



Factsheet on the "Club of Venice"

Introduction - Composition and Purpose

The "Club of Venice" is the informal gathering of the Directors-General / Directors / Heads of the information and communication services of the EU Member States, the United Kingdom and the EU Institutions. It was founded in 1986 under the auspices of the acting Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Since 2003, membership has been extended to the Heads of government communication offices of the EU accession candidate countries; and since 2008, to the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Central Bank, the European External Action Service and the European Investment Bank.

The purpose of the Club is to stimulate exchange of information and experience in all fields of public information and communication.

The "Club of Venice" governance is assured by a Steering Committee ⁽¹⁾, composed of a limited number of Member States' active communication directors and the Secretary-General who are instrumental in defining the activities of the Club. Its role is to establish the agenda, to organise plenary meetings, workshops and the management of other relevant communication activities carried out by the Club alone or in association with other peer organisations.

The Club's review "Convergences" (published on average two-three times a year) contains articles on important topics in the current public communication agenda and is open to contributions from all the Club Members and external communication specialists.



A. Plenary sessions

The Club meets in plenary twice a year: usually in Venice, in November or December ⁽²⁾, and in the country holding the EU Presidency, or in another Member country willing to host the plenary on a voluntary basis, in the spring season. In 2016 (the year marking the **30th Anniversary of the Club**) the spring plenary took place in The Hague and the autumn plenary in Venice. In 2017 the plenary

⁽¹⁾ For a detailed composition of the Steering Committee and Advisory Committee of the Club, see [Annexes VI and VII](#).

⁽²⁾ Recent exceptions in autumn 2007 (plenary hosted in Rome, in the framework of the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Rome Treaties); in November 2014 (in Rome, in the semester of Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU) and in October 2015 (in Milan, the city hosting the Universal EXPO).

meetings took place in Malta (18-19 May) and in Venice (23-24 November), in 2018 in Vilnius (7-8 June) and Venice (22-23 November), and in 2019 in Bar (Montenegro) and Venice. The spring plenary meeting 2020 was foreseen in Croatia, but owing to the pandemic crisis was deferred to a later stage and replaced by a Webinar on communication in the field of COVID-19, co-organised with the Croatian government authorities on 15th June 2020. Given the pandemic constraints, the 2020 autumn and 2021 plenaries took place on line as well. The autumn plenary meeting held in Venice in 2021 marked the celebration of the **35th anniversary of the Club** and the return of meetings held in presence. In 2022 the two plenary meetings were held in Florence and Venice; in 2023 in Nicosia and Venice and in 2024 plenaries in Dublin (first meeting of the Club in Ireland) and Venice. In 2025 the Club hosted its first plenary meeting in Athens, which welcomed the return of public diplomacy and nation branding and reputation in the Club agenda.

The Club's plenary meetings bring the members together for presentations, exchanges of best practice and reflections on priority communication topics. Discussions aim at helping elaborate comprehensive plans and strategic campaigns, and analyse the communicators' role as facilitators for the dialogue between political authorities, citizens and civil society, as well as organizational issues and communication techniques.

The informal framework ("**Chatham House**" rule) facilitates free intensive debates on challenging themes, sharing views on possible convergences and exploring ground for possible common denominators among communication strategies. Searching for synergies in this field among national authorities and between EU Member States and institutions is crucial and has a strong impact on the intergovernmental relations. The draft agenda of the plenary sessions has two components: a) public communication on issues of trans-national interest; b) communication on EU issues.

In the last fifteen years, the most recent plenary sessions of the Club of Venice took place in:

- a. Athens, 21-22 June 2025
- b. Venice, 5-6 December 2024
- c. Dublin, 20-21 June 2024
- d. Venice, 30 Nov – 1 December 2023
- e. Nicosia, 1-2 June 2023
- f. Venice, 24-25 November 2022
- g. Fiesole (Florence), 30 June and 1st July 2022
- h. Venice, 2-3 December 2021 (**Club's 35th Anniversary**)
- i. Belgrade (on line event), 10-11 June 2021
- j. Venice (on line event), 3-4 December 2020
- k. Dubrovnik (on line event), 15 July 2020
- l. Venice (Italy), 5-6 December 2019
- m. Bar (Montenegro), 6-7 June 2019
- n. Venice (Italy), 22-23 November 2018
- o. Vilnius (Lithuania), 7-8 June 2018
- p. Venice (Italy), 23-24 November 2017
- q. Sliema (Malta), 18-19 May 2017
- r. Venice (Italy), 10-11 November 2016 (**Club's 30th Anniversary**)
- s. The Hague (Netherlands), 26-27 May 2016
- t. Milan (Italy), 22-23 October 2015
- u. Vienna (Austria), 11-12 June 2015
- v. Rome (Italy), 13-14 November 2014
- w. Riga (Latvia), 5-6 June 2014
- x. Venice (Italy), 14-15 November 2013
- y. Tallinn (Estonia), 6-7 June 2013
- z. Venice (Italy), 15-16 November 2012
- aa. Protaras (Cyprus), 24-25 May 2012
- bb. Venice (Italy), 10-11 November 2011 (**Club's 25th Anniversary**)



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The Club agenda is centred on governmental and institutional strategies and surveys on public communication trends and on the role of civil administration in government communication. The Club also monitors the evolution of public opinion and citizens' perception of the EU and debates on the impact of participatory democracy experiences as study-cases.

Discussions have increasingly focused on crisis communication at both national and EU scale (very challenging issues such as the **COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid threats and counter-terrorism, countering disinformation and misinformation, the refugee and migration crisis**) and other communication priorities such as the economic recovery measures, commercial policies, climate change and environmental emergencies, neighbourhood policies and public diplomacy.



The need for effectiveness in crisis management has also induced the Club to pay close attention to strengthening activities to regain citizens' confidence in governments and institutions.

Particular emphasis has been given to the communication on the recently launched **Conference on the Future of Europe**, on the European Years (the EY of Citizens (2013), Development (2015), Cultural Heritage (2018)) and to the awareness-raising campaigns for the **European elections** in 2019 and 2024.

In the spring plenaries, the Club members share their opinions on how communication can facilitate regaining citizens' confidence in the European values and consciousness of rights and benefits stemming from EU citizenship. The agenda also includes monitoring and engaging with social networks, cooperation with the EU's neighbour countries in communicating Europe and shaping and reinforcing crisis communication (joint commitment to counter geo-political crises, disinformation, cyber threats, terrorism and other crucial issues).

The programme of the plenary meetings also focuses on specific celebrative events such as in Cyprus (2012) (communicating 20th Anniversary of the Single Market), Milan (2015) (information campaign on the Universal EXPO) and Paris (2015) (lessons learned from the communication strategies linked to the UNFCCC Conferences' expectations and deliverables).

In Venice (2017-8) and Vilnius (2018) the agenda focused on countering disinformation threats on line. The **Vilnius Charter on "Societal resilience"** adopted on **7 June 2018** (see [Annex II](#)) aims to foster synergies in countering disinformation and propaganda in a challenging digital landscape".

In the plenary sessions organised during the last years the Club debated on a wide variety of communication issues, including:

- the future of Europe
- recovering citizens' trust in public authorities
- the role of the rolling presidencies of the Council of the EU after the Treaty of Lisbon
- communicating the EU enlargement (topic covered in plenary in Bar (Montenegro) in June 2019)
- tackling threats to media freedom and synergies between public communicators and the media sector



- anti-terrorism communication strategies (Hague's plenary and Brussels seminar, 2016)
- the refugees and migration crisis, the EU neighbourhood partnership and the structural funds
- measurement and evaluation
- orientations on government and institutions' branding
- coordination, complementarities and cooperation among national, regional and local communication strategies.



Having regard to today's social and political challenges, the Club deems it crucial to analyse the role of public communicators in a variety of current and potential crisis communication scenarios.

This also entails a close look into "**capacity building**" requirements and existing inspiring models (see more details below), media monitoring capability, web data mining, capitalizing on public opinion trends, key developments in the audio-visual and interactive communication.



The Club also facilitates exchanges of best practice and discusses how to increasingly engage citizens in the dialogue with governmental and institutional authorities. Its agenda accordingly focuses also on mutual cooperation through interactive channels such as social media and platforms for deliberative polling or similar consultations and surveys, encouraging a more integrated use of on line tools to seek broader civic participation and gauge the "true public's views".

There is also a growing commitment in "**e-governance**", "**Open Government**" and "**Open Data**" in the light of today's global mobilisation in these fields (with the EU and several Member States increasingly committed since the adoption of the G8 Open Data Charter) (topics covered in an ad hoc seminar held in Luxembourg on 8-9 March 2018 and increasingly tackled in cooperation with international organisations such as OECD).



Capacity/Capability building and e-governance are closely interconnected with with the intense debate on **the impact of Artificial Intelligence on governmental and institutional infrastructures and on their communication strategies**, which was one of the key challenges discussed in the Club plenaries in 2024 held in Dublin and Venice and was also in the spotlight at the 8th StratCom seminar held in London on 12-13 March 2025.

This process, which aims to increase accountability and transparency of public structures, entails an awareness-raising process, training for the acquisition of new skills and new dynamics between politicians, policy makers, public communicators and the public audiences.



B. Seminars and Workshops

Thematic meetings and workshops are arranged on:

- Web communication and interactive techniques, with increasing focus on social networks
- Opinion polls and media monitoring



- Crisis communication, with increasing focus on StratCom (strategic communication) and anti-terrorism
- Public diplomacy and reputation management
- Communication on the EU enlargement
- Media freedom and relations with the media sector
- The education dimension in communication
- Ethics, transparency and capacity building.

The plenary meetings held in The Hague, Malta, Venice and Montenegro and the seminars in Brussels (September 2016 and November 2018) and London (seminar on strategic communication co-organised with the UK Government Communication Service from 2017 to 2025), focused on the governments' and institutions' commitment to tackle the abovementioned topics proactively and on how to **rebuild citizens' confidence in their public authorities**.

Due attention was paid to the impact of crisis management and crisis communication on public opinion and to the capacity to **counter hybrid threats and disinformation** (lastly at the **Webinar on communication in the field of the COVID-19 pandemic held on 16 June 2020**, the **Joint Seminar on Open Governance and Communication in a Time of Crisis on 18 March 2021** respectively co-organised with the Croatian Government authorities and with a pool of international partners: OGNfE, DEMSOC, HSS, OGP and the OECD) (see also the "**Memo for Action**" in Annex V); and the seminar on **governmental communication challenges in time of crisis organised in Prague in October 2022** in cooperation with the Directorate for EU Affairs of the Czech Government Office.

The brainstorming discussions held at the first StratCom seminar organised in the United Kingdom in 2017 ended with the adoption of the so-called "**London Charter**" (see [Annex IV](#)), which paved the way for strengthening cooperation in strategic communication and reinforced the concept of complementarity between the Club plenaries and seminars.

Social networks and interactive communication as well **Capacity Building** have been among the main topics on the Club of Venice agenda since 2008, when the Club organised a first seminar in the European Parliament premises in Brussels, followed by an event in London focused on "digital strategies for public communication".

These seminars, initially co-organised with the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and the Belgian authorities and since 2016 in several Member States, have increasingly engaged web-communication and social media experts (from governmental and institutional services and also from external partner organisations) to debate extensively on the new trends in online communication.

The seminars on "*The next web and the impact on government communication*" and "*The impact of social media on journalism*", attended by governmental, institutional and external specialists, focused on the increasing role of social networks and, consequently, the rise of a generation of new communication players.

The debate on these matters also includes a reflection on public communicators' preparation in view of election campaigns, on governments' investments in social media interaction, their interplay with portals, and on new applications to deliver the "public service of the future".

The seminar on web communication held in Brussels on 4 October 2012 launched a joint discussion on "*Open Government/Open Data and citizens' involvement in policies development*". The event was centred on the growing digital agenda and on public authorities' strategies to optimise information provision and enhance interaction with citizens and stakeholders. The "Open Government" approach (inspired also from the orientations of the above-mentioned "Open Data Charter" adopted by the G8 in June 2013) is one of the most challenging issues for government authorities and institutions and also triggered since 2018 a strong cooperation with the OECD.

These seminars also include an insight into inter-ministerial portals as well as independent web platforms aiming to foster transparency, trust and democracy, critical analysis and joint research.

Participants share their feedback and seize the opportunity to receive updates on a world in continuous transformation.

The seminar organised in this domain in Brussels on 22 March 2013 focused on "*Public Communication in the evolving media landscape: adapt or resist?*". The Club discussed how to facilitate transition into the social media space, drawing inspiration from successful experiences shared by independent practitioners keen on digital and social media. In particular, participants exchanged their views on how public authorities in charge of communication could optimize know-how, energies and resources to adapt their strategies and better interact on line with the wide public.



Other remarkable events of this kind were:

- a conference on "**Digital Communication Challenges** for Governments and Institutions" co-organised with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, SEECOM (South East Europe Communicators' Association) and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies in Sofia (Bulgaria) on 26-27 March 2015
- a seminar on "**Digital Communication Trends**" in Brussels on 21 February 2014.

The main themes covered in Sofia were "**Encouraging citizens' participation** with online tools", "Geopolitical conflicts – the role of governments on the Web" and "Promotion of European values in a digital world".



In Bulgaria, participants discussed a number of initiatives carried out by both national authorities and external organisations focusing on perspectives to digital media, engaging with citizens, and social responsibility, in particular when operating in areas of geo-political unrest.



The aim of the event was to study new inspiring models for the modernisation of public services and analyse "citizens journalism" as an important phenomenon bringing added value to traditional communication and enriching journalism as a whole.

Same line was followed in the Club seminar on 21 February 2014 focused on "**Engaging in citizen-oriented web services: towards an integrated approach**" and on "Social responsibility and inclusiveness: **citizens journalism impact on mainstream media and public communication**".



The abovementioned seminar on "Open Government and Open Data: New Horizons for Communication and Public Access to Information" held in Luxembourg in March 2018 and co-organized with the Directorate of the Luxembourg Government press and information service enabled the experts to share feedback and best practices on initiatives to increase transparency and accountability. It was a vivid debate on ways and means to foster citizens' trust by providing accurate and precise information in digital form, also with the aim of providing material for further re-use.

2011-2014 were years of tough challenges, with dominating issues such as Europe's response to the economic and financial crisis, measures to ensure recovery and sustainable growth, and cooperation in the implementation of communication strategies in view of the European elections.

2015 and 2016 confirmed that the impact of on-line information in this context is crucial and that the frontiers and techniques of web interaction are broadening exponentially.



In 2017 and 2018 the Club deepened discussion on strengthening capacity building standards ("*transformational processes*"), promoting ethics, regaining citizens' confidence in the public authorities and communicating Europe's future strategies.

New and longstanding communication challenges are interwoven. The main priority topic for the Club continues to be the pursuit of the appropriate communication strategies during geo-political and social instabilities, particularly in the EU's neighbourhood.

The **Vilnius Charter on "Capacity building"** (see Annex III) adopted on 8 June 2018 aims to strengthen cooperation in shaping professionalism and manage behavioural changes in communication".

In line with the principles shared in the abovementioned Charter, the Club envisages to facilitate the a multi-disciplinary integrated approach on capacity/capability building.

To this end, it has recently set up two ad hoc **permanent working groups** including government communication specialists, EU institutions' officials, academics and other external professionals to prepare a road map and intensify the exchange of feedback and proposals in this field. One of these working groups focuses on **Capacity Building** and the other on resilience versus **Hybrid Threats**.

Crisis communication opened up a new, strong chapter in the Club agenda in Istanbul, with the Club organising its first brainstorming meeting in April 2011 and two follow-up seminars hosted in Sofia (Bulgaria) (29-30 March 2012) and Athens (Greece) (27-28 March 2014), focused, among others, on :

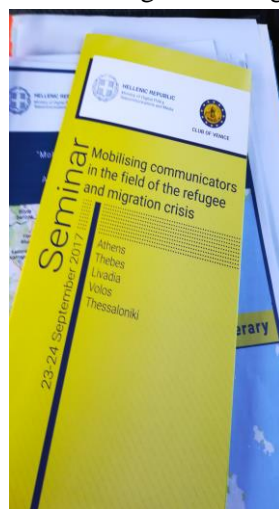
- perspectives for cooperation with government communicators from the third countries
- communication on the financial crisis
- the decline of the citizens' confidence in the EU and the European elections
- press freedom in South-Eastern Europe (topic also covered in seminars co-organised with international partners such as SEECOM and SEEMO)
- synergies in information and communication activities to support young generations



- communication strategies to counter **terrorism, radicalisation and recruitment** (seminar held in September 2016 in Brussels, organised jointly with the Belgian Federal Chancellery's communication authorities)
- communication on the **refugees' and migration crisis**. Discussion on migration was extensively developed in:
 - a joint workshop in Brussels (December 2015) with the Council Working Party on Information
 - seminars in Lesbos (Greece) (April 2016) and Sliema (Malta) (May 2017) and a seminar/study visit in Athens, Thebes, Livadia and Thessaloniki (September 2017).

Moreover, since 2017 the Club has increasingly developed cooperation with the ICMPD - International Centre for Migration Policy Development, collaborating in the organisation of EuroMED conferences and workshops:

- in Tunisia (September 2018), on newly structured narratives;
- in Athens (April 2019, seminar on migration narrative and crisis communication implications, followed by a High Level round table);
- as on line meetings (2020 and 2021) on disinformation threats and polarization;
- in Rabat (November 2022), conference focused on engagement and governance;
- in Valletta (October 2023), conference on fostering strategic partnerships in building and enhancing migration narratives.



These topics concern long-lasting challenging priorities which will be tackled by the Club for an indefinite period.

In 2017 in Sliema, one year after a memorable Lesbos seminar, the Club tackled the refugees' and migration crisis in presence of all the key players (the EU Member States and Institutions, the European External Action Service (EEAS), FRONTEX, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) and a distinguished testimonial from Lampedusa, doctor Pietro Bartolo (currently a Member of the EP).



At the seminar/study visit held in Greece in September 2017, the Club visited facilities managed by the national authorities in close collaboration with the European Union, the United Nations, international organisations and NGOs that host migrants during the process of identification, settlement, relocation or return. This event enabled the participants to meet with the local authorities mobilised for the different phases of the crisis management and also hear from the migrants' and asylum seekers' voices their own challenging times, their often dramatic personal experiences and their expectations.



The informal scenario of the Club meetings:

- is the ideal framework for government communicators to discuss freely how efficient and effective the communications plans are in this field
- facilitates a concrete understanding of the necessary strategies and synergies to better inform citizens on a regular basis;
- acts as a catalyst, through an open exchange of views and suggestions to reinforce cooperation among all the key players in all practical aspects of crisis management.

One of the new heaviest challenges for public communicators is **how to counter disinformation on line**. The Club of Venice has increasingly covered this issue, developing its analysis at the eight abovementioned **stratcom** seminars in London and in plenary (Venice (2017, 2019 to 2024), Vilnius (2018) and Dublin (2024)). This challenging topic was also on the agenda of the seminar organised in Brdo (Slovenia) on 25 and 26 April 2024, which also focused on communicating the EU enlargement.

The Club stands ready to organize ad hoc events such as seminars, conferences and workshops on:

- a. partnerships (four editions hosted in Vienna from 2009 to 2013 by the Press and Information Office of the Austrian State Chancellery); concept being re-elaborated focusing on specific communication priorities (migration) and in the context of a new project for the creation of a European expertise Centre for public communication);
- b. crisis communication, new digital challenges (widely covered in the last two plenaries held in Venice and Dublin), the impact of the new media landscape on government communication (Open Data/Open Government, e-Governance, data reliability) and public diplomacy, branding and reputation management;

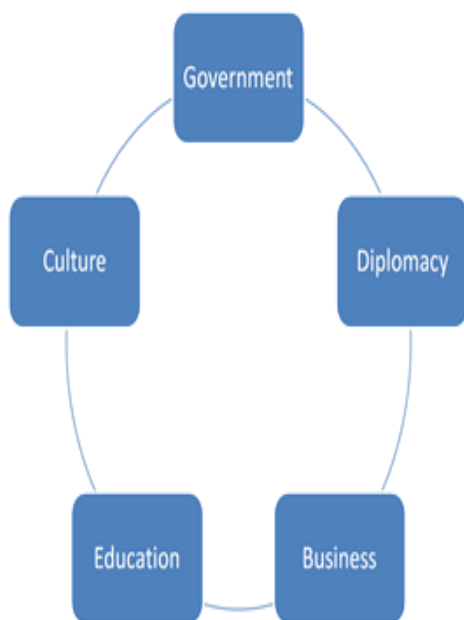
- c. communicating the EU enlargement (this matter, discussed also at the 2019 plenary meeting held in Montenegro, was also extensively debated in Dubrovnik on 28/29 September 2023);
- d. workshops on capacity and capability building;
- e. priority matters with a large impact on society, such as public health, climate change and migration, closely challenged by disinformation threats, as also extensively debated in Dublin in June 2024 and in conferences co-organised with international partner organisations;
- f. seminars on communication in schools;
- g. analysis of the implementation of the EU macro-regional strategies.

Finally, Public Diplomacy, countries'-cities' branding and reputation management are the three elements of a core subject of the communication directors' agenda.

France, Malta, Poland, Cyprus and Belgium hosted five workshops/seminars on this topic (respectively in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2019). These meetings focused on rating techniques applied to the national Public Diplomacy strategies and the countries' efforts to influence society by promoting their identity, their public image and their social and cultural standards.

In this framework, the Club also focused on the communication campaign for the Universal EXPO and the COP-15 (Copenhagen) and COP-21 (Paris) UNCC Conferences as successful branding operations (subject discussed at the plenary meeting held in Milan in October 2015 and in Venice plenaries in the following years).

Furthermore, the Club of Venice organised two debates at the plenary meetings in The Hague in 2016 and in Athens in 2025 respectively on the impact of technological developments (**e-diplomacy**) and the impact of geopolitical trends on public diplomacy.



Objective soft power indicators

Some important elements were taken into account, to include:

- driving forces of influence operating through the digital world
- the use of social networks and new interactive formats for exchange of views and expert analysis such as "diplo-hack" events
- new young audiences and players, openness and inclusiveness and the increasing need for dialogue
- the need to **change governments' approach with regard to public diplomacy** (a matter in constant evolution and severely challenged by the recent geopolitical crises worldwide) and to study **interrelations with branding and reputation management**, given its connections with **crisis communication**.



The events organized by the Club in this domain aim to foster interconnection among the Public Diplomacy players, tackling concrete organizational challenges such as :

- studying Public Diplomacy strategies in progress in old and new EU Member States as well as in countries with strong or emerging economies;
- analysing comparative PD rating models and soft power trends;
- analysing interconnections between Public Diplomacy, nations/cities' branding and country's reputation management (topic tackled at the recent seminar on "country's reputation: perceptions and management" organised in Brussels in 2019 in cooperation with the "External Communication" Directorate of the Belgian PM Chancellery);
- discussing how to prepare the ground for a more efficient diplomatic action in times of financial constraints;
- extending capacity building to adapt PD to the demanding work environment given the new digital landscape, with a view to operate effectively in a coherent multi-sectoral coordination framework;
- following closely the development of international strategies for an effective communication of the EU external policy and its possible impact on national foreign policies.

New orientations in this field were explored in the most recent of the five abovementioned seminars held in Brussels on 23 October 2019, focused on “**country’s reputation – perceptions and management**”, organised in collaboration with the Directorate-General for External Communication of the Belgium PM Chancellery, and lastly in Venice and Athens (2020 and 2025 plenaries).

The meetings in Brussels and Venice meetings were structured in two sessions focusing on:

- **expertise and best practice** (feedback: projects carried out or envisaged by national authorities and European institutions and testimonies by external specialists; measurement and evaluation techniques on a country and institution reputation and image; surveys, indexes and comparative results; and *e-reputation*, with focus on the media influence
- **lessons learned (round table) and perspectives for improvement** (How to optimise effectiveness: action and cooperation - reinforcement/Improvement of structures and roles to manage reputation and image of a country and an institution; new cooperation projects, investments and resources; cooperation among the different professional profiles: national and local communicators, public diplomacy, institutions, civil society, academic world, media).

Finally, the round tables organised in the framework of the autumn plenaries held in Venice in 2020 and 2023 and in Dublin in June 2024 focused on the impact of the different crises on public diplomacy, nation branding and reputation management and enabled the participants to share their views on

- **the geo-political challenges**: what has changed: the demolition of public diplomacy strongholds, the weakening of soft diplomacy and cultural diplomacy: how to work together to recover countries' and institutions' reputation
- **5G and artificial intelligence in the international relations**
- **re-building cooperation and re-generating mutual trust**
- **building alliances with the media, civil society and the academic world.**



CLUB OF VENICE

Plenary meeting Session on the future of the media landscape in Europe Venice, 6 December 2019

Action Plan on synergies between public communication and the media sector

Guiding principles

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

Strategic routes

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

Actions

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



CLUB OF VENICE

VILNIUS CHARTER

on

SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA

IN A CHALLENGING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

(Plenary meeting - Vilnius, 7-8 June 2018)

Communication directors and senior communication specialists from the EU Member States, institutions and candidate countries,

convened to the session "Hybrid threats: focus on countering disinformation, propaganda and fake news - a common endeavour" of the plenary meeting of the Club of Venice co-organised in Vilnius by the Club of Venice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lithuanian Government, Communication and Cultural Diplomacy Department,

in line with the principles subscribed by the London Charter of 17 March 2017, which stressed the need for reinforced cooperation to safeguard objective communication values, assure impartiality and promote transparency,

conscious of the challenging scenario for public communication generated by the new digital landscape, and in particular:

- that the digital media operates under minimal regulatory or self-regulatory frameworks
 - that, in absence of adequate monitoring and analysis mechanisms and without a proper trans-national and inter-institutional cooperation, the information provision can be significantly hampered by the vulnerability of media technology and the distorted use of digital interactive networks and platforms
 - of the risks that disinformation and digital propaganda can increasingly breach and destabilise the political and information environments in the European Union and its member states, thus generating misperceptions in the public opinion
 - of the need for building resilience capacity through an intense and continuous cooperative approach, creating and reinforcing ties with civil society and news organizations and industries,
- welcome the recent efforts of the EU institutions and its member states to explore grounds for common strategies, in the light of the international dimension of the phenomenon, with the view to defend citizens' right to quality information
 - confirm their commitment to cooperating in this field, multiplying their efforts and seeking synergies in countering disinformation and fake news and enhancing capacity to communicate effectively about common policies and values

- stress the need for an objective and balanced approach that safeguards the freedom of expression and media pluralism and fosters citizens' credibility in the public authorities, continuing to engage in communication activities liaising with all sectors of society
- agree that the only effective way to increasing European societies' resilience to disinformation is by strengthening structured cross-border and cross-sector cooperation among governmental and institutional stakeholders, with communicators playing a key role
- acknowledge the importance of strategic communications in strengthening resilience of our societies and stress the need to address hostile influences, increasing their efforts to address disinformation threats by constant bolstering of capacities and capabilities to counter them shared with the public
- recognise the progress in cooperation among the EU, NATO and other international organisations, based on shared values, in exchanging knowledge and understanding of hostile information activities, with a view to enabling more effective communications strategies to tackle this challenge
- agree on:
 - building on the work of the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force and on the multi-dimensional approach recommended in the report of the High-Level Expert Group on fake news adopted on 12 March 2018 and in the communication on tackling disinformation on line, adopted by the European Commission on 25 April 2018
 - enhancing the transparency of online news
 - cooperating in the promotion and enhancement of media and information literacy
 - developing tools of digital citizenship by empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation and foster a positive engagement
 - safeguard the diversity, independence and sustainability of the European news media ecosystem, also by continuing to cooperate with the EU initiatives in this field
 - promoting continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe, especially by developing platforms for monitoring social streams, undertaking source-checking and content provenance and forensically analyse images and videos, in line with data protection, and exchanging results (the creation of a network of independent European Centres for research on disinformation could be an enriching powerful initiative in this regard)
 - continuing to explore cross-collaboration in training activities, visits' programmes and on line interconnections
 - developing parameters to help measure each country's and competent organizations capacity in terms of overall resilience to disinformation, in order to elaborate a comparative map to facilitate the identification of imbalances and priority actions
 - continuing to use the Club of Venice network as a permanent platform for joint analysis of strategic communication capacities and further reflection on common communication initiatives.



CLUB OF VENICE

SHAPING PROFESSIONALISM IN COMMUNICATION

VILNIUS CHARTER on CAPACITY BUILDING

(Plenary meeting - Vilnius, 7-8 June 2018)

Communication directors and senior communication specialists from the EU Member States, institutions and candidate countries, convened to the session "Capacity/Capability Building and implementation of Nudge theories" of the plenary meeting of the Club of Venice,

recalling the principles shared in the Club of Venice position paper on Capacity Building adopted in the workshop held in Brussels in the premises of the European Parliament on 15 October 2009,

conscious of the need to adapt communication expertise and communication management to new strategies, new planning approaches and methods and the new digital communication and media landscape,

conscious of the need to maintain a close link between capability development and human development, and to base capacity building on firm principles such as ethics, legitimacy, credibility and investments in transparency, leadership skills and professional growth,

conscious of the volatility of digital platforms, and the complex social change that network technologies are both driving and reflecting,

as a follow-up to discussion at the Club plenary meetings held respectively in Malta and Venice on 18-19 May and 23-24 November 2017,

having due regard to the key findings of The Leaders' Report (WPP Government & Public Sector Practice), first global study into government communication presented in Davos in January 2017, which gave precise indications on how governments should better connect with their citizens in today's increasingly polarised world,

having due regard to the risk of a significant decline in citizens' trust in public authorities, poor consideration for the "human factor" in a globalized world and uneven technological development detected by recent public opinion surveys,

having due regard to the London Charter of the Club, the Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment, and the Paris Declaration of the Open Government Partnership, which point to the need for open, engaging, digitally-enabled governments that can create trusting relationships with citizens,

confirm their commitment to strengthening cooperation among Member States, institutions and civil society organisations in a multi-dimensional scheme, based on:

- the recognition of communication as one of the key levers of public policy delivery
- focused efforts to increase the leadership and influence of the government communications profession across Europe
- the identification of a strong connection between policy development and realistic two-way communication strategies capable of assuring the desired outreach
- seeking out and understanding what citizens' expectations are for more responsive government services - and the role that government communication can play in improving access to services and their quality
- the acknowledgment that the Open Government are core principles and inspiring values in the development of capacity/capability building strategies
- investing in national and cross-border training opportunities and sharing of international best practice to facilitate the swift adaptation of communication skills to the evolving digital environment and its challenges, thus increasing room for flexibility and motivation to behavioural changes
- developing sustainable synergies and reducing duplications in applied research, media monitoring, sentiment analysis and social media listening and amplification
- developing adequate platforms serving as knowledge hubs to facilitate best practice sharing on strategies to counter digital disinformation
- drawing inspiration from existing national communication plans and nudging models, to identify the capabilities needed by the organisation and the most appropriate instruments to strengthen and measure effectiveness
- exploring ground for a multi-disciplinary integrated approach, setting up an ad hoc Capacity Building permanent forum/working group facilitated by the Club of Venice, including interested government communication specialists, EU institutions' officials and external experts.



**London Charter
(17 March 2017, Club of Venice StratCom seminar)**

Communication directors and senior communication specialists from the EU Member States, institutions and candidate countries,

convened to the seminar "StratCom-Strategic Communication Challenges for Europe" co-organised by the Club of Venice and the UK Government Communications Service,

hereby share common views on the need for reinforced cooperation to safeguard objective communication values, assure impartiality and promote transparency.

To contrast the current threat to free communication and pluralism, they agree to multiply their efforts and seek synergies to contribute to the management and the solution of crises by:

- enhancing inter-governmental cooperation in strategic communications;
- supporting public communicators and their partners/multipliers/opinion makers in regions with geo-political instability in their work to promote, spread and defend the democratic processes and values;
- ensuring support to the media and the organisations who are engaged in the defence of freedom of speech, pluralism and transparency;
- neutralizing fake news to prevent public audiences' misperception and misinformation in today's post-truth actuality;
- facilitating resilience-building in response to growing nationalism, extremism and populism;
- communicating strategically the benefits that the EU has brought and can bring to the regions concerned, elaborating objective and concrete narratives for both internal and external audiences;
- regaining citizens' trust and confidence in public authorities; engaging in communication activities aimed to improve liaison between politics and citizens and dialogue with all sectors of society;
- reinforcing collaboration among communication practitioners by cross-collaboration in training activities, visits' programmes and on line interconnections;
- using the Club of Venice network as a permanent platform for further reflection to help improve StratCom capacities, in liaison with the formal governmental and institutional agenda, and in close collaboration with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN).



Communication and Open Governance in a Time of Crisis

MEMO FOR ACTION - 31.5.2021

The **workshop on "Communication and Open Governance in a Time of Crisis" co-organized by the Club of Venice, Open Governance for Europe, The Democratic Society, the Open Government Partnership, the Herbert Simon Society and the OECD on 18 March 2021** convened senior government communications professionals from across Europe, with experts from international organisations and bodies, civil society and academia, to share, learn, and develop new understanding and skills in civic participation, transparency and accountability through communication toward stronger government policies and services in a time of crisis.

As European governments and institutions work to address the complex crises posed by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a crucial common challenge to create and improve the citizens' confidence in public authorities and the collective societal resilience necessary to not only overcome crises, but also to pave the way for more coordination and cooperation among all actors.

The following memo takes stock of lessons learned during the workshop and outlines a set of common principles, objectives, opportunities, and challenges for future learning, innovation, and cooperation around communication and open governance in Europe.

Crisis response, recovery, resilience and communication

- Build on lessons from the pandemic, setting up comprehensive, structured plans and adequate strategies to communicate resilient actions timely and collectively. Set up permanent structures for open communication, which can help manage crises more efficiently and effectively (one time interventions are not enough; focus needs to be on long-term enabling environment);
- Apply the open government principles of participation, transparency, and accountability when shaping communication methodologies. Public trust must be earned and maintained through coherent, effective, sustainable and equitable policies and fueled by honest, ethical, and inclusive public communication;
- Integrate strategic communication in all crisis management plans as a pre-requisite for a professional service rendered to society. Adopt communication methods and instruments to ensure permanent liaising with citizens, facilitating interaction in resilience building and recovery and a collaborative dialogue with a view to sustainable contingency measures and, when appropriate, reforms; multiply efforts to optimize outreach;
- Set up and update reliable and realistic road maps/action plans accessible to all audiences, using a clear and trustworthy language;
- Adopt coordinated approaches to tackle mis- and disinformation holistically. Cooperation among governments, institutions and international specialists in the exchange of key information is crucial to detect and deter these threats timely and radically, since they cannot be countered through contingent technical solutions alone;

- Capacity building and, in particular, investing on public education is crucial. Public authorities and citizens need to:
 - increasingly develop a better understanding of misinformation and disinformation, in order to navigate, monitor and analyse information and media ecosystems on and offline and identify and disseminate reliable information;
 - engage in promoting communication and media literacy;
 - develop capacities for a pro-active and constructive dialogue through the social media and contribute to the development of collaborative web networks (co-creation).

New perspectives and routes for cooperation and partnerships

- Reduce defensive decision-making and create positive error cultures, adopting the appropriate behavioural approaches;
- Monitor and analyse citizens' behavioral trends. Be ready to recognize shortfalls and to adapt management culture as needed; train governmental and institutional officials and their management in this field, through the involvement of psychologists and other specialists from the scientific - cognitive - behavioral studies communities;
- Invest in improving capacities to analyse citizens' opinions and attitudes; enhance and diversify polling instruments;
- Involve and engage professionals, academics and civil society representatives in multi-annual training planning, capitalizing on their expertise in the field. Inclusiveness in this context will enable communicators to adapt their approach to the national, regional and local environment as rapidly and efficiently as needed;
- For governments, institutions and international organisations: invest more in long-term, systematic synergetic efforts and activities for awareness raising and education purposes;
- Maximize synergies and complementarity between the actions of the Club of Venice and international partners engaged in open governance and committed to the principles of sound management, transparency, accountability and partnership work;
- Explore the possibilities to strengthen work in partnership, drawing inspiration from win-win experiences such as the multi-annual agreements created in the framework of the inter-institutional Declaration "Communicating Europe in Partnership" of 22.10.2008;
- Seize the opportunity of the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe to highlight and promote the need for a strong open government culture and the blend between representative and participative democracy.

Club of Venice Governance

NAME	COUNTRY	FUNCTIONS
ROLANDO Stefano	IT	President of the Club of Venice
DEN HOEDT Erik	NL	Vice President of the Club of Venice
LE VOCI Vincenzo	IT	Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

Club of Venice Steering Group

NAME	COUNTRY or INSTITUTION	FUNCTIONS
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(under update)	Austria	Director, Department 7/2, Press and Media Service, Bundeskanzleramt
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NATHAN Michael	France	Head of the Government Information Service (Service d'information du gouvernement - SIG)
LEMOINE Christophe		Director of Communication and Press and Spokesperson, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
LE VOCI Vincenzo	Council of the EU	Secretary-General of the Club of Venice, Administrator, DG Communication and Information, Information Services Unit/Transparency, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU

ANNEX VII

Club of Venice Advisory Committee

NAME	COUNTRY or INSTITUTION	FUNCTIONS
BRUNMAYR Hans	AT	Former Director-General, DG Communication, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU
GRANATT Mike	UK	Former Head of the UK Central Office for Information, Former Club Coordinator
GYÁRFÁS FEKETE Judit	HU	Former Head of Communication at the Hungarian Government
THØGERSEN Niels Jørgen	DK	Former Director of Communication, DG Communication, European Commission
SAHAGÚN POOL Aurelio	ES	Former Communications Director for the Spanish Prime Minister's Office, Moncloa
VAN DEN BERGHE Mieke	BE	Former Head of Communication at the Belgian Government