

convergences

#13
2019

Public communication in Europe | Communication publique en Europe



FOCUS ON:

Athens seminar on crisis communication, April 2019

Planning, coordination, cooperation

London Stratcom seminar, December 2018

Truth, Trust, and Disinformation

Venice plenary, November 2018

The European elections communication strategies in the spotlight
Hybrid threats awareness raising

The “Dark Side” of Digital Diplomacy

The Role of Media in Democracy



Club of Venice | Club de Venise



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Vous vouliez qu'ils vous entendent ... ils veulent être écoutés !

Par Philippe Caroyez et Vincenzo Le Voci

L'évolution de la communication publique est intimement liée à l'évolution même des politiques publiques (et, parfois, réciproquement). Il en est ainsi des consultations mises en place par les pouvoirs ou les services publics dans le cadre de la prise de décisions ou de l'orientation à donner à celles-ci.

Ces consultations publiques « modernes » remontent aux années '80 et ont conservé jusqu'à aujourd'hui leur caractère initial : formel et limité, souvent garanti par la loi, organisé comme des processus administratif ou législatif, dans des cas spécifiques de domaines particuliers (aménagement du territoire, équipement public, environnement, ...). Dans ce contexte, le rôle des communicateurs publics et de la communication publique est resté instrumental, à tors et souvent avec des effets préjudiciables pour les pouvoirs publics eux-mêmes.

Au fil du temps, la fracture constatée entre le politique, les institutions publiques et les citoyens, qui s'est manifestée par des phénomènes notoires (abstentionnisme, montée de l'extrême droite, perte de confiance dans le personnel politique et les institutions, ... et des guerres génocidaires « observées » à nos frontières) a conduit à essayer de mettre en place des mesures visant à rapprocher les autorités des citoyens. Là encore, la communication publique a été convoquée, en parallèle avec des dispositions (souvent normatives) telles que la transparence de l'administration, l'accès aux documents administratifs, les services de médiation et d'ombudsman, la publicité « active » imposées aux institutions publiques, les « guichets publics » (point unique de contact, boîte postale, call center et numéros de téléphone dits « verts »), ... et la supposée mutation induite du « citoyen » en « client du service public » ! C'est aussi l'âge d'or des grandes (et coûteuses) campagnes d'informations dans les médias traditionnels et l'affichage.

Même si on tendait – en principe – à vouloir enrichir la démocratie représentative d'une dose de démocratie participative, rares et souvent laborieuses ont été et sont encore (!) les initiatives de réelle participation. Elles ont, de plus, toujours été cantonnées aux (seuls) niveaux territoriaux, certes les plus « proches » des citoyens et des associations mais, aussi les plus réduits. Si on excepte le referendum (d'ailleurs pas présent dans tous les pays de l'Union), rares sont les initiatives de consultation des citoyens prises par les autorités publiques et qui portaient sur des sujets d'importance nationale : seul nous vient à l'esprit la consultation britannique sur la réforme du système national de santé.

A cet égard, pour reprendre la sentence sans appel de Pierre Rosanvallon : la démocratie est inachevée. Et, ainsi, de plus en plus de voix (en dehors et au-delà des corps intermédiaires et des groupes de pression traditionnels) s'élèvent aujourd'hui, qui demandent à être entendues et à participer à la prise de décision ... face à une taxe sur le carburant (à l'origine du

mouvement des « gilets jaunes ») ou en faveur de mesures radicales face aux enjeux environnementaux (à l'origine de nombreux mouvements non structurés en Europe).

Quasi concomitamment, à la suite de l'initiative du gouvernement français¹, plusieurs états-membres de l'Union européenne organisaient des (formes de) consultations de leurs citoyens sur des enjeux majeurs dans la perspective des élections européennes de juin 2019, en même temps que la Commission européenne menait une enquête en ligne accessible à tous.

Nous avons vu à Venise, en novembre 2018, les exemples de plusieurs pays à cet égard et le rôle tenu dans ce cadre par les services de communication, essentiels de l'information sur la mise en place de ces consultations, voire pour leur organisation même, jusqu'à la diffusion de leurs apports.

On se demandera, toutefois, ce qu'il en est fait ou sera fait ; étrangement, la récente « Déclaration de Sibiu »² – qui pouvait être l'un de ses aboutissements – n'en dit rien, malgré les attentes suscitées par les Déclarations de Bratislava et de Rome³ !

Et là, nous en revenons à ce que nous avons partagé à Venise.

Autant les pouvoirs publics doivent garantir que le « débat public » (consultation, concertation, dialogue, voire codécision) se réalise dans le respect de principes clairs⁴, qui impliquent tout un processus de communication publique ; autant cette communication publique doit elle-même être menée par ceux qui la décident et la font dans le respect d'engagements clairs⁵.

1 Depuis lors, début 2019, le gouvernement français a lancé une initiative de grand débat national, sur des enjeux essentiellement nationaux et sur l'ensemble du territoire. Cette initiative, vue comme une forme de réponse aux mouvements sociaux vécus dans le pays – notamment les actions des « gilets jaunes », est d'une ampleur tout à fait sans précédent. Elle appelle, toutefois, à nos yeux plus de considérations d'ordre politique que d'avis professionnel.

2 Déclaration du Conseil européen informel réunissant les chefs d'État ou de gouvernement de l'Union européenne à Sibiu, Roumanie, le 9 mai 2019. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2019/05/09/the-sibiu-declaration/>

3 Déclaration du Conseil européen informel réunissant les chefs d'État ou de gouvernement de l'Union européenne à Bratislava, République slovaque, le 16 septembre 2016. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21236/160916-bratislava-declaration-and-roadmap-fr.pdf>

Déclaration des chefs d'État ou de gouvernement réunis à Rome à l'occasion du 60ème anniversaire des Traités, le 25 mars 2017. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-767_fr.htm

4 Voyez, notamment :

- « Principes des démarches de concertation » énoncés par la Commission nationale du débat public (France). La communication publique en pratiques. La documentation française, pp. 132-133. <https://www.debatpublic.fr/>
- Pierre Zémor. Pour un meilleur débat public. Presses de Sciences Po. Paris, 140 p. Plus particulièrement « Les conditions de la participation », pp. 91-115.

5 Voir l'encadré.

La question du débat public est un enjeu majeur pour l'évolution de nos démocraties vers la « démocratie ouverte », avec tout ce que cela suppose plus largement d'accès à une information de qualité, de vérification des sources, d'aide à une presse libre et indépendante, de formation civique, de « vivre ensemble », ... Elle est aussi un enjeu et une occasion à saisir pour un renouvellement des pratiques de la communication publique et de ses métiers.

Vous vouliez qu'ils vous entendent ... ils veulent être écoutés ! Et qu'est-ce qu'on fait maintenant ?

Les autorités publiques communiquent généralement sur la chose approuvée ou l'institution (la relation avec l'utilisateur ou l'image), plus rarement sur un projet ...

... lorsqu'elles le font, elles se placent sur le terrain du débat public ... qui prend plusieurs formes :

- la concertation ... pour accepter, modifier ou refuser un projet (c'est la forme la plus courante et la plus règlementée), voire la négociation ... pour rechercher un compromis ;
- le dialogue ... un simple échange, utilisé aussi pour informer ;
- la consultation ... pour recueillir des avis des concernés ou des intéressés ;
- plus rarement, la codécision (voire la délégation de décision)

Sauf lorsque c'est règlementé, la décision de recourir au débat public pour un projet particulier est le fait du décideur public ; c'est dans ce cadre que l'administration publique est appelée à intervenir pour supporter l'action et en faire la communication...

Pour ce qui est de la communication dans le cas précis d'une consultation et de la position du communicateur public dans ce contexte, nous voudrions souligner quelques conditions :

- le décideur public doit faire preuve d'un engagement ferme et avoir un objectif précis...
- le communicateur a besoin de recevoir une mission définie, un « briefing » clair...
- la collaboration entre le décideur, l'autorité publique et son service de communication doit être effective et chacun doit y assumer son rôle spécifique... sans quoi la consultation se limite à une « simple opération de communication » !

- la « promesse » à faire au public doit être claire et tenable, l'objectif et les modalités doivent être communiqués... ils doivent être transparents et compréhensibles...
- le thème doit être documenté et la documentation mise à la disposition du public ...dans un langage accessible et en des termes permettant leur commune compréhension...
- l'accès aux informations doit être garanti...
- la confiance du public dans la promesse et la capacité de la tenir doivent être garanties...
- il n'y a pas de place pour le doute ou l'ambiguïté : la décision ne s'y prend pas, il n'y a pas de codécision...
- tout doit être mis en œuvre pour essayer d'atteindre au mieux le public concerné et l'administration et le communicateur doivent pouvoir disposer des moyens (y compris financiers) pour y parvenir...
- l'action de consultation doit répondre à un principe (minimum) d'intérêt général et d'utilité publique... son objet doit être relevant, elle ne peut pas être sans effet...
- le rapportage public est indispensable à la démarche, à la communication et à la confiance... Ce rapportage porte autant sur les résultats de la consultation que sur l'usage qu'en fait le décideur public (par une sorte de droit de suite donné aux consultés et aux citoyens)...
- la consultation et le débat public en général ne doivent pas être des actions isolées, il importe que l'autorité publique (et les communicateurs publics) intègrent cette aspect de la gouvernance publique dans un ensemble intégré et systématique de démocratie ouverte... que peuvent soutenir, notamment, les technologies civiques

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You want them to listen to you ... and they want to be heard!

By Philippe Caroyez and Vincenzo Le Voci

The evolution of public communication is profoundly linked to the evolution of public policies (and, sometimes, reciprocally). The same applies to the consultations carried out by public authorities or services in order to take decisions or to determine the direction these decisions will take.

The «modern» public consultations date back to the 1980s and retain the same character today: formal and limited, often guaranteed by law, organised as an administrative or legislative process, and in specific cases of particular areas (spatial planning, public infrastructure, environment, etc.). In this context, the role of public communicators and public communication remains instrumental, contorted and often to the detriment of the public authorities themselves.

Over time, the observed fracture between politics, public institutions and citizens, as manifested by several well-known phenomena (abstentionism, the rise of the extreme right, loss of confidence in political officials and institutions, and so on, up to the genocidal wars «observed» on our borders), has led to attempts at measures to bring authorities and citizens closer together. Here again, public communication has been invoked, alongside (frequently normative) measures such as administrative transparency, access to administrative documents, mediation services, ombudsmen, «active» publicity imposed upon public institutions, the «public service desk» (unique point of contact, post box, call centre and freephone number), and the supposed consequent shift from «citizen» to «public service customer»! It is also the golden age of huge (and costly) information campaigns on posters and billboards as well as in traditional media.

Even if – in principle – we would want to enrich representative democracy with a dose of participative democracy, truly participatory initiatives were, and remain(!), rare and often laborious. Moreover, they have always been limited to (only) territorial levels, which are certainly the «closest» to citizens and associations, but also the most confined. If we exclude referenda (which by the way do not take place in all countries of the European Union), public consultations run by public authorities on subjects of national importance are few and far between: the only one that comes to mind is the British consultation on the reform of the National Health Service.

In this regard, to return to the irrevocable sentence of Pierre Rosanvallon: democracy is not yet complete. And so, more and more voices (outside of intermediary bodies and traditional pressure groups) are being raised today, demanding to be heard and to be part of the decision-making processes, such as about the fuel tax (at the root of the «yellow vests» movement) or in calling for radical environmental measures (the origin of numerous non-structured movements across Europe).

Almost concomitantly, following the French government initiative¹, several EU member states have organised (forms of) consultations with their citizens on some major issues, ahead of the European elections in June 2019. At the same time, the European Commission has conducted an online survey accessible to all.

In November 2018, in Venice, we saw the examples of several countries in this regard, and the role played in this framework by the communication services, with essential information ranging from the holding of these consultations, and even the organisation thereof, to the dissemination of their results.

Nevertheless, we have to wonder what this has led to or will lead to; strangely, the recent « Sibiu Declaration»² – which could have been one of the outcomes – said nothing, despite the expectations raised by the Declarations of Bratislava and Rome³!

And that brings us back to what we shared in Venice.

The public authorities need to guarantee that «public debate» (consultation, cooperation, dialogue, indeed co-decision) takes place with respect for clear principles⁴, which all involve a process of public communication. Similarly, this public communication itself needs to be conducted by those who decide upon it and done with respect for clear commitments⁵.

The question of public debate is a major issue for the evolution of our democracies to «open democracies» with all that this entails in the broadest sense: access to high-quality information, verification of sources, support of a free and independent

1 At the start of 2019, the French government launched the 'great national debate' on the main issues across the nation. This initiative, seen as a form of response to the social movements taking place in the country – notably the actions of the “yellow vests” – is of an unprecedented size. Yet, to our mind, it raises considerations that are political in nature than professional.

2 Declaration of the European Council's informal meeting of EU heads of state and government in Sibiu, Romania, 9 May 2019
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/09/the-sibiu-declaration/>

3 Declaration of the European Council's informal meeting of EU heads of state and government in Bratislava, Slovakia, 16 September 2016.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21250/160916-bratislava-declaration-and-roadmapen16.pdf>
Declaration of the heads of state or government meeting in Rome for the 60th anniversary of the Treaties, 25 March 2017.
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-767_fr.htm

4 See, notably :

- Principes des démarches de concertation” from the Nationale Commission of Public Debate (France). La communication publique en pratiques. La documentation française, pp. 132-133.
<https://www.debatpublic.fr/>
- Pierre Zémor. Pour un meilleur débat public. Presses de Sciences Po. Paris, 140 p. In particular “Les conditions de la participation”, pp. 91-115.

5 See boxed text.

press, civil training, and «living together». It is also an opportunity that must be seized, in order to renew the practices of public communication and its professions.

So you wanted them to listen to you ... and they want to be heard! Which begs the question: what are we going to do now?

Public authorities generally communicate on the thing approved or institution (the relationship with the user or the image), more rarely on a project...

... when they do so, they place themselves on the field of public debate... which takes several forms:

- concertation... to accept, modify or refuse a project (this is the most common and most regulated form), or even negotiation... to seek a compromise;
- dialogue ... a simple exchange, also used to inform;
- consultation ... to gather opinions from the persons concerned or interested parties
- more rarely, co-decision (or even delegation of decision)

Except when it is regulated, the decision to use public debate for a particular project is made by the public decision-maker; it is within this framework that the public administration is called upon to intervene to support the action and communicate it...

With regard to communication in the specific case of a consultation and the position of the public communicator in this context, we would like to highlight some conditions:

- the public decision-maker must show a firm commitment and have a specific objective....
- the communicator needs to receive a well-defined mission, a clear "briefing" ...
- collaboration between the decision-maker, the public authority and its communication service must be effective and each must assume its specific role... otherwise consultation is limited to a "simple communication operation"!

- the "promise" to be made to the public must be clear and tenable, the objective and modalities must be communicated... they must be transparent and understandable...
- the theme must be documented and the documentation made available to the public... in accessible language and in terms that allow for a common understanding...
- access to information must be guaranteed...
- public confidence in the promise and the ability to keep it must be guaranteed...
- there is no room for doubt or ambiguity: the decision is not taken there, there is no co-decision...
- every effort must be made to try to reach the public concerned as effectively as possible and the administration and the communicator must have the means (including financial) to do so...
- the consultation action must comply with a (minimum) principle of general interest and public utility... its subject must be relevant, it cannot be without effect...
- public reporting is essential to the process, communication and trust... This reporting covers both the results of the consultation and the use made of it by the public decision-maker (through a kind of follow-up right given to the consulted and the citizens)...
- consultation and public debate in general should not be isolated actions, it is important that the public authority (and public communicators) integrate this aspect of public governance into an integrated and systematic set of open democracy... that can be supported, in particular, by civic technologies



Outcome of the Club of Venice seminar “The Role of Communication in Crisis Management: Planning, Coordination, Cooperation”

Athens, 5-6 April 2019

The seminar was introduced by **Lefteris Kretsos**, Deputy Minister of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, who welcomed the participants and praised the consolidated cooperation between the Hellenic governmental authorities and the Club of Venice (since its foundation in 1986, two plenary meetings and three seminars of the Club have been organised in Greece).

Lefteris Kretsos stressed the need to increase collaboration among all the key players tackling the migration and the refugee phenomena as one, with due respect to legislation but also to the human rights (referring to Pope Francis' appreciation for Greece's humanitarian approach), and to speak to citizen truly and clearly, refraining from taking divisive positions.

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In her welcome statement, **Foteini Pantiora** (Secretary for Crisis Management Communication) recalled the indelible marks that the recent environmental disasters (extensive fires) have left among the Greek population and stressed the need to increasingly share expertise and best practice and to exploit technology to attain higher crisis management standards. **Vincenzo Le Voci** (Secretary-General of the Club of Venice) highlighted the importance of digital technology as a lever for successful strategic governmental communication in times of crisis and underlined that adequate planning, transparency and an integrated approach with clear definition of roles are the ingredients to interact successfully with citizens.

The event was structured as follows:

- Full-day on Friday 5th April, focused on:
 1. Capacity/capability building in crisis communication as essential part of coordination in crisis management
 2. Civil protection mechanisms in progress: communication, training, monitoring
 3. Crisis communication facing environmental, health and economy-related contingencies
 4. Communication and crises threats: mobilisation against disinformation
- Saturday 6th April: focus on migration
 1. Field visit to the Schisto accommodation centre for refugees and migrants
 2. Debate on managing and communication migration

Friday 5th April

The morning session on the Member States' coordination and communication capacity was moderated by **Erik den Hoedt** (NL Director of Public Information and Communication), who introduced the panel outlining the lack of coordination and the need to strengthen connections among the key players and with crisis experts.

The key notes sparking the debate were delivered by:

- Professor **Manolis Plionis**, Professor at the University of Thessaloniki and President of the BoD at the National Observatory of Athens, touched upon global climate change somber perspectives and the impact on society (the overall ecosystems' capacity to support products and services critical to the survival and well being of human populations; increases in coastal urban population and land-use practices; pollution and increasing cases of extreme weather with risks for human health and high challenges for the sustainability of healthy ecosystems). Hence, the need to multiply efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination of monitoring, risk assessment, prevention and management at national and cross-border level and throughout integrated, multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral management in collaboration with the EU institutions.
- **Maria Zuber**, Head of the Humanitarian Aid Office at the European Commission DG ECHO, presented the RescEU Civil Protection Mechanism (RescEU) (300 emergencies from 2001 to 2017, 20 in 2018 with the participation of 17 Member States) and its upgraded legal framework (adopted on 7 March 2019 and entered into force on 20 March 2019, outlining its different stages (activation of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), possible deployment of EU Civil Protection team, preventive training, situation awareness (knowledge of capacities), the disasters risk management cycle and the preparedness and response plan. Now the ad hoc communication strategy needs to be developed. In this context, key messages (Solidarity - Effectiveness - Add now and as one - Cooperation) will be instrumental in creating a positive narrative for the EU and serve as a concrete example for the its added value in providing life-saving support to its citizens and underline the urgency to strengthen EU civil protection via RescEU.

Elpida Chlimintza, in Videoconference from the Civil Protection Unit of the Directorate Justice and Home Affairs of the Council of the EU where she works as seconded national expert

coordinating the Crisis Communication Network (CCN) of the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/29699/web_ipcr.pdf), recalled the crisis response mechanism put in place under the coordination of the Council of the EU and IPCR as a “tool” in the hands of the Presidency to coordinate the political response to major cross sectoral and complex crises, dealing with major natural or man-made cross-sectorial disasters, as well as acts of terrorism. In this context, she focused on the regular exchange of data between Member States, Institutions and EU Agencies and to the continuous analysis of reports on trends and media monitoring within the web communication network and to the ad hoc meetings convened by the rotating presidency in Brussels.

Daphne Schelpe, from the Belgian Government Crisis Management Center, presented the mechanism put in place to alert, inform and dialogue with the citizens, focusing on the role of the Crisis Management Center as a national coordination hub for all work processes in crisis scenarios, on the Team D5 created in 2013 (50 volunteer professionals from local or national administrations, trained to act in times of crises, on the BE-Alert System (7M€ budget) set up in 2017 to combine strategy, technology and sensitization planning, created as a secure multichannel alert platform supporting local and national communities working 7/7, 24h/24 for the population, on the campaigns launched to raise citizens' awareness such as the alert mechanism in case of nuclear plants incidents, on emergency alert kits distributed, and on the contact center operation 1771.

Foteini Pantiora recalled the imminent launch of the New Greek National Authority in this field and stressed the need for comprehensive communication plans.

The exchange of information included interventions from **Sophie Michaelides** (Director of the Cyprus Press and Information Office), **Andreas Steindl** (Deputy Head of the Spokesperson's Office at the Austrian PM Office), **Elena Pérez Villanueva** (Deputy Director of the Oficina de Información Diplomática, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain) and **Erik den Hoedt** focused on the national alert/crisis communication systems (AT, CY, ES, NL), mobilisation of analysts but also networks of volunteers, exploiting the coverage of social media (Twitter, Facebook, Google), the expertise of other professional web platforms (such as “Coosto”) and the performance of the SMS circuits.

The afternoon session was moderated by **Linda Jakobson**, Communication Specialist from Latvia, who recalled the tragic

emergency of the collapse of a supermarket's roof in her country, which was a critical communication test for public authorities, as well as the Club of Venice experience in Lesbos during the study visit and seminar in April 2016 and the strong impact of the New Zealand Prime Minister's behaviour sympathizing with the victims of the recent terrorist attack in her country.

Linda introduced a key-note of Professor **George Pleios**, Professor and Director of the Laboratory for Social Research in Mass Media at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, connected in videoconference.

Professor Pleios underlined that a disaster is not a crisis, but can produce it. It is the political/ideological orientation of media and the journalists' expertise in the field that can make a big difference in the impact on citizens. In emergency cases, the most innovative communication tools may not necessarily function and traditional communication means can sometimes be the only available “messenger”. The key issue remains organise efficient media monitoring systems to enable public authorities to detect fake news promptly and deconstruct them. At the same time, it is crucial to “frame” news, analyse societal consequences of the disinformation threats and occurrences, and find remedies focusing on facts.

The discussion on how to manage natural emergencies such as environmental disasters and contingencies/consequences of social nature (health, economy, public security) enabled the participants to share feedback and comments on the most recent crises experienced in Europe in the latest years.

Feedback was shared on initiatives such as training for journalists (Spain and Netherlands). Specific needs were underlined such as 1) getting knowledge of the events; 2) having trustworthy and qualified players on the scene; 3) (for the governments) need to focus on the big picture, involving professionals and investing on expertise, getting to know better how the media operate and seeking common ground to build credible interfaces, also in case of need for restrictions to the news; 4) (for the media) play an honest broker's part, never forgetting the primary role to inform citizens and prevent the “story” from damaging the scenario.

The recipe for public communicators to grow in efficiency lies in the capacity to build resilience through coordinated cooperative mechanisms. **Anthony Zacharzewski** (Founder and Director of The Democratic Society), focused on the current implementation of the Charter on Shaping Professionalism in Communication

subscribed by the Club in Vilnius in June 2018 and recalled the recently established working group on capacity/capability building composed of 30 experts who will work collaboratively to enhance, upgrade and develop capacity and capability for government communications and more broadly government as a whole, building on the best work elsewhere in Europe. The aim is to facilitate strengthening abilities to use new technology, techniques and citizens' involvement/engagement, demonstrating an integrated approach. This will consequently enable administrations to reinforce their capacity to transform themselves and modernize mechanisms to deliver their services and communicate more effectively.

Anthony announced an initiative being promoted by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) : a survey on which the OECD Open Government Division will propose to the Club to cooperate (to be announced at the next plenary of the Club foreseen in Montenegro in June 2019).

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In connection with social instabilities and threats to the environmental order, the sub-session on Disinformation was based on the state of play depicted by the presentations of **Philippe Kamaris** (acting Head of the European Parliament Office in Greece), who outlined the risks and challenges for the ongoing EP information campaign (raising extremism and racism, being fed by scenarios of crisis such as the migration issue; proliferation of hostile websites on the Brexit horizon; algorithms often misused to boost radical contexts, images manipulated by means of highly sophisticated techniques; increased negative narrative through the social media, shift from mass-media to private media messaging). Philippe highlighted the important role of the EEAS Stratcom Task Forces to counter the negative impact of disinformation and stressed the need to reinforce cooperation with the Commission and the EEAS, as well as with the industries, to reinforce the control of malicious platforms, support investigative journalism, cooperate with the journalists, maintain a human touch in communicating at all levels, invest in media literacy and webinars. Cooperation with Member States is crucial, given their responsibility in the field of cybersecurity investments and planning.

Tina Zournatzi (Head of the Strategic Communication Unit at the European Commission DG Communication) outlined the recent milestones of the EU's recent mobilisation to counter disinformation, focusing on the joint EEAS-Commission Action Plan presented in December and three recent key steps: the Rapid Alert System, the Code of Practice and the network of specialists/practitioners. She also stressed the need to reinforce collaboration with the web industries in the identification of illegal platforms and to ensure continuity in the myth debunking on the ground. Finally, she highlighted the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Protects campaign (https://europa.eu/euprotects/content/homepage_en) that is based, among others, on cross-border cooperation, the use of local "ordinary" people as multipliers, on the stipulation of media partnerships in 21 countries.

Stanislav Matějca (Head of the Strategic Communication Unit at the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Slovakia), **Claus Hörr** (Director at the Austrian PM Office) and **Žana Tarase** (Head of the Division "Services for Citizens" of the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministry) shared recent national experiences: respectively in Slovakia (contribution to the Rapid Alert System - mapping exercise - and the creation of a Task Force of national coordinators), in Austria (joint co-operation inter-ministerial/Intelligence/Intelligence/NGOs/main web platforms in the awareness-raising) and in Lithuania (debunking of Russian disinformation: national campaign through an interministerial and interagency action plan based on storytelling, to raise international awareness of the Lithuania's Freedom Fighters, through an internationally-recognised trustworthy narrative).



Saturday 6th April

This session was entirely focused on communication on refugees and migration.

The field visit to Schisto refugees' camp was impressive. The Club was briefed by the Coordinator of the camp (infrastructures, day-to-day life, assistance, education, health care, psychological aid...), which is a temporary home to refugees mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, who outlined the main organizational aspects of the facility, on the state of play of refugees' day-to-day life and the impact on the local community.

The debate post-field visit was sparked by a key-note from **Dimitris Vitsas**, Minister for Migration Policy of the Hellenic Republic. It was a passionate speech. The Minister outlined the situation in the country: 73 000 asylum seekers, of which 7 000 accommodated in hotels and the rest in 32 camps or in local communities (*our input: a) 650 hosted in Diavata, near Thessaloniki, where false expectations of borders being reopened in North Greece generated a mass reaction against the police authorities during the two days of our seminar; b) good memories from the 2017 seminar study trip, asylum seekers positive example of integration in Livadia*).

The Minister underlined that Greece remains under fire, in the spotlight in particular because of the low percentage of returns (1,2%) and for being the 1st country in terms of number of asylum applications compared to its population. He urged Institutions and Member States to help distribute responsibilities reasonably, but meanwhile to go to the roots of the problem and do the best to prevent further uncontrollable migrations. He stressed the need to continue to cooperate in countering disinformation and reinforce cooperation in fighting traffickers and work together to adopt a sustainable Common European Asylum System and a Common Return System and at the same time to reinforce the capacities to integrate migrants into our society, multiplying joint efforts in the field of education and supporting very positive instruments such as the HELIOS programme

Minister Vitsas' speech was followed by an intervention of **Sophie Michaelides** (Director of the Government Press and Information Office in Cyprus), who shared the same concerns with regard to the amplitude of the phenomenon (40 000 migrants currently living in Cyprus) and underline that communicators are called to act as interface to convince political authorities and institutions to do more and face reality, share responsibilities and show solidarity.

The session included a key-note of **Danila Chiaro** (Project Manager at the Mediterranean Regional Coordination Hub of

the International Center for Migration Policy Development – ICMPD), who on behalf of the Regional Coordinator **Julien Simon** presented the Center's mobilisation to help overcome misleading perceptions and support evidence based policy-making in this field. In this context, Danila recalled that the Eurobarometer commissioned by the European Parliament in 2018 ("Parlemeter") identified immigration as the top priority in the path towards European Elections of 2019. She mentioned that, in the executive summary of the survey, "*Institutional gridlock, a lack of a shared pro-European identity, centrifugal politics in such important areas as economic policy and migration-related issues - these catchwords represent just a few of the many available examples illustrating the 'crisis discourse' around the EU*". She also draw the attention to the increasingly polarised debate and media coverage and consequent language drift and outlined the three pillars of the ICMPD activity to implement objective narrative on migration: an Open Media Hub, the Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration (OPAM) and the activities carried out in partnership (such as the 1st Workshop of EuroMed communicators coorganised with the Club of Venice in Tunis in September 2018) (*our input: the 2nd workshop is foreseen in a EU Member State in autumn 2019*). Danila stressed the need for a rebalanced narrative on migration, engaging in dialogue, developing knowledge and support evidence-based action and outlined two important initiatives: the Migration Media Award to recognize young journalism excellence in the EuroMediterranean Region and the recent study for journalists, communicators and policy-makers: "Public attitudes on migration: rethinking how people perceive migration" – an analysis of existing opinion polls in the Euromediterranean Region.

Subsequently, in the context of the abovementioned EU-Protects, **Tina Zournatzi** presented two of the recently produced video clips aiming to debunk false myths and invited the national authorities to broadcast them in their own countries and to promote the EU's information campaign.

Aleksandra Dimic, Head of cooperation with international organizations and communication with the public in the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Serbian Government, outlined the coordinated mechanisms put in place to take care of the 600 000 migrants who have transited the country and the 4 500 who are still residing in Serbia, hosted in 19 camps (now only 16 of them are still operational since the number of migrants has slightly dropped): training, education, socially meaningful activities. Youngsters are the brightest example of integration thanks in particular to the efficient school programming. Media relations are challenging (reports are showing mixed feelings and sometimes show confusion in language. The public authorities are mobilised to

organise workshops with the aim to increase opportunities for interaction and dialogue in this regard.

Aleksandra's contribution was followed by **Ryan Schroeder**, Regional Press and Communication Officer from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) who described the current challenges of its organisation in a world still threatened by misperception and imbalances in the debate. Hence, the need to "unite data and evidence", to reduce the risk for communication to be "politically electrified" and to continue to develop content for journalists highlighting also the EU's mobilisation to find viable solutions on this topic.

The Club also welcomed the contribution to the seminar by **Rosa Cavallaro** (Audiovisual Directorate of Italy's Regulatory Authority for Communication) on cooperation in countering hate speech (*our input: his presentation shared with the Club members through the Venicenet platform*).

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The participants agreed with the need to strengthen cooperation in countering disinformation through more coordinated efforts and to continue to intensify the exchanges of reliable data and communication instruments that could help increase effectiveness of the EU's, its Member States and its neighbour countries' action in this field.

Finally, **Kostas Spiropoulos**, documentary producer and director of the Institute "Storydoc" (www.storydoc.gr), presented his latest project: an inter-cultural action titled "Home New Home", aiming to address the refugee crisis and record it in a short documentary films. Syrian, Afghans, Iraqis and Palestinians refugees, together with citizens from the welcoming countries, took part I workshops on how to make a short documentary in six cities that received refugee flows: Athens and Lesbos in Greece, Izmir in Turkey, Tyr in Lebanon, Amman in Jordan and Ramallah in Palestine. Most of the participants caught the camera for the first time. Everybody was educated in cinematic narrative in intensive seminars by established directors and academics in schools, universities and refugee camps (<http://www.homenewhome.gr/index.php/en/>).

The Club of Venice envisages to pursue its analysis of communication trends on migration in the coming months, in particular cooperating with the IPCR CCN for the exchange of relevant trends and monitoring of the phenomenon, with the ICMPD in the organization of the 2nd Mediterranean workshop (after Tunis, in September 2018) foreseen in late autumn 2019 and in key activities such as media monitoring, mapping exercises of narrative spread and citizens' sentiment, and with the European institutions on the pursue of the information campaigns on EU-protects.



Athens: focus on migration narrative

By Julien Simon



Managing and communicating migration: ICMPD's experience in the Mediterranean

Club of Venice Seminar
The Role of Communication in Crisis Management

Athens, 06.04.2019

Julien Simon, Migration Dialogue and Cooperation Directorate Athens, 06.04.2019



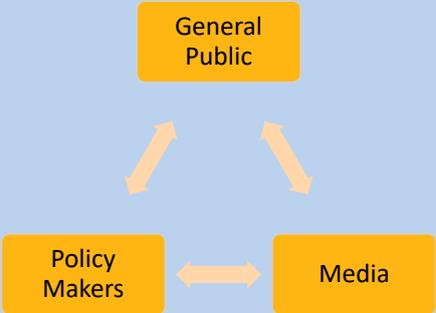
Understanding Communication on Migration

The Narrative of Migration

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy



Understanding Communication on Migration



Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy



Understanding Communication on Migration

Essential to overcome misleading perceptions and support Evidence Based Policy Making

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

13



It is not new!

Report "Migration and public perception", Bureau of European Policy Advisers, European Commission, October 2006.

- "Public perceptions of migration may strongly influence the effectiveness with which migration can be managed".
- "On the negative side public perception has the capacity to block progress on developing effective policies. While the fears of citizens have legitimate roots, they are not always based on a fair evaluation of the opportunities and risks associated with migration. ..."

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy



Now on top of Political Agenda

Parlemeter 2018* identify IMMIGRATION as the TOP PRIORITY in the EUROPEAN ELECTIONS of 2019



"Institutional gridlock, a lack of a shared pro-European identity, centrifugal politics in such important areas as economic policy and migration-related issues – these catchwords represent just a few of the many available examples illustrating the 'crisis discourse' around the EU".

* September 2018, Eurobarometer

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

Language matters!

- “migration” as synonym for “irregular immigration”
- Inter-changeable refugee/migrants – smuggler/trafficker
- expat vs. migrant
- mobility vs. migration

Bottom line: migration is them, not us

Language matters!

Effectively combating the causes of migration

The Guardian website screenshot shows several headlines related to migration, including "Why are white people expats when the rest of us are immigrants?" and "Perceptions are not reality: Things the world gets wrong".

Message matters!

- The migration “crisis”, the refugee “crisis” - 2006 vs. 2016,
- “migration” as threat, danger, invasion, chaos, drama
- The migration problem
- Combating the causes

Bottom line: Migration is something we endure.

Message matters!

A collage of media covers illustrating migration-related messages. It includes National Geographic's "THE NEW EUROPEANS: How waves of immigrants are reshaping a continent" and L'Expres' "Le vrai coût de l'immigration".

Image matters!

A collage of The Economist magazine covers. One prominent cover features the headline "The magic of diasporas" with an image of people in a boat. Another cover shows "Crossing the line" with silhouettes of people.

What do we do?

```

    graph TD
      A[Narrative on Migration] --> B[OPEN MEDIA HUB]
      A --> C[OPAM OBSERVATORY OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO MIGRATION]
      A --> D[Policy Makers]
      B <--> C
      C <--> D
      B <--> D
      B --> E[Communication]
      C --> E
      D --> E
  
```

The diagram illustrates a feedback loop between Narrative on Migration, Media (via Open Media Hub), Public Attitudes (via OPAM), and Policy Makers, all leading to Communication.

ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Re-balancing the narrative

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

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ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Re-balancing the narrative

How does the media on both sides of the Mediterranean report on migration?

A study by journalists for journalists and policy-makers

Public attitudes on migration:
rethinking how people perceive migration

An analysis of existing opinion polls in the Euro-Mediterranean region

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

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ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Re-balancing the narrative

```

    graph TD
      A[Increase in issue importance] --> B[Activation of emotional systems]
      B --> C[Stronger attitudes on the issue]
      C --> D[Influence of policy-makers according to issue]
      D --> E[Changes in public policy]
      D --> F[Other political preferences: political, economic, security]
      G[Young according to the issue] --> D
      H[Electronic networks affected by issue] --> D
      D --> I[Changes in public policy]
  
```

Crises increase issue importance of migration;
When migration becomes a more important issues far right parties gain.
Media reporting tends to follow public attitudes.
People tend to change their attitude when they are emotional.

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

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ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Re-balancing the narrative

- Engage in dialogue
- Develop knowledge
- Support evidence based action

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

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ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Re-balancing the narrative

2018 MIGRATION MEDIA AWARD

For Journalistic Excellence on Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean region

Name of speaker | Directorate | Place, dd.mm.yyyy

17

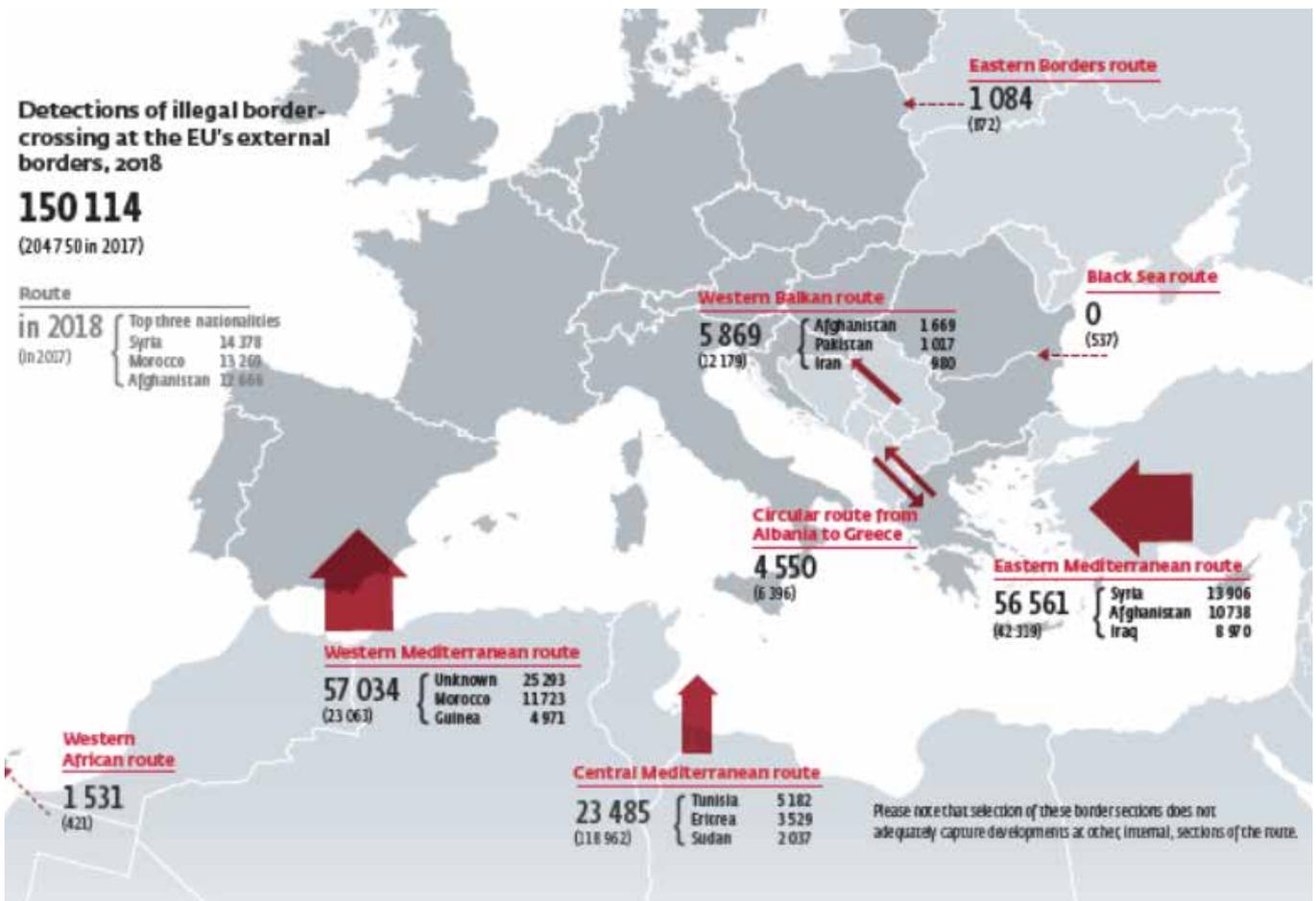
Call for Action

While praise worthy, these efforts remain far from being sufficient in the face of this major challenge.

Where do we go from here?

Thank you for your attention!

Julien SIMON
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Athens: EU Civil Protection Mechanism in progress

By Maria Zuber

Union Civil Protection Mechanism and its upgraded legal framework (rescEU)

Maria Zuber
European Commission, DG ECHO

Joint Seminar on the role of communication in crisis management, planning, coordination, cooperation
5 April 2019

"We need more solidarity not for solidarity's sake but for the sake of efficiency. This is true in the case of our civil protection mechanism. When fires rage in one European country, all of Europe burns. The most striking images from this summer were not only those of the formidable fires but of the Swedish people greeting Polish firefighters coming to their aid - Europe at its best."

Jean-Claude Juncker, State of the Union speech
12 September 2018

From this... ... to this

...through coordination of assistance in Brussels at the ERCC...

EU Civil Protection Mechanism Activation

Natural or man-made disaster inside and outside the EU

Affected country requests assistance from the Mechanism through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)

Participating States offer assistance, experts, teams, and equipment

Once the offer is accepted, the offer is accepted

ERCC coordinates the deployment and actions of assistance

ERCC may decide an EU Civil Protection team of experts

ERCC may decide an EU Civil Protection team of experts

EU Civil Protection Mechanism - Decision #PEEP1331/18/UEU

Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)

24/7
300 emergencies

17 participating states have contributed to 20 emergencies

Items and services	National assistance
500+ firefighters	1 728 experts
30 fire trucks	for 8500 people
9 joint teams of experts	2.2 million water quantities saved
11 firefighting planes	24 million litres of water dropped
6 firefighting helicopters	76 forest operations
2 water production machines	2 million litres of purified water
2 support planes for boats	13 operations and incidents

#EUcivilpro

the Mechanism is also about PREVENTION and PREPAREDNESS

... and about TRAINING and EXERCISES

DG ECHO Situational Awareness Team - 01/04/2018

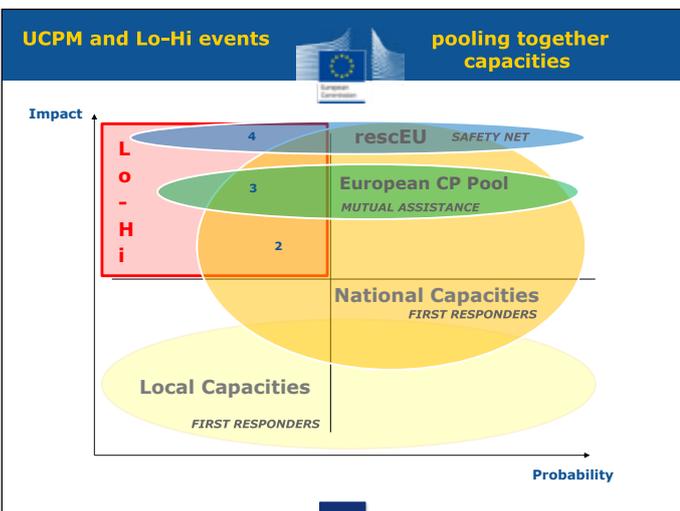
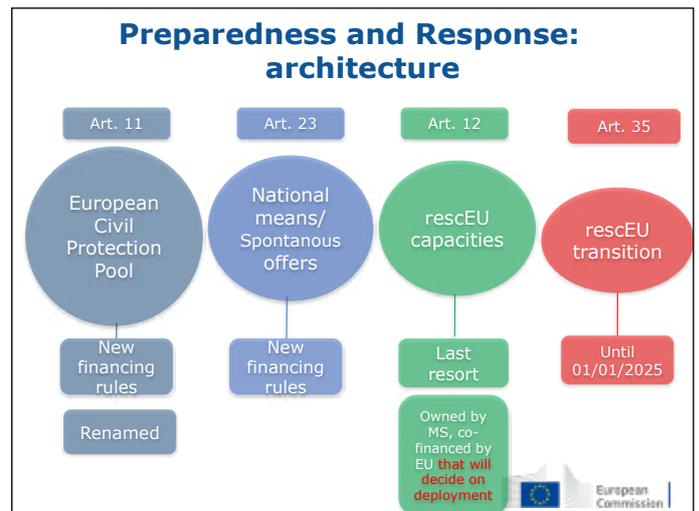
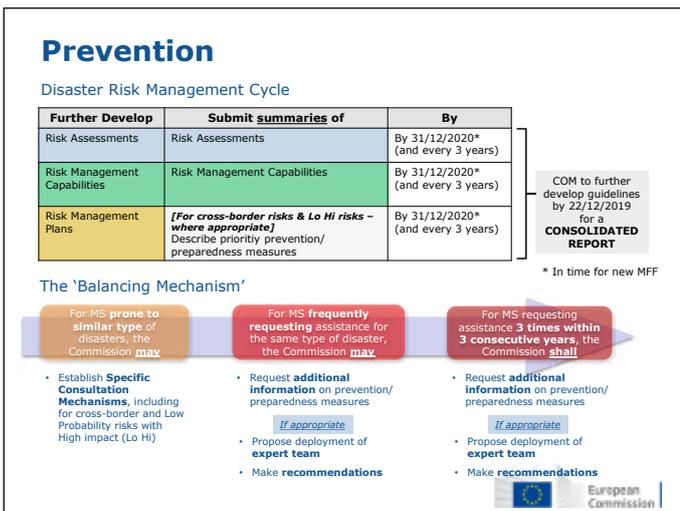
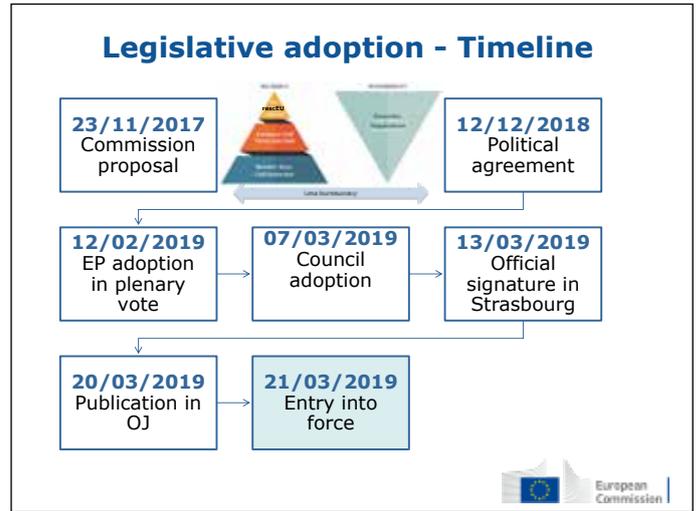
European Civil Protection Pool - Offered capacities

Offered response capacities: 106
Participating States: 23

Response Assistance

Copyright: European Union, 2018. Not created by the ERCC Situational Awareness Team. Sources: DG ECHO, ERCC, ERCC. The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the European Union.

European Commission



Preparedness & Response

Development costs

	European Civil Protection Pool	rescEU transition Until 1/01/2025	rescEU capacities
Capacities	• All-hazard (pre-defined modules)	[To be defined in Implementing Act]. Initial focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphibious aircrafts • Helicopters 	[To be defined in Implementing Act]. Special focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aerial FF means, • CBRN • Medical emergencies
Financing	• 75% Adaptation costs • 75% Repair costs Commitment to the Pool ranging from 3 to 10 years depending on the amount received through the adaptation grant.	• 75% of stand-by costs	• From 80% to 90% of total estimated costs • 100% for capacities addressing Lo HI
Procedure	• Certification	• Direct Grants to Participating States	• Direct Grants to Participating States • Joint Procurement

Deployment costs

Art. 23	Inside EU (including PS)	Outside EU
Spontaneous offers	75% Transport	75% Transport
Voluntary Pool	75% Operational costs	75% Transport
rescEU capacities	75% Operational costs [100% Lo Hi]	100% Operational costs

Preparedness & Response

Art. 13 **Union Knowledge Network:**

- Facilitate exchange of best practices, expertise in the area of management, and personnel (including volunteers).
- Stimulate research and innovation
- Further international cooperation, in particular with neighbourhood on training

Art. 15/16

Request for Assistance to be closed automatically after **90 days** unless otherwise justified



Visibility:

Reinforcing the visibility dimension: making the UCPM more tangible for EU citizens

Art. 20(a)

EU emblem in rescEU capacities (also in transition phase)



Communication strategy to be developed



Recognition for long-standing commitment



Key priorities and timeline

Key priorities	Timeline	Pre-requisite
1. rescEU transition Ensure that the national capacities are operational as rescEU before the next forest fire season	Before the forest fire season 2019	Legal basis: 1 st Implementing Decision (April 2019) Earmarked budget: revised AWP/ revised response Decision (April 2019) Agreements with Member States (May 2019)
2. rescEU Aerial Fire Fighting (AFF) capacities Ensure that additional AFF means are available in the medium to long-term as rescEU.	2019 and onwards	Legal basis: 1 st and 2 nd Implementing Decision Earmarked budget: revised AWP/ revised response Decision EU plan on needs EU wide
3. other rescEU capacities Define other capacities (other than AFF) that are needed as rescEU: medical response/ CBRN	2019 and onwards	Legal basis: 2 nd /3 rd Implementing Decision Earmarked budget: revised AWP/ revised response Decision Policy discussions on further rescEU capacities needed EU wide



Thank you

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For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



European Commission - Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO)



EU humanitarian aid @eu_echo

Outcome of the London Seminar: Truth, Trends, and Tech.

London, 13-14 December 2018

By Alex Aiken

On 14 December 2018, the Government Communication Services of the United Kingdom joined with the Club of Venice to welcome Europe's leading government communicators together in London for the "Club of Venice Seminar: Truth, Trends, and Tech." The Club of Venice has offered an informal space for discussions and debates about communications trends and challenges, as well as our professional approach. Its purpose is to stimulate exchange of information and experience in all aspects of public information and communications. Its members are the leading public service communicators in Europe. Since its founding, the Club of Venice has offered a safe space for frank and open exchange of ideas. In this spirit, this publication shares the collective wisdom of the participants of this seminar. The thoughts and advice from this session are shared without attribution, unless with the express permission of the distinguished guests.

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TACKLING TRUTH, TECH AND TRENDS

In its thirty years, the Club of Venice has witnessed a transformation in the way in which we, as government communicators, engage - a communications revolution. This revolution has democratised the spread of both information and disinformation, bringing new challenges. Our media audiences often crave an instant response, which doesn't allow audiences a real sense of perspective. Beyond technological innovation, new security risks and threats also pose challenges. In many ways, governments find it harder than ever to communicate reliable and relevant messages.

In the past 25 years, internet access has increased dramatically. Twenty-five years ago, almost no one was connected to the web. Now, 3 billion people - nearly half of the world's population - are connected and this number is expected to grow to 5 billion people in the next five years. According to Google, in one internet minute:

- over 400 hours of video are uploaded on YouTube every minute.
- there are around 3.5m Google Searches
- around \$750 million of online shopping is purchased
- there are 900,000 Facebook logins
- 340,000 apps downloaded

In our increasingly complex world, many people feel unrecognised, feel a lack of control over their own lives, and feel a sense of insecurity. Trust in government has decreased and individuals often rely more on themselves. To increase trust in government, government communicators should seek to build connection with people by listening and understanding. Strong and clear communications to explain a complicated society can help citizens to understand policy, even when they feel

increased lack of control over their lives. When addressing our citizens concerns over lack of security, communicators should tell the genuine story to our citizens instead of telling them not to worry.

International cooperation is a vital factor to cut through the noise and adapt to trends; strengthening cooperation, planning and coordination in resilience building, a common task. Strategic communications isn't just about addressing issues and informing; it is also about engaging and listening to and understanding your audience. This will enable us to have a clear objective to address.

As individual government communicators, we must master storytelling. We all know you can't just 'trot out' the facts. This can be a challenge when we are pushed to highlight a policy or political message, as we design communications. As communicators, we must change the way we frame issues. We cannot lie or manipulate. We shouldn't play with the public's anger, but need to find a way to engage the public's emotions. People have a need to belong to something - a community, and ultimately, building communities is the job of a communicator.

Equally, for a communicator, our job is also to tell people things they don't want to hear. In the age of 'populism, post-truth, disinformation,' people don't necessarily want to hear the truth. As a government communicator, our role is to share important information and "tell the truth: well told."

Lessons learned

Communications directors and senior specialists from the EU Member States, institutions, and candidate countries, joined by leading marketing experts, technology industry representatives, and distinguished academics, found nine main lessons learned from the London seminar:

1. As individual government communicators, we must master storytelling. We all know you can't just 'trot out' the facts.
2. With the rise of filter bubbles and new media, government communicators have a greater need to focus on practical measures to tackle the threat of disinformation.
3. Given the complexity of the threat of disinformation, government communications must have a clear mandate and an understanding of their role - as facilitators rather than arbitrators of truth.
4. Government should support and expand its rapid response assessment capability to foster a culture of early detection, fact checking and positive messaging by reaching out to ambivalent audiences with clear and simple language.



5. In preparing and building resilience to disinformation campaigns, government communicators should audit the capabilities of our organisations. We need to understand our strengths as well as our vulnerabilities.
6. Governments need a youth communications and engagement strategy that recognises all the varied social channels that younger audiences follow. Younger generations could be harder to reach than older generations through traditional communications channels and approaches.
7. Governments need to develop and enhance their insight and analysis capability, particularly to analyze social media.
8. Government communicators should focus on developing a strong, consistent brand.
9. Collective action and international collaboration is key in addressing the complex and international challenges that we face.

London and Vilnius charters

In March 2017 and in June 2018, the Club of Venice gathered in London and Vilnius respectively to discuss the communications challenges facing Europe. These challenges included rise in nationalism and extremism and the need to regain the public's trust and confidence in government. Disinformation and propaganda were threats to destabilize the political and information environments within Europe. The new digital landscape, largely unregulated or self-regulated, required government communicators to take new approaches.

In London, and reiterated again in Vilnius, Club of Venice members came together to outline common interests and goals in two summary charters. In essence, they agreed to enhance cooperation in strategic communications, promote, spread, defend democratic values, work together to fight disinformation, promote resilience to respond to growing nationalism, extremism, and populism, and collaborate on training and insight analysis. The charters from these meetings highlight the collective commitment to collective action to address common challenges.

Truth, trust, and disinformation

Disinformation is a multifaceted and complex communications threat that is constantly shifting. From video face swaps to voice-morphing, advances in disinformation have the power to distort democracy, erode trust, undermine consensus on important issues and threaten public security. Disinformation is moving from public sources to more private sources such as Whatsapp. With the rise of filter bubbles and new media,

*government communicators have a greater need to focus on the practical measures to tackle the threat of disinformation. The challenge as government communicators is identifying what the role of government is in the fight against disinformation and what deterrence measures work effectively. **As we begin to draw the red lines and define the criteria for this evolving threat, a tension arises, particularly for the state, between limiting the spread of false information and responding to accusations of censorship.***

One of the primary issues we have with disinformation is one of terminology. "Fake News" has become an umbrella term that signifies everything from negative rumours to Twitter bots. Fake News, such as spoof entertainment video, can have no malicious intent. Disinformation is a campaign of intentionally false or distorted news, which spreads on the internet both massively and artificially. It can be the artificial enhancement of certain issues and use of public space in a way that means credible voices are crowded out. Misinformation and information manipulation can be equally damaging.

The threat of disinformation goes beyond national borders. The interplay between hostile state actors and local actors should not be ignored particularly as the relationship is often co-dependent. An effective way of dealing with state sponsored disinformation is adopting a holistic approach. This involves assessing both the external threat as well as our own internal weaknesses. If there was no disinformation would the core issues in our society still exist? Understanding internal vulnerabilities and societal divisions, such as migration and healthcare, can be an effective way of detecting fault lines. While it is important to know our adversaries, it is equally important to know our partners and ourselves. Disinformation often works, because it fosters emotions, reinforces personal values, and undermines rational arguments. We need to ask ourselves why people are wittingly buying into these stories.

Given the complexity of the threat, it is pivotal that government communications have a **clear mandate** and an understanding of **their role**. Governments need to recognise that their credibility is in question and it is more important than ever to adopt a creative approach and work closely with third party voices. Ultimately, the role of government is as a facilitator, rather than arbitrator, of truth.

Government should foster a culture of early detection, fact checking and positive messaging by reaching out to ambivalent audiences with clear and simple language. Human beings are social animals; we look for consensus with our peer group and once we have received this we do not shift easily. We rely on social cues, which in the digital age often comes from social media sites such as Facebook. Consensus messaging is about

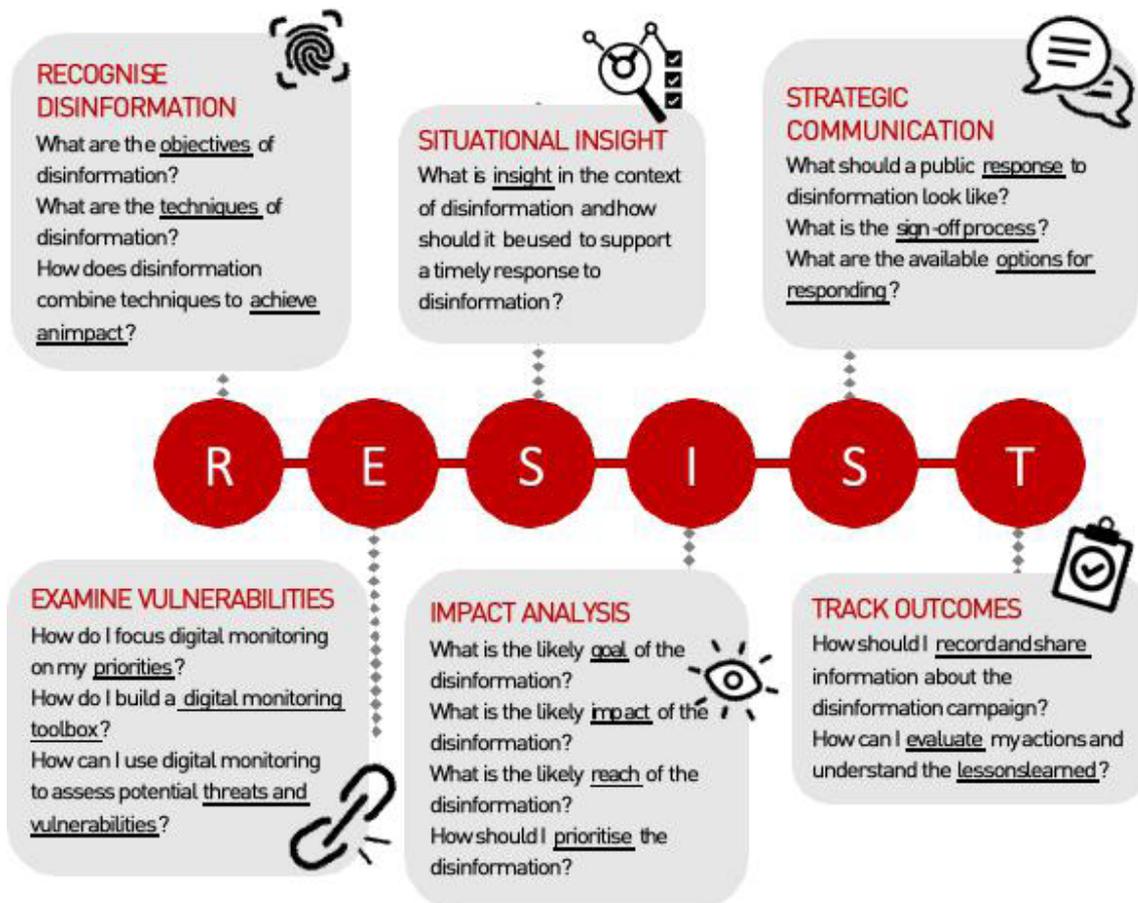
repeating a simple clear message for the majority and not letting a minority opinion distract with alternative facts. This emphasis on repetition and proactively briefing a positive narrative to the public is essential.

The **freedom of the press** is constrained by time, money, and ownership structures, which has led some journalists to work in an uncomfortably close proximity to disinformation. Governments may feel they can't always trust the press. In a fast-paced and competitive media market, the press sometimes makes accusations without thoroughly checking facts. Governments have a responsibility to work with the press to identify and respond to disinformation. This includes starting conversations with social media companies about how to monitor the news cycle and encourage discussions when abnormalities arise. Whilst we want to counter disinformation, we do not want to put free speech, or the freedom of the press, at risk. We must stand together to strengthen the independent media and support journalists. Many journalist put their lives at risk for the sake of reporting the truth; over 300 were killed last year, simply for doing their job.

It is important to help foster and create credible sources of information in various languages, particularly Russian. BBC Russian provides news programs as an option, though in some places news coverage from Russia remains popular for older generations. Regulating news media presents strategic issues for all EU member states

Finally, it is important that we consider the effectiveness of **disinformation taskforces**. Although debunking can work under certain circumstances the real challenge for government communicators is to explain the mechanisms of disinformation. The UK is taking a three-pronged approach to disinformation; deter the use of disinformation, increase transparency and accountability online, and make people more resilient to disinformation through education.

Tackling Disinformation





What can government communicators do?

We need to remain agile to a problem that is continuously shifting. We are responding to the first generation of disinformation, which continues to mutate. Our adversaries use trial and error to find the most successful methods of attack. The change of actors and creation of new handles can make the threat difficult to grasp and, critically, ensures that the strategic tipping point for government interference is not a one size fits all. Some things that government communicators should consider are:

- We should examine the capabilities of our organisations. Organisational preparedness -- how we prepare for disinformation and our strategy to address it -- is critical.
- Cooperation amongst different organisations and governments is essential to counter disinformation and present a unified version of the truth. International coalitions can be used to amplify messages to educate the public and improve media literacy. We must work together across the EU to connect the different experiences of member states and share our learnings. While the work of the Jim Marshall Foundation and Alliance of Democracy are a step forward, we need to ensure our work is interoperable and that we are not working in silos.
- Disseminating debunked stories (e.g. helped by using the ability of AI) in crises, or into echo chambers, can have tangible results. It is important to find key opinion leaders, who can be strong partners to debunk false stories.
- Being able to show the "story" behind the tactics is a helpful strategy for countering disinformation. What is the brand behind these false stories?
- Positive communications have the power to resonate on a personal level with individuals and channels that are seen as less 'serious' such as Snapchat or Twitter can actually be really useful for this.
- We should also consider the importance of raising the public's awareness of the impact of the Kremlin's disinformation. Whilst Kremlin is a visible actor, we should recognize other actors.

Technology and networking

The modern media landscape is full of tensions and contradictions. The mobile age arrived a lot faster than anyone had predicted or prepared for. Individuals are more curious, demanding and impatient, and thus expect more from the technology that is beginning to facilitate their lifestyles, especially since the increase in more accessible forms of Artificial Intelligence. The rise in mobile usage and different forms of social media channels has ultimately caused a decline in trust in traditional sources such as official news outlets and search engines. Subsequently, traditional forms of communications are having less impact.

Terrorists and extremists know their audiences well, and are very clever at targeting individuals online; using the lack of public trust to their advantage. The biggest challenge for EU member states is to keep up with the constant changes and to find ways to use strategic communications as a tool for challenging disinformation. One of the biggest challenges with using communications to tackle disinformation, terrorism and extremism is the speed at which the landscape is changing. Governments need to 'build capacity, or be prepared to waste their time and resources on yesterday's issues.' Governments need to engage with a modern audience at a pace that replicates the changing dynamics of the Internet.

By using creative campaigns across social media platforms, individuals can still receive factual information, but in a less boring and abstract style, and thus do not need to resort to disinformation to hear something they find more personally engaging. Government communicators previously assumed that certain populations were not interested in politics, or other issues, thus leaving those populations out of certain discussions. Moving forward, engaging with the youth population, who not only may be more easily influenced by disinformation, will be particularly important. Youth use much more varied social channels than the previous generations, so could be harder to reach through traditional communications. *If you wouldn't share something on your own Facebook page, you shouldn't expect the public to find it interesting and engage with it themselves.*

'Echo chambers' play a significant role as online spaces for individual beliefs and fantasies to grow into a collective conscience, which therefore turns citizens into 'active promoters of disinformation'. Deliberately false information can be posted in an echo chamber, and without any challenging or rebuttal, appears to be true or fact. The closed structure of echo chambers makes it difficult for this kind of information to be caught and removed. Echo chambers can turn their audience into active promoters of misinformation rather than simply passive receivers. They utilise the strength of group identity and personal connection to affect people.

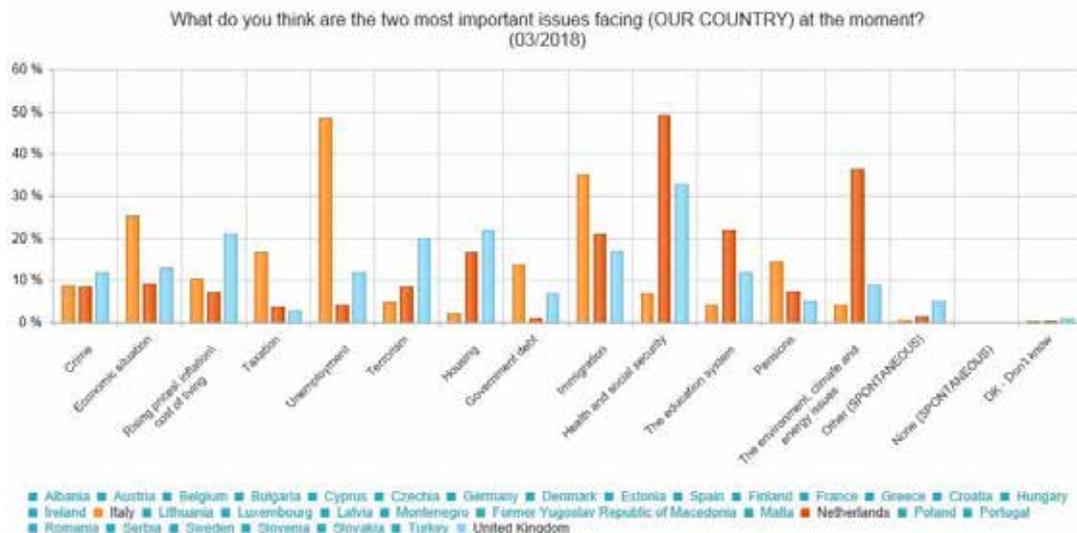
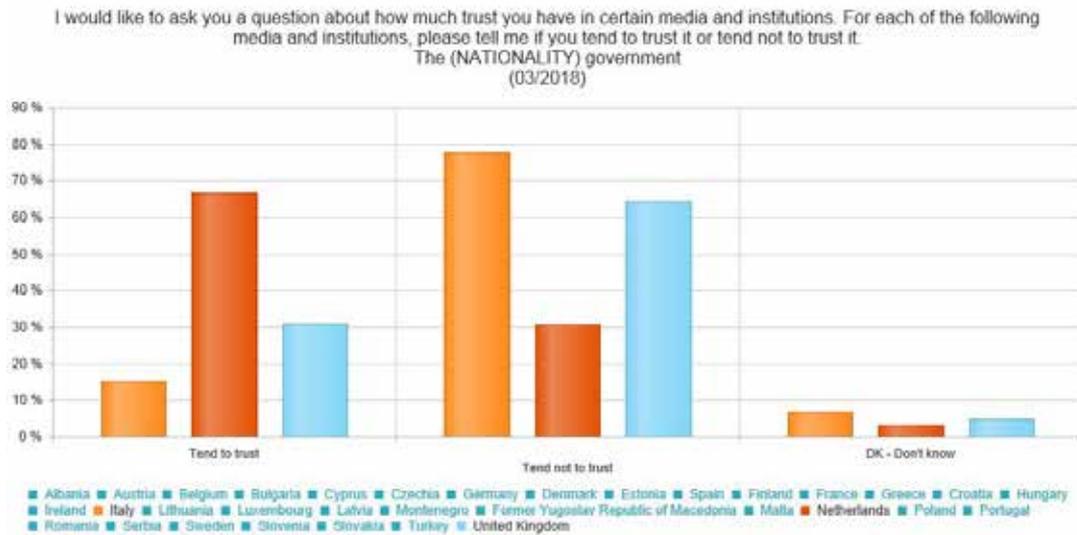
What can government communicators do?

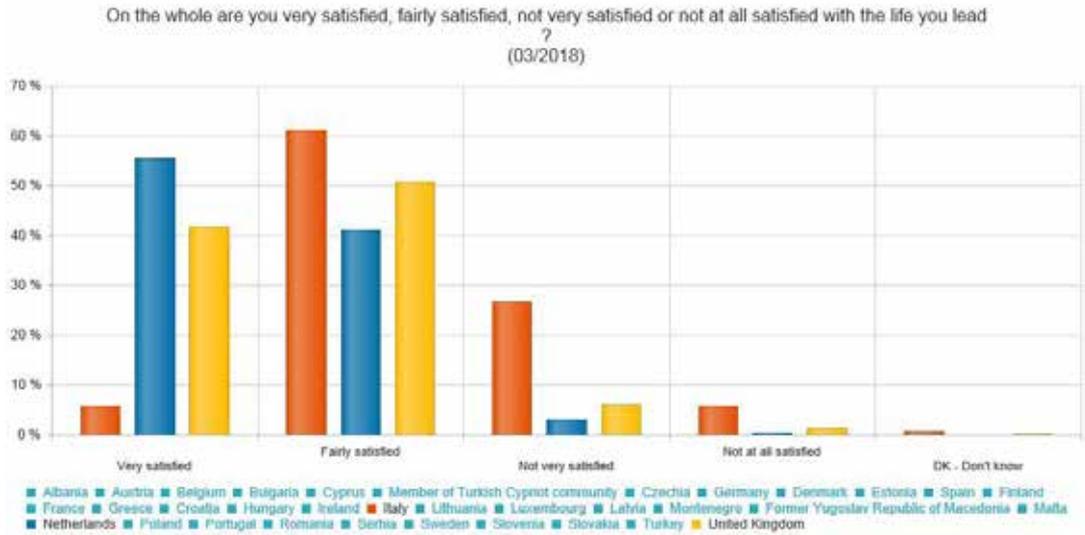
Government communications professionals need to be 'creatively brave' by working with new channels, influencers, and external agencies. We need to try things that we have not before, and listen more acutely; go against the format norms, match tone to the audience, and use old tactics in new ways. Some ideas:

- We need to analyse data better so that it tells us useful, actionable information on our audiences. Data is available on our audiences, but it is hard to present it to the decision makers. We need to be prepared to listen to audiences effectively and to unlock the ability of tech to do this well. There is a need to generate insights from the activity we are running and create a feedback loop.
- Monitoring and rapid response tools need to be developed for social media sites, especially harnessing the power of AI. Artificial intelligence should be used moving forward, as it will give organisations that may seem inaccessible to certain audiences, including the government, more of a voice and personality to appeal to individuals and disrupt the ease at which disinformation is spread. It's also vital to develop AI, which can monitor other languages, such as Latvian and Russian.
- Governments should consider what can be done in terms of regulations and in partnership with technology companies to make sites more responsible for their customers' data as well as content made available on their sites.

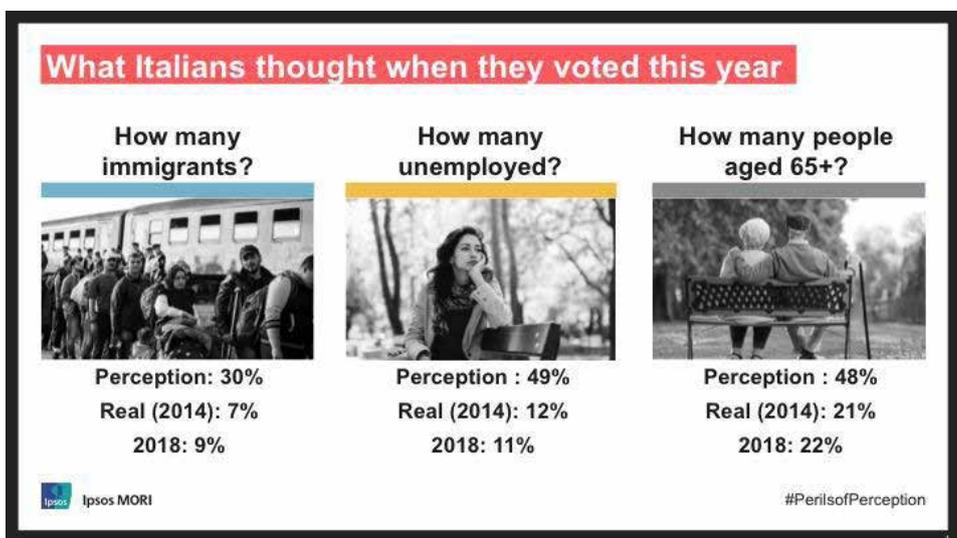
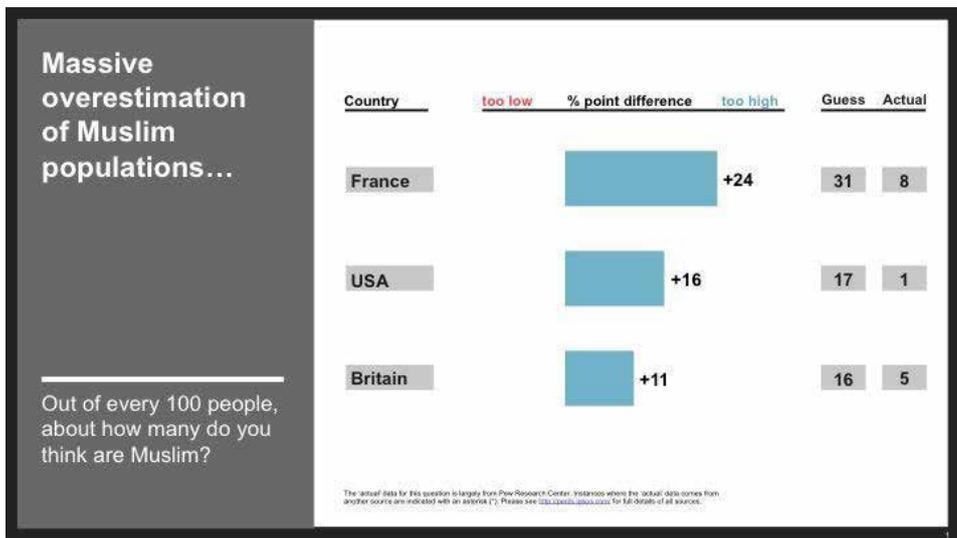
Trends

Surveys show an increasingly unstable society and a prevailing insecurity. With the increasing uncertainty in society, people feel more uncertain about their future than they did in the past. Trust in government and traditional institutions have decreased, leaving people to increasingly rely more on themselves than on institutions like the government. (Source for table below: EUROBAROMETER, European Commission permission to use per Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011.)





Low social cohesion levels could cause more problems than low trust in government. Far from binding diverse groups together, social media has led to echo chambers and the increasing alienation of social groups from each other. People in many societies are more polarized than ever and stronger "tribal" identities. Our perceptions of the scope of public problems are influenced by emotions and not always reliable. The public tends to focus on negative information.





The increasing dominance and saturation of technology is another important trend. For the first time, technology is making things, such as medical improvements, more expensive, rather than cheaper. Technology has begun to alienate people; it could replace jobs, and it is infringing on people's privacy.

To effectively communicate in today's environment, it is crucial that governments focus on their proposition and branding, without allowing themselves to be distracted. Hostile state disinformation is only a concern if it is stopping you from achieving your own objectives. Often it is not, it is simply distracting you from your objectives.

We have seen several examples of campaigns from which we can learn. The GREAT campaign in the United Kingdom has been successful in increasing the number of people investing, studying and visiting UK. This campaign is not trying to define the national character, but rather to market the country in a way that increases in the number of people investing, studying and visiting the country. Campaigning under the unification of banners will become a very important asset in an environment increasingly marred by disinformation. Latvia's centenary PR campaign captured the experiences of different groups -- from farmers to firefighters to lawyers. Though facilitated by government funding, but the stories were self-generated by people who wanted to tell their stories. The result was a feeling of unity empowering people beyond the capital and official institutions. The overall reaction to the campaign was positive and the campaign helped increase the country's resilience to negative content by breaking down silos and teaching history. NATO's new communications strategy, "We are NATO," is a positive and strong campaign that shows the effectiveness of the UK OASIS communications methodology and the benefits of working together to share recommendations.

26 Empowering the press to tell real stories is an emerging trend. For example, the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence is an institution that provides peer-to-peer training. The Latvian government also provides a grant to support the media. It can pay for research or investigative journalism that may not get money the usual ways. The media decides where funds will be used and the content is not curated or edited by the Latvian government.





What can government communicators do?

In light of the saturation of technology, the need for simplicity is ever greater. Despite the negativity at play, government communicators can have a powerful impact by focusing away from the negative side of storytelling and focusing on how to create positive stories. Some recommendations include:

- In a world of increasing uncertainty and decreased trust in government, we must seek to listen to our publics and understand in order to connect with our audiences and publics.
- We need to be open and consistent in our messaging. When communicating with the public, governments need to be clear. Many in our target audiences and the public we serve have a very low awareness of what most institutions do.
- We need to work with, not against civil society. Civil society and collaboration is the key to breaking down the "echo chambers."
- Using real people is very effective to generate content that resonates. This is one way we can work on social cohesion and resilience of society and nations.
- The importance of a free and skilled media cannot be understated.

Government can help by supporting the media to train, enhance skills, and helping the media to increase its capability to make content that is different.

Conclusion

Building capability is essential if we are to keep up with countering disinformation and create compelling content that stands out from the noise and can be trusted. Whilst tech has created a lot of problems for communicators in its ability to construct echo chambers and spread disinformation, it is a force for good. **Building capability in tech** will enable us to gather more insight on our audiences and be able to listen to them. Governments should consider and explore ways to use tools, such as AI and machine learning. **Building human capability** is also vital, through learning projects and creative funding. We need to increase cross border cooperation between member states on building capabilities like a rapid alert system, code of practice, and university network to develop communication and counter misinformation.

Collaboration is becoming more and more important if we are to communicate successfully as governments. International collaboration can be even more difficult given internal challenges to share information between teams and departments within a country – let alone internationally. However, collaboration is essential **on a societal level and an international level**. Following the downing of the flight MH17 and the Salisbury incident, we saw brilliant examples of international communication. Governments and communities worked across borders to assist each other and spread a coherent version of the truth. More **interconnections** between intelligence, security, and communications could make strategies operate effectively. However, we need to be able to communicate transparently, and to respect the freedom of press and the freedom of speech.

Creating compelling content will enable our audiences to reconnect with government and their country, and build domestic resilience to negative press. We can facilitate this through campaigns: this includes government-driven activity such as the GREAT campaign, but there is also a huge power in peer-to-peer content so we should consider what we can do to enable its creation. We should also remember to use audience insight effectively but also to gather this insight from the activity in a feedback loop.

We need to be able to measure the resilience of communities and EU institutions. Civil society, which varies a lot country to country, is as important. We are ready to develop discussions around strengthening this capability within the Club of Venice.



Alex Aiken is the Executive Director of Government Communications, UK Government. Based in Downing Street and the Cabinet Office, Alex is the most senior communications professional in the Civil Service. His role covers government communications strategy, management of the Cabinet Office and No.10 operation and leadership of the profession. He was Director of Communications & Strategy at Westminster City Council, 2000-13. At Westminster he built a team that was recognised to be the best in local government and created a successful consultancy operation providing services to other organisations. Before joining Westminster he held senior posts at Conservative Central Office, leading the Party's Campaigns Unit from 1999-2000 and the Press Office between 1995 and 1999. He has trained politicians and officials in newly democratic states around the world in communications techniques. He lives in Pimlico, London with his family.

Club of Venice plenary meeting

Venice, 22-23 November 2018

Discours d'ouverture

Par Stefano Rolando

Président du Club de Venise, Professeur à l'Université de Milan, ancien Directeur général de l'Information, Présidence du Conseil des Ministres du Gouvernement italien

Autorités, chers invités, chers collègues,

la session d'automne s'ouvre aujourd'hui traditionnellement à Venise, généralement peu de temps après l'*acqua alta* et peu avant les grandes brumes, peut-être avec un rayon de soleil.

C'est la 32e fois que cet événement se tient : la première réunion, en effet, a eu lieu ici à Venise en novembre 1986.

Un grand merci à tous ceux qui ont travaillé à l'organisation de cette rencontre et permettent le succès de cette initiative, en particulier à notre Secrétaire général et aux amis du Département pour les politiques européennes du gouvernement italien, dirigé par Diana Agosti, qui, comme d'habitude, n'a pas ménagé ses efforts.

Comme vous le savez, je n'ai raté aucune des réunions plénières à Venise.

J'ai à l'esprit les visages de nombreux amis et collègues. J'ai gravé dans ma mémoire la transformation du jargon professionnel, des mots les plus fréquents, le rapport aux langues véhiculaires. C'est pourquoi je peux dire que la communication institutionnelle a, en substance, beaucoup plus changé en Europe que la communication d'entreprise, pour le commerce et pour les affaires.

Il est vrai que la technologie et l'écriture numérique ont fait de ces trente dernières années une révolution plus forte que celle qui a été provoquée de la chute de l'empire Romain à la chute de Napoléon. Le Club de Venise s'est, lui, constitué quasi dix ans avant l'avènement de Internet.

Mais si vous y réfléchissez, la substance de la communication commerciale est restée ancrée à trois paradigmes :

- la réputation (*branding*) ;
- la référence à un besoin symbolique, au-delà d'un besoin matériel ;
- la conquête d'une part de marché plus importante.

La communication institutionnelle en Europe a plutôt transformé les scénarios, les motivations, les destinataires, les parcours de formation de ses opérateurs, les objectifs stratégiques.

J'essaie de le dire en bref.

- Nous pensions, au milieu des années 80, que l'Europe contenait l'énergie d'un projet visionnaire qui aurait permis de réduire beaucoup plus les nationalismes qui avaient été à la base des deux guerres mondiales. Un projet qui ne dépend plus des pères fondateurs, mais qui commence à appartenir à des classes dirigeantes entières. Cela faisait donc partie d'un processus de communication gagnant. La construction du marché intérieur, puis l'élargissement, puis de l'Europe de la connaissance, auraient rétabli des équilibres plus avancés entre les nations et l'Union, faisant de la communication stratégique et de la relation avec les citoyens une nécessité à construire, avec un nouveau professionnalisme relationnel et une conception géopolitique qui nous semblaient gagnants.
- Trente ans plus tard, ce projet visionnaire est confus.

Les dix dernières années de crise économique, financière et de l'emploi ont ralenti l'enthousiasme et, face à la mondialisation croissante, nous avons vu les acteurs mondiaux s'imposer et mettre notre position en plus grande difficulté.

L'élargissement a créé une condition - non déclarée mais réelle - d'une Europe à "deux vitesses", condition qui se heurte au principe de la gouvernance égalitaire.

La moitié de l'Europe croit uniquement au marché, l'autre moitié voudrait une identité politique : la demande de communication implique donc deux instances opposées et l'effet est souvent "zéro communication".

L'Europe était une règle pour tout et pour tous.

Aujourd'hui, dans de nombreux pays, la responsabilité des crises est en train d'être transférée à l'Europe et cela se développe, non en ce qui devait être un "euro-projet", mais en un phénomène appelé "euro-scepticisme".

Mais surtout, la communication politique - celle des "partis" - que ce soit à droite, au centre ou à gauche - n'est pas restée distincte de la communication institutionnelle. Et cela a conduit à un excès de journalisme et à une plus grande insistance sur le message évocateur, au détriment du rôle d'accompagnement civil de la société dans l'explication du changement (à mon avis la tâche suprême de la communication publique).

Pour vous donner la mesure du changement dont je parle, je vous dirai que - depuis de nombreuses années, j'enseigne la communication publique à l'université - je suis généralement très attentif au **thème de l'identité**, à savoir la perception sociale de l'appartenance, qui concerne les lunettes avec lesquelles les citoyens lisent les messages publics.

Il y a trente ans, si nous demandions aux jeunes, aux étudiants universitaires, quelle était leur identité personnelle, ils formulaient des réponses articulées : beaucoup répondaient "citoyen du monde" ou même "citoyen européen".

Mon dernier test date d'il y a quelque jour : "citoyens du monde", même si aujourd'hui les jeunes sont plus dans la substance que lorsque nous avons vingt ans, personne ne le dit plus ; et très peu disent se sentir aujourd'hui comme des "citoyens européens". Beaucoup plus décevant est le fait que la majorité se réfugie dans une identité locale, laissant même une identité nationale répandue dans la minorité. Le mot "européen" n'apparaît plus que pour un petit 20%, lorsqu'on demande d'exprimer "des identités co-présentes".

Pour ne pas me vanter, mais pour expliquer, je dois aussi me rappeler que mon premier vrai travail à 23 ans était avec Altiero Spinelli, dans le cadre d'une activité de recherche dans le bassin méditerranéen. Je n'ai maintenant aucune difficulté à dire que, face à ce qu'ont causé les États trop centralisateurs du XX siècle, ma préférence reste à la *solution fédéraliste* pour l'Europe ; et reste favorable à la *solution autonomiste* dans la relation entre les territoires et les nations.

Malheureusement, je ne vois pas que cette conception, cette aspiration, soit partagée par les jeunes générations.

Je crains donc que, même professionnellement, depuis trente ans, nous, communicateurs - je le dis impersonnellement et non pas à la recherche de personnes coupables à sens unique - nous n'avons pas fait du bon travail.

Un signal supplémentaire nous parvient de la Grande-Bretagne (qui dans notre domaine - celui de la communication institutionnelle - a eu un rôle historique très important en Europe et - je voudrais le souligner - très apprécié au sein du *Club de Venise*).

Les jeunes Britanniques, selon les chiffres, étaient pour la plupart en faveur de "Rester", mais le pourcentage des votant s'est arrêté à 30%. Puis, confrontés à la complexité et peut-être même aux risques du Brexit, ils ont commencé à se mobiliser. Et voilà que nous assistons à une manifestation en faveur de l'EU avec 700.000 participants.

Je crois que, sans prendre conscience des risques et des dangers, le regard sur notre réalité reste vague et la participation aux intérêts généraux reste faible.

C'est pourquoi les communicateurs publics doivent **reprendre l'objectif de la participation** (cognitif, critique, délibératif) comme principal objectif, différent de l'objectif de l'information.

Nous ne pouvons pas nous réfugier dans la technicité de l'importante révolution technologique, mais nous sommes obligés à continuer à défendre et à faire ressortir l'essence et les valeurs du contenu professionnel. Et nous devons le faire dans la loyauté du travail institutionnel et dans le réalisme d'une durabilité politique et sociale de notre fonction.

Il s'agit du même message que le Club donne depuis ses premières rencontres à Venise, il y a trente ans.

Je pense que j'ai le devoir aujourd'hui de m'en souvenir ici, étant donné la complexité des problèmes auxquels nous sommes confrontés.

Présentant les travaux de notre rencontre d'été à Vilnius, j'ai déclaré : *"Parmi les initiatives européennes intergouvernementales, le Club de Venise est aujourd'hui l'instrument qui présente peut-être le coût le plus bas et le rendement le plus élevé. Notre plate-forme continue de favoriser les interconnexions professionnelles et l'harmonisation institutionnelle grâce à son caractère totalement informel, ce qui permet d'échanger des bonnes pratiques et d'étudier ensemble la manière de communiquer avec les citoyens de manière claire, transparente et crédible"*.

Je confirme cette évaluation et confirme l'appréciation due à ceux qui - même avec des sacrifices personnels - soutiennent notre travail avant tout, je le dis avec une référence particulière à notre secrétaire général, **Vincenzo Le Voci**.

C'est aussi le point de vue de notre Groupe de pilotage et de notre Groupe de conseillers qui, hier soir, ont fait ensemble le point de la situation, tout particulièrement autour des questions soulevées par le directeur général de la Communication du Conseil de l'UE convaincus que - à un moment crucial pour l'efficacité sociale de l'action européenne - la contribution que nous pouvons apporter a une motivation et un sens. Et il mérite d'être soutenu en dissipant toute incertitude.

Je déclare donc ouverte cette session plénière du Club de Venise.



Opening Statement

Stefano Rolando

Presidente Club di Venezia, Professore
all'Università IULM di Milano, già Direttore generale
dell'Informazione alla Presidenza del Consiglio dei
Ministri del Governo italiano

Autorità, Cari Ospiti e Invitati, Cari Colleghi,

si apre oggi la sessione autunnale - quella di tradizione a Venezia, di solito poco dopo l'acqua alta e poco prima delle grandi nebbie, magari quindi con un raggio di sole - ed è la 32° volta di questo appuntamento, essendo stato il primo meeting qui a Venezia, nel novembre del 1986.

Come sapete io non sono mancato a nessun meeting qui a Venezia (per la verità dopo il primo ciclo decennale, nel 1996 facemmo una pausa a Venezia, riprendendo però presto questa tradizione nell'anno successivo) e avendo negli occhi il cambiamento dei volti di tanti amici e colleghi, avendo nella memoria la trasformazione del gergo professionale, delle parole più frequenti, del rapporto con le lingue veicolari, posso dire che la comunicazione istituzionale è, nella sostanza, cambiata in Europa molto più di quella commerciale e di impresa.

E' vero che la tecnologia, la scrittura digitale, i format comunicativi hanno compiuto in questi trent'anni (il *Club di Venezia* si costituisce quasi dieci anni prima l'avvento di internet) una rivoluzione più forte di quella intervenuta dalla caduta dell'impero romano alla caduta di Napoleone. Ma se ci pensate la sostanza della comunicazione commerciale è rimasta ancorata a tre paradigmi:

- la reputazione del brand, con indebite ingerenze e condizionamenti nei riguardi della politica;
- la corrispondenza del prodotto a un bisogno simbolico oltre che materiale;
- la conquista di una quota di mercato più importante, costi quel che costi.

La comunicazione istituzionale in Europa invece ha trasformato scenari, motivazioni, destinatari, percorsi formativi dei suoi operatori, obiettivi strategici.

Provo a dire questo in estrema sintesi.

- Pensavamo a metà degli anni '80 che l'Europa contenesse l'energia di un progetto visionario che avrebbe permesso di ridurre molto di più i nazionalismi che erano stati alla base di due guerre mondiali. E quel progetto non dipendeva più dai padri fondatori, ma cominciava ad essere patrimonio

di intere classi dirigenti. Dunque era parte di un processo comunicativo vincente. La costruzione del mercato interno, poi dell'allargamento, poi dell'Europa della conoscenza, avrebbero ristabilito equilibri più avanzati tra Nazioni e Unione che rendevano la comunicazione strategica e la relazione con i cittadini una partita da costruire non retoricamente, dunque con nuove professionalità relazionali e con un'idea geopolitica che ci appariva vincente.

- Trent'anni dopo, quel progetto visionario è appannato. I dieci ultimi anni di crisi economica, finanziaria e occupazionale hanno rallentato entusiasmi e, nella crescente globalizzazione, abbiamo visto imporsi player globali che mettono più in difficoltà la nostra posizione. L'allargamento ha prodotto una condizione - non dichiarata ma reale - di "due velocità", condizione che stride con la governance egualitaria. Metà Europa crede solo nel mercato, l'altra metà vorrebbe un'identità politica: così la domanda di comunicazione prevede due istanze contrapposte e l'effetto è spesso "comunicazione zero". L'Europa era regola di tutti e per tutti. Oggi in vari paesi si vede scaricare sull'Europa la colpa delle crisi e questo mette in marcia dentro quello che dovrebbe essere un "euro-progetto" un fenomeno che viene chiamato "euro-sceicismo". Ma soprattutto la comunicazione politica - quella delle "parti", siano esse a destra, al centro o a sinistra - non si è mantenuta distinta dalla comunicazione istituzionale e ciò ha provocato un eccesso di giornalistizzazione professionale e una maggiore enfasi sul messaggio suggestivo, a discapito del ruolo di accompagnare la società nella spiegazione civile del cambiamento (compito supremo della comunicazione pubblica).

Per dare la misura del cambiamento di cui parlo vi dirò che insegnando da molti anni comunicazione pubblica all'università, sono di solito molto attento al tema dell'identità, cioè alla percezione sociale delle appartenenze, che riguarda gli occhiali con cui i cittadini ricevono e leggono i messaggi pubblici.

Trenta anni fa se si chiedeva ai giovani, agli studenti universitari, quale fosse la loro identità prevalente, uscivano risposte articolate: molti rispondevano "cittadino del mondo" o anche "cittadino europeo". L'ultimo mio test è di pochi giorni fa: *cittadini del mondo*, anche se oggi i ragazzi lo sono più nella sostanza di quando avevamo noi venti anni, non lo dice più nessuno; e ben pochi affermano di sentirsi oggi *cittadini europei*. Ben più deludente il fatto che la maggioranza si rifugi nel rivendicare l'identità locale, lasciando in minoranza la pur diffusa identità nazionale. La parola "europeo" emerge per un esiguo 20% solo quando si chiede di esprimere le "identità compresenti".

Io non ho difficoltà a dirvi (nella misura in cui - non per vantarmi ma per spiegare - debbo anche dirvi che il mio primo lavoro

vero a 23 anni è stato con Altiero Spinelli in una attività di ricerca nel bacino del Mediterraneo) che di fronte a ciò che hanno causato gli Stati troppo centralistici nel '900, la mia preferenza resta per la soluzione federalista per l'Europa e per la soluzione autonomistica nel rapporto tra territori e nazioni. Ma purtroppo non vedo che questo disegno, questa aspirazione, appartenga alla condivisione prevalente tra le giovani generazioni.

Pertanto sono certo che, anche professionalmente, in questi trenta anni noi comunicatori – lo dico impersonalmente e non per cercare colpevoli a senso unico – non abbiamo fatto un buon lavoro.

Un segnale in più ci viene dalla Gran Bretagna (che nel nostro campo – quello della comunicazione istituzionale – ha un ruolo storico importantissimo in Europa e sottolineerei molto pregnante all'interno del Club di Venezia). I giovani britannici, dicono i dati demoscopici, erano in maggioranza a favore del "Remain", ma sono andati a votare al 30%. Poi a fronte della complessità e forse anche dei rischi della Brexit ci hanno ripensato e di recente la piazza di Londra che voleva porre un tema di ripensamento prevedeva 100 mila presenze e sono state invece 700 mila.

Non mi sento di estrapolare grandi messaggi. Ma credo che senza vedere i rischi e i pericoli lo sguardo sulla nostra realtà resta vago e la partecipazione agli interessi generali resta debole.

Ecco perché i comunicatori debbono riprendere l'obiettivo della partecipazione (conoscitiva, critica, deliberativa) come il principale scopo, diverso dagli scopi della informazione. Non possiamo rifugiarsi nel tecnicismo della pur importante rivoluzione tecnologica, ma continuare a difendere e fare emergere essenza e valori dei contenuti professionali, pur nella lealtà del lavoro istituzionale e nel realismo di una sostenibilità politica e sociale della nostra funzione.

Questo messaggio era quello di Venezia trenta anni fa. E credo sia mio compito quello di ricordarlo qui, di fronte alla complessità dei problemi che oggi abbiamo di fronte.

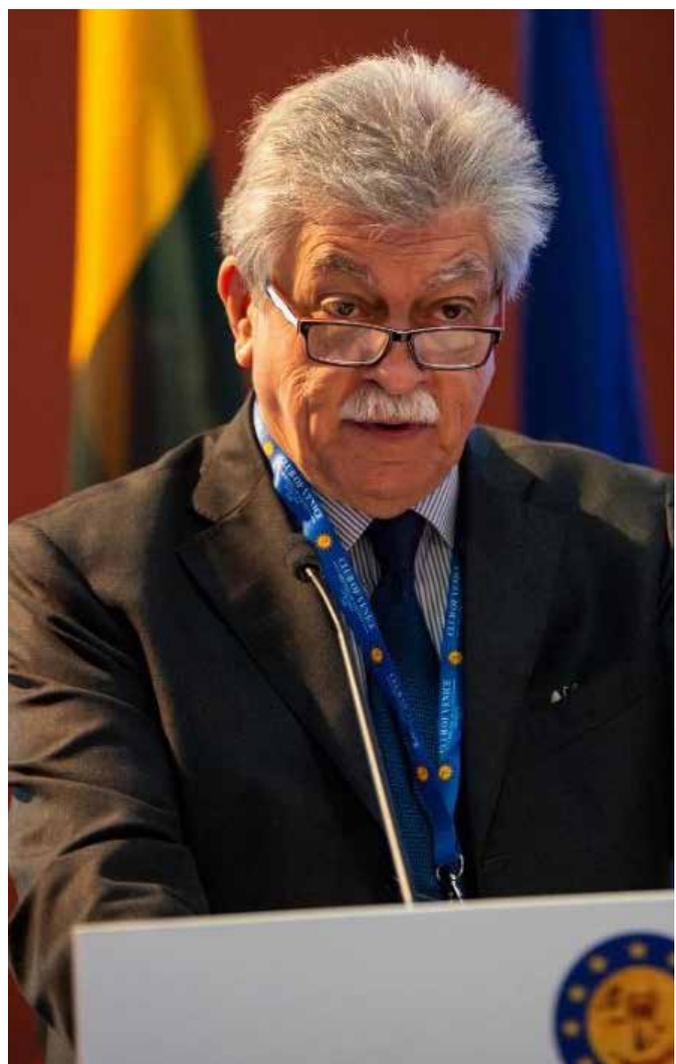
Introducendo i lavori della assemblea pre-estiva a Vilnius avevo detto: *"Tra le iniziative europee inter-governative, oggi il Club di Venezia è il soggetto che ha forse il minor costo e il massimo rendimento. La nostra piattaforma continua a favorire interconnessioni professionali e armonizzazioni istituzionali grazie al suo carattere totalmente informale, che consente di scambiare migliori pratiche e studiare assieme come comunicare con i cittadini in modo chiaro, trasparente e credibile"*.

Confermo questa valutazione e confermo l'apprezzamento dovuto a chi – anche con sacrificio personale – manda

soprattutto avanti il nostro lavoro, lo dico con particolare riferimento al nostro Segretario generale Vincenzo Le Voci.

Questo è anche il punto di vista nel nostro *Steering Group* e del nostro *Advisory Board* che ieri sera hanno fatto il punto della situazione in particolare attorno a questioni che sono state sollevate dal direttore generale della comunicazione del Consiglio UE, essendo tutti convinti che proprio in un momento cruciale per l'efficacia anche sociale dell'azione europea, il contributo che possiamo dare ha le sue motivazioni e il suo senso. E merita quindi sostegno fugando ogni incertezza.

Dichiaro dunque aperta questa sessione plenaria del Club di Venezia.



Outcome of Venice plenary

By Vincenzo Le Voci

Attendance: 80 participants from 22 MS + Serbia + Ukraine, EU institutions and bodies, and external communication specialists.

The work was introduced by a video message from the Italian Minister for European Affairs, Paolo Savona who highlighted the crucial role of communicators in understanding the citizens' main concerns emerged from the **public opinion surveys** and better explaining the concrete relevance of the EU's Treaties.

In their welcome addresses, **Eugenio Madeo**, Deputy Secretary-General of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, **Fiorenza Barazzoni**, Director at the Presidency's Department for European Policies, **Fabrizio Spada**, European Parliament Information Office in Italy and **Roberto Santaniello**, European Commission Representation in Italy stressed the need to implement the principles of the **Vilnius Charters, countering disinformation** and pursuing **stakeholders' dialogues**, keeping **"citizens' dimension"** at the centre of the debates.

Stefano Rolando, President of the Club of Venice, opened the plenary's discussion focusing on:

- **the ongoing transformation of governmental and institutional strategic communication** (changes in the scenarios, structures, audiences, strategic objectives, training needs and motivation)
- the developments of the Brexit negotiations between the **UK and the EU** and their impact on the communication landscape, given this country's historical key role in Europe and its very proactive role in the Club of Venice
- in an era of huge technological revolutions, the need for the communicators' increased commitment to defend and strengthen their **professional values**, promoting the **institutional loyalty** and facilitating a **sustainable social and political dialogue** between citizens (knowledge, critical spirit, deliberative/participative approach) and their public authorities.

The Club discussed how to **recover citizens' trust in the EU**, with focus on the ongoing implementation of the communication strategies six months ahead to the **European elections 2019**, on the public opinion trends and the challenges for governmental and institutional communicators in a period of growing skepticism and emerging populist, nationalistic and extremist sentiment.

In his key-note, **Michael Spindelegger**, former Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director-General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) underlined that Europe has been making strong efforts to overcome the three major crises of the last decade (economy/migration/Brexit horizon) - indeed a huge test for European democracy. The public debate has often been driven by emotions, rather

than by facts and figures. Opinions, perceptions and emotions remain the true drivers for decisions, and communicators should multiply their efforts in addressing root causes, working in synergy (MS, institutions and civil society) on narratives that could enable citizens to better understand the context, explain rules, develop opportunities for more interaction and be ready to counter disinformation and EU-skepticism. The second key-note of the introductory session of the plenary was delivered by **Alexander Kleinig**, Head of the Concept and Design Unit at the European Parliament Directorate-General for Communication, who presented the main elements of the ongoing implementation of the EP's communication strategy in view of the 2019 elections, focusing on its digital aspects (citizens' app, the platform <https://www.thisimeinvoting.eu/>, intense social media activities). Alexander confirmed that the information campaign for the European elections will be inter-institutional in nature (without the logos of the different actors) and will have as its main objective to inform citizens of their electoral rights and encourage them to vote.

The contributions of the panelists (**Simon Kreye from Germany, Charlotte Montel from France, Philippe Caroyez from Belgium, Fiorenza Barazzoni from Italy, Mikel Landabaso from the European Commission and James Dennison from the European International Institute**) and the interventions from the audience (**Silvio Gonzato from the EEAS, Ivana Milatovic from OCSE, Imrich Babic from Slovakia**) focused on the need to counter populism, to develop awareness-raising campaigns aiming at filling gaps and reducing divides among generations, addressing crises objectively and constructively and contributing to build a new "Euphoria".

Charlotte Montel presented freshly published figures concerning the "Consultations citoyennes" in France that have recently been renamed as "*Consultations sur l'avenir de l'Europe*": 65 000 replies to the questionnaire launched by the Commission, of which 33% from French citizens; 1 082 consultations on the ground, with 70 000 participants; debates sometimes organised in partnership, covering a variety of domains such as environment, health, culture, social issues. A compilation of all contributions enabled the public authorities to commission a report, which is available on line, to an independent administrative body. Reactions through the web differ from consultations on the ground, where comments were less emotional and more content-based. Citizenship (European identity and its implications in terms of individual responsibilities), environment and climate change, emerged among the key topics and concerns. Humanism, egalitarianism and ethics, and the intensification of dialogue with Africa as a core element to tackle the migration phenomenon effectively were also considered strategic values. A "Europe that protects"



is perceived as main solution to counter unbalances and prevent “uncontrolled” globalization. The European Council is expected to give the political boost to the joint effort of Member States and institutions to multiply the outreach initiatives to sensitize citizens in the semester leading to the 2019 European elections.

Philippe Caroyez referred to a national report on the citizens’ consultations carried out in Belgium, which recorded a strong participation of the public audiences and their interest in an increased interactive role with their public authorities. The success of this format lies in the capacity to engage all the stakeholders in recognized priority topics and commit to a concrete dialogue, developing as far as possible the “Open Government” approach (“*democratie ouverte*”).

Fiorenza Barazzoni highlighted the three axes of the Italian mobilization: information on benefits from the EU (for the general public), within the communication campaign in support of the European elections; Knowledge of the Treaties, through the further development of the web platform “Europa=Noi” (Europe=Us) educational programme for schools at all levels (for teachers and students) and in particular for the universities, and a national competition foreseen for high school students – initiatives linked to the Europe’s Day and the European elections; and activation of strategic partnerships with the EU institutions. She also stressed the need to increase cooperation between governments and institutions in countering and neutralising misinformation on line.

Mikel Landabaso focused on the still positive figures on citizens’ trust to the EU (average 59% in favour), on the broad outreach of the “Invest EU” campaign carried out in the 16 targeted Member States, and on youngsters’ positive reaction to the successful production of #EU&ME video clip testimonies.

James Dennison highlighted the difference between statistics and the real public perception on priority topics such as migration. He underlined that, for instance, Europeans are not turning against migration, but remain strongly concerned about national contingencies (worries about loss of control of the external borders, impact on economy) and this worries are often generating radicalism. Attitudes are often depending on the national socio-tropic concerns. James also underlined that concentrating the communication campaign on the concept of Europe as “community of values” may be dangerous, since we are not the unique depositories of values.

Club Action:

- the Club will facilitate networking between the European Parliament and the national authorities with a view to intensifying joint efforts in stimulating citizens’ proactive participation
- the Club will deepen its analysis of the risks of pernicious effects of disinformation on the elections’ campaign and will help disseminate updates on the monitoring mechanisms in this respect
- the spring plenary of the Club foreseen in early June 2019 will enable governmental and institutional authorities to make a first assessment of the impact of the implementation of the EP’s communication strategy and the effectiveness of cooperation efforts in this regard, two weeks after the European elections

The afternoon session of the Venice plenary was dedicated to **capacity building, public service transformation and open government**, were discussed, monitoring the implementation of the Vilnius Charter of 8 June 2018 on “Shaping Professionalism in Communication”.

Antony Zacharzewski (Director of the Democratic Society) and Laure van Hauwaert (WPP Managing Director, EU Institutions) played respectively the role of moderator and key-note speaker, recalling the objectives of discussion: analysing current capacities and exploring ground for cross-border communication capability plans, strengthening mutual trust, knowledge sharing and co-creation approaches, compatible strategic working methods and KPIs.

As Laure indicated, 77% of government communication is broadcast and one way. In an age of declining trust in government, there is a need to turn that into a true dialogue with citizens and foster inclusiveness in the decision-making process. Essential changes in society (globalization, geopolitical disorder, excessive individualization in the research of welfare and exponential growth of technology) have caused a fundamental shift in the relationship between citizens and institutions, which means we need to rethink how to engage citizens in today’s world.

Contributions from **Robert Wester (Netherlands), Vanni Xuereb (Malta), George Surugiu (Romania) and the EU institutions and bodies (Claus Giering, European Commission DG NEAR, Rudolf Strohmeier, EU Publications Office and Christophe Rouillon, Committee of the Regions)** focused on the need to adapt the profile of practitioners and specialists to the demanding media and communication landscape, modernizing their functions as needed.

In the spirit of Vilnius Charter, shaping professionalism entails increasing cooperation in this transformational endeavor. To this end, the panelists highlighted the importance to carry out a survey of existing resources that could help public communicators apply coherent models to better cope with the complexity of the communication ecosystem. Alliances should be fostered in trust building plans, investments in EU-related literacy, multilingualism and metadata infrastructures, initiatives to facilitate common (citizens' and practitioners') understanding of the EU's treaties, objectives and added value and due attention to the diverse public audiences, establishing with them permanent platforms for dialogue.

The ad hoc Working Group on Capacity and Capability Building recently set up within the Club in line with the principles of the Vilnius Charter envisages to start working collaboratively to enhance, upgrade and develop capacity and capability for government communications, building on the best work elsewhere in Europe. Its objective is to contribute to strengthening abilities to use new technology, techniques and involve citizens, demonstrating an integrated approach.

The Working Group presented its work programme. The Club members and their external partners requested additional time to discuss ideas with their teams, and to share further thoughts with The Democratic Society and WPP in the coming weeks.

Club Action:

- the Club, in cooperation with its external partners who volunteered to join the ad hoc permanent forum on capacity building, will carry out a survey to identify existing shareable professional instruments/platforms/instruments in the Member States and Institutions
- the survey will be carried out in early 2019, using a grid prepared to facilitate conversation and record collaborative/peer support planning and urgent needs to cover key communication/organizational topics at practitioners/advanced/expert level.
- the objectives of this capacity/capability exercise is to facilitate a) recycling and disseminating knowledge (Open Data/Open Government approach); b) sharing experiences and collaborative methods/platforms; c) stimulating collaborative reactions to requests for collaboration/support
- the information shared during this process will be used to finalise a capability and capacity building work plan, by early spring 2019, and to direct further activities of the working group.

The session on **"hybrid threats"**, moderated by **Silvio Gonzato (Director of Inter-Institutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy at the EEAS)**, was entirely dedicated to the implementation of the principles of the Vilnius Charter on Resilience, and more specifically to the upcoming adoption of the EU's Action Plan for the provision of a coordinated response to disinformation and fake news¹, which has many points in common with the Charter.

Silvio highlighted the four pillars of the Action Plan:

- detecting capabilities to fight (re the EEAS' Task Forces Stratcom East, Western Balkans and South Europe)
- strengthening the coordinated joint response capacities, including a dedicated alert system
- the industry's involvement
- raising awareness of the disinformation's impact and increased engagement with citizens and the media.

Silvio outlined the work done by the High Level Experts Group (HLEG) which led to a set of recommendations for joint institutions and Member States efforts, by acting on three main directions: countering/neutralizing/diluting disinformation but avoiding a censorship approach, promoting quality content and strengthening cooperation with the media/industry sectors. On the latter issue, the development of a vertical strategy (which goes far beyond general declarations of principles) appears crucial.

Alex Aiken, Executive Director of Communicators at the UK HM Government, was unable to join the session and deliver his keynote owing to the intense internal UK political agenda. However, he shared his key messages through the interventions of the Steering Group members who attended the plenary.

Unlike conventional types of warfare, we may not recognize that a hybrid warfare campaign is happening, until it is well underway. Hybrid warfare hits us where we are vulnerable and in unexpected ways. The element of surprise and simultaneous nature of the attacks creates a fog of confusion.

In Europe, we are not immune to hybrid campaigns. The schisms in our societies are visible. In Western Europe, populists have made significant gains – fundamentally changing the nature of public discourse. Populists are strongest in Eastern Europe, with significant influence in Bosnia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Slovakia.

¹ Adopted on 5th December 2019

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54866/action-plan-against-disinformation_en



As Europe adapts to an interconnected, technology economy, with many legitimate and malicious competitors, citizens demand employment opportunities. Some struggle to make ends meet.

In substance, in order to address hybrid threats, knowing how hybrid warfare is sophisticated and coordinated, and how the actors are flexible and agile, we must **act, act together and act smartly** in building resilience in our society. By **ACT** we mean:

- first, **Assess** our vulnerabilities and on strengths. We have to take a critical look at our societies and determine our weaknesses and how our enemies might use these weaknesses against us
- second, we need to **Coordinate** at the national level. The interagency approach and the increasing improvement of cross-department coordination in the UK in Whitehall is indeed an ideal model in this regard
- third, now more than ever, we must **Team up** with international allies on these issues.

This is an iterative process and, as Alex' message says, as public communicators we need to continue to honour our permanent mandate towards both the political class and our citizens by continuing to re-assess and recalibrate our posture and act more and more efficiently and effectively.

Contributions from the panelists and the audience (**Eugenio Madeo from Italy, Erik Karlsson from Sweden, Artis Ozolins and Gytis Jegermanis from Latvia, Rytis Paulauskas from Lithuania, Charlotte Montel from France, Suzana Vasiljevic from Serbia, Yevhen Fedchenko from Ukraine, Tina Zournatzi from the Commission DG COMM, Giuseppe Zaffuto from the Council of Europe - CoE, Christian Leclercq from EURACTIV, Riccardo Viale from Milan University, Christian Spahr from SEECOM, Simon Julien from ICMPD, Olivier Vujovic from SEEMO and Verena Ringler from European Commons**) confirmed shared concerns with the permanent challenges and the availability to commit to developing joint strategies in this regard.

Giuseppe Zaffuto recalled the ongoing collaboration of the Council of Europe in the sanctions' mechanism against countries and organisations perpetrating cyber-security attacks. He also referred to a report published by the CoE on "Information Disorder"², with a study on "Information pollution", endowed with 35 specific recommendations. He finally suggested to always make a distinction among misinformation (diffusion of false elements without bad intentions), disinformation (diffusion to cause damage) and malinformation (transfer to the public sphere of what must remain in the private sphere).

He finally referred to the two CoE expert groups that continue to comprehensively address the phenomenon: the Committee of Experts on quality journalism in the digital age³ and the Committee of Experts on Human Rights Dimensions⁴ of automated data processing and different forms of artificial intelligence.

Erik Karlsson debriefed the Club on the communication strategy for the national elections that took place in Sweden last September, with an 87% turn out that fully legitimated the results.

Erik described a high trust for the media and a decentralized and transparent approach in the information campaign (inter-ministerial cooperation Culture-Defence-Justice-Education) which minimized disinformation threats, though a certain risk still exists in this regard. The campaign was coordinated by the Swedish Contingency Agency. Media was invited to cooperate and a preliminary analysis of risks was carried out in 2017, available on line, helping strengthen awareness and identify appropriate measures and methods to neutralize threats. Disinformation cases were detected in alternative/social media and political authorities were victims of attacks. A monitoring system was put in place 24h/24 7d/7 and the increased attention led Finland and Sweden to organize a joint exercise. The Swedish authority is reflecting on the possibility to create in 2020-2021 an ad hoc Agency to coordinate responses and handle psychological impact. Supporting journalism is deemed one of the most effective measures to ensure good strategic responses.

Eugenio Madeo underlined that it is possible to tackle global threats such as cybersecurity breaches, spread of distorted and malicious information, only by building long-term plans, operating with mutual trust and strengthening cooperation.

Artis Ozolins focused on the Latvian inter-agency integrated approach and structured organization to counter disinformation from Russian entities, acting in two directions: through preventive actions and through a task force, both requiring strong engagement in the social media and a broad analytical work.

Rytis Paulauskas welcomed the comprehensive view depicted in the Vilnius Charter on resilience and its references to increasing cooperation between EU and NATO communication experts, and urged to thoroughly assess and develop concrete operational parameters. To this end, he looked forward to an intense and fruitful debate at the next Stratcom seminar foreseen in London in early December.

² <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-frame-work-for-research/168076277c>

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/msi-joq>

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/msi-aut>



Christophe Leclercq focused on the need for a stronger involvement of the media in the collaborative framework, for more investments in the media sector (for instance, starting through the next MFF) and for a less institutionalized structure of the Task Forces, more open to external collaboration, and advised not to duplicate initiatives (i.e. new training opportunities for journalists). He also mentioned that the actual debunking activities are not speedy enough and should be strengthened and referred to the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN).

Charlotte Montel highlighted the prejudice that can be caused by disinformation to democracy – a real serious threat for our societies, and referred to the mobilization of the French authorities to put in place devices to tackle the problem effectively. She also referred to a first report on disinformation and fake news published in France in October and to the 1st meeting of the Committee on Information and Democracy, chaired by RSF, held in Paris on 5th November 2018, to debate on the “éthique journalistique”.

Gytis Jegermanis suggested to identify all ongoing strategies, plans and tools and prepare a catalogue to be uploaded on the Venicenet platform and consulted by the Club members as a valuable reference.

Silvio Gonzato recalled the security aspects connected to this topic, given the variety of information sources involved (intelligence, ad hoc media, analytical bodies) and the EEAS' needs to recruit new skilled staff as data analysts and disinformation experts. He also referred to the strategic nuances in the national approaches in this regard (some countries more incline to increasing cooperation with civil society, others opting for inter-ministerial task forces settings) and to the need for adequate financial instruments. He also highlighted the need for a robust Alert System to address challenges promptly and consistently, and the challenging task to set up a network of fact checking communities in the Member States. He finally referred to the EU-NATO cooperation and to the proactive approach of the Council of Europe, of the Helsinki Centre of Excellence and of the G7 Canadian Presidency in this field.

Yevhen Fedchenko, Executive Director of **Stopfake**, presented his organization, a fact-checking body founded in 2014 by Ukrainian professors and students, to refute Russian propaganda and counter fake news (over 2000 news neutralized so far). Stopfake is also active on Twitter, Facebook and You-Tube. A new report on its activities will be circulated soon, including a map of “disinformation media outlets” analysed.

Simon Julien debriefed the audience on the successful 1st Euro-Mediterranean joint workshop for governmental and

institutional Communicators “Providing Clarity in Complexity: Creating an evidence-based public discussion on migration”, held in Tunis, 18-19 September 2019, organised by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in collaboration with the Club of Venice. He indicated that migration is one of the topics on which public opinion is often driven by emotions and exposed to misinformation, disinformation and consequently misconceptions. Terminology has gradually been distorted and misinterpreted and narrative is out of control (“We need to regain control of the way we speak”).

Oliver Vujovic emphasized the high risks of drifts, instability and disorientation in the public opinion and denounced 68 cases of cyberattack detected in South-East Europe in 2015 and 2016. In some cases readers are paid to act as “multipliers” to spread fake news and also media behave sometimes likewise. Against this scenario, it remains very hard to counter disinformation and communicate truth.

Suzana Vasiljevic stressed the need to enhance cooperation between the EU institutions and national authorities and underlined that it is crucial to have a sound knowledge of media profiles before taking any decision to support them.

Christian Spahr insisted that the government and institutions should increasingly involve trustworthy people in the “true and safe” narrative and that the trend can change for better if the layer of professionals who wish to cooperate to communicate honestly and effectively is strongly interconnected and reinforced.

Silvio Gonzato summarized the key issues at stake: the legitimacy of public authorities and the decisive role of governments in this joint endeavour; the need for a legislative framework and for transparency of financing; the difficulty to identify/assign clear roles when several actors are operating in the field; the EU ready to operate as a strong supporting partner, but not replacing the role of national authorities; the difficulty of changing narratives; the relations between public authorities and civil society; the evolution of the Stratcom forces and the optimization of the resilient structures by investing in skilled staff; the need to continue to collect evidence, not only to directly debunking but also encouraging/supporting the media to play this role.

Riccardo Viale underlined that effective results can only be achieved if public authorities and external partners (academics, civil society and other trustworthy specialists and multipliers) can merge forces and the collaborative process is seen in a “bottom-up” perspective.

Likewise, **Verena Ringler** highlighted the complexity of the ecosystem and urged to take due account of the added value of a wide variety of very committed sources (academics,

digital experts, Helsinki Centre of Excellence, Open Knowledge Foundation, contingency bodies, development agencies). She also shared the opinion of her peer colleagues on the need for an intense joint capacity building effort, with a clear division of responsibilities and tasks to face this long-term challenge, given the important European electoral deadline ahead, and finally agreed with the suggestion for a "catalogue of best practice" to be developed and shared by the Club of Venice.

Club Action:

- **Stefano Rolando** congratulated the participants for the fruitful discussion and agreed with mobilizing the academic networks for a comprehensive mapping exercise.
- The Club network will continue to facilitate the exchange of views and best practice and feed the debate on how to increase capacity building in analysing, preventing, monitoring and countering hybrid threats and disinformation trends.
- It remains crucial to contribute to safeguard ethical principles by shaping and protecting interfaces, establishing codes of conducts, memos and partnership agreements as appropriate, and supporting and protecting democratic medias.
- The next meetings of the Club will enable Member States, institutions, international organization and other external partners to take stock of cooperation in progress.
- The Club will continue to contribute to the promotion of reliable information sources and thematic studies in this field.

Conclusions

Convergences

Philippe Caroyez and **Vincenzo Le Voci** presented the latest issue of the Club's online magazine, which has an in-depth coverage of the Vilnius plenary held in June 2018 and the joint ICMPD/Club of Venice workshop held in Tunis in September 2018.

Next meetings

- a 2nd joint seminar on Strategic Communication ("Truth, Tech and Trends - the issues that European communicators need to address in 2019"), foreseen in London on 13-14 December 2018, co-organised with the UK Government Communications Service (GCS);
- the spring plenary meeting, that will take place (subject to confirmation) in Montenegro at the beginning of June 2019;
- still in 2019, two or three thematic seminars, in collaboration with Greece and (subject to confirmation) the Council of Europe and the Council of the EU.
- annual Conference of the 30th Anniversary of Cap'Com (French public and territorial communication network) foreseen in Lyon on 4, 5 and 6 December 2018. **Dominique Mégard**, President of Cap'Com, informed the Club on work in progress and renewed the invitation to join the event. Some Club members will take part in different thematic panels and round tables.

Vincenzo Le Voci is the Secretary-General of the Club of Venice, the network of the communications directors from the European Union member states and institutions and from countries candidate to the EU membership. He has fulfilled this role since 2011.

He is a longstanding European civil servant, having worked for the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU for 26 years. Since 2001 he is in the Directorate-General of Communication, where he is currently responsible for Transparency and Information Policy matters.

Before joining the EU he worked 7 years for NATO in administration management and logistics, as a US Air Force - DOD official.

He owns a Master degree in foreign languages and literatures and attended courses of modern history, European Integration and management in Belgium and at Maryland and MIT universities. He is giving lectures to universities and contributes articles and essays for communications books and magazines.

In 2018 he was conferred by the University of Calabria and the Municipality of Ventotene (the home of Altiero Spinelli's Manifesto) the Europa Prize in recognition of his high commitment to communication and information aimed at encouraging and strengthening public and diplomatic relations between government and institutional communicators



Keynote Address on Hybrid Warfare

By Alex Aiken, Executive Director, UK Government Communications

Part 1: Introduction

In our lifetime, we have seen the nature of warfare change:

- In Syria, Iran exploited deep sectarian, ethnic and economic divisions to project regional influence
- Russia's bold and brazen occupation of Ukraine, followed a prolonged campaign to block Ukraine's ties to the European Union
- ISIL used a various methods in Iraq to build its power in the region

These examples show that unlike conventional types of warfare, we may not recognize that a hybrid warfare campaign is happening, until it is well underway. Hybrid warfare hits us where we are vulnerable and in unexpected ways. The element of surprise and simultaneous nature of the attacks creates a fog of confusion.

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In Europe, we are not immune to hybrid campaigns. The schisms in our societies are visible. In Western Europe, populists have made significant gains – fundamentally changing the nature of public discourse. Populists are strongest in Eastern Europe, with significant influence in Bosnia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Slovakia.¹

As Europe adapts to an interconnected, technology economy, with many legitimate and malicious competitors, citizens demand employment opportunities. Some struggle to make ends meet.

We have experienced direct violent attacks. "Europol reports that in 2017, nine member states reported a total of 205 terrorist attacks that were either stopped, failed or completed, as compared to 142 in 2016".²

Today, I want to talk about:

- Europe today – our mutual interests and commitments to collaborate
- What is Hybrid Warfare?
- Our experience in the UK
- What can we do together to address these threats?

Part 2: Europe

Last week, negotiators from the European Union and the UK reached agreement on the draft Withdrawal Agreement, and on an outline of the Political Declaration on the framework for the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Negotiators are committed to reach conclusion by the end of November.

The UK and the European Union share a desire for security and prosperity. Our economies are now more connected than ever, many students travel across borders for their education, and many families have roots that cross national borders. We have worked closely with world organizations such as the European Union and NATO for our common defence and have enjoyed extended period of peace.

Founded in 1986, the Club of Venice is another example of our close cooperation. In this venue, Europe's most senior and experienced government communications professionals came together to outline common goals in both London in 2017 and Vilnius 2018. [See slide.]

Yet, as government communicators, we face a complex and constantly evolving media landscape. Younger generations are more digital and less trusting of traditional media. 73% of Europeans (18-29) get their at least daily from on-line sources. Television, radio, and print remain significant for older age groups. As our audiences' habits and preferences change, we must also change and adapt.

Part 3: What is Hybrid Warfare?

I will use a textbook definition from Multinational Capability Development Campaigns. Hybrid warfare is: "the synchronized use of multiple instruments of power tailored to specific vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions to achieve synergistic effects." The threats are real.

State and non-state actors synchronise multiple tools in unexpected ways to achieve their goals. These tools may be military might, political pressure, economic sabotage, civil disruption or manipulation of information. These actors intensify pressure on the various levers at will to increase pressure and influence their target.

¹ "European Populism: Trends, Threats and Future Prospects Report" Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

² "Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018" Europol.

Part 4: Our experience in the UK?

In March 2018, the Prime Minister Theresa May announced a new approach to address hybrid attacks. Under the Fusion Doctrine, we bring all of the government's capabilities - economic, security, and cultural and political influence - to protect and maintain our security. The Fusion Strategy recognizes the value different aspects of government can contribute to solve a problem and the importance of a "whole of government" approach.

Our centralized government communications structure, facilitates coordinated communications and messaging. We've added additional insight analysis capability by developing a Rapid Response Unit to monitoring news and provide and analyse trends in real time for policy makers in Number 10 and the Cabinet Office. We are working to build our resilience and better counter disinformation. We continue to self assess to see what we can do better.

I'd like to highlight three examples of our communications work to address challenges that are all too familiar:

- Following the attacks in Salisbury, we formed the National Security Communications Team (NSCT) at the request of the Home Secretary on 12 March, with 5 members of staff, to manage communications around the Salisbury incident. This team led a huge effort to respond to the incident, including countering Russian disinformation from this event. This team also worked with many international partners, including those of you here to respond.
- To highlight another example, the Coalition Against Daesh has employed an international, cross-government strategic communications approach to tackle the threat from Daesh propaganda. Established in September 2015 with £10 million seed funding from the UK, the Cell seeks to **empowering local voices** to tackle Daesh and build resilience within communities, **conducting public communications campaigns, and coordinating** the communications response to Daesh across all 79 partners - through information sharing, briefings and quarterly working group meetings.
- Like other European nations, we are challenged by right-wing extremism. In one tragic example, extreme right-wing terrorist repeatedly shot and stabbed Labour MP Jo Cox, as he yelled: "This is for Britain" and "Britain first." We have seen the influence these groups can have, particularly on social media. We are taking a comprehensive approach to tackling the evil ideology of extremism, whether violent or non-violent, Islamist or far and extreme right wing. We're vigorously countering extremist ideology - making sure every part of Government is taking action to confront extremist narratives; actively supporting mainstream voices; and disrupting the most harmful extremists - using all of the

tools available to us and prosecuting those who break the law. We are also building more cohesive communities - by tackling segregation and feelings of alienation which can provide fertile ground for extremists messages.

Part 5: What can we do together to address these threats?

Hybrid warfare is sophisticated and coordinated, and the actors are flexible and agile. Building resilience in our society requires that we act, and act smartly. By ACT, I mean:

First, **Access** our vulnerabilities and on strengths. We have to take a critical look at our societies and determine our weaknesses and how our enemies might use these weaknesses against us.

Second, we need to **Coordinate** at the national level. For us in the UK, that means working across the famous interagency in Whitehall. In the UK, we are doing just that and looking for ways to improve our cross department coordination.

Third, now more than ever, we must **Team up** with international allies on these issues.

This is an iterative process and we must continue to re-assess and recalibrate our posture.

As you know, the UK and the EU recently agreed in principle on the UK Withdrawal Agreement. Both sides agreed to a close and flexible partnership on foreign, security and defence policy. As we move forward, I look forward to hearing your perspectives on how we, as leading government communicators, can advance our common interests in this area.

Disinformation and Mythbusting

By Tina Zournatzi

Disinformation & Mythbusting

Policy

European Commission
Communication on Disinformation (April 2018)
Code of Practice on Disinformation (September 2018)
Action Plan for the European Council (December 2018)

Strategic Communication

Agile mythbusting network across DGs, Repts
and more recently EP and EEAS
East Stratcomm Task Force:
focusing on Kremlin anti-EU narratives



Network against Disinformation

Tackling disinformation by focusing on 3 pillars:

Early detection Fact-checking
Mythbusting
& positive messaging

Regular engagement
with academics and researchers
→ tailored, effective messaging
with elements of behavioral science



Communication Responses to Disinformation

Principles

- Inoculation & awareness raising
- Deconstructing false narrative
& pointing to inconsistencies and motives
- H2020-funded projects:
inVID, FANDANGO, DEBUNKER
- Positive & consensus messaging

Tools

- Corporate campaigns & Eurobarometer
- Social media & community management
- Influential voices and locally relevant
'multipliers' as advocates in public discourse



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Tina Zournatzi is currently Head of the Strategic Communication Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Communication. In this role she supervises corporate communication campaigns at the pan-European level. Born in Greece, Tina holds a Master's degree in International Relations from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and a degree in science from Georgetown University.

Capacity and Capabilities

By Claus Giering



Capacity & Capabilities

Communicating the EU in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions

Claus Giering, Head of Unit
Inter-institutional Relations and Communication
Directorate-General Neighbourhood and
Enlargement Negotiations
European Commission



Communicating the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

- 3 very different regions and 23 countries (+ Russia)
- most communication activities implemented by the EU Delegations/Offices
- complemented by regional information and communication programmes implemented by HQ with the help of professional communicators

... and a sceptical EU audience, namely as regards further enlargement of the EU




Challenges and gaps

- Fragmented activities, project by project
- Communication often more an after-sought, not integral part of the policies and EU actions
- Limited resources, burden on few press officers
- Lack of EU visibility and inconsistent branding
- New media landscape, social media, disinformation, ...






New approach and new focus

- strategic planning and move to (thematic) campaigning
- focus on results and concrete benefits (WHY we engage, not how much we spend)
- only one brand => "EU" and "EU identity" for all actions (EU4 ...)
- revised EU Communication & Visibility Requirements for implementing partners
- engage strongly on social media and people-to-people

=> but limited resources and lack of capacities and capabilities






Funded by the European Union



Capacity and capability building (1)

Delegation staff and implementing partners (IFIs, IOs, MS agencies, etc)

- 12 communication and visibility trainings in EU Delegations with focus on operational staff and management (Whole-of-Delegation approach)
- 8 webinars for EU staff world-wide on the C&V Requirements; information sessions for implementing partners and MS development agencies to follow
- building up on online repository COMNET of best practices, templates, ToRs etc open for EEAS, Commission, Delegations (and soon partly open for others)
- Pilot project Lebanon: intra muros communication expert to shape communications strategy






Capacity and capability building (2)

Support to media

- Media support programmes in all three regions (training, capacity building, quality output, dealing with fake news, start-up support, etc)
- Media conferences (WB Media Days 2017 + 2018, EaP Media Conference 2017, 1ères Assises du Journalism in Tunis 2018)
- Press trips from and to the three regions for EU and partner country journalists





Engaging with stakeholders and youth (3)

Series of Think Tank events on the WB Strategy in EUMS and WB

Young European Ambassadors (EaP)

- Started as pilot project, now 500 young ambassadors from EaP countries and EUMS following a call for interest
- Country coordinators organise work for each EaP – visiting schools and universities, peer-to-peer communication
- Training and study visits to Brussels (and meeting HRVP)








Partner governments (4)

Capacity building for government communicators:

- Support programmes for Serbia and Montenegro
- TAIEX : Pilot project in November in Serbia with 50 Serbian government from 11 different ministries and services – 2 day seminar with 4 EUMS experts
- next: Montenegro (tbc) and other Candidate Countries, could be complemented with a regional seminar and experts missions






Thank you!

ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/about/directorate-general_en

www.facebook.com/EUnear
twitter.com/eu_near



Claus Giering is Head of Unit at the European Commission Directorate-General NEAR (Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Directorate Inter-Institutional Relations and Communications



Professional basic principles

By Robert Wester

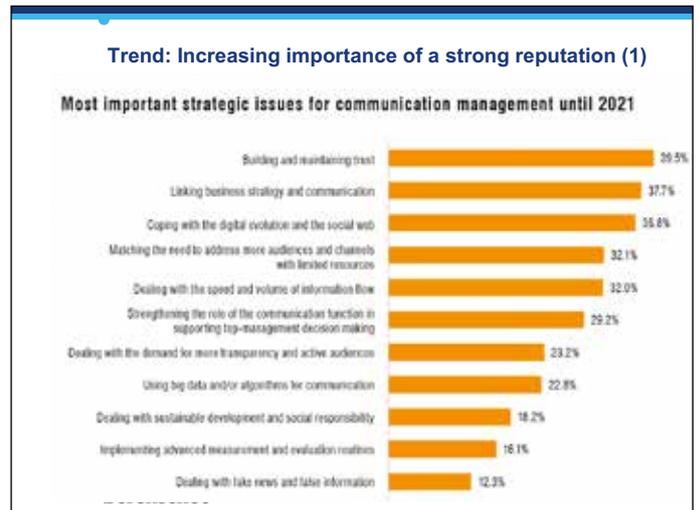
Berenschot Ministerie van Financiën

Basic principles of a professional communications function

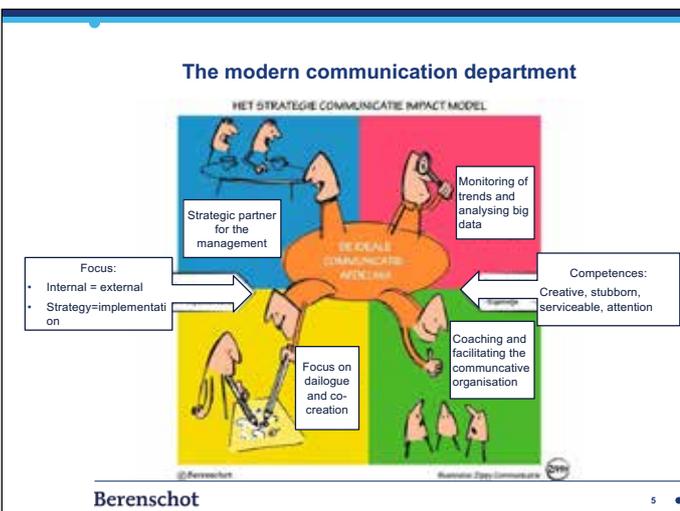
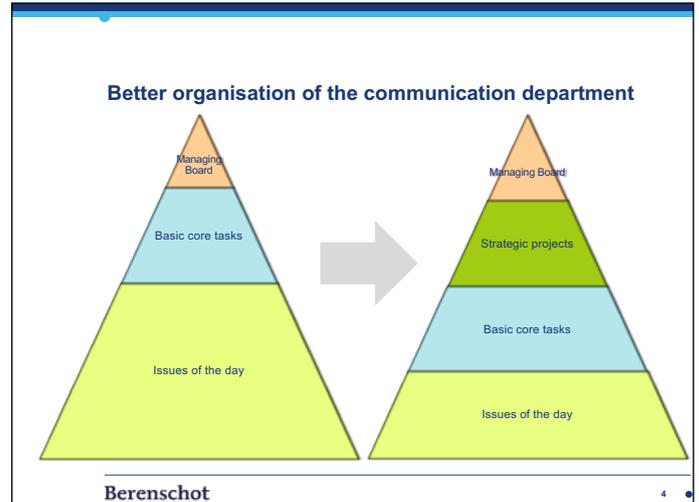
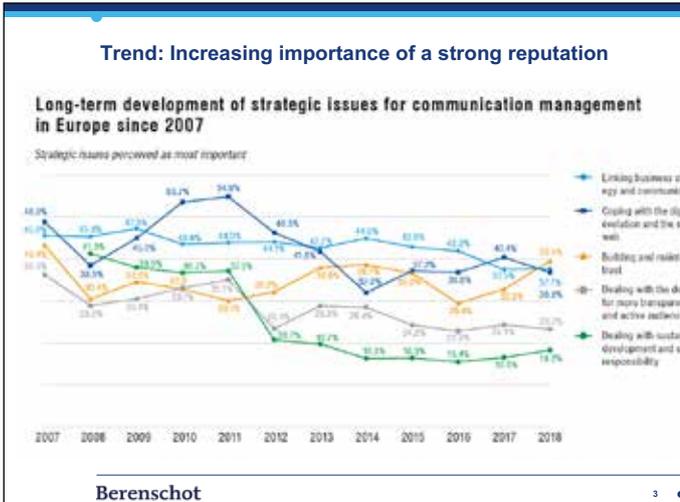
Club of Venice, November 22, 2018

Robert Wester, interim director of communications ministry of Finance, leader of the sector government, Berenschot consultancy

November 22, 2018 Verdieping 1



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- Profile of a modern communications function**
- Main goal:** 🎯
- Supporting the development and realisation of policy that is based on societal approval
- Position:** 🏢
- Strategic and close to the top level of the department
 - In the heart of the policy making process
- Organisation** ✨
- On the basis of the priorities of the ministry
 - Flexible generalists with one or two specialisms
-
- Berenschot 6

Profile of a modern communications function

Tasks

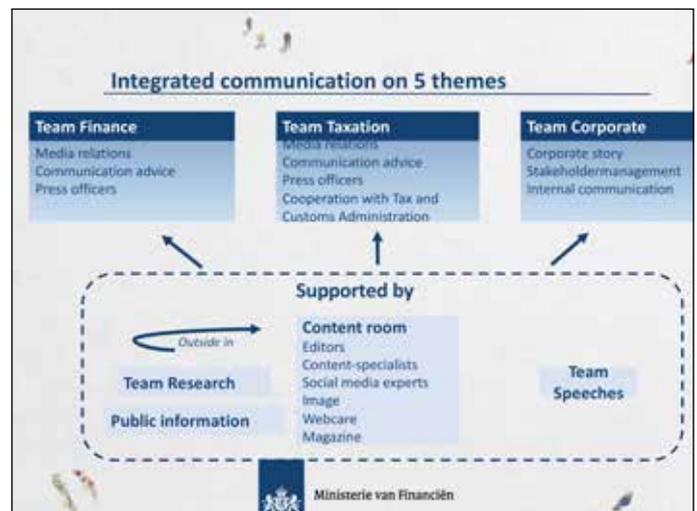
- Critical tasks: media relations, communication advice and research/monitoring
- Next to that: corporate and internal communication, storytelling & speechwriting, issuesmanagement and crisiscommunication, content or social newsroom, community and stakeholder management

Signature:

- Integrated communication through comm strategies on the main themes
- Cooperation inside and outside the ministry
- *Education permanente* and innovation

Berenschot

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Wingke Hoekstra (@WingkeHoekstra) [Today at 10:00](#)

Morgen is het alweer zover! Mijn eerste Prinsjesdag als minister van Financiën. Ik heb er zin in. #prinsjesdag2018

Menne Seef (@MenneSeef) [Today at 10:00](#)

Het kabinet wil per 2021 een #vliegbelasting invoeren. Er zijn drie opties. U kunt de komende tijd uw mening hierover geven: rijksoverheid.nl/voelstemmen/mi

Nederland

Landen met vliegbelasting

- Ingeplanning
- Wettelijke ingebruik

Week 33 Week 34 Week 35 Week 36 Week 37 Week 38

Augustus September

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Robert Wester, Senior Managing Consultant, Communications and Strategy Expert, Director a.i. for Communications at the Dutch Ministry of Finances, is Managing Director at Berenschot Europe (Netherlands). He was principle advisor of the Minister-President and the King in the Netherlands. He was also communications advisor to ministers, mayors and CEOs. He is an experienced spokesperson. Former Director-General at the Dutch Ministry of General Affairs at the Government Information Service, former policy director for Labour Market policy at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and former director of communications at the Ministry of Transport and Water management.



Un 30ème Forum Cap'Com « Au delà de la com »¹

Lyon, 5-7 décembre 2018

Par Dominique Mégard

Les communicants publics réunis à Lyon les 4, 5 et 6 décembre 2018 ont franchi ensemble le cap de leur 30ème Forum. On retiendra de ces trois journées une fréquentation historique. 1 300 participants ont irrigué les allées du Centre de congrès - rebaptisées « Place des canuts » - les salles de plénières et les ateliers, prouvant la vitalité du réseau et sa dynamique interne. Dans un environnement bousculé par l'actualité (où les gilets jaunes expriment un rejet des institutions), l'approche des élections européennes, des réformes profondes qui modifient les cartes et le vent puissant des évolutions numériques, ils ont partagé une réflexion collective et dessiné de nouveaux horizons.

Ce 30e Forum de la communication publique a été l'occasion de célébrer la profession de communicant -communicateur public : une édition marquée par les débats sur l'avenir du métier qui se dit « prêt à affronter ses propres défis qui sont aussi ceux de la société ». Avec une présence forte, pour ces 30 ans, du Club de Venise et de l'Europe. Sixtine Bouygues, témoin au Tribunal des générations futures (cf ci dessous) a pu développer une large vision européenne. Vincenzo Le Voci a participé à un atelier intense et vivant « Union européenne : une communication plus offensive pour rénover son image ».

Une intervention mobilisatrice

Bernard Deljarrie, délégué général de Cap'Com a fait une intervention d'ouverture centrée sur les questions et les problématiques du moment. « Demain, serons-nous encore des communicants ? s'est-il interrogé. Nous sommes entrés dans une période politique inédite et le mouvement des gilets jaunes nous l'a illustré violemment. Les fractures sociales et territoriales font naître des revendications légitimes, a-t-il souligné. Mais elles s'expriment aujourd'hui dans une société où la défiance s'est creusée envers les institutions, les élus et les instances représentatives. Dans une société où l'information a pris des formes totalement nouvelles, où la parole publique n'est plus considérée et où les médias sont ouvertement décriés {...} »

« Nous, communicants publics, nous œuvrons pour une société qui se parle, qui s'écoute, qui se comprend. Une société où la communication fait lien entre les gens et entre les territoires, où la communication fait sens et contribue à construire un avenir collectif. Nous sommes de modestes fantassins de la démocratie, a-t-il conclu avant de lancer un appel à la mobilisation : Je crois qu'il est l'heure de monter au front. Alors prenons la parole, profitons qu'existe le Forum, que vit ce réseau professionnel, pour, collectivement, mettre la communication publique à la place qui doit être la sienne, prête à affronter ses propres défis qui sont aussi ceux de la société ».

Le Tribunal pour les générations futures a jugé la communication publique

Le Forum a débuté par une audience du « Tribunal des générations futures », une forme de débat originale et décalée, adoptant la scénographie d'un procès, pour interroger la profession. Devant une salle de plus de 800 communicants publics, le Tribunal après avoir entendu les témoins - dont Sixtine Bouygues - , le réquisitoire du procureur, le plaidoyer de l'avocate, devait répondre à la question : « La communication publique est-elle encore qualifiée pour contribuer à la vie démocratique ? »

Point de départ de ce débat, les séminaires universitaires conduits à l'occasion du 30e Forum Cap'Com, a expliqué le président du tribunal, Bernard Deljarrie, délégué général de Cap'Com. Un travail de recherche qui a mis en évidence que dans les années 80, les premières directions de la communication dans les collectivités locales se sont organisées autour d'une mission primordiale : faire participer les citoyens à la vie démocratique. Depuis 30 ans, la communication publique s'est profondément renforcée, s'est professionnalisée, s'est mieux positionnée et a développé ses outils. Mais n'a-t-elle pas failli à sa mission première ? La communication publique est-elle donc encore qualifiée pour contribuer à la vie démocratique ? Faut-il donc la condamner et l'inviter, dans l'intérêt des générations futures, à redéfinir ses priorités pour mieux veiller à sa mission démocratique sans laquelle elle n'est que publicité ou propagande ?

Après 4 témoignages dont celui de Sixtine Bouygues, directrice générale adjointe de la communication de la Commission européenne, un procureur (Erwan Lecœur, sociologue et politologue, ex-dir'com de la ville de Grenoble) a dressé un réquisitoire (extraits) : « Nos sociétés démocratiques, a-t-il souligné, sont prises de convulsions et doivent faire face à de nombreuses colères et remises en cause qui mettent en péril notre pacte social et la démocratie elle-même. {...} Cette crise est une crise de confiance, contre l'État, et contre tous les pouvoirs... médias et communicants compris.. {...} Pourquoi condamner la communication publique, aujourd'hui ? Parce qu'elle est responsable - et donc coupable - d'avoir sous-estimé l'ampleur de la crise démocratique qui se déroule sous nos yeux. Elle est coupable et responsable de n'avoir pas fait progresser le projet de citoyenneté et l'espoir en Europe ; de n'avoir pas fait vivre plus fortement le lien de confiance entre pouvoirs et population ; d'être devenue une prestataire de services efficace, avec des

¹ <http://www.cap-com.org/evenement/le-forum-de-la-communication-publique-et-territoriale-0>

réponses techniques et administratives à tous les problèmes. Mais en perdant le sens global de sa mission.

Je ne vous demande pas de condamner des personnes ou des actes en particulier. Mais de rappeler un principe.

Je ne vous demande pas de condamner la communication publique à mort. Au contraire, elle a besoin de vivre, plus que jamais.

Je ne vous demande pas de la condamner à l'enfermement ; au contraire, elle a besoin de liberté, pour pouvoir aller à la rencontre de publics qui se sont éloignés.

Ce que je vous demande, c'est de la condamner à des travaux d'intérêt général [...] il faut la condamner aujourd'hui, pour lui permettre d'être meilleure demain, au service de l'intérêt général et des générations futures.

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Rolande Placidi, avocate au barreau de Strasbourg, avait été choisie pour assurer la défense de la communication publique. Elle plaida la légitimité de la communication « droit des habitants à être informé des affaires publiques, à être consulté sur les décisions qui les concernent. » Au nom du service public : « Le code général des collectivités locales indique que ce droit est indissociable de la libre administration des collectivités locales et que c'est là un principe essentiel de la démocratie locale. Dès lors, la communication publique s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'intérêt général et elle constitue un service public à part entière ». Elle demanda l'acquiescement après une argumentation juridique très charpentée et concluant « L'accusé est donc la communication publique. Toutefois, ce n'est pas le bon accusé que vous avez à juger. Le procès qui doit être instruit ne doit pas l'être contre la communication publique mais contre la communication politique [...] C'est pour cela, mesdames et messieurs les jurés, que je vais vous demander de ne pas condamner la communication publique mais d'engager un vaste travail de réflexion sur la place et le rôle de la communication publique et de la communication politique [...] Je vous demande donc d'acquiescer la communication publique afin de lui permettre de remettre l'intérêt général au cœur de notre société.

À l'issue des débats, le jury, composé de 5 communicants publics tirés au sort parmi les participants au Forum Cap'Com, s'est prononcé à la majorité des 3/5 pour une mesure de justice restaurative. La Cour a constaté que la communication publique sait collectivement s'interroger sur elle-même, qu'elle sait réfléchir à ses missions. C'est là une force et un atout pour les générations futures. Ayant constaté que toutes les parties reconnaissent que la parole publique est essentielle et que notre société en transition en plus que jamais besoin, elle a invité la communication publique à un débat permanent sur sa mission démocratique et sur son éthique professionnelle.

Réflexions autour de la communication européenne

Dans la foulée du tribunal introduisant les deux jours de débats et d'ateliers du Forum, Vincenzo de Voci et Sixtine Bouygues avec Isabelle Coustet, cheffe du bureau du Parlement européen en France sont intervenus dans une session d'échanges et de réflexion sur le thème : « Union européenne : une communication plus offensive pour rénover son image ». Parmi les réflexions échangées, on peut noter cette réflexion de Sixtine Bouygues : « Ce sont par des actions de terrain qu'on peut arriver davantage à faire passer nos messages et j'espère que nous pouvons compter sur vous tous pour relayer la communication sur l'Europe ». Elle a ensuite expliqué « Nous avons mis en place depuis 2013 et avec une intensification ces dernières années un exercice de dialogue citoyen en France et dans tous les États membres. Ces dialogues citoyens nous permettent d'aller vraiment au contact des personnes et pour nous c'est extrêmement utile d'abord car c'est un exercice d'écoute active qui nous permet de prendre le pouls sur le terrain et aussi comme c'est un travail souvent effectué par les commissaires eux-mêmes d'avoir une véritable perception de ce qui se passe. En plus de ces consultations citoyenne, il y a une consultation en ligne sur l'avenir de l'Europe avec questionnaire rédigée par une centaine de citoyens des 27 pays de l'Union ».

Isabelle Coustet présenta la campagne du Parlement « décentralisée et participative » pour ces élections européennes axée sur l'incitation au vote, avec la mise en place de la plate-forme de participation citoyenne très innovante « Cette fois, je vote ». Vincenzo de Voci présenta aux membres du réseau Cap'Com les modalités de travail du Club de Venise et les trois chartes récentes qui lient ses membres. Le tout avant de conclure que l'avenir était ouvert pour des coopérations plus vivantes, plus nombreuses, plus intenses entre les réseaux autour de l'Europe et des problématiques partagées par les communicants publics.

Impossible de rendre compte des quelques 40 temps, visites professionnelles, ateliers, plénières ou carrefours sur 3 jours... À noter cependant des interrogations portées en séance de clôture qui confirme l'attachement des communicants publics à leur métier : « Métier passionnant, transversal, pluridisciplinaire », « qui allie créativité, stratégie, travail en équipe », « un métier riche aux multiples facettes », « protéiforme et enrichissant »... « Un métier pour ceux qui aiment l'aventure ». De quoi donner du peps aux réseaux professionnels, Cap'Com et Club de Venise inclus...



CAP'COM LE RÉSEAU DE LA COMMUNICATION PUBLIQUE ET TERRITORIALE

Dominique Mégard est aujourd'hui présidente du Comité de pilotage de Cap'Com, réseau des professionnels de la communication publique et territoriale. Elle anime avec le réseau, une réflexion permanente sur l'actualité et la diversité de la communication publique.

Depuis l'origine, en 1988, elle accompagne la vie et les débats du Forum annuel. Elle a assuré, comme déléguée générale, la responsabilité de la manifestation ainsi que la création de nombreux services et actions pour et sur la communication publique dans les territoires, avant de devenir présidente du réseau qui en est issu. Bernard Deljarrie lui a succédé en 2012 au poste de délégué général, assurant la gestion, l'action et l'avenir de Cap'Com.

Journaliste diplômée du CFJ Paris, elle a exercé en PHR et pour de nombreux périodiques spécialisés en économie, urbanisme, vie territoriale et vie publique. Elle a été elle-même directrice de la communication dans une collectivité pendant huit ans. Elle a été chargée de cours plus de dix ans à l'université de Paris I Sorbonne, à l'université Lille 2 et à l'UCO d'Angers et intervient, en tant qu'expert, à la demande.

Auteur de nombreux articles et d'un ouvrage paru au printemps 2012, chez Dunod « La communication publique et territoriale », elle est également co-auteur avec Bernard Deljarrie de l'ouvrage La communication des collectivités locales LGDJ, 2008.



EuroPCom experience in progress

The successful 2018 conference and future perspectives¹



The **9th edition of EuroPCom** took place on **Thursday 8 and Friday 9 November 2018**. With the 2019 European Parliament elections ahead and distrust in the EU still dominating national discourse and elections in the Member States, fostering democratic engagement and advocating for the European project seem to be decisive elements in 2018 for ensuring the future of the EU.

This edition of EuroPCom therefore had the title **“Campaigning for Europe”** and provided a **unique connecting platform** in preparation for the election year ahead.

Over 1.100 communication professionals from all the EU Member States and beyond attended the conference (24 sessions in 2 days) to share their views at this largest event on public communication in Europe! Over 7300 people engaged on social media during the conference and over 13K Fb podcast views after it!

The 2018 conference sessions followed three main thematic clusters:



An innovative mix of well-known and new formats was set up for this edition. Workshops, Ideas Labs, mini trainings, EuroPComTalks, an interactive EuroPCom Market Place and an Open Space gave participants the opportunity to make the most of their learning and networking experience at the conference

EuroPCom, the **European Public Communication Conference**, is the annual meeting point of communication experts from local, regional, national and European authorities, as well as private communication agencies, NGOs and academia. During this two-day event, public communication professionals come together

to discuss how to improve public communication and raise awareness of EU policies.

The conference is organised by the European Committee of the Regions, in close cooperation with the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Club of Venice has also participated in the works of the EuroPCom Advisory Board since the 1st edition of the Conference in 2010.

The 10th edition of EuroPCom will take place in Brussels on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 November 2019

EuroPCom 2019 will take place just after the European Parliament elections and the establishment of the European Commission. This gives us the opportunity to discuss **how to communicate the priorities of the new mandate, how to engage with citizens and how to move on in a European Union of 27**.

The preliminary list of topics includes:

- Citizen participation and engagement of specific audiences (e.g. young people, women, etc.)
- Evaluation of campaigns for the EP elections 2019
- Different communication channels from traditional to online/social media
- New trends/evolutions in the area of EU/public communication

Contact: europcom@cor.europa.eu

¹ Information collected from the relevant webpages of the Committee of the Regions:

<https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/EuroPCom-2018.aspx>
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/europcom.aspx>

SEEMF - Thinking out of the box for more independent and profitable media

Tirana, report on the forum held in November 2018

By Darija Fabijanic and Manuela Zlateva, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

At the 12th "South East Europe Media Forum" (SEEMF) in Tirana measures and rules for financially independent media reporting in South East Europe were discussed.

Financial independence from media owners, advertisers, investors as well as the business with false news and transparency of media ownership were the main topics of the 12th South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF) in Tirana on the 15th and 16th November 2018. The biggest media conference in South East Europe brought about 300 journalists, publishers, politicians and NGO representatives from all over Europe to Albania. The KAS Media Programme South East Europe hosts this media forum every year together with the South East European Media Organisation (SEEMO) and the Central European Initiative (CEI).

In addition to the welcoming remarks by **Oliver Vujović**, SEEMO Secretary General, the conference was opened by **Hendrik Sittig**, Head of the KAS Media Programme South East Europe. Concerning the media situation in the region, he said: "Journalists need to be aware of their role, their task in a democracy as watchdog over the situation in the society." He further expressed the challenges which the media sector has to face and encouraged the experts in the audience to think outside the box in order to develop competitive concepts for more profitability and transparency on the media market. **Walter Glos**, Head of the KAS country office Albania, took also part in the opening ceremony. He explained that Albania is about to start EU accession negotiations, however the country still faces huge challenges. **Illir Melo**, CEI coordinator for Albania and the Director for the Region and Neighbouring Countries at the Albanian Foreign Ministry, stressed the importance of the forum, especially for the promotion of pluralistic media and strengthening of quality journalism.

Albanian President Ilir Meta Was a Guest at SEEMF

Traditionally SEEMF is opened by the president or prime minister of the host country. Albanian President **Ilir Meta** underlined the meaning of an independent press, especially in times when press freedom also declines inside the European Union. "Politics won't take the freedom of the press," promised Meta during his speech. Afterwards he answered various questions by national and international media representatives.

Right after that SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujović moderated a discussion on the relationship between media and politics in Albania. **Aleksander Cipa**, President of the Union of Albanian Journalists, referred to the fact that many journalists in Albania are working without an employment

contract and unfortunately they also wouldn't work in a collective, to change the situation. **Lutfi Dervishi**, from the Albanian National Television RTSH, explained that there is a lack of critical and investigative journalism, fact-checking as well as solidarity among the journalists. **Jonila Godole**, Director of the Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture in Tirana, described the changes in the Albanian media market in the last 25 years. "Media have surrendered themselves to political interests," said Godole. **Klodiana Lala**, journalist at News 24 TV, reported that unknown perpetrators had fired at her family home after her investigations. In spite of this attempt at intimidation, where fortunately nobody was hurt, she is assured to continue her journalistic work. Furthermore, Lala criticised that journalism is being destroyed by self-censorship. **Alfred Lela**, Founder of the online news portal "Politiko.al", illustrated that it is not necessary for Albanian journalists to think out of the box, but it is rather important to go back to the basic rules. **Ilva Tare**, News Director at Euronews Albania, criticised that mainstream media only report about politicians and do not talk anymore with the "normal" citizens.

Journalists from Serbia and Bosnia Receive CEI SEEMO Award

During the conference the annual "CEI-SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism" was awarded. **Stevan Dojčinović** and **Dragana Pečo** from the Serbian investigative Centre „Crime and Corruption Reporting Network“(KRIK) received the prize for their contribution to the investigative journalism in Serbia and for the impact of their courageous stories on the society in one very challenging environment. **Nino Bilajac** from the Center for Investigative Journalism in Sarajevo (CIN) won the award in the category "Young Journalist" for his report on financial misuse in public procurement and public funds.

Financial Security Not Enough for Independent Reporting

The second day of the conference started with a panel on „Power in our pockets: the business of news – What to do to ensure independent reporting?“ **Lars Radau**, freelance journalist at the German newspaper der Sächsische Zeitung, moderated the discussion. "Many newsportals are financially dependent on international donors," explained **Goran Mihajlovski**, Founder of the Macedonian online news portal "SDK web". This is the consequence of the retraction of many publishing houses like the WAZ media group from the South East European market. His news portal for example was only financed 10 percent by advertisements; the rest came from international donors, he said.

Boro Kontić, Director of the Media Centar Sarajevo, noticed that the competition on the media market is fierce because everybody can publish news on the internet nowadays. **Nataliya Gumenyuk**, Founder and Head of Hromadske TV from Ukraine, said that it is important for journalists not only to know their craft, but also to understand how to run a company. They have to explain donors and audiences good journalism in order to protect their brand.

Adelheid Feilcke, Head of the Department Europe at Deutsche Welle, explained that for independent reporting the internal structures are important. Thus, it needs a diverse board and a legal department to act when mistakes are made. "Pluralism secures independence. More voices build the truth," said **Francesco de Filippo** from the Italian news agency.

Sabina Castelfranco, Italian correspondent for CBS News, said that future lies in the digital market as the youth is getting the news from there. Moreover, she underlined the importance of control mechanisms. For example, CBS news never publishes an article before at least two sources were quoted and two editors have edited the text.

Subsequently, **Ognian Zlatev**, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria, held a keynote on the importance of an independent media landscape. "Only then progress in the Balkan countries is achievable," he said.

Business with Fake News Dangerous for Quality Journalism

The second panel was about the influence of disinformation on media companies and journalists. The session was moderated by **Christian Mühr**, Executive Director of "Reporters without Borders" in Germany. **Eric Chamberland** from the Think Tank NATO Stratcom CoE in Riga presented various examples on false news. He said that disinformation often was spread in the form of very credible videos. According to him nowadays it is very easy to edit video content in a very trustworthy way. The political analyst and editor of the online portal „@theEUpos“, based in Trieste and Brussels, **Marco Gombacci** reported about his experience in the Syrian war. He explained how disinformation and propaganda was spread through social media and how the citizens immediately believed it. Gombacci criticised the editorial offices since they often do not give journalists in war zones enough time to analyse the situation and thus mistakes in the reporting would occur. The Russian journalist and human rights activist **Oksana Chelysheva** who is living in exile in Helsinki talked about the practice of journalists writing false news. In her opinion this is happening in parts due to self-censorship among the journalists. Overcoming this issue

would be a question of the political will. **Alina Radu**, Director of the Moldovan daily „Ziarul de Gardă“, said during the discussion that rules are needed in order to punish the donors of media which are spreading disinformation .

Zoran Sekulić, founder and CEO of the Serbian News Agency „Fonet“ expressed his concern that journalists who write and spread fake news could not be called journalists.

After the second panel the media expert **Nico Pitrelli** talked about the relationship between media and science. His key message was that the media should spread knowledge in order to strengthen the development of the democratic societies.

Credibility Only Possible With Professional Content

The third panel focused on the question how the influence of advertisers, investors and donors could be minimised. **Stevan Dojčinović**, Editor-in-Chief of the investigative online portal KRIK, said that crowdfunding campaigns are working well for his portal and the readers are willing to support independent media projects. However, there are legal restrictions in Serbia which limit crowdfunding, e.g. the online payment service PayPal is illegal.

Florian Nehm, Head of Corporate Sustainability and EU affairs at Ringier Axel Springer Media, appealed that also advertisers need to take responsibility for which media and content they pay. Furthermore, he said that he supports more media pluralism in South East Europe and welcomes the work of investigative journalists in the region.

Silvio Pedrazzi, CEO of Intesa Sanpaolo Bank Albania and Board Member of the Foreign Investors Association Albania (FIAA) in Tirana, said that as a bank there are three types of cooperation with media: as advertiser, in direct communication and as loan provider. However, he also remarked that from an ethical point of view it is not advised to give loans to media, due to independence reasons.

Elena Popović, General Counsel at the Media Development Investment Fund in New York, explained her work and reported about the requirements for investments in media projects. One possibility for more transparency she sees in the regulation of the media market. Moreover, Popović gave examples for independent media companies and their business models.

Klaus Schweighofer, Chairman of the Management Board of Styria Media International based in Graz, was convinced that it is possible to earn money with good digital content, and to secure the own existence and independent reporting. "Content



Manuela Zlateva,
Online Communications Manager of the Media Program South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Manuela has studied Communication Management (M.A.) at the University of Leipzig (Germany). In 2012 she has received the PR Junior Award of the German Public Relations Society (DPRG). Since 2013 Manuela is working as an Online Communications Manager at the Media Program South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). She is one of editors of the KAS books "Requirements for modern journalism education. The perspective of students in South East Europe" and "Reconnecting with citizens - from values to big data: Communication of governments, the EU and political parties in times of populism and filter bubbles". Manuela has attended various conferences of the South East Europe Public Sector Communication Association (SEECOM) and events on political communication management such as the first regional KAS Sommer School of Political Communication in Chişinău (Moldova).

which comes from advertisers should not be excluded, however it must be labelled as such," said Schweighofer. The PR-expert **Samra Lučkin** from Sarajevo moderated the discussion.

Regulation of Media Ownership and Transparency as a Solution Approach

Katerina Sinadinovska, President of the Council of Media Ethics Macedonia, criticised that media ownership is unknown in many South East European countries.

Sandra Bašić-Hrvatini, Researcher at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, added that non-transparent media ownership structures are a danger for the public opinion building. According to **Željko Ivanović**, CEO of the Montenegrin daily "Vijesti", political elites in South East Europe do not have an interest in independent media. He told the example of Finland. The media situation is better there because politics supports media and sees journalists as watchdogs of democracy.

Besar Likmeta, Editor-in-Chief of the "Balkan Investigative Reporting Network" (BIRN) in Albania, said about the media situation that a lot of people were trying to address the problem, but only few would be heard by political actors. In his opinion, the legal framework and its implementation need improvement in order to achieve progress. **Ricardo Gutierrez**, Secretary General of the European Journalism Association in Brussels, moderated the panel.

Venue for 13th SEEMF Announced

In the end the organisers Barbara Fabro, Oliver Vujović und Hendrik Sittig thanked all panellists, moderators and guests for their active participation as well as the translators who have done an excellent job. They announced that the next South East Europe Media Forum will probably take place in Zagreb in autumn 2019.



Darija Fabijanić is a research associate and project coordinator at the Media Programme South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung since November 2015.

Previously she worked at the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, at Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative in Sarajevo, and the European Parliament. She studied Political Science, Slavic Studies and Eastern European Studies at the Eberhard Karl University Tübingen and at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich from 2009- to 2015.

Darija is editor of publications like "Conflict reporting in the smartphone era - from budget constraints to information warfare", "Reconnecting with citizens - from values to big data: Communication of governments, the EU and political parties in times of populism and filter bubbles" and "The Western Balkans on their path towards EU/NATO accession: The role of media and (dis)information".

Countering Disinformation: Europe mobilisation in progress

By Vincenzo Le Voci

The EU countering disinformation - chronology and key-issues -

- December 2017-March 2018: High Level Working Group – set of recommendations <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/first-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>
- April 2018: European Commission communication – proposed set of actions (debunking and monitoring system) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-fighting-online-disinformation-european-approach>
- September 2018: Code of Practice on Disinformation <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/code-practice-disinformation>
- December 2018: EAS/Commission Action Plan to counter disinformation https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2018/49/action_plan_against_disinformation_26A2FASB-DE6333C0-25A066-344D5113C-30926424
- Mobilisation of all the Institutions
- 19 February 2019 – Council Conclusions on securing free and fair European elections <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/02/19/securing-free-and-fair-european-elections-council-adopts-conclusions/>
- March 2019: Reports from Google, Facebook and Twitter addressing actions taken during February 2019 towards implementation of the commitments on electoral integrity <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/second-monthly-intermediate-results-eu-code-practice-against-disinformation>

Action Plan on Disinformation

A set of actions aiming to build capabilities and strengthen cooperation between Member States and EU institutions to proactively address disinformation

extract of the Commission DG COMM presentation at the Athens Club of Venice seminar on crisis communication, 5-6 April 2019

EEAS StratCom

- Taskforces: East, South and Western Balkans
- Specialised teams: Migration, Security & Defence, etc.

East StratCom

A team of Russian language/communication specialists:

- effectively communicate the EU's policies towards its Eastern neighbourhood
- strengthen the overall media environment in Eastern neighbourhood (support media freedom and independent media)
- improve the EU's capacity to forecast, address and raise awareness of pro-Kremlin disinformation activities

→ Identified more than 4,700 examples of pro-Kremlin disinformation

euvsdisinfo.eu

Rapid Alert System (RAS)

- Dedicated digital platform** where MS and EU institutions can share information on disinformation and coordinate responses
- Network of 28 national contact points** who coordinate their government's participation, share information, best practices

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Code of Practice on Disinformation

Commitments by online platforms and advertising sector to:

- Scrutinize **ad placements** and disrupt advertising revenues of accounts and websites that spread disinformation
- Make **political advertising** and issue-based advertising **more transparent**
- Address the issue of **fake accounts** and online **bots**
- Empower consumers** to report disinformation and **access** different news sources, while giving **prominence to authoritative content**
- Empower the research community** to monitor the spread and impact of online disinformation

On November 16, 2017, the Italian Regulatory Authority for the Communications established a "Technical table to guarantee pluralism and correct information on digital platforms to guarantee of pluralism and fairness on digital platforms". It aims to promote self-regulation of platforms and the exchange of best practices for the use of digital platforms, discerning and contrasting online misinformation phenomena. The table sees the participation of Google, Facebook, traditional broadcasters, trade associations.

EU's Action Plan against Disinformation

Brussels, 5 December 2018

By European Commission, High Representative Of The Union For Foreign Affairs And Security Policy

Introduction

Freedom of expression is a core value of the European Union enshrined in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the constitutions of Member States. Our open democratic societies depend on the ability of citizens to access a variety of verifiable information so that they can form a view on different political issues. In this way, citizens can participate in an informed way in public debates and express their will through free and fair political processes. These democratic processes are increasingly challenged by deliberate, large-scale, and systematic spreading of disinformation.

Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm¹. Public harm includes threats to democratic processes as well as to public goods such as Union citizens' health, environment or security. Disinformation does not include inadvertent errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary. The actions contained in this Action Plan only target disinformation content that is legal under Union or national law. They are without prejudice to the laws of the Union or of any of the Member States that may be applicable, including rules on illegal content².

Following the Salisbury chemical attack and the related European Council conclusions³, the Commission and the High Representative presented a Joint Communication on bolstering resilience against hybrid threats⁴ that highlighted strategic communication as a priority field for further work. The European Council, then, invited the *"High Representative and the Commission to present, in cooperation with the Member States and in line with the March 2015 European Council conclusions, an action plan by December 2018 with specific proposals for a coordinated response to the challenge of disinformation, including appropriate mandates and sufficient resources for the relevant EEAS Strategic Communications teams"*⁵.

This Action Plan answers the European Council's call for measures to *"protect the Union's democratic systems and combat disinformation, including in the context of the upcoming*

*European elections"*⁶. It builds on existing Commission initiatives and the work of the East Strategic Communication Task Force of the European External Action Service. It sets out actions to be taken by the Commission and the High Representative, with the assistance of the European External Action Service, in cooperation with Member States and the European Parliament. This Plan includes input received from Member States, including via discussions at Council⁷, in Permanent Representatives Committees I and II, the Political Security Committee, relevant Council working parties and meetings of strategic communication and political directors of Ministries of Foreign Affairs. It also takes into account the cooperation with the Union's key partners, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Group of 7 (G7)⁸.

The Communication on tackling online disinformation (the April Communication) emphasised the key role played by civil society and the private sector (notably social media platforms) in tackling the problem of disinformation. As a follow-up, online platforms and the advertising industry agreed on a Code of Practice in September 2018 to increase online transparency and protect citizens, especially with a view to the 2019 European Parliament elections, but also in a more long-term perspective. It is now essential that these actors deliver on the objectives the Commission set out in April and fully comply with the Code of Practice⁹. In addition, an independent network of fact-checkers is being developed to increase the ability to detect and expose disinformation, and sustained efforts are being made at Union and national level to support media literacy.

This Action Plan is accompanied by a progress report on the April Communication¹⁰. This report sets out the progress achieved on the various actions, notably regarding the Code of Practice, fostering a secure, trust-worthy and accountable on-line ecosystem, activities linked to awareness raising and media literacy as well as support to independent media and quality journalism.

The European Council first recognised the threat of online disinformation campaigns in 2015 when it asked the High Representative to address the disinformation campaigns by Russia. The East Strategic Communication Task Force has been set up to address and raise awareness of this issue. In addition,

1 Communication on tackling on-line disinformation, COM(2018) 236.

2 The Commission proposed targeted measures to address the spread of illegal content on-line, including the Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online (C(2018) 1177). See also proposal for a Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online COM(2018) 640 as well as the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive agreed on 6 November 2018.

3 European Council conclusions, 22 March 2018.

4 JOIN(2018) 16.

5 European Council conclusions, 28 June 2018.

6 European Council conclusions, 18 October 2018.

7 See policy debate on "Tackling the spread of disinformation online: Challenges for the media ecosystem" and Council conclusions of 27 November 2018.

8 In the Charlevoix Commitment on Defending Democracy from Foreign Threats, G7 Leaders committed to take concerted action to respond to foreign actors who seek to undermine our democratic societies and institutions, our electoral processes, our sovereignty and our security.

9 See also Council conclusions of 27 November 2018.

10 COM(2018) 794.

the Joint Communication on Countering Hybrid Threats¹¹ set up the Hybrid Fusion Cell within the European External Action Service to act as a single focus for the analysis of hybrid threats. It also led to the setting up of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, which shares best practices and supports the activities of the Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in this field.

In view of the 2019 European Parliament elections and more than 50 presidential, national or local/regional elections being held in Member States by 2020, it is urgent to step up efforts to secure free and fair democratic processes. Threats affecting democracy in any Member State can harm the Union as a whole. Moreover, disinformation often targets European institutions and their representatives and aims at undermining the European project itself in general. On 12 September 2018, the Commission adopted measures¹² to secure free and fair European elections and recommended the use of sanctions where appropriate, including for the illegal use of personal data to influence the outcome of the elections¹³. In addition, it is urgent that Member States take the steps needed to preserve the integrity of their electoral systems and infrastructure and test them ahead of the European elections.

Disinformation campaigns, in particular by third countries, are often part of hybrid warfare¹⁴, involving cyber-attacks and hacking of networks¹⁵. Evidence shows that foreign state actors are increasingly deploying disinformation strategies to influence societal debates, create divisions and interfere in democratic decision-making. These strategies target not only Member States but also partner countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood as well as in the Southern Neighbourhood, Middle East and Africa.

11 While definitions of hybrid threats vary and need to remain flexible to respond to their evolving nature, the concept captures the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. There is usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes. Massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalise, recruit and direct proxy actors can be vehicles for hybrid threats. See JOIN(2016) 18.

12 For a full overview of measures, see the Communication on Securing free and fair European elections, COM(2018) 637 final.

13 These sanctions are in addition to the ones provided by the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 2016/679).

14 Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response, JOIN(2016) 18 final.

15 These cyberattacks may include targeted intrusions to collect sensitive information as a precursor to leaks or tainted leaks, take-over of social media accounts, social media accounts driven by bots, and disruption of information technology systems of, for instance, broadcasting companies or electoral commissions.

Disinformation produced and/or spread by Russian sources has been reported in the context of several elections and referenda in the EU¹⁶. Disinformation campaigns related to the war in Syria¹⁷, to the downing of the MH-17 aircraft in the East of Ukraine¹⁸ and to the use of chemical weapons in Salisbury attack¹⁹ have been well documented.

Disinformation: understanding the threats and strengthening the European response

Disinformation is an evolving threat which requires continuous efforts to address the relevant actors, vectors, tools, methods, prioritised targets and impact. Some forms, especially state-driven disinformation, are analysed by the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, in cooperation with the Strategic Communication Task Forces of the European External Action Service and with the support of Member States' services.

The actors behind disinformation may be internal, within Member States, or external, including state (or government sponsored) and non-state actors. According to reports²⁰, more than 30 countries are using disinformation and influencing activities in different forms, including in their own countries. The use of disinformation by actors within Member States is an increasing source of concern across the Union. Cases of disinformation driven by non-state actors have also been reported in the Union, for example related to vaccination²¹. As regards external actors, the evidence is strong in the case of the Russian Federation. However, other third countries also deploy disinformation strategies, quickly learning from the methods of the Russian Federation.

16 See for example the report by the Policy Planning Staff and the Institute for Strategic Research of France: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/information_manipulation_rvb_cle838736.pdf

17 Joint statement by 17 member countries of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on chemical attacks in Douma, Syria: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/manipulation-of-information/article/syria-chemical-attacks-in-douma-7-april-joint-statement-by-france-and-16-other>

18 On the disinformation campaign on MH-17, see the East Strategic Communication Task Force: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/mh17-time-is-running-out-for-disinformation/> and <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/flight-mh-17-three-years-on-getting-the-truth-out-of-eastern-ukraine/> as well as the statement from the Joint Investigation Team: <https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-crash/@104053/reaction-jit-to>

19 <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/timeline-how-russia-built-two-major-disinformation-campaigns/>

On the Russian cyber operation targeting the OPCW in the Hague, see: <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2018/10/04/netherlands-defence-intelligence-and-security-service-disrupts-russian-cyber-operation-targeting-opcw>

20 See <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2017>.

21 See COM(2018) 245 and COM(2018) 244.

According to the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, disinformation by the Russian Federation²² poses the greatest threat to the EU. It is systematic, well-resourced, and on a different scale to other countries. In terms of coordination, levels of targeting and strategic implications, Russia's disinformation constitutes part of a wider hybrid threat that uses a number of tools, levers, and also non-state actors.

Constant targeted disinformation campaigns against the Union, its institutions and policies are likely to increase in the run up to the 2019 European Parliament elections. **This calls for urgent and immediate action to protect the Union, its institutions and its citizens against disinformation.**

Social media have become important means of spreading disinformation, including in some cases, like Cambridge Analytica, to target the delivery of disinformation content to specific users, who are identified by the unauthorised access and use of personal data, with the ultimate goal of influencing the election results. Recent evidence shows that private messaging services are increasingly used to spread disinformation²³. Techniques include video manipulation (deep-fakes) and falsification of official documents; the use of internet automated software (bots) to spread and amplify divisive content and debates on social media; troll attacks on social media profiles and information theft. At the same time, more traditional methods such as television, newspapers, websites and chain emails continue to play an important role in many regions. The tools and techniques used are changing fast - the response needs to evolve just as rapidly.

In addition to taking action within Member states and Union-wide, the Union has a significant interest in working with partners in three priority regions – the Union's Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood and in the Western Balkans. Exposing disinformation in countries neighbouring the Union is complementary to tackling the problem within the Union.

The European External Action Service has set up specific strategic communication task forces consisting of experts with relevant language and knowledge skills, to address the issue and develop response strategies. They are working closely with Commission services to ensure a coordinated and consistent communication approach in the regions.

²² Russian military doctrine explicitly recognises information warfare as one of its domains: <https://www.rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>

²³ According to Oxford University, direct messaging platforms have hosted disinformation campaigns in at least 10 countries this year.

Based on the Action Plan on Strategic Communication, adopted on 22 June 2015, the mandate of the East Strategic Communication Task Force comprises three strands of action: (i) Effective communication and promotion of Union policies towards the Eastern Neighbourhood; (ii) Strengthening the overall media environment in the Eastern Neighbourhood and in Member States, including support for media freedom and strengthening independent media and (iii) Improved Union capacity to forecast, address and respond to disinformation activities by the Russian Federation. In response to the Council conclusions in December 2015 and June 2017, the European External Action Service set up two additional task forces: the Western Balkans Task Force²⁴ for the corresponding region and the Task Force South²⁵ for the countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa and the Gulf region.

Since it was established, the East Strategic Communication Task Force has effectively communicated on the policies of the Union in the Union's Eastern neighbourhood mainly through a campaigns-led approach. In addition, the East Strategic Communication Task Force has catalogued, analysed and put the spotlight on over 4,500 examples of disinformation by the Russian Federation, uncovering numerous disinformation narratives, raising awareness of and exposing the tools, techniques and intentions of disinformation campaigns. Its focus is on the Eastern Partnership countries and on Russian domestic and international media and its approach is to expose, on the basis of the evidence collected, the trends, narratives, methods and channels used and raise awareness of them.

The mandate of the East Strategic Communication Task Force should therefore be maintained and the mandate of the other two Strategic Communications Task Forces (Western Balkan and South) should be reviewed in the light of the growing scale and importance of disinformation activities in those regions and the need to raise awareness of the adverse impact of disinformation.

Actions for a coordinated union response to disinformation

Addressing disinformation requires political determination and unified action, mobilising all parts of governments (including counter-hybrid, cybersecurity, intelligence and strategic communication communities, data protection, electoral, law enforcement and media authorities). This should be done in close cooperation with like-minded partners

²⁴ The Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process of 15 December 2015.

²⁵ The Council conclusions on Counter-Terrorism adopted on 19 June 2017.

across the globe. It requires close cooperation between Union institutions, Member States, civil society and the private sector, especially online platforms.

The coordinated response to disinformation presented in this Action Plan is based on four pillars:

- improving the capabilities of Union institutions to detect, analyse and expose disinformation;
- strengthening coordinated and joint responses to disinformation;
- mobilising private sector to tackle disinformation;
- raising awareness and improving societal resilience.

PILLAR 1: IMPROVING THE CAPABILITIES OF UNION INSTITUTIONS TO DETECT, ANALYSE AND EXPOSE DISINFORMATION

To address effectively the threat of disinformation, it is necessary to reinforce the Strategic Communication Task Forces of the European External Action Service, the Union Delegations and the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell by providing them with additional specialised staff, such as experts in data mining and analysis to process the relevant data. It is also important to contract additional media monitoring services to cover a wider range of sources and languages and additional research and studies on the reach and impact of disinformation. In addition, there is a need to invest in analytical tools such as dedicated software to mine, organise and aggregate vast amounts of digital data.

The reinforcement of the strategic communication teams of the European External Action Service will be done in two steps.

In the short term, the budget for strategic communication is expected to more than double²⁶ in 2019 and this will be accompanied by a reinforcement of at least 11 positions ahead of the European elections. In the medium term²⁷, additional positions of permanent officials will be requested in the strategic communication teams and the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell in the headquarters, as well as new posts in delegations in the neighbourhood, to reach a total increase of 50-55 staff members over the next two years.

Further synergies will take place between the Commission's services and the European External Action Service, for example on sharing tools or designing communication campaigns.

Threat analyses and intelligence assessments are the basis for the work on disinformation. The expertise of the Intelligence

and Situation Centre should be fully utilised to analyse the evolving nature of disinformation campaigns.

The Strategic Communication Task Forces will work closely with the relevant Union delegations and the Commission to tackle disinformation. In particular, they will cooperate with the internal Network against Disinformation of the Commission, set up following the April Communication²⁸.

Member States should complement and support the actions of the Union institutions by increasing their national capabilities and by supporting the necessary increases in resources for the Union institutions.

Action 1: With a view to the 2019 European Parliament elections in particular, but also with a longer-term perspective, the High Representative, in cooperation with the Member States, will strengthen the Strategic Communication Task Forces and Union Delegations through additional staff and new tools which are necessary to detect, analyse and expose disinformation activities. Member States should, where appropriate, also upgrade their national capacity in this area, and support the necessary increase in resources for the Strategic Communication Task Forces and Union delegations.

Action 2: The High Representative will review the mandates of the Strategic Communications Task Forces for Western Balkans and South to enable them to address disinformation effectively in these regions.

PILLAR 2: STRENGTHENING COORDINATED AND JOINT RESPONSES TO DISINFORMATION

The first hours after disinformation is released are critical for detecting, analysing and responding to it. Consequently, **a Rapid Alert System will be set up to provide alerts on disinformation campaigns in real-time** through a dedicated technological infrastructure. This will facilitate sharing of data and assessment, to enable common situational awareness, coordinated attribution and response and ensure time and resource efficiency.

In view of the creation of the Rapid Alert System, **each Member States should designate, in line with its institutional setup, a contact point, ideally positioned within strategic communications departments.** This contact point would share the alerts and ensure coordination with all other relevant national authorities as well as with the Commission and the

²⁶ Current discussions on the 2019 budget foresee an increase from EUR 1.9 million in 2018 to 5 million in 2019.

²⁷ Through amendments of the 2019 budget and/or the proposal for the 2020 budget.

²⁸ This network includes the representatives of Directorates-General of the Commission and its Representations. The Commission has also recently set up a working group with the European External Action Service and the European Parliament on tackling disinformation ahead of the European elections.

European External Action Service. This is without prejudice to existing competences of national authorities under Union and/or national law or under other parts of this Action Plan. Where disinformation concerns elections or the functioning of democratic institutions in the Member States, national contact points should closely cooperate with the national election networks²⁹. In this case, the outcome of the work of the Rapid Alert System should be shared with the European cooperation election network³⁰, in particular to exchange information on threats relevant to elections and support the possible application of sanctions. Online platforms should cooperate with the contact points underpinning the Rapid Alert System, in particular during election periods, to provide relevant and timely information.

The Rapid Alert System should be closely linked to existing 24/7 capabilities such as the Emergency Response Coordination Centre³¹ and the Situation Room of the European External Action Service³². The EU Hybrid Fusion Cell of the Intelligence and Situation Centre as well as the relevant Council Working Parties could also be used as channels for sharing information. The Commission and the High Representative will ensure regular exchange of information and best practices with key partners, including within the G7 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Prompt reaction via fact-based and effective communication is essential to counter and deter disinformation, including in cases of disinformation concerning Union matters and policies. This is important to foster an open, democratic debate free from manipulation, including in the context of the forthcoming European elections. Union institutions³³ and Member States need to improve their ability to react and communicate

²⁹ See Recommendation C(2018) 5949 on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns in the context of elections to the European Parliament. These networks will bring together national election authorities, audio-visual media regulators, cybersecurity and data protection authorities as well as relevant expert groups, for example on media literacy. They constitute, together with the Union institutions, the European election network. The European election network will be convened for the first time in January 2019.

³⁰ Set up pursuant to the Recommendation issued on 12 September 2018.

³¹ The Emergency Response Coordination Centre is set up under Article 7 of Decision 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

³² The Situation Room is a permanent stand-by body of the European External Action Service that provides worldwide monitoring and current situation awareness. It is part of EU Intelligence and Situation Centre and acts as a situation information hub for all relevant stakeholders from the European institutions.

³³ In the Commission, Members of the College of Commissioners, the Spokesperson's Service and Commission Representations would maintain their key role of stepping in to ensure rebuttals whenever there are errors in media reports.

effectively. The Commission has already increased its funding for better communication activities, implemented through its regional communication programmes, including in the Union's neighbourhood, and Union Delegations. Union institutions are all active in communicating about European action and policies in the Union, in particular Commission Representations and European Parliament liaison offices in the Member States play a key role to provide locally-tailored messaging, including specific tools to counter myths and disseminate facts³⁴.

Cooperation between Member States and Union institutions should be further strengthened, especially as regards information-sharing, common learning, awareness-raising, pro-active messaging and research. More intelligence sharing between Member States and Union institutions is needed to improve situational awareness and their respective response capacities. Pro-active and objective communication on Union values and policies is particularly effective when carried out directly by Member States. To this end, the Commission and the High Representative call on Member States to intensify their communication efforts and to defend the Union and its institutions against disinformation campaigns.

Action 3: By March 2019, the Commission and the High Representative, in cooperation with Member States, will establish a Rapid Alert System for addressing disinformation campaigns, working closely with existing networks, the European Parliament as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and G7's Rapid Response Mechanism.

Action 4: With a view to the upcoming European elections, the Commission, in cooperation with the European Parliament, will step up its communication efforts on Union values and policies. Member States should significantly strengthen their own communication efforts on Union values and policies.

Action 5: The Commission and the High Representative, in cooperation with Member States, will strengthen strategic communications in the Union's neighbourhood.

PILLAR 3: MOBILISING PRIVATE SECTOR TO TACKLE DISINFORMATION

Online platforms, advertisers and the advertising industry have a crucial role to play in tackling the disinformation problem, as its scale is directly related to the platforms' ability to amplify, target and spread disinformation messages of malicious actors. Given their past failures to act appropriately to tackle this problem, the Commission urged them in April 2018 to step up their efforts. Against this background, the Code of Practice on

³⁴ Several Commission Representations have developed locally adapted tools to debunk disinformation, like Les Décodeurs de l'Europe in France, UE Vero Falso in Italy, Euromyty.sk in Slovakia and EU myth-busting cartoon competition in Austria and cartoon series in Romania.

Disinformation was published on 26 September 2018³⁵. The main online platforms which signed the Code of Practice committed to specific actions to be carried out before the 2019 European Parliament elections.

The Commission calls upon all signatories of the Code of Practice to implement the actions and procedures identified in the Code swiftly and effectively on an EU-wide basis, focusing on actions that are urgent and relevant for ensuring the integrity of 2019 European elections. In particular, large online platforms should immediately (i) ensure scrutiny of ad placement and transparency of political advertising, based on effective due diligence checks of the identity of the sponsors, (ii) close down fake accounts active on their services and (iii) identify automated bots and label them accordingly. Online platforms should also cooperate with the national audio-visual regulators and with independent fact-checkers and researchers to detect and flag disinformation campaigns in particular during election periods and to make fact-checked content more visible and widespread.

The Commission will, with the help of the European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services (ERGA)³⁶, monitor the implementation of the commitments by the signatories of the Code of Practice and will regularly inform on whether and to what extent individual platforms are meeting these commitments. To allow effective and comprehensive monitoring, the platforms should by the end of this year provide the Commission with up-to-date and complete information on the actions they have taken to comply with these commitments. The Commission will publish this information in January 2019. The platforms should also provide complete information, including by replying to Commission's specific requests, on how they are implementing the commitments on a regular basis starting in January 2019 in order to enable a targeted monitoring of the compliance

³⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/code-practice-disinformation>

On 16 October, the Code's initial signatories provided their formal subscriptions to the Code, identifying the commitments each signatory will adhere to and a table listing relevant company best practices as well as milestones for the overall implementation of the Code in the EU. The initial signatories include the main online platforms (Facebook, Google, Youtube, Twitter), providers of software (Mozilla), advertisers as well as a number of trade associations representing online platforms and the advertising industry. The Code of Practice should create a more transparent, trustworthy and accountable online ecosystem and protect users from disinformation.

³⁶ The European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services comprises all the relevant regulators of all the Member States. It provides technical advice to the Commission in a number of fields related to the application of the Directive, facilitates cooperation among the national regulatory authorities and/or bodies, and between the national regulatory authorities and/or bodies and the Commission. The revised Audio-visual Media Service Directive further strengthened the role of this Group in particular in relation also to video sharing platforms.

with the Code ahead of the European Parliament elections. This information will also be published.

In addition, the Code of Practice envisages that the signatories will provide a full report after twelve months. These reports should include complete data and information to enable a thorough assessment by the Commission. **On this basis, the Commission, assisted by independent expertise and with the help of the ERGA, will assess the overall effectiveness of the Code of Practice.** The Commission may also seek the assistance of the European audio-visual observatory.

The Commission notes that the overall effectiveness of the Code depends upon the widest possible participation of online platforms and the online advertising sector. It therefore calls upon additional relevant stakeholders to adhere to the Code.

Action 6: The Commission will ensure a close and continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Practice. Where needed and in particular in view of the European elections, the Commission will push for rapid and effective compliance. The Commission will carry out a comprehensive assessment at the conclusion of the Code's initial 12-month period of application. Should the implementation and the impact of the Code of Practice prove unsatisfactory, the Commission may propose further actions, including actions of a regulatory nature.

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PILLAR 4: RAISING AWARENESS AND IMPROVING SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

Greater public awareness is essential for improving societal resilience against the threat that disinformation poses. The starting point is a better understanding of the sources of disinformation and of the intentions, tools and objectives behind disinformation, but also of our own vulnerability. A sound scientific methodology could help identify key vulnerabilities across Member States³⁷. It is essential to understand how and why citizens, and sometimes entire communities, are drawn to disinformation narratives and define a comprehensive answer to this phenomenon.

Building resilience also includes specialised trainings, public conferences and debates as well as other forms of common learning for the media. It also involves empowering all sectors of society and, in particular, improving citizens' media literacy to understand how to spot and fend off disinformation.

A comprehensive response to disinformation requires active participation by civil society. **The Communication and the**

³⁷ This could be further explored as part of the work of the Media Pluralism Monitor, a project co-funded by the European Union and carried out by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom in Florence.

Recommendation³⁸, that are part of the set of measures on securing free and fair European elections (the Elections Package) called on Member States to engage with media, online platforms, information technology providers and others, in awareness raising activities to increase the transparency of elections and build trust in the electoral processes. Member States' active engagement and follow-up in this context is needed in the run-up to the European elections.

Independent fact-checkers and researchers play a key role in furthering the understanding of the structures that sustain disinformation and the mechanisms that shape how it is disseminated online. Moreover, through their activities, they raise awareness of various types of disinformation threats and can contribute to mitigating their negative impact. It is necessary to strengthen their capacity to identify and expose disinformation threats and facilitate cross-border cooperation. Building on the actions outlined in the April Communication, it is necessary to scale up national multidisciplinary teams of independent fact-checkers and academic researchers with specific knowledge about local information environments. This requires the support and the cooperation of Member States in order to facilitate the functioning of the European network of fact checkers, in full respect of the independence of the fact-checking and research activities. Under the Connecting Europe Facility programme³⁹, the Commission will finance a digital platform which will network together the independent national multidisciplinary teams.

To increase public awareness and resilience, the Commission will further step up its commitment and current activities in relation to media literacy to empower Union citizens to better identify and deal with disinformation⁴⁰. Member States should rapidly implement the provision of the revised Audio-visual Media Service Directive requiring them to promote and develop media literacy skills⁴¹.

The Commission has proposed funding for the development of new tools to better understand and combat online disinformation in its proposal for Horizon Europe programme⁴². The Commission will also support, where appropriate,

information campaigns to raise users' awareness of the most recent technologies (e.g. deep fakes).

The work of independent media is essential for the functioning of a democratic society. The Commission⁴³ will therefore continue to support independent media and investigative journalists, as they contribute to the exposure of disinformation. In addition, the Commission will continue to carry out specific programmes related to media support, including with financial support, and professionalisation in its neighbourhood⁴⁴.

Action 7: With a view especially to the 2019 European elections, but also to the longer term, the Commission and the High Representative, in cooperation with the Member States, will organise targeted campaigns for the public and trainings for media and public opinion shapers in the Union and its neighbourhood to raise awareness of the negative effects of disinformation. Efforts to support the work of independent media and quality journalism as well as the research into disinformation will be continued in order to provide a comprehensive response to this phenomenon.

Action 8: Member States, in cooperation with the Commission, should support the creation of teams of multi-disciplinary independent fact-checkers and researchers with specific knowledge of local information environments to detect and expose disinformation campaigns across different social networks and digital media.

Action 9: As part of the Media Literacy Week in March 2019, in cooperation with the Member States, the Commission will support cross-border cooperation amongst media literacy practitioners as well as the launch of practical tools for the promotion of media literacy for the public. Member States should also rapidly implement the provisions of the Audio-visual Media Services Directive, which deal with media literacy.

Action 10: In view of the upcoming 2019 European elections, Member States should ensure effective follow-up of the Elections Package, notably the Recommendation. The Commission will closely monitor how the Package is implemented and where appropriate, provide relevant support and advice.

38 See Commission Recommendation on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns in the context of elections to the European Parliament, C(2018) 5949.

39 Regulation (EU) No 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, amending Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 680/2007 and (EC) No 67/2010.

40 Such activities will include a Union online media literacy library and learning centre as well as other media literacy tools.

41 Article 33a of the revised Audiovisual Media Service Directive.

42 COM(2018) 435.

43 The Creative Europe programme, if adopted, will help reinforce Europe's news media sector, diversity and pluralism of journalistic content, as well as a critical approach to media content through media literacy, COM (2018) 438.

44 The Commission funds the project "openmediahub" to: (i) provide journalists in the neighbourhood with the necessary skills for independent and objective reporting; (ii) improve the skills of the editorial staff and (iii) reinforce the network of media professionals and journalists in the neighbourhood. As regards the Western Balkans, the Commission is providing financial support for the setting up of a network of journalistic associations, the building of trust in media, and the reinforcing of judiciary systems to defend freedom of expression. In this area the Commission also supports public service media, new independent media outlets, and the improvement of quality and professionalism in journalism.

Conclusions

Disinformation is a major challenge for European democracies and societies, and the Union needs to address it while being true to European values and freedoms. Disinformation undermines the trust of citizens in democracy and democratic institutions. Disinformation also contributes to the polarisation of public views and interferes in the democratic decision-making processes. It can also be used to undermine the European project. This can have considerable adverse effects on society across the Union, in particular in the run up to the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Strong commitment and swift actions are necessary to preserve the democratic process and the trust of citizens in public institutions at both national and Union level. The present Action Plan sets out key actions to tackle disinformation in a coordinated approach of the Union institutions and the Member States. It also highlights measures to be taken as a matter of priority by different actors ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections. Member States should step up their solidarity and defend the Union against hybrid attacks, including attacks using disinformation.

At the same time, and in the long-term, the objective is for the Union and its neighbourhood to become more resilient against disinformation. This requires continuous and sustained efforts to support education and media literacy, journalism, fact-checkers, researchers, and the civil society as a whole.

The Commission and the High Representative therefore:

- recall that joint action is required by all relevant institutional actors as well as by the private sector, in particular online platforms, and civil society as a whole to tackle effectively all the different aspects of the disinformation threat;
- call on the European Council to endorse the present Action Plan;
- call on Member States to cooperate in carrying out the actions set out in this Action Plan;
- as a matter of priority, call on all relevant actors to implement those actions which are urgent and relevant in the run up to the upcoming European elections in May 2019.



EU's work to secure free and fair European elections¹

With less than a hundred days left until the European elections, the conclusions adopted by the Council of the EU in February 2019 set out its response to a broad range of threats to ensuring free and fair European elections, based on lessons learnt so far.

The conclusions follow the presentation of the Commission's 'Securing Free and Fair European Elections' package in September 2018, as well as the publication of the Joint Action Plan against Disinformation by the Commission and the High Representative in December 2018. Those initiatives set out a comprehensive approach to protect the 2019 European elections from interferences such as disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks from inside and outside the EU.

George Ciamba, Romanian Minister Delegate for European Affairs, underlined that "a core element of the democratic nature of the EU is enabling citizens to vote in a well-informed and safe manner. These Council conclusions aim to help ensure that was is a coordinated approach by Members States and the EU institutions to protect the democratic process from manipulation and interference, both from internal and external actors."

In its Conclusions, the Council called for a number of non-legislative actions to be taken in the coming months, such as:

- organising regular meetings of the European election cooperation network, at which member states can share expertise and good practices and can jointly identify threats;
- setting up a Rapid Alert System where national contact points in member states can share information rapidly on disinformation campaigns;
- enhancing strategic communication on European values and policies;
- strengthening the European media ecosystem, for instance by facilitating the establishment of a network of multidisciplinary independent fact-checkers and academic researchers to detect and expose disinformation across different social networks and digital media;
- increasing citizens' resilience by promoting and supporting media and digital literacy;
- promoting awareness-raising activities to protect the integrity of the electoral process, together with the private sector and civil society;
- assessing cyber threats in the electoral context and envisaging measures to address them and preserve the integrity of the electoral system;
- calling on the private sector to invest in resources to deal with election-related online activities in a responsible and accountable manner;
- exploring options for further cooperation with relevant international actors.

The Council stressed that the Union is founded on the values of respect for democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights. It underlines that pan-European cooperation and a comprehensive approach are necessary steps in ensuring the electoral security and legitimacy of the 2019 European elections. Such an approach should respect the fundamental rights to freedom of association at all levels, and to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference from public authorities.

These Council conclusions were subscribed with all actors well conscious that the 2019 European elections would take place in a context where disinformation campaigns and malicious cyber activities, including attacks on the electoral infrastructure, could be increasingly used to interfere in and influence the outcome of elections.

This comprehensive approach therefore has required a wide range of actors, including the European Commission, the European External Action Service, member states and the private sector to take action in order to protect the democratic process from foreign and domestic manipulation.



¹ Extract of the Council of the EU website.

Conclusions of the Council and of the Member States on securing free and fair European elections

THE COUNCIL AND THE MEMBER STATES, IN THE REMIT OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES²

A Union of values: protecting our democracies in the digital age

- **STRESSING** that the Union is founded on the values of respect for democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights. The Treaties emphasise the central role of citizens in European democracy. European citizens are directly represented at EU level and elected to the European Parliament by a free and secret ballot.
- **RECALLING** the importance of increasing and improving even further citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU as expressed in the Council conclusions on the EU Citizenship Report 2017³.
- **UNDERLINING** that free, reliable and pluralistic media underpin effective and healthy democracy. In the same vein, open, secure and accessible internet and online platforms can facilitate participatory, transparent and effective democracy.
- **UNDERLINING** that threats to our electoral processes can take several forms, including hybrid and cyber threats and disinformation. Therefore, a holistic, comprehensive approach and decisive action are needed in countering such antagonistic and subversive threats.
- **UNDERLINING** the need to address cybersecurity with a coherent approach at national, EU and global level⁴, and the need to increase the resilience of electoral processes in the EU and the preparedness of participants in democratic debates to withstand cyber threats, while bearing in mind that the organisation and the legal framework of national elections fall within the sole competence of Member States and that as regards the European Parliament elections, according to

Article 8 of the Electoral Act⁵, subject to the provisions of this Act the electoral procedure shall be governed in each Member State by its national provisions.

- **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the spread of disinformation brings new challenges that have a profound impact on the democratic process. Member States, EU institutions, agencies or bodies need to address these challenges in a coordinated manner and in cooperation with international partners, as appropriate.
- **RECALLING** that political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the political will of citizens of the Union, as stated in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- **STRESSING** that the right to freedom of association at all levels, such as in political and civic matters, and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference from public authorities and regardless of frontiers, are fundamental rights of every citizen of the Union.
- **RECALLING** the importance of guaranteeing to citizens an open public sphere and of ensuring a level playing field for political campaigning and electoral processes that citizens can trust.
- **WELCOMING** the measures and recommendations presented by the Commission on 12 September 2018 in its elections package, as well as the actions outlined in the Action Plan against Disinformation (referred further as "the Action Plan") to secure free and fair European elections.
- **WELCOMING** the provisional agreement on the legislative proposal to address situations in which European political parties or associated foundations take advantage of infringements of data protection rules with a view to deliberately influencing or attempting to influence the outcome of European Parliament elections and noting the need for its swift adoption.

Developing a European response to securing free and fair European elections - a call to enhance synergies

- **UNDERLINING** that pan-EU cooperation and a comprehensive approach are necessary steps in ensuring the electoral security and legitimacy – both in terms of public trust and legal procedures – of the 2019 European Parliament elections, that election periods have proven to be particularly strategic

² Having regard in particular to principles enshrined in Article 3 (6), 4 and 5 TEU.

³ Adopted by the Council at its 3533rd meeting held on 11 May 2017, 9080/17.

⁴ Council conclusions on the Joint Communication to the EP and the Council: Resilience, Deterrence and Defence: Building strong cybersecurity for the EU, 14435/17.

⁵ Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (OJ L 278, 8.10.1976, p.5).

and sensitive for online circumventing of conventional safeguards and that any threats, including those posed by cyber-attacks, disinformation and other subversive or malicious activities, have to be reflected in the elections risk management.

- **STRESSING** that urgent action is needed to protect the Union and the Member States, their bodies and policies from targeted disinformation campaigns, which are likely to increase in the run up to the 2019 European Parliament elections.
- **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the sources and phenomena of disinformation can be identified inside and outside the Union and are originating from a range of state and non-state actors. In this regard, efforts should target malign actors, notably Russian sources as set out in the Action Plan, that increasingly deploy disinformation strategies. Threat analyses and intelligence assessments shall guide the action against disinformation.
- **HIGHLIGHTING** the importance of establishing and supporting national election cooperation networks, to enable the quick detection of threats to the European Parliament elections and the rapid, effective and secure sharing of information, in full respect of data protection requirements, between authorities with competences in electoral matters and authorities working in related fields.
- **WELCOMING** the Commission's initiative to support Member States' efforts by creating a European election cooperation network, which held its first meeting on 21 January 2019, as it provides a forum for exchange of information and practices among Member States authorities, in particular in view of the 2019 European Parliament elections.
- **INVITE** the Commission to convene the European election cooperation network on a regular basis in particular to counter disinformation campaigns and other interferences in the upcoming elections to the European Parliament in a comprehensive manner, to build synergies and to share expertise and good national practices, including by jointly identifying threats and gaps.
- **CALL** on the Commission and the High Representative to timely deliver on their intention to set up the Rapid Alert System, as referred to in the Action Plan. In view of the 2019 European Parliament elections, it will facilitate sharing of relevant information between Member States through the national contact points for the Rapid Alert System. These national contact points should closely cooperate with the national election networks at the appropriate level where disinformation concerns elections. Also, the outcome of the work of the Rapid Alert System should be shared with the European election cooperation network.
- **INVITE** the Commission, in its Report on the 2019 European Parliament elections, to pay particular attention, on the basis of the input provided by Member States and other relevant actors, to preparedness and resilience to withstand interference in elections.
- **INVITE** the Commission and the Member States to further enhance their strategic communication on European values and policies, in order to consolidate the trust of European citizens in the Union and its institutions, and engage them in the democratic process.

Strengthening citizens' resilience and critical thinking

- **UNDERLINING** that, against a background of fragmented media landscapes and threats to national security, professional media play a key role in the gathering, verification, production and dissemination of information and thus are indispensable to public discourse. In this context, whistle-blowers play an important role in aiding the work of journalists and the independent press. Furthermore, the role of independent public service media in safeguarding democracy, pluralism, social cohesion and cultural and language diversity remains vital. Moreover, many private media actors deliver content which is also in the public interest.⁶
- **UNDERLINING** the importance of a high quality of general education across the Union, and in particular the importance of digital and media literacy. This can help citizens to evaluate flows of information from online media, social networks and similar sources and form their own opinion notably in their role as voters. Stressing, in this regard, the relevance of the Media Literacy Week of 18-22 March 2019.
- **CALL ON** the Commission and the responsible authorities in the Member States to strengthen the European media ecosystem in order to secure the sustainable production and visibility of independent and professional journalism as a way to empower citizens, protect democracy and to effectively counter the spread of disinformation.⁷
- **INVITE** the Commission and Member States to promote and support media and digital literacy in order to further develop a critical approach among citizens towards distributed or promoted media content⁸. This could include, guidelines for citizens to detect and avoid disinformation, targeted campaigns to raise awareness of the negative effects of

⁶ Council conclusions on the strengthening of European content in the digital economy 14986/18.

⁷ Council conclusions on the strengthening of European content in the digital economy 14986/18.

⁸ Including as set out in Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.

disinformation, support for cross-border exchanges of best practices amongst media literacy practitioners as well as the development of practical tools for the promotion of media literacy for the public.⁹

- CALL on the Commission and the Member States to promote, in cooperation with actors from the private and public sector, including media, online platforms and information technology providers and civil society, awareness-raising activities aimed at protecting the integrity of the electoral process.
- CALL on the Commission, the High Representative and the Member States to support all competent structures to detect, analyse and expose disinformation targeted at the European Parliament elections. Against this background, INVITE the Commission to work with Member States authorities in line with the Action Plan to facilitate the establishment of a network of multidisciplinary independent fact-checkers and academic researchers to detect and expose disinformation across different social networks and digital media.

Protecting our data and systems: ensuring the application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and enhancing cybersecurity for the European Elections

- RECALLING the obligation to respect the EU rules on data protection also when personal data is being processed in an electoral context, the specific competence of data protection authorities to monitor and enforce these rules, and welcoming the European Data Protection Board guidelines and the guidance provided by the Commission to support such compliance by all actors involved.
- BEING MINDFUL that national authorities with competence for electoral matters, including data protection authorities, require appropriate resources, including technical equipment and trained personnel, to resist cyber incidents and attacks, and to enforce the applicable legislation.
- UNDERLINING, having regard to the provisional agreement referred to in paragraph 11, the importance of the national data protection authorities, in compliance with Union and national law, immediately and proactively informing the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations of their decisions finding that a natural or legal person has infringed applicable rules on the protection of

personal data where it follows from that decision or there are otherwise reasonable grounds to believe that the infringement is linked to political activities by a European political party or foundation with a view to influencing the elections to the European Parliament – given that, in this regard, the Authority may only act if it is informed of a decision of the competent national data protection authority establishing such an infringement.

- CALL on Member States to assess cyber threats in the electoral context, to envisage appropriate measures to address them and to take steps needed to preserve the integrity of their electoral systems and infrastructure such as testing them ahead of the European Parliament elections. In this regard, a relevant test could be a EU level table top exercise. Member States can take into account the Compendium on Cyber Security of Election Technology developed by the NIS Cooperation Group established by Directive (EU) 2016/1148.

Encourage greater online transparency, accountability and integrity

- RECOGNISING the need, in line with the applicable rules, to foster and facilitate the transparency of paid online political advertisements and communications including on their advertising purpose, the methods by which they are targeted to citizens, and their funding.
- HIGHLIGHTING the need to continue the cooperation with social media platforms in order to assess whether voluntary self-regulatory mechanisms are adequate and sufficient for protecting the fundamental rights of citizens and effectively addressing the challenge of online disinformation.
- CALL ON Member States and online platforms, to intensify their efforts, to promote transparency of the election-related online activities. Welcoming the progress made implementing the Code of Practice, CALL on online platforms to invest the necessary resources to deal with election-related online activities, in a responsible, accountable and consistent manner, including by ensuring transparency and accountability with regard to data processing and data analysis for political purposes; identifying and eliminating bots used for information manipulation purposes; eliminating algorithmic biases that promote disinformation and distort public debate; removing illegal content online; and providing access to data for the purposes of research aimed at identifying relevant vulnerabilities, while ensuring media freedom and that no advertisements are removed due to political considerations, in full compliance with data protection rules.

⁹ Council conclusions on the strengthening of European content in the digital economy 14986/18; Council conclusions of 30 May 2016 on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training.

- INVITE the Commission to continue, in cooperation with European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) and other relevant actors, the systematic monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation and regularly inform the Council and Member States of its findings, especially with a view to the 2019 European Parliament elections.¹⁰

Countering hybrid threats and strengthening the external cooperation on electoral matters

- RECOGNISING that public communication and awareness raising can mitigate the negative effects of disinformation, hybrid threats and malicious cyber activities and can have a deterrent effect on the potential perpetrators.
- ACKNOWLEDGING the need to give full effect to the development of the measures provided in the Framework for a Joint EU Diplomatic Response to Malicious Cyber Activities in order to prevent, deter and respond, when necessary, to malicious cyber activities at a strategic level.
- ACKNOWLEDGING the need for dialogue between relevant international experts to exchange best practices for resilient electoral systems.
- INVITE the Commission and the High Representative, complementary to existing cooperation mechanisms, to explore options for further cooperation with relevant international actors, such as the G7 or NATO, where appropriate and in full respect of the EU institutional framework.

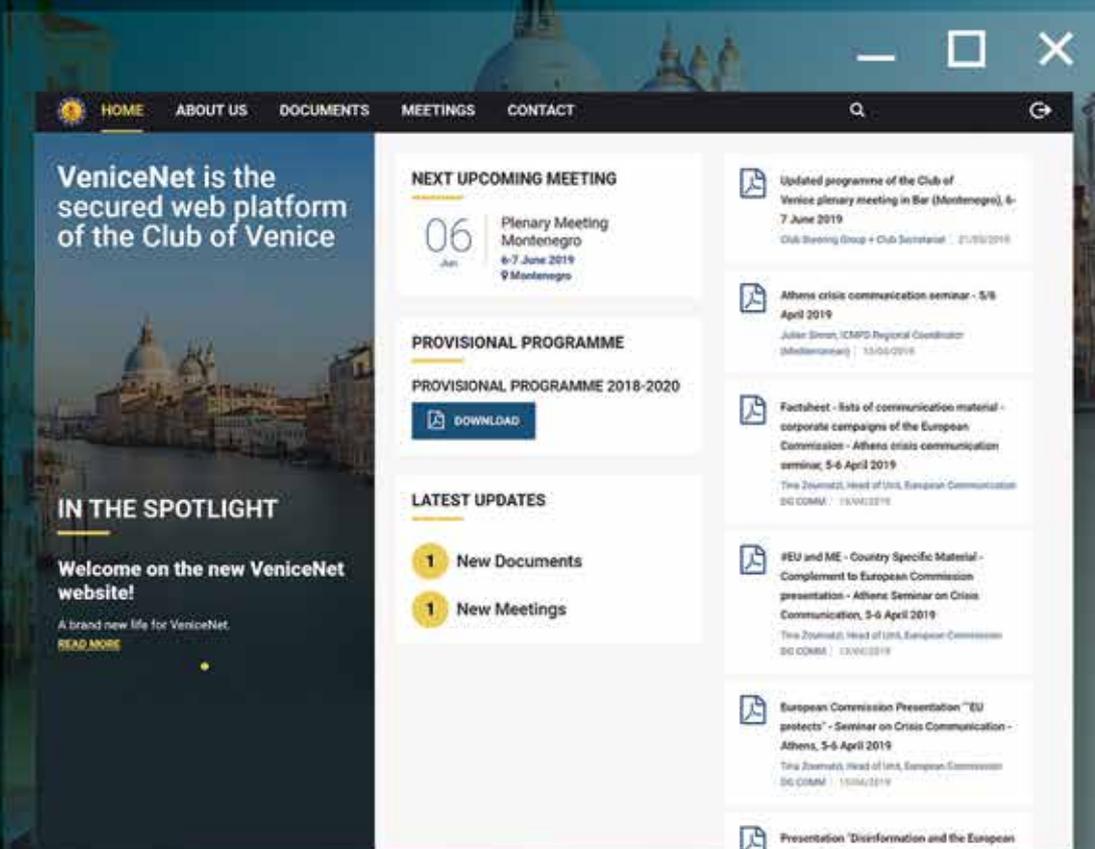
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¹⁰ Council conclusions on the strengthening of European content in the digital economy 14986/18.

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Code of Practice on Disinformation

Preamble

In light of the European Commission Communication “Tackling online disinformation: a European approach”¹ (hereafter the “Communication”), the Report of the High Level Expert Group², the Council Conclusions of 28 June 2018³, and the various important initiatives taking place across Europe⁴ to address the challenges posed by the dissemination of disinformation, the companies and associations listed on Annex 1 (“Signatories”) of this code of practice (the “Code”) recognise their role in contributing to solutions to the challenges posed by disinformation.

As provided under the Commission’s Communication, for the purpose of this Code, the Commission as well as the High Level Expert Group in its report define “Disinformation” as “verifiably false or misleading information” which, cumulatively,

- “Is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public”; and
- “May cause public harm”, intended as “threats to democratic political and policymaking processes as well as public goods such as the protection of EU citizens’ health, the environment or security”.⁵

The notion of “Disinformation” does not include misleading advertising, reporting errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary, and is without prejudice to binding legal obligations, self-regulatory advertising codes, and standards regarding misleading advertising.

The Signatories recognise and agree with the Commission’s conclusions that “the exposure of citizens to large scale Disinformation, including misleading or outright false information, is a major challenge for Europe. Our open democratic societies depend on public debates that allow well-informed citizens to express their will through free and fair political processes”.⁶

As the Commission repeatedly acknowledges in the Communication,⁷ the Signatories are mindful of the fundamental right to freedom of expression and to an open Internet, and the delicate balance which any efforts to limit the spread and impact of otherwise lawful content must strike.

In recognition that the dissemination of Disinformation has many facets and is facilitated by and impacts a very broad segment of actors in the ecosystem, all stakeholders have roles to play in countering the spread of Disinformation.

It is in this spirit that the Signatories have drafted the present Code and its Annexes, which is an integral part of this Code, and hereby commit themselves to adhere to the relevant commitments listed next to their name. Given the breadth of the commitments outlined in the Code and the heterogeneous range of stakeholders involved, Signatories will sign up only to commitments which correspond to the product and/or service they offer, their role in the value chain, their technical capabilities and their liability regimes as provided under EU Law, which vary depending on the role they play in the creation and dissemination of the content at stake. Hence, the Code refers to the individual Signatory that has accepted certain commitments as indicated on Annex 1 with the expression “Relevant Signatory”. This does not commit all Signatories of the Code to sign up to every commitment. Annex 2 sets out existing best practices. Signatories agree that the Annex might periodically be amended in the light of market, technical and other developments.

The Signatories recognize that because the various Signatories operate differently, with different purposes, technologies and audiences, the Code allows for different approaches to accomplishing the spirit of the provisions herein.

The Signatories recognise that trade associations that have signed this Code are not entering into obligations on behalf of their members. However, these associations commit to make

1 http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=51804

2 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

3 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35936/28-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf>

4 Measures taken by the European Union, its Member States and other relevant stakeholders should limit the incidence and impact of online disinformation and must be taken within the legal framework provided by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFREU) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). In particular, Freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 11 of the CFREU and Article 10 of the ECHR as an indispensable enabler of sound decision-making in free and democratic societies. Freedom of expression extends to print, broadcast and online media and includes the right to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas “without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers,” as well as the integral, corollary values of media freedom and media pluralism.

5 Communication, paragraph 2.1.

6 Communication, paragraph 1.

7 See, e.g., the Communication, paragraph 3.1.1, where the Commission states that all actions taken to challenge Disinformation “should strictly respect freedom of expression and include safeguards that prevent their misuse, for example, the censoring of critical, satirical, dissenting, or shocking speech. They should also strictly respect the Commission’s commitment to an open, safe and reliable Internet”.

their members fully aware of this Code, and encourage them to join it or respect its principles, as appropriate.

The application of this Code is limited for each Signatory to services provided in the States that are Contracting Parties to the European Economic Area.

Signatories, including signatory associations, commit to undertake the actions provided for by this Code in a manner that ensures full compliance with EU and national competition law. By way of example, Signatories must not discuss, communicate or exchange any commercially sensitive information. This includes non-public information on: prices; marketing and advertising strategy; costs and revenues; trading terms and conditions with third parties (including purchasing strategy); terms of supply; trade programmes or distribution strategy.

The Code shall apply within the framework of existing laws of the EU and its Member States and must not be construed in any way as replacing or interpreting the existing legal framework, and, in particular (but not limited to):

- The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- The European Convention on Human Rights;
- Directive 2000/31/EC, with particular reference to Articles 12 to 15, which shall apply to any obligation of this Code targeting or assumed by mere conduits, caching providers, or hosting providers such as providers of network, search engines, browsers, online blogging platforms, online forums, video-sharing platforms, social media, etc.;
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data;
- Directive 2005/29/EC concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market;
- Directive 2006/114/EC concerning misleading and comparative advertising;
- The case law of the CJEU and ECHR on the proportionality of measures designed to limit access to and circulation of harmful content.

Purposes

The purpose of this Code is to identify the actions that Signatories could put in place in order to address the challenges related to “Disinformation”

In line with the Commission's Communication, the Signatories of the Code of Practice recognise the importance of efforts to:

- Include safeguards against Disinformation;
- Improve the scrutiny of advertisement placements to reduce revenues of the purveyors of disinformation;
- Ensure transparency about political and issue-based advertising, also with a view to enabling users to understand why they have been targeted by a given advertisement;
- Implement and promote reasonable policies against misrepresentation;
- Intensify and demonstrate the effectiveness of efforts to close fake accounts and establish clear marking systems and rules for bots to ensure their activities cannot be confused with human interactions;
- Intensify and communicate on the effectiveness of efforts to ensure the integrity of services with regards to accounts whose purpose and intent is to spread Disinformation, as per specifics assessed and determined by the Relevant Signatory, and consistently with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the fundamental right of anonymity and pseudonymity, and the proportionality principle.
- Consistently with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the principle of freedom of opinion, invest in technological means to prioritize relevant, authentic, and accurate and authoritative information where appropriate in search, feeds, or other automatically ranked distribution channels. Be that as it may, Signatories should not be compelled by governments, nor should they adopt voluntary policies, to delete or prevent access to otherwise lawful content or messages solely on the basis that they are thought to be “false”.
- Ensure transparency with a view to enabling users to understand why they have been targeted by a given political or issue-based advertisement, also through indicators of the trustworthiness of content sources, media ownership and/or verified identity.
- Dilute the visibility of disinformation by improving the findability of trustworthy content.
- Consider empowering users with tools enabling a customized and interactive online experience so as to facilitate content discovery and access to different news sources representing alternative viewpoints, also providing them with easily-accessible tools to report Disinformation.

- Take the reasonable measures to enable privacy-compliant access to data for fact-checking and research activities and to cooperate by providing relevant data on the functioning of their services including data for independent investigation by academic researchers and general information on algorithms.

This Code is without prejudice to other initiatives aiming at tackling Disinformation on platforms.

This Code is agreed in good faith between the Signatories, building on a fair and honest representation of their intentions. For the sake of allowing a more comprehensive understanding of the Code, the commitments listed in the following paragraph are introduced by an explanation of the detailed purposes and context related to each group of commitments in the five relevant fields addressed by the Code.

Commitments

Scrutiny of ad placements

Whereas:

- The Signatories recognise the objectives outlined in the Communication, and bearing in mind that the commercial aspect is only one of the many facets of Disinformation, the Signatories acknowledge the need to "significantly improve the scrutiny of advertisement placements, notably in order to reduce revenues of the purveyors of Disinformation".⁸
- Relevant Signatories will use commercially reasonable efforts to implement policies and processes; not to accept remuneration from, or otherwise promote accounts and websites which consistently misrepresent information about themselves.
- The Signatories recognise that all parties involved in the buying and selling of online advertising and the provision of advertising-related services need to work together to improve transparency across the online advertising ecosystem and thereby to effectively scrutinise, control and limit the placement of advertising on accounts and websites belonging to purveyors of Disinformation.
- Avoiding the misplacement of advertising on online Disinformation sites requires further refinement of already widely used brand safety tools to successfully continue to meet this challenge, in recognition of the nature of this content.⁹

- The signatories recognise that indicators of trustworthiness and information from fact checking organizations and the new independent network of fact checkers facilitated by the European Commission upon its establishment can provide additional data points on purveyors of disinformation.

Therefore, the Signatories of this Code commit to the following:

- Relevant Signatories commit to deploy policies and processes to disrupt advertising and monetization incentives for relevant behaviours, such as misrepresenting material information about oneself or the purpose of one's properties. These policies and processes can include, for example, the restriction of advertising services or limiting paid placements, and could potentially take place in partnership with fact-checking organizations. Such policies and processes may, as appropriate:
 1. Promote and/or include the use of brand safety and verification tools;
 2. Enable engagement with third party verification companies;
 3. Assist and/or allow advertisers to assess media buying strategies and online reputational risks;
 4. Provide advertisers with necessary access to client-specific accounts to help enable them to monitor the placement of ads and make choices regarding where ads are placed.

Political advertising and issue-based advertising

Whereas:

- The Signatories acknowledge the Communication's call to recognise the importance of ensuring transparency about political and issue-based advertising.
- Such transparency should be ensured also with a view to enabling users to understand why they have been targeted by a given advertisement
- Signatories recognize that approaches to issue-based advertising developed should be reflective of the European market for political and issue-based advertising, and take note of the European Commission Recommendation on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns in the context of elections to the European Parliament

⁸ Communication, paragraph 3.1.1.

⁹ Communication 'Tackling online Disinformation: a European Approach', http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=51804

Therefore, the Signatories of this Code commit to the following:

- Signatories commit to keep complying with the requirement set by EU and national laws, and outlined in self-regulatory Codes,¹⁰ that all advertisements should be clearly distinguishable from editorial content, including news, whatever their form and whatever the medium used. When an advertisement appears in a medium containing news or editorial matter, it should be presented in such a way as to be readily recognisable as a paid-for communication or labelled as such.
- Relevant Signatories commit to enable public disclosure of political advertising (defined as advertisements advocating for or against the election of a candidate or passage of referenda in national and European elections), which could include actual sponsor identity and amounts spent.
- Relevant Signatories commit to use reasonable efforts towards devising approaches to publicly disclose “issue-based advertising”. Such efforts will include the development of a working definition of “issue-based advertising” which does not limit reporting on political discussion and the publishing of political opinion and excludes commercial advertising. Given the implications related to freedom of expression, Signatories encourage engagement with expert stakeholders to explore approaches that both achieve transparency but also uphold fundamental rights. The work to develop this definition shall not interfere with the areas covered by advertising self-regulatory organisations.

Integrity of services

Whereas:

- In line with the European Commission Communication, the Signatories recognise “the importance of intensifying and demonstrating the effectiveness of efforts to close fake accounts” as well as the importance of establishing “clear marking systems and rules for bots to ensure their activities cannot be confused with human interactions”.¹¹
- Relevant Signatories recognise the importance of ensuring that online services include and promote safeguards against Disinformation.
- Relevant Signatories underline an ongoing commitment that, before launching new services, they consider implementing and promoting safeguards against misrepresentation.

- Relevant Signatories consider reviewing existing services to ensure that such safeguards are likewise implemented, to the extent possible.
- Relevant Signatories should intensify and demonstrate the effectiveness of efforts to ensure the integrity of services with regards to accounts whose purpose and intent is to spread Disinformation whose specifics should be assessed and determined by the Relevant Signatory.
- Consistently with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights¹², Signatories should not be prohibited from enabling anonymous or pseudonymous use of accounts and services.

Therefore, the Signatories of this Code commit to the following:

- Relevant Signatories commit to put in place clear policies regarding identity and the misuse of automated bots on their services and to enforce these policies within the EU. Such measures could include some of the measures in the Annex 2 to this Code.
- Relevant Signatories commit to put in place policies on what constitutes impermissible use of automated systems and to make this policy publicly available on the platform and accessible to EU users.

Empowering consumers

Whereas:

- Consistently with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights¹³ and the principle of freedom of opinion, Signatories should not be compelled by governments, nor should they adopt voluntary policies, to delete or prevent access to otherwise lawful content or messages solely on the basis that they are thought to be “false”.
- The Signatories of this Code recognise the importance of diluting the visibility of Disinformation by improving the findability of trustworthy content and consider that users should be empowered with tools enabling a customized and interactive online experience so as to facilitate content discovery and access to different news sources representing alternative viewpoints, and should be provided with easily-accessible tools to report Disinformation, as referred to in the Communication.
- Relevant Signatories should invest in technological means to prioritize relevant, authentic, and authoritative information where appropriate in search, feeds, or other automatically ranked distribution channels.

¹⁰ ch as the ICC Advertising and Marketing Communications Code (<https://cdn.iccwbo.org/content/uploads/sites/3/2011/08/ICC-Consolidated-Code-of-Advertising-and-Marketing-2011-English.pdf>) or the advertising Codes of conduct enforced by self-regulatory organisations at national level.

¹¹ Communication, paragraph 3.1.1.

¹² Article 8 ECHR, “Right to respect for private and family life”.

¹³ Article 10 ECHR, “Freedom of expression”.

- The Signatories of this Code recognise that transparency should be ensured with a view to enabling users to understand why they have been targeted by a given political or issue-based advertisement.
- Such transparency should reflect the importance of facilitating the assessment of content through indicators of the trustworthiness of content sources, media ownership and verified identity. These indicators should be based on objective criteria and endorsed by news media associations, in line with journalistic principles and processes.
- The signatories recognise the ongoing legislative work to develop standards for transparency about the main parameters of ranking included in the draft Platform to Business Regulation as well as the work being carried out by the EU Artificial Intelligence Expert Group as well as the EU consumer acquis.

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Therefore, the Signatories of this Code commit to the following:

- Relevant Signatories commit to invest in products, technologies and programs such as those referred to in Annex 2 to help people make informed decisions when they encounter online news that may be false, including by supporting efforts to develop and implement effective indicators of trustworthiness in collaboration with the news ecosystem.
- Relevant Signatories commit to invest in technological means to prioritize relevant, authentic and authoritative information where appropriate in search, feeds, or other automatically ranked distribution channels.
- Relevant Signatories commit to invest in features and tools that make it easier for people to find diverse perspectives about topics of public interest.
- Signatories commit to partner with civil society, governments, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to support efforts aimed at improving critical thinking and digital media literacy.
- Signatories commit to encourage market uptake of tools that help consumers understand why they are seeing particular advertisements.

Empowering the research community

Whereas:

- In line with the HLEG Report and the Communication, the Signatories of this Code acknowledge the importance to “take the necessary measures to enable privacy-compliant access to data for fact-checking and research activities” and to “cooperate by providing relevant data on the functioning of their services, including data for independent investigation by academic researchers and general information on algorithms.”¹⁴

Therefore, the Signatories of this Code commit to the following:

- Relevant Signatories commit to support good faith independent efforts to track Disinformation and understand its impact, including the independent network of fact-checkers facilitated by the European Commission upon its establishment. This will include sharing privacy protected datasets, undertaking joint research, or otherwise partnering with academics and civil society organizations if relevant and possible.
- Relevant Signatories commit not to prohibit or discourage good faith research into Disinformation and political advertising on their platforms.
- Relevant Signatories commit to encourage research into Disinformation and political advertising.
- Relevant Signatories commit to convene an annual event to foster discussions within academia, the fact-checking community and members of the value chain.

Measuring and monitoring the code's effectiveness

The following set of Key Performance Indicators shall apply to the Relevant Signatories with respect to their respective commitments.

- Relevant Signatories commit to write an annual account of their work to counter Disinformation in the form of a publicly available report reviewable by a third party. The report may include details of any measures taken and the progress made by the Signatories to improve transparency regarding Disinformation, such as:
 1. In line with the Commitment under No. 1 above, policies and enforcement activities in relation to reducing monetisation opportunities for providers of disinformation;

2. In line with Commitments under paragraph II.B. above, measures to improve the visibility to consumers of instances of political advertising;
 3. In line with Commitments under paragraphs II.C. above, measures to integrate and roll-out policies in relation to the integrity of their services in the context of Disinformation;
 4. In line with Commitments under paragraph II.D. above, measures to empower consumers with products, tools, technologies and programmes;
 5. In line with Commitments under paragraph II.D., "measurement of consumer awareness/concerns about disinformation";
 6. In line with Commitment Under No. 9 above, provide people with tools to find diverse perspectives about topics of public interest;
 7. In accordance with the Commitment under paragraph II.E. above measures to improve the ability of researchers and civil society groups to monitor the scope and scale of political advertising;
 8. In line with Commitment under No. 10 above, to encourage training of people in critical thinking and digital media and skills;
 9. In line with Commitments under paragraph II.E. above, efforts to support good faith research and/or the network of fact-checkers in a given year by Relevant Signatories.
- In the specific case of advertisers, the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) will provide aggregated reporting to track and identify the different brand safety activities and policies employed by brand owners.
 - In the specific case of advertising agencies, the European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA) will provide aggregated reporting to track and identify the different brand safety activities and policies employed by advertising agencies, including the promotion of relevant tools, collaboration with third party verification companies, as well as methods to assess media buying strategies and to make choices about ad placements relative to the associated online disinformation risk.
 - IAB Europe will provide aggregated reporting to track and identify different brand safety activities and policies used by its members and those of European National IABs, which include stakeholders from across the online advertising ecosystem.
 - Signatories commit to select an objective 3rd party organization to review the annual self-assessment reports submitted by the Relevant Signatories, and evaluate the level of progress made against the Commitments, which would include accounting for commitments signed on to.
 - In line with Commitment II. B No. 4, Relevant Signatories shall work with the European Commission and other key stakeholders to endeavour to develop a working definition, which will inform the most effective approaches that both achieve transparency but also uphold fundamental rights in order to make meaningful progress towards devising approaches to publicly disclose "issue-based advertising".

Assessment period

The signature of the Code of Practice will be followed by an assessment period of 12 months, during which the Signatories will meet regularly to analyse its progress, implementation and functioning.

The Signatories will meet at the end of the assessment period to evaluate the effectiveness of the Code of Practice in connection with each of the commitments set forth above. They will discuss the continuation of the Code and, if appropriate, discuss and propose follow-up actions. These follow-up actions may include changes to how the Signatories' efforts under the Code, and Code's impact on Disinformation, are monitored. The results of this evaluation will be summarised in a report, which will include conclusions on the Relevant Signatories' own commitments and KPIs.

After the assessment period, the Signatories will meet annually to review the Code and to take further steps if necessary. They may meet more frequently, should they deem it necessary, to discuss the functioning of the Code. Reports may be drawn up to take stock of the Code's functioning and effectiveness.

The Signatories agree to cooperate with the European Commission in assessing the reporting on the functioning of the Code. This cooperation may include:

- Making available appropriate information upon request;
- Informing the Commission of the signature or withdrawal of any Signatories;
- Responding to the Commission's questions and consultations;
- Discussing the above-mentioned assessment and reports in meetings of the Signatories; and
- Inviting the Commission to all such meetings.

Signatories

This Code only applies to the Signatories. Additional signatories may sign the Code at any time. Candidate signatories must present their activities to the existing Signatories and indicate how they intend to comply with the Code's requirements.

A Signatory may withdraw from the Code or from specific commitments within the Code at any time, by notifying the European Commission and the other Signatories. Such a withdrawal will not have the effect of terminating the Code between the other Signatories.

Each Signatory may at any time inform the other Signatories that it believes a Signatory is not complying with its commitments under the Code, and of the grounds for this belief. The Signatories may decide to consider the matter in a plenary meeting. Having heard the Signatory concerned, and after concluding on objective grounds that this Signatory is not willing to respect its commitments under the Code, after all reasonable avenues have been explored, the Signatories may invite such a Signatory to withdraw from the Code. The Signatories will inform the European Commission of this decision.

The Signatories may indicate on their websites or in commercial or other communications that they have signed the code. They can take all reasonable measures to make their business contacts aware of the existence of the Code.

Entry into force

This Code will become effective and will enter into force one month from its signature.

Any changes to this Code must be agreed by all the Signatories.

The Code has an indefinite duration, subject to the Signatories' agreement to continue following their annual review of the Code.

Signed in Brussels, on 26 September 2018



The 'Dark Side' of Digital Diplomacy: Countering Disinformation and Propaganda¹

By Corneliu Bjola

Like many other technologies, digital platforms come with a dual-use challenge that is, they can be used for peace or war, for good or evil, for offense or defence. The same tools that allow ministries of Foreign Affairs and embassies to reach out to millions of people and build 'digital' bridges with online publics with the purpose to enhance international collaboration, improve diaspora engagement, stimulate trade relations, or manage international crises, can be also used as a form of "sharp power" to "pierce, penetrate or perforate the political and information environments in the targeted countries", and in so doing to undermine the political and social fabric of these countries.² The "dark side" of digital diplomacy, by which I refer to the strategic use of digital technologies as (counter-) disinformation and propaganda tools by governments and non-state actors in pursuit of strategic interests, has expanded in the recent years to the point that it has started to have serious implications for the global order.³

For example, more than 150 million Americans were exposed to the Russian disinformation campaign prior to the 2016 presidential election, which was almost eight times more the number of people who watched the evening news broadcasts of ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox stations in 2016. A recent report prepared for the U.S. Senate has found that Russia's disinformation campaign around the 2016 election used every major social media platform to deliver words, images and videos tailored to voters' interests to help elect President Trump, and allegedly worked even harder to support him while in office.⁴ Russian disinformation campaigns have also been highly active in Europe⁵, primarily by seeking to amplify social tensions in various countries, especially in situations of intense political polarisation, such as during the Brexit referendum, the Catalan separatist vote⁶, or the more recent "gilets jaunes" protests in France.⁷

Worryingly, the Russian strategy and tactics of influencing politics in Western countries by unleashing the "firehose of falsehoods" of online disinformation, fake news, trolling, and

conspiracy theories, has started to be imitated by other (semi) authoritarian countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, North Korea, China, a development which is likely to drive more and more governments to step up their law enforcement efforts and digital counterstrategies to protect themselves against the 'dark side' of digital diplomacy.⁸ For resource-strapped governmental institutions, especially embassies, this is clearly a major problem, as with a few exceptions, many simply do not simply have the necessary capabilities to react to, let alone anticipate and pre-emptively contain a disinformation campaign before it reaches them. To help embassies cope with this problem, this contribution reviews five different tactics that digital diplomats could use separately or in combination to counter digital disinformation and discusses the possible limitations these tactics may face in practice.

Five counter-disinformation tactics for diplomats

Tactic #1: IGNORING

Ignoring trolling and disinformation is often times the default option for digital diplomats working in embassies and for good reasons. The tactic can keep the discussion focused on the key message, it may prevent escalation by denying trolls the attention they crave, it can deprive controversial issues of the 'oxygen of publicity', and it may serve to psychologically protect digital diplomats from verbal abuse or emotional distress. The digital team of the current U.S. Ambassador in Russia seems to favour this tactic as they systematically steer away from engaging with their online critics. This approach stands in contrast with the efforts of the former Ambassador, Michael McFaul, who often tried to engage online with his followers and to explain the position of his country on various political issues to Russian audiences, only to be harshly refuted by the Russia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) or online users.

At the same time, one should be mindful of the fact that the ignore tactic may come at the price of letting misleading statements go unchallenged, indirectly encouraging more trolling due to the perceived display of passivity and of missing the opportunity to confront a particular damaging story in its nascent phase, before it may grow into a full-scale, viral phenomenon with potentially serious diplomatic ramifications.

1 <http://www.cbjola.com/single-post/2019/03/08/The-%E2%80%98Dark-Side%E2%80%99-of-Digital-Diplomacy-Countering-Disinformation-and-Propaganda>

2 Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power", Foreign Affairs, November 26, 2017..

3 "The dark side of digital diplomacy", in *Countering Online Propaganda and Extremism*, Corneliu Bjola and James Pamment (Eds.), Routledge (2018).

4 Craig Timberg and Tony Romm, 'New Report on Russian Disinformation, prepared for the Senate', The Washington Post, December 17, 2018.

5 Corneliu Bjola and James Pamment, "Digital containment: Revisiting containment strategy in the digital age", *Global Affairs*, Volume 2, 2016.

6 Robin Emmott, 'Spain sees Russian interference in Catalonia', Reuters, November 13, 2017.

7 Carol Matlack and Robert Williams, 'France Probe Possible Russian Influence on Yellow Vest Riots', Bloomberg, December 8, 2018.

8 Daniel Funke, 'A guide to anti-misinformation actions around the world', Poynter, October 31, 2018.

Tactic #2: DEBUNKING

In the post-truth era, fact-checking is “the new black” as the manager of the American Press Institute’s accountability and fact-checking program neatly described it.⁹ Faced with an avalanche of misleading statements, mistruths and ‘fake news’ often disseminated by people in position of authority, diplomats, journalists and the general public require access to accurate information in order to be able to take reliable decisions. It makes thus sense for embassies and MFAs to seek to correct false or misleading statements and to use factual evidence to protect themselves and the policies they support from deliberate and toxic distortions. The #EuropeUnited campaign launched by the German MFA in June 2018 in response to the rise of nationalism, populism and chauvinism, is supposed to do exactly that: to correct misperceptions and falsehoods spread online about Europe by presenting verifiable information about what European citizens have accomplished together as members of the European Union.¹⁰

The key question, however, is whether fact-checking actually works and if so, under what conditions? Research shows that misperceptions are widespread, that elites and the media play a key role in promoting these false and unsupported beliefs¹¹, and that false information actually outperforms true information.¹² Providing people with sources that share their point of view, introducing facts via well-crafted visuals, and offering an alternate narrative rather than a simple refutation may help dilute the effect of disinformation, alas not eliminate it completely. While real-time fact checks can reduce the potential for falsehoods to ‘stick’ to the public agenda and go viral, direct factual contradictions may actually strengthen ideologically grounded beliefs as disinformation may make those exposed to it extract certain emotional benefits.¹³ This is why using emotions in addition to facts may prove a more effective solution to countering online disinformation, although the right format of fact-based emotional framing arguably varies with the context of the case and the profile of the audience.

Tactic #3: TURNING THE TABLES

The jiu-jitsu principle of turning the opponent’s strength into a weakness may also work well when applied to the case of counter-disinformation strategies. The use of humour in general, and of sarcasm in particular, could be reasonably effective for enhancing the reach of the message, deflecting challenges to ones’ narrative without alienating the audience, avoiding emotional escalation, and undermining the credibility of the source.¹⁴ The case of the Israeli embassy in the US using a “Mean Girls” meme in June 2018 to confront Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s hateful tweet about Israel being “malignant cancerous tumour” that “has to be removed and eradicated” is instructive: it was widely shared and praised on social media and proved effective in calling attention to Israel’s plea for a harsher international stance towards Iran. In a slightly different note, the sarcastic tweet of the joint delegation of Canada at NATO in Aug 2014 poking fun at the statements of the Russian government about its troops entering Crimea by “mistake”, showcased Canada’s commitment to European security and the NATO alliance and further undermined the credibility of Kremlin in the eyes of the Western public opinion.

While memetic engagement is attracting growing attention as a possible tool for countering state and non-state actors in the online information environment, one should also bear in mind the potential risks and limitations associated with this tactic.¹⁵ It is important, for instance, to understand well the audience, not only for increasing the effectiveness of the memetic campaign, but more critically for avoiding embarrassing situations when the appeal to humour may fall flat or even backfire thus undermining one’s own narrative and standing. The overuse of memes and humour may also work against public expectations of diplomatic conduct, which generally revolve around associations with requirements of decorum, sobriety and gravitas. Most importantly, memetic engagement should not be conducted loosely, for entertaining the audience, but with some clear objectives in mind about how to enhance the visibility of your positions or policies and/or undermine those of the opponent.

9 Jane Elizabeth, ‘Finally, fact-checking is the new black’, American Press Institute, September 29, 2016.

10 Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, ‘Courage to Stand Up for Europe’, Federal Foreign Office, June 23, 2018.

11 D.J. Flynn, Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, ‘The Nature and Origins of Misperceptions’, Dartmouth College, October 31, 2016.

12 Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Rai and Sinan Aral, ‘The spread of true and false news online’, Science, Volume 359, March 9, 2018.

13 Jess Zimmerman, ‘It’s Time to Give Up on Facts’, Slate, February 8, 2018.

14 Stratcom laughs: in search of an analytical framework, NATO Stratcom, March 17, 2017.

15 Vera Zakem, Megan K. McBride and Kate Hammerberg, ‘Exploring the Utility of Memes for U.S. Government Influence Campaigns’, Center for Naval Analyses, April 2018.

Tactic #4: DISCREDITING

A stronger version of the jiu-jitsu principle mentioned above is the tactic of discrediting the opponent. The purpose in this case is not to undermine the credibility of the message, but of the messenger itself so that the audience will come to realise that whatever messages come from a particular source, they cannot be trusted. This tactic should be considered very carefully, and should be used only in special circumstances, as it would most likely lead to an escalation of the online info dispute and would probably trigger a harsh counter-reaction from the opponent. The way in which this tactic may work is by turning the opponent's communication style against itself: amplifying contradictions and inconsistencies in his/her message, exposing the pattern of falsehoods disseminated through his/her channels of communication, and maximising the impact of the counter-narrative via the opponent's 'network of networks'.

Following the failed assassination attempt of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in March 2018, pro-Kremlin accounts on Twitter and Telegram started to promote a series of different conspiracies and competing narratives, attached to various hashtags and social media campaigns, with the goal, as one observer noted, to confuse people, polarise them, and push them further and further away from reality.¹⁶ In response to this, the FCO launched a vigorous campaign in which it took advantage of the Russian attempt to generate confusion about the incident by forcefully making the point that the 20+ different explanations offered by Kremlin and Russian sources, including the story that the assassination might have been connected to Mr Skripal's mother in law, made absolutely no sense and therefore whatever claim Russian sources might make, they could be trusted. While the campaign proved effective in further undermining the credibility of Kremlin as a trustworthy source and convincing partners to back up U.K.'s position in international fora, it should nevertheless be noted that the bar set by Russian authorities after the invasion of Crimea and the shooting down of MH17 was already low. In addition, while the tactic of discrediting the opponent may work well to contain its influence online, it may do little to deter him/her from engaging in further disinformation as long as the incentives and especially the costs for pursuing this strategy remain unaltered.

Tactic #5: DISRUPTING

One way in which the costs of engaging in disinformation could be increased is by disrupting the network the opponent uses for disseminating disinformation online. This would imply the mapping of the network of followers of the opponent, the tracing of the particular patterns by which disinformation is propagated throughout the network, and the identification of the gatekeepers in the network who can facilitate or obstruct the dissemination of disinformation. Once this accomplished, the disruption of the disinformation network could take place by targeting gatekeepers with factual information about the case, encouraging them not to inadvertently promote 'fake news' and falsehoods, and in extreme situations by working with representatives of digital platforms to isolate gatekeepers who promote hate and violence.

The Israeli foreign ministry has been one of the MFAs applying this tactic, in this case for stopping the spread of anti-Semitic content. Accordingly, the ministry starts first by identifying gatekeepers and ranking them by their level of online influence.¹⁷ It then begins approaching and engaging with them online, with the purpose of making them aware of the fact that they sit an important junction of hate speech. The ministry then attempts to cultivate relationships with these gatekeepers so that they may refrain from sharing hate content online. In so doing, the ministry can effectively manage to contain or quarantine online hate networks and prevent their malicious content from reaching broader audience.

If properly implemented, this tactic could indeed significantly increase the costs of disseminating disinformation as opponents need to constantly protect and by case to rebuild their network of gatekeepers. They may also have to frequently re-configure the patterns by which they disseminate disinformation to their target audiences. At the same time, this tactic requires specialised skills for successful design and implementation, which might not be available to many embassies or even MFAs. The process of engineering the disruption of the disinformation network also prompts important ethical questions about how to make sure this tactic is not abused for stifling legitimate criticism of the ministry or the embassy.

16 Joel Gunten and Olga Robinson, 'Sergei Skripal in the Russian disinformation game', BBC News, Sep. 9, 2018.

17 Ilan Manor, 'Using the Logic of Networks in Public Diplomacy', Centre on Public Diplomacy Blog, Jan. 31, 2018.

Conclusions

As argued elsewhere, digital disinformation against Western societies works by focusing on exploiting differences between EU media systems (strategic asymmetry), targeting disenfranchised or vulnerable audiences (tactical flexibility), and deliberately masking the sources of disinformation (plausible deniability). The five tactics outlined in this paper may help MFAs and embassies better cope with these challenges if applied consistently and with a strategic compass in mind. Most importantly, they need to be carefully adapted to the context of the case in order to avoid unnecessary escalation. Here are ten questions that may help guide reflection about how to decide what tactic is appropriate to use and in what context:

78 What type of counter-reaction would reflexively serve to maximise the strategic objectives of the opponent? What are the risks of ignoring a trolling attack or disinformation campaign? What type of disinformation has the largest potential to have a negative political impact for the embassy or the MFA? To what extent giving the “oxygen of publicity” to a story will make the counter-reaction more difficult to sustain? What audiences are most open to persuasion via factual information? What audiences are less open to be convinced by facts? What type of emotions resonate with the audience in specific contexts and how to invoke them appropriately as a way of introducing factual information? What type of humor works better with the target audience and how to react to situations when humor is used against you? How best to leverage the contradictions and inconsistencies in the opponent’s message without losing the moral ground? Who are the gatekeepers in the opponent’s network of followers and to what extent can they be convinced to refrain from sharing disinformation online? Under what conditions is reasonable to escalate from low-scale counter-reactions (ignoring, debunking, ‘turning the tables’) to more intense forms of tactical engagement (discrediting, disrupting)?

This piece was originally published by the Elcano Royal Institute¹⁸ and the USC Center on Public Diplomacy¹⁹.

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He has authored or edited six books, including forthcoming volume on Countering Online Propaganda and Violent Extremism: The Dark Side of Digital Diplomacy (2018) and Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice (2015). His work has been published in the European Journal of International Relations, Review of International Studies, Ethics and International Affairs, International Negotiation, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Global Policy, Journal of Global Ethics and the Hague Journal of Diplomacy. @cbjola www.cbjola.com

¹⁸ http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/ri/elcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ari5-2019-bjola-dark-side-digital-diplomacy-countering-disinformation-propaganda

¹⁹ <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/dark-side-digital-diplomacy>



“Loving you is not a losing game.” Big hands up for the free press.

By Erik den Hoedt

Over 30 years the Club of Venice stimulates the exchange of information and experience in all fields of public information and communication. The informal network of DG's, directors and other communication managers of the EU Member States and the EU Institutions recently published a set of charters². They consist of common standards and shared principles that are crucial to modern government communication. In all three charters there is a reference to the role of the media. We have seen massive changes in our societies over the past decades, changes that also affected the press.

Operating a press- or media organisation nowadays is challenging. Not only from the point of financial revenues, but also with respect to authority, based on the information position. But, although the task may be harder than before, the role is as important as ever.

In his recent book *Groter denken, kleiner doen* (Thinking bigger, acting smaller), Minister of State Herman Tjeenk Willink, one of the most erudite and influential Dutch politicians over the past decades, gives his vision on democracy. In his book he devotes a chapter to the role of the press. He underlines the importance of “Its ability to weigh information, uncover links and to pay attention to the developments behind the incidents. The mission, supported by facts, to contradict authorities and to give the other reality a chance. Its purpose is to enable citizens to form their own judgment.” It is my strong conviction that the press can only perform its role adequately when it is independent, i.e. free from censorship, not tied to government and not owned by companies with their main financial or strategic interests outside the communication domain.

In my country we are in the luxury position that our press, generally speaking, performs its tasks very well. Despite shrinking numbers of subscribers and budgets the ordinary Dutch newspaper is still a perfect instrument to hit flies and authorities. The latter because the pages are filled with verifiable facts and well-considered opinions. But ‘journalism’

news gathering and dissemination and opinion making is no longer the exclusive domain of the professional, well trained journalist. Everybody with a smartphone and a social media account witnessing an incident can become an accidental journalist. Everybody with strong opinions and an internet connection can become an influencer in a congenial group. One could argue whether this is good or bad. I think it is fact of life. We, the government, and the press have to deal with it. More worrisome are the attempts to disrupt our societies with disinformation and fake news. If there is one thing that is so much easier to do in the digital domain than in the real world, it is replication. Trolls have become a real annoyance and a threat. Convinced that the Netherlands had a very strong contender in this years Eurovision Song contest, Duncan with *Arcade (Loving you is a losing game)*, I nevertheless feared the tele-voting process. But we had a winner, happily.

Pessimists could say that in our modern societies people (including politicians) do not care about facts, that opinion based on facts is replaced with opinion based on sentiments, or on false or incomplete information. I don't agree. In the end people want to rely on evidence based facts. But having said this, the changing role of the media and the press is not a non-issue. Paraphrasing a great Dutch poet, “*The press like anything else of great value is vulnerable*”. We all, government, companies, citizens alike, should always think and act from the perspective that the free press is one of the greatest assets of democracy. Loving the press is never a losing game. In this light I can only recommend the excellent presentation of Christophe Leclercq you will find on the next pages.

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- 1 Erik den Hoedt is director of the Public Information and Communication Office of the Netherlands and member of the Steering Committee of the Club of Venice.
- 2 London Charter on StratCom-Strategic Communication Challenges for Europe (2017), Vilnius Charter on social resilience to disinformation and propaganda in a challenging digital landscape (2018), Shaping professionalism in communication, Vilnius charter on capacity building (2018).



Erik den Hoedt (1959) studied Human Geography at the University of Groningen. Since 1984 he has worked for the Dutch Central Government in several management functions. Since 2010 he is director of the Public Information and Communication Office of the Netherlands. The aim of the Office is to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and to provide the citizens of the Netherlands with relevant information from the government.

The Role of Media in Democracy: Towards Sustainable Business Models in the Age of Online Platforms

By Christophe Leclercq

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#Media4Democracy: Sound Platforms & Independent Media

CHRISTOPHE LECLERCQ - Fondateur@EURACTIV.com, Chair of **Fondation EURACTIV** & member of the EU High-Level Expert Group on disinformation

Fondation EURACTIV #Media4EU

NEW EU STRATEGY 2019-24:

- Sound platforms & independent media?
- Democracy Commissioner?

ABSTRACT:

Christophe Leclercq addressed the Club of Venice conference in November 2018, based on his experience with media networks and the High-Level Expert Group on disinformation. This presentation is an update on specific policy proposals, presented to the European Commission's think tank EPSC on April 2, 2019.

Policy makers and media stakeholders recommend moving on from fake news issues to policy solutions, cutting across several fields. Looking not chiefly at the fundamental rights like the Council of Europe does, but at the ecosystem: resources required for quality press, and industrial policy.

Media policy and platforms' regulation are relevant to CoV communication leaders, because citizen involvement requires an open public space, and a European media sector.

CHRISTOPHE LECLERCQ's profile:

Founder of **EURACTIV Media Network** & Chairman of **Fondation EURACTIV**, plus adviser & commentator.

Christophe was a member of the High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on disinformation. He believes that there is an opportunity to prepare now the future 2019-2024 complement to the Digital Single Market. This "top10 priority" could be called: "Democracy in a digital world: sound platforms & independent media".

As former strategy consultant and DG COMPT official, he thinks in terms of industry structures and negotiation power, notably between media and platforms. After creating the EURACTIV Media Network, he now leads **Fondation EURACTIV** focusing on media policy and executive training.

Fondation EURACTIV #Media4EU  #Media4Democracy @LeclercqEU

OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION:

- **ISSUES: MEDIA CHALLENGES ARE DEMOCRACY CHALLENGES**
- **SOLUTION: HEALTHY EUROPEAN MEDIA SECTOR**
- **TRIGGERS: FAKE NEWS, ELECTIONS, MEDIA**
- **TOOLS: EU 'TOP 10' PRIORITY FOR 2019-2024**
 - "DEMOCRACY IN A DIGITAL WORLD: SOUND PLATFORMS AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA"
 - COMMISSIONER TO LEAD "DG DEMOCRACY"
- **BACK-UPS AVAILABLE FROM founderoffice@euractiv.com & founder@euractiv.com**

"WRITTEN NARRATIVE":

- MEPs and experts' Open letter to J.C. Juncker "Beyond fake news: Strategic options for media ahead of EU elections"
- Europe's Media Lab: policy process and draft programme - June 2019
- Background on Media4EU research
- Call for comments & practical hints

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MEDIA MARRYING PLATFORMS FOR A BETTER DEMOCRACY: A dream turns to divorce or settlement?



The beautiful, upcoming working-class girl: social media

The smart aristocrat: Journalism-driven media

Source: 'Il Gattopardo', film by Luchino Visconti & novel by Tommaso di Lampedusa

FR: "Pour que tout reste pareil, il faut que tout change" Français: "plus ça change"

IT: "Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com'è, bisogna che tutto cambi"

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WELL KNOWN: MEDIA SHOULD CONNECT NATIONAL SPHERES

CONCEPTS ARE READY → POLITICIANS ARE READY!

Prof. Jürgen Habermas: "A Europe-wide public sphere [...] will rather emerge from the mutual opening of existing national universes to one another"

Umberto Eco: "« La traduction, c'est la langue de l'Europe »"

TechCrunch: "Breaking open the language barrier will blow the potential of AI wide open."

President Jean-Claude Juncker²: "« Il faut armer médiatiquement l'Union européenne. [...] Jamais la Commission ne fera son propre programme de télévision »"

VP Frans Timmermans²: "« We don't have a European 'demos' yet. [...] Old media and new media know this is about their collective future »"

High-Level Expert Group on disinformation, summary quoted by Commissioner Marija Gabriel³: "« Avoid censorship, dilute fake news, promote quality content »"

1. Vasco Pedro, 2015
2. Resp. Pt and VP, European Commission, speaking on 9 May ('Schuman Day') and on 3 May ('Press Freedom Day') 2016. [Link to video here](#)
3. Commissioner Digital Single Market & Media, quoting Ch. Leclercq at EURACTIV conference on media strategy, 15 October + Parliament conference on fact checking, 27 September 2018

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RECENT: MOMENTUM FOR EUROPEAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

POLITICIANS

Open Letter (see back-ups) to J.C. Juncker co-signed by 6 media experts & 6 MEPs (from 4 groups: S. Guillaume, E. Ibarra, M. Laskerzgaard, S. Muresan, H. Trüpel, J.M. Cavada)

18 Member States ask for Industrial Policy (18 Dec. 2018)

Treaty of Aachen foresees media initiatives...

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

"Pour une Renaissance européenne"

E. Macron's **Op-ed** on EU sovereignty, fake news and platform regulation (27 media, March 4th 2019)

EXPERTS

Le Monde: "« L'Union européenne doit défendre la viabilité économique des médias »"

The Economist: "The determinators: Europe takes on the tech giants"

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: "14 Strategic Recommendations for a European Media Sovereignty"

HOUSE OF LORDS: "digital gangsters in the online world" (Review)
"a sustainable future for journalism" (Review by Frances Cairncross)

(Open Letter by J.M. Cavada, P. Lamy, E. Widegren, C. Leclercq) (Why big tech should fear Europe, March 2nd 2019) (G. Klossa, Report to VP Ansip)

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DEMOCRACY & MEDIA: CHALLENGES → SOLUTIONS?

Structural issues: critical mass required

- European public space?? Anglo-Saxon dependency → cooperations & language tech
- National fragmentation, concentration fears → think ahead, European champions?
- Comms' channel, not tackled as economic sector yet → sector strategy / industrial policy

Current mandate, simplified debrief: well intended, slow & soft

- Demagogy, Nationalism → platform co-regulation, not just self-regulation & slow legislation
- Disinformation → tackle media quality + media literacy, fact-checking, trust indicators
- Digital Single Market was necessary, not sufficient → new 'top 10' priority 2019-2024

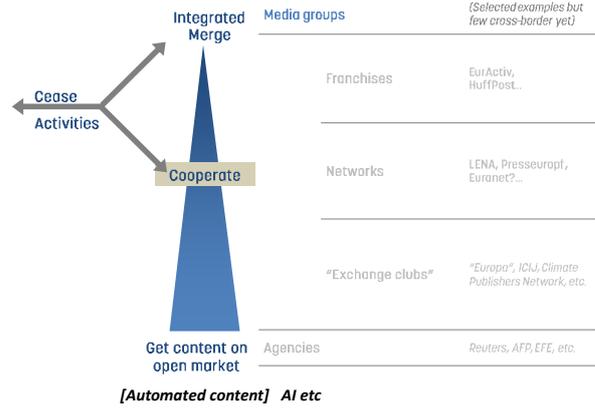
Main needs: urgent and long term economic thinking

- Revenue model crisis → after ©, balance ecosystem platforms / ads & content / media
- Rising costs of technology and innovation → some R&D and skills support appropriate

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STRATEGIC GOAL FOR ANY MEDIA'S FUTURE:

CRITICAL MASS, "CHAMPIONS" AND "INDUSTRIAL POLICY"



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STRATEGY PILLAR A: REGULATION



9

STRATEGY PILLAR B: SUPPORTING THE MEDIA



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TRIGGER 1: FAKE NEWS



Since January 2018, Christahe Leclercq is one of the experts on the **High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on disinformation** set up by the Digital Commissioner Mariya Gabriel. Read here the **Report of the HLEG on disinformation** and the authors' opinion pieces:

- **"Avoid censorship, dilute fake with quality news"** (platform see [Fragilitch](#) is not enough, the need to rebalance the ecosystem is essential: too EU priority)
- **"After the copyright win, what strategy for Europe's media sector?"**

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TRIGGER 2: EU ELECTIONS



Read the **Open Letter to President Juncker calling for a European strategy for the media sector 2019-2024**:

- **"Beyond fake news: Strategic options for media ahead of EU elections"** co signed by 6 MEPs and 6 media experts (translated into [FR](#), [DE](#))
- 3 adapted versions of the Open Letter have been published in [FR](#) ([Le Monde](#)), [IT](#) ([Italia Oggi](#)), and [ESP](#) ([El Pais](#)).

TRIGGER 3: MEDIA ITSELF



The Economist's lead article **Big tech faces competition and privacy concerns in Brussels** "give power back to the people" (March 23rd 2019)

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TOP 10 EU PRIORITY 2019-24? COMMISSIONER TO LEAD DG DEMOCRACY

"Democracy in a digital world: sound platforms & independent media"

A) A VISION: DEMOCRACY-BASED INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Move from: DSM & short-term election focus to: *systemic* issues, and from: horizontal to: *vertical* strategies
Economic study + sector enquiry on the whole ecosystem (DG COMP, like e-commerce before)

B) POLICY INITIATIVES: FAST, USING CHIEFLY EXISTING TOOLS?

• **Competition:** (in addition to individual cases)

Define 'systemic platforms', consider 'essential facility' or asymmetric regulation for data (thresholds, etc)
Warn about potential abuse of dominant positions, e.g. in © negotiations
Facilitate media cooperation or concentration enabling sustainable journalism
Level playing field for other topics: tax, data portability, etc

• **Sector-policies:** (in addition to press freedom, fighting censorship, privacy etc)

Enforce platform commitments re: disinformation & illegal content, + value related media services
Re-open directives e-commerce, advertising, data, etc (+ anticipate: soft or competition-based digital regulation)

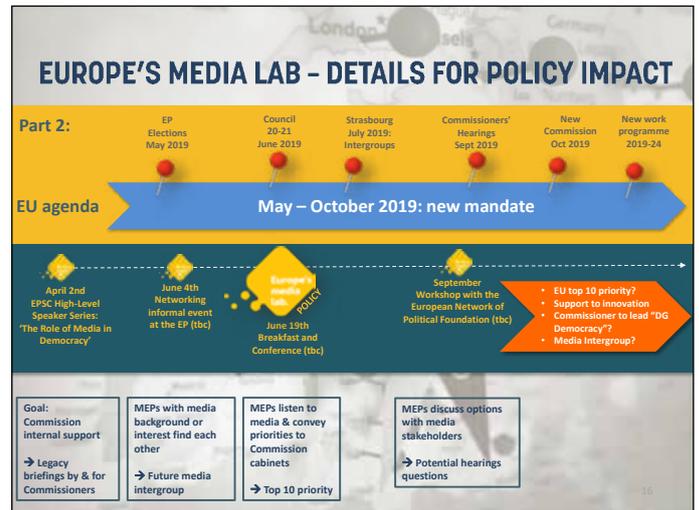
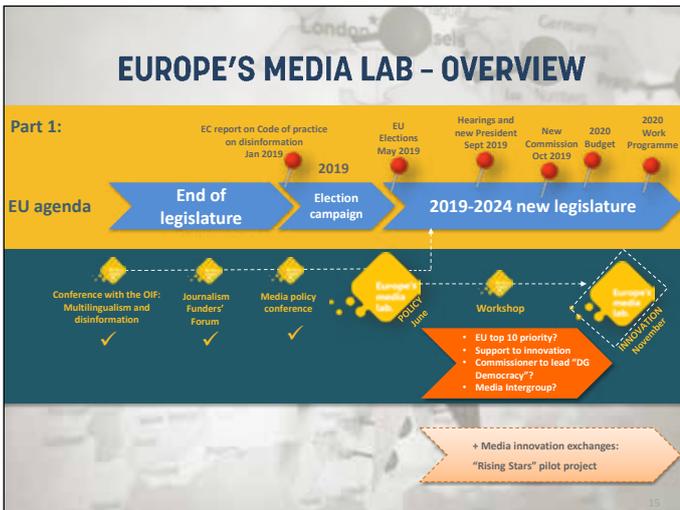
C) SOME EU FUNDING: USING EXISTING AMOUNTS?

Innovation: higher media % in Horizon Europe (notably AI, esp. Translation) + public procurement + capital fund
Industry in crisis: social funds approach, next MFF with sector-specific skills (not just journalism)

• SOME SUPPORTING INITIATIVES?

- Improved media stakeholders' representation. Help Media bundle together before negotiations vs. platforms
- Europe's Media Lab in June, for (new) MEPs → Media intergroup @EP? (not just 'Culture & creative industries')
- **Commissioner and DG 'Democracy & media'? (economics-driven, not just 'tech, rights and subsidies')**

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CONTACTS & REFERENCES:

Fondation EURACTIV #Media4Democracy

Main related publication: [Open Letter to JC Juncker, by 6 MEPs and 6 media experts FR DE](#)
 (Background information: Links Dossier [Emerging media policies for EU 2019-24](#))

Fondation EURACTIV: <https://fondationeuractiv.eu/>

Media4EU Blog: <http://media4eu.blogactiv.eu/>

#Media4EU #Stars4media #Erasmus4media @LeclercqEU @FondEURACTIV

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Christophe Leclercq is the Chairman of Fondation EURACTIV & EURACTIV Founder: fondateur@euractiv.com. He was one of the experts on the EU High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on disinformation set up by the European Commissioner for Digital Mariya Gabriel. Christophe moderates conferences, speaks at policy and corporate events, and helps boards and media associations. Leader of projects such as #Media4EU and Stars4Media Erasmus4Media, he also teaches notably at the Institut d'Etudes Européennes/ULB (Brussels).



EU'S OUTREACH - European Citizens' consultations in progress¹

By Anthony Zacharzewski, Kelly McBride and The Democratic Society's Team

The European Citizens' Consultations

The Democratic Society is working with the European Policy Centre in 2018-19 to build a network of civil society organisations working on or interested in the European Citizens' Consultations, at national or European level.

The European Citizens' Consultations (ECCs) are a new experiment in improving the quality of democracy at the EU level by giving European citizens the possibility to express and exchange their opinions about the Union and its future. The idea, which was inspired by the French President Emmanuel Macron and has been implemented since April 2018, follows two tracks:

- At the EU level, the European Commission has been hosting an online survey, available in all EU languages, consisting of questions formulated by a Citizens' Panel.
- At the member state level, national governments have been in charge of organising consultations in their respective countries and synthesising the results. The outcomes of the online questionnaire and the national syntheses were discussed at the European Council in December 2018.

In November 2018 the Democratic Society published an ad hoc evaluation report² 1 on the European Citizens' Consultations³ in cooperation with the European Policy Centre.

This report presents the results of the research and analysis carried out by the ECC Civil Society Network over seven months, as well as a number of recommendations for how to capitalise on the current round of ECCs and how to improve the way they could be executed in the future.

To independently monitor and evaluate how the ECCs were organised in practice, a European Citizens' Consultations Civil Society Network² was established with the kind support of the King Baudouin Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. It has been working to build a network of civil society organisations from across the EU which are involved or interested in the process.

You can read more about the consultations on the Commission's website⁴.

Contact: Kelly McBride (Head of European Networks) – kelly@demsoc.org

Anthony Zacharzewski is trying to make European democracy work. He founded the Democratic Society in 2006, and since 2010 he has led practical democracy projects and research from village councils to the European Commission. Recent and current project partners include the European Commission, the Open Society Foundations, the Scottish Government, the Serbian government, the Council of Europe, and the UK's Health Foundation. He is involved in numerous European networks including the Club of Venice, SEECOM, and the World Forum for Democracy's Democracy Incubator. From 1996 to 2010, he worked for the UK's Treasury, Cabinet Office, and Department of Health, and led the strategy function for the city of Brighton & Hove.



1 <https://www.demsoc.org/projects/ecc/> .

2 <https://www.demsoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/The-European-Citizens%E2%80%99-Consultations-Evaluation-Report-2018.pdf>
<https://www.demsoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Exec-Summary-The-European-Citizens%E2%80%99-Consultations-Evaluation-Report-2018.pdf>
http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=1&pub_id=8839

3 http://www.epc.eu/prog_forum.php?forum_id=84&prog_id=1

4 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/future-europe/consultation-future-europe_en

Executive summary of the DEMSOC/EPC evaluation report

By Corina Stratulat and Paul Butcher

The European Citizens' Consultations (ECCs) are a new experiment in improving the quality of democracy at the EU level by giving European citizens the possibility to express and exchange their opinions about the Union and its future.

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This report presents the results of the research and analysis carried out by the Network over the past seven months, as well as a number of recommendations for how to capitalise on the current round of ECCs and how to improve the way they could be executed in the future.

The analysis in this Report draws on information from the

Network members about their countries' experience with the ECCs, interviews with civil society representatives and government or Commission officials, and desk research.

To further illustrate the variation in the way the ECCs were carried out in each country, it also includes detailed examples from six member states: France, Spain, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, and Italy.

A key finding of this report is that the member states have stuck to the flexibility principle which they all demanded in exchange for their participation. From the name adopted for the national events, the timeframe for holding these meetings, the chosen organisers, format, agenda, and reporting procedure, down to the rationale for joining the ECCs, each country has done its own thing.

This freedom has helped to ensure that all the member states felt comfortable enough to play an active role. But it has also led to a situation in which:

1. The ECCs lack a common identity to give them visibility, credibility, meaning, and durability over time.
2. The synthesis of the consultations may fail to produce a coherent message for policymakers to acknowledge and act upon, thereby weakening the ECCs' potential impact.

In parallel, the European Commission's online questionnaire sought to grant consistency and a supranational dimension to the process. Yet this did not materialise, partly because of the low response rate, and partly because most national ECCs preferred not to use it. The somewhat puzzling failure of the

Brussels executive to promote the survey in the member states did not help either.

Moreover, the fact that the Commission internally conceptualised its participation in the process as part of its broader effort to discuss the 'Future of Europe' by organising Citizens' Dialogues has added to the confusion about the ECCs. Some member states merely re-branded Citizens' Dialogues as 'ECCs', which took away at least some meaning from the initiative.

Ultimately, the unstructured and under-funded process which unfolded through the ECCs never stood a chance of generating a critical mass of activities to fix the EU's democratic dilemmas. Nevertheless, if more citizens have had the chance to say what they think about the EU, talk to others about European affairs during or on the margins of the events, learn at least one new thing about the EU, and think about the Union from a new angle or a different perspective, while that may not be enough for fundamental democratic change, the ECCs will not have been in vain.

Several recommendations emerge from the experience of the ECCs so far, both for this round and for the future.

For this round of ECCs:

- Member states and the Commission should ensure that the summary reports provide a detailed account of the consultations and are made public.
- Organisers of national consultations should use the momentum of the forthcoming European Parliament elections to strengthen the public debate, and the European Commission should invest more effort in promoting the questionnaire.
- The European Council should set a clear timeframe for the new leadership to follow up on reports, and EP candidates and civil society should ensure that attention is paid to the results.
- The current Commission should pass on the conclusions to the next Commission.

For future rounds of ECCs:

- The purpose of the exercise and its connection to the European level should be made clear.
- Citizens should be informed from the start about how the outcomes of the consultations will be used.
- The transnational dimension of the consultations should be enhanced.
- Organisers should make use of existing models of citizens' participation.
- There should be a good balance between a common format and diverse national practices.
- National discussions should include issues that currently feature on the EU policy agenda.
- There should be a public synthesis of results, which should include independent voices.
- Another Citizens' Panel should be held.

Looking ahead, any successful new engagement will need more than procedure. There must be a genuine culture of openness in and around the European institutions. It will also require a general shift from seeing similar approaches to large-scale EU democratic reform as single stand-alone projects to understanding them as system interventions that must be built up over time.

Elections européennes sous la loupe

By Michael Malherbe

Élections européennes : quelle couverture médiatique ?¹

L'émission « du grain à moudre » du 1er mars sur France Culture pose une excellente question : « L'Europe sera-t-elle absente des élections européennes ? »². Tour de table pessimiste mais réaliste entre journalistes européens sur les enjeux des prochaines élections européennes...

Comment traiter l'Europe en campagne ?

Plusieurs angles sont possibles pour des journalistes désireux de proposer des papiers à leur rédaction autour des élections européennes :

La figure de style imposée conduit à se fixer sur le président de la République en France, auto-proclamé le chevalier blanc de l'Europe et scénariste en chef de la campagne avec un coup d'envoi officiel prévu via une tribune diffusée dans la presse de tous les États-membres, une sorte de « Sorbonne bis » pour donner les lignes de force et formuler des propositions concrètes.

Le service minimum pour les journalistes, c'est de couvrir les stratégies et les personnalités de la politique intérieure : s'attacher à la course de chevaux des têtes de liste à défaut de s'intéresser aux questions de fond au-delà toutefois de la question migratoire, le point d'orgue de la campagne.

L'exercice de curiosité consiste plutôt à écouter les voix des autres acteurs dans la société civile, en particulier les traces d'Europe que l'on peut retrouver notamment au travers du grand débat national afin de creuser des histoires plus intimes de parcours et de relations avec l'Europe.

La radicalité pousse à choisir de traiter tous les sujets de politique nationale sous l'angle européen, pour européeniser les esprits et comprendre que la crédibilité des exécutifs nationaux est en jeu dans de nombreux États-membres, à l'instar du test d'opinion que ces élections représentent en France pour Macron et ses oppositions.

Quels sont les enjeux des élections européennes pour l'Europe ?

S'attacher aux questions de fond, c'est s'affranchir de la caricature superficielle entre des « pro-européens » favorable à davantage d'intégration mais sans réelle capacité d'action sans disant en raison de tensions interétatiques pourtant médiatiquement construites et des « anti-européens » désireux par principe de moins d'Europe sans vraiment préciser concrètement de quoi il s'agirait compte tenu de la complexité des liens interétatiques juridiquement accumulés.

S'intéresser à l'avenir du Parlement européen, c'est voir le paysage spectral des partis politiques européens entre l'effondrement des forces politiques traditionnelles (droite chrétienne et social-démocratie) qui ont fait la construction européenne et la poussée des forces populistes en ordre de bataille dispersé. Pour le Parlement européen, ces élections européennes représentent tout simplement la plus grande recomposition des groupes politiques depuis fort longtemps et donc des perspectives de coalitions de circonstances et de majorités à la carte dont on ne soupçonne pas encore les conséquences potentielles.

S'inquiéter du projet européen dans son ensemble, c'est comprendre que le marasme de l'Union européenne - rejetée par beaucoup pour des torts en partie infondés, mais aussi parce qu'elle pourrait répondre davantage et mieux aux attentes et aux besoins des Européens - n'est malheureusement pas prêt de se résorber, faute de bonne volonté, de souffle mais aussi de nouvelles lignes de fracture en raison d'intérêts et donc de priorités divergents.

Au final, si la campagne électorale dans les médias parvient à poser la question de la démocratisation de la prise de décision de l'Union européenne alors le désir et l'esprit européens pourront progresser.

¹ <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/>

² <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/du-grain-a-moudre/leurope-sera-t-elle-la-grande-absente-des-elections-europeennes>

Élections européennes : comment parler d'Europe ?³

Une conférence au Collège des Bernardins sur « Qui veut encore de l'Europe ? »⁴ le 12 février dernier invite à creuser le dilemme d'un divorce qui semble toujours davantage consommé entre les institutions européennes et les citoyens alors qu'on ne cesse de parler d'Europe, en particulier lors des multiples crises. Alors, justement, comment peut-on parler d'Europe aujourd'hui ?

Comment définir l'Europe ? Regards croisés sur la construction européenne

Sur le plan intellectuel, l'Europe fait face à un monde post-idéologique qui se cherche après les effondrements des principales idéologies entre la fin du socialisme et donc à l'Est une envie de libertés et la fin du libéralisme, en Occident, avec moins d'envie de défendre les libertés. Définir l'Europe, c'est repartir de la philosophie d'un projet reposant sur l'individu s'accomplissant dans une communauté afin d'intégrer non seulement les sociétés politiques mais aussi les sociétés civiles à un niveau plus culturel.

En termes juridiques, l'Union européenne est une fédération démocratique d'Etats-membres démocratiques mise à l'épreuve par quelques régimes autoritaires qui créent une tension entre la subsidiarité, donc l'autonomie des nations et les valeurs, donc le respect des droits fondamentaux, dont les prochaines élections pourraient être l'épreuve de vérité pour cette communauté de droits qui est parvenu jusqu'à présent à étendre un acquis de domaines et de champs d'application des droits.

Pour Nathalie Loiseau, ministre des Affaires européennes, la vision politique de l'Europe consiste à voir le verre à moitié plein, comme on le fait quand on n'est pas dans l'Union européenne, à savoir le seul espace qui accorde la même valeur à la liberté individuelle, à l'esprit d'entreprise et à la justice sociale en même temps. Un esprit démocratique « olympique » en quelque sorte.

Face à la transition numérique et climatique, l'Europe dessine les nouvelles frontières de la régulation à l'échelle internationale. La

civilisation européenne est au rendez-vous des enjeux de notre temps, comme réponse pour maîtriser notre capacité de destin.

Comment faire campagne sur l'Europe ? Convergences et combats pour la construction européenne

De manière largement consensuelle, le principal défi des prochaines élections européennes réside dans les réponses apportées pour poursuivre un projet qui n'a jamais été autant nécessaire afin de faire face aux nouveaux enjeux et menaces extérieures alors que ce projet n'a jamais été aussi difficile compte tenu des oppositions et divisions internes à l'Europe.

De manière plus polémique, tandis que Nathalie Loiseau joue la carte du rassemblement contre les partisans d'une autre Europe qui défait les solidarités de l'UE, Justine Lacroix, politiste, estime plus précisément qu'il ne faut pas confondre les oppositions à certaines politiques européennes et l'opposition au projet européen. De manière chaotique, se dessine un espace public européen en train d'émerger en fonction d'une part, des mobilisations des sociétés civiles : pressions citoyennes pour la transparence dans les négociations commerciales, pour le climat, contre la pêche électrique... et d'autre part, des classes politiques : pression conservatrice contre les migrations...

Au final, selon Justine Lacroix, tout le monde veut plus d'Europe, mais pas avec le même modèle, ce qui constitue un conflit intégrateur finalement positif, permettant un débat plus ouvert qui sort de l'affrontement binaire entre pro et anti. La fin de l'impératif moral quant au soutien à l'Union européenne et ses politiques, c'est le début d'une véritable politisation de l'Europe, qui sache inclure ses oppositions.

Parler d'Europe, c'est passionnant lorsqu'il s'agit d'y penser un peu contre elle-même (discours trop techno) et beaucoup avec les autres (discussion civique et dialogue interculturel).

³ <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/2019/02/25/elections-europeennes-comment-parler-d-europe/>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7kBOUQoles>

Vers une campagne électorale européenne sous le signe des paradoxes ?¹

Alors que le scrutin est encore lointain pour les citoyens qui seront appelés aux urnes en mai prochain, l'atmosphère en matière européenne est pour le moins paradoxale. Revue des principaux paradoxes du moment...

Le paradoxe classique d'un scrutin européen mangé par les enjeux de politique intérieure

Comme souvent, selon Jean-Louis Bourlanges dans l'émission Le Nouvel Esprit Public, le 3 février, le débat européen en France est mangé par des enjeux de politique intérieure. Non seulement, la campagne va se dérouler entrecoupée des longs week-ends du mois de mai, mais surtout les conséquences du grand débat national et l'éventuel référendum vont venir escamoter le débat européen.

Plutôt que de s'intéresser aux éventuels programmes et propositions pour le futur de l'UE, la scène médiatique est davantage préoccupée par l'écume liée au choix des têtes de liste ; ce qui générera le ressentiment des électeurs qui n'auront pas eu le sentiment que les vrais sujets auront été abordés et tranchés par les résultats électoraux.

Le paradoxe contemporain d'un projet européen dorénavant à sauvegarder

Hérité des années 1950 et des Trente Glorieuses, le projet de construction européenne, reposant sur la démocratie représentative, le multilatéralisme en politique étrangère, l'économie sociale de marché régulée et redistributive est dans le climat actuel tombé du côté des « avantages acquis » à sauvegarder face à la poussée populiste.

La mobilisation des extrêmes autour d'une dynamique paneuropéenne et de leur éventuel coalition - quoiqu'illusoire en majeure partie - tire le jeu politique non plus vers le

sinistrisme qui poussait les forces politiques vers une montée irrésistible des forces « progressistes » mais bien davantage vers un affrontement entre la sauvegarde de la construction européenne co-construite par la social-démocratie et la démocratie chrétienne et la destruction sous la pression des forces populistes et néo-conservatrices.

Le paradoxe médiatique européen de débats éloignés des attentes

Dans les médias, le débat autour de l'Europe se traite davantage sous l'angle doctrinal, idéologique ou théorique sur la forme de la construction européenne, sur des décisions arbitrales pour ou contre telle ou telle action (l'euro, Schengen...) ou des sujets forcément polémiques, comme l'immigration.

Dans les sondages, ou lors des consultations citoyennes européennes, les attentes du public sont, en revanche, beaucoup plus prosaïques, concrètes pour faire avancer l'Europe de l'apprentissage et de la formation tout au long de la vie pour faire face aux changements, de la progression des protections, notamment sociale ou encore de la lutte contre les changements climatiques, sans compter tous les enjeux régaliens de l'Europe : défense, justice et droits fondamentaux.

Le paradoxe européen d'une élection à finalité incertaine

La finalité des élections européennes n'est pas - plus - consensuelle :

- S'agit-il d'« élire » le futur président de la Commission européenne via le système des Spitzenkandidaten qui consiste à imposer aux chefs d'État et de gouvernement la tête de liste du parti européen arrivé en tête le soir du scrutin, sachant que ce système n'est plus défendu par tous les membres du Conseil européen ?
- S'agit-il de choisir les représentants qui défendront les orientations politiques soutenues par les citoyens, la première consistant à approuver ou désapprouver le président de la Commission européenne nommé par le Conseil européen, puis chaque Commissaire et chaque projet de texte sur la base de coalition ad hoc ?

Le lendemain du scrutin européen n'a jamais été aussi indéterminé, non seulement en raison de la fébrilité face à la vague annoncée de populisme mais surtout à cause de l'inconnu du Conseil européen, qui pencherait vers une nomination de circonstance « en fonction des résultats », selon les termes du traité de Lisbonne, mais donc indépendamment du système des Spitzenkandidaten.

¹ <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/2019/02/11/vers-une-campagne-electorale-europeenne-sous-le-signe-des-paradoxes/>

Le paradoxe europhobe d'une détestation de l'UE qui fait la démonstration de sa raison d'être

Dernier paradoxe soulevé par le correspondant des Echos à Bruxelles Gabriel Grésillon² dans « la très paradoxale percée des europhobes ». Selon lui, « à mesure que les partis populistes s'imposent dans le paysage européen, leur discours ouvertement hostile à l'Union donne à cette dernière une reconnaissance politique inégalée ».

Ce paradoxe des partis eurosceptiques radicaux - dit europhobes - est également pointé par France Culture³ qui constate que « la posture anti-européenne des eurosceptiques radicaux rejoint un positionnement anti-système, anti-élite, censé avoir des retombées électorales. Une façon donc de s'ancrer un peu plus dans le système politique qui est en théorie rejeté. »

Au total, les balbutiements de la campagne électorale 2019 sont à plus d'un titre paradoxaux : les opposants les plus farouches légitiment en dépit l'Europe tandis que les acteurs censés les plus européens délégitiment en partie le scrutin européen.

Michaël Malherbe is Manager at Burson Cohn & Wolfe, an international Public Relations agency and a regular lecturer in the following master's courses: "European Studies" at the Sorbonne-Paris III and "European Affairs" of the Sorbonne-Paris IV. Since 2007, he has managed the blog "Décrypter la communication européenne": www.lacomeuropeenne.fr



² <https://www.lesechos.fr/idees-debats/editos-analyses/0600605913606-la-tres-paradoxe-percee-des-europhobes-2241310.php>

³ <https://www.franceculture.fr/histoire/de-margaret-thatcher-aux-brexiteers-la-fabrique-du-mot-eurosceptique>

Pour une communication sans stéréotype

Plusieurs initiatives ont été prises en vue de privilégier une communication sans stéréotypes ; certaines sont prises par les autorités publiques ou visent directement la communication publique et leurs professionnels, d'autres sont des initiatives d'autorégulation prises par des fédérations du secteur des annonceurs ou des agences de publicité.

Nous avons sélectionné ici des initiatives et recommandations qui peuvent vous être utiles.

Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (France)¹

Le Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (HCEfh) met à la disposition des professionnels de la communication des collectivités territoriales, des services de l'État ou des établissements publics un outil pratique pour les aider à construire une communication sans discrimination entre les hommes et les femmes et qui ne véhicule pas les stéréotypes de sexe.

L'État et les collectivités se doivent d'être exemplaires

Les stéréotypes de sexe sont des représentations schématiques et globalisantes sur ce que sont et ne sont pas les filles et les garçons, les femmes et les hommes. Leur présence se manifeste par trois aspects :

- Un fort déséquilibre entre le nombre de femmes et le nombre d'hommes représentés
- Un enfermement des femmes et des hommes dans un répertoire restreint de rôles et de situations, limitant de fait leurs possibilités d'être et d'agir
- Une hiérarchisation des statuts et des fonctions de chaque sexe au détriment des femmes »

précise le HCEfh en introduction du guide. Il rappelle que l'État et les collectivités se doivent d'être exemplaires, notamment via l'utilisation de l'argent public destiné à la communication.

10 recommandations pratiques à l'usage des communicants

Le guide synthétise d'abord le cadre juridique relatif à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et définit les notions de « stéréotypes de sexe », « rôles de sexe » et « genre ». Puis il présente de manière concrète et pratique (« Pourquoi », « Comment faire », « astuce... ») 10 recommandations pratiques pour une communication sans stéréotype de sexe :

- Éliminer toutes les expressions sexistes
- Accorder les noms de métiers, titres, grades et fonctions
- User du féminin et du masculin dans les messages adressés à tous et toutes

- Utiliser l'ordre alphabétique lors d'une énumération
- Présenter intégralement l'identité des femmes et des hommes
- Ne pas réserver aux femmes les questions sur la vie personnelle
- Parler "des femmes" plutôt que de "la femme", de la "journée internationale des droits des femmes", plutôt que de la "journée de la femme", et des "droits humains" plutôt que des "droits de l'homme"
- Diversifier les représentations des femmes et des hommes
- Veiller à équilibrer le nombre de femmes et d'hommes
- Former les professionnels et diffuser le guide

Ce guide est téléchargeable via http://www.cap-com.org/sites/default/files/field_file/hcefh__guide_pratique_com_sans_stereo-_vf-_2015_11_05.pdf (document en langue française)

¹ Texte publié par Cap'Com

Union belge des Annonceurs (UBA), en collaboration avec le Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel de la Communauté française de Belgique (CSA)²

90 Publication de la charte « Unstereotype Communication » de l'Union belge des Annonceurs (UBA) pour des publicités sans stéréotype, en collaboration avec le CSA.

- L'UBA publie une charte visant à favoriser la diversité et l'inclusion dans la publicité en présentant des exemples concrets pour les créateurs de campagne.
- Cette charte est le fruit de réflexions et d'un dialogue constructif avec le secteur publicitaire suite à la présentation des résultats du « Baromètre Diversité & Egalité » du CSA au printemps 2018.
- Être plus inclusif et diversifié, c'est aussi toucher un public plus large. La charte souligne que la réflexion sur les enjeux sociaux et éthiques du message publicitaire peut être compatible avec des impératifs d'ordre commerciaux et stratégiques.

Des outils pour lutter contre les stéréotypes dans la pub

Via la publication de la charte « Unstereotype Communication », l'UBA entend insuffler plus de diversité et d'inclusion dans la communication commerciale. L'objectif recherché est clairement d'œuvrer à plus de diversité non seulement dans les campagnes, mais aussi dans la composition des équipes créatives qui les élaborent. La charte présente une série de conseils concrets à destination des créateurs de campagnes publicitaires ; comme par exemple créer des campagnes générales où les groupes minorisés se sentent concernés ou soumettre les campagnes à un public-test représentatif de la société.

Une suite positive aux résultats du Baromètre de la communication commerciale

L'étude du CSA « Baromètre Diversité & Egalité », publiée en avril 2018, conclut à une division genrée des rôles dans le récit publicitaire. On constate que les personnages se voient largement « assigner » une place, une fonction, un rôle différent selon qu'ils sont hommes ou femmes. Les personnages féminins sont en outre deux fois plus associés à des stéréotypes de genre que les personnages masculins. Second constat : il y a peu de diversité dans les représentations de la féminité et de la masculinité dans le récit publicitaire. La majorité des personnages sont blancs, de corpulence mince, hétérosexuel et de moins de 35 ans.

Pour le CSA, il semblait primordial que l'industrie publicitaire prenne conscience des représentations qu'elle diffuse et du rôle qu'elle joue auprès du public. C'est pourquoi les résultats du Baromètre ont été présentés au secteur publicitaire. Le dialogue a été constructif. Il a amené les partenaires à réfléchir ensemble sur les initiatives à mettre concrètement en œuvre. Le CSA a contribué à la réflexion sur le contenu de cette charte sur la base des points identifiés comme problématiques dans le Baromètre.

Trouver l'équilibre entre les impératifs commerciaux et les enjeux sociaux

La charte « Unstereotype Communication » souligne que la réflexion sur les enjeux sociaux et éthiques du message publicitaire n'est pas incompatible avec des impératifs d'ordre commerciaux et stratégiques. Elle rejoint ainsi d'autres initiatives internationales qui se sont développées autour de la conciliation de ces deux enjeux : sociaux-éthiques et commerciaux. Être plus inclusifs et diversifiés, c'est aussi toucher un public plus large. Les entreprises et les marques peuvent retirer un bénéfice d'une représentation équilibrée des genres et de la diversité de la société dans le récit publicitaire.

Ce document, bien documenté, est téléchargeable via <http://barometrediversite.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/UBA-Charter-Unstereotype-Communication-FR-29-01-2019.pdf> (document en langue française)

² Texte publié par l'UBA



**Club of Venice (CoV) Plenary Meeting
6-7 June 2019, Bar (Montenegro)
Provisional agenda as of 29 May 2019**

WEDNESDAY, 5TH JUNE 2019

Optional social programme
19:30 INFORMAL EVENING
Venue: King Nikola's Palace - Bar (Montenegro)

THURSDAY, 6TH JUNE 2019

8:30 - 9:00 GUESTS' ARRIVAL, REGISTRATION
Meeting Venue: King Nikola's Palace - Bar

9:00 - 09:30 OPENING SESSION
Welcome statements by Zoran PAŽIN, Deputy Prime Minister of Montenegro; representatives of the European Institutions

9:30 - 10:00 MEETING OBJECTIVES
Stefano ROLANDO, President of the Club of Venice

10:15 - 13:00 PLENARY SESSION / ROUND TABLE
Communication Strategies to re-connect Europe to its citizens:
Challenges and Opportunities for governments and institutions

- Lessons learned from the 2019 European Elections communication campaign - Public opinion trends
- Countering disinformation: implementation of the EU Action Plan and the CoV Vilnius and London Charter

MODERATORS:

- Rytis PAULAUSKAS, Director, Communications and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Lithuania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, member of the Steering Group of the Club of Venice
- Elpida CHLIMINTZA, Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) Specialist, Crisis Communication Network webmaster, Council of the EU, Civil Protection Unit

KEY NOTE SPEAKERS:

- Jaume DUCH GUILLOT, Spokesperson of the European Parliament and Director-General of the European Parliament DG Communication
- Victor LIAKH, President, East Europe Foundation

PANELLISTS:

- Jens MESTER, European Commission Head of Unit "Interinstitutional relations, corporate contracts, Europe Direct Contact Centre"
- Anja TREBES, Government Press and Information Office, Germany, Head of Unit, "Press and Public Relations Europe"
- James DENNISON, Research Fellow, European University Institute (EUI)
- Member States, candidate Countries, external partners/specialists



14:15 – 17:30 PLENARY SESSION

Capacity/Capability Building: managing changes and challenges

- Analyses and strategic approaches (World Leader's Report and other feedback)
- Management of Member States' transformation processes in communication
- Implementation of the Vilnius Charter: CoV expert group work in progress

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 SPEAKER:

- Toby ORR, UK, Director of Communications and Marketing, Department for International Trade

PANELLISTS:

- Francis DORLAS, Head of Unit "Communication Capacity", Public Information and Communication Office, Netherlands, Ministry of General Affairs
 - Kelly McBRIDE, Head of European Networks & Strategy, The Democratic Society
 - Sean LARKINS, Director of Consulting & Capability, WPP Government and Public Sector Practice
- Craig MATASICK, Public Communication Team Specialist, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)
 - Olena KOPIYKINA, Chief Specialist, Ukraine, Information and Communication Department, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers
 - National authorities, Institutions, Academics, NGOs and Think Tanks

20:30 OFFICIAL DINNER

20:30 – 20:45 KEY-NOTE SPEECH

"Close to the citizens - communicating EU solidarity"

Christian SPAHR, Spokesperson for Regional Policy, European Commission

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FRIDAY, 7TH JUNE 2019

8:30 – 09:00 GUESTS ARRIVAL, REGISTRATION

Meeting Venue: King Nikola's Palace - Bar

09:00 – 12:30 PLENARY SESSION/ROUND TABLE

Communicating Europe: 1) narrative/storytelling; 2) evolution of public opinion; 3) managing expectations, perspectives and momentum

- Enlargement: communicating in the candidate countries and in the Member States:
 - European structural and investment funds and EFSI: a case-study

MODERATORS:

- Vuk VUJNOVIC, Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister, Montenegro, Secretary-General of the South East Europe Public Sector Association (SEECOM)

- Vincenzo LE VOCCI, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

ADDRESS by Aleksandar DRLJEVIĆ, Montenegro's Chief Negotiator with the European Union

KEY NOTE SPEAKERS:

- one representative from the European Commission

- Matteo MAGGIORE, Director of Communication, European Investment Bank (EIB)

PANELLISTS:

EU Institutions, Member States and candidate countries

- Igor BLAHUSIAK, Director, European Affairs Communication Department, Czech Republic, Office of the Government
- External partners/specialists

13:00 – 13:30 CLOSING SESSION

- Reflections on the issues emerged during the plenary meeting
- Planning for 2019-2020, with focus on:

Capacity Building Working Group, SEECOM annual Conference, ICPMD 2nd Euro-Med communicators' Workshop, poss. 3rd Strat-com seminar (London, autumn 2019), poss. thematic seminar in Cyprus (autumn 2019 or spring 2020), Venice plenary (December 2019) - Work in synergy

Calendar of Club meetings



2019
Athens, 5-6 April 2019 Thematic seminar on Crisis Communication
Bar (Montenegro), 6-7 June 2019 Plenary meeting
(venue to be defined), autumn 2019 Thematic seminar
(venue to be defined), November 2019 2nd workshop on communication/narrative in the field of migration (in cooperation with the ICMPD)
Venice, November 2019 Plenary meeting
2020
(venue to be defined), early spring 2020 Thematic seminar
Croatia (venue to be defined), May or June 2020 Plenary meeting
(venue to be defined), autumn 2020 Thematic seminar
Venice, November 2020 Plenary meeting
2021 (35th year of activity of the Club)
Brussels, early spring 2021 Thematic seminar on social media
(venue to be defined), May 2021 Plenary meeting
(venue to be defined), autumn 2021 Thematic seminar
Venice, November 2021 Plenary meeting

Acknowledgments

The Club expresses its gratitude to its members from Belgium, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Montenegro.

Many thanks also to the Steering and the Advisory Committees of the Club, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the Committee of the Regions, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), FRONTEX, SEECOM, KAS, the Democratic Society, Cap'Com, SEEMO, EURACTIV, Prof. Corneliu Bjola, Michaël Malherbe and all 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.

