Focus on

[Re]gaining citizens' confidence in times of crisis

- Athens' joint Greek Presidency-Club of Venice seminar (27-28 March 2014)
- European elections: what is at stake
- Knowledge networking for governments
- Digital diplomacy
- Optimizing outreach and increasing citizen's involvement in decision-making
- e-democracy and government agencies

Summary

Communicating in response to THE crisis…

Philippe Caroyez & Vincenzo Le Voci

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GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

The Club of Venice has been examining 'crisis communication' for many years now. During that period, we have given presentations and hosted discussions about operational or communication models and strategies and about the 'solutions' (institutions, systems, communication initiatives) they give rise to in the Member States of the European Union and their practical application in actual crisis or crisis-prevention situations.

There have been crises relating to public health ('mad cow disease', bird flu), the environment (nuclear accidents, the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption) and earthquakes (L'Aquila) as well as humanitarian crises (the 2004 tsunami, illegal immigration) and political crises (hooliganism, the aftermath of 9/11). Each of these defining situations has had an impact on policies and institutions (crisis centres) and helped to shape public communication (prevention campaigns, targeted information about risk areas, emergency plans requiring communicator involvement, European stress tests, warning systems, and so on) – yet it is far from certain that all the relevant lessons have been learned from these crises when it comes to public communication. As evidence of this, we have only to consider the continued low use of connectivity when issuing warnings and passing on information (not to mention geolocation of nationals ... an area in which the Italian Civil Protection Department has been leading the way for some years).

However, we had never addressed the issue of communicating about more general crisis situations of an economic, financial, social or even institutional nature, in other words communicating about THE crisis... We finally had an opportunity to do so, thanks to an initiative of our Greek colleagues, in Athens in late March 2014. The location was of course symbolic: Greece has faced a particularly acute crisis, to the extent that it has become emblematic of the crisis that has affected many other European countries, its shockwaves and solutions and the relationship between national authorities and the supranational bodies involved, such as the European institutions. No doubt the reason we have waited until now to do this is because we needed a degree of hindsight, some tangible signs of recovery and some belief that things would get better, before we could get down to the analysis and the commentary.

Public communication is not to be confused with government policy: at best, it is only one element (albeit a necessary one) of such policy. The primary role of public communication is to inform, present, explain and promote understanding ... and then to convince or reassure. However, the crisis is only 'straightforward' in its effects (at

least its immediate effects), while its causes (insofar as they are all identifiable) are more complex. Moreover, the measures adopted to deal with the crisis are not always immediately 'readable' or even understandable at first glance (as reflected in the rejection of austerity, the unpopularity of measures and institutions, irrational behaviour, short-term ineffectiveness and longer-term measures, ideological blurring, interventions by international bodies and imposed measures, etc.).

The crisis is also a time when messages and communications proliferate (from sources including the media, politicians, various pressure and special interest groups, the general public, economic and financial players, the international press, the foreign press and international bodies) and debate intensifies. It is therefore a time of major tensions, when institutions (in the broad sense) and their ability to tackle the crisis are called into question.

It is also, in a way, an opportunity to take a long hard look at the system and get to grips with some of its characteristics: sudden (and unexpected) vulnerability, loss of confidence on the one hand and of credibility on the other (with the rise of various forms of populism and anti-democratic parties, as well as Euroscepticism), heightened social tensions, increased poverty and a deteriorated standard of living and services (such as public services, including social security), the powerlessness of institutions in certain areas and the questioning of public administration, the primacy of economic over political considerations, the damage done to international reputations and the emergence of 'forgotten players' in roles that are not always welcomed or that are perceived in a negative light ('Europe', national banks, and so on).

Public communicators (and indeed all public players) therefore find themselves in a very difficult position, facing situations of heightened tension as well as, in many cases, big budget cuts, making it hard to carry on with business as usual. This predicament may be exacerbated by a lack of preparation, a failure to establish protocols and roles governed by a professional, ethical or statutory organisational model.

When public and political communication are to play their own role (always a delicate balancing act, especially if there is no model to follow), the temptation will be for the political one to take precedence. There may be no other option but to instill and therefore to convince and reassure. Under such circumstances, since its time frame becomes shorter, communication assumes more than ever a potentially vital strategic importance, between a silent approach (which is part of the process) and agreed sound bites.

However, this does not mean that public communication officers are becoming less important or losing their role – at least, let us hope and trust not.

The contributions made to the seminar in Athens, which we report here, are professional testimonies from the field. They perfectly illustrate the context we have been describing and the actions taken by our colleagues in response to THE crisis.

This fifth issue of Convergences also addresses other topical issues (the European elections, citizen involvement in decision-making) and subjects of importance for our work, such as digital diplomacy, e-democracy and knowledge sharing.

Communiquer face à LA crise ...

Philippe Caroyez & Vincenzo Le Voci

Le Club de Venise se penche de longue date sur la communication dite de crise. Au fil du temps, nous avons eu l'occasion de proposer des exposés et des échanges sur les modèles et stratégies communicationnels ou opérationnels, ainsi que sur les « solutions » (institutions, dispositifs, actions de communication) qui en découlent dans les pays de l'Union européenne et leur application effective dans des cas concrets de crises ou de prévention de celles-ci.
On peut citer les crises sanitaires (« vache folle », grippe aviaire, ...), environnementales (accidents nucléaires, Eyjafjallajökull,...), sismiques (L'Aquila, ...), humanitaires (tsunami de 2004, immigration clandestine,...), politiques (houliganisme, « après 11 septembre », ...),... Toutes des situations marquantes qui ont pesé sur les politiques, les institutions (centres de crise) et orienté la communication publique (campagnes de prévention, informations ciblées sur les zones à risque, plans d'urgence intégrant l'intervention des communicateurs, « stress tests » y compris au niveau européen, systèmes d'alerte, ...) ... mais dont nous ne pouvons toutefois pas gager qu'on en ait bien tiré toutes les leçons sur le plan de la communication publique ! Nous n'en prendrons pour preuve que la faiblesse encore actuelle du recours à la connectivité dans ce cadre pour le lancement des alertes et la transmission des informations (sans même parler de la géolocalisation des ressortissants ... dont la protection civile italienne nous a montré la voie depuis plusieurs années).

Nous n'avions toutefois jamais abordé la thématique de la communication sur des situations de crise plus généralisées, sur les plans économique, financier, social, voire institutionnel. La communication sur LA crise ...
C'est ce qui nous a été donné de faire, grâce à l'initiative prise par nos collègues de Grèce, à Athènes, fin mars dernier.

Le lieu est bien sûr symbolique, le pays ayant été confronté à un état de crise particulièrement aigu, au point d'en devenir emblématique de la crise qui a touché beaucoup d'autres pays européens, de ses remous et de ses remèdes et de la relations dans ce cadre des autorités nationales avec les instances supranationales impliquées, dont les institutions européennes. Si nous ne l'avons fait que maintenant sans doute est-ce parce qu'il fallait, pour les analyses et les commentaires, le recul nécessaire ou – pourquoi pas – les signes tangibles et donc la conviction d'une embellie.

La communication publique ne se confond pas avec la politique des autorités, elle n'est – dans le meilleur des cas – qu'un (nécessaire) élément de celle-ci.
Le rôle primordial de la communication publique est d'informer, d'exposer, d'expliquer et de permettre de comprendre ... avant de convaincre ou de rassurer.

Or la crise n'est « simple » que dans ses effets (du moins ses effets « immédiats »), alors que ses causes (pour autant qu'elles soient toujours toutes identifiables) sont des plus complexes. De plus, les mesures retenues pour y faire face ne sont pas toujours directement « lisibles » ou même « compréhensibles a priori » (refus de l'austérité, impopularité des mesures et des institutions, comportements qui peuvent être irrationnels, inefficacité immédiate et mesures à plus long termes, « brouillage » idéologique, intervention d'instances internationales et mesures imposées, ...).

La crise est également un moment particulier au cours duquel les flux de communication et les messages se multiplient (les médias, le politique et les différents groupes de pression et d'intérêt, la rue, les acteurs économiques et financiers, la presse extérieure, les instances internationales,...) et que le « débat » s'amplifie. C'est de ce fait un moment de grandes tensions et de mise en cause des institutions (au sens large) et de leur capacité à faire face à la crise.

C'est aussi, d'une certaine manière, un temps de « mise à nu du système » et de la prise de conscience de certaines de ses dimensions : vulnérabilité soudaine (et insoupçonnée), perte de confiance dans un sens et de crédibilité dans l'autre sens (avec la montée des populismes et des partis anti-démocratiques, si pas de l'euroscepticisme), augmentation des tensions sociales, apparition d'une plus grande pauvreté et dégradation du niveau de vie et des services (dont les services publics y compris les formes de sécurité sociale), formes d'impuissance des institutions et mise en cause de l'administration publique, prima de l'économique sur le politique, image dégradée à l'étranger, émergence d'« acteurs oubliés » et dans un rôle qui n'est pas toujours bien perçu ou négativement (« l'Europe », la banque nationale, ...),...

Les communicateurs publics (comme tous les acteurs publics, d'ailleurs) se retrouvent ainsi face à des situations exacerbées et dans une position particulièrement difficile, avec aussi des coupes budgétaires souvent importantes, où il n'est pas aisé de (continuer à) faire son métier. Tout ceci d'autant si la préparation peut faire défaut, alors qu'elle devrait définir des protocoles et des rôles réglés par un modèle organisationnel professionnalisé, et déontologique ou légal.

A l'articulation de la communication publique et de la communication politique (toujours délicate et d'autant plus si le modèle manque), le politique va avoir la tentation de reprend le pas ... il peut ne plus s'agir que d'imposer et donc de convaincre ou de rassurer. On conviendra que, dans ces circonstances, le « temps de la communication » devient plus court et que la communication, plus que jamais, devient d'une importance stratégique qui peut être capitale : entre le silence (« qui fait partie de la partition ») et « la petite phrase » convenue.

Ce n'est toutefois pas pour autant que les fonctionnaires chargés de la communication publique perdent de leur importance ou cèdent le pas. Comme espoir, mais aussi comme constat, gageons que ce n'est pas le cas.

Les contributions faites lors du séminaire d'Athènes – dont nous rendons compte ici et qu'il faut prendre comme autant de témoignages professionnels de terrain – illustrent parfaitement ce contexte et l'action de nos collègues face à LA crise.

Cette livraison du 5ème numéro de « Convergences » aborde aussi d'autres thèmes d'actualité (les élections européennes, l'implication des citoyens dans la prise de décision) ou d'importance professionnelle : la diplomatie digitale, la démocratie électronique, le partage des connaissances, ...

Preparing the Leaders of the Future: a new route to professionalise Government Communication

By Professor Anne Gregory
Director, Centre for Public Relations Studies Leeds Metropolitan University.
Chair Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management.

Despite the popular wisdom that Government Communication lags behind the best of the private sector, I beg to offer an alternative view. In my opinion, having worked in and with both sectors, the complexities of Government work and the levels of accountability and scrutiny that it is subject to, far outstrips those placed on the private sector. The real issue is that the level of competence and consistent high performance required of Government Communicators is higher than in the private sector and it is this that leads to unfavourable comparisons.

Of course there is much that can be learned from the private sector: flexibility, speed of working, consistent planning and evaluation of campaigns and their early adoption of the latest communication tools. But again, the private sector often does not have many of the constraints that Government Communicators operate under.

If all this sounds like an excuse, it is not meant to. These are the realities of working life. It also means that identifying and preparing the future leaders of the Government Communication profession is a large and important task. Who are the people who have the potential to deal with these complexities, advise politicians and government officials well, develop and lead effective teams of professionals and deliver communication initiatives which inform, protect and inspire populations? And how can these individuals be developed from within the Government communication profession itself?

That is the task that the Inspire programme of the UK Government Communication Service has set itself. Inspire will formally commence in May 2014 when 37 carefully selected future leaders will begin a specifically designed two year programme which will be tailored to meet their individual needs.

Inspire is underpinned by other important mechanisms such as regular reviews of progress, but it is mainly a learning and development experience. The aim of the programme will be to develop their leadership potential, but will also build a strong 'talent pipeline' for senior communication roles into the future. These leaders will be able to move into roles across Government, not only in their parent department: indeed, part of the purpose of the programme is to develop a 'corporate resource' which will help drive the continuing professionalisation of the Government Communication Service.

There are a number of special aspects to Inspire which differentiate it from other accelerated learning programmes. These have been built in to take full recognition of the fact that the participants are at different stages of development, come from different backgrounds (for example, primarily from a press office or from an internal communication role) and will have had a mixture of staff development already. Inspire also seeks to expose participants to a wide variety of different experiences and to test and stretch their developing leadership capabilities as they move through the programme.

Professor Anne Gregory is Director of the Centre for Public Relations Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University and Chair of the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management, the global confederation of over 60 public relations associations.

Anne heads specialist research, education and consultancy programmes for public sector clients such as the UK Cabinet Office and Local Government Communications. She is a Government Departmental Reviewer and has completed three attachments.

She contributed to the special plenary meeting organised by the Club of Venice in November 2011 on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary and will speak on the Inspire programme at the Club of Venice plenary in June 2014.

Professor Gregory was President of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in 2004, leading it to Chartered status and was awarded the Sir Stephen Tallents Medal in 2010 for her outstanding contribution to the profession. She has written and edited 20 books, including the globally available CIPR series; authored 30 book chapters and 50 refereed journal articles and conference papers. She is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Communication Management.

Some of the main elements of the programme are:
- Four fixed learning events spread throughout the first year which will allow participants to reflect on progress, receive focused training input and plan their next developmental steps. The training input has been determined by taking information from a range of sources including the recent Departmental Communication Reviews conducted across Government, speaking with current Directors of Communication, the participants themselves and taking best practice from within Government and externally, including the private sector
- A menu of other courses which can be chosen from depending on the individual needs of participants. One of the courses available will be offered by Google who will provide an emersion course on the latest in information technology and on future prospects.
- Short placements in other Government departments and in external organisations, including in the private sector.
- An assigned mentor who will provide help and guidance to each participant – the participants themselves will be expected to mentor other more junior colleagues
- Coaching as required
- Stretching projects that will test participants' abilities to deal with technical communication challenges, leadership issues and more specific management skills such as project management.
- Regular feedback on performance and leadership behaviour and a requirement to keep a learning log and updated development plan.

This leadership programme is a new initiative by the Government Communication Service and forms part of a much wider, structured approach to developing capability within the service. It is a truism to say that good organisations require on good leaders, but it's also true to say that good leaders do not just appear. They need to be identified, nurtured and given the opportunity to grow in supportive but stretching environments. Inspire sets such a context for Government Communicators.

Joint Greek Presidency/CoV seminar on "Public Communication: Re-gaining Citizen's Confidence in Times of Crisis"
Athens, 27–28 March 2014

Increasing engagement for youth, more substance in communicating Europe, need for coherence and clear definition of roles

By Vincenzo Le Voci
Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

This meeting was a new opportunity for a thorough exchange of views after the first two seminars on "Crisis Communication" organized by the Club of Venice in Istanbul in April 2010 and in Bulgaria in March 2012.

The seminar was co-organized with the Greek General Secretariat of Information and Communication in the framework of the Greek Presidency communication agenda.

It was attended by representatives from 20 different countries (18 MS + 2 candidate), the Dutch Ambassador in Greece, the three main EU institutions and the two EU advisory committees, the OECD, the Adenauer Foundation, one media representative (WSJ) and a number of external experts.

The meeting was opened by **Simos Kedikoglou** (Deputy Minister and Spokesperson of the Greek Government) and by **Stefano Rolando**, President of the Club of Venice.

Participants were also given a warm welcome by Andreas Katsaniotis, Secretary-General for Information and Communication of the Greek government and member of the Steering Group of the Club.

Simos Kedikoglou underlined that regaining citizens' confidence in politics and in Europe is crucial. Citizens' trust towards both journalists and politicians has been lost. In his dual capacity as a journalist and a politician, he has realized that the work ahead is difficult. Stressing that «trust is hardly won and easily lost», Simos said that the only solution is to be straightforward and sincerely let actions speak for themselves.

He added that the recovery of the Greek economy, especially during the last few months, following a long period of hard sacrifices, has undeniably been impressive. A surplus of 2.9 billion euros was achieved in 2013 and even the markets have realized that Greece is exiting the economic crisis. But what is important, Kedikoglou said, is to communicate the impact of these positive results to the daily life of citizens and especially the unemployed young people. The unemployment rate remains high despite improved economic indicators - and in this context, it is difficult to convince citizens and regain their trust, not only in the government and the national institutions but also in European institutions. In Simon's view, the Greek case has taught that austerity alone is not going to solve the problem unless we maintain at the same time growth on top of the priority list. This has to be communicated to the citizens, in particular in view of the upcoming European elections, in order to prevent extremism and the rise of anti-European forces in the EU.

Stefano Rolando welcomed the commitment of the Greek Presidency to the key topic of common interest chosen for the seminar. He praised the Greek authorities' efforts to re-align their country's processes and priorities and invited all participants to capitalize on the informal setting of the Club of Venice which enables to focus constructively and openly on the main objectives of public communication: influence institutions and citizens equally, in a dialogue-oriented approach; promote rules of democracy and authorities' accountability; illuminate processes and reveal trends; strengthen relations between public and private organisations as well as between institutions and civil society. These are common principle for Greece - "the heart of democratic culture and origin of all of us" - and for Europe.

Case Studies and debate

The two central themes were :

- **the communication in and on Europe in the framework of the economic crisis and citizens' perception in view of the European elections** (session moderated by Eleonora Gavrielides)

- **governmental and institutional communication and joint public-private initiatives to foster youth employment** (session moderated by Mike Granatt).

With regard to the **European elections**, in his key-note **Marco Incerti**, Director of Communication of the "European Centre for Political Studies " outlined current forecasts, risks and potential scenarios which could be taking shape after the vote in May. He presented a five-year horizon (2014-2018) based on key indicators such as the real GDP growth, the unemployment rate possible fluctuations (going down in the next 5 years, but not so quickly, with Greece going faster because of its recovery process) and public and private financial prospects.

Moreover, Marco provided latest projections with regard to the possible repartition of seats in the European Parliament based on current surveys (EP and TNS Opinion, PollWarch.eu) and statistics on comparative cohesion rates of political groups within the EU in the previous years.

Against a complex scenario, communicating Europe remains a strategic challenge. Regardless of the possible impact of the EP's ACT-REACT-IMPACT approach, a lot needs to be done to regenerate communication taking distances from the so-called "Brussels bubble" and avoiding purely cosmetic exercises. What public communicators (national and European) should do is to contextualise information, prevent contradictory or empty messages from coming across, invest in interaction and engage in open discussions with citizens using social media (14 of the 28 Permanent Representations of the EU MS do not have yet a Twitter account).

Finally, Marco invited to do not overestimate the danger of euro-skeptic movements which - albeit ominously growing - are currently divided among themselves and should be unable to influence significantly in the EP's operational agenda.

The discussion revolved around the election predictions in the different countries and the European citizens' declining confidence in Europe.

Majdi Abed, Deputy Director for Communication at DG Comm/Press in the French MFA, shared Incerti's views about the growing negative image of Europe. This situation can be counterbalanced by interacting with all audiences (national, regional and local) openly (avoiding pre-packed sentences and slogans, but focusing on true achievements) and on a regular basis (not focusing on a short term event such as the European elections, but as a long term coherent process - which is the approach encouraged by the Club of Venice in its agenda). This could be done by using in particular the innovative digital instruments and social networks to ensure widest and prompt coverage, but on condition that communication relates to concrete areas of citizens' daily concern such as unemployment, economic issues, security, etc.

Ana María Rodríguez Perez, spokesperson at the Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU, expressed her concern about the uncertainties for citizens' future (growing unemployment rate, social unrest and difficulties in understanding the EU's decisions to facilitate recovery). She added that the main lesson learnt from the crisis is that, if nothing is build in perspective, everything is fragile and an exhausted society takes ages to recover. The lack of interest and trust expressed in particular by the youngsters make the public communicators' job very challenging, also because the impact of reforms takes a long time to be seen as tangible. In her view, the challenge is how to face the situation until improvements are noticed. Part of civil society (whose cooperation is crucial), the entrepreneurial world and the economic circle of the Spanish society are very concerned and mobilized towards this direction and this "regenerating process" must simply go on, with continuity and determination. She also observed that social media are often overestimated, whilst the impact of TV news, in particular from Brussels correspondents, remains strong.

Victoria Melamed, Bulgarian spokesperson in Brussels, shared her colleagues' views and admitted that the rise of extremism has also touched her country, though not so overwhelmingly. However, she wondered whether the political crisis in the neighborhood (in particular, the Ukrainian crisis) could be a fuel for the extreme parties and have a

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strong influence on the public opinion on the eve of the European elections. She also mentioned the increasing use of social media (in particular, Twitter activity) in the country. Her colleague **Ivailo Danailov**, Adviser to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, underlined the risk of misperceptions that may be generated by the misuse of media and the need to safeguard media independence.

Christian Spahr (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Director of the Media Programme in South-East Europe) focused on political communication challenges in South East and Western Europe, tackling the relations between crisis communication and trust and the need to optimize professional information in particular in times of crisis in order to promote and defend democratic values and contrast populism and risks of regressions. In this context, he indicated that transparency and openness must go together with integrity and impartiality, and that inclusiveness and citizens' participation should be on top of public communication' role and concerns because of today's higher public scrutiny. To this end, we should be well conscious about the ongoing changes in the relations between communicators and politics which are increasingly determined by the development of new communication instruments. In this context, Christian invited to take due account to invest in professional communication, act to fill the information deficit in critical areas, and seek higher professional cooperation with media.

Nicole Civatte, Deputy Director of the French Government Information Service (SIG) outlined the national information campaign to raise citizens' awareness and persuade them to go to the polls. She recalled the high abstention recorded in the previous European elections as well as citizens' lack of knowledge and comprehension of the working dynamics of the EU (80% of the French estimate that they are not well informed or not informed at all on European questions; 56% say they do not understand the workings

of the EU and only 41% are aware that the EP members are elected directly by citizens of each member country). She also mentioned that an increasing majority of citizens (56%, +4% compared to last survey) declare themselves pessimistic about the future of the EU. Nicole also shared his colleagues' concerns with the increase of euro-scepticism and euro-phobia and the fact that the EU is deemed responsible for the Europe-wide austerity measures. At the same time, she underline the need for public communicators to act in line with the national law of 15.1.1990, which provides for "a neutral and factual" communication. Against the worrying scenario of possible strong abstentions' rate, she agreed that communication should not aim at making people love the EU, but to reduce the distance that separates citizens from it, refraining from delivering "technical" info and taking due account of the their real needs. Communication on the EP elections will be channeled through the dedicated website ouijevote.fr and the hashtag #OuiJeVote, mass mobilisation through social media (tagline: "choosing your MEP is choosing your Europe"), a radio campaign, banners and a web film, EP brochure, info graphics, links to other websites, explanation of the voting system (procedure, option to delegate, etc.), etc.

Alexandros Stylos (Deputy Head of Communication, Bank of Greece) presented a brief look at the Economic Crisis outlining how, as the Greek Governor Provopoulos said in a recent interview, the country "...did not face a single crisis, but a series of consecutive crises: continuous sovereign downgrades, and then bank downgrades, exclusion from markets, PSI, massive deposit outflows, banking system restructuring, 2012 double elections, and Cyprus". Economic crises have social, political and communication dimensions and implications. Stylos' view is that the communication dimension of that specific crisis was prominent.
In contrast to what happened in other countries, in Greece it was the sovereign crisis that led to a banking crisis, and not the other way around. Alexandros recalled, among others,

the communication environment of the first months of 2010, which revealed the tremendous pressure from international Media put on the country; and that, by 2012, the Greece's exit from the euro ("GREXIT" how the media and markets baptised it) seemed to be inevitable. He explained that Greece was the epicenter of a global financial earthquake and consequent media top scrutiny and this particularly affected the way in which communication had to be restructured in order to re-build credibility, confidence and trust.

For Alexander, the crisis period has marked an era of change, especially in the way we communicate and he specifically brought as an example the significant changes made in the Bank of Greece environment: in the internal and external communication strategy, target audiences, communication channels, media handling and media monitoring, communication resources as well as in the actual communication content.

Constantinos Tsoutsoplides (Spokesman of the EP Office in Athens) and **Leonidas Antonakopoulos** (Head of the EP Office in Athens) pointed out that communication on the upcoming EP elections must focus on how Europe can guarantee a better future to its citizens. It should explain them clearly why "this time is different" and Europe is relevant (a wider variety of decisions being taken in co-decision; need to act together and coherently in a more complex political context; measures contrasting the crisis being more effective if adopted under the EU's umbrella). In his view, a real debate should take place in a meaningful way and cover tangible topics: how to boost recovery, regain competitiveness and prevent further crisis through a stable and reliable economic governance, how to create more jobs, invest in a more efficient way (no more money, but better spending), protect citizens' and consumers' rights, how the EU is framed in the global scene and how to develop a new narrative for European integration. Constantinos and Leonidas also confirmed the strong commitment of the EP's communicators in a joint effort with the other key players (institutions, national parliaments, governmental authorities and NGOs).

Marco Incerti shared the EP's colleagues' views but observed that expectations should be realistic and all players (governments, institutions and citizens) should be well

aware of the time frame needed to implement tangible and long-lasting measures.

Alexandros Stylos shared **Marco's** views and recalled the importance of communication in this context, bringing as example the impact on markets and on public opinion of Governor Draghi's statement in July 2012 that the ECB would have done "whatever it takes" to preserve the euro.

Hans Brunmayr (Vice President of the Club and former Director-General for Press, Communication and Protocol at the Council of the EU) agreed with the former panellists on the need speak to the audiences coherently and explain Europe's achievements. He also highlighted that this can be done if communicators have a clear vision of Europe's added value, as well as the required degree of competence and leadership to interact with citizens constructively.

Mike Granatt (Former Director of the UK COI and Club Coordinator), **Eleonora Gavrielides** (Director of the Government Press and Information Office in Cyprus) and **Alkman Granitsas** (Head of the Wall Street Journal and Dow/jones Newswires Bureau in Athens) urged to draw good lessons from the growing Euro-scepticism and underlined that communication on Europe is not only about seeking or re-gaining trust but also on how we talk to people, what the EU means to people, how relevant it is, and its prompt, inclusive and sustainable response to crisis scenarios.

The afternoon panel discussion, addressed the issue of public communication with regard to **youth employment**.

In its introduction, **Anthony Gooch** (OECD Communication Director) outlined the OECD's perception on citizens' expectations in view of the European elections (there is not a single image of Europe, but more images - a deeper analysis would be needed on this issue). Anthony focused on the OECD's brand (better policies for better lives; a stronger, cleaner and fairer world; objective, open, bold, pioneering and ethical) and communications themes and priorities (inclusive growth, jobs, trust). In this context, he recalled the Youth Action Plan as well as the cooperation with the European Youth Forum since 2010 (which led the OECD to co-organize the 2013 Youth Summit for Quality Jobs); the 2013 "Integrity and the Crisis: how to earn back the trust of young people" co-organised with Transparency International; the round table on "Youth Unemployment" hosted in 2013 and the OECD Forum on 5 and 6 May 2014 which will host a conference on "Addressing the Talent Gap". Moreover, Anthony referred to the inspiration drawn from the surveys PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies) by governmental authorities for the preparation of their strategies in support of the young people. The surveys were put on the table at the "Education" Council in Brussels on 24 Feb 2014 to facilitate discussion in a public session on how to cooperate in developing skills and enhancing employability". They were carried out throughout a variety of communication tools such as a dedicated portal, social networks, media articles, e-books, You-Tube videos, with launch in four different continent with 13 global events and double coverage compared to 1st experience in 2009. The OECD will continue to promote and disseminate the results of those studies which, over the years, have become a truly important tool.

Gisela Kirchler-Lidy, Director for Communications at the Austrian Ministry of Labour, outlined the state of education in the country, presenting the national situation (the labour market, the education and training system, important measures taken [vocational guidance; PES (public employment services) implemented through the European Commission network which covers 27 EU MS and the EEA countries), Youth and Apprentice Coaching, Company-based apprenticeships, production schools, etc.] , and the communication approach by the Social Ministry (Ads, Press Conferences, Press Releases, Visits of Training Companies), which puts Austria on top of the list in this domain within the EU.

In February 2014 the unemployment rate in the country was 4.9% (February 2014) while the youth unemployment rate was 10.5% (February 2014) (the lowest after Germany). The labour market policy prevents any young person in Austria from remaining outside the labour market, training or education systems. Gisela referred, in particular, to the existing provision of proper training and opportunities for young people development and the commitment to upgrade the structures available at the transition from school to continued training or job entry. She also mentioned the obligation to train set up in a recent government programme as ultimate goal (to be reached by autumn 2016 at the latest (training not to be seen only a duty, but also a legal claim). Finally, she outlined the current activities carried out under the EU's framework (possible contribution by the European Social Fund, EU Measures to Support Youth Employment, EU Lifelong Learning Programme, The European Voluntary Service, Youthpass).

Jan Versteeg, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Greece, presented the joint Dutch-Greek project "Orange Grove ", a joint initiative carried out in Athens by Greek and Dutch partners to help counter youth unemployment and the "brain drain" phenomenon. Orange Grove is the result of a collective effort of a large group of Dutch and Greek people and organizations: Dutch companies with a long presence in the Greek market, Greek businesses, universities, individuals with links with both countries. It generated as a result of deep concern on the very high number of talented young people who left their own country owing to lack of professional opportunities.

This project offers concrete assistance and support (such as a workspace in "physical premises" and legal advice) to young people in their entrepreneurial investments. Through its design it tries to inspire the user, the young entrepreneur, by incorporating in the architectural design some of the key-points of the Orange Grove project, which are mobility, flexibility and connectivity. This venture is likely to be extended to more potential partners and also easily exported to other countries. Reference was also made to the Dutch University of Delft and its advanced analytical studies and policy debate on issues at sub-national level on urban and rural and different conceptions of space such as city-regions, economic development and growth, conceptions of territory and its governance and related to equity and injustice.

Panos Carvounis, Director of the Commission's representation in Athens and former Deputy Director-General in the Commission DG COMM, outlined the wide variety of opportunities offered to the young people by the European programmes (Horizon 2020, EURES, Erasmus +, Creative Europe) and the Youth Guarantee (with the Commission helping the EU countries develop national YG Plans and set up a national scheme of interventions as part of the implementation of the huge "employment package" launched in April 2012). **Panos** highlighted the need to enhance relations between EU institutions, national and regional authorities to maximise use of the different projects and platforms for the benefit of businesses and citizens, and the Commission's willingness to play a facilitator's role in the different scenarios.

Prof. Vassilios Makios, Director-General of the Corallia Clusters Initiative, outlined his organisation role and objective? Established in Greece, specialised in management and development of "Innovation Clusters" aiming at boosting competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation, Corallia focuses on knowledge-intensive thematic sectors with a strong exports-orientation: a) nano/microelectronics-based systems and applications; b) space technologies and applications; and c) gaming technologies and creative content.
Up to now, it operates two "innovation hubs", in Athens and in Patras. It also implements a series of initiatives to stimulate and promote young entrepreneurship, in cooperation with high-profile partners and supporters in Greece and abroad and organizes programmes to accelerate young entrepreneurship engaging young aspiring entrepreneurs from all over Greece with creative and innovative ideas in any sector of the economy. Additionally, Corallia organizes the programme "Educational Trip", in cooperation with the student associations from Stanford, Berkeley, MIT and Georgia Tech. Corallia's activities are financed by the private sector, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and National funds, the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme and donations.

Main findings and way forward

➤ While approaching to the electoral deadline, one undisputable element, which was missing in the previous EP elections, is the growing space given in all national debates to discuss about the European Union, albeit critically. Speaking more about Europe, bringing the European agenda and the EU dynamics into the national debate (and not the opposite) can make the difference also on public opinion and will contribute to raising more awareness and higher citizen's engagement. This reality requires due attention as there is more than ever a need for a "substantial communication" on the grounds and objectives of Europe.

➤ Those who are involved in communication on Europe should have a sound knowledge and experience in order to be able to deliver relevant information and provide evidence of the EU's capacity to manage crisis effectively, adopting sustainable and tangible measures.

➤ In order to provide young people with concrete perspectives for employment and growth we need coherence and transparency. Governmental authorities and EU institutions should increasingly work together, avoiding to carry out single pieces of communication on their own and in a disorganised manner, in order to assist as efficiently as possible young people in search of their first job opportunity and young entrepreneurs in the development of their capacities, providing guidelines, advise and general assistance on all European projects that could help concretise their own potential.

➤ Transparency, timeliness and accountability should be emphasised in all communication activities as these elements can help build citizens' trust and proximity.

➤ Traditional and innovative media instruments should coexist, for the benefit of all audiences.

➤ Governments and institutions should continue to invest in prevention, planning, training, coordination and analysis as crucial pre-conditions to ensure effective crisis communication. Moreover, in times of crisis there should be a clear definition of roles (who talks and on what behalf, who does what, when and how) and no room for improvisation.

➤ The Club of Venice stands ready to organise, in cooperation with government communication authorities who wish, future events of this king in order to foster the exchange of experiences an best practice, analysis of roles and dynamics in a communication context in rapid evolution. Due account should be taken of crisis management strategies, internal, national, trans-national and pan-European contacts and coordination, cooperation between Member States and EU institutions and with other international partners from the public and private sector). An ad hoc working group could be created within the Club in order to follow work in progress.

The workshop was followed by a preliminary informal meeting among the participants from the countries taking part in the **Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy**.
Prof. Rolando (who has been delegated by the Italian national authorities to coordinate the governmental activities with regard to the communication component of the strategy) outlined the objectives of this new cooperation framework and asked the colleagues of the countries concerned (Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia as well as candidate countries such as Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia) to start reflecting on a possible joint communication approach to implement a general Action Plan, pending the final decision on the adoption of the strategy foreseen towards late spring. (Greece and Italy are playing a particularly pro-active role in this context because these year these countries are sharing the mandate of the EU Council presidency).

Crisis reVIEW from the Comms office!

By Alexandros Stylos
Deputy Head, Communications Section, Bank of Greece
Email : astylos@bankofgreece.gr

Before I begin, let me clarify that the following points are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Bank of Greece. I would rather see my short presentation as a brief look to the Economic Crisis through the perspective of a central bank and even more specifically, from the Communications Section of the Bank of Greece.

In 2009, when I left this building to return to the Communication Section of the Bank of Greece, some people told me that I would probably get bored. Moreover, that was the prominent perception of the communication activities of a central bank at that time. As the former Governor of the Bank of England Sir Mervyn King has said: "Our ambition at the Bank of England is to be boring."

Reality proved that we were wrong. As our Governor George Provopoulos said recently in an interview: "the period from late 2008 until some time ago was extremely difficult. We did not face a single crisis but instead a series of consecutive crises: Continuous sovereign downgrades, and then bank downgrades, exclusion from markets, PSI, massive deposit outflows, banking system restructuring, 2012 double elections, Cyprus". It was a Mega Crisis indeed!

Economic crises have social, political and communication dimensions and implications. My view is that the communication dimension of that specific crisis was prominent.

To support that opinion someone might say that if we could compare all the measures taken at an international level to confront the crisis, it seems that the critical response, the turning point of the crisis was a short statement by the head of the European Central Bank, President Mario Draghi and even more specifically three powerful words: «Within our mandate, the ECB is ready to do **whatever it takes** to preserve the euro. And believe me, it will be enough.».

I think it is more than that.

In contrast to what happened in other countries, in Greece it was the sovereign crisis that led to a banking crisis, not the other way around.

- The crisis was transferred to Greece as a credibility crisis of the Greek authorities , when in the autumn of 2009, it was known that the budget deficit for that year would be much higher than deficit predicted by the Greek Government.
- What had started out as a sovereign debt crisis spilled over to the banking system, creating a second storm front.
- By 2012 , Greece's exit from the euro - GREXIT called by the markets and the media- seemed to be inevitable.
- The rumors on GREXIT further undermine the economic and financial position of the country. Currency risk combined with sovereign risk, drove the spreads at unprecedented levels .
- As a result the country seemed to be in a vicious circle.

As someone may notice, at the heart of this crisis and behind the twin deficits of Greece, the fiscal deficit and the current-account deficit, a credibility deficit was hidden. We were facing a crisis of confidence. It was a communication crisis.

Furthermore, a look at the communication environment of the first months of 2010 may reveal the tremendous pressure from international Media put on my country. Try a little to remember when was the last time you read the name of your country in the first page of the Financial Times. It was yesterday ? Before a week? A month ago ? One semester ago or a year go? As you see in the first half of 2010 the word ""Greece" was at the front page of the FT almost daily. A simple search in the archives of the newspaper will show 330 articles with references to "Greece" at that period. Greece was the epicenter of a global financial earthquake and the Bank of Greece together with the Greek Government , were at the forefront of the management.

There is an additional reason why the crisis has particularly affected the operation of central banks and in particular the way in which they communicate. The crisis hit the very core of their existence. Allow me to explain.

In a speech on how the crisis has changed the way the central banks communicate, Jörg Asmussen, former member of the ECB Executive Board stated that : "The physical "product" of a modern central bank is something with little intrinsic worth. The euros in our pockets are, after all, only pieces of printed paper. Their value lies in the shared conviction that this so-called fiat money can be used as a means of exchange, as a unit of account and above all as a store of value. "All money is a matter of belief ".

This belief stands and falls with the credibility and trustworthiness of the central bank. This, in turn, rests on its words and deeds."

If we could go a step further and ask ourselves what is the product of a central bank and what are the Bank's key assets and by that we mean the assets that their loss would jeopardize the very existence of the bank, some might mention economic studies, economic statistics, monetary policy decisions or the supervisory framework of the banking sector. Respectively, the Bank's asset could be gold, foreign exchange or even banknotes.

But, if he could look at the core of all the above, we would see that in fact central banks are **providers of confidence and trust** and their most valuable asset is their **credibility**.

Considering all the above I think anyone could appreciate the challenges faced by an institution,

1) which produces confidence and trust
2) has credibility as its key asset &
3) faces a global crisis of confidence with Greece at its epicenter

For our organization, crisis period was an era of change . Especially in the way we communicate. There were significant changes in our communication strategy , our target audiences, our communication channels, media handling, media monitoring, the communication resources as well as the actual content of our communication.

From a strategic point of view, the crisis has led most central banks to communicate beyond the "circle of experts", that is to address more vigorously the general public.

One of the biggest challenges for the Bank of Greece was to prove that it is also Bank of the Greeks and by that I mean that Bank of Greece is not an institution that is disconnected from society, but an adviser to the government and a valuable source of information on financial matters for the general public. This priority was set by our Governor George Provopoulos as early as in 2008, even before the crisis erupted.

Communication does not mean to speak loud. It means sending the right message at the right moment . Communication is like music. In a melody musical notes have the same importance as pauses! By that I don't mean that we have avoided the Media. Our voice was heard and was heard loudly when needed, both inside Greece and abroad.

One of the key principles that any organization should follow in a crisis situation, is the "Single Voice Principle." The agency must speak publicly with one voice and transmit one message. In our case this rule was practically applied with the gradual reduction of the spokespersons of the Bank to the following one, our Governor!

The advantages of choosing the model of "a single representative" are obvious. At a second level, a collateral challenge is born, that is the need to protect the Governor at a communication level. The equivalent in rescue operations is to protect the rescuer or as the experts say : "First, Save the savior".

Eurobarometer shows that all the organizations & institutions, participating in the management of the economic crisis, came under public scrutiny and faced setbacks as far as it concerns their public image.

In our case the challenge was even greater since the bank:

- was found in the middle of political tug of war at a time of major upheaval in the political system
- was at the forefront in the fight against corruption bringing many relevant cases to justice and
- was responsible for a giant restructuring of the banking sector, which included a resolution of eight banks. After three years of deep crisis, the stability of the banking system has not only been preserved -- not a single depositor has suffered a loss -- but it has strengthened.

All the above highlight that the Bank's "share of voice" has never been taken for granted, since we were "competing" with strong political agendas, corporate interests and long established relations with the media.

Media Sector was also affected by the crisis. TV stations and newspapers have been closed; the majority of Media faces financial problems, which are reflected in layoffs, salary reductions and delays in paying. Someone may argue that this means that the "bargaining power" of media has been decreased. However, at the same time, we observed the birth of new newspapers and digital media. Media environment is even more fragmented and certainly more radical. Moreover, the international dimension of the crisis has highlighted the importance of local media , which have acted as sources of news for the international media, shaping the agenda of the latter with their local criteria.

In terms of media management , you may easily assume that there was no major international television network, newspaper or news agency, that did not asked for an interview with our Governor or background information from our senior staff. It was not unusual to receive a call from the security of our building, saying that there were some gentlemen who just appeared without any previous notice on the doorsteps of our main building with a camera, asking in English , German, French , Italian , Portuguese or Chinese to be allowed to film or ask for a statement from our staff.

Therefore we had to modify our media conduct procedures. Indeed, after continuous news reports on the return of the drachma and the spreading of rumors and urban legends concerning the alleged printing of drachmas in our mint, in the summer of 2010, we have allowed the controlled entry and filming of the production of the Euro coins. In order to reassure the public we also utilized our wonderful Museum as a communication tool, showing to the representatives of media the casts and dimes of the old drachmas, which are exhibited there.

As far as it concerns media monitoring, a routine procedure for all Press Offices in all organizations around the world before the crisis our main focus was on Greek Media and especially the Press. Our deliverables included just two daily newsletters. There were even some days with almost no news for the Bank.

The situation changed dramatically with the outbreak of the crisis. We now use any available tool to provide the top management of the Bank with a complete picture of what is written and what is said about the bank and the country. At any time of the day and some times of the night.

As you may also see we use twitter as a media monitoring tool. Although for the moment we have excluded twitter and the majority of social media from our communication toolkit, we utilize its capabilities in order to monitor Media, international institutions and opinion makers in real time.

From September 2009 until today –just to give you an example of the Comms section's workload - me and my colleagues, read, indexed , evaluated and classified by order of importance 52,780 articles from Greek newspapers , that is approximately 68,000 pages or over 350 books of 200 pages. That is equivalent to the capacity of big bookcase.

The bank has also made significant efforts to simplify the content of our communication.

For example , the size of our Annual Report, where the country's economic situation and prospects are presented is half the size of the same edition a decade ago . Furthermore, the structure of the Report has also been changed. The reader no longer sees long, complex sentences and generic titles but instead short sentences, bullet points and headlines that represent main points and most importantly, key messages .

In terms of human resources, the prominent need for extra resources did not apply in the case of the Bank of Greece, as the Bank had to keep pace with the overall changes in our country.

While for example the DG ECFIN seemed to increase its manpower by 24 % from 2009 to 2014 , Bank of Greece's staff was reduced by 18 % over the same period , while in comparison with 2007, the staff has been reduced by 31% . At the same time apart from the extra workload, the responsibilities of bank were also broadened to include the Supervision of Private Insurance Companies.

As a result, we had major organizational changes, which have been supported at a communication level by two new Internal Communications tools, our magazine staff and our intranet site. These tools were aiming at keeping the morale of our staff high, supporting internal changes and helping our people to act as the Bank's Advocates, that is to say the right things about our organization.

Last but not least, I have to share with you a few things on the importance of the support we had from the members of the Eurosystem Communication Committee (ECCO), our comms colleagues from the central banks of the Eurosystem and most of all, from our colleagues working at the Communications & Language Services Directorate General of the European Central Bank. One of the key lessons learned following this difficult period, was the importance of being a member of a broader, strong "family".
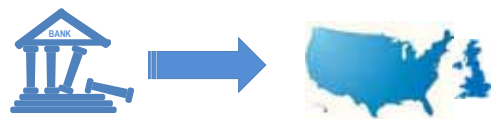
Thank you for your attention.

The financial crisis

Not a single crisis but instead

a series of consecutive crises

- sovereign downgrades, and then bank downgrades
- PSI
- large deposit outflows
- 2012 double elections
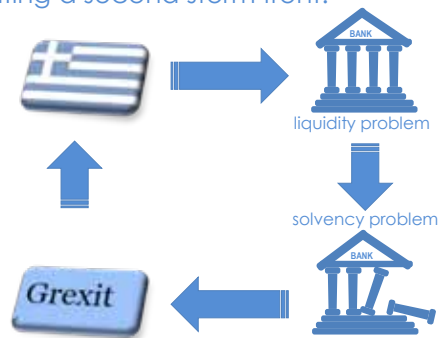- Cyprus

Greece, a different case

In contrast to what happened in other countries, in Greece it was the sovereign crisis that led to a banking crisis, not the other way around

A vicious circle

What had started out as a sovereign debt crisis spilled over to the banking system, creating a second storm front.

liquidity problem

solvency problem

Grexit

Crisis path

Fiscal Crisis	Banking Crisis
Deficit announcement	
crisis of confidence	
Sovereign downgrades	Bank downgrades
Adjustment program	Banks out of the markets
Spending cuts	deposit outflows
Taxation	huge one-off losses on bond portfolios
PSI	increase in non-performing loans
Delays of struct. reforms	
	General crisis of confidence ← solvency problem
Recession GDP contraction	
shrinking debt-to-GDP ratio	GREXIT scenarios
Sovereign risk	currency risk
crisis became self-fulfilling	

The core of the crisis

Confidence deficit

Trust deficit

Credibility deficit

The power of three words

"Within our mandate, the ECB is ready to do whatever it takes to preserve the euro"

"And believe me, it will be enough."

GREAT

Media pressure

FINANCIAL TIMES

Greece seals €110bn rescue

Media pressure

330 articles on Greece

FINANCIAL TIMES

Greece seals €110bn rescue
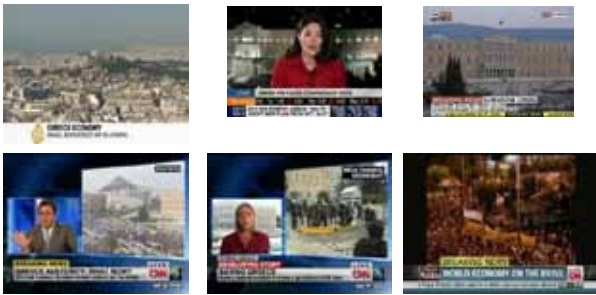
The media environment

The media environment

Central banks

"the physical "product" of a modern central bank is something with little intrinsic worth. The euros in our pockets are, after all, only pieces of printed paper.
Their value lies in the shared conviction that this so-called fiat money can be used as a means of exchange, as a unit of account and above all as a store of value.
"All money is a matter of belief "

This belief stands and falls with the credibility and trustworthiness of the central bank. This, in turn, rests on its words and deeds.

Jörg Asmussen
fmr Member of the ECB Executive Board

The "product" and the "assets" of a central bank

Statistics? Monetary policy decisions?
banknotes? economic papers?
Foreign exchange ? Surveys?
Gold? Supervision decisions?

Central banks are providers of trust confidence credibility

Central bank's more valuable asset is its credibility

Crisis affected:

- Communication strategy
- Media handling
- Media monitoring
- Comm. channels
- Comm. resources
- Content

New role for the bank

New role at the limits of our mandate

advising the government

informing the citizens
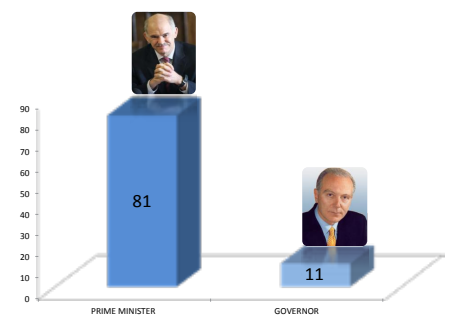
Communication

Communication is like Music

Pauses are as important as music notes

Different approach

In 1ST semester of 2010:

- Bank of Greece Governor gave 11 interviews
- Prime Minister gave 81

Warnings & alerts

Warnings & alerts

FINANCIAL TIMES

"Any delay in forming a new government threatens to damage further the country's credibility." George Provopoulos, central bank governor, told the Financial Times.

Single Voice & its side effects

Governor gradually became the only spokesman for the Bank

▶ secondary need to protect him

▶ scrutiny was personalized at him

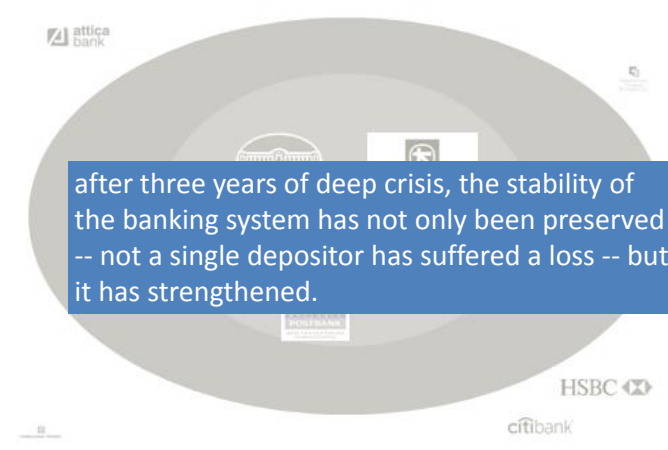## Bank's share of voice not taken for granted

in the middle of internal political tug of war & blame game

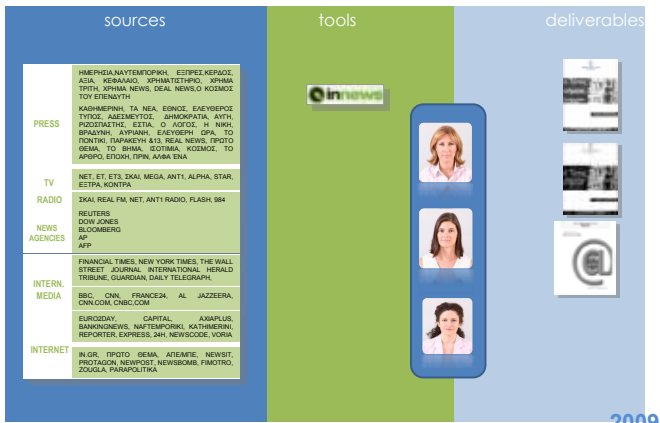Players & stakeholders with long established relations with Media

A new banking sector

A new banking sector

A new banking sector

> after three years of deep crisis, the stability of the banking system has not only been preserved -- not a single depositor has suffered a loss -- but it has strengthened.

Rumors & conspiracy theories

Museum

"Drachma. At the Museum"

The Mint

"Yes we print! Euro banknotes"

Media monitoring

2009

Media monitoring

2014

Media monitoring

Since September 2009

our Staff has monitored, read, evaluated, classified

52,780 articles

(only from Greek Newspapers)

approx **68,000** pages

that is equivalent of **350 books**

(of 200 pages each)

Internal Communication

Intranet

- Supported organizational changes
- Kept moral high
- Supported informal "advocates" network

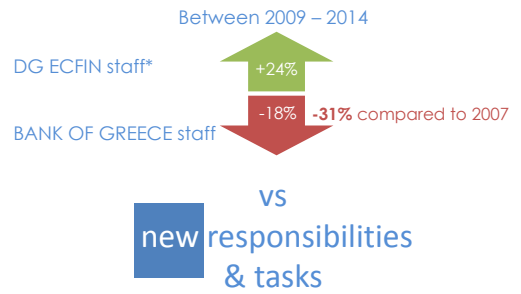Staff magazine
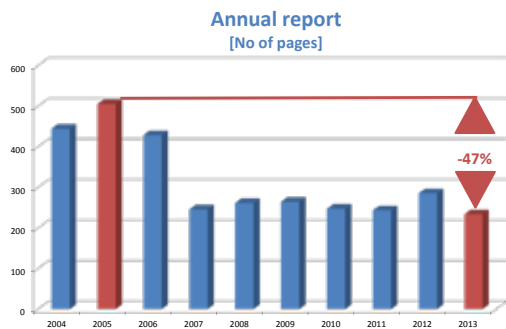
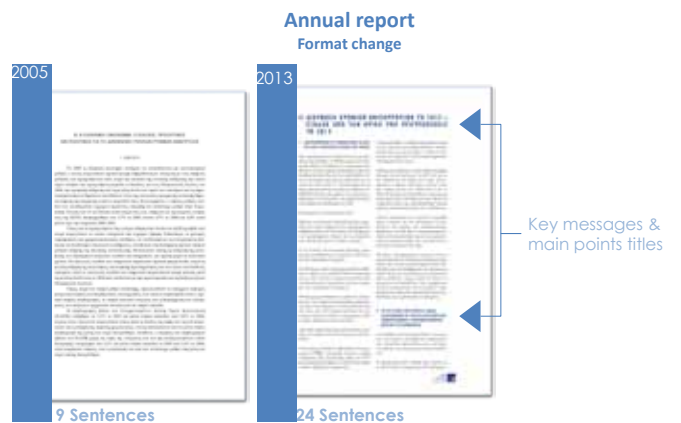## Media environment in Greece affected by the crisis

Limited resources

Between 2009 – 2014

DG ECFIN staff*   +24%

BANK OF GREECE staff   -18% **-31%** compared to 2007

VS

new responsibilities
& tasks

Different approach

Annual report
[No of pages]

-47%

Content simplification

Annual report
Format change

2005   2013

Key messages &
main points titles

9 Sentences   24 Sentences

20

2012 twin elections – the fear of a bank run

Between the twin elections of May & June 2012
we had a deposit outflow of 12 billion euros

Cyprus

Ukraine

2012 twin elections – the fear of a bank run

19/05/2012 - **Announcement of the Bank of Greece**

The Bank of Greece adamantly refutes a press report in a
Sunday newspaper referring to alleged plans to restrict
deposit withdrawals and impose capital controls.

Eurosystem coordination

Coordination for a Eurosystem
communicative response through
Eurosystem Communications Commit
(ECCO)

Alexandros V. Stylos was born in Thessaloniki (Greece) in 1968.
He currently works for the Bank of Greece, where he holds the
position of the deputy Head of the Communication Section.

From 2004 to 2009 Alexandros was a member of the Office of
the General Secretary for Information. From 2007 to 2009 he was
the Director of the Office. He was also a member of the Crisis
Communication group of the Government during and after the
Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

Before joining the Bank of Greece he was the commercial Direc-
tor of Eone SA, a subsidiary of Kathimerini Media group. He also
worked for media and advertising companies (Initiative Media,
Ammirati Puris Lintas, IMAKO media group).
Alexandros holds a Diploma in Production & Management Engi-
neering from the Technical University of Crete & an MSc in Media
Management from the University of Stirling (UK).

Corallia: "Innovation Designed in Greece"

By Vassilios Makios

corallia (/'kɒr.əl.iæ/)

co-ra-lli-a κο-ρά-λι-α

corallia
corallia
co(operation)**rallia**
co(xxx)**rallia**
coreallia
co**rally**ia
co-rallyia
cor**allia**
cor**allia**
cor**alliance**
cora(xxx)**llia**
cora**llia**
cora**llia**

Corallia is the first organisation established in Greece for the management and development of Innovation Clusters, in specific sectors and regions of the country, aiming at boosting competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation, in knowledge-intensive and exports-oriented technology segments, where Greece has the capacity to build a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

The name Corallia incorporates the fundamental values of the organisation, which encapsulates all the characteristics and semantics of an ecosystem such as a coral reef: co-operation and co-petition, core (focus), rally, co-rally, all, alliance and ia (flourish).

Corallia's mission "to underpin and catalyse the development of cohesive and productive innovation ecosystems, within which actors operate in a coordinated manner, in specific sectors and regions of the country, where a competitive advantage and export orientation exists", was conceptualised in 2004, portraying its founders' shared vision, namely, Prof. V. Makios, Dr. J.-A. Sanchez-P. and Dr. N. Vogiatzis. Corallia currently acts toward the diffusion of the existing know-how in high tech sectors and undertakes systematic efforts to build and further enhance the brand "**Innovation Designed in Greece**".

To date, 3 highly-specialised **clusters** have been developed in knowledge-intensive thematic sectors with a strong exports-orientation: the mi-Cluster (nano/microelectronics-based systems and applications) established in 2004, the si-Cluster (space technologies and applications) established in 2009 and the gi-Cluster (gaming technologies and creative content) established in 2011. Additionally, Corallia has performed preparatory actions and has contributed to the kick-off of clusters in other sectors. In those clusters, Corallia acts as a facilitator implementing targeted support actions (one-stop-shop services and specialised helpdesks for cluster members, coordinated education and training seminars, communication activities i.e. export promotion and roadshows etc.), which involve all innovation ecosystem actors.

Additionally, Corallia promotes the hyper-concentration of industrial members of clusters in the InnoHubs, in order to boost innovation exhibited in Greece and abroad. Up to now, it operates two InnoHubs, in Athens and in Patras. Both of them offer a variety of specially designed services. The α1•innohub was established in 2007, as the innovation and cutting-edge technology node in the Greek capital, Athens. The π1•innohub has been in full operation since 2011, as the innovation, research and high-tech bridge in Patras, the third largest urban area and regional capital of Western Greece. The portfolio of InnoHubs is currently complemented with the α2•innohub, which will be inaugurated in the 2nd quarter of 2014, as the innovation, networking and high-tech ring, strategically located in the business district of Athens.

Clusters

InnoHubs

Young Enterpreneursip

International Collaborations

Vassilios Makios is General Director of Corallia and Professor Emeritus at the Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering of the University of Patras, and at the Dept of Electronics of the Carleton University in Ottawa.

He has been involved in numerous scientific projects, has a lengthy publication record and was influential in the establishment of technology companies in Greece.

Corallia also, implements a series of initiatives to stimulate and promote **Young Entrepreneurship**, in cooperation with high-profile partners and supporters in Greece and abroad and organizes programmes to accelerate young entrepreneurship including the most prominent accelerator programme currently operating in Greece, the egg – enter.grow.go, in cooperation with Eurobank. In short, the programme engages young aspiring entrepreneur from all over Greece with creative and innovative ideas in any sector of the economy, who have the passion to put their 'idea' into 'action'. Additionally, Corallia organizes the programme "Educational Trip", in cooperation with the student associations from Stanford, Berkeley, MIT and Georgia Tech. Each year 20 students from Greece have the chance to get familiar with a different academic reality, attend lectures and seminars according to their academic field, visit high-tech companies and research centers in Silicon Valley, San Francisco, Boston and Atlanta and interact with highly estimated professors, researchers and entrepreneurs.

Given that activities related to cluster development have experienced a strong growth in Europe and many clusters have been nurtured in a multitude of sectors, Corallia also demonstrates a strong engagement in European cluster policy bodies; it has already established strong global strategic collaborations aiming at accelerating the international exchange of ideas, expertise and best practices in the fields of clusters, innovation centres, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and smart specialization strategies through projects, partnerships and policy making.

The role of Corallia "making innovation possible in any town" and the egg programme "bringing the start-up mindset to Greece" were particularly stressed in a Press Release issued by the European Commission (IP/14/11 10/01/2014, Neelie Kroes, EC Vice-President).

Corallia's activities are financed by the private sector, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and National funds under the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), the Operational Programme Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship, the Regional Operational Programmes, the Hellenic Public Investments Programme, the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme and donations from the private sector, foundations and other benefactors.

Political communication Challenges in south-east and western Europe

Christian Spahr is Head of the Media Programme South East Europe of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Sofia, Bulgaria, since October 2012. The programme covers ten countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania and Serbia.

As journalist and communication expert, Christian was press spokesperson of BITKOM, the association of the German Internet economy in Berlin, from 2006 to 2012, where he was responsible for the public relations of the digital high-tech sector in regard to media and internet policies.

Christian is initiator and co-editor of studies on digital society, another field of his professional interest being online journalism. From 2003 to 2006 he was a business editor with Sächsische Zeitung, a high-circulation German regional newspaper. He had previously received journalistic training at Sächsische Zeitung and as a grantee of the KAS School of Journalism.

During his studies in Romance Languages and German Philology as well as Corporate Communications in Dresden, Christian worked for Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR) radio and other media. He wrote his Master's dissertation on internet policies in French-speaking Canada, for which he received an award from the Foundation for Canadian Studies. In the context of this project he did research in Montreal. During his studies Christian also worked for one year as a foreign language assistant at French secondary schools.

Christian Spahr has participated as a speaker or presenter at the following conferences: Kommunikationskongress (Berlin), Medientreffpunkt Mitteldeutschland, Frankfurt Days on Media Law, German-Russian Autumn Talks, South East Europe Media Forum, South Eastern European Government Communication Conference and Club of Venice plenary meeting.

Presentation by Christian Spahr Athens Seminar

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN SOUTH EAST AND WESTERN EUROPE

CHRISTIAN SPAHR, KAS MEDIA PROGRAM
ATHENS, 28 MARCH 2014

CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND TRUST

- Trust is the currency of democracy (Thomas Jefferson)
- Democracy = convincing people
- Democracy ≠ deceiving or forcing people

- Focus: how to convince people and gain trust

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

- Safeguarding democracy
- Democracy: Not only steps forward in Europe
- Populists gain influence
- Halt or regressions in the democratisation process in individual countries

CONVINCING PEOPLE OF THE DEMOCRACIC MODEL

- Value-based political communication
- Transparency and openness
- Inclusiveness and participation of citizens
- Integrity, impartiality and public interest
- The Budva Declaration:
  First Government Communication Ethical Code in Europe, presented at SEECOM conference 2012 in Budva (KAS amongst others)
  www.gov.me/en/seecom/Budva_Declaration

MODERN POLITICAL PR STILL EMERGING

- Post-communist countries in South East Europe: Many heads of government and ministers without press spokesperson
- Often: Head of PM office = PR advisor
- More traditional media, less Internet
- Majority of PM's without FB profile
- Agenda setting underdeveloped

CHANGE OF POLITICAL CULTURE

- Government information: not just for elites – for the public
- Political leaders: not omniscient – open for advice
- Political power: not without limits – subject to public scrutiny
- Development of political systems and communication: two sides of the same coin

INVESTMENT IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

- New EU members and candidates need to be seen as professional partners
- So far too many negative headlines in Western media
- Governments in transition countries need to explain themselves to citizens
- Especially in times of crisis, good inward and outward communication is crucial

INFORMATION DEFICIT IN THE WEST

- Democracy perceived as an established fact
- Not enough public knowledge about institutions and participation
- Younger generation without personal experience of war and lack of freedom
- Advantages of open society and citizens' participation must be explained time and again

PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION WITH MEDIA

- Misuse of media
- "Deals" with media owners
- Secret payments to media
- Citizens don't believe in media independence
- Political messages lose value
- Disillusionment with politics growing
- Politicians should not only improve own PR, also media framework conditions
- Aiming at a consensus of politicians, journalists and media owners

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Christian Spahr
KAS Media Program South East Europe

Bul. Yanko Sakazov, Et. 1, Ap. 2
1504 Sofia
Phone: +359 2 94249-71

E-Mail: christian.spahr@kas.de
Web: www.kas.de/medien-europa
Facebook: www.facebook.com/kasmediaeurope

www.kas.de

Communicating European recovery in the run up to the elections

By Marco Incerti,
Head of Communication, European Centre for Political Studies (CEPS)

The European elections are around the corner, and some are hoping that the improving economic outlook in the EU will help contain the projected rise of eurosceptic parties.
In this respect, communicating the positive results of the European economy would obviously play a fundamental role. Unfortunately, in the current climate there is only that much that communication can do.

To begin with, the recovery is uneven across Europe. This poses a challenge for both the EU institutions, as they cannot send a uniform message, and for those countries where growth is not expected to be strong, as they do not have a positive story to tell. From a certain point of view, it also represents a challenge for the member states where recovery will be more robust, as their governments should be wary of complacency setting in. Important reforms have already been implemented, but a lot remains to be done.

But among the various economic indicators, the one that is bound to play the most significant role in determining the choices of voters is unemployment. Citizens can be told that the economy is growing, but if one's brothers, relatives, friends are without a job, the perception will necessarily be different. The other problem with unemployment is that it is sluggish: even with the economy getting better, it will take time for the number of jobless people to go down in an appreciable way.
Indeed, while the unemployment rate is projected to decrease in all member states, only in countries which start from a very dire situation like Greece the improvement will be remarkable year-on-year.

According to the forecasts, the picture will be rosier for both GDP growth and unemployment only over a 3-5 years horizon, which is way too distant considering that the elections are only a few weeks away.

Especially in the member states that have been more badly affected by the crisis, this grim outlook has already given rise to social tensions, which in the ballot box are likely to take the form of a protest vote cast for parties variously defined as eurosceptic, populist or extremist.
However, while the political message of such a vote should not be underestimated, the concerns for the impact that a potential 'success' of the eurosceptic parties could have on the functioning of the EU institutions are somewhat exaggerated.
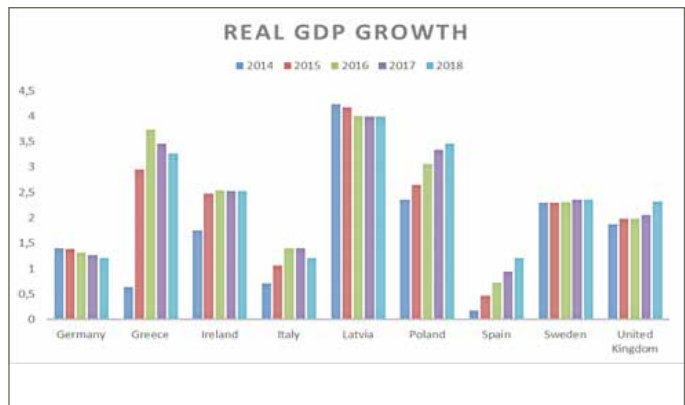

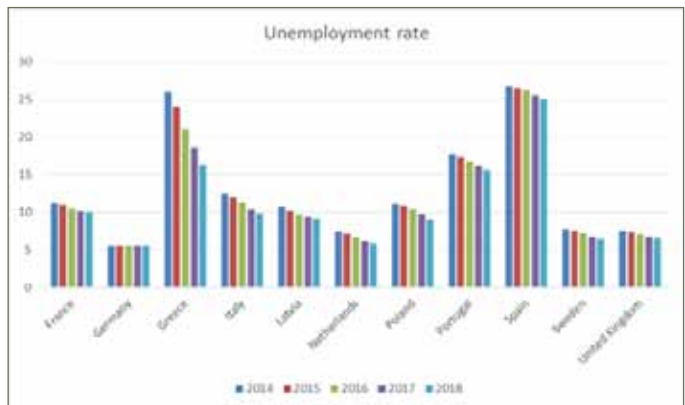*Figure 1: Source CEPS calculations based on IMF and ECB data*

Figure 2: Source CEPS calculations based on ILO and European Commission's data
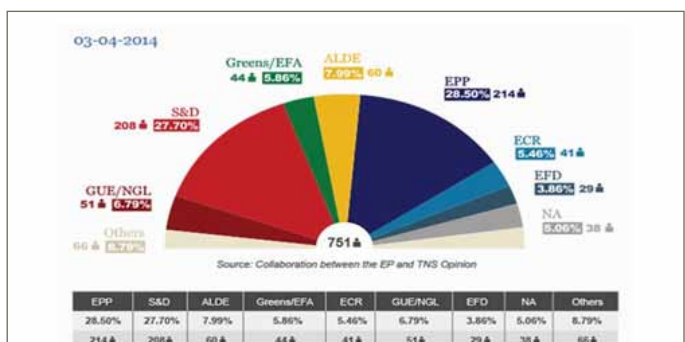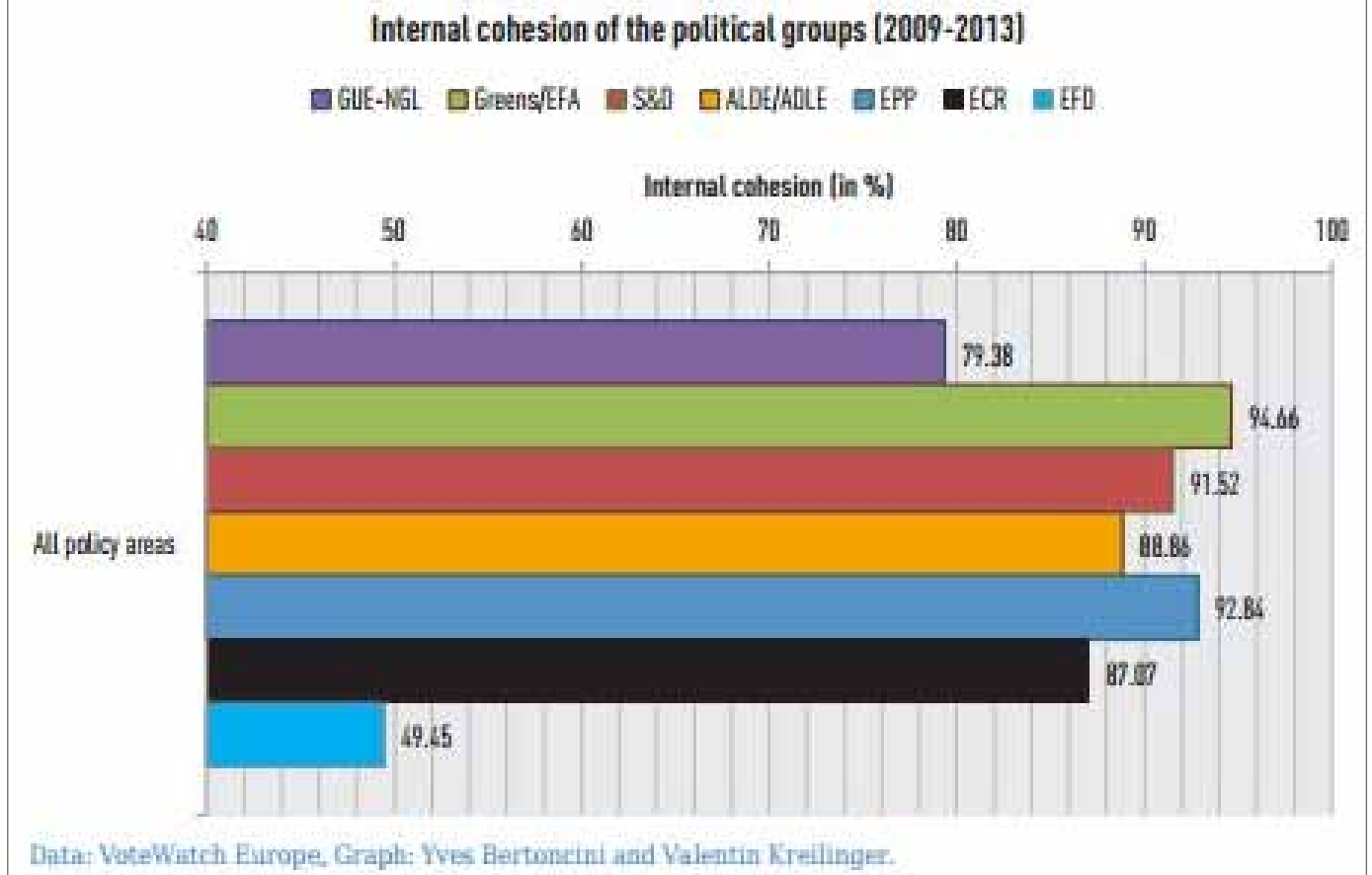

Figure 3: Source European Parliament and TNS Opinion

Graph 1 — Internal cohesion of the political groups in all policy areas 2009-2013

Internal cohesion of the political groups (2009-2013)

■ GUE-NGL ■ Greens/EFA ■ S&D ■ ALDE/ADLE ■ EPP ■ ECR ■ EFD

Internal cohesion (in %)

Group	Value
GUE-NGL	79.38
Greens/EFA	94.66
S&D	91.52
ALDE/ADLE	88.86
EPP	92.84
ECR	87.07
EFD	49.45

Data: VoteWatch Europe, Graph: Yves Bertoncini and Valentin Kreilinger.

Figure 4: Source, Notre Europe Policy Paper n. 102 by Y. Bertoncini and V. Kreilinger

Indeed, these parties will not have consistently strong showings across Europe. In some of the member states (including some of those that endured most sacrifices due to the crisis like Portugal, Ireland and Spain), they simply do not exist, or their scores are negligible. Moreover, in spite of the common label that is attached to them, profound ideological differences make it impossible for these parties to work together on the European scene. And working together is the only way to make an impact at the EU level.

Given the size of the parliament, it is impossible for any given party, no matter how large, and no matter how populous the country it comes from, to single-handedly change the course of European policies. To do that, national parties need to join the European political families that are then sitting together as groups in the European Parliament.

According to the parliament's internal rules, being member of a group is a pre-condition to enjoy several rights, like the attribution of a secretariat (Rule 31), speaking time in the plenaries (Rule 149), appointment of a coordinator in the committees (Rule 189), as well as the obtainment of the presidency of committees and legislative reports (both pro-portional to the size of the group). But in order to form a group, it is not only necessary to bring together at least 25 deputies, these also have to come from at least a quarter of the member states (thus currently 7 – Rule 30.2).

In the legislature that just came to an end, only one of the existing political groups included parties belonging to the broadly-defined eurosceptic galaxy that is being discussed here: the Europe for Democracies group, the largest member of which is the United Kingdom's Independence Party (UKIP). The EFD currently consists of 31 members, and it is unlikely that it will grow substantially, both because UKIP will have scores similar to those of 2009 and because the Italian Lega Nord and the Finnish Party of the Finns will probably quit the group.

The eurosceptic party that at the national level is expected to register the biggest rise compared to the 2009 elections is the French Front National (FN). However, UKIP's leader Nigel Farage has repeatedly declared that his party would never join forces with the Front National, whose positions are regarded as too extreme for the British electorate. The FN will therefore try to form a new group with other like-minded parties, and according to the latest news, it may well manage. But even this group will only bring together some of the parties of the eurosceptic arc (PVV, FPÖ, Lega Nord, Vlaams Belang, Swedish Democrats and Party of the Finns). Considering also the size of the countries these parties are coming from, the group may consist of 30-35 deputies (comparable to the EFD), which means that it will not be particularly influential (by comparison, ALDE and the Greens, which are both expected to do badly at the elections will still have 60-62 and 40-44 members respectively). The even more extremists parties like the Hungarian Jobbik and the Greek Golden Dawn will not be accepted in the group, and will therefore have to sit among the non-attached.

Finally, it should also be kept in mind that according to the statistics, even after forming a group the eurosceptic/protest parties tend to have difficulties in working together. In fact, while the mainstream groups have a very high rate of cohesion (the number of times they vote according to the commonly agreed position – over 90%), the EFD group during the last legislature had a much lower rate, just under 50%. It can be expected that a newly formed group (like the "Alliance" that FN is trying to set up) would encounter similar problems in terms of enforcing party discipline, thus watering down its influence in the hemicycle.

The fact that the Eurosceptic parties will not play a major role in the new parliament does not however mean that one should not counter their discourse and attempt to win back the trust of the citizens. From this point of view, a proper communication strategy at the different levels of governance could go a certain way in redressing the situation.
But for the EU-level institutions, on top of the difficulties already mentioned above, communicating recovery poses an additional and specific challenge. Indeed, they are often overshadowed by the individual communication campaigns of the member states.

Figures 5 & 6: Source @ChandlerTWilson

To take just some basic indicators, and concentrating on social media, which is the focus of so much attention these days, the Heads of State and Government are by far the most visible European actors on both Facebook and Twitter, with the President of the European Commission and of the European Council lagging substantially behind. In terms of numbers of followers and 'online clout' they come before only the leaders of small countries such as Ireland. The figures are obviously even less comforting for different departments of the European Commission and Parliament, insofar as they have an individual presence on social media.
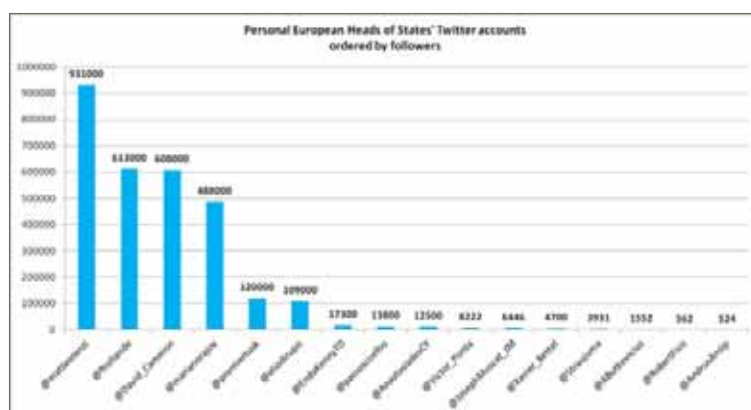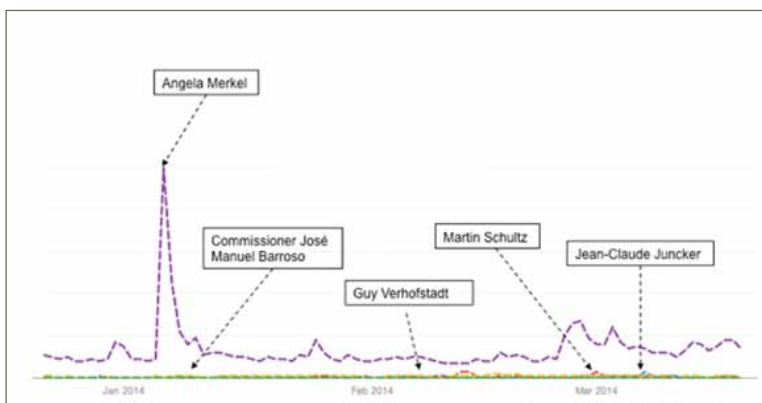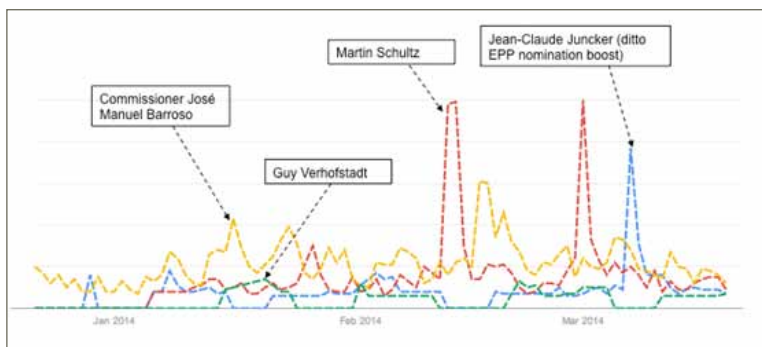

Figure 7: Source @MarcoRecorder

While this is understandable, as the HoSG's communication is more political in nature and especially in the larger member states citizens tend to look at European affairs through a national prism, it would appear that there is room for improvement. In particular, social media are an effective and non-expensive way for the institutions to reach out beyond the Brussels' bubble.

Unless the institutions continue to step up their effort (as to be fair they have been doing over the last two years), and even with the additional hype generated by initiatives like the 'spitzenkandidaten' debates, the main figureheads of the EU will continue to be dwarfed by their national counterparts, as graphically illustrated by the two charts below, based on simple Google searches.
Finally, while it is now too late for any comprehensive turnaround of the European voters' mood, one small step that could be taken is the boosting of communications by the member states' Permanent Representations in Brussels. The latter could work alongside the EU institutions and act as a bridge between Brussels and the national capitals (both policy-makers and public opinion).

Today, the main channel for the transmission of European information is the media and other political/politicised actors, who at times convey a somewhat distorted message and especially in recent years seem to have developed a cynical attitude vis-à-vis all things EU.

To offset this tendency, actors such as the permanent representations should be more present in the cyber public sphere, become more active in countering misleading information, and provide facts to retort to any unfounded/biased allegations that may be in circulation. One easy step to achieve that would be to embrace twitter, which has become the social media of choice for most institutional communicators in Brussels, as well as for journalists all over Europe, and to do that in a constructive way.

This would entail adopting a more informal tone compared to the traditionally more diplomatic one of institutional communication, and reducing the scope of internal hierarchical controls in order to allow a more direct (and swift) engagement with the relevant interlocutors who, provided with the right information, can also act as important multipliers.
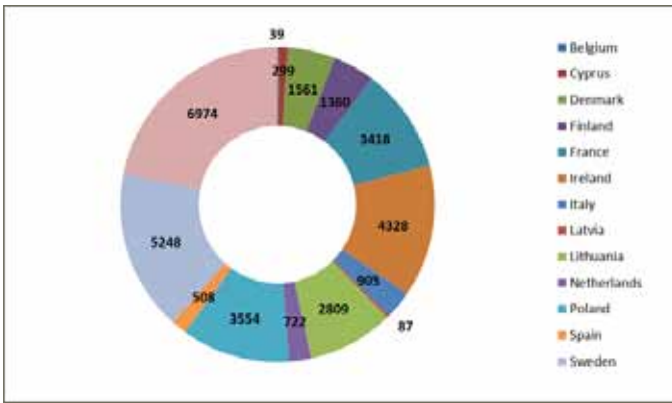
Figure 8: Source @MarcoRecorder

As of today, only half of the 28 permanent representations have a twitter account, and the quality of their presence differs greatly. While some of them (pro-)actively engage with their followers, and provide a constant stream of relevant information, some others confine their activity to broadcasting institutional statements about a Minister's presence in Brussels, or the fact that he/she met with the President of the Commission. The varying degree of participation in the online public debate is reflected in the fact that, looking at member states of comparable size and with comparable internet penetration, some representations have much smaller number of followers than others.

Of course we are all aware that resources (both financial and human) are extremely limited, but this is one area where a lot of added value, including in terms of being able to set the agenda, could be accrued with relatively little investment.

Marco Incerti is the Head of Communications and a Research Fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), one of the leading European think tanks. Before joining CEPS, he worked in the International Law Department of the University of Rome "La Sapienza".

Since joining CEPS in 2002, he concentrated on the European Constitutional process, following the work of the Convention on the future of Europe and focusing in particular on institutional reform. In this context, he helped found and, between 2003 and 2006, managed the European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN), a network of think tanks from all over Europe which, through regular meetings in Brussels and a constant flow of publications, aims at fostering the European dimension of the debate on EU policies and at increasing the degree of cooperation between research organisations on the continent.

Incerti is a member of the Steering Committee of the Brussels Think Tanks Dialogue, of the Young Transatlantic Network of the German Marshall Fund, and of the European Association of Communication Directors.

For CEPS, he follows the developments of think tanks-related policy in Europe, and is in charge of the European Transparency Initiative dossier. During his tenure, CEPS has been ranked for six years in a row among the Top Ten Think Tanks in the world, and received the European Public Affairs Award as "Think Tank of the year" in 2008, 2010 and 2011. He tweets at @MarcoInBxl

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This time it's already been different

By Aleyda Hernándes Laviades
European Parliament - Policy Advisor, DG Communication

When the European Parliament kicked-off its institutional communication campaign for the upcoming European elections nine months before the event itself, it did so knowing full well that a yearlong campaign would require enormous efforts from every single person involved to make it happen according to plan. In an unprecedented exercise of horizontal coordination between all services of DG Communication, preparations started on the concept as early as September 2012 and soon after we cautiously started sharing our ideas with most institutional partners, informing about its plans and introducing the notion that these elections might turn out to be very different that the ones held so far in the history of the EU.

They would be different indeed but not because we've involved our communication partners from the very beginning – not an easy task to be open about intentions in the early stages of the procedure - nor because we were going to launch the campaign nine months ahead of the elections and continue it through until the inauguration of the next European Commission – a gruelling idea for any public communicator working in a political institution.

This time, it's different because the political and economic context has brought the attention of the media and the general public (for better or worse) onto the EU institutions and the decisions taken here, because the increased powers conferred to the Parliament by the Lisbon Treaty which include the election of the next European Commission president but also because the main European political parties have put forward candidates to take over the position currently held by Mr. Durao Barroso should their party win the next European elections.

When we were pitching this concept to our partners a year and a half ago, when the European political parties were yet to announce their intentions, we were met with a mixture of amusement, disbelief and scepticism. It was not without risk on the Parliament's side to propose a slogan "This time it's different" months before these events had happened. But it was a calculated risk knowing full well that what we could not afford was to design a campaign that would miss the mark should these developments in European politics actually happen. And they did, and so the risk paid off.

At the time of writing this contribution, we are a few days away from the election with the campaign living its peak moments of visibility with a live presidential debate having been broadcasted across the EU, all the political parties' campaigns in full swing and five lead transnational candidates to be the next president of the European Commission proposing to all EU citizens different choices for the future of the Union.

Our institutional campaign had to face the challenge of communicating about the EU as a political project without entering politics. Our job was to let people know something is happening and that they have the power to decide who will be in charge of Europe for the next five years.

For nearly two years we have been preparing this moment carefully as it's required with a budget of 16 Mio euros for a campaign aimed at informing 400 million potential voters, in 28 Member States in 24 official languages with very different concerns. What was required? Early planning, a lot of negotiations with national and regional authorities as well as with public broadcasters, nearly over 5,000 communication toolkits distributed in person to potential multipliers, over 1,000 journalists have received specific training about the elections, thousands of presentations of the campaign with a view of getting as many people on board as possible as well as maximising our social media impact through the very experienced staff that have put the European Parliament at the forefront of the use of social networks in public communication.

The official elections' website was launched in December and has become the main hub for all communication materials and news produced by the Parliament. Within three months it had received over 1 Mio visits of which more than 85% originated from outside the "Brussels bubble". The Parliament's Facebook page has long surpassed the million fans and the online offer[1] of all our high-quality products such as info-graphics, audiovisual materials, and historical archives is proving to be a highly appreciated source of information for communication professionals.

Particular efforts have been made into reaching first time voters and younger audiences through innovative online products such as the interactive storychangers.eu, the Facebook application "I'm a voter" or a web-oriented first time voters' video.

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[1] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep_products/webpartners/

But as it is common knowledge, the majority of EU citizens still get their news mainly from traditional media and offline. Therefore, a key element for the campaign has been the capacity to go local through our EP Information Offices. Indeed, since the beginning of the campaign they have organised numerous of events, with the presence of over 400 MEPs, with over 120.000 participants, with a particular emphasis on stakeholders and multipliers (over 8.000) representing around 25 million people through their organisations' membership. Including the online and offline actions related to these events, total outreach is estimated to be over 80 Mio people.

They have also been at the centre stage in negotiating free airing for our institutional TV and radio commercials in most Member states. Thanks to their efforts is being broadcasted free of charge in over 100 major TV channels in most Member States[2] in addition to Euronews and Eurosport. Our advanced Teletrax system will allow us to measure the concrete outreach of this broadcasting. The radio spot is being also present in all Member States. This represents a great amount of money saved to the taxpayers. In addition, over 2000 cinemas have shown the TV commercial.

The official campaign visuals also are being displayed in 40 major airports, 174 train stations as well as in local transport in the 28 capitals and 38 secondary cities since mid-April.

A special mention is needed to the important role cooperation with our institutional partners (European, national and regional) has played throughout this time. This was done through any means possible, either within the framework of existing Management Partnership Agreements, bilateral agreements with Member States, with the European Commission and central and de-centralised level or with the Committees. While acknowledging the difficulties of addressing the obstacles and imperatives all institutions have to deal with, it must be said that the Parliament's efforts to reach out to our partners have been met with enthusiasm, support and active engagement by them.

The fourth and final phase of this campaign starts at the time this article will be published. We'll continue our efforts to explain in layman terms what the consequences of the vote are and how the EU institutions have been influenced by the positions expressed by citizens. We already know this time has been different, what remains to be seen is how much different. Whatever happens in the coming months, these elections will have opened the door to a new kind of politics: European politics.

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[2] Legal restrictions applied in UK, BE, LU and SE where it's not possible to broadcast for free

Aleyda Hernández Laviades
European Parliament - Policy Advisor, DG Communication

Aleyda started working at European Parliament in 2004 and joined DG Communication in 2010 where she is in charge of inter-institutional relations.

She has actively been involved in the design and the follow-up of implementation of the institutional communication campaign for the European elections 2014.

The European elections in France

By Nicole Civatte
Translation by Anders Pettersson

Presentation given by at the joint seminar on "Public communication: regaining citizens' confidence in times of crisis" held in Athens on 27-28 March 2014.

An election characterised by a large abstention

- The EP elections generate the highest number of abstention in France: 59,4 % in 2009 vs. 57,2 % in 2004 and 53,2% in 1999
- Different reasons:
  - Lack of time or negligence: absence (35%), voters not registered on the electoral lists (16%), lack of time (11%)
  - Lack of knowledge of the institutions (20%)
  - Distrust of politics (32%)
- Concerning the different publics:
  - Women
  - Young people
  - Over 40-year olds
  - The socio-professional categories

## Lack of knowledge and comprehension

- Of the working dynamics of the EU:
  - 80% of the French estimate that they are not well informed or not informed at all on European questions (1 point behind the Spanish)
  - 56% say they do not understand the workings of the EU (47% in the whole EU), which puts the French behind the Italians and the Portuguese.
- Of the elections: only 41% of the French think that the members of the European Parliament are elected directly by citizens of each member country (EU 27 average 52%)

An increase of euro-scepticism and even euro-phobia

- Like in 6 other Member States, 63% of the French do not have trust in the EU (in October 2013, an increase of 6 points compared to results in spring)
- For 65% of the French, the EU is responsible for the Europe-wide austerity measures
- A majority (56%, +4 points) declare themselves pessimistic about the future of the EU, a tendency which goes against the general European trends (51% optimistic (+2) and 43% pessimists (–3) in the whole of the EU).

A deterioration of the image of the EU

- For the first time, there is a larger amount of French citizens who have a negative image of the EU (33%, +6) than the ones having a positive one
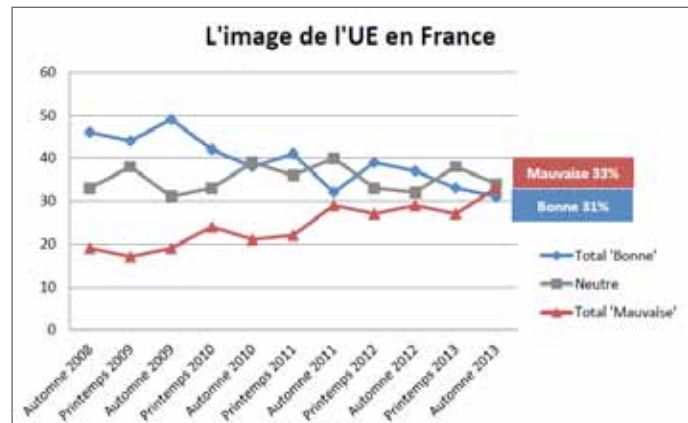
Maintaining attachment to Europe

- France remains favourable to the euro: 63% (+1 point since spring 2013) declare themselves in favour of "a European economic and monetary union with a single currency, the euro". These levels are the same as the average in the euro-zone
- 61% of the French support a common foreign policy and 77% support a common security and defence policy
- 72% consider that the voice of Europe counts in the world but only 38% think that their voice counts in Europe
- 57% of the French people feel that they are citizens of the European Union while 42% feel the opposite. This feeling is the highest in Luxembourg (85%) and in Malta (74%), while the lowest levels are found in Greece (42%) and in the UK (42%).

What vote expected on the 25th of May?

- Echoes from the municipal elections of the 23rd and 30th of March:
  - a record level of abstention in the first round: 38,72 % (vs. 33,5% in 2008) with large variations depending on the municipality
  - a strong growth of the "Front national": a result 6 times higher than in 2008 (national level 7%)
- A regulatory framework (the law of 15 January 1990) that imposes a neutral and factual communication
- A context marked by a tense economic and social situation and individual worries (employment, taxes, purchasing power)…

The main issue at stake regarding the communication: how to encourage the interest of the voters to vote on the 25th of May?

The key strategic issues concerning the communication approach

- It is not about making people love Europe, but to reduce the distance that separates citizens from Europe
  - Spread the perception that the EP is the "voice of citizens"
  - Avoid a "technical" communication focused on the functioning of the EP
  - Avoid an "image" communication based on an ideal ("perfect") Europe
  - Take due account of the French people's perceptions on Europe
- Reminding/Interact in order to raise awareness of the impact of the vote
- Capitalise on the tools developed during the municipal elections for the campaign to encourage voting

The key instruments

- Use the website ouijevote.fr and the hashtag #OuiJeVote
- Repeat the date

- Strive to reach the largest number of audience
- Mobilise through social media

The tagline: "choosing your MEP is choosing your Europe".

The plan

- A radio campaign to re-iterate the message
- Banners and a web film to encourage people to visit the website, mobilise and share the content
- Information provided on OuiJeVote.fr:
  - The EP: brochure, infographics, links to other websites
  - The vote: procedure, option to delegate, etc.

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Nicole Civatte is the Deputy Director of the French Government Information Service (SIG)

Après avoir démarré sa carrière professionnelle dans une agence de communication publique puis au sein de deux groupes de presse professionnelle, Nicole Civatte a rejoint le Service d'Information du Gouvernement en 1991. Chargée de coordonner les campagnes de communication des ministères, elle a également conduit des projets visant à optimiser cette communication, et les moyens qui lui sont dédiés, avec par exemple la création d'un identifiant fédérateur de la communication gouvernementale et la mise en place de la mutualisation de l'achat d'espace de toutes les campagnes ministérielles.

Directrice de la communication de l'Inpes de 2005 à 2009 (Institut national de prévention et d'éducation pour la santé), elle a développé, dans le cadre des programmes de prévention élaborés avec le ministère de la Santé, des programmes de communication et des dispositifs d'information et d'aide à distance (sites Internet, lignes téléphoniques) sur différents sujets de santé publique (alcool, tabac, VIH, nutrition, accidents de la vie courante, crises sanitaires...).
Au sein de France Télé Numérique, groupement d'intérêt public chargé d'informer et d'accompagner les Français pour le passage à la télévision tout numérique qui s'est déroulé, région par région, de 2009 à 2012, elle a piloté le marketing et de la communication et développé dans ce cadre un large dispositif de communication multicanal, national et régional.
Depuis novembre 2012, elle occupe les fonctions de directrice adjointe du Service d'information du Gouvernement.

Les élections européennes en France

Club de Venise

Athènes – 28 mars 2014

Un scrutin caractérisé par une forte abstention

✓ Les élections qui génèrent le plus fort taux d'abstention en France : 59,4% en 2009 vs 57,2% en 2004 et 53,2% en 1999

✓ Des raisons diverses :
- Un manque de temps ou la négligence : absence (35%), non inscrit sur les listes électorales (16%), pas le temps (11%)
- une méconnaissance des institutions (20%)
- une défiance du politique (32%)

✓ Qui concernent des publics différents :
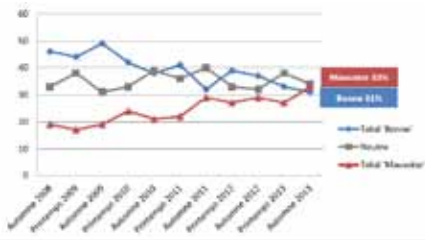- Les femmes
- Les jeunes
- Les +40 ans
- Les CSP-

Un déficit de connaissance et de compréhension

✓ Du fonctionnement de l'UE :
- 80% des Français estiment ne pas être très bien ou pas du tout informés sur les questions européennes (1 point derrière les Espagnols)
- 56% disent ne pas comprendre le fonctionnement de l'UE (contre 47% dans l'ensemble de l'UE) ce qui situe la France après les Italiens et les Portugais.

✓ Du scrutin : seuls 41% des Français pensent que les membres du Parlement européen sont élus directement par les citoyens de chaque Etat membre (52% pour la moyenne des 27 états membres)

Une progression de l'euroscepticisme, voire de l'europhobie

✓ Comme dans 6 autres Etats membres, 63% des Français ne font pas confiance à l'Europe en octobre 2013 (+ 6 points par rapport au printemps)

✓ Pour 65% des Français, l'UE est responsable des mesures d'austérité en Europe

✓ Une majorité (56%, +4pts) se déclare désormais pessimiste pour l'avenir de l'Union européenne , évolution à contre-courant de la tendance européenne : 51% sont optimistes (+2) et 43% pessimistes (-3) dans l'ensemble de l'UE.

Une poursuite de la dégradation de l'image de l'UE

✓ Pour la première fois, un plus grand nombre de Français a une image négative de l'Union européenne (33%, +6 points) que positive

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Un maintien de l'attachement à l'Europe

✓ La France reste favorable à l'euro : 63 % (+1 point depuis le printemps 2013) se déclarent pour « une union économique et monétaire européenne avec une seule monnaie, l'euro », un niveau équivalent à la moyenne de la zone euro

✓ 61% des Français soutiennent une politique étrangère commune et 77% une politique de sécurité et de défense commune

✓ 72% considèrent que la voix de l'Europe compte dans le monde mais seulement 38% pensent que leur voix compte dans l'Europe

✓ 57% des Français se sentent citoyens de l'Union européenne contre 42% d'opinion contraire. Ce sentiment est le plus élevé au Luxembourg (85%) et à Malte (74%), et le plus faiblement en Grèce (42%) et au Royaume-Uni (42%).

Quel vote le 25 mai?

✓ Les municipales des 23 et 30 mars :
- une abstention record lors du 1er tour : 38,72% (vs 33,5% en 2008) avec de fortes variations selon les communes
- une forte progression du Front national : un résultat 6 fois supérieur à 2008 (taux national de 7%)

✓ Une disposition réglementaire (loi du 15 janvier 1990) imposant une communication neutre et factuelle

✓ Un contexte marqué par une situation économique et sociale tendue et des préoccupations individuelles (emploi, impôts, pouvoir d'achat…)

➔ **Le principal enjeu de la communication : comment susciter l'intérêt des électeurs et les inciter à voter le 25 mai?**

Les parti-pris pour la communication

✓ Il ne s'agit pas de faire aimer l'Europe mais de réduire la distance qui sépare les citoyens et l'Europe
→ faire percevoir que le PE c'est « la voix des citoyens »
→ éviter une communication « technique » focalisée sur le fonctionnement du PE
→ éviter une communication d'image sur l'Europe idéale (voire parfaite)
→ faire écho/ prendre en compte les perceptions des Français sur l'Europe

✓ Interpeller pour faire prendre conscience de l'impact du vote

✓ Capitaliser sur les outils développés pour la campagne d'incitation au vote des municipales

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Les principes

✓ Utiliser le site ouijevote.fr et un hashtag **#OuiJeVote**

✓ Répéter la date

✓ Toucher le plus grand nombre

✓ Mobiliser les réseaux sociaux

➔ **La signature : choisir son député c'est choisir son Europe**

Le dispositif

✓ Une campagne radio pour répéter le message

✓ Des bannières et un film web sur Internet pour inciter à aller sur le site, mobiliser et partager les contenus

✓ Des informations sur **OuiJeVote.fr**
- le Parlement européen : brochure, infographie, des liens vers d'autres sites
- Le vote : déroulement, procuration…

Involving Public in Decision-Making: a Threat or Asset to Political Vision?

By Vuk Vujnovic and Stefan Vukotic

Decision-makers are often caught between a rock and a hard place. The dichotomy they face is the need to be self-reliant in terms that they need to pursue policies according to their own views and visions, and at the same time they need the public support to remain in office (or get there). This is even more the case in republican, more commonly called 'democratic', societies, where there is a direct correlation between catering to what the public wants and being in power, manifest in regular elections. The rock and the hard place often give birth to a third predicament – how to avoid the pitfall of becoming a populist who implements bad and myopic decisions just for the short-term gain of winning public support.

The developments of recent political history, and especially the rise of the groups of citizens actively involved in the political process demand not necessarily power-sharing, but certainly a much greater level of public engagement than before.

This is where good understanding of what public communication ought to be may provide a way out of this predicament and a bridge between the two opposites – autonomy and reliance on popular support.

It is blatantly evident that communicators of today can no longer be used solely as voices of their governments who profess to the public what is best for them. In an era when an unprecedented wealth of information about almost anything is a mouse-click away, the most difficult task, and not just for communicators, but more so for their bosses, is to get people to care about a policy developed by a boring and technocratic institution. This makes it increasingly difficult to have successful policies, because increasingly more of them depend on traction they get among ordinary citizens.

When 40 years ago our leaders needed the public to understand why it is important, say, to join agriculture production, it was simple – the people had just two TV channels and on one of them they would tell them why the policy is important and on the other they would reprimand them for not watching the first one. Now the information is abundant, the control no longer possible, and interests have shifted elsewhere. And all because the receiving end has evolved and the sending end has largely remained the same.

Therefore, if people are to care for a policy nowadays, it first needs to capture their attention and interest. And one way of attracting people's attention and maintaining their interest is to engage them in the process of policy design and implementation. Obviously, any sort of engagement and participation needs motivation and 'what's in it for me' is a critical factor to be taken into account. However, the sheer willingness of a government to listen, in addition to speaking, and take into account citizens' views, concerns and proposals, has proved to be a powerful incentive for citizens to engage.

This shift, however, requires a major change in the way policies are being made. A change towards integrating communication as an essential part of designing and implementing policies, rather than tasking communications to 'sell' policies after they have been created by elites behind closed doors.

This new role of communications is especially important in South East Europe, a region well known for its turbulent history, both distant and more recent, which is still occasionally affected by the remnants of the deep political, religious or ethnic divides of the past.

Stefan Vukotic is international PR adviser at Montenegro's government and has been in communication for four years. He holds a Master's degree in IR from Cambridge University.

Vuk Vujnovic is the Secretary-General of SEECOM, an association that brings together senior public sector communicators from 13 countries of South East Europe. He occupied a number of senior positions in government communications in the past decade, including as Head of the Montenegrin Government's Communications Office in 2012/13.

This is exactly is why a group of senior government communicators from 13 countries of the region have created the South East Europe Public Sector Communication Association (SEECOM), a professional network that will help them share and learn how to build greater social cohesion in their respective nations through meaningful communication with citizens.

Last month, SEECOM members met with government communicators and civil society activists in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, to discuss practical ways to improve public dialogue through the use of collaborative technologies and showcase some good Gov 2.0 practices in the region.

Sarajevo, a symbol of the region's complexities, whose streets recently witnessed a series of anti-government rallies, proved to be just the right place for the talk, which revealed that, slowly but surely, governments across the region seem to be coming around to the idea that citizens should have a say in how public policies are made and implemented.

Some quite encouraging signs were found showing that the so-called "young democracies" of South East Europe are moving, slowly but surely, towards more collaborative approach to policy making, one that is more in tune with citizens needs and expectations and more likely to produce greater social cohesion.

In Moldova, for example, all central government ministers have started to communicate with their citizens on Facebook, whereas the Government of Croatia has been recognised by Twiplomacy as the world's most communicative government, due to its strong interaction with citizens.

On the other hand, Montenegro has become home to the region's first government e-petitioning system and even a traditionally tight-lipped government agency such as the Defence Ministry of Bosnia and Herzegovina has decided to introduce an online platform that enables citizens to report corruption in the security sector by using the power of new technology.

These examples prove that this shift is possible even in the so-called 'young democracies' and that government leaders can only benefit from attracting and maintaining public interest and engagement in policies by integrating meaningful communication with citizens as an essential part of their political strategies.

This also shows that citizens, with their insight, expertise and skills, can be used as a valuable asset in policy making, rather than being treated as a liability and a threat to political vision. Or to put it more emphatically, this also holds true the other way around – if citizens have no seat at the table, political elites risk ending up on the menu.

How are governments and political communication changing with web and social media?

Interviews with Anthony Simon and Luis Arroyo

By Anders Pettersson

Government leaders are increasingly communicating to citizens and stakeholders through social media and web communication. In order to understand better the difference between government and political communication on social media, we asked one of the experts in the field, Anthony Simon, Head of Digital Communications for the UK Prime Minister's Office, to share his views and work methods. As a follow up to his article in Convergences no. 4, Luis Arroyo, sociologist and expert on political communication, gives his views on government communication in the age of social media.

Interview with Anthony Simon

What are the greatest challenges in managing the social media for the official accounts of the UK Prime Minister?

We are fortunate that we have strong numbers of followers to our official accounts. We currently have over 2.6 million followers to @Number10gov on Twitter, 206,000 followers on Facebook and 900,000 followers of the Prime Minister's blog on LinkedIn. With such a high profile social media presence it is vital that we are accurate, interesting and engaging. Everything we publish via social media needs to have the same high levels of accuracy and quality expected from any official Government outlet. That is not to say that we shy away from content that is innovative or different to the norm, it's just that we need weigh up the risks with potential comms benefits of any activity. For example we have recently worked with government and private sector partners on a campaign to promote jobs and careers using the hashtag '#getBritainworking' where we have used our strong social media presence to highlight opportunities and advice. It resulted in over 3000 tweets being sent using the hashtag during the course of a week, reaching a potential audience of over 4 million.

What are the differences from the approach and content of David Cameron's personal account?

The Number 10 accounts on Twitter and Facebook are used to highlight the official business and activities of the UK Prime Minister and broader government. We adhere to the UK Civil Service Code which ensures our activities are objective and impartial. David Cameron's personal Twitter and Facebook are run from a political perspective and therefore are not run by civil servants like myself.

While the Foreign Office's Twitter account regularly cites William Hague's personal account and retweets his content, you avoid both citing Cameron's personal account and retweeting his content. You apparently strive for full separation between the politician and the Prime Minister's office, but do you collaborate with the team of his personal social media accounts in any way?

We separate content on the official Number 10 and other government channels from any political account. This is to ensure that we adhere with the Civil Service Code and work to the highest standards of propriety expected by the public. It can also be confusing to the user to cross reference an official and political account. We do of course liaise with politicians and their advisers to ensure non party political communication is properly joined up and messaging is clear and consistent on all channels.

Since the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister's Office have different social media strategies regarding retweeting content from personal accounts, one wonders if there is any central social media policy or strategy for UK cabinet and government accounts? If not, do you believe it is necessary to have common rules for all cabinet and government accounts?

As well as the Civil Service Code, which I have mentioned already, we have additional guidance which is provided by the Government Communication Service. This is aimed at giving further assistance to all government communicators who manage digital and social media channels but is still based on the nature of the Code. The very nature of social media means that it's inherently a two-way conversation and inter-

Anthony Simon is Deputy Director of Communications and Head of Digital Communications for the UK Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office. He heads a team of communicators, campaigners, technical experts and designers who lead pan-government digital campaigns and use social media to communicate key Government messages to a broad range of audiences.

Anthony has worked in digital media since 2000. He joined the Prime Minister's Office in August 2011 from the Central Office of Information where he worked on a number of projects for Cabinet Office including open public data and digital engagement.

With a background in journalism, Anthony previously worked for the BBC on digital projects including news, current affairs and children's content.

active with users. This means that having too much in the way of binding rules and strategies can actually inhibit its development. Instead, we prefer to approach it from a viewpoint of how social media can be used as part of broader communication strategies, for example the GREAT campaign which uses social media as a primary means of delivery, when promoting the UK as a place to do businesses, study and visit.

Apart from communicating official statements and representing the Prime Minister's Office, do you also concentrate on strategies for gaining more followers and more interaction? Do you ever think in terms of competing with other institutional accounts of other British or foreign political offices and politicians?

Whilst the size of following of any social media channel might tell you something about an account, it's never the whole story. Trying to drive up numbers of followers purely for the sake of it usually achieves very little in terms of overall engagement and outcomes. There are numerous examples from the commercial sector where tactics to boost the number of followers have been used, but it's quickly established that someone who, say, follows a brand as part of entering a competition doesn't lead to increased engagement with, or endorsement of, the product. Therefore we do not deploy tactics that may attempt to promote the existence of our channels (e.g. sponsored posts on social media channels). We are of course proud that the Prime Minister is within the top ten of LinkedIn's global Influencers, however this is the result of months of creation of strong, engaging content which appeals to professional users in the UK and around the world. It's difficult for us to benchmark our content against other institutional accounts, as the Prime Minister's Office is of course unique within the UK and each country has a different constitutional set up for their government (e.g. Presidential accounts as well as PM in France and the Federal and State structure in countries like the US). However, comparisons which take size of population into account can be useful to tell part of the picture of the following of our accounts. For example, this graph based on OECD data indicates that @Number10gov has the highest following, when taking the size of different countries' populations is taken into account.

Twitter followers of government accounts. Share of population, September 2013. Source: OECD and Twitter
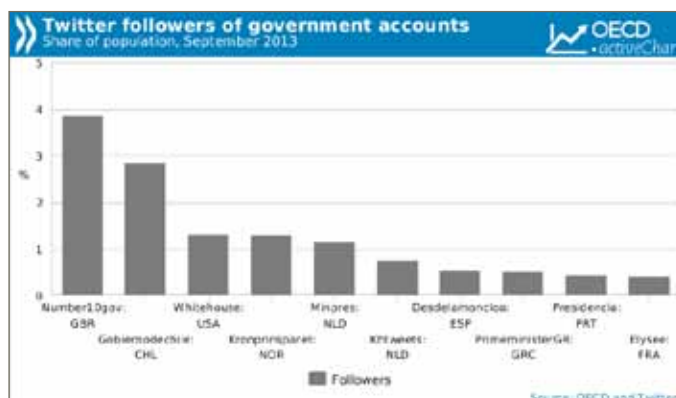
Have you had any experience of tweets being mocked or misinterpreted with the risk of going viral, as did the photo of Cameron on the phone with Obama that was tweeted from Cameron's personal account?

A parody of a tweet or Facebook post - as long as it isn't malicious or offensive in intention - isn't the worst thing that can happen to any government communicator. If the objective of the comms activity was met and there is no reputational damage, it isn't necessarily a disaster. In the case of the Cameron/Obama phone call Tweet, it could be argued that the parodies were reinforcing the point that the Prime Minister was engaged with the ongoing events in Ukraine, and in touch with global leaders on the issue. It's probably an occupational hazard for anyone using social media that these things can happen. My advice is to learn from experience and remember that the interactive nature of social media means anything can happen and sometimes it does!

How much of the content of the Prime Minister's official account is decided by the Prime Minister himself and does he tweet and publish some of the content himself?

We make it clear on all Number 10 accounts that it is the account of the 'office of the Prime Minister', so whilst it always reflects the views and activities of the PM, it is done with the assistance of government officials. The Prime Minister engages with social media activities and events; for example he interacted with global audiences during the World Have Your Say interactive programme with the BBC as he prepared to host last year's G8 summit in Northern Ireland.

Reading your statement Freedom of Information requests, do you often answer to FOI-requests on Twitter?

We are obliged to respond to FOI requests we receive via social media. However, due to character limitations we usually ask for contact details for any requester so we can send a full response.

After the election of Barack Obama, many followed his innovative social media strategies in political campaigns all around the world. Still today, many government websites can be seen to be inspired of the White House's website, particularly regarding the layout. Do you have any Twitter or other social media accounts that you see as an inspiration in order to improve the social media presence of the British Prime Minister?

Every social media account reflects the unique personality and characteristics of its owner, either an individual or organisation. I'm constantly inspired by examples from many different places. Often it's the smallest organisations that catch my eye; usually small enterprises who use social media as an effective means to brilliant low cost marketing.

Some heads of state in Europe do not use Twitter, including the leaders in Sweden, Denmark, Czech Republic and Austria among others. Do you think social media accounts for heads of state is an optional or is it a necessary step that all heads of state eventually will have to take?

Twitter penetration rates and attitudes towards its use vary from country to country. I don't think there should be any compulsion towards it, and nor would I want to tell any country on how to run its own social media. I think it's down to the office of each head of state/government to consider what its communication objectives are and whether channels like Twitter could be a facilitator. Some may see social media as a frivolous extravagance, but I would caution against that attitude. I believe that any social media channel can be used with serious and strong effect. The UK Prime Minister's Office has used Twitter to announce the formal business of Cabinet appointments. It's authentic, official and effective – things that we aim to be with all our communication.

Anthony tweets at: @anthonysimon
Corporate websites: www.gov.uk/number10
www.gov.uk/cabinetoffice

Interview with Luis Arroyo

In your article in Convergences no.4, you talk about tribalism online and how we all tend to look for people and groups that confirm our existing worldview online. What can be done to hinder this development from growing?

Internet is a reflection of how people act in their lives in other contexts. Tribalism is not an online development: it is how the human being is. We tend to look for those similar to us, follow persons we like and interact with people like us. The same happens on the Internet. That does not of course mean that we cannot avoid extremism, and there are tools (like forums, chats, conferences and mediations) that can help on that both in the online and offline world. But I think that cyberutopians who believe that the Internet will bring a cold analysis and conversation on public affairs are terribly wrong.

You mention in your article how both ideas of cyber utopia and cyber pessimism should be replaced by cyberrealism and how a regulation of internet, including the marketing and selling of private information, is necessary. What exact steps do you think could be realistically done regarding the regulation of the internet?

One, analyse the situation from the point of view not only of the big internet companies or even the big IT operators, but from the point of view of citizens. Second, assume that things that are limited in the offline world, like getting data without permission, spreading offensive or dangerous content, should be limited in the online world as well. And third, balancing the tremendous strength of US companies.

How is political communication changing with social media, especially with visual media such as Instagram and Vine becoming more common among politicians and government accounts?

My view is that activism is changing. Revolts, protests, mobilizations are now clearly happening faster than a decade ago. Faster, cheaper, easier. But the typical party oriented politics is not changing very much. Yes, politicians use Twitter, but that does not really change the old-style politics as much as we think.

The Canadian government has started to publish more web and social media friendly press releases, ending the use of traditional press releases. Do you think this move will be followed by other governments and other public sector institutions?

The old press release is dead, or in a coma, at least the traditional press release that was sent to the media. As media outlets have increased dramatically in number, and decreased in their quality, governments tend to leak more, select places better, do more direct communication through Twitter and post their news for everybody on their websites. My view is that governments have now more power than before, not less. This is probably counterintuitive but that's how I see it.

Do you think there are any risks when governments and politicians adapt their writing to the web or is it a necessary strategy to survive in the digital media landscape and to get the attention of citizens?

The best strategy on the Internet is to maintain your strategy you're using in the offline world . It is a very common mistake to think that Internet is something different than "real" life. Internet has its codes, styles and requirements, but your communication strategy, the big avenue of your strategy, should not be different online and offline.

Is the wish to getting short messages or photos shared and retweeted taking away focus from politicians to communicate in other ways, and is this development in your view positive or negative?

We always knew that attractive and contagious memes, like an eccentric photo, or a good soundbite, or a short video, could take the place of the important politics. And Internet probably exacerbates that. The challenge is to make important contents also interesting, through for example good short stories, good and short videos as well as infographics.

Is there any social media or technology that you think will play an important role in various political elections in the near future, in the same way Facebook, Twitter and Youtube did in Barack Obama's first presidential campaign?

Although Internet is not at all new anymore – we recently celebrated its 20th birthday – the tools are evolving and changing every day. So yes, we will see new ideas and tools for sure.

Some heads of state in Europe do not use Twitter, including the leaders in Sweden, Denmark, Czech Republic and Austria among others. Do you think social media accounts for heads of state is an optional or is it a necessary step that all heads of state eventually should have to take?

They or their successors will use it sooner than later. It's very easy to see the advantages of Twitter.

Luis Arroyo, Head of Asesores de Comunicación Pública, is a sociologist and an expert in political communication. The organisation's clients include the World Bank and some national and local governments.

During his studies in Sociology and Political Sciences, Luis worked for three years at Sigma Dos, a company specialising in electoral surveys. Some years later, he participated in the electoral campaign of the former Spanish president Zapatero and became Chef de Cabinet of the Spanish State Secretary for Communication, Miguel Barroso. In this role, he had to develop and deliver a wide variety of communication strategies, including the Spanish withdrawal from Iraq in 2004, the legalisation of homosexual marriage, and the European Constitution referendum in 2005.
After three years, Luis went to work for the Spanish Minister Chacón and for Vice-President Fernández de la Vega.

Luis has written two books on Political Communication: El Poder Político en escena. Historia, estrategias y liturgias de la comunicación política and Los cien errores en la comunicación de las organizaciones.

Luis tweets at: @LuisArroyoM

"Open policy making: what vision for the EU and its Member States? What will need to change?"

By Anthony Zacharzewski

By the end of the year we will have a new Commission and Parliament. One of their main tasks will be modernizing and reforming European governance, to repair the damage that the years of crisis have done to trust and optimism. They should put open policy making at the centre of their work.

The phrase "open policy making" was introduced in 2012, as a convenient name for the UK Government's new commitment to wider consultation and more experimentation with public participation. It has since become one of the UK government's major goals for civil service reform, and one of its commitments to other countries in the Open Government Partnership. The UK government is increasingly focused on how departments can make open policy making a reality.

Open policy making, as a phrase, obviously echoes successful initiatives such as open data and open source, but I often think it would be simpler to use the term "good policy making" instead.

Open policy is about listening broadly, finding new ways to engage people, using the fullest range of evidence, and being open and honest about the reasons why decisions are being taken. Those are all the characteristics of good policy making. Open policy making is good policy making that reflects three changed realities in the public policy environment.

First, there are fewer civil servants around, and less money for research, so policy making can't be done just inside the team. Policy officials have to rely on resources outside, and on the basis of fairness, that can't just mean relying on well-funded lobbyists with their line to push.

Second, there are more ways of spreading the discussion, so it's easier to reach more people. Policy makers can made hidden processes open, and bring the world into their conference rooms.

Third, that people are less willing to accept decisions on trust. The public may not want to be involved in every little thing, but they want to have the opportunity. They may not want to see every piece of evidence, but they want to know they can.

Open policy making is inherently networked and connected. It finds people where they are and brings in multiple voices. More important, it uses multiple routes. This is important because the spread and scale of online participation is making it clear that there is no one right route for public participation, whether Facebook, European Citizen Initiative or hundred-page PDF.

It is hard to give up the quest for a single platform – I get people telling me about their brilliant new platform at least a couple of times a month – but it's a hopeless search. No single platform could ever attract broad enough participation. No single route could manage the multiple different sorts of engagement, conversation and consultation that true open policy needs. Rather than a platform, open policy making needs an assemblage (using a phrase from Social Innovation Camp founder Dan McQuillan) a set of small things that can be flexibly and responsively configured to meet a specific situation.

Why in the Institutions, particularly? Partly because the new Commission and Parliament will give an impetus to reform, and the need for reform is widely acknowledged.

However, there are also features of the EU that make a more open and networked participation beneficial. Effective networked participation can use existing groups and networks in multiple places and languages. The scale of the EU makes it more attractive to use new technologies for consultation where possible. The challenge to the legitimacy of the European project, and the fear of the "democratic deficit" means that the new institutions need to have a strong narrative of change, with early results.

In fact, and I've said this before elsewhere, it feels to me that the European level has the potential for the most interesting open policy and democratisation work in the coming years. There's the possibility for the EU to be a pioneer in open policy making and thinking about networked democracy.

What will need to change?

The institutions will need to work out how they can support the infrastructure for participation – the foundations for the assemblages I talked about before. How can institutions connect their work into existing networks, and how can those connections support existing tools? Perhaps it would be useful to make a commitment to a number of public experiments, as the UK government has – perhaps even sign up to the Open Government Partnership and see what others can teach.

The institutions will need to think more like local councils. People feel more able to make a difference at local level for a reason. The centre starts from policy and the local starts from people. The centre thinks about input into policy and constructing the process that can best obtain it. The local thinks about a person's relationship to a place, and how it can be made better. The local connects different but related issues, which the centre keeps separated by department or topic. It is easier for the local to work face to face and at a human scale. This personal and human face is what the institutions will have to develop if they are to be approachable and open.

The institutions will need to be open when the people want, not when they want. Open policy making is a culture as well as a programme, and being open means opening up before the beginning of the policy process, when issues are still being framed, and working in an agile, iterative way to develop and implement policy. This – let us be frank - reduces the immediate power of the official, but brings a far wider range of ideas and experience into the process, as well as making the policy making process far more interesting and engaging on every side.

Finally, there is a central point in common: all visions of citizen action and involvement require interested and capable citizens, with good information and good opportunities to participate. It is a challenge for both every part of government to build that environment.

Politics and policy is still arranged on a twentieth century model of mass parties and lobbyists rather than a twenty-first century model of networked, personalised activism.
If the EU, national and local governments can work openly, collaboratively to create a connected public conversation, the next five years will build a democratic foundation for the next fifty years.

Anthony Zacharzewski runs the Democratic Society, a non-partisan membership organisation promoting participation, citizenship and better democracy. His background is in central and local government in the UK.

At various times he has been speechwriter at the Department of Health; secretary to the Cabinet Committees on health, food and agriculture; lead official for first-round Sure Start projects in East London and South-West England, and project leader in the Treasury's internal think tank, the Productivity and Structural Reform Team.

Anthony joined Brighton & Hove City Council as Head of Policy in 2006, where he was responsible for strategy, community relations, and sustainability. After nine months on the authority's board as Acting Director of Strategy & Governance, he left to work for the Society in February 2010. Anthony Zacharzewski has collaborated with the Club of Venice since 2012 by delivering key notes at its plenary sessions and thematic seminars on the impact of the social networks in the emerging media landscape, focusing on e-democracy trends and citizens' engagement on line. Anthony has volunteered to share his views with "Convergences" on his participation in the CoE World Forum.

Twitter: @demsoc

E-democracy and government agencies on Facebook: what can be learned from Estonia and Sweden?

By Anders Pettersson

The internet and in particular social media are seen more and more as the future of the public administration's dealings with citizens. E-government services are provided in many countries and government agencies can be found on social media such as Facebook.

The problem today in Europe is that many governments only focus on e-government, providing government services online, treating citizens basically as customers of a service. E-democracy, that involves a two-way communication between citizens and the state, is less frequently a priority.

Among politicians who do see the internet as the future for democracy, they too often consider it a democratic shortcut. One example can be found in Italy where Beppe Grillo and his 5-Star Movement give the internet an almost magical democratic power, in a country where 20 million lack an internet connection.

Where the problem of internet connection has been more or less solved and where public administrations have started to use social media, the problem is instead that they have often maintained a one-to-many communication approach. Two European countries, Estonia and Sweden, offer examples of successful implementations of expanded internet and social media used as an instrument for dialogue with citizens. Could they lead the way for the rest of Europe?

E-democracy and Wifi everywhere: Europe's leading e-nation Estonia

When it comes to leading nations in internet and e-government, Estonia is at the forefront not only of Europe but also of the world. The small Baltic country gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and later joined the European Union in 2004. A focus on the internet as a guarantee for freedom of communication made the young country invest in the internet early on. Already in the end of the 1990's almost all schools had internet, and today over forty government services are handled online, such as the filing of tax returns. You can sign legal documents and buy a beer with your smartphone and get an e-prescription from your doctor. Cabinet meetings are paperless since years in the country which is often called "E-stonia".

Tallinn, Estonia. Photo: David Pursehouse, Creative Commons

The e-democracy feature of voting online in elections is however the most revolutionary aspect of the Estonian internet success. The first local elections that included e-voting parallel to traditional voting already took place in 2005 with electronic ID cards. An essential condition in order to perform elections online is the presence of a WiFi-net that covers nearly all of the country.

"We realised that if the government was going to use the internet, the internet had to be available to everybody," Linnar Viik of the Estonian IT College told the Guardian in an interview. "So we built a huge network of public internet access points for people who couldn't afford them at home."

Estonia demonstrates that you shouldn't stop at e-government solutions that provide more efficient services to citizens online but you should create interactive forms of citizenship online, such as e-democracy. Voting online might be the future of representative democracy in Europe but, as Estonia shows us, first you need to expand internet to all citizens. Not providing all citizens with internet access in the era of e-democracy, or access to computers and other devices, is like depriving them from the right to vote.

Stockholm. Photo: Mispahn, Creative Commons

The Swedish government on Facebook: is social media the future of e-government?

E-government solutions are usually centred on providing services on a government website. Even though the websites can simplify citizens' dealings with their public administration, the communication remains essentially unidirectional. Examples of these websites are the French Service-public.fr, the British Gov.uk and the Finnish Suomi.fi, to name a few. The unidirectional communication has often continued in social media such as Twitter, where government agencies simply post information in a one-to-many fashion instead of interacting with users.

The Facebook page of the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, Försäkringskassan, provides an example of how to communicate with citizens on social media. On the Facebook page for parental benefits, people can ask specific questions on parental leave. The employees of the agency answer in the comments and sign their name on each comment. The tone is friendly and they usually answer quickly. The answers are often followed by other questions and answers, developing more into conversations rather than simple Q & A.

The agency uses the Facebook timeline in a clever way, featuring important steps in welfare legislation in Sweden, giving the government agency more of an identity. They also have a multilingual Facebook page that answers questions in English, Finnish, Polish, Arabic and Spanish, for the major immigrant communities and minorities. The Social Insurance Agency has also a Facebook page for their housing benefits for students while the Swedish Tax Agency, Skatteverket, has a similar Facebook-page where they answer questions on tax returns.

The Agencies' presence on social media is based on the principle that the public administration has to adapt to the needs and habits of the citizens, not the other way around. Sweden, and other countries with similar pages, can be an example in how to use Facebook as an interactive communication channel between citizens and their administration. It can shrink the perceived distance between government and citizens, put them on a more equal level and further legitimise the government and the public administration.

The e-solutions of the future?

The examples of Estonia and Sweden show what public administrations and governments can achieve when priority is given to providing internet to all citizens and to creating a dialogue on social media.

The expansion of IT infrastructure and an accessible WiFi-network everywhere can give citizens the possibility to participate in the democratic life of a society, when government e-solutions become more frequent. A use of two-way communication on social media can help promote a more equal relationship between citizens and their government and their public administration. These are some of the key steps that can increase the citizens' feeling of being an active participant of a democratic society and that can help legitimise the public administration and the government.

Regarding the future, we can only speculate on the idea of having e-voting implemented in other countries. Could even the European elections one day be carried out online? Facebook-pages of government services are today used mainly for general questions and answers. Even though it might be a legally complicated issue, could more personalised e-government services on social media be possible in the future?

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Anders Pettersson is a Swedish-Finnish trainee at the Public Relations Unit of the Council of the European Union in Brussels (Spring 2014).

Anders has a Master's Degree in Public and Social Communication Studies from the University of Bologna and specialises in social media and video editing.

Twitter: @Anders_EU
Website with info and short films:
www.bitly.com/apettersson

How the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs works with digital diplomacy

By Joakim Edvardsson Reimar

The digital environment offers new ways to communicate in a rapidly changing world. Being able to easily and immediately search for, receive and spread information has revolutionised the way we work with communication. This involves great challenges, but also requires a new approach and constant adjustment for everyone working with communications in the Swedish Foreign Service.

Sweden has long been a country that has prioritised digital initiatives, and has become known over the years as one of Europe's most digitised countries. For the past seven years, Sweden has also has a Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, who has long prioritised digital diplomacy. He became the first head of state to send an official email to another head of state (President Clinton) 20 years ago. Last year, Mr Bildt was named the "world's best connected political leader on Twitter" in a study conducted by Twiplomacy. This has given those of us at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs favourable conditions to establish ourselves early in digital channels and work with digital diplomacy.

At the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, digital diplomacy embraces all communication via digital channels by the Swedish Foreign Service. The term covers websites, blogs, social media, streaming services, photo platforms, video platforms and other digital networking channels. Common to them all is that it is the users themselves who produce and control the content, and that communication often takes place in an open arena. In this way, we view digital diplomacy as part of what is called 'public diplomacy'.

But if we are to stay at the forefront of the work and development of digital diplomacy, we need to learn from others who have also come a long way. We have therefore decided to launch an initiative known as the Stockholm Initiative for Digital Diplomacy, abbreviated as #SIDD. #SIDD began as a conference in Stockholm where we invited experts on digital diplomacy from other countries. The experts included everyone from other foreign ministry representatives to staff from channels such as Facebook, professors of diplomacy and public relations professionals. After the conference, an international group of experts going by the name SIDD was formed. The task of the group is to share good examples of well executed digital diplomacy and work to develop future methods of digital diplomacy.

Diplomacy in a modern society

The main tasks of diplomacy are to observe, analyse, report and act with the goal of promoting a country's interests. Digital diplomacy is a tool with which to accomplish these tasks in a modern society. So, in this respect, digital diplomacy is nothing new. In short, it may also be said that digital diplomacy is about using the internet to meet the goals of diplomacy. Because the task is still to gather and analyse information of importance to a country's foreign policy positions and communicate these, safeguard your own country's economic, political and commercial interests abroad and help your country's citizens in emergency situations. But the digital environment offers new ways to communicate and opportunities to express yourself. This requires a new approach and constant adaptation for everyone who works with diplomacy.

Obtaining information, which traditionally takes place via embassies, permanent delegations and temporarily posted diplomats, can now be helped along by digital information sources, such as social networks, microblogs and search engines. But social media mean more than this for the collection of information. Social media have meant that anyone can publish and disseminate news in a way that previously was only done via traditional news outlets such as newspapers, radio and television. This means in turn that information can be obtained directly from an active politician on social media, for example, rather than waiting for it to be featured on a news channel.

Digital channels can also be used to inform governments, international organisations and others of a country's position on a certain issue. So, a strength of digital diplomacy is that countries can, on their own, reach out quickly and broadly well beyond the traditional diplomatic contexts using their own digital channels. It is especially important to make use of these channels in contact with citizens, and with regard to promoting the image of a country.

Seven tips for successful digital diplomacy

1. Be sure to have strong leadership backing
All managers and staff members in the foreign service can and should take advantage of these new tools in their work. Clear support from the political leadership is necessary for effective digital diplomacy.

2. Recruit experts in digital communication
Communicating in and navigating the digital landscape requires expertise. Learning how digital channels work takes time. Current technological development is so fast that by the time you have learned, it may be time to relearn. So be sure to recruit people who not only already have broad knowledge about digital communication, but also about digital development, and who are comfortable working with new tools.

3. Make it a task for everyone
Digital diplomacy should not be something that is only conducted by communicators or experts in social media. Reaching out with relevant messages requires a flair for both diplomacy and communication. The staff members – regardless of their position in the organisation – communicating a country's position or anything else must be very familiar with the purpose and goals of their communication. It is best if several staff members in the organisation, with different backgrounds and experiences, collaborate and learn from each other in order to gain confidence in the digital arena.

4. Start with a strategy
Produce a strategy that explains why you should work with digital diplomacy and how this work should proceed. The strategy should clearly identify the issue or issues to be pursued, the goal to be achieved, the target audience and, only then, the channel that is most appropriate. The strategy should be tailored to local conditions.

5. Do not work digitally just for the sake of it
Think about how the digital environment can help to achieve operational objectives. If there is no such link, do not spend time and energy trying to create it. Sometimes a personal meeting or a private negotiation is the best way to achieve the desired result.

6. Do it again – do it right
There are several statistical tools that can be connected to various digital platforms. Understanding the true scope and influence of digital diplomacy requires regular qualitative and quantitative analyses. This work can and should be developed constantly on the basis of thorough analyses.

7. Back to the future
Digital channels are evolving at a rapid pace and it is important to keep up. A good digital strategy and clear goals for what is to be achieved with digital diplomacy help when communication must be adapted constantly to technical developments. Strive for a forgiving attitude – working with digital diplomacy is a learning process and there is always something new to learn.

Joakim Edvardsson Reimar is responsible for the Social Media & Digital Diplomacy at the Communications Department of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Twitter of the Foreign Ministry is @swemfa and Joakim's personal Twitter is @joakimeskil.

Facebook for Government? Five Lessons on Online Communities

By Steve Ressler

Steve Ressler is the Founder and President of GovLoop.com, the "Knowledge Network for Government" which connects and fosters collaboration among over 100,000+ members of the government community. On GovLoop, members use social media such as blogs, videos, and forums to discuss best practices and share ideas on improving government.

Steve is a 3rd generation public sector leader and spent 6 years in roles at Social Security Administration, Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security Inspector General, and DHS Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

He has won the 2010 GovTech Top 25 Doers, Dreamers, and Drivers Award, the 2007 and 2009 Federal 100 Award, and the 2009 AFCEA Bethesda Social Media Award. Additionally, he has been featured in many publications and conferences including the Washington Post, Harvard Kennedy School, World Economic Forum, Wall Street Journal, Fox News, Huffington Post, among others.

Steve Ressler is also the co-founder of Young Government Leaders (YGL), a professional organization of over 2,000 government employees across the U.S. He is a Master's graduate from the University of Pennsylvania where he received the Department of Homeland Security Fellowship. When not in D.C., he spends his time with his wife, his son, and two cats in Tampa, Florida.

What if there was a Facebook for Government? A way to connect online and learn from the millions of others in government just like me

I'm here to tell you it exists. Steve Ressler, the Founder and President of GovLoop.com, an online community of 140,000+ federal, state, and local government employees.

We launched in June 2008 with a simple mission — to connect government to improve government. At the time, I was an IT Specialist at the Department of Homeland Security. Every day, I was given a new assignment — "launch a Facebook page for our agency", "develop our IT strategic plan", "create a new leadership development program." Every time, I thought — I better someone in government has already done this and I wish I could talk to them right now.

GovLoop was launched to solve this problem. A place where government employees can learn from others in government. One part social network, one part association, one part media group. We started small. At the beginning, it was just me, part-time, after hours, working at Starbucks. But 0 members turned to 1,000 members and eventually I left government to explore this mission.

We've evolved and now are a 15-person team in the heart of D.C. We were acquired by GovDelivery, the largest government to citizen communication cloud platform in government, where we run as an independent subsidiary focused on government to government communication. We've grown from simple blogs and discussion and now offer blogs, discussions, podcasts, research guides, and online trainings. In the last year, 20,000+ individuals took our free online trainings alone.

So what are the lessons in the journey that are applicable to EU communications professionals?

Here's my 5 tips from our journey

1. Find What People Really Want – Our original conception was that people would use GovLoop to collaborate because it was the right thing to do. Instead, we found that many people were shy, didn't want to ask their questions, and were very busy. But they did want to learn and advance in their career. So we began offering more practical how-to guides, online training, and clear case studies and we were off to the races.

2. Communities Require Moderation – Ever watch Field of Dreams and the line "build it and they will come?" That was definitely not true for us. Originally, I thought we just needed to provide the technology infrastructure and collaboration would happen by itself. Definitely not true. We found that much like a dinner party – the community required a host. It needed moderation from helping people get on-board successful, figure out how to blog, and serve as a learning concierge to find the information they needed.

3. Don't Underestimate Email – Who needs email when you have social media? Guess what – everyone. When do I check LinkedIn? When I get an email from LinkedIn that someone has recommended me or invited me to be a friend. We found the same true at GovLoop. You have a core user base that is going to visit your community directly but email was extremely powerful in terms of reminding the majority of your audience about the community and the best current content and conversations.

4. Free Like a Puppy – It may be free to adopt a puppy but quickly the costs escalating for food, dogsitting, shots, and more. The same is true with an online community. The technology was quite affordable to get going. But it requires effort to growth as shown by the size of the 15-person GovLoop team. To do anything well, requires effort from writing great blog posts to moderating the community to sending great emails.

5. Get Going – The best day to start an online community is today. The power of online communities is amazing. What was a little idea has spread international and GovLoop has inspired similar sites such as OZLoop in Australia and communities in Netherlands, Brazil, and Israel. Just the other day, we had over 3,000 leaders on an online training on public speaking – learning and sharing tips with each other. This should exist in the EU as well. I encourage folks reading this article to join GovLoop and engage in our community and learn. If folks are interested in creating an EuroLoop or something similar, I'd love to help (send me a note to steve@govloop.com). Get going, take action, and let's see the power of European public sector leaders together.

Government's Secret Traffic Weapon

By David Worsell

In a recent article in the Washington Post entitled, "Meet Obamacare's secret (traffic) weapon," GovDelivery was noted as one of the few successes of the launch of the US Affordable Care Act website: Healthcare.gov.

With the early issues now behind Healthcare.gov and time to reflect on the lessons learnt from launching this ambitious website, it is obvious the one thing the site never lacked was traffic. Traffic is the lifeblood of any government website, especially one as important as Healthcare.gov. According to the web analytics firm SimilarWeb, Healthcare.gov saw a reported 4.7 million unique visitors in its first 24 hours, with GovDelivery accounting for the majority of this traffic.

The article noted that "GovDelivery was the number-one source of referral traffic to Healthcare.gov in September and October 2013." So, when a user came to Healthcare.gov through a Web link, that link was frequently generated through and sent from GovDelivery.

But what is GovDelivery, and how does it promote outreach and drive so much traffic?

For over a decade, GovDelivery has partnered with government, learning about public sector communication challenges and creating digital solutions designed for their needs. This work has evolved into the GovDelivery Communications Cloud, a Software-as-a-Service platform that enables government organisations to connect and communicate with the public on a very large scale.

GovDelivery is well-known in the public sector for its digital updates, alerts and newsletters. But its innovative GovDelivery Network, which allows government organisations to work together to cross-promote information, provides the boost that government needs if they want to reach more people and get those people to take action.

Today, GovDelivery has grown to become the leading multichannel digital outreach and engagement platform for government communication professionals around the world. Just about every email alert you receive from US federal, UK central, and countless local government agencies use GovDelivery.   Think weather alerts, public health updates, tax education newsletters, emergency notices, small business newsletters and school closures alerts. The message is likely powered by GovDelivery.

More than 1,000 government organisations in the UK, US and the European Union partner with GovDelivery to improve their digital communications, from email to social media to SMS messaging. Organisations include major institutions like the European Parliament, NASA, GOV.UK, US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), European Space Agency and US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) where reaching people and getting them to engage is everything.   In total, GovDelivery connects government with more than 65 million citizens, enabling organisations to meet programme goals that result in safer communities, happier commuters, healthier families, and better government.

The UK national tax authority, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), uses GovDelivery to engage with nearly 830,000 small businesses. The results are astonishing. "Our target to reach 718,000 customers in the current year may sound quite ambitious. But with GovDelivery we've actually already reached more than that" said Oliver McGuire, SME Education Strategy Manager. This massive outreach provides HMRC with the perfect vehicle to encourage behaviour change and promote smarter usage of online resources.   Although HMRC still has improvements to make the revenue benefit for 2014 supported by greater engagement through the GovDelivery platform is estimated to exceed £20 million.

While HMRC's case study and the Washington Post article on Healthcare.gov clearly demonstrate GovDelivery's value in major government agencies and their programmes, local engagement is a key driver in the success and reach of the GovDelivery platform. Good public communicators understand that most citizen engagement starts at the local level, where digital engagement can promote channel shift, ensure a citizen-centric focus on online service delivery and encourage feedback to aid services improvement.

Promoting online services is just as critical as providing online services that work and are easy to use. For many local authorities, marketing is a key component in achieving cost-saving channel shift and ensuring the success of 'digital by default' strategies.

Southampton City Council was recently cited in the Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM) Better Connected report as an example of excellent digital communications best practice. Southampton deployed GovDelivery to inform residents on events and waste collection details. They currently reach over 77,000 residents (33% of population) with timely updates on local service delivery. As a result of their messages, they generate more Web traffic (channel shift), increase event attendance and keep citizens informed and happy.

Engagement -- whenever, wherever and across all levels of government -- is a core GovDelivery strength. Understanding the barriers that traditionally impact the success of digital communications helps government in key areas:

- Connect with more people — GovDelivery helps government reach more people, using a mix of the most effective and unique communications technologies, including the GovDelivery Network. More than 30,000 new people sign up for updates from government through GovDelivery every day.
- Deliver relevant communications that encourage people to act — GovDelivery supports the sending of more than 6 billion messages a year. Government reaches the right people at the right time with the right message, ensuring they get relevant information and can take positive action.
- Generate Insight – Giving citizens the opportunity to select the content they want to receive from government, gives valuable insights into what the audience cares about. This understanding is used to create and deliver relevant, action-oriented information quickly and easily.
- Be more impactful — Reaching more people builds greater awareness and deeper engagement, which means more citizens are take the actions they need to take. From school closures to waste collections, from severe weather alerts to national data and statistics, reaching more citizens and delivering relevant communications allows government to promote actions to be more impactful.

What is evident from the success at Healthcare.gov, HMRC, Southampton City Council (and repeated across government at all levels) is that GovDelivery understands people: people in government and people in the community. GovDelivery connects more than 1,000 government organisations with over 65 million people and gets those people to take action. If reaching more people is a priority, then GovDelivery is worth investigating.

David Worsell is the Director of GovDelivery Europe Ltd.

David manages GovDelivery Europe and is supporting over 70 European public bodies connecting, engaging and informing citizens each and every day. With over 65 million users, GovDelivery offers the largest and most effective public sector digital communication platform designed specifically to help government reach more people.

David has a technical background combined with considerable communication expertise gained through working with public sector organisations for almost 20 years. He is an expert in the application of digital engagement technologies and understands the obstacles that must overcome to engage the public effectively.

Twitter @dworsell

YOUR EUROPE, YOUR SAY! 2014

By Peter Lindvald-Nielsen
Head of Communication at the European Economic and Social Committee

Through this youth initiative, now in its fifth year, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) gives a small, but representative, random sample of Europe's young people the chance to speak out on issues of concern to them.

The EESC is an advisory body which must be consulted by EU policy-makers on many items of European legislation. As its name indicates, it represents diverse elements in European society: employers, workers, NGOs, consumer interests and various other organizations. Young people are one of its constituencies. Your Europe, Your Say gives them a rare chance, not only to speak out, but to be heard.

The timing of this year's Your Europe, Your Say is significant. The 2014 event took place on the eve of elections for the European Parliament and changes at the top of EU institutions. It was the right time to make the voice of young people heard. Groups of 16 and 17 year-olds with teachers from all 28 member states met in Brussels, in the EESC's premises, with the main objective to set five priorities for what Europe should do to become a better place and more relevant to its citizens. Before coming to Brussels EESC Members had traveled to the different Schools in Member States, starting the dialogue.

Not surprisingly, the students 'action plan' focused on education, languages, jobs and the environment. These priorities emerged from lively and intensive workshops involving mixed-nationality groups with English as their near-universal lingua franca.

Here are, ranked in terms of importance, the five priorities voted by the youngsters:

1. Equality in education
2. Develop language teaching further
3. Encourage research and innovation to boost renewable energy and recycling
4. Recognize work experience, whatever its form and duration (internships, voluntary work, seasonal jobs, etc.)
4. (ex aequo) Create equal opportunities.

The EESC will transmit the students' priority list to the new European Parliament; furthermore, it will be presented by a delegation of the students in the 500 Plenary Session of the Committee, on 9-10 July 2014.

Read more and see the video from the event here: http://www.eesc.europa.eu/yeys2014.

This article is an extract of the official EU-Turn report on YEYS2014

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