to widen the base of platforms signing up to it
- Although the Code of Practice is a self-regulatory instrument – and the first of its kind – introducing a mechanism for action in case of non-compliance of the (insufficient) implementation of the commitments that platforms signed up to, could be considered to enhance the credibility of the agreement. To that effect, according to the study the Commission should consider proposals for co-regulation within which appropriate enforcement mechanisms, sanctions and redress mechanisms should be established.

The Europa's website's comments on the Study

The European Commission published the Study for the assessment of the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation in its website on 8th May 2020[2].

The Study assesses the policies and tools adopted by the online platforms to implement the commitments made in the Code of Practice against Disinformation[3] in its first year (2018-2019).

It concludes that the Code established a common framework to fight disinformation and should not be abandoned, and it proposes ways to strengthen implementation and monitoring (study reference: SMART 20190041).

This Study aims at supporting the European Commission's evaluation of the Code effectiveness.

The assessment of the independent contractor, Valdani, Vicari and Associates (VVA), focused on 13 Signatories to the Code of Practice against Disinformation. It analysed the standard terms of service and the specific policies and tools adopted by the online platforms to implement the commitments made in the Code in the first year of its implementation (October 2018 to October 2019).

The overall conclusions of the study:

- The Code of Practice should not be abandoned. It has established a common framework to tackle disinformation. Its aims and activities are highly relevant and it has produced positive results. It constitutes a first and crucial step in the fight against disinformation and shows European leadership on an issue that is international in nature.
- Some drawbacks relate to its self-regulatory nature, the lack of uniformity of implementation and the lack of clarity around its scope and some of the key concepts.
- The implementation of the Code should continue and its effectiveness could be strengthened by agreeing on terminology and definitions.

Finally, the Study suggests a mechanism for action in case of noncompliance. To that effect, the European Commission should consider proposals for co-regulation within which appropriate enforcement mechanisms, sanctions and redress mechanisms should be established.

2 https://ec.europa.eu/dSigital-single-market/en/news/study-assessment-implementation-code-practice-disinformation

3 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/code-practice-disinformation
As provided under the Commission's Communication, for the purpose of the Code, the Commission as well as the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) who provided in March 2018 its recommendations to inspire the European Commission for the preparation of its strategy in this field, define "Disinformation" as "verifiably false or misleading information"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary presents **key findings and the conclusions of the study "Assessment of the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, SMART 2019/0041".** The study was commissioned by the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) of the European Commission and it was carried out by VVA Economics & Policy with the support of DisinfoLab.

A. Objectives and methodology

The overarching study objective is to **support the European Commission's evaluation of the Code of Practice's effectiveness**. The assessment focuses on the 13 current Signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation (online platforms and business associations).

The study analyses the standard terms of service and the specific policies and tools adopted by the online platforms to implement the commitments of the Code in the first year of implementation of the Code (October 2018 to October 2019). For this reason, ongoing efforts made by the Signatories to combat disinformation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic are not covered.

The study methodology is documented in the Evaluation Plan (Annex 4). The methodology was designed specifically to be replicable so that it can form the basis for future assessments.

B. Findings and conclusions

The study's overall conclusion is that the Code of Practice has produced positive results.

There is a consensus among stakeholders that the Code of Practice is needed. Since disinformation continues to be a widespread problem, the Code, its aims and activities are considered to be highly relevant.

Furthermore, stakeholders consulted for the study also agreed that disinformation is a topic where the EU has an added value and where it should continue to lead and coordinate action. Despite differences in stakeholder views with regards to the effectiveness of self-regulation, there is widespread acknowledgement that the Commission is right in pursuing a dialogue with the social media platforms.

There is also acknowledgement that the Code constitutes a first and crucial step in the global fight against disinformation. In this sense, the Code shows European leadership on an issue that is international in nature.

When it comes to effectiveness, the study identifies a range of achievements. Firstly, the Code has established a common framework under which to agree on and implement activities to tackle disinformation. In doing this, the Code has set a foundation on which further activities can be built. Indeed, the Code – and the preparatory activities carried out before its establishment – has contributed to the debate on disinformation, raised awareness, and provided guidance to stakeholders (e.g. civil society, policymakers, the media and publishing sector) and to the Signatories.

Secondly, the discussions facilitated by the work of the Code have also contributed towards a specific set of actions and measures at EU and national levels and it has improved cooperation between policymakers and the Signatories to combat disinformation:

- For instance, the Code has established a **platform for negotiation** that has produced concrete results in the form of **regular monitoring of Signatory activities** and continuous action to combat disinformation activities. The monitoring processes report on change over time, which allows for better transparency of social media platforms during elections and other political campaigns.
- In addition, the **Code has also led to increased reflection among Member States with regards to activities to understand and combat disinformation**. Some Member State authorities are planning/undertaking activities relevant to the Code, e.g. planning disinformation strategies and preparing (better) monitoring of the phenomenon.

In addition to these general conclusions, the table below summarises specific key findings on the Code's five Pillars.

Pillar	Key findings
Pillar 1: Scrutiny of advertisement placements	The Code has prompted Signatories to put in place new, or to enhance existing measures to scrutinise ad placements. However, available data are not sufficiently detailed to be assess the effectiveness of these measures. There is an inconsistent understanding of the details and implications of the Code under this pillar, which (partly) explains the lack of data. Currently, the Code does not have a high enough public profile to put sufficient pressure for change on platforms. Future iterations of the Code should refer to click-baiting as a tool used in disinformation and specifically ad placements.
Pillar 2: Political advertising and issue-based advertising	While efforts have been made by platforms in the area of political and issue-based advertising, there is still room for improvement. For instance, measures regarding political advertising have been more effective than measures regarding issue-based advertising. However, there are widely different views (also among the experts consulted for the study) regarding the scope of 'issue-based' advertising, with national culture being a crucial factor influencing understanding of the scope of concept.
Pillar 3: Integrity of services	The Signatory platforms have put in place tools and policies to combat inauthentic behaviour and malicious actors as agreed by the Code, while non-Signatory stakeholders consulted seem to have less knowledge on the impacts of such tools under this pillar. To better understand the ongoing interaction and development of inauthentic behaviours and malicious actors, the focus within this pillar could also be on the reach and influence of these aspects. Studies and experiments could be conducted into how such actors and their associated behaviour contribute to the spread of disinformation and how effective the platforms' tools and policies are in preventing this spread.
Pillar 4: Empowering consumers	Although there is no convergence of opinion regarding stakeholders' assessment of Pillar 4, most of the signatory platforms have a range of tools in place for empowering consumers. However, these tools have not (yet) been consistently rolled out across all Member States and reporting on their impact is inconsistent. Most stakeholders identified see an increased consumer awareness on the topic of disinformation, but it is difficult to establish the extent to which this can be attributed to the Code of Practice.
Pillar 5: Empowering	Efforts have been made by the Signatories to support and encourage good faith research into disinformation. However, these initiatives should be further developed to be more effective. Most researchers consulted for this study indicated that access to

Pillar	Key findings
the research community	data is still limited, or that databases that are made available are not user-friendly. In addition, there is a general lack of trust between researchers and platforms.

The main criticism of the Code relates to its self-regulatory nature, lack of uniformity of implementation – evidenced by the unevenness of progress made under the specific Pillar – monitoring, and lack of clarity around its scope and some of the key concepts.

First, as mentioned already above, it is a voluntary document, and as such there are no means to enforce the commitments of the Signatories nor do the 13 signatories cover all relevant stakeholders. This has led to **at times fragmented implementation across the various Pillars, across platforms and across Member States**. In particular, in relation to Pillars 4 and 5 that are focused on the relationship between Signatories and consumers and between Signatories and the research community respectively. Further time and effort will be required to ensure that all five Pillars are implemented as effectively as possible and in a uniform manner across the different stakeholders and geographies.

Second, the study shows that there remains a need for a common understanding of key concepts. Indeed, **disinformation is a topic that is not very clearly defined and it can at times be interpreted subjectively**. To combat this lack of clarity and foster a harmonised approach, it is important that the action that are agreed upon are as concrete as possible to facilitate the definition of intended results and key performance indicators and support implementation and monitoring. For example, it appears to be the case that measures regarding political advertising have seen stronger development than issue-based advertising because stakeholders are unclear about the remit of issue-based advertising which lacks a common definition. Similarly, to ensure a common language and improve future evaluation exercises a joint terminology needs to be agreed among stakeholders in the near future.

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C. Future considerations

As the study has shown, the Code remains relevant, it has led to positive results, and it provides value added at a European level.

For this reason, **the Code should not be abandoned, and its implementation should continue**. However, the effectiveness of the Code can be strengthened in the following ways:

1. Continued efforts to debate the Code's strengths and weaknesses with the Signatories, non-Signatories and wider stakeholders. These debates could focus on agreeing on terminology and definitions of key terminology, as well as discuss and assess the current scope of the Code and how current weaknesses can be addressed.

2. A mechanism for action in case of non-compliance of the Code's Pillars could be considered. To that effect, the European Commission should consider proposals for co-regulation within which appropriate enforcement mechanisms, sanctions and redress mechanisms should be established.

3. Further support to evaluation and monitoring of the Code is needed; this study also provides methodological recommendations that can be used to further improve this process (proposed key performance indicators are documented in Chapter 7).

4. Consider strengthening the practical implementation of the current requirements of the Code, which entails that signatories should implement activities to the same standard across Member States. Ensuring that the common standards for the platforms to adhere to in each Member State are also enforced would ensure better consistency in the implementation of the Code across the Union and help create more bargaining power towards the platforms. For example, if a tool is not implemented in all MS at the same time, the platforms should communicate a provisional calendar when users in each of the MS can expect to be able to use these tools. This is important given that a large part of the threat comes from state actors outside of Europe.

ANNEX 2: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONTACTED

The table below provides an overview of all the stakeholders that the study team contacted throughout the study. Some of the stakeholders did not wish to contribute to this study.

Table 10: List of stakeholders contacted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation
Signatory (online platform)	Facebook
Signatory (online platform)	Google
Signatory (online platform)	Mozilla
Signatory (online platform)	Twitter
Signatory (online platform)	Microsoft
Signatory (trade association)	European Association of Communication Agencies
Signatory (trade association)	European Digital Media Association
Signatory (trade association)	Interactive Advertising Bureau Europe
Signatory (trade association)	World Federation of Advertisers
Signatory (trade association)	SAR Marketing Communication Association
Signatory (trade association)	Association des agences conseils en communication
Signatory (trade association)	Union of Belgian Advertisers
Signatory (trade association)	Associace komunikacnich Agentur
EU institution	DG CNECT
Academic	An academic from Cardiff University
Academic	An academic Oxford University
Media	News Media Europe
Academic	An academic from University of Utrecht
Academic	An academic from George Washington University
Academic	An academic from Aarhus University
Media	EBU
Media	ACT
Media	Euractiv
Media	A journalist contributing to La Stampa
Civil society / consumer organisations	Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs
Sounding Board	International Fact-Checking Network
Sounding Board	European Federation of Journalists
Sounding Board	Copenhagen Business School
Regulators	AGCOM
Regulators	BAI
Fact-checkers	Fact-checkers from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Non-signatory platform	Snapchat
Non-signatory platform	Reddit
Fact-checkers	Pagella Politica
Fact-checkers	Les Decodeurs

Type of stakeholder	Organisation
Civil society / consumer organisations	Avaaz
Academic	An academic from the Bocconi University
Academic	An academic from the Sorbonne Nouvelle University
Media	AFP
Civil society / consumer organisations	European Digital Rights
Civil society / consumer organisations	Consumer Choice Center
Civil society / consumer organisations	Global Disinformation Index
Civil society / consumer organisations	Internet Society
Civil society / consumer organisations	Centre on Regulation in Europe
Regulators	CAS (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel)
Regulators	National Media and Infocommunications Authority
Regulators	Rada pre vysielanie a retransmisiu
Regulators	Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel de la Communauté française de Belgique
Regulators	Krajowa Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji

The Europa website's comments/ background on The Code of Practice

Representatives of online platforms, leading social networks, advertisers and advertising industry agreed on a self-regulatory Code of Practice to address the spread of online disinformation and fake news.

This is the first time worldwide that industry agrees, on a voluntary basis, to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation. The Code[4] aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's Communication presented in April 2018[5] by setting a wide range of commitments, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetization of purveyors of disinformation.

The Code includes an annex[6] identifying best practices that signatories will apply to implement the Code's commitments. The Commission has also published the opinion of the Sounding board[7] of the Multi-stakeholder forum on the Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice was signed by the online platforms Facebook, Google and Twitter, Mozilla, as well as by advertisers and advertising industry in October 2018[8] and signatories presented their roadmaps[9] to implement the Code. In May 2019, Microsoft subscribed to the Code of Practice and also presented its roadmap.

Online platforms and trade associations representing the advertising sector have submitted a baseline report[10] in January 2019 setting out the state of play of the measures taken to comply with their commitments under the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Between January and May 2019, the European Commission carried out a targeted monitoring of the implementation of the commitments by Facebook, Google and Twitter with particular pertinence to the integrity of the European Parliament elections. In particular, the Commission asked the three platforms signatory to the Code of Practice to report on a monthly basis on their actions undertaken to improve the scrutiny of ad placements, ensure transparency of political and issue-based advertising and to tackle fake accounts and malicious use of bots. The Commission published the reports received for the five months together with its own assessment (for more details, see the intermediate reports for January[11], February[12], March[13], April[14], and May[15] 2019).

The Code and other initiatives[16] set forth by the Commission were essential steps in ensuring transparent, fair and trustworthy online campaign activities ahead of the European elections in spring 2019.

4 https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=54454

5 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-tackling-online-disinformation-european-approach

6 https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=54455

7 https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=54456

8 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/code-practice-fight-online-disinformation-2018-oct-16_en

9 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/roadmaps-implement-code-practice-disinformation

10 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/first-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation

11 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/first-monthly-intermediate-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation

12 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/second-monthly-intermediate-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation

13 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/third-monthly-intermediate-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation

14 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/fourth-intermediate-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation

15 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/last-intermediate-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation

16 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/fake-news

Lithuanian diplomacy in the digital age: closing the foreign policy gap

By Corneliu Bjola and Rytis Paulauskas

With an expanding digital network of influential and engaging social media accounts, actively operating on multiple platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, Instagram), in support of carefully crafted strategies of digital communication, the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has managed, in a rather short period of time, to distinguish itself as one of the most innovative members of a relatively small club of digital diplomatic powerhouses. According to the 2018 Twiplomacy study[1], the Lithuanian MFA ranks sixth among the best digitally connected organisations and shares the platform with globally influential foreign services such as the European External Action Service (EEAS), the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, or the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. A capacity for strong adaptive leadership, coupled with an organisational culture open to innovation and experimentation and a commitment to delivering ambitious foreign policy goals in a complex geopolitical context are the key ingredients accounting for this performance. That being said, the broader question is how digital diplomacy could contribute more effectively to Lithuania's foreign policy, both in terms of advancing the country's interests and in protecting them when they are challenged.

The main reason that small and medium-sized states like Sweden, the Netherlands, Mexico, Israel, or Australia have enthusiastically embraced digital diplomacy from the early stages has to do with the perception that digital technologies can help them increase their diplomatic influence to levels they might otherwise not be able to reach. It is thus assumed that by being able to directly engage with millions of people, MFAs and their network of embassies could positively shape the views of the global public about the country of origin, and in so doing, they could increase the diplomatic standing of the country in bilateral or multilateral contexts and even 'punch' above their political or economic weight. The Lithuanian MFA makes no exception to this principle. Its expanding 'network of networks of diplomats, journalists, businesspeople, diaspora leaders, academics etc. has proved effective in boosting the country's efforts in public diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and crisis communication. With the arrival of a new generation of digital technologies including artificial intelligence (AI) and mixed reality (MR), the Lithuanian digital diplomacy could expand even further and include consular services, negotiations and new forms of diplomatic representation under its digital umbrella.

Currently Lithuania MFA's digital network has four main Facebook pages, directly aimed at communicating with Lithuanian citizens living in the country and its sizeable diaspora community residing abroad. Three main Twitter accounts (Lithuania MFA; LT MFA StratCom and the Foreign Minister's account) introduce the Lithuania's diplomatic activities and its foreign policy positions to foreign audiences. In the field of economic diplomacy, the MFA uses LinkedIn page to reach out and engage a more sophisticated audience made of professionals, experts, etc. The digital network also includes 50 Facebook, 21 Twitter, and 4 Instagram accounts of Lithuanian embassies and consulates around the world. One hundred Twitter accounts are used as personal accounts by Lithuanian ambassadors and diplomats. The total reach of Lithuania MFA's network from 31st of August 2018 to September 1st 2019 is estimated at 10.5 mil., while the total engagement of the reached users is approximately 590,000. In the year 2018 – 2019, the MFA has launched and managed 7 major campaigns such as the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters, Brexit information for Lithuanian citizens, the Papal visit to Lithuania, Baltic Way 30 and a few others. During this period, the MFA's main pages (Facebook; Twitter; LinkedIn) have gained from 1.5 to 11 thousand new followers.

The strategic aim set by the MFA for its digital activities is to achieve systemic integration of all its accounts so that they can communicate together as one coherent network, a well-designed and effective "Network of Networks". The strength of this approach lies in improving coordination between the MFA and its embassies, amplifying online influence by reaching out a wide range of audiences in real-time, and strengthening the effectiveness of its communication through the use of advanced analytical and content planning programs.

As we are about to enter a second decade of steady evolution and professionalisation of digital diplomacy, one particular lesson stands out for MFAs with respect to how they can excel in their digital approach. More specifically, they need to demonstrate that digital diplomacy holds not only tactical value for communicating MFAs' positions and interests, but also strategic significance as an element of statecraft. This requires a better understanding of how technology impacts relationships between states and a solid commitment to developing the necessary capabilities by which to respond to the opportunities and challenges so generated. In other words, for digital diplomacy to advance into the next stage, it must enhance its strategic value primarily by ensuring that online influence is successfully converted into offline influence of relevance for foreign policy.

The recent media controversy over the role of Lithuania in the second World War (WWII) and the political memory of the Holocaust presents itself an interesting case for briefly exploring how digital diplomacy could provide better strategic support to foreign policy. To mark the eightieth anniversary of the Munich Agreement, the Russian MFA and several of its embassies launched a coordinated digital campaign in Sept-Oct 2018 (see Graph), promoting the narrative that, against the background of extremism and neo-Nazism in Europe, the Baltic states, including Lithuania, deny their past and facilitate neo-appeasement policies by celebrating national heroes who were

1 Twiplomacy Study 2018, available at https://twiplomacy.com/blog/twiplomacy-study-2018/

	Date							
	2018				2019			
Handle	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Grand Total
lv_rusembas	587	407						994
mfa_russia	3,606	1,202						4,808
MID_Kaliningrad		7					13	20
natomission_ru	220	10		116			418	764
PMSimferopol	1,013	515						1,528
PskovMid	206	161	38	105	321	5	63	899
rus_emb_est	199	289						488
RusEmbNo		134	84	131				349
rusembusa	725	1,827						2,552
russian_un	466	159						624
russianembassy_c	3,413	1,007						8,430
Grand Total	13,434	6,728	122	352	321	5	494	21,456

Breakdown of ReTweets by month

Nazi collaborators. The campaign targeted audiences primarily in Europe and North America with the rather transparent goal to discredit these countries and generate diplomatic tensions with their allies. The digital campaign followed closely the pattern of Russian disinformation of cultivating political controversies tailored to the local context, exacerbating divides in the West and manufacturing an echo chamber of Kremlin support[2]. It was aided by the fact that traditional media was also covering Holocaust-related stories as part of the commemorations marking the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

From a strategic perspective, this case shows the importance of closing the gap between digital diplomacy and foreign policy by ensuring that hostile attempts to undermining the country's international position and reputation do not go unanswered. Given that Russia's narrative is spread through Twitter, Lithuania should also disseminate its counter-narrative on Twitter by refuting the argument of the adversary without repeating it unnecessarily. Moreover, as the Russian narrative centres on the allegation that Lithuania is "whitewashing" its past, Lithuania's counter-narrative should be centred on the argument that Lithuania is dedicated to remembering the lessons of the Holocaust and ensuring that these lessons are not forgotten. The digital campaign should also prioritize increasing the number of positive reports in newspapers as such development can help break the mutually reinforcing cycle between social and print media. At the same time, it should seek to map the "network of networks" of Russian sources, bots, and influencers involved in the dissemination of negative stories and disinformation about Lithuania and the political memory of the Holocaust. The map could prove useful for identifying potential patterns of dissemination on social media, which could then be modelled to predict and pre-actively react to further disinformation campaigns.

To conclude, the key contribution that Lithuanian digital diplomacy can make to its foreign policy is to help advance the country's interests and to protect them when they are challenged. This can be better accomplished not by directly influencing the views of (friendly or hostile) decision makers, but rather by shaping the environment in which those decisions are made or unmade.

2 Corneliu Bjola and James Pamment, "Digital Containment: Revisiting Containment Strategy in the Digital Age," Global Affairs 2, no. 2 (2016): 132, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2016.1182244.



CORNELIU BJOLA Associate Professor in Diplomatic Studies at the University of Oxford and Head of the Oxford Digital Diplomacy Research Group, Faculty Fellow at the PD Center at the University of Southern California and Lecturer at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. His research focuses on the impact of digital technology on diplomacy (strategic communication, digital influence and countering digital propaganda). Co-editor of "Countering Online Propaganda and Violent Extremism: The Dark Side of Digital Diplomacy (2018), he authored or edited six books in this field. His work has been published in several authoritative international journals and reviews of International Affairs, Global Policy and Ethics.

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European leaders gather in our virtual Situation Room

Creating resilience and recovery readiness among decision-makers from the public, private and civic sectors

By Verena Ringler and Nadja El Fertasi

"In just two sessions, we managed to get out of the panic cycle. We've seen our vast field of opportunities instead," says the fundraising and communications manager of an international health NGO. "What a convincing mix of content, methodology, strategic expertise, and operational smoothness," says a member of the European Parliament (MEP). These two leaders are referring to their teams' videocall experience called the SITUATION ROOM during the COVID-19 lockdown weeks.

With our background in European affairs, we have initiated and refined this format as a unique, on-demand and impactful offer for leadership teams in the first weeks of lockdown. The SITUATION ROOM methodology blends design thinking, risk management, visioning and backcasting, as well as scenario-building techniques, condensed into just 150 or 200 minutes of interaction. We thereby refined our earlier concept, the "Open Situation Room", which Verena Ringler had co-invented in Switzerland in 2014 and brought into series later with the German Federal Foreign Ministry. In 2016, while working at Mercator Foundation in Germany, we could realize these Open Situation Rooms both at the Munich Security Conference and the Munich Impact Hub, among other settings.

We engage in this field of optimizing integrated strategy consultancy because we know just how difficult it is for public as well as private sector leadership to act within and beyond disruption: Many of our colleagues and interlocutors had to abandon annual plans, organizational routines, and grand goals within hours in March and April 2020. Now, they must ensure to survive the coming months and years. In the best case, they concurrently prepare their performance in a world after the pandemic experience.

Surely, the inter-institutional European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) has for years called for a "culture of preparedness" among EU governments and decision-makers. Recall for instance former ESPAS Chair Ann Mettler's foreword to the "Challenges and Choices for Europe" report released in April 2019. Proactively shaping the future, however, is easier said than done in some circumstances. Restoring the old order and falling prone to group think along the way seems enticing at face value. Many decision-makers wear blinders and thus oversee blind spots. Why would they summon their teams while everyone is in full crisis management mode, and call for a "pit stop" conversation with experts? How can decision-makers find an easy, "drive-through" opportunity to reflect and take the long view? How to work quickly with trusted experts below procurement thresholds?

With our histories in the EU Council and NATO, respectively, we want to ensure that leadership teams get a chance for a 360-degree, mindful stocktaking and strategizing exercise in a confidential atmosphere and on the basis of a transparent Ethics Code. Having convened and facilitated several hundred top-flight consultations, workshops and fireside talk formats in the past years, we set out to refine the SITUATION ROOM offer so that it works promptly, easily, and in a high-quality manner to senior leadership teams.

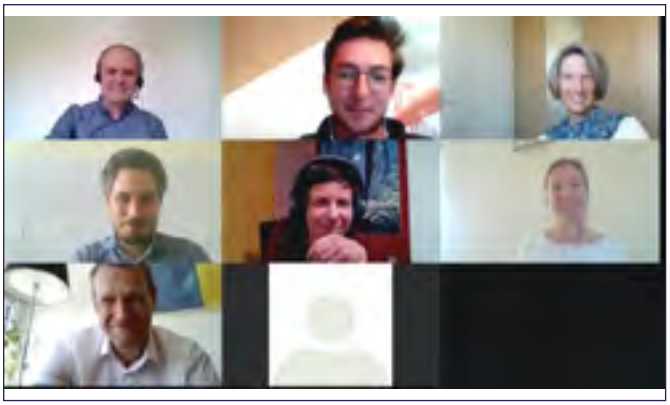
We aim to apply insights made and lessons learned from previous game-changing moments and large-scale transitions. We want to make sure many organisations and institutions receive high-speed, multi-disciplinary, top-quality support to gauge their "NOW" as well as their "NEXT" situation. Focusing on the best imaginable scenario and bundling resources towards that goal might often be the best -and only- way forward.

Three aspects stand out in our SITUATION ROOM format:

- Thinking short-term, but also in the medium run and the long run, requires discipline and audacity on the parts of government or private sector leaders in crisis times. In the Situation Room, we dedicate at least as much time and thinking to the future as we allocate to the present situation.
- Ours is a perspective of opportunities management – in contrast to the typical risk- and problem-centered focus often inherent to strategy- and scenarios work. This allows teams to harness the potential and talent they might have overlooked so far.
- The SITUATION ROOM is a safe and trusted space of conversation between leadership teams and three hosts with three different professional backgrounds, who Verena Ringler scouts and convenes tailor-made for each partner or customer. Teams of three guarantee complementary views and completion of the picture, as described below.

Traditional societal models have been disrupted at an unprecedent pace and the short-term consequences are already visible around the globe. People are facing lack of safety and security on a personal level at a global scale. The new normal dynamics are fuelled by the human security implications triggered by COVID-2019 as civil unrest is on the rise. It is human nature to resist unpredictability and uncertainty when faced with disruption, and thus increases the risk for acting from a place of fear and aggression – the impulse controlled by the amygdala[1] part of the brain. A renewed sense of leadership focused on human centric values amongst policy and decision makers is a necessity in the new normal.

1 The amygdala is an almond-shape set of neurons located deep in the brain's medial temporal lobe. Shown to play a key role in the processsing of emotions, the amygdala forms part of the limbic system. The limbic system is the part of the brain that controls the processing and filtering of all emotions.

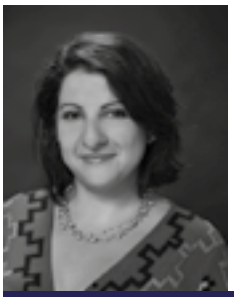




To navigate this unrest and crisis is to understand the root cause of the behaviours through the use of simulation scenarios, focusing on building human resilience, trust and inclusion by mitigating unconscious bias across all strata of society. It is only when decision-makers feel pressured under high-levels of stress, do they revert to their unconscious bias and short-cut behavioural patterns that are no longer fit for the changing world we live. Exercising inclusion in the safe space of the SITUATION ROOM is critical and through the science of emotional intelligence, mental resilience and stress testing will leaders learn to rise in the face of disruption.



What's clear already is that our mainstream dialogue and traditional notions and teachings of international relations have to change to reflect the geopolitical and security challenges of the new normal. Trust amongst civil society and in the founding principles of democracy across institutions is eradicating. Populism is gaining traction as they manage to play into people's fears and insecurity through rhetoric rooted in the "divide and rule" principle. If the governments, institutions and the European Union want to stay ahead of another crisis amongst humanity that is looming large, decision makers must start now to exercise including all stakeholders in dialogue and action. What better way than to open our SITUATION ROOM to help reshape tomorrow by starting today?





VERENA RINGLER, founder and director of European Commons (www.europeancommons.eu), a network that initiates and realizes informal dialogue formats, backchannel conversations, and public communication concepts in diplomacy and European politics. Specialized in user-centered and multi-disciplinary approach to Europe, communications, journalism and diplomacy, she worked as staff editor for the Foreign Policy magazine in Washington D.C., built and led the Europe programme of Stiftung Mercator and the communications side of the EUSR/ICO diplomatic team in Kosovo. Verena got her MA from the Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies in 2002 and also studied in Uppsala, Vienna, and her hometown, Innsbruck. She wrote on global leadership for "Realistic Hope" (Amsterdam University Press, 2018) and co-authored the European Reformists' Report "Refocus the EU: Planet, Lifetime, Technology" (Carnegie Europe, 2019). She curates the 2019 Tipping Point Talks series in Vienna. Last year she was publicly nominated as independent candidate by a liberal party to become European Commissioner.

NADJA EL FERTASI. Nadja has worked for nearly two decades at NATO, where her last position was Senior Executive at the Communications and Information Agency, responsible for stakeholders' strategic engagement and communications for implementing NATO and Nations's Digital Transformation programmes. Deeply engaged in fostering trust and understanding among stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, she facilitates tackling challenges and disruptions by maximizing emotional intelligence (EQ), having trained with leading experts in the field. Her professional experience includes Secretary to Senior Executive tasks in large multinational institutions, working in different countries and contributing to transformative workforce development strategies at all levels. Nadja is an alumna of the 2018 German Marshall Fund Marshall Memorial Fellowship programme, a post-graduate in International Relations from Cambridge University, and Co-Chair of the largest side event of the GLOBSEC 2019 Bratislava Forum and its inaugural cyber security crisis simulation.

Open Climate Policy Lab

or how to communicate youth voices, concerns and ideas about climate change in policy and decision-making

By Tamara Puhovski

THE MOTIVATION - why are we giving typewriters to youth to create apps?

I have just come from yet another conference with yet another session asking why is youth not participating (in politics) and I thought a lot about the dominant youth communication discourse. After some consideration I concluded that the answers are not wrong, the question is wrong. The question is not why the youth is not participating or what we imply they are doing wrong or not enough of, the question is why are we, the more mature people, creating policy that in content and in tools fails for a large and possibly most important group in our society? We are giving them the policy equivalent of typewriters and asking them why they are not creating apps with them. That motivated me to embark on a six month preparation period in order to, jointly with the British Embassy in Zagreb, invest in the first open climate policy lab. We are currently working on a digital climate policy lab for online communication and collaboration as a follow up to the activity.

We are changing the trends in the solutions game

Too often, when speaking about social impact we forget that policy and politics, the regulatory framework – in fact impacts all of the other sectors and that policy is the master social impactor. Because of the anti-establishment sentiments and general lack of trust in institutions and governments, focus on policy has all but disappeared. Instead we are focusing all our attention, funds and expertise in countless challenges, innovation sprints, impact investments. Which should all exist and flourish of course. But in the meantime policy and politics are left in the shadows. And policy should never ever live in shadows as it has a very bad historical tendency of impacting us in a disastrous way if we leave it there. The more we are disappointed with politics and policy and the less we engage in it, the more we give it power to negatively impact us.

Open policy is not a good idea, it is a necessity.

We created a three day intensive open policy lab. Not just because co-creation and inclusion simply makes for better policy, but because it makes it transparent and on top of that because, as political scientists, we know that the more conflicts you resolve in the earlier stage of policy making the better policy you will have and the easier politics path is ahead of you. We used the methodology of a somewhat redesigned policy lab. We added a day for policy research with Code for Croatia and Demagog, to ensure our policy solutions are data-based. We added open data, factcheck and digital storytelling as well as a lobbying and advocacy day with the assistance of The Good Lobby and the Euronavigator. During the policy day we co-created with the UK Policy lab a workshop starting with Climatopia designing and grouping youth according to what their visions for the climate are. We will then continue building a (policy) roadmap with each team identifying obstacles and working on innovation in how to overcome them. Along the way we stopped for a quick exercise in behavioral bias and values check, ensuring that we pick up every stepping stone we laid down and examine underneath it to ensure we are critical and aware as to what decisions and what turns in policy we take. We want the policy to be open both in participation and stakeholders as well as in content. With the help of the Academy for Political Development in Croatia, we organised climate talks – 4 tables of decision makers divided by sector ready to be lobbied and advocated, ready to be pitched by youth participants on the solutions they have built.

YOUTH-CENTERED DESIGN

In my company, we always focus on critically examining the impact we create, and not just the effect. We therefore take special care, when working with groups that are in higher risk of being vulnerable or socially excluded, to always have that in mind. The same was true for Open Climate. Some of the things we put in place:

- **We don't have any key speakers**, we have key listeners – we had specifically designed think thanks of experts that will be at the disposal for the youth during their work.
- We have passed a general **ban on presentations or speeches**, we don't want to speak at youth we want to listen and support.
- We have **engaged youth experts, facilitators and coordinators** to ensure the content is created by youth as well, and to ensure youth role models
- We ensured the **digital dimension** to include those that couldn't come but also the technologies that youth will create to use themselves
- We have **experts and workshops in fact checking, digital storytelling** to ensure we address issues that are important for this generation
- We created **special sessions and changed the agenda and methodologies according to applications** we received to ensure user-centric design
- **We attempted (and somewhat failed) to include an equal number of young men** because we feel that we have to examine if women leading in climate and environmentalism





has roots in sexism and teaching women, and not men, to be nurturing

- We had **quota of at least 30% of participants not coming from the capital**
- We included Fuckup nights and speaking about failure in the program to **question authority** but also to have a **conversation about dealing with failure** in this very visible world of ours
- We added an extra **session on how to take care of yourself while taking care of the environment**, led by a psychologist and tailor made for activism at such young age and such a life threatening topic
- We **threw out role playing exercises** for lobbying and advocacy and ensured the youth participants will have **access to decision-makers** sitting in the room and available and open to hear their solutions
- We are ensuring not just **sharing our social capital but also teaching how to build social capital** by turning the UK Ambassador's reception into a networking game with networking missions assigned to each team.

OUR RESULTS - The experiment worked!

- We had **33** applications and **22** youth participants
- Youth confidence gain was evaluated between **90 and 95%**, and motivation increase around **85%**
- **2 out of 5** teams have self-organised continued work on solutions after the workshop
- **Skills** were evaluated as raised between **50 and 90%** and **42 to 76%** of youth participants have a clear plan on how they will use what they have learned in their current work/activities
- At the beginning of the policy lab none of the participants perceived policy solutions as a way to resolve the problems they chose to tackle, by the end of policy lab we had **5 teams with 9 detailed policy solutions** ranging from legislation, investment, campaign, sanction and other ways in decision-makers can act
- Youth participants consulted with **8 experts** in the field and lobbied **4** tables **of 13** decision-makers: civil society (NGO,media and university) public administration (national and city administration, public agency) private sector (association of enterprises, corporation, social enterprise) and political parties (right and left wing political party representatives)

Lessons learned

"Youth are apolitical" is a myth – we teach youth in our education system to replicate ideas of others rather than create ideas themselves, we talk down to youth in our societies, we use tools and create content in policy in a way that is so outdated for this generation. If that context is changed, with appropriate tools and expertise and design, we find out how passionate, motivated and full of ideas youth are in policymaking.

There is a certain **patriarchal, old-school patronising authority and approach to listening to youth voices**, however on an individual level with so many partners and decision-makers coming in, and providing time and knowledge to create new spaces of discussion there is a lot of room for intergenerational dialogue.

Self-care and support are crucial, especially in the field of young activists fighting for the climate The workshop with the psychologist was considered one of the most useful tools and many participants felt better after discussing the many concerns they have about the future, how they feel and what they can do when they feel anxious, afraid or sad.



TAMARA PUHOVSKI lives in Zagreb (Croatia). Founder of ProPuh (a social impact hacking company) and Impact House Consulting (collaborative pool of policy, corporate and community impact experts), she has worked with UNDP and the European Parliament as well as the national government as an adviser to the Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister heading the Open Government Partnership and leading open, innovative and impact policy projects.
Her multi-faceted experience includes cooperation with large corporations in developing core business and social engagement and innovation and mentor tasks in several startups in the field of innovation and impact. She was a university researcher and professor and volunteered in several NGOs as project manager, trainer and community manager (youth, Roma, migrants, women and other communites). She was selected by the European Commission as one of the 30 best social innovators in Europe.

Communicating the Future of Europe - what is at stake?

By Stavros Papagianneas

Europe has been undergoing a process of slow unification for almost seven decades now and is better off for it: there is less conflict between European countries than at any time in history, and their collective power makes Europe strong, even now in the era of corona virus.

But there is more. The European Union has brought freedom, justice, sustainable democracy and helps protect our basic political, social and economic rights. It supported the extraordinary transformation of former dictatorships in Europe, which now are members of the EU family.

South European countries with a democratic deficit and dictatorships like Spain, Greece and Portugal are now examples of democracy. People with different political opinions in these countries are not more in jail or exile anymore.

The European Union also embraced the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. After decades living under communist regimes, they were taken under the secured umbrella of the Union.

Now all citizens living in the EU, have the same rights in all other member states as they do in their country of origin. Europeans can travel, study, reside and work in the other member states. They can even vote in certain elections in other EU countries.

The Union has achieved extraordinary results in the fields of education, environment, research and innovation. However, in other fields like the creation of jobs, public diplomacy and illegal immigration - one of the major public's concern - it failed to fulfil citizens expectations and give answers with one united voice.

Despite the European Union ensuring more than 60 years of peace in Europe, the EU struggles to sell its story. Most Europeans see it as boring and they often don't understand what is happening in Brussels.

In recent years the EU has spent a lot of time and money on communicating with its citizens, explaining its policies and its purpose. But this communication has been high on jargon and low on impact. The EU and its member states failed in communicating Europe. They were unsuccessful in communicating the constructive advantages of integration, cohesion and co-operation. The advantages of common policies in the fields of finance, taxation, defence, trade, healthcare and foreign affairs.

Europe is missing a sustainable communication strategy. To establish a strong relationship with the people, effective communication practices must be put in place. A powerful connection with the citizens cannot be installed without a well thought out communication strategy and effective tools, practices and analysis. Government policies rarely succeed when communication fails.

Many factors contribute to inefficient EU communication: the lack of leadership, the absence of a shared vision and a common European public sphere, poor knowledge on EU affairs, a hostile media, EU red tape, unethical practices in politics, the 'blame game' on European issues, multilingualism, scandals and austerity. All these factors contribute to the EU's incapability to communicate its policies and achievements in a transparent and clear way.

Today, audiences are central to the success of an organisation or a project. People no longer accept being "talked at". But EU communication is often based on one-way information, not genuine dialogue.

To be successful, there is a necessity for change: the European message needs to be interesting to the media and understandable to citizens. The Parliament, the Commission and the Council often express diverging and even contradictory views, resulting in a cacophony. "Europe can only work if we all work for unity and commonality, and forget the rivalry between competences and institutions. Only then will Europe be more than the sum of its parts," said Jean-Claude Juncker in his 2016 State of the Union speech.

Nevertheless, there are some successful methods for communicating Europe in an efficient way like for example, the Citizens Dialogues. These public debates with European Commissioners and other EU decision-makers, such as members of the European Parliament, national, regional and local politicians are very useful.

The events take the form of a question and answer session. Citizens can ask EU politicians questions, make comments and tell them how EU policies affect them. They can also share their ideas on the future of Europe. Held in cities across the EU, the sessions are free to attend and many of those are broadcast live online.

A tremendous chance to communicate the European project accurately is the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe. While EU Institutions are negotiating its mandate, composition and the methodology of working, its launch on 9 May 2020 is doubtful due to the coronavirus crisis. Despite warnings that expectations would not be met, as it was the case with the European Constitution, I believe that it is a unique opportunity towards a more democratic, sovereign and federal Europe.

It will offer the possibility to put the future of the EU at the heart of the European debate and if managed well it could revitalise the European idea. The selection of Guy Verhofstadt as president is an excellent choice. He is a committed European and has long experience in EU affairs. The Conference is a wonderful project for recognising and respecting the different national dimensions. It will be a process of discussion, citizen interaction and should lead to the formulation of new ideas.

The member states of the EU have different public opinions depending on their historical, political, socio-economic and media context. The Conference on the Future will help to find out why a large part of the Europeans does not endorse the Union. It will launch a discussion on what is a European identity and what our values are. We should use the process and the outcomes to communicate a message of unification in a coherent way - by taking into account the diversity of audiences and countries.

The Conference on the Future of Europe could be an excellent example of Going Local. Empowering the citizens and engaging with them, supporting the development of a public European sphere, setting-up a two-way dialogue, listening to the people and being transparent. The outcomes of this democratic process should not be neglected but respected and analysed.

While the European Parliament was the first EU institution to publish a document on the conference, in fact, the original idea came from President Macron. For the moment, everybody wants to be involved, and so the discussion is currently focused on format rather than content. Debate on the future of Europe is not new. Last time it was in 2017.

The European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe was a sad confirmation of the absence of a future vision and leadership. Brussels cannot find a solution for the deadlock we have been in for many years. Nevertheless, most of the main actual problems such as the migrant-crisis, Euroscepticism, cooperation on security issues, and lately the coronavirus pandemic require a coordinated European answer.

The conference will focus on involving civil society in large debates about the future of Europe and provide sustainable solutions on how the Union can respond to peoples' needs. It should identify what the EU does well and what new measures it needs to do better, to increase its capacity to act and to make it more democratic. The whole process should be based on a bottom-up approach. The 6 agoras foreseen will deliberate throughout the conference process on a set of predefined policy areas, such as the digital transformation, social justice, climate crisis, the redrafting of EU electoral law, etc.

It should also provide more insights in fields concerning the transparency of the works of the Council of the EU; push forwards the system of pan-European lists for the next European elections and bring the system of Spitzenkandidaten back to life.

The conference should be a useful step in the direction of structuring a public European sphere. Such a sphere is hardly needed for the further unification of the continent. For the moment, Europe is not yet one nation and the EU is not yet a federal state. It is a kind of confederation.

The absence of a real common European sphere is a huge obstacle for integration and cohesion. At the EU level, the identity component common in most European countries is very weak. If EU countries need an institutional setting to manage their interdependence while forgetting to build a common demos, infusing democracy into the system might be ineffective.

The absence of a European public opinion, related to the incompleteness of a European identity and the ever constant enlargement of the EU to new national public spheres, makes a common future and communication even more complicated. Communication implies the existence of a community.

Despite improvements, the EU has often been unable to send clear and understandable messages to its citizens, focusing too much on who they are rather than what they do. All too often, they hide behind the complexities of policy-making or platitudes and fail to show why the EU matters and makes people's lives better.

Here are seven recommendations to help productively communicating Europe during & after the two years of the Conference:

- **Make communication a strategic priority**. A Brussels correspondent indicated in the survey described in my book Rebranding Europe (2017), the Leave Brexit campaign as the most successful one in the EU. During the first Barroso Commission, communication was an EU strategic priority and had a dedicated Commissioner. Nowadays, that portfolio does not exist anymore. In the private sector, the Chief Communication Officer seats more and more at the C-level table when business decisions are made. The role of communication managers is to explain the political, economical, societal and technological change. To explain what are the implications of these changes to the lives of the people. During the last years, we have also examples of how it could work in the public sector: in the US, Donald Trump-Steve Bannon and the UK, Boris Johnson-Dominic Cummings. The EU should make communication one of its top priorities. Strategic communication planning is a

powerful management activity for identifying issues, setting priorities, defining strategies, and determining performance benchmarks as well as expectations.

- **Communicate at both EU and national levels**. Communicating in a true partnership is paramount. It needs to be based on common values, political will, transparency and honesty. The key players should operate on an equal footing. An innovative and sustainable public-private partnership would help; involving the EU institutions, member states, civil society, the media, political parties, academia and the private sector. They would commit to presenting the EU as a useful brand, an entity that is seeking to collaborate with the citizens and make a meaningful difference in their daily lives. The message should be adapted to the local identity of each country.
- **Forget the fluff**. Good communication is like good journalism: it creates transparency by making important things clear and relevant to stakeholders. Good communication helps create dialogue and is the basis of beneficial decision-making. It is necessary to make messages coherent, clear, concrete and jargon-free, and to connect them to particular human needs and expectations. Speaking with one voice at all levels - EU, local and regional - is fundamental. If you want the attention of the audience the message needs to be clear.
- **Talk about success**. During the last years, we have heard different EU and national leaders expressing criticism about the European project. This sounds logical in times of crisis. This tendency is reinforced by the media which covers more the negative aspects of the crises. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to talk also about good results. And there are plenty in the EU in the fields of education, research, innovation, etc. Messages of success will always be positive irrespective of the communication tools used to transmit them.
- **Support quality journalism, press independence and challenge myths and populism**. According to the March 2018 Eurobarometer on fake news and online disinformation, 85% of the citizens in the EU perceive fake news as a problem in their country, 83% perceive it as a problem for democracy in general, and 73% are concerned about disinformation online during pre-election periods. The revelation that 50 million people had their Facebook profiles harvested by data firm Cambridge Analytica so it could target them with political ads is a massive blow to the social network. Fundamental questions arise about Facebook's approach to data protection and disclosure. Can social networks adequately secure our most personal data? And if that data is misused, is our democracy still safe? Do we need a voters protection legislation as we have in place for consumers? There is an urgent necessity of a strategy for sustainable and independent media in the whole European continent. The EU and governments of the member states should support quality journalism on the one hand and challenge myths and populism on the other. In our European societies, in which citizens have not many direct experiences with politics, mass media and more and more social media are the most important channels for the creation of a public sphere and a public opinion.
- **Focus on what matters to the people**. Traditional branding is based on the idea of what differentiates a company from the competition. A brand grows by promoting itself as different and by isolating itself from others. Apple, for example, took that quite literally with the *Think different* campaign to great success. However, people are comfortable on the internet with the idea that everything is interconnected. So what distinguishes brands becomes less important than what brings things and people together. It does not really matter if your iPhone can talk to your Tesla, or if you can read articles from different sources in one place, like on Facebook. The brand that screams the loudest no longer receives the most of the attention. It is the one that offers something genuinely useful that does.
- **Communicate more about the EU's role in the world**. This is an effective way to involve the citizens of Europe themselves. However, more resources need to be allocated to achieve this. The European institutions should also recognise that there is an external aspect which is very important. It is the role of the Union in the world. Communicating about that aspect will reinforce internal communication, inside the EU, as well. There is a tendency towards myopia in the field of external communication that is not in Europe's own best interests. The EU fails to deliver when it comes to communication at a global level. For example, while the rest of the world was trying to make sense of the euro crisis, the bulk of the EU's communication budget was spent on the member states.

  Not communicating is the worst you can do. The president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker said that he regrets not intervening in the Brexit referendum and the EU could have "destroyed the lies" that led to Britain voting to leave the EU. Speaking at a press conference in May 2019 Juncker said that David Cameron, UK's prime minister at the time, asked him not to interfere in the referendum campaign. It was a mistake to be silent at such a crucial moment, added the Commission president. Silence is the worst strategy you can have in a time of crisis. If you don't communicate your positions in a clear way, you are the looser.

Europe needs to challenge the myths that surround the block by presenting stories that answer citizens' concerns. The EU needs a real communication revolution if it wants to highlight its achievements and its added value. However, branding, PR or communication cannot work properly if not backed by real reforms and political will. All communication strategies start with policy, they start with performance, they start with action. Most of the problems of the EU, including Euroskepticism and populism, can be tackled if the Union itself begins to change, perform better and is seen to be doing so by EU citizens.

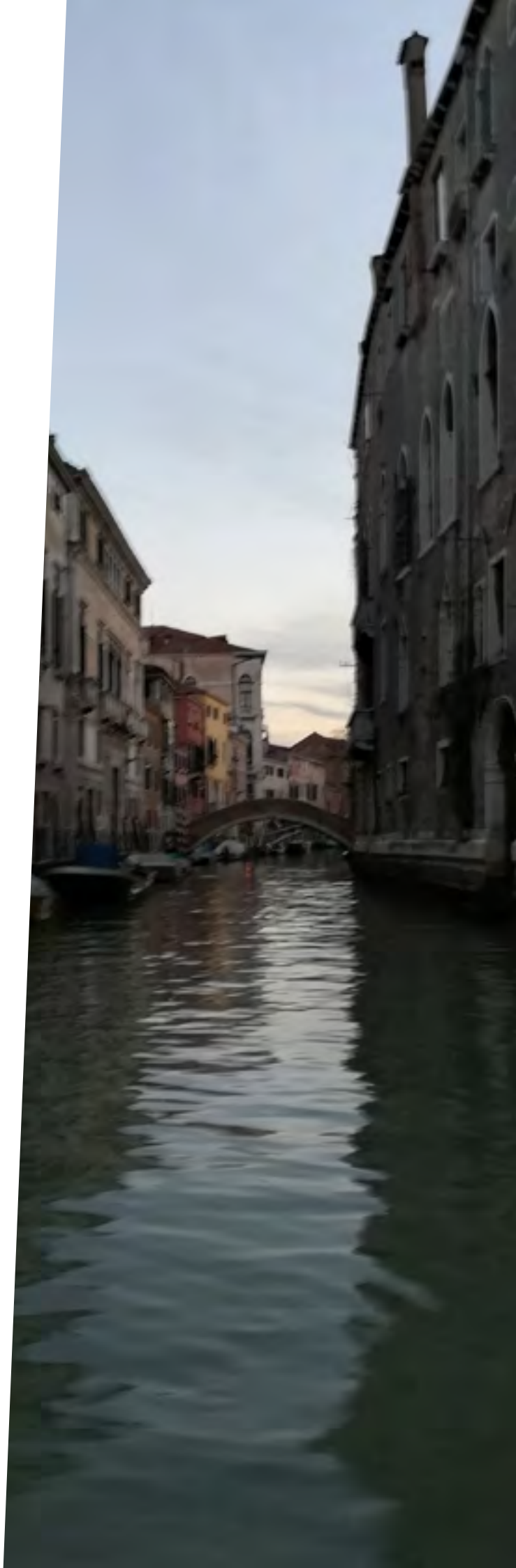
Crisis communications, nation branding, public communication, PR: the coronavirus crisis is an example of how not to do it. Governments and institutions need to constantly reinforce public trust and enhance their reputation via their communications on how they are successfully managing the rising complications of this global crisis. There's a lot to learn from crisis communication best practices, but there is also a lot that we can learn from seeing organisations doing it wrong. Analysing their mistakes can help us avoid making similar ones.

The founding fathers of the Union shared the same desire for the pacification of Europe, not via a balance of power, as was the case after the Vienna Congress in 1815, but via the reconciliation and the integration of European nations. They wanted a strong, united and prosperous Europe.

Despite the slow unification process, we experienced the last seven decades in Europe, divisions are widening even more lately because of COVID-19. On the other hand, as long as humanity, as a whole undergoes the same traumatic experiences repeatedly, there will be, gradually, a larger sense of unity. However, this will be a slower process than the rise of nationalism.

I strongly believe that the European Union allow us to preserve our welfare-state model of society, our liberal democracies and the diversity of our national cultures. By joining forces and working together we can find workable solutions to many issues. A politically unified Europe is the best remedy against the rise of poverty, alt-right, intolerance and racism.

Even after losing Britain, the EU remains one of the main players on the planet despite its very slow decision process. If we want to play an important role and have a kind of influence on the international political agenda and the solution of global problems, we must keep our forces together. Abandoning European unification would be equal to quitting the world stage for good.



Combining Media Development and Media and Information literacy (MIL) in the Western Balkans

By Klaus Dahmann

Media have become an extremely complex topic, especially for young people. At a very early age, they easily access a great variety of media content, anywhere and at any time. Many of them even start to create and distribute content themselves. How to help them understand and use media, as well as how to develop critical thinking as recipients and responsibility as creators? Viral problems of the digital age – such as disinformation, false and fake news – would bother us much less, if citizens did not take any information for granted, and instead critically approached and tried to verify them. Therefore, Media & Information Literacy (MIL) is a fundamental skill to be taught, and even more important in societies that are still on their way to modernize education systems and consolidate democracy.

Professional media nowadays face big challenges. Since everybody can access and create media content (almost) for free, media makers need to point out why high-quality journalism is essential more than ever. They struggle to stay relevant and play a crucial role in society, especially in transition countries with small audiences.

In this regard, DW Akademie's current project "Young Media" for Serbia and the Western Balkans combines traditional media development and MIL. On the one hand, we cooperate with media to enhance and modernize their content for young audiences. We encourage journalists not only to address their target group adequately but also to integrate young people in the production of content. On the other hand, we work with young people, offering journalistic and technical skills, as well as the opportunity to evaluate media content, give feedback and write complaints to Press Councils, if necessary. Furthermore, we cooperate with media associations, youth NGO's and social media influencers, building training capacities and expertise.

Focusing on Ownership and Sustainability

The media markets in the Western Balkan countries are oversaturated. There are too many media platforms for too small audiences fighting for quite small advertising budgets. Most of the media outlets would have to shut down within a few weeks or months without institutional and project funding. As the direct revenues from the consumers are low, producing unique, high-quality content, in most cases, does not guarantee consistent income. Therefore, we see that media pluralism in these countries is not automatically equivalent to diversity: One group of media tends to political PR, in order to keep doors open for domestic project funding. Second competes by sensationalism and clickbaity content to attract advertisers with high audience ratings, but often violating the Press Code and human rights. The third group sticks to ethic standards, critical reporting, and, in several cases, investigative and data-driven journalism, works under tough circumstances and tries to access international donorships.

Meanwhile, international media assistance rarely means media *development* or *innovation capacity building*. Many programs lack the transfer of knowledge and expertise to modernize and innovate content as well as guidance to open up new business models, audience development and future perspectives. When offered, training programs for journalists could deliver significantly higher impact, if development concepts for their media would accompany them. Fortunately, we happen to see some change of mindset on the donors' side of the table.[1]

As of 2017, DW Akademie's media development project for Serbia and the Western Balkans has given special emphasis to two crucial aspects: *ownership* and *sustainability*. We select media who are, with or without us, highly committed to focusing on young target groups and able to identify their needs. They have to bring forward their *own* ideas and vision, providing all the resources needed to implement the project, especially the coverage of running costs. Once these preconditions are fulfilled, DW Akademie offers individual and in-house consultancy, training and mentorship. Experience shows that initial one-time investments are affordable and can be covered, either by the media themselves or by accessing external sources (sponsors, etc.).

Through our project, media cope with the most challenging part of their potential audience: The generation of *digital natives* scarcely ever buys print media or watches news on TV, but continuously uses social media on mobile devices to communicate and "stay tuned." In recent decades, most traditional media in the Western Balkans have either deliberately neglected children, teenagers and students or offered content based on what they believe youngsters *should* know, but not what they *would like to*. In the Western world, many media makers see young audiences as a kind of *Litmus test*: Once you discover how to reach children and teenagers, you'll become a relevant source of information for future generations. And the only way to reach that goal is continuously concentrating on innovation and digitization, content development combined with audience research and new business models. All of these elements lead to *sustainable* media development.

1 See the recent EU TACSO 3's Consultation Paper "Sustainability of Professional Journalism in the Media Business Environment of the Western Balkans".

Embedding Media & Information Literacy into Media Development

MIL is not a topic to be learned or taught like math. Teachers do transfer knowledge, but they, even more, train a set of skills and critical thinking. Learners discover things on their own. They analyze, reflect and discuss their thoughts and findings with others. Indeed, the most attractive (and most common) starting point is to *create* some media content, maybe a Facebook post, an Instagram story, YouTube or Tik Tok video. Then you compare, find rules and regulations, explore the impact, discuss ethical questions, draw conclusions – and that's it, in many cases.

DW Akademie's project "Young Media" goes a step further: MIL workshops are systematically linked to *real media production*. Training programs for young people are followed by short-time internships in media or even settled in the context of media development.

A best-practice example is the journalistic portal "Youth Vibes" for teens. Two 16-years-old participants of a MIL training and internships in the investigative outlet „Južne vesti" in Niš (South Serbia), have underlined: „There is hardly anything to be found in media nowadays, that interests people of our age." That is why they gathered some 20 teenagers from their hometown and found a new online portal. DW Akademie has supported them by consulting and training on journalistic skills, photography, video production and editorial workflows, as well as ethics and legal issues. A professional journalist has mentored them continuously for more than a year, until they were able to work independently.

Another best-practice example is the YouTube channel "Hexatorm" run by the Montenegrin public service - RTCG. In an open call, six teenagers were selected and trained in YouTube video production by DW Akademie and mentored by experienced RTCG's journalists. The teenagers are the creative part, while the journalists take editorial responsibility and offer technical support. Their sometimes entertaining, sometimes educational and critical videos are regularly published on the "Hexatorm" channel. Even one of the young YouTubers recently became one of the most popular Tik-Tokers in Montenegro.

Holistic Approach

DW Akademie's activities involve media, media organizations, National Youth Councils and other NGO's as well as social media activists and young people, bringing them together with benefits for each of them. Networking and cooperation, even on a regional level, make them join forces. The results are encouraging. The young news outlet "Fakulteti" from Skopje created "Bibi," the hero of an educational cartoon for pre-school children, becoming one of the most popular merchandising brands in North Macedonia. A group of proficient YouTubers spoke against hate speech and cyberbullying on social media, producing two video clips with more than 2.7 Million views each. In 2019, the Serbian weekly "Vreme" launched the young portal "Vugl," one of the most successful start-up media outlets in the region. In other words, we have witnessed that more and more media start to develop youth-friendly content.

From our experience, development impact in the media sector does not necessarily imply high budgets, though, of course, necessary running costs have to be covered and investments in equipment have to be made. Nevertheless, results primarily depend on a *holistic approach*, individual consultancy, capacity building and mentoring, based on the principles of ownership and sustainability. If more media assistance programs were focused on digitization, innovation and new business models, and if the *cooperation* between donors, media development organizations and media in the region was closer, we would multiply the impact.



KLAUS DAHMANN, Country Manager Serbia & Western Balkans, Deutsche Welle. Klaus Dahmann studied Slavic Studies and has been working as a journalist and media trainer at Deutsche Welle for 20 years. He has been coordinating the work of the DW Akademie in Serbia and the Western Balkans since 2016.

Press Freedom and Europe: Wolves, vultures, trolls… plus knights and journalists[1]

By Christophe Leclercq[2]

In this opinion piece, EURACTIV founder Christophe Leclercq creatively illustrates how characters could cooperate to avoid an EU media crisis.

The media and the EU face similar dangers: Dark forces, impoverishment, and slow decisions. Press Freedom Day was on May 3rd, Europe Day on May 9th, and a key Council of Ministers for Culture and Media meeting takes place on May 19th.

Christophe Leclercq, who established Fondation EURACTIV and the EURACTIV media network, creatively illustrates how characters could cooperate to avoid the worst.

Winter has come. The plague has spread. Kinglets were caught unprepared. Merchants have stopped trading. Villagers have taken refuge at home. Within closed borders, rumors abound. Sorcerers offer wonder potions. **Trolls** spread confusion and curses. There are premature talks about the continent's breakup.

Each town has its **minstrels** and **messengers**, spreading folklore and news. They depend on open cities, exchanging enlightenment for food. Hence, some power-hungry Lords use the epidemic to clamp down on free thinking.

Two packs of **wolves**, from far afield, encircle villages in ever smarter ways. Trolls join forces with them. Herds of sheep are not enough: the beasts go for human brains and gobble up messengers who cross boundaries.

Daring messengers seek to reestablish freedom and shed light in the darkness. But, like watchdogs for the dark lords, **vultures** are perched on forest edges: ready to pounce in the wake of wolves.

Spring is coming: freedom

Finally alert to the dangers of these predators, messengers regroup, their corporations stop infighting. They get torches to fight the beasts, and seek to reestablish links. In May, for St Schuman, as the sun warms up before pentecost, couriers speak in tongues and start reaching out to their companions. They seek merchants to pay for the voyage, and villagers to nourish them on the way. Encouraged **by councillors, white knights** from all lands protect them.

Europe's **wise kings** send emissaries to meet white knights in Bruocsella. They issue an edict to keep wolves, vultures and trolls at bay. Europe's treasury is small, but given the starvation and need to inform the people, messengers get passports and some stipends.

Meanwhile, learned physicians find cures for the plague. Surviving messengers are trusted by the people, and spread the good news. There is no holy grail: as each and everyone is well informed and makes major efforts, the plague comes under control. Freedom is re-established..

The messengers herald a new social and environmental conscience. In the cities, culture thrives, good values are respected, peace reigns. Europe is strengthened by common values, a **renaissance** is underway.

Back to policies for the media sector's health

MEPs have written[3] about the essential role of the press, and the need to help its survival. Journalists[4] have elaborated wider demands. Stakeholders are encouraged by signals given but some warn about mere statements of intent[5].

Fittingly, this week highlighting both Press Freedom and Europe ushers into decisive times. The Culture Committee of the European Parliament exchanges on Monday, May 4th with Commissioners Breton and Gabriel. The Commission could specify its proposals in more detail at its Wednesday meeting. On May 19th, meeting as Council, Ministers for culture and media could welcome and emulate at national level a **Coronavirus Plan for the Media**.

You could read the fable above again, replacing minstrels with culture, messengers with journalists, councillors with parliamentarians, corporations with media associations and networks, white knights with Commissioners and Ministers. Packs of wolves stand for dominant platforms, and vultures for oligarchs.

You do not want to be a sheep, then are you a helpful villager or merchant? Or perhaps a white knight or lady?

1 https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/opinion/press-freedom-and-europe-wolves-vultures-trolls-plus-knights-and-journalists/

2 All opinions in this column reflect the views of the author, not of EURACTIV. COM Ltd. 04-05-2020 (updated: 07-05-2020).

3 https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/opinion/eu-leaders-must-stand-up-to-protect-the-news-media-sector/

4 https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2020/04/22/journalists-unions-urge-covid-19-recovery-plans-to-sustain-the-media-sector-now-and-into-the-future/

5 https://fondationeuractiv.eu/saving-the-media-sector-a-short-window-of-opportunity-newsletter

Key steps out of dark ages, and clear attributions

The main roles are local and national, but let's look at the EU level too:

- Commissioner Thierry **Breton** is well placed for the media's industrial strategy, starting with emergency funding. He could also deliver the Media Action Plan this year, as promised.
- Commissioner Mariya **Gabriel** knows the media portfolio, and has two key funding levers: skills and innovation. She could help create a NEWS programme under 'Creative Europe'.
- EVP Margrethe **Vestager** leads the promising digital agenda, pointing to regulation of platforms, more 'systemic' than ever. To rebalance the ecosystem, she could refuse to delay policy-making, and use competition powers now.
- VP Vera **Jourova** stands for fundamental rights, the *raison d'être* of the media. She chairs the Project Group of Commissioners for media[6], including the above; it met only once since its set-up six months ago.

As for Commission President **von der Leyen**, she declared democracy one of only six priorities for her mandate. She could still answer the questions put six weeks ago by 28 MEPs and stakeholders[7]:

"Who is in charge?" "Where is the Coronavirus media action plan?".

Related links:

- 'Press freedom Index in the time of Coronavirus'[8] (Reporters sans Frontières)
- Programmes for Europe's Day, May 9 2020[9] (EU institutions)
- "Difference Day, May 3rd 2020"[10] (VUB & ULB: Brussels universities)
- "Journalism emergency funds around the world"[11] (WAN-IFRA, world association of newspapers)
- 'Denmark provides a survival kit for media outlets'[12] (European Center for Press and Media Freedom)



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https://www.euractiv.com/authors/christophe-leclercq/

6 https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/opinion/cooperation-of-four-key-commissioners-needed-for-healthy-media-democracy/

7 https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/opinion/health-trust-and-journalism-a-coronavirus-plan-for-the-media/

8 https://rsf.org/en/news/index-time-coronavirus

9 https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day_en

10 https://www.differenceday.com/

11 https://blog.wan-ifra.org/2020/04/16/journalism-emergency-funds-around-the-world

12 https://www.ecpmf.eu/covid19-and-world-press-freedom-day-denmark-provides-a-survival-kit-for-media-outlets/

Open Letter - Health, trust and journalism: a Coronavirus Plan for the Media[1]

By Christophe Leclercq

In this Open Letter to the President of the EU Commission, media stakeholders and experts, in a personal capacity, along with MEPs and former MEPs ask for the Commission to support trust in public action, and to help sustain the media in this testing time.

The current Coronavirus pandemic impacts our democracy infrastructure. Like banks during the financial crisis, will the media be saved? For this, institutions and governments should take short term actions, while continuing to work on medium term policy-making.

In this Open Letter to the President of the EU Commission, media stakeholders and experts, in a personal capacity, along with MEPs and former MEPs ask for the Commission to support trust in public action, and to help sustain the media in this testing time.

Dear Commission President von der Leyen,

As people are confined at home and worried, media readership is booming. Parliaments and civil society organisations are affected too: the media remains a pillar of democracy, and trust – as long as it can function properly. Apart from public broadcasting, news reporting is a success done on a shoestring: journalists do an amazing job, but risk both their health and their jobs.

Don't take the media sector for granted

The media sector was already fragile, due to the pace of technological change and the move of most advertising to US platforms. As we enter a recession, most of the remaining **ad revenues are on hold**. And as people can't meet, the press now loses its main profitable business: **events**.

Moreover, newspaper distribution is suspended in some places. If independent media vanish, fake news[2] will not be countered, making coronavirus an 'infodemic'.[3] Public broadcasters play a major role, but private sector voices are needed, especially in times of reduced liberties. The health crisis could become a major confidence crisis, feeding all fears, radical nationalism and worse.

To avoid that, politicians need to think of who pays for the coverage. To help the media survive, and adapt, media sector strategies are needed, both from the public and private sector. The EU cannot do it alone – Member States and philanthropy have a key role, the Unions is preparing a better policy frame, and should now lead by example.

1 25-03-2020 (updated: 02-04-2020).

2 https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-kremlin-and-disinformation-about-coronavirus/

3 https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30461-X/fulltext

Medium-term strategy: policies for the ecosystem

Rebalancing the ecosystem platforms/advertising/media has notably been left behind in the EU's Digital Strategy[4]. It has horizontal dimensions like the Digital Services Act, and potentially some moves around journalism.

Medium-term policy actions (like regulating platforms[5] and like a sector strategy for the media sector) are necessary. We are not addressing them in this Open Letter: they will come along too late for what is required now.

EU officials talk proudly of draft Competition guidelines allowing State Aid[6] during the health crisis, of course applying to media like all sectors. In the case of the media sector, tax deferments and loans are not enough, only postponing the cash problems.

President von der Leyen: allowing straight aid is OK, encouraging others is good, but leading by example would be even better...

Short-term: support to overcome the current crisis

The media needs to take some costs out, gain replacement revenues, and boost innovation. As part of the already sketched **economic recovery plan**, here are some examples:

- **Boost media literacy**: On top of small education projects, financing free vouchers for pupils and students to purchase media subscriptions.
- **Reimburse social security costs for bona fide journalists** (not just postponing payments): This is up to Member States and social partners[7], but the EU can encourage it. One could also ease up rules, especially for non-employee freelancers[8].
- **Recommend media funds to support quality news and fight disinformation**: To be set-up where they do not exist yet. France's aides à la presse, for example, use objective criteria and respect media independence. At the EU level, have an independent media board assess open calls on fighting disinformation, related to coronavirus or future major issues.
- **Spend on advertising**: Advertising is a fast and respectful way to feed the media, channeling money through objective channels and contracts. Unlike some subsidies, it does not interfere with editorial freedom. Massive public information campaigns (not Google ads) would sustain public trust

4 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-shaping-europes-digital-future-feb2020_en_4.pdf

5 https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/opinion/democracy-and-digital-trusted-media-and-platform-regulation/

6 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_479

7 https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2020/03/23/covid-19-it-is-time-to-guarantee-social-security-for-all/

8 https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/l-ajp-tres-preoccupee-par-une-eventuelle-fermeture-totale-des-librairies-et-points-presse/article-belga-1265707.html?cookie_check=1584539404

in politics, and journalism too. In Europe, Newspaper advertising amounts to around 12 billion euros a year[9]. Some order of magnitude: if one assumes losing one third this year, the shortfall would be 4 billion euros; the Commission and the Parliament could spend half of it, 2 billion euros, and encourage governments to spend as much. At EU level, that money could come from re-allocations, while at national level, it could be part of the economic recovery plan already decided.

- **Trust events to media companies**: There is a good trend to consult the public widely, online and at physical events. Participative democracy will be in demand after the frustrating lock-downs, and for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Public institutions tend to pay officials or consultancies to do this. Media are good organisers and independent moderators: they should be a systematic part of the procurement 'tool box'.
- **Provide hope for later: Innovation**. The goal is not a subsidized sector, but to go back to modernizing it, for sustainability. Earmarking for media could be greater under the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Under the R&D programme Horizon Europe, Creative Europe currently earmarks 61 million for journalism: far too little.
- **Strengthen media's Capital**: equity from InvestEU[10] and from private 'socially responsible investors' should be boosted.

Commission President, last July you declared Democracy – including media freedom – one of your six priorities. How much is it worth to safeguard the democracy infrastructure? It will certainly cost less than the €1.5 trillion bailout of the financial infrastructure after 2008.

Preserving the media sector would also get a very small figure compared to Europe's budgets (total EU GDP 2019: 18 trillions €, total EU budget set for 2020 before the crisis: €169 billion, so each billion is only 0.6 % of the EU budget). In fact, total crisis media funding, mostly a 'one off', would be less than the special levy on platforms, currently pitched at around €5 billion per year.

Before turning to political next steps, let us consider the private sector, notably foundations:

- **Greater commitment by philanthropy**: It needs to step up and understand that without functioning media, civil society collapses. Efforts such as the Journalism Funders Forum are urgent and much needed. The philanthropic sector can complement EU and government actions by filling the gaps that neither the public nor the private sector could cover fast. It should address market failures for public interest journalism, by catalysing innovation, subsidising risk, and by working with civil society to deliver journalism of value.

Actions required now: processes exist

Two related EU Actions Plans are currently foreseen for this Autumn: one on **Democracy** and one on **Media**. The democracy agenda is led by Vice-President Jourova, and her plan should naturally include some media aspects, such as media freedom, pluralism, and countering disinformation with quality journalism.

A more 'industrial' **Media Action Plan** was promised by Commissioner Breton during his parliamentary hearing, as an 'Action Plan for media and broadcasting'. However, certainly due to many pressing demands, priorities seem to go 'on' and 'off'.

That plan did not feature in the Commission work programme that you, Commission President, presented for 2020. Then the Digital strategy led by Executive Vice-President Vestager mentioned it, rightly. Then the New EU Industrial Strategy[11] by Commissioner Breton again left it out, although it clearly is a sector strategy.

We should accelerate greatly. Not merging the two actions plans Democracy and Media, which could make things slow and wordy. Anticipating in April a draft Media Action Plan may be difficult too: industry and competitiveness policies are connected to the overall digital discussions.

As for the Democracy Action Plan, it could come faster and expand on urgent issues, plus the economic prerequisites for healthy journalism. In addition, to prioritise funding for urgent actions, the Commission could issue very soon a draft '**Coronavirus Media Plan**'. This would list what it can do itself and offer to the Council how to use the Coronavirus recovery plan in this area.

Not gathering in Strasbourg, MEPs understand media needs so far: some are co-signing this call, many others would be supportive. As for the Executive, it has the right format in

9 https://www.statista.com/statistics/434708/newspaper-advertising-expenditure-in-the-eu/

10 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/jobs-growth-and-investment/investment-plan-europe-juncker-plan/whats-next-investeu-programme-2021-2027_en

11 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-eu-industrial-strategy-march-2020_en.pdf

principle: the Media Project Group of Commissioners. Chaired by Vice-President Jourová, this group notably gathers the power to regulate digital (EVP Vestager), industrial strategy (Commissioner Breton), plus funding innovation and skills (Commissioner Gabriel). These policies are what the media sector needs from the EU, urgently.

President von der Leyen, you have a broader crisis on your hands, do you need to be involved here? Not directly – despite being in charge of EU Communication – if your Commissioners now converge much faster. Building on your initial commitments, you need to ask them just two questions: 'where is our media action plan?', and 'who is in charge'?



List of co-signatories:

MEPs

- Alex Agius Saliba (Socialist & Democrats, S&D)
- Carmen Avram (Socialist & Democrats, S&D)
- Katalin Cseh (Renew Europe)
- Anna-Júlia Donáth (Renew Europe)
- Ivo Hristov (Socialist & Democrats, S&D)
- Danuta Hübner (European People's Party, EPP)
- Radan Kanev (European People's Party, EPP)
- Morten Løkkegaard (Renew Europe)
- Dace Melbarde (European Conservative and Reformists, ECR)
- Karen Melchior (Renew Europe)
- Martina Michels (GUE/NGL)
- Alexandra Geese (Greens/EFA)
- Stelios Kouloglou (GUE/NGL)

Former MEPs

- Rebecca Harms (Greens/EFA)
- Jens Rohde (ALDE)
- Helga Trüpel (Greens/EFA)

11 Stakeholders and media experts

- Gabriele Capolino, Publisher – Class Editori (Italy)
- Miguel Castro, Global Partnerships – Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Luciano Morganti, Professor – Media Department, VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
- Pier Luigi Parcu, Director – Centre for Media Pluralism & Media Freedom, European University Institute
- Pedro Ortun, former Director – European Commission
- Christian Rainer, Publisher – Profil (Austria)
- Francesca Ratti, Co-President – CIVICO Europe
- Slobodan Sibinčič, Secretary General – European Business Press
- Marc Sundermann, Lawyer (former EU representative – Bertelsmann)
- Adam Thomas, Director – European Journalism Centre
- Ramon Imielski (Deputy Editor-in-chief – Gazeta Wyborcza)
- Christophe Leclercq, Executive Chair – Fondation EURACTIV, founder@euractiv.com & @FondEURACTIV (Further contacts: @LeclercqEU, #MediaActionPlan.)

Lettre ouverte à M. Charles Michel, Président du Conseil européen

Par Virgilio Dastoli

MOVIMENTO EUROPEO
CONSIGLIO ITALIANO

IL PRESIDENTE

Sachez oser, M. Michel !

Lettre ouverte à M. Charles Michel, Président du Conseil Européen

Monsieur le Président du Conseil européen,

l'Union européenne est à nouveau à une **croisée de chemins**.

Elle pourrait prendre la direction qui la mènerait vers sa **dissolution progressive** si l'ensemble de ses institutions décident de mettre en péril la réalisation de ses objectifs tels qui sont décrits par l'article 3 du Traité sur l'Union européenne.

Ou elle pourrait prendre la direction qui lui avait été indiquée il y a 70 ans par la Déclaration Schuman et qui devrait la conduire à réaliser sa **finalité fédérale**.

Vous avez invité vos collègues à Bruxelles le 20 février pour un Sommet extraordinaire consacré au Cadre Financier Pluriannuel en leur demandant de faire preuve de "*bon sens, détermination et esprit de compromis*".

Vous avez bien conscience du fait que "***le Conseil européen n'exerce pas de fonction législative***" et que sa mission est "*de donner à l'Union européenne les impulsions nécessaires à son développement*" en vertu du principe de la **coopération loyale**.

Vous savez aussi que le Conseil européen peut autoriser le Conseil à statuer sur le Cadre Financier Pluriannuel à la majorité qualifiée **APRÉS APPROBATION DU PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN** et que le Traité s'exprime pour une période de cinq ans et pour un budget **INTÉGRALEMENT FINANCE PAR DES RESSOURCES PROPRES**.

Représentant une large majorité de députés européens et donc des citoyens qui les ont élus, le Président du Parlement Européen David Maria Sassoli ainsi que les chefs des groupes PPE, S&D, Renew et Verts vous ont notifié la décision de ne pas donner leur approbation à un Cadre Financier Pluriannuel n'étant pas à la hauteur des ambitions de l'Union européenne, une formule qui avait été adoptée par les Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement – y compris par Vous en tant que Premier Ministre Belge – dans le Sommet de Sibiu le 9 mai 2019.

Nous vous invitons à prendre au sérieux cette notification puisqu'elle vient de la seule institution européenne ayant une légitimité démocratique transnationale.

Nous vous suggérons de soumettre au Sommet une proposition de conclusions **demandant à la Commission de présenter dans les plus brefs délais et au plus tard à la veille du Conseil européen des 26 et 27 mars un nouveau projet de Cadre Financier Pluriannuel** respectant les priorités politiques du programme qui a conduit au vote de confiance du Parlement européen sur l'ensemble du collège le 27 novembre 2019.

Nous vous suggérons de proposer à vos collègues d'adopter par consensus des orientations sur quatre points fondamentaux:

- un **Cadre Financier Pluriannuel fondé sur une période de cinq ans,** afin de respecter le principe démocratique qui engage une seule législature et la logique économique d'une planification coordonnée et prévisible des dépenses et des programmes dont elles sont issues;

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IL PRESIDENTE

- des budgets annuels financés – graduellement mais, à la fin de la période quinquennale, intégralement - par des **ressources propres** comme il a été proposé par le Groupe de Haut Niveau présidé par Mario Monti et ceci afin de donner une capacité fiscale autonome à l'Union européenne, la libérer du débat stérile et faussé sur les contributions nettes des Etats membres et ouvrir la voie à des investissements européens dans les domaines fondés sur des objectifs communs;
- l'association du Parlement européen, en tant que partner sur un pied d'égalité avec le Conseil et pas comme organe consultatif, aux décisions sur les ressources propres afin de respecter le principe "***no taxation without representation***";
- la convocation d'une **conférence interparlementaire**, parallèle à la Conférence européenne sur l'avenir de l'Europe, ayant la mission de discuter du partage entre l'Union et les **États** membres et pour une période de dix ans (5+5) des responsabilités relatives à la réalisation des actions communes et des charges financières qui en résultent.

Agissant ainsi, vous éviterez de faire tomber l'Union européenne dans une énième crise institutionnelle et vous montrerez votre détermination à prendre le chemin de la **relance nécessaire et urgente** dont la demande a été exprimée par la grande majorité des citoyens et des citoyennes lors des élections européennes en mai 2019.

Nous attendons de votre part et avec confiance un signal de *leadership* européen, de capacité d'impulsion et de direction de l'Union européenne.

Pier Virgilio Dastoli
Président

Rome, le 17 février 2020



PIER VIRGILIO DASTOLI is President of the Association of Communicators of Italian Public Administration and President of the Italian Council of the European Movement, member of the Spinelli Group. Pier Virgilio was assistant of Altiero Spinelli in the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the European Parliament from 1977-1986, founder and spokesman of the Spinelli Committee for the United States of Europe, Secretary General of the International European Movement from 1995-2001, and Director of the European Commission Representation in Italy from 2003-2009. He is author of numerous articles and essays on Europe.

Riscoprire valori e garantire buona informazione e comunicazione

Di Virgilio Dastoli

"*In questo momento di difficoltà la gente ha riscoperto il valore della buona informazione*" Andrea Martella, sottosegretario all'informazione

Durante i sessanta giorni che sono trascorsi da quando l'Italia è stata colpita - il 24 gennaio 2020 – dai primi due casi di COVID19, l'opinione pubblica e le istituzioni hanno scoperto l'esistenza di eccellenze in settori importanti della nostra società insieme alla necessità di reinventare le regole del vivere comune salvaguardando i principi della democrazia e dello stato di diritto e di rendere più efficiente e più moderna la nostra pubblica amministrazione anche attraverso una sua più estesa digitalizzazione.

Al centro dell'attenzione dei media e dei giornali vi è stata l'informazione fornita da scienziati, medici e operatori del settore sanitario.

Nella lotta al virus l'Italia si è distinta con misure di estremo rigore, decise dalle autorità di governo in collaborazione con i poteri locali e regionali e i partner sociali, che sono diventate un modello per l'intera Europa.

Partendo da questo modello ci saremmo attesi un atto di responsabilità dei governi europei per attribuire alla Commissione europea i poteri di una "catena di comando" per gestire il coordinamento e le azioni comuni applicando quelle norme del Trattato che danno all'Unione la competenza di agire per la sicurezza nel settore della salute (art. 168 TFUE), per coordinare la cooperazione fra gli Stati in materia di protezione civile (art. 196 TFUE) e per dare adeguata esecuzione alla clausola di solidarietà (art. 222 TFUE).

Ci saremmo anche attesi una comunicazione pubblica omogenea europea rivolta a tutte le cittadine e i cittadini europei per informare sulle ragioni e sugli effetti di una pandemia simmetrica sottolineando quel che può fare e deve fare l'Unione europea per garantire il bene pubblico della salute e sfruttando reti di collaborazione e di coordinamento fra le amministrazioni nazionali come il CLUB DI VENEZIA, fondato nel 1986 da Stefano Rolando, come luogo di incontro permanente fra i responsabili dell'informazione dei governi nazionali e delle istituzioni europee.

Il rispetto, individuale e collettivo, di queste misure è stato il frutto contestuale di un impegno civico largamente diffuso in tutto il paese e dell'attività di comunicazione pubblica, altamente professionale, degli operatori dell'informazione nelle amministrazioni locali, regionali e nazionali che hanno tradotto – lontano dai riflettori dei media ma con una abnegazione pari a quella degli operatori sanitari – le decisioni legislative in una nuova narrazione e in un rapporto costante con i cittadini.

Di fronte agli effetti di un'emergenza inattesa, i comunicatori pubblici e istituzionali sono stati chiamati ad innovare il loro linguaggio di fronte alle nuove necessità, a interpretare dei testi giuridici di immediata applicazione, a gestire il numero crescente di domande della pubblica opinione, a controllare la buona applicazione delle decisioni a tutti i livelli, a dialogare costantemente con i vari protagonisti della vita civile e ad agire con flessibilità.

Trascorsa la fase dell'emergenza, verrà il momento di riflettere sul ruolo esercitato dagli operatori della comunicazione pubblica e tradurre l'esperienza di questa crisi in una accentuata valorizzazione della loro professionalità offrendo a questo settore della funzione pubblica gli strumenti digitali per un'erogazione più efficace dei servizi di informazione.

In questo quadro sarà urgente e necessario applicare pienamente la Legge 150 del 7 giugno 2000 che disciplina le attività di informazione e di comunicazione delle pubbliche amministrazioni garantendo una precisa distinzione fra l'informazione svolta dagli uffici stampa e dai giornalisti e la comunicazione pubblica garantita dalle pubbliche amministrazioni a livello locale, nazionale e regionale con particolare riferimento al settore della salute e dell'ambiente. In questo quadro si colloca l'opportuna iniziativa del ministero della funzione pubblica per sfruttare le possibilità offerte dalla Legge 150 e aggiornarle a venti anni dalla sua entrata in vigore.

Poiché quest'anno molti responsabili della comunicazione pubblica andranno in pensione bisognerà sfruttare questa occasione per innestare nelle pubbliche amministrazioni linfa vitale rafforzando le attività di formazione che vengono svolte da anni da COMPUBBLICA[1] e che sono state rilanciate ora attraverso dei webinar aperti all'esterno della associazione.

1 www.compubblica.it

Rediscovering values and ensuring good information and communication

By Virgilio Dastoli

"*In these difficult times, people have rediscovered the value of good information*", says Andrea Martella, Undersecretary for Information.

During the first sixty days since Italy was hit by the first two cases of COVID19 (on January 24, 2020) - public opinion and institutions discovered excellence in important sectors of our society, together with the need to re-invent the rules of common living by safeguarding the principles of democracy and the rule of law, and to make our public administration more efficient and more modern, also through a more extensive digitalization.

The attention of media and newspapers was drawn to the information provided by scientists, doctors and healthcare professionals.

In the fight against the virus, Italy distinguished itself by enforcing extremely rigorous measures, adopted by the government authorities in collaboration with local and regional authorities as well as social partners. Measures which have become a model for the whole Europe.

Starting from this model, we would have expected an act of responsibility on behalf of the European governments to confer to the European Commission the powers of a "chain of command", to manage coordination and common actions by applying those Treaty rules that give the Union the competence to act for safety in the public health sector (art. 168 TFEU), to coordinate cooperation between States in the field of civil protection (art. 196 TFEU) and to properly implement the solidarity clause (art. 222 TFEU).

We would also have expected a homogeneous European public communication addressed to all European citizens to inform about the reasons and effects of a symmetric pandemic, highlighting what the European Union can and must do to guarantee health as a public good and exploiting collaborative and coordination networks among national administrations such as the CLUB OF VENICE, founded in 1986 by Stefano Rolando, as a permanent interactive platform for those responsible for information in national governments and European institutions.

The individual and collective respect for these measures was the contextual result of a widespread civic commitment throughout the whole country and the highly professional public communication activity carried out by information officers in local, regional and national administrations. These professionals translated ad hoc legislation into a new narrative and in a constant relationship with citizens, keeping away from the media spotlights, but with an abnegation equalling that of health workers.

Challenged by an unexpected devastating emergency, public and institutional communicators have been called to innovate their language to face new needs, to interpret immediately applicable legal texts, to manage the growing number of questions rising from the public opinion, to control the smooth implementation of decisions at all levels, to carry out a constant dialogue with the various protagonists of civic life, to act flexibly.

After the emergency phase, time will come to reflect on the role played by the public communicators and translate the experience they have earned during this crisis into an increased enrichment of their professionalism, by endowing this sector of the public function with the necessary digital tools for more effective information services.

In this context, the full application of Law 150 of 7 June 2000 which governs the information and communication activities of public administrations will be urgent and necessary; this, while maintaining a clear distinction between the information carried out by the press offices and journalists, and the public communication guaranteed by the local, national and regional public administrations, with particular reference to the health and environmental sector. In this context, the appropriate initiative of the Italian Ministry of Public Administration aims to exploit the possibilities offered by Law 150, updating them twenty years after its entry into force.

The imminent retirement of many public communication managers this year is an opportunity which should be seized in order to instil lifeblood into public administrations, in particular by strengthening those training activities that have been carried out for years by COMPUBBLICA[1], recently relaunched through webinars open to external collaborators.

1 www.compubblica.it

Les défis de l'Union européenne et de ses états membres[1]

Par Michael Malherbe[2]

Agenda-framing du « moment Hamiltonien » de l'Union européenne

L'annonce historique d'une proposition du couple franco-allemand en faveur d'un endettement mutualisé de l'UE d'un montant de 500 milliards d'euros constitue une belle occasion de décrypter les manières de raconter la construction européenne en mouvement. Quels sont les cadres narratifs et interprétatifs mobilisés autour de ce « moment Hamiltonien » de l'Union européenne ?

Agenda-framing « basique/ classique » : le moteur du couple franco-allemand

Premier cadre des narrations sur l'Europe, la renaissance des initiatives du couple franco-allemand est au cœur des récits qui réinscrivent l'avancée dans une histoire de compromis qui ont fait avancer l'UE au cours des crises.

Principal constat, cette interprétation semble davantage mobilisée en France puisqu'elle replace l'adhésion au projet européen dans la dynamique d'une projection qui grandit la France, face à un partenaire allemand qui doit se laisser convaincre, comme ce fut le cas pour la création de la monnaie commune.

Primordiale raison, ce récit ayant déjà été mobilisé pour les précédentes étapes de la construction européenne, ce cadre narratif et interprétatif se trouve disponible et compréhensible pour un vaste public disposant de peu de connaissances et d'intérêts pour la construction européenne.

La mise en récit du couple franco-allemand (expression très française qui n'est pas traduite de la même manière par le partenaire allemand) est le mode de narration le plus accessible et donc le plus usuel dans les médias, en particulier les médias audiovisuels qui ne consacrent que quelques instants à ce sujet pourtant majeur.

Agenda-framing « stato-centré » : les négociations du concert des nations européennes

Deuxième cadre de présentation de l'initiative, l'intégration de cet élément de péripétie narrative dans la mise en scène plus globale du dialogue entre les chefs d'État et de gouvernement des États-membres de l'UE. Le mouvement de la France et de l'Allemagne doit ainsi se comprendre en réponse aux positions de l'opposition constituée par les frugaux.

Force est de constater que ce cadre interprétatif nécessite de réinscrire la dernière séquence dans un plan plus long, avec davantage de « personnages » : Macron et Merkel sont ainsi en dialogue avec leur homologues des pays européens, dont seuls les plus importants, comme l'italien Conte sont à minima connus voire reconnus dans les opinions publiques européennes.

Par conséquent, ce cadre présente une lecture plus « fleurie », avec davantage d'intrigues et de tension narrative, pour un public forcément plus « averti », qui tendra à se réduire aux consommateurs d'information plus internationale et aux amateurs d'enjeux géopolitiques. Toutes les connaissances préalables relatives aux situations nationales en Europe peuvent être mobilisées pour multiplier les interprétations et les prédictions sur les issues futures.

Agenda-framing « européo-centrée » : la mutualisation du destin européen

Dernier cadre interprétatif observé autour de l'annonce de la mutualisation de dettes européennes en réponse à la crise du Coronavirus, la mobilisation non seulement de « briques » narratives nationales mais surtout de ressources symboliques liées à l'Union européenne à proprement parlé.

Ce qui distingue ce cadre narratif, c'est évidemment que la narration se fait sous un angle européen, à partir des référentiels de l'Union européenne. L'annonce se comprend comme l'approfondissement de l'unification économique, rendue indispensable après l'arrêt de la cour fédérale de Karlsruhe, dans un prolongement attendu, pensé à la suite de la quasi-fédéralisation de l'union monétaire avec la monnaie unique, l'euro et la Banque centrale européenne, la BCE.

Évidemment, cette mise en récit familière des milieux européens et simplificatrice pour la bulle bruxelloise, se voit portée par les acteurs en scène, en particulier dans les institutions nationales et européennes, qui disposent de tout le capital social pour naviguer avec aisance voire plaisance dans ce dédale où la simple annonce devient un moment charnière vers la mutualisation des souverainetés.

1 Titre de la rédaction.

2 Contributions à la plateforme en ligne https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/ - républiées avec l'accord de l'auteur.

Certains spécialistes s'essaient même à chaud à offrir une quasi-théorisation de l'événement, ce que l'expression « moment Hamiltonien » suggère puisqu'il s'agit de l'introduction de la mutualisation des dettes entre les États fédérés des États-Unis d'Amérique – un agenda-framing indisponible à la quasi-totalité des Européens, à fortiori avant l'annonce.

Au total, l'enseignement à tirer : les cadres de narration et d'interprétation, auquel le public accède, s'appuient sur des ressources symboliques et des référentiels discriminants préexistants à l'annonce. Une même annonce n'a pas le même impact.

Comment développer l'adhésion et la participation des citoyens au projet européen ?

La lecture par la professeur Nathalie Pignard-Cheynel du rapport « What media can learn from other member-driven movements » du Membership Puzzle Project[3] est très instructive pour explorer le modèle de l'adhésion et de la participation dans le cadre de l'Union européenne...

L'Union européenne doit devenir un acteur du changement

Une vision glocal, à la fois global et local doit être proposée par les institutions européennes afin de répondre aux crises et aux sentiments d'insatisfaction ou d'indifférence ; ainsi qu'à la quête de sens et d'action recherchée par les citoyens.

Une transformation de rupture quittant l'anti-modèle technocratique pour des institutions européennes pourvoyeuses d'opportunité d'action collective afin de passer du pessimisme généralisé de l'intelligence collective à l'optimisme exploitable des bonnes volontés en partant d'une recherche sincère et collective de solutions concrètes.

Une approche visant à repenser la manière de s'adresser aux citoyens, de chercher à construire des relations de long terme et de créer des communautés d'intérêts afin de réarticuler l'individuel et le collectif en visant un but commun qui transcende les intérêts en vue de favoriser l'adhésion des publics rassemblés autour de problèmes à résoudre ensemble.

L'Union européenne doit favoriser la participation des publics

Une réinvention de la participation qui doit dépasser le modèles des dialogues citoyens basiques générant plus de déception et de frustration que de réelles plus-values pour les citoyens. Les institutions européennes doivent réexaminer leur rule book définissant la façon dont on envisage la « mission » du citoyen, le « contrat social » avec les institutions et le discours de l'Union européenne.

D'une part, il s'agit de proposer une participation non élitiste, en brisant l'idée qu'il faut des compétences spécifiques pour participer au débat sur l'Europe même s'il faut prévoir des modalités innovantes d'accompagnement, de sensibilisation et d'information.

D'autre part, il convient d'imaginer une participation diversifiée et modulable en proposant une palette de modalités qui :

- Font sens par rapport au but de l'Union européenne et qui ne sont pas instrumentalisés à des fins de mise en scène ;
- Modèlent des engagements des plus passifs aux plus actifs en rompant avec la dichotomie intimidante et excluante entre « participants » et « non participants » ;
- Conduisent à réfléchir à des voies d'accès à une adhésion et une participation inclusive des moins aisés et plus exclus qui n'ont ni les compétences ni les moyens mais qui peuvent s'investir autrement.

L'Union européenne doit développer une nouvelle communication

D'abord, l'Union européenne doit acquérir de nouvelles pratiques afin d'être à l'écoute de ses publics, de leurs propos et de leur modes de vie, ce qui suppose de nouvelles manières de sonder et d'analyser les attentes dans une démarche empathique et innovante afin d'amplifier des usages existants permettant de reconnecter des citoyens défiants mais aussi de nouvelles manières d'interagir avec les communautés, de façon informelle permettant également de mieux connaître leurs capacités et domaines d'action.

3 https://fr.ejo.ch/economie-medias/adhesion-participation-engagement-publics-modeles-venus-dailleurs-inspirer-les-medias-membership-membershippuzzleproject

Ensuite, l'Union européenne doit favoriser de nouvelles compétences auprès des publics afin dans un premier temps de créer des « jumelages » entre les centres d'intérêts et les passions des citoyens d'une part et les possibilités d'engagement d'autre part via une personnalisation de la participation L'idée est que l'adhésion sera toujours renforcée si les envies et les motivations des citoyens coïncident avec ce que propose la participation. De nouveaux métiers vont apparaître afin de remplir la fonction dédiée aux liens avec les citoyens et l'engagement avec les publics.

Dans un second temps, les institutions européennes pourront proposer d'utiliser des relais au sein des communautés et de proposer des logiques de « mentorat » autour de parrainages de citoyens récents par des citoyens plus expérimentés pour les accueillir, les intégrer et les orienter.

En troisième lieu, des rôles d'ambassadorat pourraient être confiés, avec des ambassadeurs/porte-parole délégués pour disséminer les informations auprès des communautés et réguler les conversations.

L'Union européenne doit inscrire l'adhésion et la participation dans un projet viable et durable

Les institutions européennes doivent concevoir des approches agiles intégrant les connaissances et les retours des citoyens afin de favoriser une croissance à l'échelle humaine, intentionnelle et maîtrisée permettant de garantir une capacité à servir les citoyens selon le « contrat » initial sans diluer la valeur perçue et reçue.

Une telle démarche doit s'appuyer sur des outils open source de gestion et de pilotage des communautés doit viser la fidélisation, la diversité des publics, la maturité à la fois au sens de la pérennité de la communauté et de la responsabilité des institutions européennes.

Une participation maximisée doit nécessiter des ressources technologiques et humaines ainsi que des réorganisations internes afin que la proposition de valeur de la participation demeure simple et accessible aux citoyens leur permettant de s'investir, selon leur volonté, quelques soient leur temps ou leur énergie disponibles.

Au total, le modèle de l'engagement des citoyens doit s'inscrire dans une perspective globale requérant une réflexion profonde sur le positionnement adéquat qui favorise l'adhésion et la participation des citoyens en vue de créer des communautés partageant une vision des valeurs communes.

Euroscepticisme et ambivalence de l'opinion publique française vis-à-vis de l'Europe

Passionnant travail sur l'opinion publique française et l'Europe par l'institut Jacques-Delors Notre Europe où les auteurs du rapport « les Français et l'Europe entre défiance et ambivalence[4] » analyse une situation inquiétante et inédite d'euroscepticisme et d'ambivalence…

Euroscepticisme très fort : des fractures européennes sans précédent en France

Fait sans précédent, parmi tous les États-membres, la France appartient aux peuples les plus négatifs face à l'UE – une position peu enviable liées à un soutien « diffus » aux valeurs et aux principes de l'UE faiblement majoritaire face à un soutien « spécifique » moins favorable concernant l'efficacité de l'Union européenne.

La 2e ligne de clivage porte sur la fracture sociale, particulièrement vive pour la France : classes populaires, ouvriers et chômeurs se représentent l'Europe comme une menace contre les protections sociales nationales.

La polarisation des attitudes vis-à-vis de l'UE renforce l'intensité des clivages : contrairement à la France, dans le reste de l'Europe, les plus positifs sont deux fois plus nombreux et les plus négatifs deux fois moins.

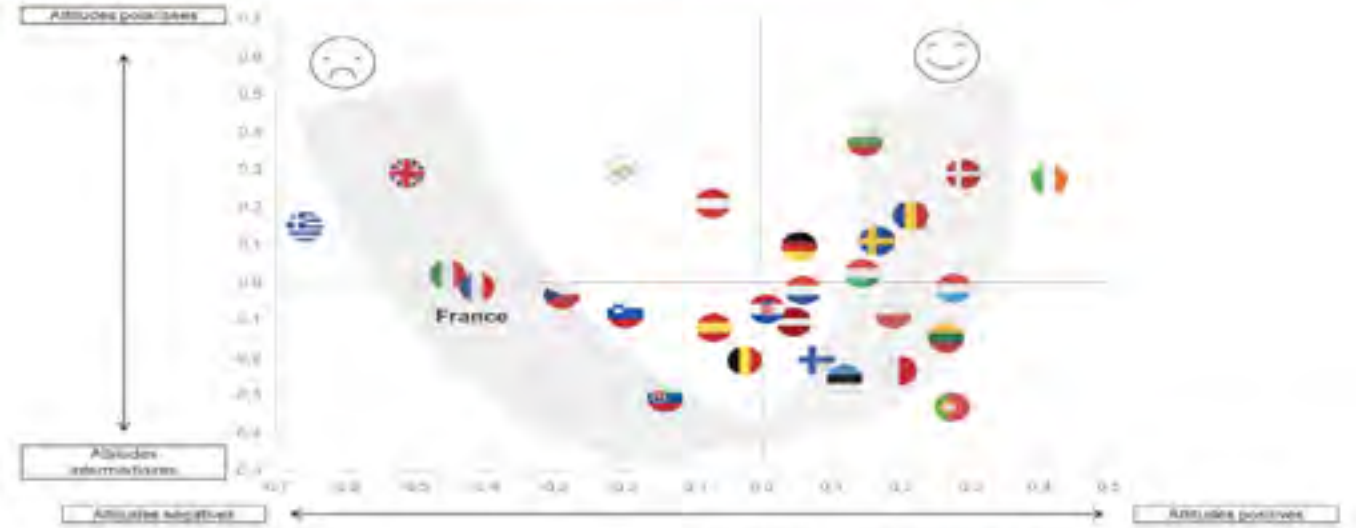
Ambivalence de la relation des Français à l'Europe : les sentiments mêlés divisent

Des variations entre attitudes pro et antieuropéennes dessinent des individus ambivalents à l'égard de l'Europe :

Côté « positif », les ambivalents ont une massive adhésion à la libre circulation et au droit de travailler comme de vivre dans tous les États membres ; un soutien très majoritaire aux

4 https://institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/R119_OpinionFranceEurope_Chopin_200504_FR.pdf

GRAPHIQUE 3 - La géographie des opinions vis-à-vis de l'UE



Source : Eurobaromètre 92, analyses réalisées par les auteurs

différentes politiques communes et une conviction que la voix de l'Union européenne compte dans le monde.

Côté « négatif », les ambivalents ont une mauvaise image de l'Europe, se méfient de la situation économique ; des institutions et de l'avenir mais surtout doutent que les intérêts de la France soient bien pris en compte au sein de l'UE. L'idée européenne est belle, mais ça ne marche pas comme ils le souhaiteraient.

Méconnaissance ou incompréhension de l'Europe : le facteur clé d'interprétation

La méconnaissance du fonctionnement de l'Europe constitue un élément majeur du rapport de défiance des Français à l'Europe (la France occupe le dernier rang parmi les 27). Le facteur culturel constitue un élément majeur d'explication de ce rapport ambivalent des Français vis-à-vis de l'Europe.

La compréhension ou l'incompréhension de l'Europe divise entre les proeuropéens, qui ont le sentiment de bien comprendre comment fonctionne l'Europe, les eurosceptiques non et les ambivalents guère plus.

C'est un élément majeur du rapport des Français à l'Europe, car il s'agit d'une des dimensions sur laquelle la France occupe le dernier rang parmi les Etats-membres. Une situation dramatique déjà abordée ici.

Relations entre les Français et l'« Europe » : les projections sur l'Europe, reflet des exceptions françaises

Plusieurs éléments explicatifs de nature culturelle sont avancés par les auteurs du rapport pour comprendre les rapports spécifiques que les Français entretiennent avec l'UE :

La culture politique unitaire « jacobine » de la souveraineté française est en décalage avec la culture européenne « pluraliste » du compromis au sein de l'UE. Du coup, les Français ont du mal à jouer le jeu des règles européennes : deal majoritaire, lobbying décomplexé, coalitions parlementaires à géométrie variable.

La culture socio-économique « colbertiste » de la France marquée par une certaine défiance voire une hostilité au libéralisme et au libre-échange impactent négativement le rapport que maints Français entretiennent avec l'Union européenne. Du coup, les règles du marché commun, du pacte de stabilité ou de la politique de concurrence passent encore mal aujourd'hui.

Enfin, les visions radicalement différentes de la raison d'être de l'engagement européen entre le projet des "pères fondateurs" l'Europe des nations gaulliste se sont fracassées sur les élargissements aux pays d'Europe centrale et orientale : « l'Europe n'est pas la France en grand » !

En conclusion, tant que la méconnaissance et le niveau d'information médiocre des citoyens français ne sera pas corrigée, tout discours de l'Union européenne sera inaudible. Mais, l'Europe qui a tant déçu les Français n'aura pas beaucoup de seconde chance.

Stratégie de communication post-Covid : l'UE nouveau soft superpower ?

Anu Bradford, professeur de droit à l'Université Columbia, fait débat dans les think tank bruxellois en ce moment avec une thèse iconoclaste sur le superpower de l'Union européenne : « The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World », tribune et podcast sur Project Syndicate[5]. Est-ce que ce devenir

5 https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/brussels-effect-digital-economy-by-anu-bradford-2020-04

d'*hegemon* régulateur peut se mettre au service d'une nouvelle stratégie offensive de communication de sortie de crise ?

De la résilience du « Brussels Effect »

Pour la juriste américaine Anu Bradford, le pouvoir unilatéral de régulation des marchés de l'UE vient du fait que les grandes entreprises mondiales, notamment américaines, se conforment de plus en plus aux règles européennes, non seulement pour exister dans le marché unique mais sur tous leurs marchés, les règles européennes s'imposent comme la norme standard de la globalisation, qu'il s'agisse de protection de l'environnement, de sécurité alimentaire, de respect de la privacy...

Cette situation exceptionnelle pour l'UE est due non seulement au vaste marché des consommateurs européens et au pouvoir de régulation et de sanction des institutions européennes, mais surtout au ration PIB par habitant qui place les sociétés européennes encore parmi les plus avancées du monde, donc les plus en attente de protection renforcée de la part des pouvoirs publics.

Ni la crise du Coronavirus qui n'entame pas le rôle de régulation technocratique de l'UE, ni la fausse promesse de liberté de régulation du Brexit ne renverse le rôle de « rule maker » plutôt que de « rule taker » de l'Union européenne.

De l'impact et des limites du soft superpower bruxellois

Dans les stratégies de sortie de crise Post-Coronavirus, face à l'autoritarisme digital chinois de contrôle massif des populations et au tout marché américain sans protection des droits personnels avec les GAFAM, la régulation humaniste européenne – illustrée avec le RGPD et attendue pour l'IA notamment – positionne l'Union européenne comme un soft superpower crédible capable de trouver des solutions, à partir du marché et d'incitations, ainsi que de sanctions, pour les entreprises. Le modèle est certainement appelé à impacter encore davantage la régulation numérique du nouveau monde.

Néanmoins, pour la professeur de Columbia, la Commission géopolitique annoncée par Ursula von der Leyen -et déjà critiquée ici-même – sera difficile à « délivrer » car tous les attributs du superpouvoir régulateur, permettant des effets de long terme par la régulation du marché ne seront de peu d'impact sur les questions géopolitiques, où le hard power s'exprime par des formes traditionnelles dont l'UE est encore largement dépourvue et encore pour longtemps.

Quand on voit combien nous dépendons dans notre vie quotidienne du bon fonctionnement de la globalisation, nous ne pouvons que souhaiter que le rôle d'équilibre entre les puissances, d'influence sur l'organisation du système mondial et de régulation des acteurs économiques porté par l'Union européenne soit relancé et renforcé. Le sursaut du projet européen est en jeu.

Quel futur pour l'engagement citoyen avec l'Europe ?

Un rapport de la Banque Mondiale, rédigé avec la pandémie de Covid-19 « Emerging Digital Technologies Create New Risks and Value[6] » dresse une série de prédictions technologiques et d'implications pour des pouvoirs publics qui souhaiteraient pratiquer une gouvernance numérique centrée sur les utilisateurs encore plus d'actualité aujourd'hui. Quelles conséquences pour l'engagement citoyen avec l'Europe ?

Adopter le mouvement d'une « gouvernance numérique » centrée sur l'utilisateur

Internaliser des ressources autour des technologies gouvernementales permet non seulement aux équipes employées de fournir des services publics numériques, mais également d'entraîner les pouvoirs publics à améliorer le traitement des questions de politique numérique.

Face aux capacités des fournisseurs de technologies, les pouvoirs publics, notamment l'Union européenne doit accroître ses capacités à promouvoir et conserver en interne des compétences numériques, afin d'acquérir les diverses compétences nécessaires non seulement pour fournir des services publics axés sur l'utilisateur, mais aussi pour savoir comment faire face aux futures innovations.

Lancer des débats publics sur le « score social » pour s'assurer de faire des choix éclairés

Chaque société dispose de points de vue différents sur le compromis entre la vie privée individuelle et les données publiques des individus et des institutions. Les décideurs publics et les dirigeants de la société civile devraient planifier dès maintenant que les systèmes de notation sociale arriveront bientôt, et leur arrivée posera un dilemme politique important avec des niveaux élevés de notoriété publique.

Pour éviter que des décisions profondément éthiques soient prises à la hâte ou en état de crise, des débats publics devraient être menés dès maintenant sur les frontières entre les utilisations acceptables et inacceptables du scoring social via des méthodes participatives telles que les assemblées de citoyens pour s'assurer que les conclusions qui en découlent sont prises en compte, légitimes et prêtes à être traduites en actes.

Le débat public sur les réglementations qui affectent directement les citoyens, telles que la notation sociale, la prise de décision algorithmique et la protection des données, ne devrait pas être limitée aux gouvernements et à l'industrie technologique. Le fait que certains de ces choix réglementaires soient très techniques

6 https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32495/Citizen-Engagement-Emerging-Digital-Technologies-Create-New-Risks-and-Value.pdf

ne doit pas être utilisé comme excuse pour ne pas engager le public dans ces choix. Les citoyens seront très directement touchés par la réglementation des principales plates-formes et se méfieront fortement de l'intervention du gouvernement dans presque toutes les circonstances.

Élaborer des politiques numériques informées, robustes et légitimes avec des assemblées de citoyens

Compte tenu de la complexité des enjeux et du problème majeur de faire des choix légitimes, les pouvoirs publics devraient résister à la tentation de limiter leurs pratiques d'engagement à des consultations simplistes limitées aux environnements en ligne. Compte tenu des conséquences profondes des décisions prises, tout processus participatif devrait être soigneusement conçu pour promouvoir l'inclusivité et un jugement éclairé.

Pour réduire la suspicion, l'Union européenne pourrait animer des assemblées de citoyens composées de panels de citoyens choisis au hasard qui délibèrent tout au long d'un processus qui implique que les citoyens se renseignent sur la question en jeu, consultent des experts, entendent les différents points de vue sur la question et participent à des discussions afin de présenter des décisions ou un ensemble de recommandations à l'intention des pouvoirs publics.

Veiller à un engagement numérique régulé, inclusif et accessible des citoyens

L'essor des grandes sociétés transnationales de technologie numérique a donné aux gouvernements des maux de tête réglementaires à l'échelle mondiale. Les gouvernements commencent à prendre des mesures pour se mettre à jour et se reconfigurer face à ces géants aux multiples facettes.

Construire des structures réglementaires pouvant intervenir pour améliorer les résultats de l'engagement des citoyens doit constituer une priorité afin de donner aux citoyens de nouvelles façons ultra-fluides de s'engager avec les structures de pouvoir directement à partir des plateformes de médias sociaux via l'ajout d'outils et de fonctionnalités spécifiquement déployés pour briser et combler les divisions.

À l'époque des données, la participation des citoyens au pouvoir et à la prise de décision doit être facilitée via des services accessibles et gratuits réduisant les obstacles pour les organisations de technologie civique et les entrepreneurs d'accéder aux interfaces de programmation d'applications de médias sociaux pour développer plus de solutions qui favorisent l'engagement des citoyens.

À ce jour, la plupart des initiatives de technologie civique se sont appuyées sur des modèles de participation volontaires et auto-sélectionnés alors qu'il faut promouvoir l'inclusion d'individus peu susceptibles de participer à des mécanismes basés sur l'auto-sélection.

Dans ce cas, la sensibilisation proactive des individus est impérative lorsque les gouvernements souhaitent solliciter des commentaires simples des citoyens (par exemple, la qualité de la prestation de services, les plaintes) afin d'évaluer ses performances sur une base continue en appelant directement ou en envoyant des SMS aux citoyens pour solliciter leurs commentaires sur les services publics qu'ils ont récemment utilisés.

D'autres mesures peuvent être prises lors de la conception d'outils de participation, notamment l'utilisation réfléchie et intelligente de technologie accessible, limitée aux appareils déjà disponibles et largement utilisés par le public cible.

Garder les choses hautement accessibles du point de vue de l'utilisateur n'exclut pas la possibilité d'utiliser des technologies émergentes, notamment des solutions d'IA pour penser à l'interface utilisateur ou le back-office.



Toute conception technologique inclusive nécessite systématiquement plusieurs cycles de recherches et de tests auprès des utilisateurs à mesure que la solution technologique est progressivement développée. La capacité des gouvernements et des militants à mener des recherches et des tests appropriés avec les utilisateurs constitue une compétence essentielle si l'on veut utiliser efficacement les technologies émergentes pour tirer parti des pratiques d'engagement des citoyens.

Les technologies ne sont aussi bonnes que les institutions et les processus dans lesquels elles sont intégrées. Seules de véritables améliorations institutionnelles pourront faire entrer les institutions dans le 21e siècle afin de récolter les avantages des technologies émergentes.

La véritable victoire pour les citoyens aura lieu lorsque les institutions européennes commenceront à modifier leurs règles pour :

- Mener des exercices de budgétisation participative ;
- Abaisser le seuil des initiatives citoyennes ;
- Mandater des assemblées de citoyens pour permettre la co-conception de législation.

Au final, il est temps de donner aux citoyens une voix contraignante dans les processus décisionnels, de la législation à la prestation de services dans un proche avenir.

MICHAËL MALHERBE, Deputy Practice Leader Digital chez Burson Cohn & Wolfe (groupe WPP). Depuis plus de 12 ans, il développe une activité de conseil en communication digitale (stratégies en e-campagne, e-influence et e-réputation) dans les secteurs corporate et institutionnel), précédemment en tant que Fondateur-Associé de l'agence Two4com et Directeur du pôle Digital de l'agence Cohn & Wolfe de 2011 à 2015.
Formé à l'Institut d'Études politiques de Strasbourg (2001-2005) et à l'Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne dans le master « Communication politique et sociale », il est un spécialiste de la communication de l'Union européenne, intervenant dans les masters « Etudes européennes » de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle[1], Paris III et « Affaires européennes » de la Sorbonne-Paris IV et précédemment à l'ENA et à Sciences-Po Lille. Depuis 2007, il anime le blog : « Décrypter la communication européenne » et intervient régulièrement dans la presse[2] et les médias[3], des débats publics et des colloques[4].

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1 http://www.univ-paris3.fr/departement-institut-d-etudes-europeennes-18058.kjsp
2 https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/presse/
3 https://www.franceculture.fr/personne/michael-malherbe
4 https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/evenements/



Creating online spaces for deliberation — what we're thinking[1]

By Mel Stevens, Anthony Zacharzewski and Kyle Redman



Together with Australia's newDemocracy Foundation, the Democratic Society decided to source solutions to public deliberation having to go digital by examining the things that have worked, while keeping in mind the challenges that are inherent.

Just like many, we at the Democratic Society have found ourselves in the midst of a question that imposed itself on us and our work alike: how have the measures that have led us to this "new normal" caused by the spread of Covid-19 affected public deliberation? And what can be done to resolve the challenges and make the shift to digital mechanisms as quickly and as efficiently as possible?

Indeed, the tallest of orders. And not only due to the pandemic: the challenges of taking deliberation online while making sure its most useful aspects are retained have existed prior to this shift. Together with Australia's newDemocracy Foundation[2], we decided to source our solutions by examining the things that have worked, while keeping in mind the challenges that are inherent to this, digital approach.

"A simple 'lift and shift' online will not work as well — if it even works at all."

"Designing an online public deliberation", presented here, is just that. The note has a singular purpose: it goes beyond a simplistic amalgamation of digital tools, but rather puts together the tools and techniques that, in our opinion, can get the best out of what exists and is available online, while ensuring that the qualities of public deliberation that we firmly believe in are preserved as much as possible, given the bigger picture.

In our note, we examine the pre-existing barriers to a viable shift to the digital domain: how the shift affects access, what it does to the ability for everyday people to participate, but also build relationships with one another and engage at length while solving a shared problem, as well as how to strike a good balance while using the tools that at the same time make us feel more able to contribute and make us more prone to distraction.

The questions of connectivity, skills and troubleshooting all come into play here. Our approach attempts to offer answers to these questions that can act pre-emptively, allowing for a "flat" space like the online domain to become a healthy, comfortable, and feasible area for the most important discussions that truly get to the heart of any issue.

"Though this approach does not change dramatically with the move online, it requires specific emphasis on the efforts that will be made to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate, independent of their technological access."

Now that you know what this note is about, we at the Democratic Society encourage you to read it, take it into consideration, think, discuss and deliberate, and in the end, make it your own, while maintaining the core philosophy behind public deliberation at

1 https://medium.com/@demsoc/creating-online-spaces-for-deliberation-what-were-thinking-e94fb40b1e

2 https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/



its heart. In the end, it is not a finished article by any means: we ourselves are going to continue to develop and build on these innovations through our practice and research in the field. In short, this is what we know so far, and we hope that it will help spark a discussion and help you in your work in the long run.

Read and download "Designing an online public deliberation" via https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JZ1e7_EE2v3UUJUh3cX2Vxa6CsdMG0sK/view

For further information, or to discuss any of the issues raised, please contact us:

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- The Democratic Society AISBL, Europe: Marian Cramers, marian@demsoc.org. Twitter/FB/IG: @demsoc

MEL STEVENS an expert in local democratic system change, evidence-based decision making, innovative design and co-production, developed her passion for the public sector while working at a Citizens Advice Bureaux monitoring social policy impact. She consolidated her experience focusing on the interrelations among organisational and cultural changes, open participatory governance processes, and co-design and shared power. Mel is currently leading Demsoc's Public Square programme of research and action to foster participation in local government across the UK. She also plays a pivotal role in Kensington and Chelsea in supporting relationship and mutual trust between the council and residents following the recent Grenfell disaster. An experienced leader in applied social policy and in a wide range of public sector areas such as developing a data framework for governance within a prison trust, supporting counties' co-designing processes to improve children's services, and collaborative commissioning projects on health for adults with complex needs in Nottingham.



ANTHONY ZACHARZEWSKI founder and president of The Democratic Society, is an expert in democratic systems and innovation, government policy making, politics. He has worked in central and local government in strategic roles for 14 years before founding The Democratic Society (Demsoc) in 2006. He has deep practical experience of policy making as an official, and of creating democratic innovations in nine years running the Democratic Society's day-to-day work. He has worked with institutions at every level of government, with health and housing providers, with doctors' groups, planners and developers, and international organisations to design, implement, and test new democratic models and systems.



KYLE REDMAN Project Designer and Manager at the newDemocracy Foundation, owns a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) at the New South Wales University. He designed and managed a number of newDemocracy's most recent projects, including our Democracy in Geelong, City of Sydney 2050, ACT Housing Choices and Byron Shire Council projects. He has also worked with international partners to design democratic innovations in Eupen, Fortaleza and Madrid. Co-author a recently published handbook 'Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections' for the United Nations Democracy Fund", he joined Demsoc in February 2019.

Climate change: How to engage citizens in a just transformation process[1]

By Nadja Nickel and Aleksandar Brezar

With climate change, we are facing one of the biggest challenges of our lifetime – one that cannot be solved through technical solutions alone. The right individual and collective decisions will limit global warming to 1.5 C. The wrong ones will put that goal out of reach forever.

The Democratic Society[2], as a design partner of the Healthy, Clean Cities Deep Demonstration[3] at EIT Climate-KIC, wants to highlight how solutions to climate change need to be designed and executed with citizens at its heart, ensuring that this transformation process is adaptive, democratic and fair, for the whole population but particularly for marginalised groups in societies.

In times when the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that urgent, far-reaching measures can take place on short notice, many have wondered why we haven't approached climate change with similar resolve. Although understandable in its well-meaning tone, this sentiment echoes the fact that finding a solution to one of the most pressing concerns of our time is a daunting task in its own right. A complex challenge, thus, requires a carefully thought out and implemented solution. At the Democratic Society, they believe that the citizens need to be at its very core.

Climate change touches people's lives in very concrete ways: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter are all at jeopardy. A 2019 WHO analysis showed[4] that through flood, heatwaves, drought and fires, climate change has a considerable impact on human health, including undernutrition, mental health, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and vector-borne infections, while limited access to drinking water and to health services are jeopardising the health of women, especially during pregnancy. Therefore, climate action requires us to act with people in mind. In the plethora of ways in which it touches people's every area of life, climate change comes both as a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge can be daunting, as there is a lot to coordinate; the type of complexity and interconnection and the sheer scale of it pose a major requirement to any response. However, the opportunity that it presents allows for multiple ways to make a difference.

It wouldn't be too far-fetched to suppose that, if the citizens are at the very centre of climate change work, citizen involvement is the first logical step to finding a solution. However, this hasn't been the case – neither always, nor everywhere. Even the most elaborate attempts in the past have shown that some of the more technocratic solutions fail to address what is, in essence, a matter of a much more inclusive approach.

Citizen participation is often a point-intervention. A vote at an election every few years, a consultation process on a new town square, or a bypass, the occasional protest movement or letter to the mayor. Challenges on the societal scale, so dependent on personal behaviours, and with such huge impact on the life of individuals, cannot be handled in such a way. We need a longer-term, more conversational approach, that allows for changes to be planned and delivered with people, and strengthens the civic and democratic infrastructure that can allow that to happen – and which in too many places has been thinned out rather than strengthened over the years. We need to make sure that everyone in Europe, not just the eloquent and the sharp-elbowed, can access those opportunities, and that their voices are heard in a fair balance.

For instance, the marginalised communities around the world are especially affected by the impact of climate change. Just one 2016 estimate by the United Nations[5] showed that in the two decades prior, 4.2 billion people were affected by weather-related disasters, with a significant loss of life felt the hardest in the low-income countries. Yet simultaneously, some of these communities are at risk of having to bear the highest costs of climate solutions. The affluent family will be disappointed if flying to the Caribbean becomes a luxury rather than an annual affair. Those who live with scarcity will be unable to live if policies increase their heating bill by ten per cent.

Thus, we are risking further polarisation in society if we do not tackle climate change with a just approach that includes the marginalised and under-represented groups in a society. Europe and its citizens still bear the scars of industrial transformations that took place without thinking about the social and economic structures in place to support people through. Any initiative that has just transition as its starting point is thus particularly important, because some areas are historically deeply dependent on high carbon industries: whether it is the coal mines of Poland, or thermoelectric power plants of the Western Balkans, technical tools risk to be developed without the involvement of communities they affect.

Together with EIT Climate-KIC, the Democratic Society want to ensure that climate change is not a technocratic, but a democratic issue, by fostering citizen engagement work. Participation and engagement have different meanings in different context, and are sometimes used interchangeably. Engagement does not mean communication, or only changing people's social norms. The goal of engagement activities is that authorities provide information and options to people to allow them to make decisions themselves.

1 https://www.climate-kic.org/innovation-spotlight/how-to-engage-citizens/

2 https://www.climate-kic.org/partners/the-democratic-society/

3 https://www.climate-kic.org/programmes/deep-demonstrations/

4 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2019-0174_EN.html

5 https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/report-inequalities-exacerbate-climate-impacts-on-poor/

We cannot hope to solve the challenges of climate change without the wholehearted participation of citizens in action and in decision. Too often, however, citizens are involved as an afterthought or a box-ticking exercise, whereas the changes needed require buy-in across society. Our approach, working across multiple Deep Demonstrations, seeks to bring the best citizen participation theory and practice and develop them further in the context of the essential role that public involvement has in solving climate change. By working in a way that responds to the individual needs of each Deep Demonstration, but also in connecting across them, we ensure that citizens' voices, ideas, and action in the Deep Demonstrations can be accessed readily where required.

By involving citizens in the decision-making process, we ensure that approaches are developed for and by people at its heart. The process itself will:

- Increase community acceptance of the outcomes and whatever is designed

  By working with citizens and other stakeholders, we can help the city representatives understand how citizens think and act, and how they value different climate action approaches – including ensuring that the transition to carbon neutrality is just and fair. We can't decide the approach in the Berlaymont, or even in national capitals. They can set targets, set priorities, but the impacts have to be handled on the ground, by communities and people involved. This is why citizen participation is so essential, on a scale and in a way that we have not generally done such things before.

- De-risk the investment in climate action

  Climate action requires significant investment from governments at all levels. Ensuring that the community resources invested in climate action are ones that will pay dividends and contribute to healthy, clean cities of the future is important. Embedding citizen participation helps to ensure that opportunity costs – whether financial, effort or interest – is managed. That's why it's essential even as money is flowing in increasing amounts into climate transition, that the choices on how to move forward are made with citizens, in the places where they live, and that those voices are joined up at regional, national and European scale

- Gain the public will to create a better and just future for all

  While climate action is a challenge that cities are facing, it is not the only one. Climate action issues touch on fundamental questions about what our communities ought to be like, and how we ensure justice and fairness in the future. Making citizen participation part of the approach ensures that people are able to have a voice in understanding how they will enjoy living, working and playing in their city in the future. Policy and decision-makers are able to build on the legitimacy for certain measures by setting aspirations for climate action together with citizens.

As we have seen in places like Cambridge, UK, where a Citizen Assembly[6] carefully selected to represent the communities living in the wider city area worked on creating recommendations on how to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and provide better public transport in the Greater Cambridge region, the interest is already there. A key and repeated message that arose during the Citizen Assembly was "be bold, be brave, and take action". And more importantly, the Citizen Assembly demonstrated the role that residents from all walks of life can play in developing a local approach to tackling difficult issues.

In Jarva, a neighbourhood of Stockholm[7], what originally was a contested retrofitting plan by a housing company of grew into an energy transition project of one million homes by the simple act of involving the citizens. The Järva Dialog took place in the form of open meetings, which saw 10,000 residents participate and provide 30,000 responses about the advantages and challenges of the area. This then expanded into what can be seen as a wider case of empowerment. A different picture has emerged whereby local residents feel empowered enough to actively participate in local decision-making processes, both inside and outside of the project. In particular, migrant women, who were previously absent in any local dialogue were now voting in local elections and exercising their democratic rights, which was not the case at the start of the project.

Krakow, one of our Healthy, Clean Cities has seen citizen engagement take centre stage of the Deep Demonstrations work, with the city on the brink of having a mass movement, all with the involvement of key stakeholders from the public administration (both local and regional), citizens, civil societies, academia, and local businesses. Exploring solutions for green mobility in Krakow, for instance, included a hackathon, attended by nearly 1,000 people. The workshops saw students, think tanks, CSOs and housing associations all sign up to participate in analyzing trends and proposing future scenarios and alternative futures – showcasing a keen interest by the city in establishing direct collaboration with actors from the civil society in the city – while an online consultation game involved middle- and high-school students. All of this has shown that massive cross-sectoral collaboration is not only possible, but works best when it has the citizens at its core.

6 https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/cityaccess/greater-cambridge-citizens-assembly/

7 https://local-social-innovation.eu/news/?c=search&uid=iaJbQvuz

Then there is also the collaborative governance work, that is elementary to what we do. In the southeast of Belgium, the German speaking community[8] has created a system of political participation in addition to the existing parliament. The permanent Citizen Council is to decide each year on what it is that requires consultation, and then debate the issues in an independent Citizen's Assembly in order to come up with concrete policy recommendations. The key part of the process lies in the fact that the Parliament of the Germany-speaking community as its official body works on the implementation of the recommendations in one of the most-far reaching democratic innovation models to date, only proving the point that the people's voices and opinions can and must become elementary in any future decision making process.

This is the work that we are undertaking at the Democratic Society in partnership with EIT Climate-KIC. It's not easy, no one has done this sort of thing at this scale before, but we're lucky to be starting with a strong partnership with cities and the other design partners in the project. A process of experimentation, but with a single goal – building up a long-term democratic and participative capacity in the places that we are working, with greater skills and confidence in public institutions and among citizens, denser and stronger civic and democratic networks, and a structure of deliberative and participative methods that allows everyone voice to be expressed and to be heard. In this way, we hope to solve the greatest connected problem of the 21st century – how to reimagine and reconnect democracy for the networked age, and how to save the planet – together.



NADJA NICKEL is the Research & Project Manager for PaCE based at DemSoc's Berlin office. Before joining Demsoc in February 2019, Nadja was the Managing Director of WithoutViolence, a non-profit communications and advocacy agency for the social sector. At WithoutViolence, she applied lessons learned from research and from existing behavioural science findings to solutions-focused advocacy on the issue of ending violence against women and children. She also worked as a consultant supporting the former Federal President Horst Köhler on the UN High-level Panel for the post-2015 agenda and as a Program Coordinator for the GIZ, the German international development agency. Nadja holds an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies of Uppsala University, Sweden.



ALEKSANDAR BREZAR joined the Democratic Society in 2019. His work with Demsoc involves finding novel ways of approaching democratic governance and citizen engagement in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership areas of Europe, while addressing a variety of key topics, from climate change to European membership perspectives. Coming from a background in media and culture prior to joining Demsoc, Aleksandar worked on projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider Western Balkans area, with partners including USAID, TI, OSF, the European Commission and British Council.

8 https://www.foundationfuturegenerations.org/files/documents/news/20190226_dgpermanentcitizensassembly_pressrelease.pdf

Plenary Meeting

Regretfully, this plenary meeting had to be cancelled owing to the pandemic, but the Club looks forward to co-organising new meetings in Croatia in the near future
Here below, the programme as it stood on the eve of the Europe-wide lockdown (end of February 2020)

Club of Venice Plenary Meeting 4-5 June 2020, Dubrovnik (Croatia) ***CANCELLED***
WEDNESDAY, 3RD JUNE 2020
Venue: Dubrovnik 18:00 (restricted) Preparatory meeting of the Steering and Advisory Group of the Club of Venice with the hosting Croatian authorities
Optional social programme 19:30 Informal evening/Welcome reception
THURSDAY, 4TH JUNE 2020
9:00 – 09:15 OPENING SESSION - Welcome statements - representatives of the hosting Croatian authorities and the Club of Venice ▪ one Member of the Steering Group of the Club of Venice ▪ Zvonimir FRKA-PETEŠIĆ, Head of Cabinet of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia
9:15 – 09:30 MEETING OBJECTIVES ▪ Stefano ROLANDO, President of the Club of Venice
9:30 – 10:00 PLENARY SESSION Communicating on the Future of Europe: challenges and opportunities for work in synergy ▪ Address by Dubravka ŠUICA, Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Democracy and Demography ▪ Q & A
10:15 – 12:45 PLENARY SESSION Round Table The Conference on the Future of Europe A forward-looking project? How ambitious? Will it follow an inclusive approach? Will there be room for convergence between EU Member States' and Institutions' communication strategies? What role for civil society and the academic world? What instruments? How will practitioners engage in the digital sphere? How to enhance synergies between communication and the media? Who will moderate and coordinate? How to monitor work in progress? Will this manage to create more proximity with citizens? Moderator: - Vincenzo LE VOCI, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice Key Note speakers: - Verena RINGLER, communication specialist in European politics, founder and director of "European Commons" (www.europeancommons.eu)





14:15 – 17:30 PLENARY SESSION
Crisis Communication: focus on the Coronavirus/Covid-19 spread emergency
- governmental and EU institutions' communication strategies
- optimizing citizens' information and countering disinformation

- Moderator:
- Rytis PAULAUSKAS, Director, Communications and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Lithuania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, member of the Steering Group of the Club of Venice

Key Note speakers:
- one representative from the European Commission (DG SANTE or DG COMM)
- an external expert

FRIDAY, 5TH JUNE 2020

8:30 – 09:00 GUESTS ARRIVAL, REGISTRATION
Meeting Venue: Lazzarettos of Dubrovnik, Ul. Frana Supila 10

09:00 – 12:45 PLENARY SESSION
Strengthening engagement in the digital eco-system
- the social media impact on the government communication strategies
- capacity/capability building in progress: coping with innovation processes and organising behavioural changes
- implementing the Venice Action Plan on synergies between public communicators and the media

Moderator:
- ERIK den HOEDT, Director of Communication and Public Information, Ministry of General Affairs, Netherlands, member of the Steering Group of the Club of Venice

Key Note speakers:
- one government representative
- one representative from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)

12:45 – 13:30 CLOSING SESSION
- Reflections on the issues emerged during the plenary meeting
- Planning for 2020-2021, with focus on:
= the work plan of the Capacity Building Working Group
= SEECOM annual Conference (Tirana, 17-18 November 2020)
= ICMPD 3rd Euro-Med communicators' Workshop (Rabat, ...)
= Cap'Com annual Conference
= Venice plenary (3-4 December 2020)
= poss. thematic seminar in Milan (communication on macro-economic matters) (February 2021)
= poss. 4th Stratcom seminar (London, Feb or Mar 2021) (tbc)
- Work in synergy

OPTIONAL SOCIAL/CULTURAL PROGRAMME
15:00 - 17:00 Visit to the Old Town of Dubrovnik (tbd)

Club of Venice webinar

Crisis communication
Managing communication on the covid-19
Challenges, analysis and lessons learned

15 June 2020 14:00-17:45

Agenda
14:00 - 14:05 WELCOME MESSAGES - Zvonimir FRKA-PETEŠIĆ, Croatia, Head of the Prime Minister's Office - Vincenzo LE VOCI, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice MODERATORS: Vincenzo LE VOCI and ERIK DEN HOEDT
14:05 - 14:20 KEY-NOTE: - Alex AIKEN, Executive Director, Government Communication Service (UK) "COVID-19: The factors that influence confidence in public communication during the Covid crisis"
14:20 - 14:30 Q&A
14:30 - 15:20 - FIRST ROUND-TABLE: "OLD KEY CHALLENGES" Building and maintaining public trust, confidence and acceptance Zvonimir FRKA-PETEŠIĆ, Croatia, Head of the Prime Minister's Office (focus on "Communication during the Covid-19 crisis , the semester of Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the earthquake emergency" Benoît RAMACKER, Belgium, Crisis Communication Strategic Advisor at National CrisiscenterBE (NCCN) Structures and mechanisms for successful communication Ave EERMA, Strategic Communication Adviser, Government Office of Estonia, Coordinator of the IPCR/Crisis Communication Network The role of policy makers (governments) and scientific communities Herman WIERSEMA, Netherlands, Head of Communication, Ministry of Justice and Security Špela HORJAK, Slovenia, Government Deputy Spokesman for COVID-19 James DENNISON, Research Fellow, European University Institute, Italy
15:20 - 15:35 KEY-NOTE: - Prof. Marijn DE BRUIN, Behavioural Scientist (NL) "Integrating Behavioural Science in COVID-19 Prevention Efforts"
15:35 - 15:45 Q&A
15:45 - 16:30 SECOND ROUND-TABLE: "NEW CHALLENGES" Communication on the gradual waiver of lockdown measures: specific challenges for public communicators Alessandra DE MARCO, Italy, Director, Public Information and Communication Office, Department for Information and publishing, Presidency of the Council of Ministers Recovery: communication synergies, EU mobilisation, coordination Tina ZOURNATZI, Head of the Strategic Communication Unit, European Commission, DG Communication Christian MANGOLD, Director for Campaigns, European Parliament, DG Communication Behavioural attitudes/changes as a societal syntom Riccardo VIALE, Professor of Behavioural Economics, University of Milano-Bicocca
16:30 - 16:45 KEY-NOTE: - Dr Heidi LARSON, Anthropologist and Director of The Vaccine Confidence Project (VCP)

16:45 - 16:55 Q&A

16:55 - 17:40 THIRD ROUND-TABLE: "BUILDING RESPONSE MECHANISMS IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION AND DISINFORMATION"
Fake news and the conspiracy theories
Rytis PAULAUSKAS, Lithuania, Director of Communications and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

An insight of reliable sources and effective countering actions
Rosa CAVALLARO, Italy, Senior Officer, Communication Regulatory Authority (AGCOM)

Media and civil society added value to resilience building
Christophe LECLERCQ, Founder of the EURACTIV Media Network, Associate Professor at the ULB

European leaders in the "Situation Room" – Rising beyond the COVID-19 lockdown
Verena RINGLER (European Commons) and Nadja EL FERTASI (Thrive with EQ)

17:40 - 17:45 CONCLUDING SESSION
Lessons learned/The way forward/Future cooperation
- Zvonimir FRKA-PETEŠIĆ
- Vincenzo LE VOCI
- Stefano ROLANDO (President of the Club of Venice)



The Case Study of Greece
The Greek Crisis Management Communication Model

By Konstantinos Alexandris

Greece was very quick to take the appropriate social distancing measures and impose the necessary restrictions at an early stage of the coronavirus pandemic. This swift reaction helped the country avoid the tragic healthcare crisis that other European states faced. It's worth noting that Greece closed down all non-essential shops only four days after its first Covid-19 death, while the ban on non-essential movement came only a week afterwards. The Greek Prime Minister, through his nationally televised addresses, emerged as a voice of reason, the country's political system as a whole reacted with composure and the citizens appeared to be very mindful of respecting the lockdown rules, in part a result of the steep penalties for non-compliance. The country worked to quickly increase its intensive care beds, to recruit additional hospital staff members and to open up more hospital worker positions.

Greek citizens saw a State acting in an organized way, taking measures and adapting political decisions to the guidance received from the experts. They saw the public administration going digital and becoming more effective and less bureaucratic. They saw a public health system rising to the challenge, in spite of having felt the consequences of a decade-long austerity. But the major result was the restoration of the Greek people's confidence in State institutions and the international trust the country regained for its endeavors and sacrifices, after so many years of hard criticism.

During the lockdown restrictions as well as the current period of the gradual return to normality, the Greek government tried and managed to communicate, inter alia, the following messages:

Lockdown period

- Protecting human life and reducing the rate of transmission are priorities
- The decisions taken are science-based
- We have to strengthen the health system, create new mechanisms to deal with the pandemic and adopt new methods of work and behavior
- Combine individual and collective responsibility
- Accelerating digital transformation / Development of digital applications in various sectors

Back to normality

- Restoring economic activity while maintaining public health
- Opening up the education system as part of the "new normal"
- Development of specific protocols for various workplaces / activities, mainly in the field of tourism

The communication mechanism was based on:

- Daily televised briefings held jointly by the Health Ministry Spokesman and the Deputy Minister for Civil Protection
- Televised addresses of the Prime Minister on the important decisions and measures to be taken and the strategy to implement
- Televised briefings held by Ministers and government officials on decisions and measures to be taken in particular fields, such as education, culture, economy, transports and tourism
- Frequent briefings by the Government's Spokesman for further information on important decisions and measures and the Greek positions in a EU level
- Announcements, viewpoints or comments by Greece's representative on coronavirus to international organisations

Press and social media campaigns (on an indicative basis):

- "We stay home": Audiovisual campaign initiated by the Ministry of Health encouraging citizens to stay home
- "We remain safe": Audiovisual campaign initiated by the Ministry of Health for the period after the end of the lockdown and the gradual return to normality
- "Greece From Home": Online platform to promote the country's image to people all over the world and invite them to visit – not by travelling physically, but virtually – straight from the comfort and safety of their homes. An initiative created jointly by the Greek Tourism Ministry, the Greek National Tourism Organization and Marketing Greece
- "We Stay Home and Travel through Literature": A two-part video featuring ambassadors from 19 countries reciting Greek literature in support of "#we stay home" campaign against the spread of coronavirus. The video was created and posted by the General Secretariat for Public Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The initiative was aimed at sending a message of international solidarity against the COVID-19 pandemic through the universality and the timelessness of Greek literature, from Homer to the present day
- Exchange of wishes for the Greek Easter through e-cards promoting the "#we stay home" campaign, the work from home and the practice of social distancing. An initiative of the General Secretariat for Public Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Restrictive measures

Movements and gatherings

- 10/3/2020: All educational institutions were closed for 14 days.
- 16/3/2020: Two villages were quarantined after several cases among their residents were confirmed. 18/3/2020: New coronavirus restrictions pertaining to migrant camps.
- 18/3/2020: A ban was announced on public gatherings of 10 or more people.
- 20/3/2020: Only permanent residents and supply trucks were allowed to travel to the islands.
- 22/3/2020: The Greek government announced a ban on all nonessential transport and movement across the country. Movement is permitted only for a prescribed set of reasons
- 22/3/2020: Limitation of daytime public transport services.
- 31/3/2020: Additional restrictive measures for a duration of 14 days in a number of regional units.

Travelling abroad

- 9/3/2020: Temporary suspension of all flights to and from northern Italy, affecting all Greek airports and all airlines. On 14 March the suspension was extended to all passenger flights to and from Italy, excluding cargo and sanitary ones.
- 16/3/2020: Greece closed its borders with Albania and North Macedonia, deciding to suspend all road, sea and air links with these countries, while only permitting the transport of goods and the entry of Greek nationals and residents. The suspension of ferry services to and from Italy, air links to Spain, as well as the prohibition of all cruise ships and sailboats docking in Greek ports was also decided. On the same day it was announced that a 14-day home restriction will be mandatory for those who enter the country.
- 18/3/2020: Greece and the other EU member states decided to close their external borders to all non-EU nationals.
- 23/3/2020: Greece suspended all passenger flights to and from the UK as well as all air, sea, rail and road connections with Turkey, with an exception for Greek citizens and those who have residence permits or whose main residence is in Greece, as well as trucks and ships transporting goods.
- 28/3/2020: Greece suspended all commercial flights to and from Germany and the Netherlands until 15 April, with a few exemptions.
- 15/4/2020: A ban on commercial flights to and from Italy, Spain, Turkey, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany.
- 15/5/2020: Extension of the suspension of all commercial flights to and from Italy, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands until 1 June, and all flights to and from Albania and North Macedonia and flights from Turkey until 15 June. Moreover, the temporary entry ban to all non-EU citizens was extended until 1 June and all international flights are allowed to land and depart only at the Athens airport until that date.

Businesses and workplaces

- 12/3/2020: Closure of all theatres, courthouses, cinemas, gyms, playgrounds and clubs.
- 13/3/2020, Closure of all shopping malls, cafes, restaurants, bars, museums and archaeological sites and food outlets, excluding supermarkets, pharmacies and food outlets that offer take-away and delivery only.
- 14/3/2020: Closure of organised beaches and ski resorts.
- 19/3/2020: Closure of all hotels across the country, with the exception of hotels accommodating personnel that guard the border, as well as three hotels in Athens and Thessaloniki and one hotel per regional unit.

Educational institutions

- 10/3/2020: The operation of all schools, universities, daycare centres and all other educational establishments were suspended. Schoolchildren moved to a virtual learning model.

Religious places

- All services suspended in all areas of religious worship at any religion or dogma, from 16/3/2020 to 17/5/2020.

Economic measures

- 18/3/2020: Announcement of a package of measures to support the economy, businesses and employees. The measures included the suspension, for four months, of tax and social security obligations of corporations that were ordered to close by the state decree, with the sole condition that they do not dismiss any workers.
- 19/3/2020: Revision of the State Budget to allocate more than 10 billion Euros in support of the economy.
- 20/5/2020: Announcement by Prime Minister on measures to support employment, economy and tourism.
- 22/5/2020: Ministry of Tourism issued detailed directions for hotels, camping grounds ahead of June reopening.

Gradual lifting of restrictive measures

Initial stage

- 28/4/2020: Announcement of the government's plan for the gradual lifting of the restrictive measures and the restart of business activity. The plan consists of specific milestone dates and extends throughout May and June 2020, and may be revised as it would be evaluated continuously against the COVID-19 infection rate. The initial stage started on 4/5/2020 and included the free moving of the residents, but only within their regional unit, while travel to other regional units or between islands within the same regional unit remained prohibited until 18 May.
- At the same time, some stores opened while some others operated by appointment only and strict rules regarding the maximum number of customers inside applied. This restart affected a total of 26,167 businesses, about 10% of those whose operation was suspended, and 68,528 employees, also about 10% of the total.

Subsequent stages (11 May – June)

- 11/5/2020: All remaining retail shops re-opened with specific hygiene rules. Classes for High school senior grade students resumed from 11 May divided into two groups with a maximum of 15 pupils in each group attending classes on alternating days.
- 18/5/2020: All other grades of secondary education resumed classes and private tuition and foreign language centres re-opened. Worshippers were able to attend religious services following specific hygiene rules, from 17 May, while all movement restrictions across the country were lifted and archaeological sites, zoos and botanical gardens re-opened.
- 1/6/2020: All cafes and restaurants were allowed to re-open, but only with outdoor seating and certain distances between chairs and tables. Shopping malls, year-round hotels and summer movie theatres began operation on that date, with strict social distancing rules. Nursery schools, kindergartens and primary schools continued to remain closed until June 1.



KONSTANTINOS ALEXANDRIS is Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, Religious and Consular Affairs, a career diplomat and he has served at Greece's Embassies in Washington, Tel Aviv and Ankara. Before joining the diplomatic service, he worked as a lawyer. He studied Law at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and holds a postgraduate degree in European Law. He speaks English and French. He has been awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III (Republic of Cyprus) and the Gold Cross of the Order of Merit (Kingdom of Norway).

Calendar of Club meetings

2020
London, 6-7 February 2020 3rd seminar on Strategic Communication
Dubrovnik (Croatia), 4-5 June 2020 Plenary meeting - CANCELLED
15 June 2020 Webinar on communication challenges in the field of COVID-19 pandemic (in collaboration with the Croatian government authorities)
London, September 2020 Open Government seminar In cooperation with the OECD
Morocco, autumn 2020 (tbc) 3rd workshop on communication/narrative in the field of migration (in cooperation with the ICMPD)
Venice, 3-4 December (dates tbc) Plenary meeting
2021 (35th year of activity of the Club)
Brussels or Cyprus or Lisbon, early spring 2021 Thematic seminar on social media
Serbia (tbc), May 2021 Plenary meeting
Slovenia (tbc), autumn 2021 Thematic seminar
Venice, November 2021 Plenary meeting
2022
Brussels or Paris, February 2022 Thematic seminar
May 2022 (venue to be decided) Plenary meeting
Brussels or Prague, February 2022 Thematic seminar
Venice, November 2022 Plenary meeting

Acknowledgments

The Club expresses its gratitude to its members from Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovenia and United Kingdom.

Many thanks also to the Steering and the Advisory Committees of the Club, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the European University Institute (EIU), the Democratic Society (DEMSOC), European Commons, EURACTIV, Deutsche Welle, Prof. Corneliu Bjola, Pier Virgilio Dastoli, Nadja El Fertasi, Michaël Malherbe, Guido Moltedo, Stavros Papagianneas, Ben Page, Tamara Puhovski, Verena Ringler, Robert Westers and our other external collaborators for their proactive support.

This edition was made possible thanks to the collaboration of the Directorate-General for External Communication of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in Belgium.

