

# convergences

Public communication in Europe | Communication publique en Europe

## FOCUS ON

**Madrid plenary, June 2026** Resilience to disinfo- and misinformation, digital transformation and AI influence, societal cohesion challenges, epistemic security, crisis communication, communicating Spain and Portugal 40 years in the EU **Rome seminar, May 2026** Anti-FIMI synergies, digital transformation and AI's intelligence influence, public diplomacy, country branding and security reputation **Zagreb seminar, March 2026** Reinforcing Strategic Communications in a Rapidly Changing Geopolitical Landscape: European Narratives in Digital Future, Trust and Values, AI in Crisis Comm, Engaging and Branding **Venice plenary, December 2025** Stratcom inter-operability, relations with the media, governing AI impact on public comms (scale planning and investments), communicating the EU MFF **Digital Ireland**, Mainstreaming participatory and deliberative democracy, **Communicating renewable energies in Spain**, Algorithmic challenges in an increasingly polarised world



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# AU-DELÀ DE LA VITRINE ...

Par Philippe Caroyez et Vincenzo Le Voci

« Souviens-toi de la fragilité des choses. »  
Fénelon<sup>1</sup>

La communication publique et les services qui en ont la charge, comme institution et organisations au sens sociologique, tendent à se perpétuer.

Après un demi-siècle d'institutionnalisation (dans leur forme « moderne »), ils n'en sont cependant pour autant pas moins sujets à la *fragilité*, pour reprendre un concept mis à la mode, d'ailleurs plus sur le plan stratégique qu'heuristique (glissé de la science gériatrique aux spéculations géopolitiques). Ce n'est ni antinomique, ni paradoxal ... une force peut receler plus d'une faiblesse.

Leur *robustesse* (non en elle-même mais comme degré atteint) doit donc être vue et questionnée au regard de ces fragilités.

C'est, bien sûr, la résistance au(x) changement(s) *en soi*, mais aussi :

- l'absence de souplesse (l'agilité communicationnelle et organisationnelle souvent peu compatible avec une situation bureaucratique et procédurale) ;
- la tendance, autant inscrite dans l'institution que dans ses organisations, héritée de la propagande politique et de l'ère des mass media et de la publicité, à être des producteurs désincarnés d'informations générales et légitimatrices plutôt que de véritables acteurs du lien communicationnel conversant avec les citoyens, alors qu'eux recherchent principalement « Tout ce qui peut être aide et accompagnement »<sup>2</sup> – faisant conclure à l'association professionnelle française Cap'Com que « La solidité de la communication publique réside dans son utilité concrète »<sup>3</sup> ;
- dans ce contexte, par la force des choses, l'absence de prise en compte et en charge réelle des *vulnérabilités* des citoyens en général et des publics et situations ou milieux spécifiques en particulier, si pas parfois être même des fabriques de ces vulnérabilités<sup>4</sup> ;
- toujours comme conséquence, le caractère *massif en soi* de la communication publique et donc le peu de frugalité des moyens mis en œuvre et nécessaires (de moins en moins compatibles par rapport à des restrictions budgétaires toujours plus nombreuses et à des impératifs sociétaux de plus en plus prégnants) ;
- un contexte de méfiance et de désinformation et mésinformation non propice à la communication des autorités. Contexte dont, plus largement, à bas bruit ou de façon plus assumée, ne sont pas absentes des opinions et manifestations défavorables aux services publics,

allant jusqu'à des formes de *haine des fonctionnaires*<sup>5</sup> ... que d'aucun n'hésite pas à générer, entretenir ou instrumentaliser à des fins idéologiques et politiques. C'est à prendre en compte d'autant qu'on peut postuler qu'y répond – en quelque sorte – des formes si pas de *dégoût des fonctionnaires*, au moins de démotivation de ceux-ci ;

- la « *surdité réciproque* » dans la relation autorité-citoyens<sup>6</sup> ;
- la toujours insurmontée prévalence du politique par rapport à celle que devrait avoir la *demande sociale* et – peut-être de ce fait – l'inexistence d'un rapportage systématique de l'exécutif au législatif et d'une évaluation effective des activités et actions de communication publique (qui relèvent des politiques publiques) et, dès lors, l'inexistence d'un *débat public* de fond sur ces matières et questions, si pas à la base l'inexistence même de politique réelle, concertée et coordonnée, dans le domaine, ses objectifs, son organisation, ses moyens et son futur ;
- une forme d'*inconfort* du politique (aux affaires ou pas) par rapport à la communication publique et par rebonds par rapport à ceux qui en ont la charge et à leurs services. C'est un constat sur lequel il faudra revenir, mais qui nous semble encore plus profond ces dernières années ;

<sup>1</sup> Fénelon (François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, dit). *Les aventures de Télémaque*. Paris, 1699, page 109. [https://archives.ecole-alsacienne.org/CDI/pdf/1301/130125\\_FEN.pdf](https://archives.ecole-alsacienne.org/CDI/pdf/1301/130125_FEN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 7<sup>e</sup> édition du *Baromètre de la communication locale*. Sondage grand public Harris Interactive/Epiceum, une étude réalisée en partenariat avec Cap'Com et le groupe La Poste, France, novembre 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Cap'Com. Les Cahiers n°5. *Une année de communication publique et territoriale*. Lyon, 2023, page 128.

<sup>4</sup> Sur ces questions : (Sous la direction de) Laborde A., Carayol V. Cousserand-Blin I. *Fabrique des vulnérabilités et communication organisationnelle*. Revue "Communication et Professionnalisation", numéro 17. Editions UCLouvain, février 2026, 198 pages. <https://ojs.uclouvain.be/index.php/comproff/issue/view/9013>

<sup>5</sup> Gervais J., Lemerrier C., Pelletier W. *La Haine des fonctionnaires*. Editions Amsterdam, Paris, septembre 2024, 260 pages.

<sup>6</sup> On lira à cet égard, pour le champ de l'Europe, cette intéressante analyse et ses recommandations faites par l'agence LLYC pour la Commission européenne : "VDL 2.1. *Single Voice, Fragmented Audience, Weak Reception*" et la recension qu'en fait Michaël Malherbe, dans son blog "Décrypter la communication européenne", "Diagnostic 'VDL 2.1' : anatomie d'une surdité réciproque", 12 janvier 2026 <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/2026/01/12/diagnostic-vdl-2-1-anatomie-dune-surdite-reciproque>



- l'incertitude liée aux développements technologiques à l'œuvre. Pour le dire simplement : internet et les réseaux sociaux ont affecté principalement la diffusion de l'information, les intelligences artificielles génératives et agentiques et les LLM's impactent également sa production, les modalités de celle-ci et — dès lors — de nos tâches et compétences professionnelles, voire métiers.

Puisque de l'inévitable il faut faire un atout, considérons positivement que l'intégration raisonnée et graduelle des intelligences artificielles dans nos organisations et pratiques pourrait (devrait, si nous le forçons) au moins avoir cette vertu qu'elle suppose une *revue de détail*, voire une forme de *mise à nu*, de nos missions, contenus de nos tâches, taxonomie de nos rôles professionnels, fonctions et métiers, procédures, processus, actions, résultats, besoins et attentes ; sans négliger nos valeurs et l'éthique ... pour en parallèle — avec les possibilités offertes — envisager ce qui peut être automatisé (mais certainement pas uniquement) et, mieux, être enrichi et introduit dans nos activités.

Ce sont des opérations qui se mènent sans concession et en toute transparence pour et avec l'autorité, les services d'appui (IT et RH), les collaborateurs et les parties prenantes et qui devraient s'inscrire dans une *feuille de route*<sup>7</sup> rendue publique et faisant l'objet de communications périodiques quant à son état d'avancement.

Ce ne sera pas un *long fleuve tranquille* et dans le concert des critiques souvent entendues et généralement admises en la matière, ajoutons deux écueils.

D'abord, la *fracture numérique* existante (qui n'est pas que générationnelle), souvent pointée du doigt quand il s'agit du *grand public* (notamment en matière d'accès à l'information) mais bien plus rarement identifiée au sein même de la fonction publique et des agents publics ; le peu d'outillage informatique spécifique, adapté et fiable ; le retard et la faiblesse des formations de base, continues ou spécialisées mises en place et de l'identification et de la prise en compte des nouvelles compétences requises par les responsables de nos services et, plus généralement, des services RH qui présentent « *une expertise limitée sur les enjeux numériques, par exemple s'agissant du développement de l'intelligence artificielle* »<sup>8</sup>.

Dans ce contexte, comme le note l'OCDE : « *Le rôle des managers intermédiaires et de direction évolue également, caractérisé par une implication accrue dans la communication et le dialogue avec les citoyens, comme l'a montré la crise sanitaire. Ces évolutions soulèvent la question de leur accompagnement et de la clarification de leurs responsabilités. La transformation des pratiques managériales ne se limite pas à l'acquisition de compétences techniques : elle touche la capacité à animer, fédérer et incarner une culture de coopération* »<sup>9</sup>.

Malgré quelques tentatives prospectives, qui restent encore très théoriques et hypothétiques, nous ne mesurons pas encore pratiquement les changements qui s'amorcent... mais pour autant ce n'est pas la panacée que beaucoup espèrent, d'autant que la *supposée robustesse* des intelligences artificielles (l'illusion de la réponse, si pas de la solution, à tout) est en grande partie un leurre majeur face à tant de *faillibilités* en elles-mêmes et de

*vulnérabilités* pour ceux qui en font usage et des questions qu'elles posent, notamment à l'autorité publique (propriété, souveraineté, impact environnemental, biais, problèmes éthiques, ...).

Ensuite, autre leurre, l'*illusion* — comme on le lit régulièrement sur des sites des autorités publiques<sup>10</sup> — qu'une intelligence artificielle de service public (mais toujours pas *du service public* !) ouvrirait la voie à des services personnalisés pour les citoyens répondant à leurs besoins. Par rapport à cet élément du discours, pour reprendre l'un des concepts de la philosophie du langage de John Austin<sup>11</sup> et le mettre dans une perspective politique, on peut douter de la réelle *volonté performative* de l'administration publique en la matière et de sa capacité effective à pleinement transformer l'*action de dire* en une *action de faire*.

Outre qu'il y a confusion entre la *personnalisation du service* et la *relation interpersonnelle* avec un service, c'est là une affirmation incantatoire, fondée sur une illusion techniciste, qui se répète au fil de l'évolution des moyens de communication (de la boîte postale à l'e-mailing, en passant par les call centres et la téléphonie mobile et, désormais par l'IA et l'IA agentique) ... mais qui ne semble jamais atteindre l'objectif annoncé puisqu'on le répète sans cesse !

<sup>7</sup> On lira avec intérêt : Bourgoin-Verdier Th., Alibert A., Bouligny J., Doré A., Forgues A. *Une feuille de route pour intégrer l'IA au travail parlementaire*. Editions de la Fondation Jean Jaurès, Paris, avril 2026, 33 pages. Menée par la Fondation Jean Jaurès et l'Agora des collaborateurs, editrice du site <https://www.emplois-politiques.fr> (France), cette étude se fonde sur les tâches réalisées par les collaborateurs/collaboratrices parlementaires de l'Assemblée nationale, du Sénat et du Parlement européen à travers l'étude d'un corpus de 239 offres d'emploi.

<sup>8</sup> Certes plus particulièrement pour la France, mais nous faisons ces constats de manière plus étendue, sur ces différents points on lira : OCDE. *Développer une fonction RH résiliente dans la fonction publique française : Faire face aux évolutions numériques, écologiques et managériales*. Examens de l'OCDE sur la gouvernance publique, Éditions OCDE, Paris, 2026. Citation extraite de la page 26. <https://doi.org/10.1787/6f351772-fr>.

<sup>9</sup> OCDE (2026). *Op. cit.* page 36. C'est nous qui soulignons.

<sup>10</sup> Par exemple, on peut lire sur le site internet du Service public fédéral (belge) Stratégie et appui (équivalent d'un ministère de la fonction publique ou des affaires générales, selon les pays) : "L'intelligence artificielle (IA) révolutionne progressivement le secteur public belge, ouvrant la voie à des services plus personnalisés et performants, tout en rendant l'administration plus réactive. [On] vous invite à découvrir comment l'IA est exploitée pour construire une administration plus intelligente, connectée et attentive aux besoins des citoyens.". C'est nous qui soulignons. <https://bosa.belgium.be/fr/AI4Belgium/AI4GOV>

La voix à l'humour grinçant de (Georges) Wolinski résonne : "Le gouvernement va être à l'écoute de ceux qui ne disent rien" in *Les secrets d'un couple heureux* (Bande dessinée). Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 2003, page 9.

<sup>11</sup> Austin, John Langshaw. *Quand dire c'est faire*. Seconde édition inédite. Editions du Seuil, Collection L'Ordre philosophique. Paris, mai 2024, 264 pages.

En se fondant d'expérience sur le constat que « *le manque de clarté dans la communication et le manque d'informations ont souvent autant d'impact que le contenu même d'une décision* », le médiateur fédéral belge (dans son rapport récent au Parlement) fait remarquer que « *Des administrations fiables supposent une communication proactive et compréhensible, de nature à prévenir l'incertitude* » et, dans le fil de ce qui est ici remarqué, prescrit que « *Les administrations ne peuvent jamais être une solution « one size fits all ». Les citoyens attendent également de l'empathie et une prise en compte de leur situation concrète* »<sup>12</sup> ;

- parallèlement, un manque évident de réflexion et d'action dans les domaines de la *gouvernance anticipative* et de l'*innovation anticipative* ou même de la simple résilience de nos systèmes administratifs et de communication. A contrario de ce que promeut l'Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (au sein de l'OCDE) : une incapacité à « *percevoir, comprendre et agir de manière constante sur l'avenir à mesure qu'il se dessine dans le présent* »<sup>13</sup>, voire, dans nos domaines en particulier, de concevoir l'innovation au service du bien commun, comme « *un outil d'intérêt public au service de la réforme de l'action publique et du nouveau démocratique* »<sup>14</sup> ;
- bien que plus diffuse, mais insidieuse, une certaine absence de *culture de l'efficacité* qui tient sûrement à beaucoup de phénomènes : comme dans toutes organisations, le poids des habitudes et particulièrement le *retour du même* (la re-production périodique) ; le caractère ponctuel, voire éphémère, de nombreuses actions de communication ; souvent le choix du politique qu'il faut suivre *quoi qu'il en soit* et la déresponsabilisation qui en résulte ; bien souvent, l'absence de latitude laissée aux fonctionnaires dirigeants et par eux-mêmes à leurs équipes ; les évaluations individuelles et les rapports annuels qui sont plus de l'ordre des rites obligés que de celui du *diagnostic opérationnel* ; une utilisation obligée mais *au coup par coup*, non stratégisée, des marchés publics et, par morcellement de la commande publique en matière de communication, une incapacité à se positionner comme *acteur de poids* sur les marchés économiques en cause et dans le monde des annonceurs sur le marché des divers médias ; l'absence de réflexion et de programmation à terme des moyens et activités ; ...

Ce sont là toutes situations qui se traduisent généralement par une faible capacité d'adaptation et d'évolution et donc un retard de développement, une absence quasi constante d'évaluation systématique globale *interne* des processus, actions, activités et résultats et *externe* des politiques publiques de communication, le peu de mutualisation des moyens et de coordination générale des services, actions et politiques, la faiblesse des stratégies d'achat, l'enthousiasme souvent modéré des agences à vouloir œuvrer pour nos services, mais à l'inverse la très grande dépendance de ceux-ci par rapport aux prestataires privés, ...

Ce sont là les principales faiblesses que nous identifions.

Peut-on ajouter : parfois, un regard auto-satisfait et ronronnant, sans volonté critique ni recul, de la part des « appareils » et des communicateurs eux-mêmes.

Même s'il découle d'un savoir expérimentiel, le tableau dressé ici l'est à gros traits et, d'une certaine manière, à *charge*, certes ; il est néanmoins à voir comme un appel positif, si pas à une forme de sursaut au moins à la réflexion critique au bénéfice de nos métiers, services et activités... et finalement de notre quotidien et de celui des citoyens au service desquels nous travaillons.

Pensons à Sylvia Serfaty, mathématicienne renommée, qui – au moment où elle entre récemment à l'Académie des sciences (de l'Institut de France)<sup>15</sup> – publie un ouvrage<sup>16</sup> pour – comme elle le dit – « *passer au-delà de la vitrine que les mathématiques et les mathématiciens exposent d'eux-mêmes* »<sup>17</sup> et dans lequel – pour reprendre les mots de la préface de son éditeur – « *elle raconte le quotidien, la place de l'intuition et de la créativité, les déceptions et les frustrations, les errements comme les illuminations* »<sup>18</sup>. Mais où aussi, dans le dernier chapitre, elle s'interroge lucidement sur le devenir de son métier face à l'IA et se dit être « *au bord du précipice* », prête à faire le deuil d'une manière de faire les mathématiques.

Dans le fil de ce *quasi* benchmarking empathique, avec ce qui fait *notre quotidien*, osons aussi *passer au-delà de la vitrine* ...

Nous l'avons vu – contrairement à une certaine tendance réductrice, à l'excès catastrophiste ou euphorique – notre attention ne doit pas se porter (comme trop souvent aujourd'hui) que sur les apports et risques de l'IA générative et agentique aux métiers et activités de la communication publique ... il y a bien d'autres aspects et *fragilités* auxquels les communicateurs publics doivent aussi être particulièrement attentifs.

Et pour le dire avec une métaphore quelque peu prosaïque : il est peut-être temps de *renverser la table* ... sur laquelle nous nous sommes mis debout !

<sup>12</sup> Médiateur fédéral (Belgique). *Rapport d'activités 2025. Une administration fiable*. Bruxelles, avril 2026, 101 pages. <https://www.federaalombudsman.be/fr/rapport-annuel-2025-une-administration-fiable>

Rapport déposé et présenté à la Chambre des Représentants du Parlement belge, le 22 avril 2026. Les citations sont extraites de l'avant-propos, page 2. C'est nous qui soulignons.

<sup>13</sup> Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OCDE). <https://oecd-opsi.org/work-areas/antipatory-innovation-2/>

<sup>14</sup> Boscher, Benjamin et Pave, Xavier. *L'innovation à l'ère du bien commun*. Editions de la Fondation pour l'innovation politique, Paris, février 2018, 59 pages. Citation extraite de la page 37.

<sup>15</sup> Académie des sciences (Institut de France), Paris. Communiqué de presse du 7 janvier 2026. *Dix-huit nouveaux membres à l'Académie des sciences pour l'année 2026*. <https://share.google/gaoQZlcoIFIntjnFA>

<sup>16</sup> Serfaty, Sylvia. *Des équations personnelles*. Editions Flammarion, La collection scientifique, Paris, 2026, 224 pages.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., pages 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit., page 4.

Bien sûr pas *le changement pour le changement ni pour faire la même chose autrement*. Et, par analogie — depuis au moins Bachelard (dans *son épistémologie*), nous savons que ce n'est pas qu'une question de connaissance mais autant de reconnaissance des obstacles (nos *fragilités*) et de recherche des ruptures nécessaires.

Une équipe d'anthropologues suisses, spécialisés dans le management en entreprise, s'est rendue à Crans-Montana, immédiatement après l'incendie dramatique du nouvel an 2026<sup>19</sup>, soucieux de décortiquer les comportements observés de la « génération Z » (1995 – 2010), particulièrement concernée, et d'en tirer des enseignements (croisés avec d'autres études existantes) pouvant être rapportés au management des entreprises et à sa possible évolution à venir<sup>20</sup>.

L'exercice est singulier, d'autant que cette caractérisation générationnelle n'a de valeur que comme catégorie créée et ne présente aucune pertinence sur le plan sociologique ou anthropologique, soit !

Ils font, entre autres, ce constat sévère : « *La dissociation entre l'action efficace et la communication publique contredit quelque peu le dogme du "faire savoir" (...). Pour la GenZ, la confiance s'établit par l'action discrète, non par la déclaration d'intention* ». Et, en conclusion, « (...) pendant que les institutions activaient leurs protocoles, une génération en révélait d'autres ». Au rang desquels leur analyse décèle - pour les aspects organisationnels (positifs) : une auto-organisation *ad hoc* décentralisée, non tributaire d'une initiative ou de validation centrales et donc *non-procédurale* ; la résolution par essaim (indice de "*Swarm intelligence*") ; « *l'efficacité par l'invisibilité* », sans soucis de reconnaissance, d'identification ou de notoriété ; un souhait de solidarité active, d'entraide, ...

La réflexion prospective dans nos domaines doit aussi s'intéresser à une telle « tentative » d'analyse et aux études plus documentées et profondes sur des sujets comme la consommation et les pratiques culturelles (dont des divers médias et réseaux), les formes de sociabilité, de participation et

d'engagement, la perception des institutions et des relations humaines et sociales, la relation à l'autorité, la position et les attentes par rapport au politique et à l'administration publique, la conception du *vivre ensemble*, les capacités à la rhétorique, au dialogue et au débat, la littérature communicationnelle, ... et savoir en tirer parti, pour questionner en même temps l'évolution des situations socio-économiques, attentes, aspirations, valeurs et comportements des citoyens et celles de nos collaborateurs et futurs collaborateurs et la manière d'orienter nos services, rôles professionnels, formations et recrutements, processus, canaux et activités et, finalement, *la manière de faire de la communication publique*.

Avec l'intérêt porté à ces matières et analyses et leurs apports, c'est aussi le constat de nos fragilités et leur appréciation objective, sans concession, qui peuvent nous donner une base et une orientation pour le changement.

Il s'agit évidemment d'un processus difficile et long, mais — pensons-nous — indispensable.

Certes des éléments contingents sont à prendre en compte et beaucoup des leviers résident entre les mains du politique, mais c'est une voie à prendre ... qui n'est ici qu'esquissée.

A chacun d'y veiller, à chaque communicateur public d'y prendre sa part.

Dans cette approche critique, un élément traverse l'analyse, comme une forme de nécessité pragmatique et — transcendée — comme un impératif d'ordre éthique : le besoin, la volonté et la recherche de *rendre visible l'invisible*.

Depuis nos citoyens et conditions d'existence invisibilisés, jusqu'aux "ressorts" de ladite *intelligence artificielle* et ses biais, en passant par la recherche d'être en phase avec les demandes sociales et l'attention à porter à nos propres principes d'organisation et d'actions, nos faiblesses et la nécessité de « *penser autrement la robustesse, en la ramenant au niveau des interactions* »<sup>21</sup>.

Dans un contexte où les communicateurs publics ont de plus en plus de responsabilités, des règles existant à celles à (re) créer — de la morale à l'éthique, et où l'IA change tout ... sauf l'essentiel<sup>22</sup>, cet *essentiel réside* (au moins en partie) dans tout ce que nous avons essayé de déceler en le rendant visible.

De quoi donner à penser pour agir ...

<sup>19</sup> Une initiative de même nature, d'immersion sur le terrain, avait été prise en Italie après le tremblement de terre du 6 avril 2009 à L'Aquila, elle centrée sur la communication publique et la population victime : (sous la direction de) Rolando, Stefano. *L'Aquila e il terremoto. La popolazione, primo fattore della comunicazione pubblica. Un project work del Master MASPI IULM. Rivista Italiana di Comunicazione Pubblica*, 39/2010, pages12-20. Editions Franco Angeli, Milan.

<sup>20</sup> Ce que Crans-Montana dit du management GenZ : l'efficacité des réseaux auto-organisés ...et leurs angles morts. Une contribution de R. Delaye-Habermacher et G. Auer de la Chaire "Mutations et Agilités" de l'International Management School de Genève. Publié par FORBES, 22 janvier 2026. <https://www.forbes.fr/management/ce-que-crans-montana-dit-du-management-genz-lefficacite-des-reseaux-auto-organises-et-leurs-angles-morts/>

<sup>21</sup> Dutot A., Olivier D., Ponty J.-L. et Pigné Y. (Université Le Havre Normandie). *L'intelligence en essaim, de la nature aux algorithmes*. The Conversation, en ligne le 1er avril 2026. <https://theconversation.com/lintelligence-en-essaim-de-la-nature-aux-algorithmes-275250>

<sup>22</sup> L'IA a tout changé... (sauf) l'essentiel. Entretien de Philippe Warzée, directeur éditorial, avec le mathématicien et philosophe Luc de Branbandere. PUB (magazine), Bruxelles, avril 2026, pages 12-13.

# BEYOND THE SHOWCASE...

By Philippe Caroyez and Vincenzo Le Voci

« Remember the fragility of things.. »  
Fénelon<sup>1</sup>

Public communication and the departments in charge of it, as *institutions* and *organisations* in the sociological sense, tend to perpetuate themselves.

After half a century of institutionalisation (in their “modern” form), they are, however, no less prone to fragility, to use a fashionable concept that is more strategic than heuristic (having slipped from geriatric science to geopolitical speculation). It’s neither contradictory nor paradoxical... a strength can conceal more than one weakness.

Their *robustness* (not in itself, but as a degree achieved) must therefore be seen and questioned in the light of these fragilities.

It is, of course, resistance to change(s) *in itself*, but also:

- The absence of flexibility (communicative and organisational agility often incompatible with a bureaucratic and procedural situation);
- The tendency, just as much a part of the institution as of its organisations, inherited from political propaganda and the age of mass media and advertising, to be disembodied producers of general, legitimising information rather than genuine players in the communication link conversing with citizens, who are mainly looking for “*Anything that can be of help and support*”<sup>2</sup> — leading the French professional association Cap’Com to the conclusion that “*The solidity of public communication lies in its tangible usefulness*”<sup>3</sup>;
- In this context and out of necessity, the absence of any real consideration and responsibility for the *vulnerabilities* of citizens in general, and of specific groups, situations or environments in particular, if not sometimes even the *fabrication* of these vulnerabilities<sup>4</sup>;
- As a consistent consequence, the *massive* nature of public communication and, therefore, the lack of frugality in the means used and required (which are less and less compatible with ever-increasing budgetary restrictions and ever-more pressing social imperatives);
- A context of distrust, disinformation and misinformation that is not conducive to communication by the authorities. A context in which, more broadly speaking, opinions and demonstrations unfavourable to public services are not absent, whether quiet or more overt, going as far as forms of *hatred of civil servants*<sup>5</sup> ... which some do not hesitate to generate, maintain or exploit for ideological and political ends. This must be taken into account, all the more so as we can postulate that it responds — in some way — to forms of, if not *disgust for civil servants*, at least demotivation

among them;

- “*Reciprocal deafness*” in the authority-citizen relationship<sup>6</sup>;
- The ever-insurmountable prevalence of politics over that which should be held by *social demand*, and — perhaps as a result — the lack of systematic reporting from the executive to the legislative branch, and of effective evaluation of public communication activities and actions (which fall within the scope of public policy), and the consequent lack of in-depth *public debate* on these matters and issues, if not, at root, the very non-existence of a real, concerted and coordinated policy in the field, its objectives, organisation, means and future;
- A form of *discomfort* on the part of politicians (whether in office or not) with regard to public communication, and in turn with regard to those responsible for such communication, and their departments. This is an observation that will have to be revisited, but one that seems even more profound in recent years;

<sup>1</sup> Fénelon (François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, dit). *Les aventures de Télémaque*. Paris, 1699, page 109. [https://archives.ecole-alsacienne.org/CDI/pdf/1301/130125\\_FEN.pdf](https://archives.ecole-alsacienne.org/CDI/pdf/1301/130125_FEN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Baromètre de la communication locale*. Harris Interactive/ Epiceum general public survey, a study carried out in partnership with Cap’Com and La Poste Group, France, November 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Cap’Com. *Les Cahiers n°5. Une année de communication publique et territoriale*. Lyon, 2023, page 128.

<sup>4</sup> On these issues: (Edited by) Laborde A., Carayol V. Cousserand-Blin I. *Fabrique des vulnérabilités et communication organisationnelle*. Revue “Communication et Professionnalisation”, issue 17. Editions UCLouvain, February 2026, 198 pages. <https://ojs.uclouvain.be/index.php/comprofi/issue/view/9013>

<sup>5</sup> Gervais J., Lemerrier C., Pelletier W. *La Haine des fonctionnaires*. Editions Amsterdam, Paris, September 2024, 260 pages.

<sup>6</sup> In this respect, for Europe, see this interesting analysis and recommendations by the LLYC agency for the European Commission: “VDL 2.1. Single Voice, Fragmented Audience, Weak Reception” and the review by Michaël Malherbe, in his blog “Décrypter la communication européenne”, “Diagnostic VDL 2.1: anatomie d’une surdité réciproque”, 12 January 2026 <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/2026/01/12/diagnostic-vdl-2-1-anatomie-dune-surdite-reciproque>



- Uncertainty linked to current technological developments. To put it simply: the Internet and social networks have mainly affected the dissemination of information, while generative and agentic artificial intelligence and LLMs are also having an impact on its production, the way it is carried out and – consequently – on our professional tasks and skills, and even our occupations.

Since it is essential to turn the inevitable into an asset, let us positively consider that the reasoned and gradual integration of artificial intelligence into our organisations and practices could (should, if we force it) at least have the virtue that it implies a *detailed review* of, or even a form of *exposing*, our missions, task content, the taxonomy of our professional roles, functions and occupations, procedures, processes, actions, results, needs and expectations; without neglecting our values and ethics... in parallel – with the possibilities offered – to consider what can be automated (but certainly not exclusively) and, better still, enriched and introduced into our activities.

These are operations that are carried out without concession and in full transparency for and with the authority, support services (IT and HR), employees and stakeholders, and which should form part of a *roadmap*<sup>7</sup> that is made public and the subject of regular communications on its progress.

It's not going to be a *smooth ride*, and in the chorus of criticisms often heard and generally accepted in this field, let us add two more pitfalls.

Firstly, the existing *digital divide* (which is not merely generational), often pointed out when it comes to the *general public* (particularly in terms of access to information), but much more rarely identified within the civil service itself and among civil servants; the scarcity of specific, suitable and reliable IT tools; the delay and inadequacy of basic, ongoing or specialised training, and the failure to identify and take into account the new skills required by the managers of our departments and, more generally, HR departments, which have "*limited expertise in digital issues, such as the development of AI*"<sup>8</sup>.

In this context, as the OECD notes: "*The role of middle and executive-level managers is also changing, marked by increased involvement in communication and dialogue with citizens, as highlighted during the health crisis. These developments raise questions about support for these managers and clarification of their responsibilities. The transformation of managerial practices goes beyond the acquisition of technical skills: it also concerns the ability to lead, bring people together and embody a culture of co-operation*"<sup>9</sup>.

Despite some forward-looking attempts, which are still highly theoretical and hypothetical, we are yet to *actually* measure the changes that are emerging... but for all that, it's not the panacea many are hoping for, especially as the supposed robustness of artificial intelligence (the illusion of having the answer, if not the solution, to everything) is largely a delusion in the face of so many *fallibilities* in themselves and *vulnerabilities* for those who use them, and the questions they raise, particularly for public authority (ownership, sovereignty, environmental impact, bias, ethical problems, etc.).

Then there's the *illusion* – as we regularly read on public authority websites<sup>10</sup> – that artificial intelligence for public service (but still not generated by the *public service*!) would pave the way for personalised services for citizens, tailored to their needs. With regard to this element of discourse, to take up one of John Austin's concepts from the philosophy of language<sup>11</sup> and put it into a political *perspective*, we may doubt the real *performative will* of public administration in this area and its effective capacity to fully transform the *action of saying* into an *action of doing*.

Apart from confusing *personalised service* with an *interpersonal relationship with a service*, this is an incantatory assertion, based on a technical illusion, which is repeated as the means of communication evolve (from P.O. boxes to emails, call centres and mobile telephony, and now AI and agentic AI)... but which never seems to achieve its stated objective, because it's repeated over and over again!

<sup>7</sup> For interest, see: Bourgoin-Verdier Th., Alibert A., Bouligny J., Doré A., Forgues A. *Une feuille de route pour intégrer l'IA au travail parlementaire*. Editions de la Fondation Jean Jaurès, Paris, April 2026, 33 pages. Conducted by the Fondation Jean Jaurès and l'Agora des collaborateurs, publisher of the <https://www.emplois-politiques.fr> website (France), this study is based on the tasks performed by parliamentary staff at the French National Assembly, the French Senate and the European Parliament, through the study of a corpus of 239 job offers.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, this study is focused on France, but we make these observations on a much wider scale. For more on these points, see: OECD. *Developing a Resilient HR Function in the French Public Service: Addressing Digital, Ecological and Managerial Change*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2026. Quote taken from page 24. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a6bf832b-en>.

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2026). Op. cit. page 34. Emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the website of the (Belgian) Federal Public Service Policy and Support (equivalent to a ministry for the civil service or general affairs, depending on the country) states: "*Artificial intelligence (AI) is gradually revolutionising the Belgian public sector, paving the way for more personalised and efficient services, while making the administration more responsive. [We] invite you to discover how AI is being harnessed to build a smarter, connected administration that is attentive to citizens' needs.*" Emphasis added.

<https://bosa.belgium.be/fr/AI4Belgium/AI4GOV>

The cynical humour in (Georges) Wolinski's voice resonates: "*The government will listen to those who say nothing*" in *Les secrets d'un couple heureux* (Comic). Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 2003, page 9.

<sup>11</sup> Austin, John Langshaw. *Quand dire c'est faire*. Unpublished second edition. Editions du Seuil, Collection L'Ordre philosophique. Paris, May 2024, 264 pages.

Based on his observation that *"lack of clarity in communication and a lack of information often have as much impact as the content of a decision itself"*, the Belgian Federal Ombudsman (in his recent report to Parliament) points out that *"Reliable administrations mean proactive and comprehensible communication, likely to prevent uncertainty"* and, in line with what is noted here, prescribes that *"Administrations can never be a 'one-size-fits-all' solution". Citizens also expect empathy and consideration for their situation in practice*<sup>12</sup>;

- At the same time, a clear lack of reflection and action in the fields of *anticipatory governance and anticipatory innovation*, or even in the simple resilience of our administrative and communication systems. In contrast to what the OECD's Observatory of Public Sector Innovation promotes: an inability to *"consistently perceive, understand and act on the future as it emerges in the present"*<sup>13</sup>, or even, in our fields in particular, to conceive of innovation in the service of the *common good*, as *"a tool of public interest in service of a reform of public action and democratic renewal"*<sup>14</sup>;
- Albeit more diffuse, yet still insidious, a certain absence of a *culture of efficiency*, which is surely due to a number of phenomena: as in all organisations, the weight of habit and, in particular, the *return of the same* (periodic re-production); the occasional, even ephemeral nature of many communication initiatives; often political choice that has to be followed *no matter what*, and the resulting lack of accountability; very often, the lack of latitude given to senior civil servants and, in turn, given by them to their teams; individual appraisals and annual reports that are more a question of a mandatory rite of passage than of an actual *operational diagnosis*, obligatory but *piecemeal*, non-strategic use of public procurement contracts and, through the fragmentation of public procurement in the field of communications, an inability to position itself as a *major player* in the relevant economic markets and in the world of advertisers in the various media markets; the absence of long-term reflection and planning of resources and activities; etc.

These are all situations which generally result in a low capacity for adaptation and evolution, and therefore delays in development; an almost constant absence of systematic global *internal* evaluation of processes, actions, activities and results, and *external* evaluation of public communication policies; little pooling of resources and general coordination of services, actions and policies; weak purchasing strategies; the often moderate enthusiasm of agencies to work for our services, but conversely their very great dependence on private service providers, etc.

These are the main weaknesses we have identified.

We might add: sometimes a self-satisfied, purring gaze, uncritical and lacking in hindsight, on the part of the "establishment" and communicators themselves.

Even though it is based on experiential knowledge, the picture painted here is broad and, to a certain extent, admittedly *incriminating*. Nevertheless, it should be seen as a positive call, if not for a form of wake-up call, at least for critical reflection, for the benefit of our professions, services and activities... and

ultimately of our daily lives and those of the citizens we serve.

Consider Sylvia Serfaty, renowned mathematician, who – just as she recently entered the Académie des Sciences (of the Institut de France)<sup>15</sup> – published a book<sup>16</sup> to, as she puts it, *"go beyond the showcase that mathematics and mathematicians display of themselves"*<sup>17</sup> and in which – to quote the words of her publisher's preface – *"she recounts everyday life, the place of intuition and creativity, disappointments and frustrations, wanderings and illuminations"*<sup>18</sup>. But also, in the final chapter, she lucidly ponders the future of her profession in the face of AI, and says she's *"on the edge of a precipice"*, ready to mourn the loss of a way of doing mathematics.

In line with this *virtually* empathic benchmarking, with that which makes up our *daily lives*, we also dare to *go beyond the showcase*...

As we have seen – contrary to a certain reductive, and in excess, catastrophist or euphoric tendency – our attention must not be focused (as is all too often the case today) solely on the contributions and risks of generative and agentic AI to the public communication professions and activities... there are many other aspects and *fragilities* to which public communicators must also be particularly attentive.

And to put it in a somewhat mundane metaphor: maybe it's time to *turn the tables*... those we've been standing on!

Of course, it's not about change for change's sake, nor about *doing the same thing differently*. And, by analogy, at least since Bachelard's *epistemology*, we know that it's not just a question of knowledge, but also of recognising the obstacles (our own *fragilities*) and seeking the necessary ruptures.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Ombudsman (Belgium). *Annual report 2025: a reliable public service*. Brussels, April 2026, 101 pages. <https://www.federaalombudsman.be/en/annual-report-2025-a-reliable-public-service>

Report tabled and presented to the Chamber of Representatives of the Belgian Parliament, 22 April 2026.

Quotations are taken from the foreword, page 2. Emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup> Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OCDE). <https://oecd-opsi.org/work-areas/anticipatory-innovation-2/>

<sup>14</sup> Boscher, Benjamin and Pave, Xavier. *L'innovation à l'ère du bien commun*. Editions de la Fondation pour l'innovation politique, Paris, February 2018, 59 pages. Quote taken from page 37

<sup>15</sup> Académie des sciences (Institut de France), Paris. Press release dated 7 January 2026. *Eighteen new members of the French Academy of Sciences for 2026*. <https://www.academie-sciences.fr/en/press-release-eighteen-new-members-french-academy-sciences-2026>

<sup>16</sup> Serfaty, Sylvia. *Des équations personnelles*. Editions Flammarion, La collection scientifique, Paris, 2026, 224 pages.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, pages 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, page 4.

A team of Swiss anthropologists specialising in business management went to Crans-Montana immediately after the dramatic fire of New Year's Eve 2026<sup>19</sup>, with a view to analysing the behaviours observed among "generation Z" (1995-2010), who were particularly affected, and to draw lessons (cross-referenced with other existing studies) that could be applied to business management and its possible future evolution<sup>20</sup>.

It's a singular exercise, especially so since this generational characterisation is only of value as a *created category*, and has no sociological or anthropological relevance, either!

They make several statements, including this harsh observation: "*The dissociation between effective action and public communication somewhat contradicts the dogma of 'raising awareness' (...). For GenZ, trust is built by discreet action, not by declarations of intent*". And, in conclusion, "*(...) while institutions were activating their protocols, one generation was revealing others*". Among these protocols, in terms of (positive) organisational aspects, their analysis reveals: decentralised *ad-hoc* self-organisation, not dependent on central initiative or validation, and therefore *non-procedural*; the "*Swarm intelligence*" index; "*efficiency through invisibility*", without concern for recognition, identification or notoriety; a desire for active solidarity, mutual aid, etc.

Forward-looking thinking in our fields must also take an interest in such "attempted" analysis, and in more documented, in-depth studies on subjects such as cultural consumption and practices (including various media and networks), forms of sociability, participation and commitment, perceptions of institutions and human and social relations, relationships with authority, positions and expectations regarding politics and public administration, the notion of *living together*, rhetorical, dialogue and debate skills, communicative literacy, and knowing how to take advantage of such skills in order to question, *at the same time*, the evolution of socio-economic situations,

expectations, aspirations, values as well as the behaviour of citizens and that of our collaborators and future collaborators, the way we direct our services, professional roles, training and recruitment, processes, channels and activities and, finally, *the way we handle public communication*.

By taking an interest in these subjects and analyses and their contributions, we can also observe our weaknesses and assess them objectively, without concession, which can provide us with a basis and direction for change.

This is obviously a difficult and lengthy process, but one that we believe is essential.

Of course, there are contingent factors to take into account, and many of the levers lie in the hands of politicians, but it's a path worth taking... a path that is merely sketched out here.

It's up to every one of us, every public communicator, to play our part.

In this critical approach, one element runs through the analysis, as a form of pragmatic necessity and — transcended — as an ethical imperative: the need, the will and the quest to *make the invisible visible*.

From our invisible citizens and conditions of existence, to the "remit" of said *artificial intelligence* and its biases, the quest for alignment with social demands and the attention we need to pay to our own principles of organisation and action, our weaknesses and the need to "*think of robustness differently, by bringing it in line with the level of interactions*"<sup>21</sup>.

In a context where public communicators have ever-increasing responsibilities, from existing rules to those yet to be (re)created, from morals to ethics, and where AI is changing everything — except the essential<sup>22</sup> — this very *essential* lies (at least in part) in everything we've tried to detect by making it visible.

Food for thought, and inspiration to act...

<sup>19</sup> A similar initiative, involving immersion in the field, was taken in Italy after the earthquake of 6 April 2009 in L'Aquila, focusing on public communication and the victimised population: (Edited by) Rolando, Stefano. *L'Aquila e il terremoto. La popolazione, primo fattore della comunicazione pubblica. Un project work del Master MASPI IULM*. Rivista Italiana di Comunicazione Pubblica, 39/2010, pages 12-20. Editions Franco Angeli, Milan.

<sup>20</sup> *Ce que Crans-Montana dit du management GenZ : l'efficacité des réseaux auto-organisés...et leurs angles morts*. A contribution by R. Delaye-Habermacher and G. Auer from the "Mutations and Agilities" Chair at the International Management School Geneva. Published by FORBES, 22 January 2026. <https://www.forbes.fr/management/ce-que-crans-montana-dit-du-management-genz-lefficacite-des-reseaux-auto-organises-et-leurs-angles-morts/>

<sup>21</sup> Dutot A., Olivier D., Ponty J.-L. and Pigné Y. (Université Le Havre Normandie). *L'intelligence en essaim, de la nature aux algorithmes*. The Conversation, online, 1 April 2026. <https://theconversation.com/lintelligence-en-essaim-de-la-nature-aux-algorithmes-275250>

<sup>22</sup> *L'IA a tout changé... (sauf) l'essentiel*. Interview by Philippe Warzée, Editorial Director, with mathematician and philosopher Luc de Brabandere. PUB (magazine), Brussels, April 2026, pages 12-13.

All quotations in this text for which no official English translation is available, have been translated by the authors.



# CLUB MEETINGS

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# Plenary Meeting



Madrid, 10-12 June 2026

Meeting languages: Spanish, French and English  
(interpretation provided)

Meeting venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Calle  
General Pardiñas n.55, Madrid

## Provisional agenda (as of 4.6.2026)

Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026 ■ 19:00-21:00

13

19:00-21:00

**Informal welcome gathering Introductory session in presence of  
political authorities and/or Ambassadors of EU MS to Spain**

(Venue: Bienmesabe Marqués de Salamanca, C/ Príncipe de Vergara, 43)

Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> 2026

8:30 – 9:00

**Guests' registration**

9:00 – 9:30

**Welcome statements - representatives of the hosting Spanish  
authorities and the European Institutions**

- Antonio Asencio Guillén, Director-General for Communications, Public Diplomacy and Social Media, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Cooperation of Spain
- Vincenzo Le Voci, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice
- María Andrés Marín, Director of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Spain
- Daniel Calleja Crespo, Head of the European Commission Representation in Spain (TBC)

9:30 – 9:45

**Key address – objectives of the plenary**

- Stefano Rolando, President of the Club of Venice

9:45 – 11:00

## Plenary session I – Round Table

**"Government communication challenges: strengthening democratic Resilience to Disinformation and Misinformation"**

- Anti-FIMI strategies in progress: detecting malicious sources, monitoring societal risks and coordinating prebunking and debunking activities
- Identifying vulnerabilities, reinforcing capacity building strategies and resilience comms interoperability
- Ibero-American summit 2026: Disinformation campaigns in Spanish language
- Building alliances and optimising existing synergies at national and cross-border level vs FIMI

### Moderator:

- **Mario Scharfbillig**, European Commission, Joint Research Centre

### Key Note speakers:

- **Marc Marginedas**, journalist at *El Periódico*

### Panellists:

- **Mónica Colomer**, Spain, Director-General for the Promotion of Spanish in the World, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Cooperation
- **Guillermo López**, Deputy Director General for the Promotion of Spanish Language in the World (Spanish MFA)
- **Cristina Manzano**, Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB)
- **Yevhen Fedchenko**, Ukraine, Co-Founder and Chief Editor, Stopfake.org
- **Mykolas Katkus**, Lithuania, CEO and Co-Founder of Repsense

11:00 – 11:15

*Coffee break*

11:30

### Address by:

- **José Manuel Albares**, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation

12:00 – 13:00

- **Alessandra De Marco**, Italy, Director-General, Department of Press and Publishing, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **Carlos Rullan**, Community manager and expert of disinformation and misinformation dynamics, European Parliament Liaison Office in Spain
- **Inga Höglund**, European Commission, Deputy Head of Unit, Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation
- **Péter Kreko**, Policy Leader Fellow, Florence School of Transnational Governance; Director of Political Capital Institute and Head of HDMO-Lakmusz, Hungary (from remote)
- **Saman Nazari**, Counter Disinformation Network Coordinator & Influence Operations Researcher, Alliance4Europe

13:00 – 14:15

*Lunch and family picture*

14:15 – 17:00

## Plenary session II

**"Digital transformation, Artificial Intelligence influence on modern communication – governance and societal cohesion challenges in times of increasing geopolitical uncertainties"**

- State of the art :
  - Developing internal know-how and expertise and investing in literacy to extend global digital inclusion
  - Analysing ongoing technological processes and potential risks and opportunities from AI's use for digital outreach strategies
- Outreaching strategies
  - Managing AI impact on public communication: Identifying/Building sustainable digital models and preserving ethics when building AI infrastructures
  - Developing Interconnectivity and inclusiveness and cooperation with trustworthy digital platforms

#### Moderator:

- **Sophie Sacilotto**, Research and Data Analyst at Debunk.org and Lead Analyst for the FIMI Defenders of Election Integrity project

#### Key Note speakers:

- **Aibek Iliasov**, Senior Research Director, [M&C Saatchi World Services](#)

#### Panellists:

- **Alejandro González**, Directorate for National Security (DSN), President of the Government Office
- Representatives from national governments
- **Virginia Padovese**, Newsguard, Managing Editor and VP Partnerships, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (from remote)
- **Janis Sarts**, Director of the NATO Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, Riga
- **Clara Jiménez Cruz**, CEO and Co-founder of [Maldita](#) (fact checker agency)
- **Guillermo Infantes**, [NEWTRAL](#) media group, specialized in disinformation
- **Augustine McMahon**, Digitalis, Associate in the Digital Risk team, OSINT specialist
- **Anthony Zacharzewski**, Founder and Director of The Democratic Society

#### Q&A session

15:45 - 16:00

*coffee break*

17:00 - 17:15

### First day summing-up - issues emerged

(Club Steering Group member + Spanish representative)

17:30 : 19:30

### Extraordinary session – round table format meeting “Good Information For A Strong Democracy: challenges of today and tomorrow around epistemic security, information regulation and the need for citizen participation”

organized by DEMSOC and INDIGO TRUST in cooperation with the Club of Venice

The two panels of this session will elaborate on good information for a strong democracy, with particular attention to the role of government communications in today's evolving information environment, especially the challenges around epistemic security, information regulation, and the need for meaningful citizen participation.

The aim of the session is to raise the importance of government communications in ensuring epistemic security and safeguarding quality of information for democracy, and to identify pathways for future collaboration.

### 17:30 – 17:35: Opening & Framing

**Anthony Zacharzewski (Chair):** Why epistemic security matters now (politically and institutionally), set within the context of 50 years of Spanish democracy.

#### Panels' focus:

##### 17:35-18:30 Panel 1 – The challenge

Strong democracy needs good information, but information alone is not enough if we cannot work from a common base that truth exists and should be sought out through debate and inquiry. FIMI builds on a desire to undermine the existence of agreed truth, not only by presenting alternative truths. What are the steps that government communicators and civil society take to ensure that we preserve the foundations of democracy at every level, and in every space?



17:30 : 19:30

**Chair:**

- **Anthony Zacharzewski** (Demsoc) & **Erik den Hoedt** (CoV Vice President)

**Contributions:**

- **Katherine de Vries** (IE University): The challenge of populism to truth
- **Iñigo García**: Linking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spanish democracy to today's information challenges
- **Inga Rosinska** (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Director of Information and Outreach, DG Communication and Information): liaising with young people and investing in co-creation
- **Tom Lillywhite**: Challenges for government communicators
- **William Perrin** (Indigo Trust): Summing up - Philanthropy, civil society, and epistemic security at the European level.

**20' Q&A****18:30-19:20 Panel 2 – Solutions**

How can governments and civil society work together to rebuild shared narratives, protect democratic discourse and build citizen engagement in a fragmented information environment? Looking at the four solution areas - better regulation, better public information, better hyperlocal information, stranger networks for democracy. How can governments and civil society can strengthen synergies and collaborate more concretely (focus on possible developments within the Club/Demsoc framework and relations with international partners and scientific communities)

**Chair:**

- **Anthony Zacharzewski**

**Contributions:**

- **Salomé Herce** (Spain, State Secretariat for Communication): Government communication against hate speech and disinformation.
- **Karin Christensen**: Modern approaches to government communication
- **María González** (Futuro en Común): Role of civil society, AI and Human Rights, transparency and accountability
- **Marie Whelan** (Policy Analyst, OECD – Innovative, Digital and Open Government Division / Public Governance Directorate)
- **Sophie Sacilotto** (Debunk.org): Information integrity, democratic resilience, and responses to online manipulation and influence operations

**15' Q&A****19:20 – 19:30: Closing Remarks:**

- **Anthony Zacharzewski**: Synthesis and pathways for future collaboration.
- **Vincenzo Le Voci**: Reflections from the Club of Venice side

20:30

*Dinner*

(Venue: Palacio de Santa Cruz, Plaza de la Provincia 1, Madrid (28012))

## Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2026 (9:15-13:00) - Plenary meeting – session III

08:45 – 09:15

**Guests' registration**

09:15 – 09:45

**Joint interventions from**

- representatives from the governments of Spain and Portugal
- representatives from the European Parliament Liaison Offices and European Commission representations in Spain and Portugal (TBC) celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the two countries' EU membership

09:45 - 12:45

## Plenary session III

### "Crisis Communication and crisis management" (round table based on case studies)

- Lessons learned from recent crises in Europe and overseas: roles, responsibilities and accountability (information sharing and strategic communication)
- The three "T" formula: timeliness, transparency and trust
- The crucial impact of independent reports and cooperation with scientific communities
- Growing geo-political challenges and risks of communication failures

#### Moderator:

- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

#### Key Note speakers:

- **Rolando Marini**, Vice-Rector of the University for Foreigners of Perugia, Italy
- **Nicholas Cull**, Professor of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communications (from remote)

#### Panellists:

- **Antón Leis**, Director-General of the Spanish Agency of Cooperation and Development (AECID)
- **Nicolás López Torres**, Spain, Deputy Director-General for Communications at the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge
- A Representative from the UK
- **Viktoriia Romaniuk**, Ukraine, Director at Mohyla School of Journalism NaUKMA, Deputy Chief Editor of Stopfake.org
- **James Dennison**, Social and Political Scientist, European University Institute and Harvard University
- **Dr Lucia Anne Mullen Bristow**, Associate Scholar, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security; Lead Integrator, GP Counter WMD Disinformation Initiative (from remote)
- **Yves Stevens**, Belgium, Head of Communication at the National Crisis Centre, Chairman of the EU IPCR CCN

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10:45 - 11:15

*coffee break + new family picture*

12:45 - 13:00

## Closing Session

- **Antonio Asencio Guillén**, Director-General for Communications, Public Diplomacy and Social Media, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Cooperation of Spain
- **Alberto Gago**, Director of the Spanish Agency for the Supervision of Artificial Intelligence
- **Erik den Hoedt**, Netherlands, Manager and Communication Expert, Ministry of General Affairs, Vice President of the Club of Venice
- Reflections on the issues emerged during the plenary meeting
- Planning for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2026: key-events:
  - **8-9 October 2026: stratcom seminar, London, UK**, M&C Saatchi headquarters
  - **20-21 October 2026 (Montenegro) (dates to be confirmed)**: seminar on communicating Western Balkans agenda and relations between public communicators and the media sector
  - **10-11 December: plenary (Venice) - plenary meeting** - celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Club of Venice and presentation of the new publication (compendium on public communication and public diplomacy trends in Europe)
  - **Work in synergy with international partner organizations** (OECD, Council of Europe, NATO, ICMPD, SEECOM, SEEMO, DEMSOC, CAP'COM, DEBUNK.ORG, university pools...)

13:00 - 14:15

*Lunch*

14:30

**Social/Cultural event organized by the hosting Spanish authorities: Visit to Reina Sofia Museum**

# International Seminar



Rome, Italy ■ 6-7 May 2026



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri  
Dipartimento per gli Affari Europei

**CAP**  
**COM** **LE RÉSEAU** DE LA  
COMMUNICATION  
PUBLIQUE  
ET TERRITORIALE



## Final Agenda<sup>1</sup>

**Synergies in Communicating Europe: fostering young people and civil society engagement and triggering cooperation with scientific communities**

18

### Day 1 - Wednesday, 6 May 2026 afternoon

Venue: European Parliament ■ Liaison Office in Italy – Piazza Venezia 11, 2nd floor, Rome

14:15

**Arrival and registration**

14:30-14:45

**Welcome/Opening remarks and scene settings**

- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice
- **Laura Cavallo**, Director-General, Italian Department for European Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **Carlo Corazza**, Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Italy
- **Claudio Casini**, Head of the European Commission Representation in Italy
- **Caroline Grand (Cap'Com)**, Communication Director, University of La Rochelle, France

<sup>1</sup> meeting will be conducted in English (French interpretation provided on 7 May 2026).

14:45-16:30

## Round table – session I

- Sharing best practices for cooperation with EU institutions and raising public awareness and participation.
- Sharing concrete methods of cooperation with the scientific communities and with the media sector.
- Bridging the digital divide: developing training on digital communication and raising digital media literacy standards.

### Moderator:

- **Prof. Marinella Belluati**, University of Turin

### Panellists:

- **Prof. Gea Ducci**, University of Urbino Carlo Bo
- **Caroline Grand (Cap'Com)**, Communication Director, University of La Rochelle, France
- **Ivana Crnic**, Croatia, Head of the Public Relations Department, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
- **Nikolina Lakic**, Montenegro, Head of the Public Relations Unit, Ministry of Finance
- **Lucie Sýkorová**, Chair of the Supervisory Board, European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), Prague
- **Prof. Giuseppe Macca**, Kore University, Enna (from remote)
- **Prof. Arno Scharl**, Managing Partner, WebLyzard technology, Modul University Vienna (from remote)

16:30-16:45

*coffee break*

16:45-18:30

## Round table – session II

- The evolving digital environment and transformation of the public sphere.
- AI exploitation, social networks, threats to the media developments and impact on information provision.
- Screening the profile and ownership of information and communication sources.
- Safeguarding ethic models and building trustworthy communication.

### Moderator:

- **Prof. Alessandro Lovari**, University of Cagliari

### Panellists:

- **Prof. Mariaeugenia Parito**, University of Messina
- **Prof. Marina Caporale**, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
- **Mary Keenan**, Ireland, Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services Division, Department of the Taoiseach
- **Gabrielė Nieckyte-Lozinske**, Deputy Coreper II Spokesperson, Strategic Communication Coordinator, Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU
- **Natalie Maroun**, Cap'Com, International Risk communication and Crisis management strategist, EU Climate Pact Ambassador, Chief of Staff of the Mayor of Bois-Colombes
- **Krzysztof Chojnowski**, Polish Local Media Association (Stowarzyszenie Mediów Lokalnych)(from remote)
- **Malak Altaeb**, Operational Coordinator, DebunkEU.org
- **Laura Ferrari**, Public Affairs Specialist, The Good Lobby
- **Roberta Carlini**, Assistant Professor, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute (from remote)



## Day 2 - Thursday, 7 May 2026 morning\*

Venue: Sapienza University • Congress Hall – Via Salaria 113, Rome

09:15

### Arrival and registration

09:30-09:45

### Welcome/Opening remarks and scene settings

- **Elisabetta Marchesini**, Italy, Communication Officer, Department for European Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **Prof. Luca Dezi**, Head of the Coris Department, Sapienza University of Rome Prof. Maria Romana Allegri, Coordinator of BEST Project
- **Prof. Christian Ruggiero**, EuroMedia Ownership Monitor

09:45-11:15

### Round table – session III

- Strategic comms planning and civil society empowerment in progress: the role of national associations of public communicators.
- Reaching out and engaging young people (university projects, national fora, policy-related platforms).
- Optimising behavioural trends' research analysis.
- Producing and updating reusable content for trustworthy interactive networks.

#### Moderator:

- **Prof. Lucia D'Ambrosi**, University of Rome

#### Scene setting/Keynote address:

- **Giampiero Gramaglia** (journalist)

#### Panellists:

- **Prof. Hans-Jörg Trenz**, Scuola Normale di Pisa
- **Leda Guidi**, President of Compubblica
- **Yves Charmont**, Délégué général Cap'Com
- **Prof. Rolando Marini**, Vice-Rector of the University for Foreigners of Perugia, Italy
- **Giacomo Baiocchi**, Digital Leader, European Commission Representation in Italy
- **Vladimir Milosev**, Governing Board President, National Youth Council, Serbia (from remote)
- **Prof. Emese Pogany**, University of Debrecen (from remote)
- **Francesco Marchionni**, Programme Manager, Knowledge of Society (Parma European Youth Capital 2027)

11:15-11:30

*coffee break*

14:45-16:30

## Round table – session IV

- Seeking synergies in promoting European identity and reinforcing outreach and inclusiveness.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion in public communication (DEICom project)
- Cooperating in a structured dialogue with European networks, based on realistic participatory strategies.
- Facilitating proactive engagement at regional and local level when preparing and implementing communication campaigns and EU-financed academic projects.

### Moderator:

- **Yves Charmont**, Délégué général Cap'Com and Vincenzo LE VOICI, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

### Panellists:

- **Mattia De Crescenzo**, Italy, Head of the Communications Office, Department for Press and Publishing, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **Nicolas Cazes**, France, Communication Director, Département des Pyrénées atlantiques
- **Prof. Katerina Veljanovska Blazhevsk**a, University of Skopje
- **Prof. Cesare Buquicchio**, Journalist and Scientific Director of CRESPI, University of Pisa
- **Anthony Zacharzewski**, Founder and President of The Democratic Society
- **Prof. Evandro Oliveira**, LabCom – Universidade da Beira Interior
- **Prof. Christian Ruggiero**, rep. of EuroMedia Ownership Monitor
- **Lorenzo Robustelli**, Editorial Director of *EUnews*, University of Perugia (from remote)

13:00

## Conclusion

- **Prof. Paola Marsocci**, Sapienza University
- **Yves Charmont**, Délégué général Cap'Com
- **Ana María Izquierdo Pliego**, Subdirectora General de la Oficina de Información Diplomática, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Cooperation (outline of Madrid plenary meeting of the Club of Venice on 11-12 June)
- **Vincenzo LE VOICI**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

13:30

## Buffet lunch



# Outcome

Rome, 6-7 May 2026

The seminar organised in Rome on 6 and 7 May 2026 in close co-operation with the Department for Foreign Affairs of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Minister, Cap'Com, the European Parliament Liaison Office in Italy and the Sapienza University of Rome was focused on strengthening synergies in Communicating Europe, in particular on fostering young people and civil society engagement and triggering cooperation with scientific communities.

Approximately 90 participants from over 25 countries, also including countries candidate to the EU membership such as Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, EU institutions, international organisations, media representatives and media research monitoring centres, external experts from the strategic advisory sector, the academic world, national associations of public communicators, media research institutes and observatories and digital platforms convened to discuss how to reinforce cooperation to face the increasing challenges linked to the geopolitics developments and to exploit digital innovations to build stronger synergies in Communicating the European values.

The evolving digital environment, its increasing impact on public communication, the transformation of the public sphere and the need to [re]build trustworthy communication while safeguarding ethic models were at the centre of discussion.

The round tables of the seminar focused on the following topics:

- Sharing best practices for cooperation with EU institutions and raising public awareness and participation.
- Sharing concrete methods of cooperation with the scientific communities and with the media sector.
- Bridging the digital divide: developing training on digital communication and raising digital media literacy standards.
- AI exploitation, social networks, threats to the media developments and impact on information provision.
- Screening the profile and ownership of information and communication sources.
- Strategic comms planning and civil society empowerment in progress: the role of national associations of public communicators.
- Reaching out and engaging young people (university projects, national fora, policy-related platforms).
- Optimising behavioural trends' research analysis.
- Producing and updating reusable content for trustworthy interactive networks.
- Seeking synergies in promoting European identity and reinforcing outreach and inclusiveness.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion in public communication (DEICom project)
- Cooperating in a structured dialogue with European networks, based on realistic participatory strategies.
- Facilitating proactive engagement at regional and local level when preparing and implementing communication campaigns and EU-financed academic projects.





Rich thematic panels focused on how to develop analytical capacities to detect vulnerabilities and opportunities for strategic planning on the run, setting valuable key parameters to ascertain the public opinion trends and reporting on citizens' interest in governmental and institutional information provision, on social media trends, on polarized dialogues and on the possibility to join forces in increasing authenticity standards in communicating Europe.

In this context, it was agreed that the ideal approach to adopt when setting up communication strategies and organising ad hoc campaigns requires stronger ties with the scientific communities (to guarantee trustworthy information) and increased cooperation with platforms of young specialists dedicated to the monitoring of digital dialogue and digital disinformation threats.

The need for reliable, comparable and verifiable information was also stressed in a contribution from ethics4growth focused on the impact of "greenwashing" on citizens'/consumers' trust and on their behavioural change.

Furthermore, due attention was drawn to how to organise multidimensional and multilevel public communication of sustainability, investing in collaborative efforts to integrate, coordinate and cross-fertilize communication across complex policy ecosystems, bearing in mind the central importance of institutional public policy communication as a service to the citizen, a true commitment to the community (contribution by Professor Gea Ducci, from the University of Urbino).

In this context, the multilevel approach to be sought by public communicators should be based on the following fundamental steps, perfectly fit for any priority policy:

- **Overcoming fragmentation:** shift away from an exclusively policy-based focus and sector-specific communications, while encouraging collaboration between local governments
- **Focusing on and promoting sustainable solutions** emphasising a **multidimensional approach** (for instance, in the framework of development, focusing on the wide variety of the Agenda 2030 and Paris Agreement 2050 goals, and considering the different areas/types of sustainability
- **The responsible use of AI** and full awareness of the risks of platformization and of information disorder in the contemporary public sphere (mis/disinformation, polarization, toxicity/incivility)

- **The added value of cross-border strategies** based on full knowledge of the dynamics of territories that undergo the same challenges and share the same socio-economic objectives and targets (contribution from Nicolas Cazes, Director of Communication at the Department of Atlantic Pirenees).

The two-days agenda also included several projects aiming at promoting an inclusive approach in public communication, interconnectivity and the reinforcement of the collaborative framework by exploiting the boundless potential of generative AI (such as the project MULTIPOD (Multilingual and Multicultural Spaces for Political Deliberation, presented by Professor Arno Scharl from the Modul University of Vienna, based on a multilingual and cross-cultural approach to support collaboration in a European Public Space for Citizen Deliberation. Such project develops new methods to liaise existing communities and increase the transparency of political deliberation. It also develops generative AI methods for cross-cultural transformation and visualisation, endowed with a visual analytics dashboard will help identify communication patterns (for example, inclusion and exclusion strategies or inherent biases).

The success of the seminar is due to the professionalism of the speakers and the excellent quality and variety of all the contributions, which will fuel the debate at upcoming events organized by the Venice Club.

Follow-up discussions are envisaged at the Club's future plenary meeting foreseen in Madrid on 11-12 June (in close cooperation with the Spanish governmental authorities), with the representative from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Cooperation outlining the main topics foreseen on the agenda), followed by three events in the 2nd semester of 2026: a seminar on crisis communication and digital comms strategies in London (early October), a seminar in Montenegro focused on communicating the Western Balkans agenda and the relations between public communication and the media sector (late October) and the plenary meeting of Venice on 10-11 December that will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Club of Venice.



# 9<sup>th</sup> StratCom Seminar



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA  
Ministry of Foreign and  
European Affairs



Zagreb, 12-14 March 2026

Venue: Croatian State Archives, Marulić Square 21,  
Zagreb

## Agenda<sup>1</sup>

### Day 1 - Thursday, 12 March 2026 ■ 18:15-20:00 ■ Evening Reception

Venue: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs ■ Đorđićeva 4, Zagreb

18:00

#### Delegates arrival

18:15-18:45

#### Welcome speeches

- **Gordan Grlić Radman**, Croatia, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
- **Zvonimir-Frka-Petešić**, Croatia, Head of the Prime Minister's Office, Member of the Steering Committee of the Club of Venice
- **H.E. José Ramón García Hernández**, Ambassador of Spain to Croatia

#### Opening remarks

- **Davor Božinović**, Croatia, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior

18:45-18:55

#### Outline of the agenda and objectives of the seminar

- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General, Club of Venice

18:55-20:00

*Cocktail reception and networking at the Ministry's Reception Hall*

<sup>1</sup> This meeting will be conducted in English and held under the Chatham House Rule.



## Day 2 - Friday, 13 March 2026 ■ 09:00–18:30

Venue: Croatian State Archives ■ Marulić square 21, Zagreb

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08:30–09:00

### Delegate arrival and registration

*Coffee on arrival*

09:00–09:15

### Opening remarks and scene-setting of the three main themes and their impact on communications

- Digital tools as amplifiers in strategic communications: from learning to regulating
- Cross-border synergies in resilience-building: from understanding to influencing
- Regional cooperation on security reputation and public diplomacy: from engaging to branding
- **Andrea Vodanović**, Deputy Spokesperson, Croatian Government
- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General, Club of Venice

09:15–09:30

### Keynote

- Communication, trust and outreach capacity – the way ahead
- **Erik den Hoedt**, Netherlands, Communications Manager, Ministry of General Affairs, Vice President of the Club of Venice (including on line connection with **Yevhen Fedchenko**, Ukraine, co-Founder and Editor in chief of stopfake.org)

### Section 1

Artificial intelligence and algorithmic platforms are reshaping how information is created, distributed and interpreted, while the EU works to regulate and navigate an evolving global legal framework. This theme explores the opportunities and risks of the fast-changing digital environment – from AI-driven analysis and content prediction to the challenges of deepfakes, algorithmic bias and audience fragmentation. Panels will consider how communicators can integrate AI responsibly, ensure transparency, strengthen resilience, and remain trusted in an information landscape increasingly shaped by automation, complexity and FIMI, including its impact on EU foreign affairs.

**Panel 1: LEARNING****Digital Tools as Amplifiers in Strategic Communications: A Users' Manual**

- Assessing emerging AI capabilities
- Preparing for, and helping to shape, Europe's evolving digital ecosystem
- Government and institutional vulnerabilities and opportunities
- Anticipating and preventing disruption
- Shared challenges: autonomous agents, multimodal systems, quantum-enhanced models

AI is transforming how European governments and institutions analyse narratives, understand audiences and communicate across multilingual digital environments. This panel will examine AI as a strategic amplifier that can enhance credibility, accelerate insight generation and strengthen Europe's ability to defend its information space while upholding democratic values.

**Moderator:**

- **Ivan Marić**, Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Croatia)

**Panellists:**

- **Simon Piatek**, Managing Director, The New Imagination Lab
- **Vedran Bajer**, former Country Director, Microsoft Croatia; Director, Wonderful (start-up)
- **Valentina Zadrija**, Doctor of Science, Tech lead AI/ML, Yaak AI GmbH
- **Dr Holly Marquez**, Senior Behavioural scientist, and **Neil Ilan Lavie-Driver**, PhD, Intern, Behavioural Team, UK Cabinet Office, Government Communications Service (GCS)
- **Amra Ducic**, Austria, Federal Chancellery, Head of Department, Digital Communications
- **Colonel Margus Valdre**, Deputy Director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga
- **Krzysztof Chojnowski**, Poland, representative from the Polish Local Media Association (Stowarzyszenie Mediów Lokalnych)

**Key questions:**

- Which digital tools offer the greatest strategic advantage for narrative mapping, sentiment detection and real-time monitoring?
- How can governments ensure transparency and accountability when integrating AI into official communication workflows?
- Which upcoming digital disruptions are most likely to reshape public communication and institutional credibility?
- How can foresight tools support proactive planning, risk mitigation and scenario-based preparation?

*coffee break*

**Panel 2: REGULATING****European Narratives in Digital Future: Security, Identity and Values within the EU Legal Framework**

- Digital tools are redesigning how Europeans consume information, form opinions and develop identities – particularly among younger audiences
- A lack of strategic vision for communications and outreach in times of acute geopolitical challenge can erode trust in public authorities and weaken democratic resilience
- European governments and institutions should strengthen communications, media literacy and expertise, and pool capacities for faster, more agile delivery

The challenge is to communicate Europe's values – solidarity, dignity, sustainability and democracy – through compelling, future-oriented narratives. This panel examines how to craft messages that resonate with younger generations and reinforce a shared European identity, while supporting a safer online environment.

**Moderator:**

- **Andrea Čović Vidović**, Deputy Head of Representation and Head of Media Team, European Commission Representation in Croatia

**Panellists:**

- **Irena Petrijević**, Croatia, State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior
- **Jasna Vaniček Fila**, Member of the independent regulator of the Electronic Media Council of Croatia
- **Lea Zuber**, European Commission, Deputy Head of Unit, Digital Service Act, DG CNECT
- **Sophie Sacilotto**, Research and Data Analyst, Debunk.org

**Key questions:**

- Which narrative frames best express European values in today's digital cultural environment?
- How can the EU strengthen a sense of belonging among diverse, digitally native audiences?
- How can storytelling counter fragmentation and nurture trust in democratic institutions?
- How can the Digital Services Act and other EU initiatives strengthen transparency and limit manipulation by AI-driven content?
- Which capabilities must EU governments and institutions build to remain agile and future-ready?

*Family photo**Lunch***Section 2 - Democratic Resilience, Trust and Values in an Era of Polarisation**

Polarisation, populism and declining institutional trust challenge the foundations of democratic governance. This theme focuses on how strategic communications can safeguard democratic resilience through transparency, credibility and ethical engagement. Panels will explore how to counter disinformation, navigate value-sensitive debates, protect freedom of expression, maintain neutrality and communicate effectively during crises. The emphasis is on restoring public confidence and reinforcing the social fabric at a time when extremes increasingly shape mainstream discourse.



**Panel 3: UNDERSTANDING****From Crisis to Continuity: When the Extreme Becomes the Norm**

As crises, uncertainty and emotionally charged discourse become more frequent – and increasingly normalised – effective communication is critical to maintaining public trust and democratic stability. This session explores how institutions can deliver clear, coherent and reliable messaging under pressure, counter polarisation and radicalisation in online spaces during moments of heightened tension, and sustain trust over time. Drawing on lessons from emergency communications and digital discourse, the discussion will also consider how strategic preparedness and responsible moderation can strengthen societal resilience and shared understanding across Member States.

**Moderator:**

- **Erik den Hoedt**, Vice President of the Club of Venice
- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

**Panellists:**

- **Andrea Liebman**, Senior Analyst/Spokesperson, Swedish Psychological Defence Agency
- **Gabrijela Kišiček**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb
- **Michał Staniszewski**, Poland, StratCom expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Rachael Piltch-Loeb**, Professor of public health emergency preparedness and response and risk communication, City of New York University, USA (from remote)
- **H.E. Siniša Grgić**, Ambassador of Croatia to Sweden and Latvia
- **Nevena Wahl**, Advisor to the Director of Media and Communication, DG COMM, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU

**Key questions:**

- Which communication principles help ensure credibility and calm in fast-moving emergencies?
- How can governments and institutions coordinate narratives across platforms, languages and borders?
- How do government communication services cooperate with scientific communities and national crisis centres?
- Which lessons from past crises can inform stronger strategies for future national preparedness and EU-coordinated readiness?
- How can public communicators respond to polarising narratives without amplifying them?
- How can cooperation with civil society be strengthened?
- Which strategies can counter the normalisation of extremist rhetoric in digital spaces?
- How can governments and institutions strengthen societal cohesion amid rising division?

*Coffee break***Workshop****Situational Awareness: Artificial Intelligence in Crisis Communication - Case Studies**

- **M&C Saatchi World Services (Pippa Gordon)**, Associate Director; Dr. Elisa Chami-Castaldi, Strategy Director; Liam Webber, Regional Director
- **Determ d.o.o.**, Croatia (Ivor Bihar, CEO; Antun Tomašević, Chief Products Officer)

**Panel 4: INFLUENCING****Behavioural Dynamics of Communication: Who Is Influencing a New Generation of Europeans**

Young Europeans interact with information in ways shaped by rapid visual exposure, digital saturation and evolving cognitive habits. This discussion brings together behavioural science, social research and design expertise to explore how institutions can build meaningful engagement, using evidence-based methods that remain respectful of autonomy and democratic values.

**Moderator:**

- **Krešimir Macan**, Communications Expert

**Panellists:**

- **Agnieszka Lipinska**, Head of the Centre of Disinformation Analysis (NASK), Poland
- **Erik Brezovec**, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Croatian Studies; expert in the use of AI in education
- **Iva Ivanković**, Croatia, State Secretary, Ministry of Science, Education and Youth
- **Dario Marčac**, Co-Founder of Crew Media
- **Larissa Leonhard and Ruth Wendt**, Media and Communication Department, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany (from remote) and Johanna Strohm, Outreach and Policy Officer, Lie Detectors
- **Konrad Kiljan**, Digital and EU Policy Law Expert, CEE Digital Democracy Watch
- **Maryia Sadouskaya-Komlach**, Global Engagement Strategist, Free Press Unlimited, Amsterdam

**Key questions:**

- How should EU messages be framed and structured to resonate with digitally native attention habits?
- Which visual forms (colour, shape and composition) best support comprehension and emotional connection among younger audiences – and how are these insights applied in practice, including to reach vulnerable groups?
- How are narratives and influence shaped by security challenges in regions neighbouring the EU (e.g. the Baltic Sea, the Arctic, the Western Balkans and Ukraine)
- How can behavioural insights be used ethically to promote democratic engagement and strengthen a shared European identity?
- Who are influencers, and how do they operate?

**End-of-day summary**

- **Katja Šare**, Head of the Public Diplomacy Directorate, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Croatia)

*Departure for the restaurant*

*Aperitif, followed by a seated dinner hosted by the Croatian authorities*

**(Venue: Vinodol Restaurant • Teslina 10, Zagreb)**

## Day 3 - Saturday, 14 March 2026 ▪ 09:00–11:30

Venue: Croatian State Archives ▪ Marulić square 21, Zagreb - followed by a cultural event and lunch

### Section 3 - (Re)Organising Strategic Communications in Geopolitics in an Evolving Information Warfare Landscape: From Engaging to Branding

Europe's strategic environment is shaped by geopolitical competition, hybrid influence and the struggle for narrative dominance. Hostile state and non-state actors increasingly exploit digital channels to mislead audiences, undermine public institutions and inflame societal tensions. In response, democratic societies must strengthen public diplomacy, deepen partnerships around shared safeguarding approaches and reinforce operational defences against malign influence.

This section examines how nation branding, public diplomacy and regional cooperation can strengthen Europe's global presence, build credible resilience partnerships and counter malign narratives. Discussions will consider how to communicate a common European approach to today's geopolitical challenges and how to develop the partnerships that make national policies more tangible and relevant in an era of uncertainty and intensifying global competition.

09:00–10:00

#### Fireside Chats: ENGAGING

#### How to communicate successfully in an AI-dominated environment, with NonDemocratic Actors and among automated misinformation?

Conducting dialogue with partners that do not uphold open governance requires careful calibration, as reflected in global public diplomacy surveys. In this session, two experienced practitioners will consider how principled engagement can be pursued responsibly while navigating constraints, sensitivities and strategic interests.

##### Panellists:

##### Round 1 - 09:00–09:30

- Daniel Markić, Director, EU INTCEM
- Lara Romano, Croatia, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

##### Round 2 - 09:30–10:00

- Alina Koushyk-Pietrzykowska, Editor in Chief, Belsat TV
- Paolo Caridi, Head of the Communication Unit, DG Climate Action, European Commission
- Sian Eve Crucefix, Communications Manager, The Lancet Group; independent advisor to WHO/Europe (Lancet)
- Vincenzo Le Voci, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

##### Key questions:

- Which communication approaches uphold EU principles when engaging with non-democratic partners?
- How can strategic messaging influence behaviour in environments with limited freedoms?
- Which risks and opportunities arise in these interactions?

10:00–10:15

*Coffee break*

10:15-11:30

## Panel 5: BRANDING

### Public Diplomacy Through Regional Cooperation: Lessons and Practical Pathways for Future Cooperation

Collaborative initiatives among neighbouring states can increase visibility, support economic engagement and showcase shared priorities. This session, based on examples from Central European and Mediterranean frameworks and fresh feedback from North EU countries, will demonstrate how coordinated storytelling and joint strategic efforts can enhance each region's global standing.

#### Scene setting and Keynote address:

- **Zvonimir-Frka-Petešić**, Croatia, Head of the Prime Minister's Office, Member of the Steering Committee of the Club of Venice

#### Moderator:

- **Andrea Vodanović**, Deputy Spokesperson - Croatian Government

#### Panellists:

- **Konrad Jagodzinski**, Place Branding Director, Brand Finance
- **Tea Ivanisevic**, Italy, Communication Manager, Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department for Cohesion policy and the South
- **Rannar Park**, Head of Research and Development, Brand Estonia

#### Key questions:

- How can regional cooperation amplify the global visibility of participating states?
- Which communication lessons emerge from the Three Seas Initiative and MED9 case studies?
- How can joint narratives enhance EU cohesion and international influence?

11:30

### Closing remarks

- **Zvonimir-Frka-Petešić**, Croatia, Head of the Prime Minister's Office, Member of the Steering Committee of the Club of Venice
- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of Club of Venice

11:45

*Departure for Klovičevi Dvori Gallery ▪ Jezuitski trg 4, Zagreb*

12:00

*Guided tour through the exhibition marking 1,100 years of the Croatian Kingdom: "In the Beginning Was the Kingdom"*

13:30

*Departure for the restaurant*

14:00

*Seated lunch hosted by the Croatian authorities  
(Venue: Kaptolska klet Restaurant ▪ Kaptol 5, Zagreb)*

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# Opening speech Zagreb, 9 March 2026

By Prof. Stefano Rolando, President of the Club

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I would have gladly returned to Zagreb, where I lived and learned while working there in the early 1970's (another world, another vision of the relationship between past and future), at the beginning of my career, then working for the European Commission and Commissioner Altiero Spinelli. Unfortunately, I am in the process of starting my semester-long university courses, which cannot be delegated. My apologies and warmest regards to everyone, thanking those who worked on the organization and all those who are participating in the work.

This Zagreb session marks the 40th year of the Club of Venice existence and activity.

Having been there at its origins, I look back with satisfaction and gratitude at the growth, expansion, sense of responsibility, and desire to converge and understand that inspires the membership – young and forward-looking – of this table, which remains both legally informal and morally and professionally representative.

At the end of the year in Venice, we will together take proper stock.

But an important part of that stocktaking is what you are doing today and tomorrow. Because redesigning the turning points of communication in light of the geopolitical changes, within which Europe's uncertainties and opportunities also lie, is neither a secondary matter nor a foregone conclusion.

Hence my brief note. I won't go any further because I want to stay within the time constraints of a greeting. But I sense the importance of the topic and I won't shy away, at least with these very brief remarks.

The geopolitical transformation, as we see, is not merely a technological, financial, and organizational adjustment. It presents itself with the cruelty of wars, with the risk of weakening the fundamental values of democracy, with the marginalization of international law and multilateralism within which we have worked to establish the role of Europe, with milestones already achieved and crucial agenda items yet to be unlocked.

Communication doesn't anticipate solutions. It accompanies them.

And conflicts – both external and internal – fundamentally reduce its role and effectiveness, exposing it even more to technological limitations and the risk of propaganda.

Our debate must be intelligent, but truthful.

We have a duty to the new generations so that they can live in a context of growth and opportunity in which at least four before generations have learned – even through criticism – to be grateful for Europe.

Europe is not a technical construct. It is a choice born from identity and values that must rediscover those same identity and values.

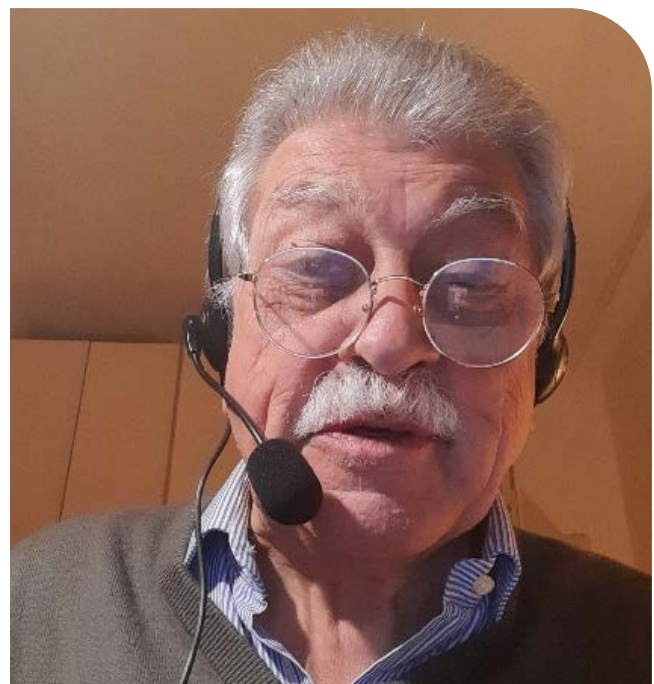
It is not enough for us to look at hypothetical tables showing that, if we were the United States of Europe, we would have swept the Winter Olympics with 164 medals, demonstrating that the entire background of investment and organization of a competitive model makes us second to none.

Today this idea appears as mocking as it is challenging. Communicators consider a stress test: which of the two risks prevailing, the mockery or the challenge?

For now, I'll stop here.

But from here to Venice, a realistic and meaningful discussion of this symbolic issue must become part of our agenda.

Ciao, everyone!



# Outcome

Zagreb (Croatia), 9-10 March 2026

Government communication specialists from twenty-five European countries and external partners from international organisations, civil society platforms professionals and academics met in Croatia on 9-10 March 2026 to discuss today's most challenging stratcom priorities. For the first time, this year the annual stratcom seminar took place outside the United Kingdom, in close cooperation with the Croatian governmental authorities.

The Zagreb seminar demonstrated how European public communication is currently at the center of an accelerated transformation, marked by the impact of artificial intelligence, growing geopolitical competition, and a widespread erosion of trust. In this context, the ability of institutions to build and maintain credibility has become a truly strategic asset: simply transmitting clear messages is no longer enough; citizens must be made more resistant to manipulation by developing transparency, consistency, and bonds of trust over time.

Geopolitics has also become a battle for narratives. A significant part of the discussion focused on the evolution AI has brought to the entire communication cycle: it accelerates the production and dissemination of information, makes disinformation more sophisticated, and requires institutions to become recognizable and reliable sources, even for automated systems.

Furthermore, young people are getting their information through creators, short videos, and social dynamics based on personal trust. Influencers can become allies, but only if they act transparently and consistently. Politics, with new restrictions on sponsored advertising, is shifting toward hybrid forms of communication: influencer candidates, collaborations with creators, and campaigns on unconventional platforms.

## Trust

Overall, the seminar highlighted that the challenge is not just about improving institutional communication, but strengthening Europe's ability to deliver concretely, compete, persuade, and protect its information space. The challenge is cultural, ethical and technological: in a world dominated by speed, polarization, and algorithms, trust and collective resilience become the ultimate goal of any effective communication strategy.

To this end, the debate on communication, trust and outreach capacity in progress fully responded to the audience expectations: How do we get things implemented? How to make a concrete two-way street of communication prevail? commit to giving unwavering trust to citizens because trust is reciprocal. It was stressed that governments should see their own people as citizens, not consumers. Citizens claim a right to prosperity and feel their prosperity is threatened. Any system without mutual trust and 'humanity' is doomed to fail and autocracy, which is a popular business model for populist governments, will increasingly lead to a destabilised society, although its system is destined to collapse.

While facing the rise of populism and autocracy, which are phenomena fuelled by distorted and manipulative communication, there is a constant need to regenerate and dynamise narratives. It was underlined that democratic governments must recover a more authentic vision of their role: this new approach should start from re-establishing a relationship based on mutual trust, even accepting that citizens may make mistakes or have differing opinions. This is a necessary condition for rebuilding credible public communication.

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## Communicating in an era of conflicts

The audience welcomed a pregnant contribution from a Ukrainian representative, who added a firsthand perspective on the information warfare accompanying the conflict in his country, explaining that a crucial part of Ukrainian communication is making its people—and the world—understand that Ukraine is not alone, despite the length of the conflict. He also emphasized the need to constantly reinvent approaches, languages, and communication strategies, thinking outside the box to counter the Russian narrative.

According to the Ukrainian speaker, despite the saturation of global attention due to the coexistence of many crises (Ukraine, Gaza, Venezuela, Iran), Ukraine has managed to maintain a central presence in the international debate. This result is, in itself, a communication victory: Russia is not winning the war on the information level.

A central theme is disinformation: from unfounded accusations of corruption to narratives constructed to delegitimize Kiev, the Ukrainian representative also highlighted a new narrative gaining traction internationally: the idea that his country could become a provider of defense technologies—for example, drone interception systems—based on its experience gained during the war years.

He also drew attention to a crucial problem: in the Global South, Russia remains free to spread disinformation with almost no counterbalance, influencing perceptions of Ukraine, Europe, NATO, and democracy itself. At the same time, he noted signs of international pressure toward a “normalization” of relations with Moscow, citing as examples the controversies surrounding Russia’s participation in the Paralympics and the Venice Biennale.

## Digital Tools as Amplifiers in Strategic Communications

The session explored how artificial intelligence and digital tools are transforming the work of public communicators, accelerating processes, expanding analytical capabilities, and introducing new vulnerabilities.

Simon Piatek, Managing Director of The New Imagination Lab, described an information ecosystem in which truth no longer comes from a single source, but from the interaction between algorithms that construct personalized bubbles. In the long term, he argued, society will also adapt to this transformation, developing new skills.

Vedran Bajer, former Country Director of Microsoft Croatia and now Director of the startup Wonderful, reminded us that “there will never be a return to the pre-ChatGPT world.” The speed of technological evolution requires constant updating, because no organization will be able to compete without integrating AI into its processes: those who fail to do so will inevitably fall behind in productivity and effectiveness. Indeed a wake-up call for investments addressed to governments, institutions, and international organisations.

As emphasised by other distinguished specialists, AI may generate positive returns, enabling people and companies to perform tasks that were unthinkable just a few years ago, much more quickly. However, there is a need for greater clarity in communicating the concrete value of these tools and public administrations should avoid investing in proprietary models, preferring instead the broad ecosystem of already available open-source tools.

The discussion also helped explore the development of AI models dedicated to public administrations. It was also mentioned the existence of “Assist,” an AI tool developed by the government to support public communicators, with entirely open source code.

On a more security-oriented perspective, the representative of the NATO StratCom Center of Excellence in Riga warned about the use of AI as a capacity multiplier in profiling, manipulation, disinformation, and psychological operations. In this context, the only effective protection is building “cultural antibodies”: widespread skills that allow citizens to recognize manipulative content and hostile narratives.

As regards social media impact, society therefore appears more polarized than it actually is. It is therefore necessary to combine aggregate analysis of social content with targeted surveys of the silent majority.

Finally, Krzysztof Chojnowski, representative of the Polish Local Media Association, highlighted the risk of “information desertification” linked to the decline of local media. Without journalists to verify facts, the population will continue to seek information, but this will expose them to greater and more rapid exposure to fake news and manipulated content. AI

can help monitor narratives and provide technical support to newsrooms—comment moderation, post automation, video editing—but it can never replace human authority.

The need for trustworthy messengers and multipliers (photographers, journalists) was also highlighted. It was also stressed that truth does not come from a single source, but from a collection of voices. Moreover, the myriad of democratic platforms themselves that stand ready to cooperate with governments and institutions are the best tools to combat FIMI. Meanwhile, the biggest barrier is the behavioural change that is necessary to enable people to use all new technologies and to mitigate fear of innovative tools and the myths that surround them. Skills erosion does not constitute a concern, if we use tools properly and do not abuse them – and fundamentally public communicators have a primary responsibility to feed AI with good information.

## European Narratives in Digital Future: acting within the EU Legal Framework

The debate also focused on the delicate balance between transparency, security, identity, and the protection of democratic values. The contributions on this topic emphasized the importance of providing the population with accurate and timely information, especially on sensitive issues such as disasters, security, and migration<sup>1</sup>. Governments operate under intense pressure on the migration front, where distorted perceptions or alarmist narratives can amplify mistrust. In this context, the immediate threat to security perceived by citizens is not AI, but rather the management of these real phenomena.

A member of the Croatian Independent Authority for Digital Media outlined the country's work on media literacy, especially among young people, citing data from the "EU Kids Online" study: only a fifth of children do not use AI, and the majority do so to write texts or summaries, but also for health or personal reasons. No significant gender differences emerged, except for boys' greater use of deepfakes. The goal is to strengthen critical skills starting in primary school.

The representative from the European Commission (DG CNECT) described the Digital Service Act (DSA) as one of the key elements of the new European digital regulatory framework: its primary purpose is to hold platforms accountable for the content they host, allowing anyone to report potentially illegal material for its removal. The definition of "what is legal" remains the prerogative of member states. The DSA applies not only to social media, but also to platforms like Shein, Temu, and WhatsApp, while Telegram is not yet included.

The discussion also covered other issues such as the political advertising bans introduced by Meta, and some complementary Commission initiatives, including the Democracy Shield and the new European Centre for Democratic Resilience.

The intervention by Sophie Sacilotto, data analyst at Debunk.org, brought the focus back to the concrete dynamics of disinformation. Sacilotto explained that, in Lithuania alone, her organization has identified over 5.1 million scam ads in the last year. Algorithmic biases—combined with AI's growing ability to make fake news plausible—particularly expose younger people. To reach this age group, he emphasized, influencers can be a useful tool, provided they are chosen with great attention to their credibility.

## From Crisis to Continuity: When the Extreme Becomes the Norm

The third panel analyzed how to manage public communication in a context where crisis, polarization, and geopolitical tensions have become permanent conditions. The shared goal: preserving credibility, coherence, and trust even when the exception becomes the norm.

The representative from the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency, who illustrated the techniques with which Russian and Chinese actors influence the European information space. She summarized the fundamental rule of crisis communication: do not lie or repeat a lie, because every reiteration—even to contradict—contributes to strengthening it. In an environment where hostile actors operate, communication discipline is at least as essential as a rapid response.

Gabrijela Kišiček, professor at the University of Zagreb, invited the panel to begin with the root causes of current digital and geopolitical dynamics. She described a situation marked by the crisis of expert credibility, the post-truth era, and growing polarization. According to Kišiček, information conflicts often stem from a "deep disagreement," made up of seemingly irreconcilable positions: little common ground and many points of divergence. However, he offered an optimistic interpretation: beneath the superficial fractures lies a core of shared values, which can be restored by making communication more attentive, less paternalistic, and aware of its rhetorical impact. Experts, she recalled, have contributed to the loss of trust with a technocratic communication style; it is therefore necessary to rebuild a relationship of mutual respect.

Michał Staniszewski, a strategic communication expert at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, offered concrete examples. He described the episode that occurred in September 2025, when several drones entered Polish airspace, generating panic, speculation, and fake news attributing the event to Ukraine. The response was immediate and coordinated between defense, domestic, and foreign affairs, with clear, brief, and fact-based messages. In Poland, he noted, even when trust in institutions is fragile, trust in the armed forces remains high and can be a communications asset. He also highlighted an interesting experiment: training courses for influencers, with the aim of empowering them in their public role.

<sup>1</sup> Due attention will be drawn to this topic at the next plenary of the Club of Venice, where a specific panel will be dedicated to the relations between crisis comms and crisis management.



Liaising from the United States, Rachael Piltch Loeb, professor at the City of New York University, outlined some key principles for emergency communication: openly acknowledging uncertainty, maintaining linguistic consistency over time, adapting messages to the audience's digital literacy, and favoring video formats. She emphasized that consistency is more important than speed, because it builds credibility during protracted crises.

A diplomatic perspective was offered by Siniša Grgić, Croatian ambassador to Sweden and Latvia. Grgić introduced the concept of "dark matter" in international relations: 97% of diplomatic work is not visible to the public and consists of personal connections between ambassadors, informal networks, and daily exchanges. New data analysis technologies are illuminating part of this hidden space, offering a deeper understanding of geopolitical dynamics. At the core, however, remains the human relationship.

Finally, Nevena Wahl, advisor to the Council of the EU's DG COMM, returned to the theme of audience fragmentation, often noticed in the referendum campaigns, dominated by emotional and visual messages, and explained how the EU has since sought to evolve its communication language, focusing on the concrete impact of policies. Wahl highlighted significant progress in coordinating communications between the Commission, Council, and Parliament: weekly meetings, shared materials, and, in some cases, joint budgets. She also noted that the Council's communication is strengthened by ongoing collaboration with the member states holding the six-monthly presidency.

36 The key messages emerged from the debate focus on the need to well understand the threat and governmental/institutional intrinsic vulnerabilities, monitoring work in progress, supporting target audiences, developing psychological defence as a civil defence and enabling societies to understand and identify threat actors attempts on an ongoing basis.

Showing readiness in identifying information manipulation and being able to argue in each others cognitive frameworks can certainly help disarm FIMI, but it is necessary to adopt a collective and a constant approach, seeking alliances, knowing the audiences, tailoring the messages, and build up large scale emergency communication structures to share information in times of crisis.

Other relevant actions to prioritise are the analysis and use of influencers (weigh up their role as a privilege and responsibility, the democratisation of access, engagement and interaction, the need for developing an increasing co-creative framework with civil society, and the need for acoherent voice within the EU (avoiding cacophony).



## Workshops – Case Studies:

**M&C Saatchi World Services workshop was dedicated to situational awareness and the use of AI in crisis communications.**

The company, which assists governments in various countries and under very different operating conditions, highlighted the impact of AI on the contemporary information environment: in times of crisis, the digital space becomes extremely saturated, and everyone—institutional actors, hostile groups, public opinion, and the media—now has the ability to produce high-impact content using AI tools.

The presentation demonstrated how AI can support de-escalation processes by working along six axes: scale, information, quality, speed, dissemination, and precision. To be effective, communications must be rapid, credible, transparent, focused, and consistently repeated.

Responsiveness, it has been reiterated, is built before the crisis: during the preparation phase, AI is integrated to develop a vulnerability index that identifies areas of fragility and intervention priorities, calculating the indicator and displaying it in a comprehensible way. During the crisis, technology refines this index through real-time monitoring.

**Determ d.o.o., an enterprise in Croatia, with the main office in Zagreb, an award-winning media intelligence solution presented a case study on AI in crisis communication as part of a workshop on situational awareness.**

Speakers from Determ explored one of today's key challenges: how to understand and respond to a crisis when hundreds of news articles, social media posts, and reports appear within hours across multiple languages and platforms. They also demonstrated how artificial intelligence can help communication teams process large volumes of information faster and make better-informed decisions.

A key concept discussed was the Perspective Gap, a real-world examples showing how same media coverage leads to completely different conclusions depending on which stakeholder is reading it. They highlighted that not seeing the other side's reality isn't just a blind spot in government StratCom - it's a strategic risk.



Participants saw how AI-generated executive summaries can rapidly provide crisis alerts, scenario forecasts, and communication recommendations, often before teams arrive at the office. The session also demonstrated how AI agents operating within a digital Situation Room can support decision-making in real time. These systems can monitor changing narratives, identify potential escalation risks, and suggest response options while events are still unfolding.

One of the key takeaways was the speed of modern AI-supported workflows: from the first signs of a crisis to a prepared press briefing in less than three hours. The presentation highlighted the growing interest in practical AI tools for strategic communications, showed how advanced media monitoring, sentiment analysis, and AI-powered insights are helping communication teams stay ahead of rapidly evolving narratives and help them respond more effectively.

Discussions throughout the session reinforced a common view among participants: the future of strategic communications will increasingly depend on better data, faster insights, intelligent technologies, and smarter tools that support informed decision-making during complex and fast-moving events.

## Behavioural Dynamics: Who Is Influencing a New Generation of Europeans

This panel explored how young Europeans interact with information and how influence mechanisms are evolving in an environment saturated with visual stimuli, AI-generated content, and new behavioral dynamics.

Agnieszka Lipinska, head of the Polish Center for Disinformation Analysis (NASK), emphasized the importance of gamification in educational strategies aimed at young children. Younger generations learn and obtain information primarily through interactive and playful methods: integrating media literacy is crucial to making it effective.

A sociological framework was offered by Erik Brezovec, professor of sociology at the University of Zagreb and an expert on AI in education, who explained **that technology does not create new trends, but amplifies those already present in society**. One of the most significant is the rise of egocentrism and the so-called “culture of narcissism.” In this context, he warned, politics risks adapting by prioritizing emotions over content: a strategy that’s effective in the short term, but extremely dangerous for democratic quality.

The institutional perspective came from Iva Ivanković, Undersecretary of the Croatian Ministry of Education, who presented the BrAI project, dedicated to introducing AI technologies in the country’s schools. In Croatia, digital literacy is mandatory from elementary school onwards, and significant investment is made in critical thinking as a core skill. The goal is to prepare children to decode complex information and recognize manipulative content.

The direct experience of creators was shared by Dario Marčac, a Croatian influencer with over a million followers on TikTok and co-

founder of Crew Media. Marčac emphasized that influencers only work if they maintain consistency with their identity and their channel: excessive institutional control would undermine this relationship. For politicians, he added, TikTok can be a powerful channel for building empathy with Gen Z, but it only works if you’re perceived as authentic and—simply—likable.

The panel then welcomed a remote presentation by Larissa Leonhard and Ruth Wendt of Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, along with Johanna Strohm of the Lie Detectors organization. They presented a media literacy project for schools, in which students learn techniques to identify fake news and verify sources. An interesting finding emerged: after the workshops, the students didn’t so much apply formal verification tools (comment checking, fact checking) as two intuitive strategies—trusting their own judgment and asking for confirmation from people they trust. This result highlights the importance of the relational dimension in media education.

A regulatory framework was offered by Konrad Kiljan, an expert in digital and European policies at CEE Digital Democracy Watch. Kiljan analyzed the role of political influencers in elections: with the new restrictions on sponsored political advertising, politicians are pursuing two main paths. The first is to become influencers themselves—as in some recent cases in Europe—; the second is to collaborate with content creators. In this case, greater transparency regarding the source of funds must be ensured. He also highlighted a still-unresolved regulatory limitation: the lack of a unified European definition of “influencer,” which makes it difficult to regulate the sector.

The panel concluded with a presentation by Maryia Sadouskaya Komlach, strategist at Free Press Unlimited in Amsterdam, who outlined an experimental project to build trust among young people in Central and Eastern Europe. Sadouskaya Komlach highlighted that this segment of the population tends to distrust both institutions and journalists, while the trustworthiness of influencers varies greatly depending on the topic. The crucial element, she believes, is recognition: when young people are engaged, listened to, and “seen” by journalism—through the narration of what they do, rather than what they should do—an authentic relationship is born. Reach isn’t enough: it’s true engagement, based on mutual trust, that creates a lasting bond.

Key issues emerged were the chronic underfunding, the “ethics at risk”, the “de-prioritisation” of small and rare languages, the 16 to 25 year aged youngsters being the primary targets of FIMI, the difficulty to build trust with 1<sup>st</sup> time voters, the young audiences being trained by disinformation to distrust how journalists speak (“educated” to distrust corrections and fact-based reporting), but also ready to engage when they are being asked; and the need for empathy and for a continued, long term engagement.



## Engaging in an AI-dominated environment, communicating with and among nondemocratic actors and automated misinformation

The session addressed one of the most sensitive issues in contemporary strategic communication: how to maintain effectiveness, credibility, and coherence in an environment dominated by AI, automated disinformation, and interaction with actors who do not share democratic principles.

The first speaker was Daniel Markić, Director of EU INTCEM, the EU's intelligence center. Markić emphasized the growing importance of intelligence in European decision-making, especially in a global landscape characterized by hybrid threats and information competition. He noted that many intelligence professionals instinctively tend not to communicate, due to the confidential nature of their work. But one point, he insisted, must be made public: intelligence exists and is co-operative, and it is essential that citizens understand this to strengthen trust in European institutions.

The perspective of non-democratic societies was illustrated by Alina Koushyk Pietrzykowska, editor-in-chief of Belsat TV, an independent Belarusian-language broadcaster broadcast from abroad and banned in Belarus. Alina described how a media environment can be completely controlled by the regime, in which every piece of content is designed to influence and manipulate the population. She highlighted a structural difference between authoritarian regimes and democracies: in regimes, propaganda comes first, and then, possibly, policies; in democracies, policies are made first, and only then, perhaps, are they communicated. This asymmetry creates a substantial challenge for Europe, which must confront actors capable of moving quickly, aggressively, and completely without ethical constraints.

The representative of the European Commission's DG Climate Action, focused on the climate sector, currently one of the most targeted by disinformation. He explained that the climate issue has been marginalized in the European debate, overshadowed by defence and migration. He added that the AI will become a "functional substitute" for social media: it will therefore be crucial for European institutions to become a trusted source for the automatic responses generated by models. He also recalled two basic principles of crisis communication: never repeat lies and never feed trolls, and suggested building local networks capable of lending credibility to climate policies, beyond the central European message, as a solution.

A parallel between climate and healthcare information was drawn by Sian Eve Crucefix, Communications Manager at The Lancet Group and consultant for WHO Europe. Crucefix explained that in the healthcare sector, trust in science is as fragile as that in climate institutions: the public is exposed to a constant flow of misinformation and highly structured anti-scientific narratives. The answer, she believes, lies in

building credibility chains, composed of reliable actors who consistently repeat the same message. The Lancet's role is often to coordinate this network, ensuring consistency, rigor, and source recognition.

The discussion revealed, among others, that non democratic actors misunderstand EU communications on purpose; that we need to understand who is "on the other side", that calibrating communication with difficult partners is essential and the public communicators need to prevent dangerous misunderstandings; and that direct engagement and the creation of powerful networks are the essential ingredients of strong synergies.

## Public Diplomacy Practical Pathways for Future Cooperation

The final session of the seminar explored how nation branding and regional cooperation can strengthen the international presence of European countries, increase their attractiveness, and consolidate a credible image in a competitive geopolitical context.

Zvonimir Frka Petešić (Head of the Croatian Prime Minister's Office and member of the Club of Venice Steering Committee) opened the panel by retracing Croatia's recent history, recalling how the country emerged from the war of the 1990s in devastating economic conditions. Reconstruction—both material and symbolic—has become the foundation of Croatia's nation branding, built on four pillars: reconstruction and modernization, tourism as a form of public diplomacy, sporting successes as narrative tools, and a strong visual identity, represented by the famous red and white checkered motif.

His introduction highlighted how a credible national brand is a boost to the country's attractiveness and a strategic diplomatic asset, especially for small-scale entities.

Konrad Jagodzinski, Place Branding Director at Brand Finance, underlined, among others, that an effective nation brand requires a coordinated, coherent, and recognizable narrative. He illustrated a clear correlation between the strength of nation branding, the perception of international soft power and the fragility of reputation depending on the impact of geopolitics on the global information arena, which has have undermined the perception of Western values traditionally associated with growth, freedom, and stability.

The Italian presentation was entrusted to Tea Ivanišević, Communication Manager of the Department for Cohesion Policies and the South of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, who presented the "Cohesion Italy 21 27" brand, developed to provide a unified identity to the communication of European and national cohesion funds.



The success of such brand relies on two key elements:

- coordination of funds and coordination of communication, now made more consistent by removing the requirement to indicate the individual fund financing each intervention;
- territorial adaptability, with the application of the brand to all projects, tailored to the identity of the different Italian regions.

Brand governance is supported by biannual meetings between regional communication managers to ensure consistency, the exchange of best practices, and ongoing updates. The Italian experience was presented as a concrete example of how coordinated branding can facilitate the perception of the impact of public policies and, at the same time, strengthen the country's international positioning.

## Closing Remarks

Zvonimir Frka Petešić (Head of the Croatian Prime Minister's Office and member of the Club of Venice Steering Committee) summarized the key lessons learned during the seminar, emphasizing how the global landscape is radically transforming the role of strategic communication.

He observed that states no longer compete solely on economic or military levels, but increasingly in their ability to shape narratives. In a high-velocity information ecosystem shaped by artificial intelligence, competition is about people's minds: what information they receive, how they interpret it, and what beliefs they develop.

Zvonimir noted that AI is profoundly changing the communication cycle: news circulates at unprecedented speed, content is profiled and personalized, and disinformation is more sophisticated, scalable, and difficult to detect.

In this context, as emerged from the intense debate in the seminar, the true strategic resource becomes public trust, a fragile but crucial capital that must be built and protected over time. Content profiling, he emphasized, is not just a technical tool: it is part of a "war on the human mind," where hostile actors exploit cognitive vulnerabilities and manipulated information to influence perceptions and behaviors.

Looking at the European level, Zvonimir Frka-Petesic and Vincenzo Le Voci, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice, highlighted the urgent need to create more robust mechanisms of collective resilience (in close interconnection with civil society, democratic platforms of fully dedicated young professionals, digital experts and all scientific communities) against fake news and hostile narratives. The goal of strategic communication cannot be limited to spreading clear and effective messages: it must help build societies that are more resistant to manipulation, capable of recognizing disinformation and resisting destabilization.

Zvonimir and Vincenzo reaffirmed the central role of European cooperation and the sharing of common practices in addressing an ever-evolving information environment.

## Key Points of Discussion

Governments need to remember their people are citizens not consumers, however citizens increasingly see their government as if they are consumers and treat them as such expecting quick turnaround and immediate results

As technology and AI continues to develop, we cannot forget that human infrastructure and networks remain a core of our work that we cannot forget and allow to disappear.

AI is increasingly becoming a primary source of information for the public: how do we make sure that our sources and the work we produce is what AI is drawing from when it is giving people answers? How do we inform the AI?

Young audiences have been trained by disinformation to distrust how journalists speak. They have learned to see a correction of an article as a failing and lie and do not trust fact based reporting.

Non democratic actors such as Russia misunderstand EU communications on purpose.





# Plenary Meeting



Venezia, 4-5 December 2025

**Wednesday, 3 December 2025 - 19:00:**

**Welcome reception** in the framework of the CoE Days Initiative (Council of Europe premises, Venice Office, San Marco 180C)

**Welcome address** by Mario Schwetz, Director of the Council of Europe Office in Venice and Giuseppe Zaffuto, Head of the Media Relations, Research and Analysis Division, CoE Headquarters

Meeting languages: Italian, French and English (interpretation supported by the European Parliament)

Meeting venue: Palazzo Franchetti, San Marco 2847, Venezia

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## Final agenda

**Day 1 - Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2025 ■ 9:00-12:45**

08:30-09:00

**Guests' registration**

09:00-09:45

**Opening Session**

(introduced by Vincenzo Le Voci, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice)

**Welcome statements - representatives of the hosting Italian authorities and the European Institutions**

- Laura Cavallo, Italy, Director-General, Department for European Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- EU institutions in Italy
  - Fabrizio Spada, Head of the Institutional Relations Department, European Parliament Information Office in Italy
  - Claudio Casini, Head of the European Commission's Representation in Italy (from remote)
- Michele Zuin, City Councillor, Venice Municipality

9:45-10:00

**Key address**

- Stefano Rolando, President of the Club of Venice

10:00-10:20

*coffee break*

10:20-12:30

## Plenary session I – Round Table

### Public communication trends: interaction and inter-operability in resilience building strategies; cooperation in countering foreign influence and manipulation of the information (FIMI); reinforcing capacities in countering disinformation

- Capacity and capability building: Implementation of the Warsaw Memo for Action on 10 October 2025 on reinforcing cross-border synergies in countering Foreign Influence and Manipulation of Information (FIMI) and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in strategic communication
- Government infrastructures: organisational challenges, streamlining interface tools, organising proactive cooperation at cross-border level and with EU institutions and international partner organisations
- Media observatories: the added value of surveys and analyses
- Synergies with civil society, academic world and the media sector

#### Moderator:

- **Carlotta Alfonsi**, Policy Analyst, Open Government, Civic Space and Public Communication Unit, Open and Innovative Government Division, Public Governance Directorate, OECD Headquarters, Paris

#### Key-Note speaker:

- **Verena Ringler**, Director, European Commons "*Building EU Resilience : Developments and Potentials*"

#### Panellists:

- **Raluca Truscanu**, Romania, Director for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Vilijus Samuila**, Lithuania, Deputy Director, Communication and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Viktoriia Romaniuk**, Ukraine, Deputy Chief Editor of StopFake; Director of the Mohila School of Journalism
- **Sofia Verza**, Research Associate, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute, Italy

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12:30-13:30

Lunch

13:30

Family picture

13:45-17:30

## Plenary session II

### Strengthening the relationship with citizens and society while navigating digital strategies: increasing AI adoption across public service and impact on communication plans and strategies

- Priorities setting and scale planning
- Enhancing internal and cross-border cooperation
- Adapting digital infrastructure for the public sphere
- Streamlining rules for on line protection
- Investing in digital media literacy
- Building trust

13:45-15:30

## Session IIa

### Moderator:

- **Virginia Padovese**, Newsguard, Managing Editor & Senior Vice President Partnerships, Europe, Australia and New Zealand

### Key-Note speaker:

- **Simon Piatek**, Director, The New Imagination Lab

### Panellists:

- **Fiona Speirs**, United Kingdom, Head of the Government Communications Academy
- **Glenda Gentili**, Communications Officer, Agency for Digital Italy
- **Malak Aaltaeb**, Operational Coordinator, DebunkEU.org
- **Krzysztof Chojnowski**, Poland, representative from the Stowarzyszenie Mediów Lokalnych (Polish Local Media Association)
- **Paula Gori**, Secretary-General, European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) (from remote)

15:30-15:45

*coffee break*

13:45-15:30

## Session IIb

### Moderator:

- **Paula Rejkiewicz**, Poland, Head of the Strategic Communication Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### Key-Note speaker:

- **Stefano Epifani**, Italy, President of the Foundation for Digital Sustainability

### Panellists:

- **Aedín Donnelly**, Ireland, Communications Manager, Department of the Taoiseach
- **Laura Maanaviija**, European Commission DG for Climate Action, Deputy Head of Unit, Communication and Stakeholder Relations
- **Andrea Vodanovic**, Croatia, Government Deputy Spokesperson orđe Trikoš, Senior Strategist, M&C Saatchi World Services
- **Alessandro Lovari**, Associate Professor in Cultural and Communicative Processes, University of Cagliari, Department of Political and Social Sciences

17:30-17:45

**First day summing-up - issues emerged**  
(Club Steering Group representative)

20:00

**Official Dinner (offered by the European Commission)**  
(Venue: *Ristorante "Do Forni", San Marco 468 - Venezia*)



## Day 2 - Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup> 2025 ■ 9:30-13:00

08:30-09:00

### Guests' registration

09:00-10:00

### Capacity building – Evaluating Public Communication Performance to Strengthen Public Trust

Joint presentation from Carlotta ALFONSI, Policy Analyst, Public Governance Directorate, OECD Headquarters, Paris and Baptiste GOURSAUD, International Communications Lead, French Government Information Service (SIG)

Q&A

10:00-10:20

*coffee break*

10:15-13:00

### Communicating Europe

**Moderator:**

- **Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice
- **Giuseppe Macca**, Adjunct Professor, University of Enna Kore; Research Fellow and Venture Building Expert, University of Palermo; Founder, Ethics4Growth

10:15-10:30

**"Communicating Council of Europe priorities and synergies 2025-2026" – intervention by Giuseppe ZAFFUTO, Head of the Media Relations, Research and Analysis Division, Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg**

10:30-12:00

### Session III A- round table

- Communicating the EU's new priority policies: Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) under the spotlight: focus on the defence budget 2026-2027 and 2028-2034
- Countering hybrid threats:
  - disinformation environment ahead of electoral deadlines
  - media challenges and impact on information provision (focus on the Baltics and on South East Europe)

**Key-Note speaker:**

- **Tanja Rudolf**, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Communication, Head of the Concept and Design Unit

**Panellists:**

- **Fiorenza Barazzoni**, Italy, Director-General, DG Coordination of EU policies, Department for EU Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **Erik Den Hoedt**, Netherlands, Senior Government Communication Expert, Vice President of the Club of Venice
- **Renaud Soufflot De Magny**, European Commission, Adviser for Political Communication, Directorate-General for Communication
- **Péter Krekó**, Policy Leader Fellow, Florence School of Transnational Governance; Director of Political Capital Institute and Head of HDMO-Lakmusz, Hungary
- **Kerstin Meresma**, Estonia, Acting Director of the Media Department, Communication Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Katerina Veljanovska Blazhevaska**, North Macedonia, Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of Security Sciences, MIT University-Skopje



12:00-13:00

### Session III B

#### Presentation of new EU-funded stratcom projects launched by universities and academies

- COMMunicating for Transitions in Europe – New Skills for Public Communication and Participation in the Digital Environment, Jean Monnet Chair + INTERregional ACTION for Italy & France Interactive DG REGIO project (**Marinella Belluati**, Associate Professor, University of Turin - **Sara Pane**, Senior Researcher, University of Turin)
- Bringing Europe to STudents and back. Youth participation in EU institutional communication policies (BEST) (**Lucia D'Ambrosi**, Associate Professor, Sapienza University, Rome - **Maria Romana Allegri**, Professor, Sapienza University, Rome - **Paola Marsocci**, Professor, Sapienza University, Rome)
- Post-truth politics and the resilience of the public sphere in Europe (**Mariaeugenia Parito**, Associate Professor, University of Messina - **Hans-Joerg Trenz**, Professor, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence)

13:00

#### Closing Session

- Reflections on the main issues emerged during the plenary meeting
- Initiatives to celebrate the **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Club of Venice in 2026**
- Planning for 2026: key-events:
  - **9<sup>th</sup> stratcom seminar** (in cooperation with the Croatian Government) - Zagreb, 12-13 March 2026
  - **Spring 2026 plenary** (Madrid, June 2026, venue to be defined)
  - **Seminars** (Brussels and London, dates to be defined)
  - **Synergies with international partner organizations**

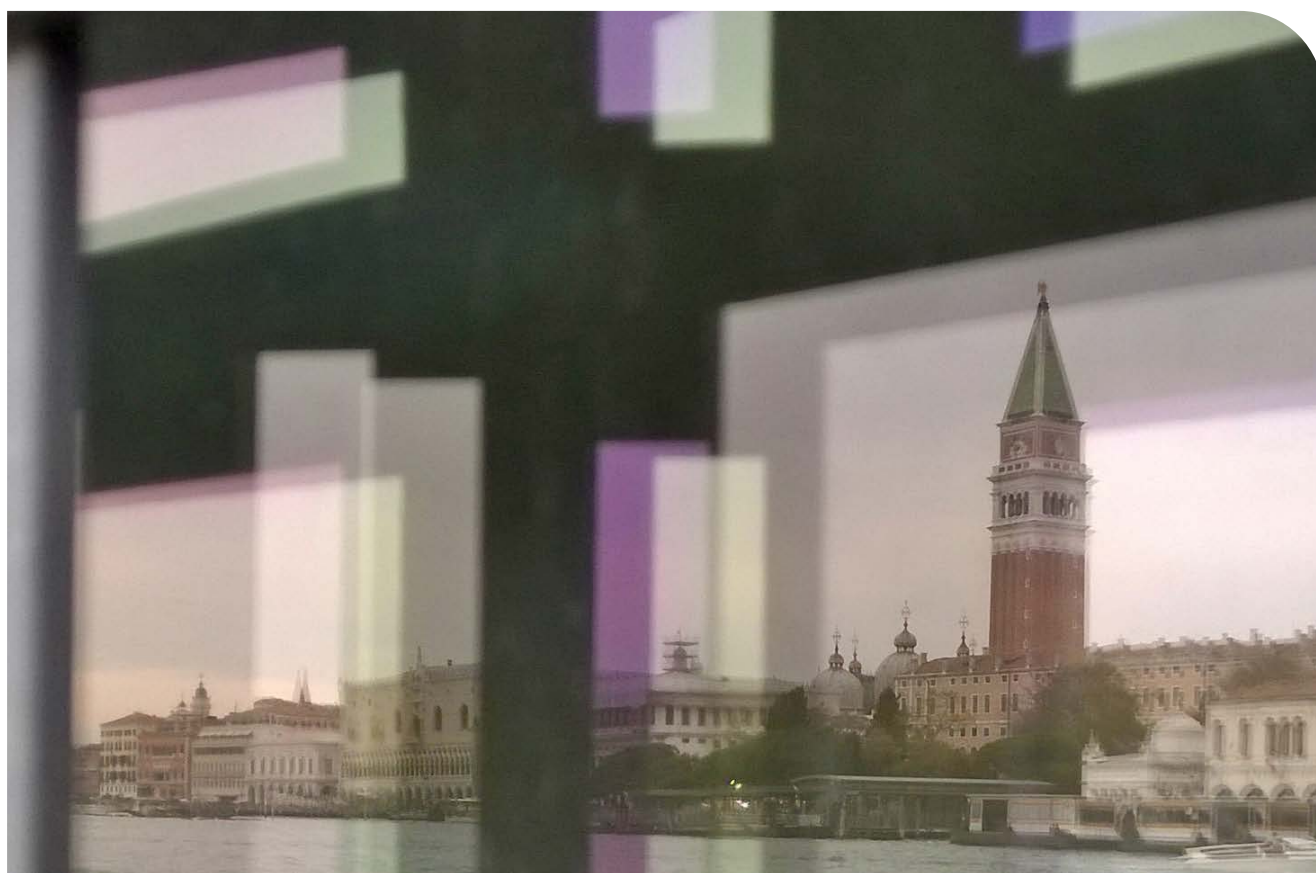
13:15-14:30

*Lunch (offered by the Council of Europe)*

15:00-16:30

#### Social/cultural event organized by the hosting Italian authorities

- Guided visit to the Exhibition of the Council of Europe "*La Democrazia attraverso il Diritto. Dalla Serenissima Repubblica alla Commissione di Venezia del Consiglio d'Europa*", Palazzo Ducale



# Outcome

Venezia, 4-5 December 2025

Over 110 communication professionals representing over 35 countries, international organisations and think tanks met in Venice to tackle the most challenging communication priorities for governments and institutions, with a particular view on public communication trends: interaction and inter-operability in resilience building strategies; cooperation in countering foreign influence and manipulation of the information (FIMI).

The participants also engaged in a brainstorming analysis of how to strengthen the relationship with citizens and society while navigating digital strategies: increasing AI adoption across public service and impact on communication plans and strategies.

Today's public opinion trends suggest that the EU governments and institutions multiply their efforts to recover credibility and, to do so, the right choices must be made to gain credit in capacity building, in a world constantly challenged and deeply influenced by the geopolitical. Regaining citizens' confidence in the public authorities is a must. Enhancing internal and cross-border cooperation has never been so crucial.

The debate touched upon the following main topics:



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## Public communication trends: interaction and inter-operability in resilience-building strategies

- cooperation in countering foreign influence and manipulation of the information (FIMI); reinforcing capacities in countering disinformation
- Capacity and capability building: Implementation of the Warsaw Memo for Action on 10 October 2025 on reinforcing cross-border synergies in countering Foreign Influence and Manipulation of Information (FIMI) and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in strategic communication
- Government infrastructures: organisational challenges, streamlining interface tools, organising proactive cooperation at cross-border level and with EU institutions and international partner organisations
- Media observatories: the added value of surveys and analyses
- Synergies with civil society, academic world and the media sector



## Strengthening the relationship with citizens and society while navigating digital strategies: increasing AI adoption across public service and impact on communication plans and strategies

- Priorities setting and scale planning
- Enhancing internal and cross-border cooperation
- Adapting digital infrastructure for the public sphere
- Streamlining rules for on line protection
- Investing in digital media literacy
- Building trust

This session was introduced by a fully-fledged key-note of Stefano Epifani, President of the Foundation for the Digital Sustainability, who presented the global scenario of Public Communication in the AI Era, outlining how Artificial Intelligence is redefining the relationship between institutions, citizens, and public information.

Stefano underlined that, given the immediate impact of such revolution, the consequent non-linear transformation with a

profound change that crosses organisational and territorial boundaries, and the new equilibrium of relationship between institutions, citizens, and private digital platforms being redefined within an ecosystem we do not directly govern, the stake is institutional credibility and the big challenge is to govern what we don't fully control.

The risk for public communicators is multi-dimensional: cognitive, procedural and systemic and the consequences are measurable in terms of asynchrony, asymmetric challenges and interoperability challenges. The standards for governing such risks are clear requirements, auditable processes, reduction of asymmetries and a solid technical foundation.

To overcome such period of "uncertainty" and worries about the capacity to govern the new digital ecosystem, what government must do, indicated Stefano, is to redesign processes and supply chains, to create new skills, to define what "remains human", to create a permanent intergovernmental coordination and to put in place solid and continuous monitoring systems.

Stefano also presented the Manifesto for Digital Sustainability in Communication (attached to this outcome).





### Capacity building – Evaluating Public Communication Performance to Strengthen Public Trust

- Joint presentation from Carlotta Alfonsi, Policy Analyst, Public Governance Directorate, OECD Headquarters, Paris and Baptiste Goursaud, International Communications Lead, French Government Information Service (SIG).

### Communicating Europe

- Communicating Council of Europe priorities and synergies 2025-2026 – intervention by Giuseppe Zaffuto, Head of the Media Relations, Research and Analysis Division, Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg

### Communicating the EU's new priority policies: Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) under the spotlight

- focus on the defence budget 2026-2027 and 2028-2034

### Countering hybrid threats:

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- Post-truth politics and the resilience of the public sphere in Europe (**Mariaeugenia Parito**, Associate Professor, University of Messina - **Hans-Joerg Trenz**, Professor, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence)



As already detected in Venice in December 2024, there is a need for a thorough screening of national capacities to organise communication following a more integrated approach, looking not only at informing and communicating on contingencies, but also in preventive terms.

Based on surveys carried out by the international partners of the Club, two pillars of intervention were identified during the debate: the need for structural communication investments (which is the most difficult target to achieve, if the analytical processes are not supported by convincing evidence) and the need to reinforce cross-ministerial coordination and inter-governmental cooperation in the field of communication, in order to develop a culture of synergies and share of knowledge.

The Club members also discussed with the several representatives from the scientific community attending the plenary how to increment cooperation with civil society, with the academic world and the media sector.

The Club pursues its role as facilitator of shared communication strategies based on a genuine cooperative approach among central governments, in order to continue handling together today's challenging moments for Europe and its citizens, and for the whole world.

Crisis management remains in the spotlight because of the intrinsic complexity of the information and communication ecosystem and the risks that the lack of competencies and low level of knowledge of the digital developments may increasingly generate weaknesses and increase the gap between public communicators and civic audiences, leaving problems unsolved. Outreach, engagement and trust are definitely at stake. Increasingly liaising with crisis comm networks, civil protection players, prevention centres and analytical experts is a must. Crisis comm will be tackled at the future StratCom seminars in Zagreb and in the UK, both foreseen in 2026.

Against nowadays' challenging scenario, in Venice the Club continued to catalyse the exchange of information and best practice, focusing on capacity building in Artificial Intelligence, with focus on digital trends and threats and investments, including their impact on crisis communication. The panellists shared their thoughts on the current Artificial Intelligence systems and their rich feedback on investments in progress, including an outlook into transparency and complexities, ethical and security implications.

Setting priorities and identifying mid- and long-term resources and readiness capacities: reinforcing a culture of digital developments in communication: planning, building know-how, leading and coordinating changes, measuring engagements are the key ingredients to build a trustworthy organisational framework. Governmental communicators can tackle today's most sophisticated disinformation campaign by engaging in continuous training, cultivating a cooperative approach and engaging in a frank exchange of views with regard to the main regulatory challenges in a world of AI-generated disinformation and manipulation.

Ad hoc surveys continue to reveal that the most pressing topics are the need to detect and handle dis- and misinformation, the need for increased citizen's consultations and dialogues, the support to social-media listening and interaction, the need for investments in designing citizen engagement strategies and for building partnerships and optimising analytical skills.

The plenary provided a wide range of reflection elements in view of the 9th StratCom seminar that will be organised in Zagreb in mid-March 2026 in close cooperation with the authorities of the Croatian Government.



# Discorso d'apertura dei lavori Stefano Rolando (Presidente del Club di Venezia)

Palazzo Franchetti, 4-5 dicembre 2025

Quaranta anni fa, alla fine dell'anno (il 1985) che aveva visto l'Europa fare una forte accelerazione verso l'integrazione del mercato (e le sue nuove regole) e verso un programma vasto di misure per avvicinare i cittadini e le istituzioni (che allora si chiamavano "comunitarie") cominciò una fitta consultazione tra i capi della comunicazione dei principali paesi europei, che per i quaranta anni precedenti non si erano pressoché mai parlati e persino poco incontrati nelle cose ufficiali dell'Europa.

La comunicazione istituzionale si rivelava uno degli ambiti tra le maggiori gelosie nazionali.

Ci dicemmo che non si dovevano cedere né competenze né ruoli. Dovevamo solo parlarci, per vedere fomme comuni e forme di diversità nelle funzioni e nelle applicazioni. Ma anche cominciare a calibrare in modo più moderno tre processi che andavano ognuno per la sua strada: *la comunicazione dell'Europa, la nostra distinta comunicazione sull'Europa, la specificità e le priorità della comunicazione nazionale di ciascuno.*

Quei colloqui impegnarono l'inverno e la primavera. E diedero vita al primo meeting, qui a Venezia, alla Fondazione Cini. Era un'Europa a 12: i **sei paesi fondatori**, Francia, Germania Ovest, Italia, Paesi Bassi, Belgio e Lussemburgo; i **sei paesi integrati tra il 1973 e il 1986**: Danimarca, Irlanda e Regno Unito (1973), Grecia (1981), Spagna e Portogallo (1986).

Fin dall'inizio erano stati partecipi Parlamento, Commissione e Consiglio.

L'anno prossimo sarà il quarantennale di quell'avvio di dialogo.

Cercheremo di non fare una cosa retorica, ma di fare un bilancio critico, valutativo.

Il consolidato e l'irrisolto. Ma soprattutto l'acquisito e il perduto. Cioè le trasformazioni.

Come fu all'inizio, bisognerà cominciare a discutere presto di questa trama. Non è solo un problema di autocoscienza. È un problema – se posso dire questa parola – anche "politico".

L'Europa in verità è più potente, ma anche più prudente. È più complessa, ma anche più conflittuale.

È, diciamo, una immensa soluzione. Dunque, ha un carattere strutturale. Ma una sua parte la vede come una sovrastruttura, dunque come un sistema tattico.

Lo steering group farà la sua parte. E poi dovremo approfittare della seconda componente del Club, che non è fatto solo

dai membri istituzionali ma anche dagli advisor, coloro che rappresentano la ricerca e l'analisi dei processi, per mettere a fuoco trend, cambiamenti e aspetti dello scenario prevedibile.

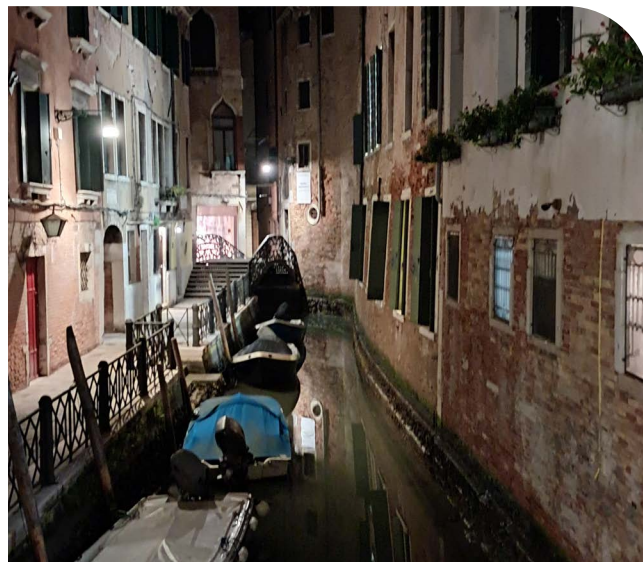
Magari prepareremo per tempo un dossier di valutazione, su cui profilare meglio le basi del quarantennale.

Oggi l'agenda varata per questa 39° edizione della plenaria di fine anno esprime **tre temi che sono parte dell'agenda di questo attuale decennio**: *l'informazione pubblica tra cooperazione e manipolazione; il nuovo profilo della trasformazione digitale e il ruolo crescente dell'intelligenza Artificiale; le linee con cui si può parlare di "comunicazione europea" sia in senso istituzionale che in senso scientifico.*

È già una base di lavoro in vista del meeting di autocoscienza del 2026.

Credo che sia mio dovere – nella **piena indipendenza** di chi non rappresenta qui una nazione e nemmeno gli organi istituzionali europee, ma è solo testimone di un progetto simbolico di un sodalizio che ha rivelato resistenza e saggezza – di **aprire questa preparazione al "quarantennale" con brevi spunti**. A cui limo il contributo di apertura di questa edizione. Quella resistenza e quella saggezza si deve a tanti amici e colleghi che ci hanno lavorato. E nell'ultimo lungo periodo grazie soprattutto alla tenacia e alla capacità relazionale di **Vincenzo Le Voci**.

- Il **primo** riguarda la qualità culturale e civile dei partecipanti.
- Il **secondo** riguarda le dinamiche di guerra e pace che hanno prodotto la costruzione delle basi dell'Europa e ora devono dimostrare di essere un fattore di unità e di nuova strategicità.
- Il **terzo** riguarda la forza e la debolezza della capacità narrativa dell'Europa di parlare ai popoli e non solo agli addetti ai lavori.



## Primo punto

L'incremento degli studi moderni nelle scienze della comunicazione e nella trasformazione digitale ha creato una condizione professionale inimmaginabile 40 anni fa, in cui le basi culturali dell'approccio alla comunicazione pubblica veniva negli stessi alti funzionari dal diritto, dalla filosofia, qualcuno dall'economia e con più frequenza dal giornalismo e dalla stessa politica.

Si è allargata la base tecnica della competenza, risulta più sfibrata la partecipazione "etico-politica" al sogno europeo. Una relazione che va forse restaurata con il realismo e il pragmatismo necessari. Ma consolidando nel Club la presenza di esperti e rappresentanti di atenei che lavorano sulla materia fino a creare un aggiornamento teorico-metodologico interno.

## Secondo punto

La costruzione stabile della pace come infrastruttura costituzionale e di governo ha caratterizzato la formazione dell'Europa negli anni '50 e '60, pur misurandosi con i postulati della guerra fredda. Ora – in particolare a fronte del carattere che ha assunto la guerra di invasione russa in Ucraina e dall'involuzione degli Stati Uniti – il tema è diventato metafora della nuova domanda di sicurezza e difesa che c'è in Europa, ma anche di spinta a condividere le ragioni strategiche (quindi anche culturali, sociali e filosofiche) dell'identità europea.

**Non è detto che ci sia vero commitment su questo tema.** Che pure, dal punto di vista comunicativo, è centrale. E questo è un punto di domanda che solo la politica scioglierà, ma su cui gli operatori di comunicazione hanno diritto di formarsi un'opinione.

## Terzo punto

**Lacerazioni e dualismi** (fondamentalmente tra ambiti più europeisti e ambiti più legati a modelli nazionalistici) hanno creato una condizione di commitment comunicativo frenato.

Quando un'organizzazione (come anche un'impresa che però risolve più facilmente questi dualismi) si trova in queste condizioni la domanda interna di comunicazione si abbassa e tende a limitarsi ad aspetti tecnici.

Questo abbassamento non incoraggia la produzione di narrative che abbiano significato nella cultura popolare di identità e appartenenza.

Questo deficit causa la percezione tecnocratica dell'Europa.

Noi non siamo tenuti a decidere su un aspetto così strategico. Ma abbiamo risorse per studiare meglio e rappresentare meglio il problema. A fronte della geo-politica globale che in cui sembrano affermarsi nuove forme di imperi dispotici (fa male dirlo, ma anche il modello in corso di politica USA rischia di essere coinvolto in questo schema) l'Europa è obbligata ad una narrativa popolare identitaria di cui per ora quasi non c'è traccia.

## Non mi spetta dire di più.

Ma solo provare a dare spunti alla creazione di un'agenda per il quarantennale che, se non proviamo a farci delle domande più di fondo, corre un vero rischio. Trovarci l'anno prossimo per dirci in sostanza che ora è. **Scoprendo che la cosa che abbiamo da dire è che sono passati 40 anni.**

Ora, conforta celebrare un giorno in cui ci troviamo tutti vivi. Ma quel fervido creare in una evoluzione capace di rendere comuni i patrimoni materiali e quelli simbolici dell'Europa, beh! era un altro brivido.

**Jürgen Habermas**, nato a Düsseldorf il 18 giugno 1929, tuttora vivente e intellettualmente attivo, filosofo, sociologo, politologo ed epistemologo tra i principali esponenti della Scuola di Francoforte (culla della *teoria critica*), che per la sua continuata analisi della "*sfera pubblica*" dovrebbe essere il santo patrono dei comunicatori pubblici europei, ha svolto una conferenza il 19 novembre a Monaco di Baviera divenuta un articolo pubblicato in molti paesi in questi giorni<sup>1</sup>, per spiegare perché è venuto il momento in cui l'Europa provi a "ballare da sola" che si conclude con queste parole:

*"Non mi è facile trarre una conclusione che avrebbe comunque il senso di uno sconvolgimento. Dico solo che un'ulteriore integrazione politica, almeno nel cuore dell'Unione Europea, non è mai stata così vitale per la nostra sopravvivenza come lo è oggi. E mai, d'altro canto, è sembrata così improbabile".*



# Opening address

## Stefano Rolando (President of the Club of Venice)

Palazzo Franchetti, December 4-5, 2025

Forty years ago, at the end of the year (1985) that had seen Europe make a strong acceleration toward market integration (and its new rules) and toward a broad program of measures to bring citizens and institutions (then called Community institutions) closer together, a close consultation began among the heads of communications from the main European countries, who for the previous forty years had almost never spoken to each other and even rarely met on official European matters

Institutional communication was proving to be one of the areas of greatest national jealousies.

We told ourselves that neither skills nor roles should be ceded. We simply needed to talk to each other, to identify commonalities and forms of diversity in functions and applications. But it also meant beginning to calibrate, in a more modern way, three processes that were each going their own way: communicating Europe, our distinct communication about Europe, and the specific nature and priorities of each country's national communication.

Those discussions spanned the winter and spring. And they gave rise to the first meeting, here in Venice, at the Cini Foundation. It was a Europe of 12 (the six founding countries: France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg; the six countries integrated between 1973 and 1986: Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom (1973), Greece (1981), Spain, and Portugal (1986).

The Parliament, Commission, and Council were involved from the beginning.

**Next year will be the fortieth anniversary of that initial dialogue.**

We will try not to be rhetorical, but to take stock critically, evaluatively. What has been consolidated and what has not been resolved. But above all, what has been gained and what has been lost, that is, the transformations.

As was the case at the beginning, we will need to begin discussing this issue soon. It is not just a problem of self-awareness. It is also a "political" problem—if I may use this word.

Europe is indeed more powerful, but also more prudent. It is more complex, but also more conflictual.

It is, let's say, an immense solution. Therefore, it has a structural character. But part of it sees it as a superstructure, therefore as a tactical system.

The steering group will play its part. And then we will have to take advantage of the second component of the Club, which is made up not only of institutional members but also of advisors, those who represent research and process analysis, to focus on trends, changes, and aspects of the foreseeable scenario.

Perhaps we will prepare an evaluation dossier in advance, on which to better outline the foundations of the fortieth anniversary.

**Today, the agenda launched for this 39<sup>th</sup> edition of the end-of-year plenary session** expresses three themes that are part of the agenda of this current decade: public information between cooperation and manipulation; the new profile of digital transformation and the growing role of Artificial Intelligence; the lines along which we can speak of "European communication" in both the institutional and scientific sense.

It is already a basis for working towards the 2026 awareness-raising meeting.

**I believe it is my duty—in the full independence** of someone who does not represent a nation or even European institutional bodies here, but merely bears witness to a symbolic project of a partnership that has demonstrated resilience and wisdom—to open this preparation for the fortieth anniversary with **brief remarks**. To these I limit my opening contribution to this edition. That resilience and wisdom are due to the many friends and colleagues who have worked on it, and in the last long period, above all, to the tenacity and interpersonal skills of **Vincenzo Le Voci**.

- **The first** concerns the cultural and civic quality of the participants.
- **The second** concerns: the dynamics of war and peace that have produced the construction of the foundations of Europe and must now demonstrate their role as a factor of unity and new strategic focus.
- **The third** concerns the strengths and weaknesses of Europe's narrative capacity to speak to the people and not just to insiders.



## First point

The growth of modern studies in communication sciences and digital transformation has created a professional situation unimaginable 40 years ago, in which the cultural foundations of the approach to public communication, even among high-ranking officials, came from law, philosophy, some from economics, and more frequently from journalism and politics itself.

The technical basis of expertise has broadened, while “ethical-political” participation in the European dream has become more frayed. This relationship perhaps needs to be restored with the necessary realism and pragmatism. This requires strengthening the presence within the Board of Directors of experts and university representatives working on the subject, ultimately leading to internal theoretical and methodological updates.

## Second point

The stable construction of peace as a constitutional and governing infrastructure characterized the formation of Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, despite contending with the tenets of the Cold War. Now—particularly given the nature of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the decline of the United States—the theme has become a metaphor for Europe's new demand for security and defense, but also for a push to share the strategic (and therefore cultural, social, and philosophical) rationales for European identity. True commitment on this issue, which is central from a communications perspective, is not necessarily present. And this is a question that only politics will resolve, but on which communications professionals have the right to form an opinion.

## Third point

Lacerations and dualisms (essentially between more pro-European spheres and spheres more closely tied to nationalist models) have created a state of stifled communicative commitment.

When an organization (or even a business that more easily resolves these dualisms) finds itself in these conditions, internal demand for communication declines and tends to be limited to technical aspects.

This decline does not encourage the production of narratives that have meaning in the popular culture of identity and belonging.

### **This deficit causes a technocratic perception of Europe.**

We are not required to decide on such a strategic aspect. But we have the resources to better study and better represent the problem. Faced with global geopolitics, where new forms of despotic empires seem to be asserting themselves (it hurts to say it, but even the current model of US politics risks being implicated in this pattern), Europe is forced into a popular narrative of identity of which there is currently almost no trace.

### **It is not my place to say more.**

But simply to try to provide ideas for the creation of an agenda for the fortieth anniversary, which, if we do not try to ask ourselves more fundamental questions, is truly at risk. Meeting next year to essentially tell each other what time it is. Discovering that what we have to say is that 40 years have passed.

Now, it's comforting to celebrate a day when we're all alive. But that fervent creativity in an evolution capable of sharing Europe's material and symbolic heritage—well, that was another thrill.

**Jürgen Habermas**, born in Düsseldorf on June 18, 1929, still alive and intellectually active, is a philosopher, sociologist, political scientist, and epistemologist, among the leading exponents of the Frankfurt School (the cradle of critical theory). For his persistent analysis of the “public sphere,” he should be the patron saint of European public communicators. He gave a lecture on November 19 in Munich, which has recently been published in many countries. He explained why the time has come for Europe to try “dancing alone,” concluding with these words:

*“It is not easy for me to draw a conclusion that would still have the air of a curse. I am simply saying that further political integration, at least at the heart of the European Union, has never been so vital to our survival as it is today. And never, on the other hand, has it seemed so unlikely.”*

8107



# Manifesto per la Sostenibilità Digitale della Comunicazione

01

## On-line ed off-line: verso un contesto integrato di sostenibilità

Il digitale è oggi il principale motore di evoluzione della comunicazione. La trasformazione digitale ridefinisce profondamente sia la comunicazione on-line che quella off-line, determinando cambiamenti strutturali e di significato che investono persone, società, cultura ed economia. Una visione orientata alla sostenibilità digitale della comunicazione deve partire dalla convergenza e dall'integrazione di questi due elementi.

02

## Biunivocità della relazione tra sostenibilità e comunicazione digitale

La relazione tra comunicazione digitale e sostenibilità, in coerenza con il manifesto per la sostenibilità digitale, è sistemica e bidirezionale. Il digitale nella comunicazione va quindi sviluppato in coerenza con gli obiettivi di sostenibilità, ma nel contempo diventa esso stesso motore di sviluppo sostenibile della comunicazione.

03

## La Persona al Centro

La comunicazione deve essere orientata al benessere umano, garantendo il rispetto della dignità e dei diritti come sanciti dalla Carta dei diritti fondamentali dell'Unione europea e dagli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile di Agenda 2030. La centralità della persona deve essere promossa sia attraverso l'attenzione ai contenuti, che alle infrastrutture digitali che permettono tale comunicazione.

04

## Inclusione e Accessibilità Universale

La comunicazione digitale deve superare ogni forma di esclusione e garantire accessibilità equa, contribuendo così alla riduzione delle disuguaglianze. La trasformazione digitale applicata alla comunicazione deve quindi essere sviluppata in coerenza con tali principi affinché l'accessibilità diventi un valore integrato in ogni fase del processo comunicativo.

05

## Benessere e Qualità delle Condizioni di Lavoro

La digitalizzazione deve assicurare condizioni lavorative dignitose e sicure per tutti gli operatori coinvolti, tutelando il benessere psicofisico dei professionisti della comunicazione e degli utenti, in linea con gli obiettivi di lavoro dignitoso e crescita economica.

06

## Benessere Digitale e Uso Consapevole

La comunicazione deve incoraggiare un uso consapevole e responsabile delle tecnologie digitali, prevenendo dipendenze e fenomeni di isolamento sociale, in accordo con gli obiettivi di salute e benessere di Agenda 2030 e incentivando contenuti che promuovano l'adozione di comportamenti responsabili.

07

## Diversità e Impatto Culturale e Sociale Positivo

La comunicazione digitale deve valorizzare le diversità sociali e culturali, favorendo una società più inclusiva, equa e dinamica, in linea con gli obiettivi relativi all'istruzione di qualità e allo sviluppo di città e comunità sostenibili.

08

## Etica, Responsabilità e Trasparenza

La comunicazione digitale deve fondarsi su principi di etica e responsabilità, prevenendo disinformazione e manipolazioni algoritmiche e garantendo trasparenza sui contenuti e sui processi decisionali.

09

## Sostenibilità Ambientale e Riduzione dell'Impatto

La digitalizzazione della comunicazione deve minimizzare l'impatto ambientale legato a infrastrutture e processi, contribuendo alla lotta contro il cambiamento climatico e a promuovere comportamenti di uso e produzione responsabili. Ciò implica sia garantire la sostenibilità della comunicazione digitale che valutare le modalità con le quali la digitalizzazione possa rendere più sostenibile la comunicazione nel complesso.

10

## Collaborazione tra Attori

È essenziale un'azione coordinata tra aziende che sviluppano azioni di comunicazione, istituzioni che definiscono il contesto normativo, operatori del settore che mettono in pratica le iniziative, piattaforme digitali che ne favoriscono la veicolazione, per sviluppare modelli comunicativi sostenibili ed a supporto della sostenibilità.

11

## Educazione, Formazione e Consapevolezza Digitale

La rapidità della trasformazione digitale richiede un impegno condiviso di aziende e istituzioni nel garantire una formazione continua sia degli operatori della comunicazione che degli utenti finali. È essenziale diffondere la consapevolezza della natura e delle caratteristiche degli strumenti digitali, creando così un ecosistema comunicativo sostenibile e consapevole.



La **Fondazione per la Sostenibilità Digitale** è la prima fondazione di ricerca riconosciuta in Italia dedicata esclusivamente alla **sostenibilità digitale**. Riunisce esperti indipendenti, università, aziende e istituzioni, impegnati a promuovere un futuro dove l'**innovazione tecnologica** e la **trasformazione digitale** siano realmente al servizio dello sviluppo sostenibile. Rappresenta un punto di riferimento per chi vuole comprendere e orientare l'**evoluzione tecnologica** in chiave **etica, inclusiva e sostenibile**.



# Manifesto for the digital sustainability of communication

## English version

### 01 Online and Offline: Toward an Integrated Context of Sustainability

Digital technology is today the main driver of the evolution of communication. Digital transformation profoundly redefines both online and offline communication, bringing about structural and meaningful changes that affect people, society, culture, and the economy. A vision oriented toward digital communication sustainability must begin with the convergence and integration of these two elements.

### 02 The Biunivocal Relationship Between Sustainability and Digital Communication

The relationship between digital communication and sustainability, in line with the manifesto for digital sustainability, is systemic and bidirectional. Digital communication must therefore be developed in line with sustainability objectives, but at the same time it becomes itself a driver of sustainable development in communication.

### 03 Putting People at the Center

Communication must be oriented towards human well-being, ensuring respect for dignity and rights as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030. The centrality of the person must be promoted both through attention to content and the digital infrastructures that enable such communication.

### 04 Inclusion and Universal Accessibility

Digital communication must overcome all forms of exclusion and guarantee equal accessibility, thus contributing to the reduction of inequalities. The digital transformation applied to communication must therefore be developed consistently with these principles so that accessibility becomes an integrated value at every stage of the communication process.

### 05 Well-being and Quality of Working Conditions

Digitalization must ensure decent and safe working conditions for all involved, protecting the mental and physical well-being of communication professionals and users, in line with the objectives of decent work and economic growth

### 06 Digital Well-being and Conscious Use

Communication must encourage the conscious and responsible use of digital technologies, preventing addictions and social isolation, in accordance with the health and well-being objectives of Agenda 2030 and encouraging content that promotes the adoption of responsible behavior.

### 07 Diversity and Positive Cultural and Social Impact

Digital communication must enhance social and cultural diversity, fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and dynamic society, in line with the objectives of quality education and the development of sustainable cities and communities.

### 08 Ethics, Responsibility, and Transparency

Digital communication must be based on principles of ethics and responsibility, preventing misinformation and algorithmic manipulation and ensuring transparency in content and decision-making processes.

### 09 Environmental Sustainability and Impact Reduction

The digitalization of communication must minimize the environmental impact of infrastructure and processes, contributing to the fight against climate change and promoting responsible use and production behaviors. This involves both ensuring the sustainability of digital communication and evaluating how digitalization can make communication more sustainable overall.

### 10 Collaboration between Stakeholders

Coordinated action between companies that develop communication initiatives, institutions that define the regulatory context, industry operators that implement the initiatives, and digital platforms that facilitate their dissemination is essential to develop sustainable communication models that support sustainability.

### 11 Education, Training, and Digital Awareness

The rapid pace of digital transformation requires a shared commitment from companies and institutions to ensure ongoing training for both communications professionals and end users. It is essential to spread awareness of the nature and characteristics of digital tools, thus creating a sustainable and informed communications ecosystem.

The **Foundation for Digital Sustainability** is the first recognized research foundation in Italy dedicated exclusively to digital sustainability.

It brings together independent experts, universities, companies, and institutions, committed to promoting a future where technological innovation and digital transformation truly serve sustainable development. **It represents a point of reference for those who want to understand and guide technological evolution from an ethical, inclusive, and sustainable perspective.**



# OTHER MEETINGS

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# Stratcom Seminar “Be(A)ware”

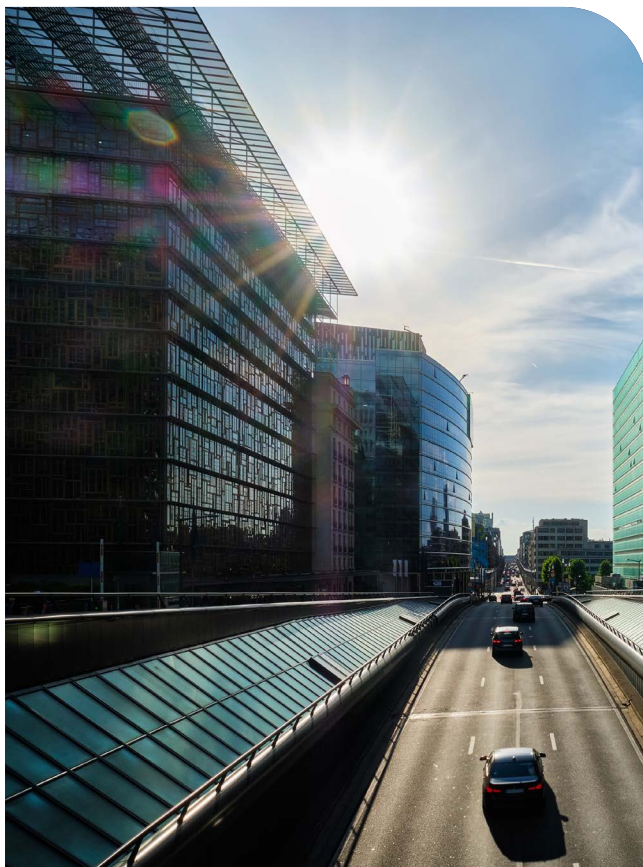
Brussels, 2 July 2026

- Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION  
OF LITHUANIA TO THE  
EUROPEAN UNION

*Venue: Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU - Rue Belliard 41-43, Brussels*



The European Commission launched the European Democracy Shield in November 2025, which aims to safeguard the information space, ensure fair elections, and boost resilience and citizens' engagement. Confronted with ongoing persistent cynical FIMI and hybrid attacks from Russia, China, and their proxies, the EU needs to step up its resilience efforts. Teams across EU institutions and national efforts, including civil society, media, academia, authorities and active citizens - all play a pivotal role in building the European democracy shield.

Lithuania's whole-of-society approach proves that response to disinformation is most efficient when institutional frameworks are complemented by vibrant ecosystem, grassroots initiatives and synergetic experiences.

The second edition of BE(A)WARE! aims to gather practitioners, diplomats, and experts from EU institutions, Member States, NGOs, private sector and society at large. The main goal of this new event is to strengthen collaboration and develop actionable strategies to counter FIMI, through sharing best practices from , national efforts, joint European initiatives and other international collaborative endeavours. It is also increasingly obvious that FIMI not only undermines democratic institutions but also has serious economic implications that need to be addressed.

This event, which is part of Lithuania's preparations for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2027, is organised in partnership with the Club of Venice.

# Agenda

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:30-10:00  | <b>Welcome coffee and registration</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 10:00-10:05 | <b>Welcoming remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Mr. Nerijus Aleksiejūnas, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10:05-10:15 | <b>Current state of play by Representative of Directorate-General for Communication, European Commission TBC</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 10:15-10:25 | <b>Key-Note by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Mr. Edward Lucas, Director of Baltic International Security Centre</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 10:25-11:30 | <b>Be aware. Working as one.</b><br><b>Panel 1.</b> <p>How can the European Democracy Shield and the steps taken since its launch help to convert experience, data and personal sentiments into coordinated actions against FIMI? What are the practical steps to strengthen a whole-of-society approach to democratic resilience across the EU? What is the scale of the economic damage of FIMI campaigns, and how should it be prevented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Representative of European Commission TBC</li><li>– Representative of the Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield, European Parliament TBC</li><li>– Mr Thomas Delorme, researcher, Sopra Steria TBC</li><li>– Mr Vytautas Matulevičius, book author of 'Fear Front'</li><li>– Representative of CyberPeace Institute TBC</li></ul> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Mr Edward Lucas, Director of Baltic International Security Centre</li></ul> |
| 11:30-11:45 | <b>Q&amp;A session</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 11:45-12:00 | <i>coffee break</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 12:00-13:00 | <b>Beware. Taking up the sword.</b><br><b>Panel 2.</b> <p>How can we protect our information space from FIMI? How can we help European youth navigate social media safely and build resilience in a rapidly changing environment? Is it still possible to trust social media? What effective tools we have at hand, like sanctions and strategic communication, to advance the fight against FIMI?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Ms Goda Smilingytė, Author of Brain Hygiene initiative</li><li>– Mr Dominykas Kubilius, youtuber, author of YouTube channel 'On Fire'</li><li>– Representative of Europol / ENISA TBC</li><li>– Representative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe, France TBC</li><li>– Representative of Centre for Strategic Communication, Ukraine TBC</li></ul> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Representative of Defend Democracy TBC</li></ul>                                                          |
| 13:00-13:15 | <b>Q&amp;A session</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 13:15-14:15 | <i>Networking lunch</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

14:15-14:30

**Keynote speech by:**

- Representative of the European External Action Service TBC

14:15-15:15

**Data driven solutions for keeping us safe.**

**Panel 3.**

Can data-driven solutions improve the safety of our information space? What changes and investments are needed to relaunch and protect the public discourse now and in the future? Are we prepared to safeguard our information environment in the European Union and beyond?

- Representative of EU Member State TBC
- **Mr Mykolas Katkus**, CEO and Co-founder of Repsense
- Representative of Europol / ENISA TBC
- Representative of EEAS TBC

**Moderator:**

- **Mr Vincenzo Le Voci**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

15:15-15:30

**Q&A session**

15:30-15:40

**Closing remarks by:**

- **Mr Mindaugas Lašas**, Director of Communication and Cultural Diplomacy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lithuania

16:00-17:00

**Fireside Chat:**

- Setting anti-EU disinformation on fire by famous Lithuanian youtuber, activist, fighting against lies and disinformation **Dominykas Kubilius** with **Edward Lucas** / or EU Commissioner TBC  
*Livestream / Informal discussion*

17:00-19:00

**Informal networking reception**



# EuroPCom 2026: Be connectors in a fragmented world



Brussels, 9 and 10 June 2026

The 17<sup>th</sup> edition of EuroPCom will take place on 9 and 10 June 2026 in Brussels, bringing together communicators, leaders and changemakers from across Europe and beyond.

Under the theme “**Be connectors: creating proximity in a fragmented world**”, EuroPCom 2026 will explore how public communication can foster connection and trust in an increasingly complex environment. The programme is structured around three core strands:

- Connecting people
- Connecting places
- Connecting times

Across all three strands, a **Digital mirror** will provide a crosscutting perspective, examining how digital technologies can both connect and divide societies.

This year's conference will focus on four priority topics:

- Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and regional elections
- Listening at scale to citizens with AI
- European alternatives for social media and large language models
- Europe speaks – but who is really listening?

59

## Programme (as of 20.5.2026)<sup>1</sup>

### 9 June

#### Opening Session

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 62 (listening room JDE 53) / Web streaming / EN-FR-ES-IT*

We scroll, we click, we connect, but do we really feel close? This opening session kicks off EuroPCom 2026 by exploring the paradox of connection in today's digital world and by inviting public communicators to step into their roles as true connectors of people, democracy, and belonging.

#### Speaker TBC:

- **Kata Tüttő**, President, European Committee of the Regions - Representative from the European Parliament TBC

#### Moderation:

- **Anna Gumbau**, moderator, Moderating.eu

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/plenaries-events/europcom-2026>



## EuroPCom talks

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE Atrium 5 / EN*

Three short and inspiring talks that explore how public communication can create connection across people, places, and time, from strengthening social bonds and amplifying diverse voices, to grounding European narratives in local realities and linking the past experiences to future challenges, these talks show how communication can turn fragmentation into shared meaning.

### Connecting people

- **Sevim Aktas**, Founder, inside eu and Social Media Coordinator, Cabinet of Commissioner Micallef

### Connecting places

- **Mariyana Nacheva**, Information and Communication Officer, DG Communication, European Commission

### Connecting times

- **Dr Felix M. Simon**, Research Fellow in AI, Information, and News at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford

#### Moderation:

- **Anna Gumbau**, moderator, Moderating.eu

## Connecting people - parallel sessions

### Workshop 1

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 62 / Web streaming / EN-ES-FR-IT*

#### **From recognition to resilience: countering Foreign Information Manipulation Interference (FIMI) in regional elections**

FIMI doesn't just spread falsehoods, but it also turns people against each other. In the run-up to regional elections, this workshop explores how manipulation campaigns exploit fear, identity, and emotion to fracture communities and weaken election integrity. It challenges public communicators to move beyond debunking and focus on what really counters interference: rebuilding trust, restoring dialogue, and reconnecting people to democratic life.

#### Keynote:

- **George Papandreou**, Member of the Hellenic Parliament, former Prime Minister of Greece, General rapporteur on Democracy in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

#### Speakers:

- **Viktoras Dauksas**, Head of Debunk.org
- **Péter Krekó**, Policy Leader Fellow, Florence School of Transnational Governance and Director of Political Capital Institute and Head of HDMO-Lakmusz
- **Andrea Lieberman**, Senior Analyst, Swedish Psychological Defence Agency

#### Moderation:

- **Sara Ahnborg**, Press Officer, European Parliament

## Ideas lab 1

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE Atrium 6 / EN*

### **In-person interaction as an antidote to polarisation: An Ideas Lab on facilitating dialogue and community building in challenging conversations**

This hands-on session explores how face-to-face dialogue can counter polarisation by rebuilding trust and fostering constructive exchange—even in heated discussions. Drawing on the Local Conversations – European Questions workshop findings, participants will practise tools to navigate tense topics (like migration, climate, or institutional distrust) without falling into confrontational traps. Through group analysis of real polarising narratives, attendees will unpack deep-seated beliefs and backcast trust-building alternatives, identifying what institutions and individuals can do differently. By the end, participants will leave with a few practical pointers to keep conversations open, empathetic, and focused on shared understanding - not “winning.”

#### **Facilitators:**

- **Kasia Sumislawska**, Policy Officer, Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation, DG COMM, European Commission
- **Rolf Nijmeijer**, Analyst, Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation, DG COMM, European Commission

## Training 1

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 51 / Web streaming / EN*

### **Data Storytelling**

TikTok is one of the most influential and notoriously opaque platforms shaping political communication today. From election campaigns to disinformation networks, its dynamics are studied - but rarely accessible to the communicators who need to act on them. This hands-on workshop shows you how to collect, clean, and visualise TikTok data to produce compelling, evidence-based stories.

#### **Trainer:**

- **Marcus Bösch**, researcher and consultant specialising in propaganda, AI, and platform politics



## Connecting places - parallel sessions

### Workshop 2

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 62 / Web streaming / EN-FR*

#### Europe speaks but who is really listening?

This workshop will explore how European public communication is perceived from outside Europe. We will listen to bold provocative, and (uncomfortably) honest views - challenging the European lens, revealing blind spots, and unpacking how credibility and relevance are constructed (or lost) across continents. This session aims to break the autopilot of EU narratives.

#### Speakers:

- **Shada Islam**, Managing Director, New Horizons Project and Brussels-based EU analyst and commentator
- **Luca Eszter Kadar**, Head of Division of Global Communications, International Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy, European External Action Service
- More speakers TBC

#### Moderation:

- **Silke Toenshoff**, Head of the Events and Local Dialogues Unit, European Committee of the Regions

### Ideas Lab 2

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE Atrium 6*

Nordic Focus - details to come soon

### Facilitators TBC - Training 2

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 53 / Web streaming / EN*

#### Reclaiming social media: bold responses to online attacks

Social media is a contested space where narratives collide and connection can quickly break down. This training will present the example of the French Response account to showcase how bold, realworld digital strategies can be used by public communicators to push back against disinformation, reclaim space, and build meaningful engagement.

#### Trainer:

- **Mélodine Allaire**, Head of the Influence and Strategic Communication Unit; French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

### Spotlight session / 09:00-10:30

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 52 / Web streaming / EN, FR, IT, ES*

#### Countering FIMI: practical strategies for political leaders at the regional level

This interactive training brings together regional and local political leaders, Young Elected Politicians, and public communicators to explore how foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) affect regions and cities across Europe. Through real-life cases shared by CoR members and a minimaster-class led by Debunk, participants will gain practical experience from concrete cases, codevelop tailored response strategies for the regional and local level.

#### Speakers:

- **Matteo Pugliese**, Senior Analyst, Debunk.or
- **Sophie Sacilotto**, Analyst, Debunk.org

#### Moderation:

- **Mario Grubišić**, Head of Future LAB Sector, Events and local dialogurd unit, European Committee of the Regions

## Connecting times - parallel sessions

### Workshop 3

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 52 / Web streaming / EN-FR*

#### Beyond Big Tech: shaping Europe digital future

Europe is building its own digital kit. The workshop will explore alternative social media platforms, AI solutions, and LLMs in light of current EU priorities, including democratic resilience, the implementation of the Digital Services Act, and Europe's strategic autonomy in the digital sphere. The focus is on what new models can structurally change public communication ecosystems and ensure technology serves connection rather than fragmentation.

##### Speakers:

- **Anna Zeiter**, CEO, W
- **Sofie Schönborn**, Digital Sovereignty Manager, Schwarz Digits
- **Gualtiero Carraro**, Digital Sovereignty Manager, Schwarz Digits
- More speakers TBC

##### Moderation:

- **Adalbert Jahnz**, Head of Unit Social media & Visual Communication, DG Communication, European Commission

### Ideas Lab 3

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE Atrium 6 / EN*

#### Listening at scale: how AI can turn noise into meaning

What if we could hear everyone at once—and still respond with care?

This Ideas Lab examines how AI can become a genuine listening tool -detecting trends, decoding sentiment, and surfacing meaning from complex, fragmented public voices. The focus is on augmenting human empathy, not replacing it, and translating digital noise into real, respectful connection over time.

##### Trainer:

- **Agueda Quiroga**, Workshops Lead, InnovateUS - TheGovLab-Burnes Center for Social Change

### Training 3

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 53 / Web streaming / EN*

- Speakers TBC

### Closing session

*European Committee of the Regions, JDE 62 / Web streaming / EN-FR*

EuroPCom 2026 wraps up by reflecting on the ideas, insight, and experiments of the past two days. The session highlights how public communication can transform hyper-connectivity into meaningful human connection, reinforcing trust, engagement, and democratic resilience across people, places, and times.

##### Speaker:

- **François-Xavier Priollaud**, vice-president of the Normandy Region and Special Rapporteur for the CoR's Communications Strategy
- **Inga Rosinska**, Director for Information and Outreach, DG Communication and Information, Council of the European Union
- **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Deputy Director-General, DG Communication, European Commission
- **Florian Marin**, member of the European Economic and Social Committee
- Representative from the European Investment Bank
- **Gabriel Glöckler**, Principal Adviser, Directorate General Communications, European Central Bank
- **Gillian Dörner**, Deputy Director, Public Governance Directorate, OECD

##### Moderation:

- **Anna Gumbau**, moderator, Moderating.eu



# COMMUNICATION TOPICS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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# Un battement de cils dans l'histoire de l'univers<sup>1</sup>

Par Zvonimir Frka-Petešić

*À l'heure où l'intelligence artificielle transforme le monde plus vite que jamais auparavant, le regard porté depuis la perspective cosmique révèle combien les derniers instants de l'histoire humaine sont exceptionnels — et combien ils exigent de nous un sens aigu des responsabilités.*

Nous entrons dans une nouvelle année au moment même où l'intelligence artificielle connaît un essor fulgurant. En l'espace de quelques mois à peine, des machines apprennent à écrire, créer et raisonner, souvent à une vitesse qui dépasse les capacités humaines. Les promesses sont immenses, mais les inquiétudes grandissent avec elles. Et tandis que nous échangeons des vœux de bonheur, de santé et de réussite, c'est peut-être précisément le moment de lever les yeux un instant — non seulement vers l'avenir immédiat que nous tentons de prévoir, mais vers le temps long, celui de l'univers, de la vie et de l'humanité. Car l'instant que nous vivons est véritablement exceptionnel, non seulement par ce qu'il nous promet, mais aussi par ce qu'il exige de nous, sans que nous en ayons toujours conscience.

Imaginons donc que l'histoire entière de l'univers — 13,8 milliards d'années, du Big Bang à aujourd'hui — soit condensée en une seule année civile, du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier à minuit jusqu'à la dernière seconde du 31 décembre. Cette image ne sert pas seulement à comparer les échelles ; elle constitue un cadre de pensée qui nous aide à percevoir plus clairement comment l'histoire de l'univers, de la vie et de l'homme s'accélère à mesure que l'année touche à sa fin, et comment, dans cette accélération vertigineuse, notre place elle-même se transforme.

## L'année cosmique

Le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier à minuit naît l'univers. Avec lui apparaissent l'espace et le temps, mais presque simultanément aussi les briques élémentaires de la matière : protons, neutrons et électrons. Ces particules fondamentales sont encore présentes aujourd'hui dans chacun de nos atomes. Quel que soit l'âge que nous célébrons à nos anniversaires, nous sommes tous constitués de particules nées à l'aube de l'univers.

Longtemps, l'univers demeure simple et obscur. Il n'est composé que d'atomes légers, principalement d'hydrogène et d'hélium. Puis, durant la première semaine de janvier, la nuit cosmique s'illumine : les premières étoiles s'allument. Immenses, instables et de courte durée de vie, elles sont de véritables chaudrons cosmiques.

En leur sein, la fusion nucléaire « cuisine » la matière et crée de nouveaux éléments chimiques, c'est-à-dire de nouveaux types d'atomes : carbone, oxygène, silicium, fer... À la fin de leur brève existence, ces étoiles explosent en supernovæ, dispersant ces atomes à travers l'univers.

Commence alors un cycle patient et grandiose : la poussière d'étoiles se répand, se mélange, puis se rassemble de nouveau sous l'effet de la gravitation. De ces vestiges naissent de nouvelles étoiles, puis une deuxième et une troisième génération, plus durables et souvent entourées de planètes. C'est ainsi que tous les éléments chimiques présents sur Terre ont été forgés au cœur d'étoiles disparues bien avant la naissance du Soleil.

L'univers est d'une immensité vertigineuse. Les astronomes estiment qu'il contient environ dix fois plus d'étoiles qu'il n'existe de grains de sable sur Terre, en comptant toutes les plages et tous les déserts. Et pourtant, un seul gramme d'eau contient approximativement autant d'atomes qu'il y a d'étoiles dans l'univers observable — de l'ordre de  $10^{23}$ , soit un nombre écrit avec un 1 suivi de vingt-trois zéros. Il y en a déjà autant dans une seule goutte d'eau, et plus encore dans l'univers tout entier. Chaque étoile est un monde ; chaque atome est déjà un petit cosmos. Et chacun possède sa propre histoire cosmique.

<sup>1</sup> Version originale publiée dans le [numéro 831](#) de *Vijenac*, le 15 janvier 2026.



## Une planète minuscule

Ce n'est qu'au début du mois de septembre que se forme notre système solaire, puis la Terre. La planète est encore incandescente, violemment bombardée, enveloppée d'une atmosphère dense et toxique, riche en dioxyde de carbone et dépourvue d'oxygène. Avant la fin du mois de septembre, il se produit pourtant quelque chose d'extraordinaire : les premières formes primitives de vie apparaissent, minuscules et fragiles, mais capables de se reproduire, de s'adapter et de persister.

Jusqu'à la fin du mois de novembre, la vie sur Terre se réduit presque entièrement à des bactéries et à d'autres organismes unicellulaires. Pendant des dizaines de millions d'années, ce sont eux qui modifient la composition de l'atmosphère, produisent de l'oxygène, transforment les océans et déclenchent de grandes périodes glaciaires. Puis apparaissent les premiers organismes multicellulaires. La complexité franchit un nouveau seuil.

Vers le 11 décembre, la Terre entre dans l'une des périodes les plus spectaculaires de son histoire : elle se couvre presque entièrement de glace. La planète prend l'aspect d'une gigantesque boule de neige. La vie semble proche de l'extinction. Pourtant, elle survit. Le dioxyde de carbone s'accumule progressivement dans l'atmosphère, l'effet de serre s'intensifie et la Terre finit par se réchauffer.

Au milieu du mois de décembre survient l'un des moments les plus féconds de l'histoire terrestre : l'explosion cambrienne. La vie devient soudain beaucoup plus complexe. Les poissons peuplent les mers, les plantes verdissent les continents, les insectes conquièrent les airs, tandis que les tétrapodes sortent de l'eau et commencent à coloniser la terre ferme.

À Noël apparaissent les dinosaures. Ils règnent sur la Terre pendant quelques jours de cette année cosmique. Mais le 30 décembre, au petit matin, ils disparaissent brutalement sous l'impact d'un gigantesque astéroïde, qui provoque des incendies planétaires et l'effondrement du système climatique. La vie vacille, sans disparaître. Les mammifères prennent alors le relais.

## La dernière soirée

Toute l'histoire humaine tient dans la dernière soirée du 31 décembre. Vers 22 heures apparaissent les premiers hommes en Afrique orientale. Ce n'est qu'avec *Homo erectus*, environ une heure et quart avant minuit, que l'homme quitte pour la première fois l'Afrique. À 23 h 20, il maîtrise le feu. Vingt-quatre minutes avant minuit, Néandertal parcourt l'Europe et l'Asie. Douze minutes avant minuit apparaît *Homo sapiens*, notre propre espèce. Mais sa grande migration hors d'Afrique ne se produit que deux minutes et quarante secondes avant minuit.

Puis tout s'accélère brusquement. Trente secondes avant minuit, l'agriculture transforme durablement les paysages. Cinq secondes avant minuit naît le christianisme. Une seconde avant minuit, l'Amérique est découverte. Une demi-seconde

avant minuit commence l'ère industrielle. Un dixième de seconde avant minuit, l'homme marche sur la Lune.

Mais dans ces ultimes fractions de seconde, la planète se transforme à une vitesse inédite. La masse de tout ce que l'humanité a construit — béton, acier, verre et plastique — dépasse désormais le poids cumulé des forêts, des animaux et de la vie océanique qui se sont développés au cours des quatre derniers mois de cette année cosmique, depuis l'apparition de la vie sur Terre.

## Une fraction de seconde qui change tout

Une telle accélération et une transformation aussi brutale du visage de la Terre ne sont évidemment pas sans conséquences. Les océans se réchauffent et s'acidifient. La cryosphère — l'ensemble des masses glacées de la planète, y compris les calottes polaires, les glaciers de montagne et la banquise — fond rapidement. Les sols s'érodent, les eaux se dégradent et la biodiversité recule à une vitesse stupéfiante.

Depuis 1970, les populations de vertébrés sauvages ont diminué d'environ 70 %. Les insectes, essentiels à la pollinisation et aux chaînes alimentaires, disparaissent massivement dans de nombreuses régions du monde : en l'espace d'une seule génération humaine, le nombre d'insectes qui venaient autrefois s'écraser sur les pare-brise lors des longs trajets a chuté de manière spectaculaire. Le monde végétal recule lui aussi, fragmenté par l'urbanisation et les changements climatiques. On estime qu'environ 40 % des espèces végétales sont aujourd'hui menacées, tandis que le monde a perdu depuis 1990 près de 420 millions d'hectares de forêts, soit une superficie équivalente à celle de l'Union européenne.

Il y a encore une demi-minute à peine dans cette année cosmique, presque toute la biomasse des mammifères appartenait à des animaux sauvages. Aujourd'hui, dans cette dernière fraction de seconde, plus d'un tiers de la biomasse des mammifères est constitué d'êtres humains, près de 60 % du bétail que nous élevons pour nous nourrir, tandis que toute la faune sauvage restante ne représente plus qu'environ 4 %. En d'autres termes, en quelques dizaines de secondes de l'année cosmique, l'humanité a évincé les animaux sauvages de leur propre planète.

La concentration de dioxyde de carbone dépasse aujourd'hui 420 ppm — parties par million — ce qui signifie que plus de 420 molécules de CO<sub>2</sub> sont présentes pour chaque million de molécules d'air. La Terre n'avait plus connu un tel niveau depuis des millions d'années, et surtout jamais une augmentation d'une telle rapidité. Pendant des centaines de milliers d'années auparavant, la concentration de CO<sub>2</sub> oscillait naturellement entre environ 180 ppm durant les grandes périodes glaciaires et quelque 280 ppm pendant les périodes tempérées plus clémentes, comme celle des douze derniers millénaires au cours desquels la civilisation humaine s'est développée. L'augmentation actuelle est liée au réchauffement global le plus rapide connu dans l'histoire de la Terre — environ cinquante fois plus rapide que lors de la sortie de la dernière glaciation.

## Conscience et responsabilité

Chaque être vivant aujourd'hui — plante, animal, bactérie, champignon ou être humain — est l'ultime rameau de l'arbre de la vie, vieux de plus de trois milliards d'années. Chacun est le dernier descendant d'une lignée ininterrompue qui a traversé le plus exigeant et le plus complexe des processus de « contrôle de qualité » imaginable : la sélection naturelle, à l'œuvre depuis des milliards d'années. Or, au cours de l'évolution, ce n'est pas seulement la majorité des branches de cet arbre qui a été coupée, mais l'immense majorité — pratiquement toutes. On estime que plus de 99,9 % des lignées évolutives potentielles ont disparu au cours de l'histoire de la vie, car seule une infime minorité a réussi à survivre à tous les changements, catastrophes, prédateurs et hasards. C'est pourquoi toute forme de vie sur Terre est à la fois un miracle et d'une valeur inestimable. Chaque être vivant aujourd'hui est un survivant.

Et nous, êtres humains, sommes constitués d'atomes nés dans des étoiles depuis longtemps éteintes. Les protons, neutrons et électrons qui nous composent ont vu le jour aux tout premiers instants de l'univers. De cette matière primordiale est née une créature devenue consciente d'elle-même — que l'on y voie l'œuvre des lois de la nature, un sens profond, ou l'alliance des deux.

La science décrit comment l'univers s'est formé et développé ; la foi s'interroge sur la raison même de son existence et sur le sens du surgissement de la conscience en son sein. Ces deux perspectives ne s'excluent pas nécessairement. Comme le veut une anecdote souvent rapportée — et probablement apocryphe — après une conversation entre le pape Jean-Paul II et le célèbre physicien théoricien Stephen Hawking, le Saint-Père aurait conclu avec un sourire : « Nous sommes donc d'accord : pour nous, c'est jusqu'au Big Bang ; pour vous, c'est après. »

Véridique ou non, cette formule résume bien la possibilité d'une coexistence paisible entre science et foi, chacune dans son propre champ de questionnement et de sens. En nous se rencontrent, d'une manière unique, l'histoire cosmique et la conscience humaine. L'univers, du moins sur cette planète, est devenu conscient de lui-même à travers nous. Si tel est le cas, la conscience n'est pas seulement un don, mais aussi une responsabilité.

Dans ce même dernier fragment de seconde de l'année cosmique, nous assistons également à une explosion de l'information : alors que quelques centaines d'exaoctets de données avaient été produits depuis les origines de l'humanité jusqu'aux environs de l'an 2000, il se crée aujourd'hui presque deux fois plus d'informations chaque jour — environ un demi-zettaoctet — sous forme de textes, de sons, d'images et de vidéos, tous codés numériquement en zéros et en uns. Si l'on imprimait ces données sur du papier, on pourrait en recouvrir plus de vingt fois la surface de la Terre. Pourtant, la plupart de ces informations sont éphémères, et les archéologues du futur auront sans doute bien peu de choses véritablement significatives à étudier sur notre époque.

Mais en une seule génération humaine, quelque chose de plus important encore que la quantité d'informations a changé : le rapport entre information vérifiée et fiable, d'une part, et bruit informationnel, d'autre part, s'est radicalement transformé. Dans un monde où plus de six milliards de smartphones signifient aussi plus de six milliards d'« éditeurs » potentiels à portée mondiale, la frontière entre savoir, opinion et manipulation devient toujours plus poreuse.

Or la démocratie ne repose pas sur le gouvernement des plus intelligents, mais sur celui de la majorité — et celle-ci ne peut subsister que tant que cette majorité demeure relativement bien informée. Faute de quoi, la liberté de choix se transforme aisément en liberté de l'illusion.

L'intelligence artificielle, première invention humaine capable de raisonner de manière autonome, de nous dépasser dans la vitesse de traitement et parfois même de produire de façon convaincante des contenus faux ou trompeurs afin d'atteindre un objectif donné, accroît encore cette vitesse — et notre responsabilité. Car, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la planète, le destin d'une grande partie de la vie ne dépend plus des astéroïdes ou des glaciations, mais des décisions d'une seule espèce. Notre puissance est devenue planétaire. La question qui s'impose désormais n'est plus de savoir si nous pouvons aller encore plus vite, plus loin et plus haut, mais si nous saurons être assez sages.

À l'aube de cette nouvelle année, contempler cette aventure cosmique peut nous aider à relativiser bien des préoccupations quotidiennes. La Terre est fragile et précieuse. À travers nous, l'univers acquiert la possibilité d'être compris et raconté. Reste à savoir si cette conscience pourra se transformer en sagesse — à temps.

Que l'année 2026 nous soit heureuse.

### Zvonimir Frka-Petešić

Zvonimir FRKA-PETEŠIĆ is a career diplomat who has served as Chief of Staff to Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković since 2017. He served in Paris, then in Brussels during the negotiations for Croatia's accession to the EU and was ambassador to Morocco. He was Head of the Directorate for Support to the Accession Process of Croatia to the EU, at the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. He was also Head of the Department of Public Diplomacy and the editor of several publications on Croatia and its European journey. Zvonimir FRKA-PETEŠIĆ is Member of the Steering Committee of the Club of Venice.





# 20 years building democracy, by with and for everyone

By Anthony Zacharzewski

## *The DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY celebrates its 20 years of activity*

20 years ago, five young pioneer founders signed the documents that created The Democratic Society. When they started in 2006, the world felt different - full of hope for the internet, more confident in democratic progress. Today, democracy faces challenges both new and old with polarisation, disinformation, and growing authoritarian tendencies.

And yet, one important shift gives us hope: Citizen participation is no longer a niche idea - it is increasingly seen as essential.

Over the past 20 years, Demsoc has contributed to this shift: from small-scale participation processes to supporting cities, governments and international institutions in embedding participation as part of how decisions are made.

Demsoc mission remains the same: democracy by, with, and for all. Today, high focus is maintained on strengthening the infrastructure that allows democracy to flourish: public institutions, civic spaces, networks, and capabilities that enable participation, trust, and collective agency.

The 20th anniversary of Demsoc is a milestone, but only marks the beginning of a new phase. Throughout the coming months and years, this platform, one of the strongest international partners of the Club of Venice, will continue with strong determination to share reflections, collaborations and ideas on what the next chapter of democracy can look like.

The Club of Venice will keep developing the already excellent cooperative approach with Demsoc and supporting this platform - together with colleagues, partners, members and communities - who have been and will be part of this journey. The next 20 years of our democracy work starts today.

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20th anniversaries make you realise how close we are to different worlds. It doesn't feel that long since I started Democratic Society, but it is older than the iPhone. The year we were founded, Tony Blair was still in 10 Downing Street, George W Bush was still in the White House and we were at the end of the long period of economic growth and stability that my kids tell me was a golden age, even if we didn't think it at the time.

20 years on, Demsoc is still here - but the mood is very different. I miss the optimism of our early years, the sense that we just needed to make a few sensible changes and governments would be able to transform themselves into open, participatory systems. I particularly miss the sense that

the Internet would change the world for the better, rather than provide a place where authoritarians and commercial corporate interests could support each other.

Watching the Hungarian elections on Sunday made me feel that - perhaps - we are passing a peak in the authoritarian wave. But even if the pressure on democracy reduces, it will never disappear. Around the world we will need to keep on developing, defending and advancing democracy, knowing that if we lose that fight, the other side will shamelessly entrench their power.

Does that mean that after twenty years of work, things have gone backwards? I don't believe so. Underneath the political and economic cycles, I can see a long-term social trend which gives me hope.

The fundamental shift from our early years is that citizen participation is assumed to be an important part of what governments and decision makers should be doing. That doesn't mean that every government is doing it well, or indeed that all governments are trying. However, it is now generally assumed that governments need to be responsive, and that the public should be involved in essential decisions. What seems self-evident today was definitely not so in 2006.

This cultural shift is even visible in the far right. They don't argue for an ideology or a religion, except on the fringes. They have to disguise their true ideology with the language of populism, pretending to be speaking for the people by restricting "the people" to their own race, nation, or religion. Hypocritical, for sure, but an acknowledgement that citizens' voices must be at the centre of politics.

Over the last 20 years, our work has ranged from microcommunities in rural Sussex and urban Madrid, all the way up to European-level citizen assemblies. We have helped membership organisations, local councils and national governments embed citizen participation in their thinking and their structure.

At all of these different levels, we have made the case that long-term engagement and participation of citizens, through multiple channels, is a critical part of public service reform and democratic renewal.

It is not just in traditional government, either. Everyone seeks agency, the power to have the impact they want to have in the world and to live the life they want to live. Better democracy and participation are an essential part of that, even though we are all still experimenting with the systems that can allow that to happen.

We also need to make sure that citizens are ready, willing and able to participate. That means ensuring that the information sources they have access to are reliable, that we are including the voices of every citizen, and that everyone has multiple different opportunities at local and higher levels to participate effectively.

Government alone cannot create this. Organisations such as Democratic Society have an essential role to play, and always will. The first 20 years of have seen us shift from experimental participation events to advising governments. I can see the next twenty years being about broadening civic networks, understanding how we can create longer-term participation, and including more people and organisations in our mission of democracy by, with and for everybody.

I am proud of having created Democratic Society, and proud that it has made it through two decades and is looking ahead to the next two. But none of this has been done alone. I have to thank a huge number of people who have passed through Democratic Society - colleagues, citizens, members, partners and those who have supported our work in multiple ways. I want to thank them for their commitment to a vision of a better democracy, even when times are tough.

In the next twenty years I want us to keep working on the edge of democratic and public service innovation - but also to go wider, to open up further, and to root our work more deeply in individuals and communities. Without deep-rooted support, based on human rather than digital connections, any democratic action will built on sand.



# Creating government structures for engaging citizens

By Anthony Zacharzewski

In mid-May, Wales went to the polls. But elections alone don't make a healthy democracy.

Over the past few months, we've had the privilege of working with the Welsh Government on a major report: "Mainstreaming Participatory and Deliberative Democracy in Wales". Our question was simple:

"How can Wales move beyond one-off engagement exercises and build a democracy where citizens shape decisions every day, not just on election day?"

The answer lies in strengthening what we call the Democratic Social Infrastructure: political commitment, legal frameworks, administrative capacity, civic infrastructure, and a shared narrative.

Wales has real strengths: statutory participation strategies and citizens' assemblies are emerging. But stakeholders told us about fragmentation, resource constraints, and uneven understanding of participatory methods across government.

We looked at Scotland, the Basque Country, Ostbelgien, and Tuscany. The message is clear: mainstreaming doesn't happen through any single reform. It happens when multiple conditions align.

Our five recommendations offer a roadmap. From embedding participation mandates into legislation and tying resources to local participation strategies, to establishing a central Participation Team and extending the Democratic Engagement Grant beyond elections to fund long-term democratic literacy.

But perhaps the most important recommendation is the simplest: build a shared "Democracy for Wales" narrative. A story that connects participation efforts, builds momentum, and reminds everyone –citizens and politicians alike– that democracy is not a spectator sport.

In mid-May Wales chose its representatives. But deepening democracy requires work every day in between.

## Extract of the report "Mainstreaming participatory and deliberative democracy in Wales. Evidence review":

### Introduction

This report is based on research designed to inform practical steps for mainstreaming participatory and deliberative democracy in Wales. We aim to answer the call's core questions by analysing what approaches have been effective internationally in creating the conditions<sup>1</sup> for mainstreaming participatory and deliberative democracy, and the impacts observed where these efforts have been successful. Drawing on comparative case studies, our findings will provide actionable insights to help Wales foster a political culture that supports participation and deliberation.

The report is organised in five phases. It begins by synthesising the academic literature on institutionalisation and embeddedness, establishing a conceptual framework centred on democratic infrastructure and the systemic conditions that enable participatory practices to take root<sup>2</sup>. It then provides a baseline assessment of Wales' existing participation landscape, drawing on documentary analysis and stakeholder interviews to identify current strengths, gaps, and strategic opportunities. Four international cases—selected for their reputation, varied institutional designs and developmental trajectories, and similarities in context and scale—are examined in depth to extract transferable insights about enabling conditions, implementation pathways, and evaluation practice. An impact evidence-mapping exercise consolidates learning about how the effects of democratic innovation are understood and evaluated. Finally, the report presents a set of actionable recommendations tailored to the Welsh political and administrative context, alongside an assessment of feasibility, dependencies, and implementation

considerations. In doing so, it aims to support Wales in transforming its emerging participatory infrastructure into a coherent, resilient, and internationally distinctive model of deliberative and participatory democracy.

[...]

### **Condition 3: Administrative capacity and capabilities**

[...]

Mainstreaming participatory and deliberative practices requires both organisational capacity and professional capabilities. Capacity refers to the availability of staff time, budgetary flexibility, and institutional space to embed participation in everyday workflows, as well as the ability to absorb and implement the volume of work generated by participatory processes. Capabilities refer to the skills needed to design participatory processes, facilitate deliberation, ensure inclusion, and translate public input into policy.

Research on PB and deliberative processes demonstrates that meaningful administrative support—consisting of adequate capacity combined with committed, skilled staff—is often decisive for longterm success.<sup>15</sup> Evidence from Helsinki further illustrates this point: participatory processes, including PB, proved resourceintensive and required stable staffing and sustained organisational bandwidth, while improvements in servicedesign competence, interaction skills, and cocreation practices strengthened the quality and uptake of participation across the city's divisions.<sup>16</sup> Smith likewise emphasises the role of administrative actors, showing that bureaucratic will among senior officials, crossgovernment working practices, and the presence of “activist” public administrators are often crucial for embedding participatory approaches within everyday governance.<sup>17</sup>

### **Condition 4: Civic infrastructure and democratic networks**

Civil society capacity and broader civic ecosystems also play an important role in strengthening democratic innovations. Active civil society organisations can mobilise participants, maintain engagement, and provide legitimacy and scrutiny. In Barcelona, for example, civil society actors helped sustain participatory structures during political shifts and experimented with new communitybased practices that later shaped institutional reforms. Civil society also often contributes to capacity building within public institutions, transferring knowledge and practical know-how that support the institutionalisation of participatory approaches. However, PB research consistently shows that civil society alone cannot compensate for weak political or administrative commitment; its influence is greatest when embedded within a supportive institutional environment. Under such alignment, civil society becomes a reinforcing element that helps anchor democratic practices within local contexts.

### **Condition 5: Vision and narrative**

Finally, democratic innovations tend to endure when institutions share an overarching democratic purpose—a clear sense of why participation matters and what it is intended to achieve. This involves longterm orientation, normative alignment across political and administrative actors, and the development of evolving democratic narratives that define participation as a legitimate and valued aspect of governance. Smith highlights the critical importance of narrative alignment, showing that participatory governance becomes more deeply embedded when political leaders articulate a coherent storyline linking participation to organisational purpose—and that mainstreaming falters when such narratives erode or lose resonance.

Taken together, these conditions suggest that mainstreaming does not arise from any single factor. Rather, it emerges from the alignment of political, legal, administrative, civic, and narrative elements that collectively support participatory and deliberative practices to become stable, embedded features of democratic systems.

[...]

## **1.3 | Strategies**

[...]

Promote an institutional culture of openness and collaboration compatible with public participation in decision-making: The Netherlands is professionalizing participation by establishing a knowledge network of public participation professionals from within and outside government, supporting interdepartmental collaboration on participation, and designing an online participation guide for participation. A similar approach is visible in Helsinki, which has built a citywide participation and interaction model, established crossdepartmental participation



structures, and invested in digital tools and liaison roles to cultivate an open, collaborative participation culture.

Remove structural barriers to public participation: France is defining a Citizen Participant Status Framework to support people involved in long-term deliberative initiatives, potentially through payments or special work leave allowances, enabling greater accessibility and inclusivity. Simon Fraser University's Beyond Inclusion Guide identifies a range of barriers to participation for various groups and strategies to address them. Strategies include developing tailored communication and outreach strategies for different communities, conducting engagement activities in formats, times and locations that enable participants of varying backgrounds to feel comfortable, and working with community members to frame and design engagement to ensure sensitivity and awareness to diverse norms and worldviews.

Some of these different approaches will be explored in the case studies below. As will become clear, governments rarely rely on a single pathway to mainstream participatory or deliberative processes. Instead, these approaches are typically combined, adapted, and sequenced in ways that respond to local political, administrative, and civic contexts.

[...]

You can read the full report in

- <https://lnkd.in/dm-j8H6d>
- [https://admin.demsoc.org/uploads/Mainstreaming\\_Participatory\\_and\\_Deliberative\\_Democracy\\_in\\_Wales\\_Evidence\\_review\\_by\\_Democratic\\_Society\\_c7afae4c45.pdf](https://admin.demsoc.org/uploads/Mainstreaming_Participatory_and_Deliberative_Democracy_in_Wales_Evidence_review_by_Democratic_Society_c7afae4c45.pdf)



# Communicating Europe Across Borders: Key Insights from the Interact-IF Project

By Marinella Belluati, Sara Pane and Anna Maria Garofalo

Communicating European cohesion policy is harder than it looks. The policy touches millions of people's lives through infrastructure, jobs, training and cross-border cooperation, yet it remains one of the least understood areas of EU public action. How institutions communicate about it, and whether citizens actually recognise what it delivers, has become a question of democratic legitimacy, not just information management.

The INTERACT-IF (INTERregional ACTION for Italy & France) project examines this challenge in the France-Italy cross-border area, focusing on Piedmont and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes within the framework of Interreg ALCOTRA and Alpine Space<sup>1</sup>. Implemented between 2025 and 2026 under the European Commission's Information Measures for EU Cohesion Policy programme, it drew on interviews with EU public communication experts conducted by Marinella Belluati, Sara Pane and Anna Maria Garofalo at the University of Turin. This article presents the main findings across six dimensions: communication objectives, channels, target audiences, evaluation, artificial intelligence, and the broader challenges facing cohesion policy communication today.

## Communication objectives: communicating European added value and legitimacy

The interviews show that cohesion policy communication goes well beyond visibility, branding or compliance with EU information obligations. Its strategic function lies in connecting three dimensions that are often treated separately: the transparency of fund allocation, the public intelligibility of policy impact, and the legitimisation of European public action. Communication therefore emerges as a strategic component of policy implementation, through which technical interventions become publicly recognisable and are translated into evidence of European added value, territorial solidarity and concrete effects in citizens' everyday lives.

Interviewees questioned communication models centred exclusively on positive storytelling and visibility metrics. Cohesion policy communication was instead described as an exercise in institutional credibility that requires recognising complexity, implementation constraints and uneven outcomes.

Several participants argued that communication should move beyond celebratory narratives and include projects that did not fully achieve expected results, as these experiences support institutional learning and strengthen public trust. In cross-border cooperation, communication acquires an additional function: making visible the value generated through cooperation and explaining why certain outcomes emerge only through joint action across borders.

<sup>1</sup> The INTERACT-IF project is implemented by a partnership composed of Alcé Communication (coordinator), the University of Turin, Europe Direct Lyon Metropolitan Area, Europe Direct Drôme Ardèche, Europe Direct Turin and L'Eco del Chisone.

## Communication channels: towards hybrid and multi-channel communication ecosystems

The interviews point to the end of any single-channel logic. Effective communication depends on the orchestration of a hybrid communicative ecosystem in which institutional platforms, traditional media, social media, local media and proximity-based formats perform different but complementary functions. Traditional media retain relevance because of their credibility and capacity to legitimise complex public issues, while social media support reach, segmentation and first-contact visibility. Participants stressed that channel diversification does not automatically generate engagement. Different platforms require distinct narrative logics and varying degrees of institutional adaptation. Interviewees described communication strategies as increasingly hybrid, combining digital distribution with relational and place-based forms of communication. Local media emerged as particularly important in cohesion policy communication because they provide contextualisation and territorial legitimacy that European institutions often struggle to achieve directly. Several participants also discussed the growing use of influencers and content creators, especially for reaching younger audiences. Their value was associated less with amplification than with their capacity to act as trusted intermediaries able to translate institutional language into accessible and socially embedded forms of communication.

## Target audiences: from segmentation to strategic inclusion

This differentiated understanding of audiences is accompanied by a shift from segmentation towards strategic inclusion. Interviewees emphasised that effective communication should identify target groups while also creating conditions for participation, recognition and mediated forms of engagement. In this perspective, young people emerged as a particularly strategic public for the future legitimacy and social embeddedness of European public action. Rather than treating youth as an audience to be reached through adapted formats or digital channels, participants stressed participation, co-creation and peer-to-peer circulation as mechanisms through which younger generations contribute to shaping European narratives. Interviewees also highlighted the growing role of intermediary actors, including local opinion leaders, influencers, project beneficiaries and trusted territorial figures, who increasingly operate as communicative brokers capable of translating institutional narratives into more accessible and socially meaningful forms. In cross-border contexts, these actors were considered particularly relevant for fostering forms

of belonging and participation that extend beyond national frameworks and support the emergence of more territorially grounded European publics.

## Evaluation practices: beyond metrics towards meaningful evaluation

Evaluation emerged as one of the most unresolved dimensions of EU public communication. The interviews identify a structural tension between the institutional demand for measurable indicators and the long-term, indirect and relational nature of communication effects. Metrics such as views, participation rates or content diffusion remain useful for measuring reach and visibility, yet they provide limited insight into whether publics understand messages, recognise the relevance of cohesion policy or develop greater trust in European institutions.

Interviewees therefore argued for evaluation frameworks that move beyond communication outputs and integrate quantitative and qualitative indicators capable of capturing perception, recognition, engagement and public value. This includes assessing whether communication strengthens institutional credibility, whether audiences perceive interventions as meaningful within their territorial context and whether communicative practices contribute to generating understanding, participation and legitimacy. Evaluation consequently emerges as a mechanism for institutional reflexivity, adaptation and continuous improvement rather than a reporting requirement.

## Artificial intelligence: towards trustworthy and human-centred artificial intelligence in public communication

Artificial Intelligence emerged in the interviews as an organisational and governance challenge for public communication rather than a straightforward technological solution. Participants recognised its potential in supporting content production, workflow efficiency, audience analysis and personalisation, while stressing that effective adoption depends on internal competences, shared standards and integration into existing institutional processes. Across interviews, a human-in-the-loop approach emerged as the dominant orientation: artificial intelligence was considered valuable insofar as human oversight remains central to interpretation, editorial judgement and accountability.

At the same time, interviewees emphasised the urgency of developing forms of trustworthy and human-centred artificial intelligence, capable of aligning technological innovation with

transparency, accountability and the quality requirements of public information. Artificial intelligence was therefore positioned as a technology whose legitimacy depends on institutional capacity to govern its use and preserve public trust, distinct from both a substitute for communicative expertise and a neutral instrument. The interviews also revealed an emerging institutional asymmetry in artificial intelligence adoption. Participants operating at central EU level described more constrained experimentation environments due to institutional complexity, governance requirements and reputational considerations, whereas communicators working at programme and project implementation level reported greater operational flexibility and faster experimentation with AI-enabled practices. This divergence points to a widening gap in institutional adaptation to technological change within EU public communication and was identified as an open issue requiring further reflection on governance models, organisational learning and the future relationship between communication professionals and artificial intelligence systems.

## Challenges and critical issues: lessons for the future of cohesion policy communication and beyond

The interviews identify a set of structural challenges that extend beyond technical communication problems and point to broader transformations affecting EU public communication. Cohesion policy remains difficult to communicate because it combines institutional complexity, technical language, fragmented governance arrangements and increasingly competitive information environments. Communicators operate under conditions of information overload, disinformation, algorithmic polarisation and declining public attention, which challenge the capacity of institutions to generate understanding, visibility and trust. These tensions become even more evident in cross-border contexts, where linguistic, cultural and administrative differences expose the limits of standardised communication approaches and require greater communicative adaptation across governance levels. Interviewees therefore described communication as a process of translation: making European action understandable without oversimplifying it, territorially embedded without losing the European dimension, and sufficiently credible to incorporate limitations, disagreement and contestation rather than relying exclusively on celebratory narratives. More broadly, the findings suggest that communication should be understood as a constitutive dimension of policy implementation and democratic legitimacy rather than as a downstream activity accompanying interventions once they are delivered. From this perspective, the future of cohesion policy communication depends less on increasing message volume and more on strengthening communicative capacity, creating conditions through which citizens can recognise, interpret and engage with European public action within their own territorial expe-

rience. While these insights emerge from cohesion policy and cross-border cooperation, interviewees suggest that similar challenges increasingly characterise EU public communication more broadly, making this field a relevant laboratory for reflecting on the future relationship between institutions, territories and publics.

The full research report is available in open access in Italian, French and English here: <https://www.collane.unito.it/oa/items/show/257#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0>.

The analytical framework adopted in this article builds on recent reflections developed by Marinella Belluati in *Comunicare l'Europa tra crisi e transizioni* (2026), Il Mulino.

### Marinella Belluati

Marinella Belluati is an Associate Professor at the University of Turin, where she teaches Sociology of Communication and Communication of Europe. She is the President of the interdisciplinary centre To-EU (Turin-Europe) and Vice Director of the journal *De Europa*, and has significant expertise in key areas of European studies. She is the scientific coordinator of *MagIA Magazine* ([www.magia.news](http://www.magia.news)), dedicated to artificial intelligence in public debate, and coordinates communications for AI@Unito, the University of Turin's scientific platform dedicated to artificial intelligence. Currently, she is involved in the Interactif project (INTERregional ACTION for Italy & France), funded by DgRegio.

As coordinator of the Jean Monnet Com4T.EU Chair (Communication for Transition in Europe) and previously of the Jean Monnet CoEUr modules, Professor Belluati has made substantial contributions to the study of the European public sphere, particularly regarding the roles of institutions, media, and public opinion. Her research and publications focus on the European public sphere and the communication of its institutions. Currently, she is involved in the Interactif project (INTERregional ACTION for Italy & France), funded by DgRegio. Her forthcoming publication, 'Comunicare l'Europa tra crisi e transizione' (Communicating Europe between crisis and transition), edited by Il Mulino.





### Sara Pane

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EU (University of Turin). She holds a Ph.D. in *Social Representations, Culture and Communication* from Sapienza University of Rome, awarded within the Joint International Doctoral Programme co-funded by the NextGenerationEU initiative under the framework of innovation for public administration. Her research focuses on European public communication, citizen engagement and the European public sphere. Her current work explores the intersection between artificial intelligence and democratic innovation, with particular attention to participatory processes.

### Anna Maria Garofalo

Anna Maria Garofalo holds a Master's degree in Public and Political Communication (University of Turin), complemented by a postgraduate qualification in EU project design. She gained significant experience at the Delegation of the Piedmont Region in Brussels, where she focused on the analysis of European policies, particularly in the areas of cohesion and competitiveness. She supported the Interact-IF project as Research Assistant (University of Turin). She also collaborates with the communication team of the Jean Monnet Chair Com4T.EU University of Turin). Her expertise spans the analysis and research of EU policies, the writing, management and implementation of European projects, and institutional communication within the European context.



# La communication de l'Union européenne à l'ère de la « Social Culture »<sup>1</sup>

Par Michaël Malherbe

La dernière enquête Eurobaromètre « Social Media Survey 2025 » confirme que l'ère de la communication institutionnelle verticale, où l'Union européenne émet « du haut vers le bas » est révolue. Nous sommes dans l'âge de la « Social Culture » : un écosystème d'information décentralisé, fragmenté, défini par les utilisateurs et les communautés.

Face à une défiance alimentée par la désinformation (66% des Européens y sont exposés) et à une « communication en mode survie » qui fragilise les actifs européens (sa marque, son narratif, ses valeurs), l'UE ne peut plus se contenter d'être un simple émetteur. Elle doit devenir un facilitateur, un participant et une incarnation de ses propres valeurs : mieux écouter, s'adapter et humaniser.

## De l'institution à l'incarnation : la fin du « corporate boring »

Le constat est sans appel : les contenus institutionnels traditionnels sont « chassés des flux ». Pendant ce temps, 74% des 15-24 ans suivent des influenceurs, et 38% d'entre eux suivent des commentaires sur l'actualité politique. Le paradigme change : la légitimité naît de l'expérience et de la passion, pas du statut. La « Social Culture » nous enseigne que « les experts passionnés sont les nouveaux influenceurs ».

Que devrait faire l'UE qui regorge de ces experts. Activer « la fabrique de l'incarnation ». Nous devons sortir les experts des communiqués de presse pour les placer sur LinkedIn, TikTok ou en format long (44% plébiscitent les interviews d'experts). Nous devons embrasser « le brut » et « l'imperfection », qui sont devenus des gages de sincérité. Nos porte-paroles doivent devenir des « créateurs de contenus » qui humanisent les messages et le projet européenne, plutôt que de laisser nos plateformes devenir des « no-go zones ».

## Des masses aux niches : la puissance de l'« Interest Graph »

Seuls 22% des Européens suivent l'actualité européenne « la plupart du temps ». Tenter de parler aux millions de citoyens avec un seul message est un échec garanti. L'ère du « Social Graph » (nos amis) est morte, remplacée par l'« Interest Graph » (nos passions).

Comment la communication européenne peut exploiter ce nouveau graph ? « Créer pour les niches, pas pour la masse ». Cela nécessite de se spécialiser. Plutôt qu'un compte générique, nous devons nourrir les communautés de niche passionnées par l'économie circulaire, la biodiversité, les clean tech, etc. Nous devons accepter que « la masse ne soit plus l'objectif » et plutôt investir dans le développement de « communautés » qui partagent une culture et un « lore » autour des enjeux des politiques publiques européennes.

## Naviguer la polarisation : l'authenticité comme bouclier

Le contexte mondial pousse les marques au « désengagement » sur les sujets de diversité ou de RSE, par peur du « backlash ». L'UE, dont ces valeurs sont au cœur de son activité, ne peut se permettre ce repli.

Comment contourner le risque de backlash lié au désengagement sociétal et environnemental ? Répondre non par le silence, mais par l'authenticité. La communication européenne doit se recentrer sur les « bénéfiques clients ». Comment le Green Deal (notre RSE) améliore concrètement la vie des citoyens ? Nous devons le démontrer avec humilité et en se basant sur des faits, en utilisant les formats longs (47% veulent des vidéos de fond) pour l'explication et les formats courts (41% de vidéos courtes) pour la diffusion. L'authenticité est notre meilleur bouclier contre la désinformation.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/> - original posted on 18 May 2026

## Du mégaphone à la communauté : l'Europe comme espace culturel

L'ère du mégaphone, où l'UE diffusait un message unique à une « masse » passive, est terminée. La « Social Culture » est, par définition, « fragmentée mais fédératrice ». Le pouvoir n'appartient plus à celui qui émet mais à celui qui fédère autour de communautés.

Le défi de l'UE n'est plus de « parler à », mais de « créer avec ». Les marques l'ont compris et sont en « quête de communautés », allant jusqu'à se définir comme des « acteurs culturels » qui produisent leur propre folklore et références.

L'UE doit opérer un pivot stratégique : de la communication d'information à l'animation de communautés en investissant des espaces où la culture se crée (comme Reddit ou Discord, cités dans les tendances) et cesser de craindre la perte de contrôle. La viralité, « naît de la capacité d'un contenu à être remixé, pas de sa perfection ». Nous devons activement encourager cette appropriation, nourrir les niches passionnées (climat, tech, environnement) et accepter de n'être qu'un participant – le plus pertinent possible – dans une conversation que personne dirige.

## L'IA et la « Minimum Viable Communication »

Les budgets « communication » se contractent. Nous devons « faire plus avec moins ». L'IA générative offre une opportunité d'efficacité immense (production, « remixage » de contenus), mais présente un risque majeur : tomber dans l'« IA slop », ce contenu médiocre de masse qui augmente par ailleurs la concurrence pour le « Search ».

Utiliser l'IA non pas pour *remplacer* la création de valeur, mais pour la *décupler*. Nous devons être capable de créer à la fois des contenus longs à très haute valeur ajoutée (interviews d'experts, « explainers » de fond) puis utiliser l'IA pour automatiser leur déclinaison en « snack content » (vidéos courtes, vignettes) adapté à chaque niche et plateforme. Nous devons « tester, apprendre et répéter ».

**L'avenir de la communication de l'UE n'appartient pas à « ceux qui crient le plus fort, mais à ceux qui écoutent le mieux ». Nous devons passer d'une forteresse institutionnelle à une plateforme communautaire. L'enjeu n'est plus de contrôler le message, mais de participer à la conversation.**

## 78 De la réaction à l'utilité : gagner la guerre de l'information par la pédagogie

Face à la désinformation (à laquelle 66% des Européens pensent être exposés), notre stratégie a été largement défensive : le « fact-checking », la réaction. Mais la « Social Culture » change les règles de la crédibilité. « La légitimité naît de l'expérience, pas du statut ». Sur #LearnTikTok, un conseil financier pertinent peut venir d'un adolescent. Les citoyens plébiscitent les formats de fond : 47% veulent des vidéos explorant les sujets en profondeur et 44% des interviews d'experts.

L'UE doit basculer d'une posture de « correcteur » à celle de « formateur ». Notre meilleure arme contre la désinformation n'est pas le démenti, c'est l'utilité et la pédagogie radicale. Nous devons transformer notre complexité en notre plus grande force. En nous inspirant de la tendance #LearnTikTok, nous devons expliquer *comment* fonctionnent nos institutions, *pourquoi* une régulation est créée, avec « humilité et utilité ». En devenant la source la plus fiable et la plus pédagogique sur nos propres sujets, nous ne combattons pas seulement la désinformation : nous la rendons obsolète.

**Michaël Malherbe, Deputy Practice Leader Digital chez Burson (groupe WPP)**



Depuis plus de 15 ans, il développe une activité de conseil en communication digitale (campagne, influence et réputation) dans les secteurs corporate et institutionnel, précédemment en tant que Fondateur-Associé de l'agence Two4com et Directeur du pôle Digital de l'agence Cohn & Wolfe de 2011 à 2015.

Formé à l'Institut d'Études politiques de Strasbourg (2001-2005) et à l'Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne dans le master « Communication politique et sociale », il est un spécialiste de la communication de l'Union européenne, intervenant dans les masters « Études européennes » de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle, Paris III et « Affaires européennes » de la Sorbonne-Paris IV et précédemment à l'ENA et à Sciences-Po Lille. Depuis 2007, il anime le blog : « Décrypter la communication européenne » et intervient régulièrement dans la presse et les médias, des débats publics et des colloques.



# Décryptage de la campagne d'affichage « Protégeons ce qui compte » de la Commission européenne : les failles du récit sur la démocratie<sup>1</sup>

Par Michaël Malherbe

À la tribune de la récente Conférence sur la sécurité de Munich, le vice-président américain J.D. Vance a livré une offensive idéologique frontale contre les fondements de la démocratie européenne. Une attaque structurée, hostile, conçue pour décrédibiliser le modèle politique et normatif de l'Union.

Face à ce choc géopolitique, la réponse narrative de la Commission européenne se déploie actuellement dans nos espaces publicitaires avec la campagne d'affichage « Protégeons ce qui compte ».

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## Vos libertés démocratiques dans l'UE



Liberté des médias



Votre avis compte



La science reste libre

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/> - original posted on 11 May 2026



Le contraste est saisissant. Le texte de la campagne s'ouvre sur une promesse de proximité. Pour illustrer les acquis démocratiques de l'Union européenne face aux menaces, la Commission nous invite à protéger les libertés dans l'UE avec une triple déclinaison : « une presse libre », « une parole libre », « une science libre ». L'intention est lisible. Il s'agit d'ancrer l'institution dans le réel, de montrer que la démocratie n'est pas un concept éthéré, mais une pratique charnelle.

Puis, sur le site de la campagne, le regard glisse vers le bas de la page, là où l'institution invite le citoyen à l'action. Le ton change, au profit d'un lexique d'une aridité administrative : « Lancer une initiative citoyenne », « Contribuer aux futures propositions de l'UE » ou encore « Adresser une pétition à l'UE ».

En l'espace d'une page web, la Commission européenne tente de convoquer l'émotion d'un quasi mouvement militant pour finalement renvoyer vers un guichet. Ce grand écart révèle une faille structurelle dans la fabrique du récit européen : l'incapacité de l'institution à résoudre ses propres contradictions lorsqu'elle s'adresse directement au citoyen en temps de crise.

Pour comprendre les failles de ce storytelling, nous allons disséquer cette campagne au prisme de trois invariants narratifs.



## 1. Le piège du nivellement sémantique : quand l'avis de comptoir percute la méthode scientifique et l'information journalistique

La première fracture de cette campagne est sémantique. Les mots choisis par une institution définissent le terrain sur lequel elle accepte de livrer bataille. Ici, la Commission tente de valoriser la liberté d'expression par une série d'affirmations juxtaposées : « Liberté des médias », « Votre avis compte » et « La science libre ».

Le choix de placer ces trois concepts sur un même plan horizontal est une erreur stratégique. Dans une ère saturée par la désinformation algorithmique, la guerre de l'attention se gagne en rétablissant des hiérarchies claires. En mettant l'avis individuel (« Votre avis compte ») au même niveau sémantique et visuel que le fait scientifique ou l'indépendance journalistique, la communication institutionnelle valide involontairement le relativisme ambiant.

C'est le syndrome de la plateforme sociale appliqué à la politique publique : toutes les paroles se valent. Le fait scientifique devient une opinion parmi d'autres, débattue entre commentateurs. L'Europe, pourtant bâtie sur l'expertise, la norme et la raison, adopte ici les codes du populisme numérique qui flatte l'expression individuelle pour générer de l'engagement.

L'injonction participative se retourne contre l'institution : en voulant montrer qu'elle écoute, elle affaiblit le statut de la vérité qu'elle est censée protéger.

## 2. Le mimétisme artificiel et asymétrique : quand l'institution simule une approche ascendante

Le deuxième invariant frappé par cette campagne est celui de l'asymétrie. L'Union européenne affronte des adversaires politiques (de la Maison-Blanche aux populismes nationaux) qui maîtrisent l'organique, la colère et l'immédiateté. Face à une menace assumée comme celle de Munich, la Commission européenne réagit par le mimétisme.

Le texte multiplie les appels à la mobilisation directe : « Ensemble, nous pouvons inverser la tendance », « Le pouvoir est entre vos mains », « Préservez-la. Façonnez-la. Protégez-la ». La posture est celle d'une organisation non gouvernementale ou d'un mouvement de jeunesse.

L'institution simule une approche ascendante, une dynamique « bottom-up » qui viendrait des citoyens pour irriguer Bruxelles.

La réalité de la proposition annule cet effort. L'engagement promis se résume à participer au « processus d'élaboration des politiques de l'UE » ou à « adresser des pétitions ».

La Commission se drape dans les habits de la rébellion civique, mais elle reste fondamentalement un producteur de normes. Ce mimétisme artificiel génère un rejet : le public perçoit immédiatement l'incohérence entre une rhétorique de la puissance citoyenne et la réalité d'un processus consultatif lourd, normé et souvent sans issue politique concrète.

Moraliser la cible en lui rappelant l'urgence de s'engager, tout en lui offrant des outils bureaucratiques, signe l'échec tactique d'une communication qui refuse d'assumer sa nature descendante.

### 3. La bureaucratie des sentiments : quand le vide émotionnel remplace le visage incarné

Le dernier enseignement relève de l'incarnation. Une politique publique n'existe dans l'espace public que si elle possède un visage, une émotion tangible. La Commission tente cette approche par la grande histoire : « Renaissant des cendres d'un continent meurtri par la guerre et l'autoritarisme, l'UE s'est attachée à défendre les valeurs démocratiques ».

Mais l'émotion institutionnelle tourne à vide car elle manque de relais humains. Le citoyen décrit par la campagne est une abstraction statistique. Il est appelé à « partager ses idées dans le cadre de débats en ligne et de panels de citoyens ». Le processus remplace l'incarnation. L'acte démocratique est réduit à un acte de gestion administrative.

Le citoyen est seul face au guichet numérique de Bruxelles. Il manque les corps intermédiaires, les visages, les élus locaux, les figures syndicales ou associatives qui donnent une réalité physique à la démocratie européenne. En voulant s'adresser directement à l'individu sans médiation, la Commission européenne produit un récit désincarné, promet la chaleur d'un idéal collectif, mais livre le froid d'un mode d'emploi juridique.

#### Comment « Protéger ce qui compte » avec un récit institutionnel qui assume un discours de puissance ?

Cette campagne est symptomatique d'une communication publique qui a peur de son ombre. En voulant plaire, l'institution emprunte des codes qui ne sont pas les siens et s'affaiblit.

L'urgence est de repenser la fabrique d'un récit européen qui ose assumer la mue d'une technocratie à une puissance :

- Réinvestir le vocabulaire de la solidité, pas de l'opinion

Les institutions publiques ne doivent pas tenter d'imiter les réseaux sociaux. Leur rôle n'est pas de flatter « l'avis » de chaque individu, mais de garantir le cadre qui permet au débat de s'appuyer sur des faits. La communication doit s'opérer sur la solidité de la méthode scientifique et la protection physique et juridique des médias. Le récit doit

être celui d'un arbitre fort, qui sanctionne les atteintes à l'État de droit, plutôt que celui d'un animateur de débats en ligne. C'est une nouvelle conjugaison de hard power et de soft power qu'il s'agit de mettre en scène et en récit.

- Assumer l'asymétrie de l'autorité, pas de la promesse

L'Europe est une puissance juridique, administrative et économique. C'est sa force. Elle doit assumer sa posture descendante quand celle-ci est protectrice. Plutôt que de demander aux citoyens de rédiger des pétitions ou d'introduire des plaintes, le récit doit documenter l'action concrète du « bouclier européen ». Il s'agit de scénariser la force de frappe de l'Union face aux ingérences étrangères, plutôt que de culpabiliser le citoyen sur son devoir de participation bureaucratique.

- Sous-traiter l'incarnation aux protagonistes, pas aux banques d'images

L'incarnation ne se décrète pas par une campagne d'affichage. Les institutions européennes doivent abandonner l'illusion d'une relation directe et sans friction avec 450 millions de citoyens. Le budget et l'effort stratégique doivent être réorientés vers les corps intermédiaires. L'institution doit s'effacer en tant qu'émetteur direct des émotions, pour financer et armer narrativement les relais qui possèdent l'ancrage charnel dont elle est structurellement dépourvue.

#### Enfin, à quoi sert la communication européenne aujourd'hui ?

Le récit européen paie ici le prix de l'illusion de croire que l'autorité institutionnelle gagne à se diluer dans la sympathie. L'Union européenne n'a pas été conçue pour être aimée à la manière d'un mouvement de jeunesse ou d'une communauté en ligne, mais pour résister aux chocs de l'Histoire.

Face aux menaces existentielles formulées publiquement par les puissances rivales, la quête de l'engagement numérique par l'injonction participative est une erreur de diagnostic. Le citoyen européen n'attend pas de Bruxelles qu'elle anime son fil d'actualité ou qu'elle l'invite à donner son avis sur tout. Il attend qu'elle tienne la ligne de front.

La véritable bascule stratégique consiste à abandonner le marketing de la sollicitation pour assumer une diplomatie publique de la souveraineté. Le récit européen ne doit plus chercher à séduire l'individu par mimétisme. Il doit dissuader les adversaires de la démocratie et protéger ceux qui la font vivre sur le terrain.

**La démocratie européenne n'est pas un sentiment à partager, c'est une infrastructure à défendre. Il est temps que les institutions arrêtent de jouer les animateurs de débats pour assumer pleinement leur rôle de bouclier.**

# From Solar Periphery to Renewable-Energy Front-Runner: Why Spain Is Becoming Europe's Leading Large Renewable Power System

By Claudio Camarda

Spain's rise in renewable energy is not simply the result of sunshine and wind. It is the outcome of a long political, regulatory, economic, technological, and communicative process. Spain is not literally first in Europe by every renewable-energy indicator: countries such as Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, and others have higher renewable shares under some electricity metrics. However, Spain has become one of Europe's most important renewable-energy leaders because it combines large system scale, rapid solar and wind deployment, falling fossil dependence, ambitious national planning, industrial strategy, and increasingly sophisticated public communication.

This article argues that Spain's renewable-energy leadership has emerged through three connected dynamics: a national story of policy learning after boom-and-bust cycles; decisive government choices that moved the country from fragmented incentives toward long-term planning; and communication across multiple levels—European, national, regional, local, technical, and social—that has become essential for maintaining legitimacy and system reliability.

## 1. Introduction: Defining Spain's "first" position

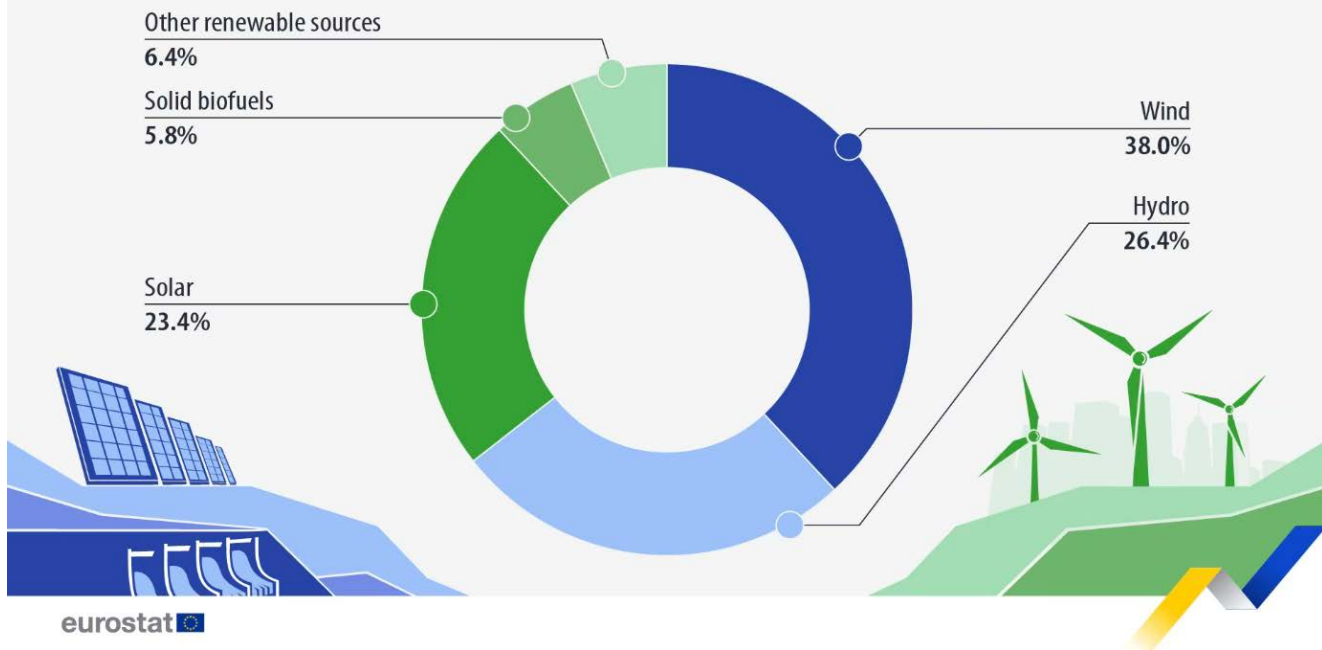
Spain's claim to being "first" in European renewable energy must be defined carefully. If "first" means the highest percentage of electricity from renewables, Spain is not the absolute European leader. Eurostat reported that in 2024 Austria, Sweden, and Denmark all had more than 75% of gross electricity consumption generated from renewable sources, while Spain stood at 59.7% under that methodology. Under another Eurostat measure—renewables in net electricity generation—Denmark, Portugal, and Croatia ranked above Spain in 2024.

Spain's leadership is therefore better understood in dynamic and strategic terms: it is becoming the first major European electricity system to attempt a large-scale transition built mainly on solar photovoltaic power, wind power, grid modernization, self-consumption, storage, and industrial electrification. In 2025, renewables generated 55.5% of Spain's electricity, or 56.6% when estimated self-consumption was included; renewable output reached a record 150,988 GWh. Spain also added 10 GW of renewable power in 2025, including 8.8 GW of solar photovoltaic capacity and 1.2 GW of wind.

The Spanish case is academically significant because it shows that renewable-energy leadership is not produced by natural resources alone. Many countries have sun and wind. Spain's transformation depended on political decisions, regulatory reforms, market design, planning institutions, public legitimacy, and communication. Its experience also shows that renewable leadership is fragile: the more successful renewables become, the more important grids, storage, local acceptance, interconnections, and transparent crisis communication become.

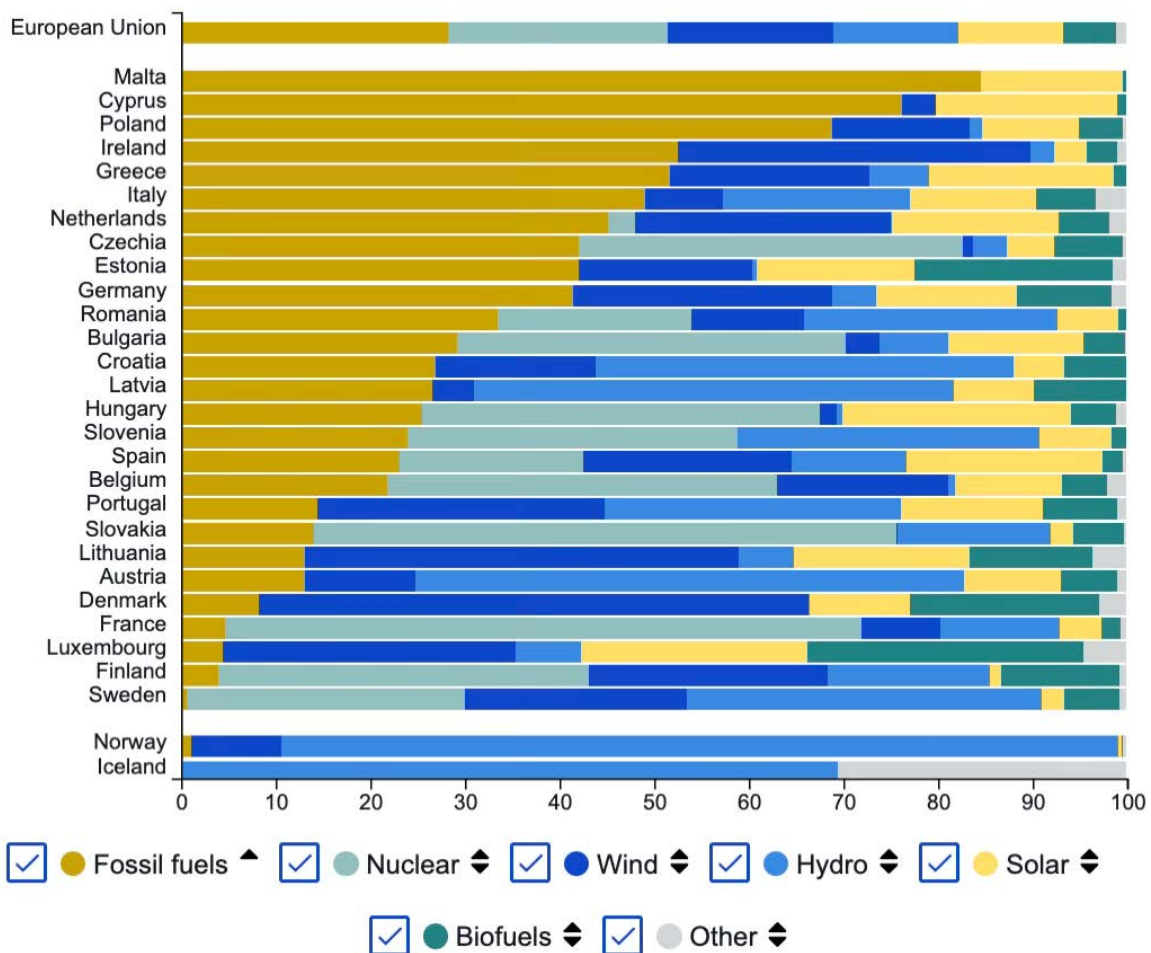
## Sources of renewable energy in gross electricity consumption in the EU, 2024

(%)



## Production of electricity by source, 2024 i

(in %)



Source: Eurostat - [access to dataset](#)





## 2. The story: from early promise to policy learning

Spain's renewable-energy story began before the current solar boom. In the 2000s, Spain became an early European leader in wind and solar deployment through support schemes, including feed-in tariffs. Royal Decree 661/2007 regulated renewable electricity production under a "special regime" and established tariffs and premiums for renewable technologies.

This policy helped attract investment and build domestic expertise, but it also created costs and later political controversy when the financial crisis and tariff deficit pressured the electricity system.

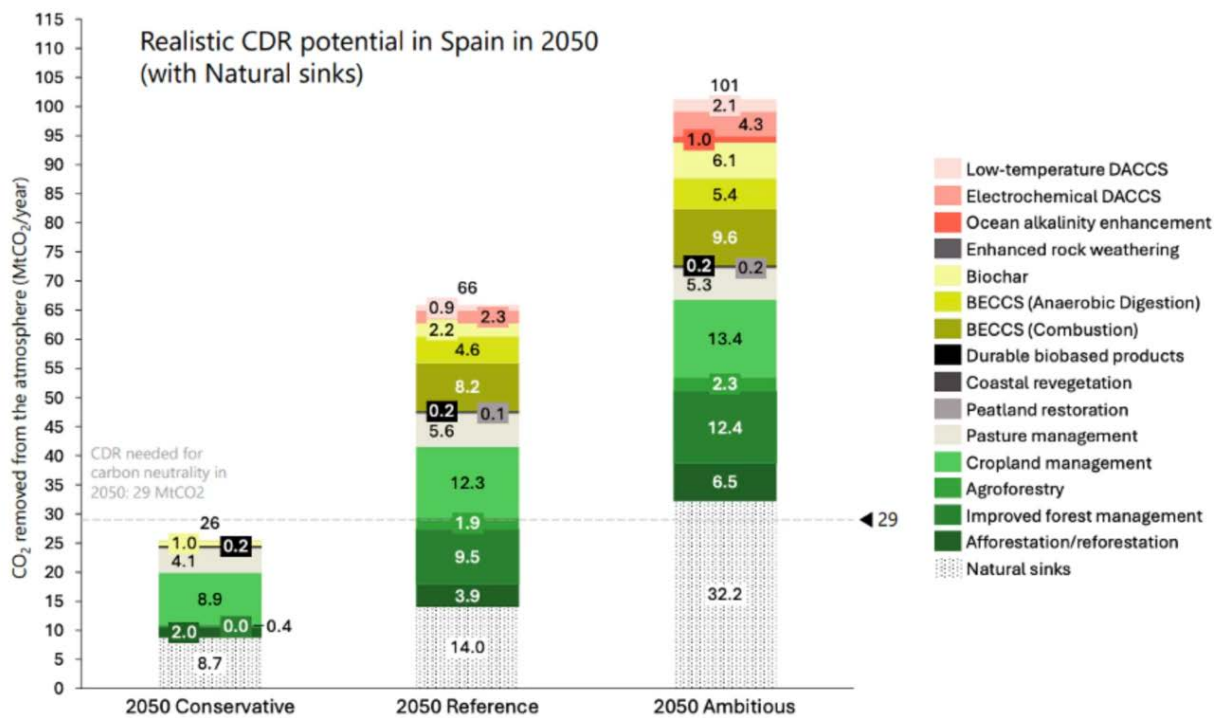
The first phase of Spain's renewable transition can therefore be described as an experimental phase. It proved that renewable technologies could be deployed quickly, but it also exposed the risks of unstable policy design. When policy support was reduced and regulatory uncertainty increased, investment slowed. Spain's story is not one of uninterrupted success; it is a story of learning from over-expansion, austerity, policy reversal, and later institutional reconstruction.

A major turning point came after 2018, when Spain changed course on self-consumption. The earlier regulatory environment had discouraged small-scale solar and became publicly associated with the so-called "sun tax." Royal Decree-Law 15/2018 and Royal Decree 244/2019 changed the framework by recognizing self-consumption, allowing surplus electricity to be injected into the grid, simplifying modalities, enabling collective self-consumption, and exempting renewable self-consumed electricity from charges and tolls.

This shift was more than a technical regulatory reform. It changed the social meaning of renewable energy. Solar power was no longer only a utility-scale investment controlled by companies and developers; it also became a household, community, municipal, and industrial strategy. In political terms, the reform helped transform citizens from passive consumers into potential "prosumers." In communication terms, this was crucial because it allowed renewable energy to be presented not only as climate policy, but also as autonomy, savings, participation, and local modernization.

## 3. Government decisions and the move from incentives to planning

Spain's current renewable-energy leadership is strongly connected to the government's decision to build a planning architecture around climate and energy policy. The Climate Change and Energy Transition Law of 2021 institutionalized two central governance tools: the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plans, known as PNIEC, and the Long-Term Decarbonization Strategy for 2050. The law explicitly framed these tools as instruments for reliable, inclusive, transparent, and predictable decision-making, and as guides for public and private investment.



The updated PNIEC 2023–2030 set ambitious targets for 2030: a 32% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions compared with 1990, 48% renewables in final energy use, a 43% improvement in final-energy efficiency, 81% renewable electricity generation, and a reduction of energy dependence to 50%.

These targets matter because they communicate direction. Investors need to know whether the state is committed to renewables over a long period; grid operators need to know what infrastructure to plan; regional governments need to understand permitting priorities; industries need to know whether electrification will be supported; and citizens need to understand why renewable projects are expanding in their landscapes. The PNIEC functions not only as a climate plan, but also as a national communication device.

Another decisive choice was the creation of a new renewable auction framework. Royal Decree 960/2020 introduced an economic regime for renewable energy, linked to competitive auctions, with the aim of helping Spain install around 5,000 MW of new renewable capacity annually during the following decade. The decree also recognized that attractive financing conditions were necessary and that public intervention could reduce investor uncertainty in a market with large renewable penetration.

This auction framework signalled a shift from open-ended subsidy politics to competitive, planned deployment. The goal was not merely to subsidize renewables, but to reduce financing costs, provide predictable revenue, discipline project delivery, and pass lower renewable costs to consumers. In this sense, Spain's government decisions reveal a broader lesson: renewable leadership depends on the credibility of institutions as much as on the quality of natural resources.

## 4. The material basis of leadership: solar, wind, grids, and geography

Spain's geography gives it a powerful foundation. Solar resources are concentrated especially in central and southern regions such as Extremadura, Andalucía, and Castilla-La Mancha, while wind resources are especially important in northern and inland regions such as Castilla y León, Aragón, Galicia, and Castilla-La Mancha. Global Energy Monitor reported in 2024 that Spain had Europe's largest pipeline of utility-scale renewable projects in development, led by utility-scale solar; it also noted that Spain had 29.5 GW of utility-scale solar installed and 7.8 GW under construction as of May 2024.





By early 2025, solar photovoltaic power had become Spain's largest installed power-capacity technology, surpassing wind. Red Eléctrica reported that solar PV reached 32,043 MW compared with 32,007 MW for wind, and that renewables represented 66% of Spain's total generation capacity at that time.

By the end of 2025, Spain's installed power system had expanded further. Red Eléctrica reported a generation fleet of 142.5 GW, or 150.8 GW when self-consumption facilities were included. Of this broader total, 68.9% corresponded to renewable generation power. Solar PV, including self-consumption, was almost 50 GW and represented 33.1% of installed capacity; wind represented 22.1%. Spain was second among ENTSO-E members for the presence of solar and wind technologies, behind Germany.

This shows why Spain is increasingly perceived as Europe's renewable front-runner. Germany remains larger in absolute renewable capacity, while Nordic and Alpine countries have higher renewable shares due to hydro and wind.

Spain's emerging leadership can be better understood through its growing ability to deliver not only renewable capacity, but also **energy price stability and resilience to external shocks**. The expansion of solar and wind has reduced Spain's exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets, allowing it to better absorb crises such as the war in Ukraine or tensions affecting global oil and gas routes, including the Strait of Hormuz. This structural shift has contributed to more competitive electricity prices compared to highly import-dependent systems and has strengthened national energy security. In this sense, Spain is not only advancing in renewable deployment but is also positioning itself as a model for how energy systems can combine decarbonization with economic stability and geopolitical resilience.

Recent international media coverage highlights how Spain's renewable-energy model is increasingly associated with lower electricity costs, reduced exposure to fossil-fuel volatility, and resilience to geopolitical shocks. Here you can find some interesting articles about the topic

- [Spain's renewables help shield energy prices amid global crisis](#)

*Euronews* reports that Spain now has some of the **cheapest electricity prices in Europe**, largely due to rapid wind and solar expansion. The article emphasizes that Spain's energy system is less affected by gas price volatility, even during crises such as the Iran war and disruptions to global energy supply routes.

- [Spain's renewable boom weakens gas influence on electricity prices](#)

According to *Bloomberg*, the rapid increase in renewable generation is **loosening the link between electricity prices and fossil fuels**, a structural shift that distinguishes Spain from many other European countries.

- [One year after blackout, Spain doubles down on renewables](#)

*The Guardian* highlights how, despite the 2025 blackout, Spain continued expanding renewables and was **better protected from rising gas prices caused by geopolitical tensions**, including disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz. The article notes that renewables helped keep electricity prices significantly lower than in countries more dependent on gas.

- [Spain's solar boom becomes a European benchmark](#)

Coverage of Spain's photovoltaic expansion shows that solar power now represents a growing share of electricity generation, positioning Spain as a **reference case for large-scale solar deployment in Europe**.

## 5. Communication as infrastructure: why the transition needs more than megawatts

The Spanish case demonstrates that communication is not secondary to the energy transition. Communication is part of the infrastructure of transition. It is the mechanism through which technical change becomes politically legitimate, socially accepted, financially credible, and operationally manageable.

At the **European level**, Spain must communicate with EU institutions and neighboring countries because the Iberian Peninsula remains relatively weakly interconnected with continental Europe. Red Eléctrica notes that interconnections improve security of supply, integration of renewables, energy autonomy, and efficiency; however, Spain's exchange capacity with neighboring systems is around 3 GW, representing a low interconnection level for the peninsula. The EU target is at least 10% interconnection by 2025 and 15% by 2030.

This makes international communication strategic. Spain's renewable surplus has more value if it can be exported, balanced, and integrated into European markets. The European Commission, France, Portugal, and Spain signed a memorandum of understanding in 2023 to strengthen cooperation on cross-border energy infrastructure in South-West Europe, including key electricity interconnections and renewable-energy projects.



At the **national policy level**, communication is needed to create confidence. The PNIEC, climate law, auctions, and storage strategies all communicate that the transition is not a temporary political fashion but a long-term state project. This is important because renewable-energy investment is capital-intensive: developers, banks, manufacturers, grid companies, and industrial consumers need confidence in future policy direction.

At the **regional and local level**, communication is essential because renewable projects occupy land and affect landscapes. Solar parks and wind farms may produce national benefits, but their costs—visual impact, land-use conflict, biodiversity concerns, and local disruption—are often felt locally. If communities experience the transition as something imposed from Madrid, Brussels, or large companies, opposition will grow. Spain's grid-planning process recognizes this problem: the 2021–2026 transmission plan followed a Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Red Eléctrica described the plan as the result of collective participation by public administrations, companies, civil society, and citizens.

At the **technical level**, communication is operational. High-renewable systems require real-time coordination among generators, grid operators, distribution companies, storage operators, and market institutions. Red Eléctrica emphasizes that its Renewable Energy Control Centre, CECRE, is essential for operating a system with high renewable penetration under safe conditions.

At the **citizen level**, communication must connect climate goals with everyday benefits: lower import dependence, local jobs, industrial competitiveness, cleaner air, energy communities, and lower exposure to fossil-fuel price shocks. Spain's own PNIEC communication frames the transition as an opportunity for competitiveness, prosperity, security of supply, industrial employment, innovation, technological development, and reduction of energy poverty.

Finally, at the **crisis-communication level**, Spain's experience shows how fragile public trust can be. The Iberian blackout of April 2025 intensified public debate about renewable acceleration, grid stability, storage, voltage control, and nuclear phaseout. Spain's environment minister warned against prematurely blaming renewables and promised a full audit, while experts and media highlighted the need for better grid tools, storage, and interconnections.

Ethics4Growth is dedicated to bridging the gap between business growth and environmental stewardship. We partner with organisations of all sizes to design strategic roadmaps that prioritise renewable energy, ensuring that today's profits don't come at the expense of tomorrow's planet. In ethics4growth, we create

- **Customized Roadmaps:** “We don't believe in one-size-fits-all. Our strategies are tailored to the unique operational needs of each enterprise, from local SMEs to global corporations.”
- **ROI of Sustainability:** “Our plans focus on the 'Triple Bottom Line': People, Planet, and Profit. We show businesses how green energy can reduce long-term operational costs.”

- **Regulatory Compliance:** “As global regulations tighten, Ethics4Growth ensures your business remains ahead of the curve in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reporting and compliance.”

The lesson is not that renewables are inherently unreliable. The lesson is that a renewable-heavy system requires institutions capable of explaining technical complexity clearly and honestly. Public trust depends on avoiding simplistic narratives: neither “renewables caused the problem” nor “there is no problem” is adequate. A credible transition requires explaining that variable renewables are manageable, but only if grids, storage, demand flexibility, interconnections, and regulation advance at the same speed as generation capacity.

## 6. The unresolved challenge: from renewable generation to renewable system

Spain's progress is remarkable, but the next phase is harder. Building solar and wind farms is only the first stage. The deeper challenge is to build a renewable system. That means matching generation with demand, expanding transmission and distribution networks, increasing storage, developing flexible consumption, electrifying industry and transport, and ensuring that rural territories receive visible benefits.

Red Eléctrica reported that storage systems, including pumped storage and batteries, helped integrate 9,213 GWh in 2025, 6.2% more than in 2024. But storage power stood at only 3,427 MW at the end of 2025, showing that flexibility remains a central challenge.

Transmission planning is therefore crucial. Spain's 2025–2030 grid-planning process defines objectives including maximizing renewable-energy use, minimizing wasted generation, maintaining system security, transmitting renewable energy from high-resource areas, removing technical restrictions, developing storage, supporting industrial decarbonization, and promoting territorial cohesion and just transition. It also describes the planning process as participatory and transparent.

This is where communication and infrastructure meet. If grid expansion is not explained well, it can face local opposition. If storage incentives are not clear, investors hesitate. If self-consumption rules are too complex, citizens and apartment communities cannot participate. If interconnection debates remain technocratic, the public may not understand why France-Spain links matter for Spanish energy autonomy. Spain's future leadership will depend on its ability to communicate the second stage of the transition: not simply more renewable plants, but a more flexible, democratic, and integrated electricity system.



## 7. Conclusion

Spain's renewable-energy rise is the result of a distinctive combination of natural advantage, political decision-making, institutional learning, market reform, grid planning, and communication. Its story includes early feed-in tariff success, policy instability, the repeal of barriers to self-consumption, the creation of long-term climate and energy plans, competitive renewable auctions, rapid solar and wind deployment, and a growing focus on grids and storage.

Spain is not "first" in Europe under every statistical definition. But it is becoming one of Europe's most important renewable-energy leaders because it is attempting something historically significant: building a large, industrial, solar-and-wind-based electricity system at national scale. Its leadership will be judged not only by how many gigawatts it installs, but by whether it can integrate them reliably, share benefits fairly, communicate transparently, and maintain public legitimacy.

The Spanish case therefore offers a broader lesson for Europe. Renewable transitions are not only technological substitutions; they are communication-intensive transformations. Governments must communicate long-term policy certainty to investors, system needs to grid operators, project benefits to local communities, technical realities to citizens, and cross-border priorities to neighboring states. Spain's ascent shows that the countries most likely to lead the renewable-energy future will be those that treat communication, trust, and coordination as seriously as solar panels, wind turbines, and transmission lines.

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# Public Communications Implications of Digital Ireland

By Mary Keenan

*Digital Ireland – Connecting our People, Securing our Future* – is Ireland's National Digital and AI Strategy to 2030. It positions digital and AI transformation as essential to modern public services, economic resilience and social inclusion. Digital Ireland recognises that public confidence, understanding and trust are critical enablers of successful strategy implementation, not secondary considerations. Public communication is, therefore, a vital component of strategy implementation. How change is explained will strongly influence digital uptake, policy legitimacy and long-term success.

## Core Communications Objectives

Public communications in the context of Digital Ireland should aim to:

- 1. **Build trust** in digital and AI-enabled public services
- 2. **Explain change clearly and early**, avoiding confusion or misinformation
- 3. **Empower people**, not overwhelm them, in a more digital society
- 4. **Reassure the public** on safeguards, rights and accountability

## Four Key Public Communication Principles for Public Bodies Moving to Digital Service Provision

### Principle #1: User-Centred, Plain-Language Communication

Digital Ireland commits to public services that are designed around people's needs. Public communications should mirror this by:

- Using plain language (no technical or AI jargon)
- Framing changes in terms of **practical benefits for users**
- Clearly stating when digital options supplement—not replace—human services

### Principle #2: Transparency about Technology Use

Trust depends on clarity. Avoid vague assurances; be specific and factual. Where AI or advanced digital systems support public services, public communications should explain:

- Where technology is used
- What it does and does not do
- That accountability remains with public bodies and officials

### Principle #3: Communicate Safeguards, Not Just Innovation

Digital Ireland places strong emphasis on data protection, regulation, online safety and EU digital frameworks. This reassures the public that progress and protection go hand in hand. Public communications should consistently reference:

- Privacy and data-protection standards
- Regulatory oversight
- Ireland's role as a trusted hub for digital regulation

## Principle #4: Balance Benefits with Honesty about Limits

Digital Ireland explicitly acknowledges risks and challenges associated with digital and AI technologies. Credibility is strengthened by realism. Public communications should:

- Avoid hype or over-promising
- Acknowledge limitations and learning phases
- Be open about why changes take time or are being phased

## Empowerment Through Communication

### Supporting Digital and AI Literacy

Digital Ireland highlights digital and AI literacy as essential for participation in society. This positions public bodies as trusted guides, not just service providers. Public communications should:

- Actively explain new digital services and tools
- Signpost help, guidance and alternatives
- Reinforce that no one is left behind by digital change

### Inclusion and Choice

Digital Ireland stresses accessibility and inclusion. Public communications should clearly state:

- Digital services are designed to expand access
- Non-digital channels remain available where required
- Support exists for those with lower digital confidence

## Engagement and Feedback

Digital Ireland commits to ongoing stakeholder engagement in implementation. Two-way communication strengthens legitimacy and improves service design. From a public communications perspective, this means:

- Signaling change early
- Inviting feedback where appropriate
- Listening and responding to public concerns

## Practical Guidance for Communications Teams

When communicating about digital or AI-enabled public services:

-  Lead with purpose and benefit, not technology
-  Explain how people are protected as clearly as how systems work
-  Reassure audiences that humans remain responsible
-  Keep messages consistent across departments and channels
-  Avoid technical detail unless genuinely necessary
-  Avoid language that implies inevitability or loss of choice

## Strategic Communications Takeaway

Digital Ireland frames trust, understanding and inclusion as foundations of digital transformation. Public communication is therefore a delivery mechanism for the strategy itself.

Clear, honest and people-focused public communication will help ensure that digital transformation:

- Is embraced rather than resisted
- Connects people rather than alienating them
- Secures public confidence alongside innovation

### Mary Keenan

is a civil servant working in the Corporate Services Division of the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Ireland. As part of her role, she has responsibility for public communication, public engagement, civic policy and emergency planning and management.



# The Algorithmic Trap: Propaganda, Polarisation, and Digital Control

By Stavros Papagianneas

Social media platforms are now central to how people access information and form opinions. Although once celebrated as tools for democratisation, these platforms demonstrate a troubling capacity to manipulate public opinion. Their use of algorithmic targeting and amplification of misinformation undermines democracy by restricting genuine freedom of thought and distorting the flow of ideas.

Algorithms are central to this issue. Designed to maximise user engagement, they shape what users see, favouring content that provokes strong emotional reactions. This approach benefits advertising-driven business models but harms public discourse. By amplifying sensationalist or polarising content, algorithms distort users' perception of reality and erode balanced, factual discussion.



## Algorithms: the highway to hell

This distortion is not neutral. By selectively exposing users to particular viewpoints while excluding others, algorithms foster the creation of “echo chambers” in which individuals are consistently exposed to ideas that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs. Over time, this process contributes to increased political and ideological polarisation, as individuals become less inclined to engage with opposing perspectives.

In a well-functioning democracy, it is essential for citizens to be able to consider a range of viewpoints and participate in reasoned debate. However, social media platforms often promote the opposite outcome: societal division, hostility, and ideological entrenchment.

They have emerged as powerful tools for disseminating propaganda. In contrast to traditional forms of propaganda, which were typically state-controlled and readily identifiable, digital propaganda is often subtle, decentralised, and highly targeted. Political actors, interest groups, and foreign governments can exploit social media to influence public opinion.

By using data analytics, these entities can tailor messages to specific audiences, appealing to their fears, biases, or identities. Such micro-targeting renders propaganda more effective and more difficult to detect, as disparate groups may be exposed to totally different versions of reality.

Russia for example, has been developing propaganda since the beginning of the century, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The contemporary propaganda model can be defined as ‘the firehose of falsehood’ or ‘firehosing’ because of its particular features: high numbers of (social media) channels and messages and dissemination of partial truths or outright fictions. Russian propaganda has other distinctive features: it is also rapid, continuous, repetitive, and sometimes lacks consistency.

The Russian government first used this technique during its offensive against Georgia in 2008. Nowadays, it is used to justify Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. This model has inspired other governments and political movements around the globe; it especially inspired Donald Trump in his massive fake news and hate propaganda to divide American society.



## A lie told often enough becomes the truth

False or misleading information can disseminate rapidly across social media platforms, frequently surpassing the effectiveness and speed of corrective measures. As algorithms tend to prioritise user engagement, sensationalised falsehoods are often promoted more extensively than nuanced, factual content.

This dynamic cultivates an environment in which individuals increasingly struggle to distinguish fact from fiction, thereby undermining the informed decision-making fundamental to democratic governance. When electoral choices are informed by inaccurate or manipulated information, the legitimacy of democratic processes is consequently undermined.

A further concern pertains to the concentration of power among a limited number of technology corporations. These platforms function as primary gatekeepers of information, yet they typically operate with minimal transparency and accountability.

Decisions regarding content moderation, algorithmic architecture, and data utilisation can exert significant political and societal influence; however, such decisions are frequently made without public scrutiny. This situation prompts critical questions about the control of information dissemination in society and the interests ultimately prioritised.

## In a world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is power

The impact on individual freedom is considerable. Although social media gives users the illusion of choice and autonomy, their online experiences are meticulously curated by hidden systems. Users may believe they are freely exploring ideas, but in reality, their exposure to information is shaped by algorithms designed to predict and influence their behaviour.

This contriving form of algorithmic control has the potential to constrain intellectual autonomy, subtly directing individuals towards particular viewpoints without their explicit awareness. Genuine freedom entails not only the right to express oneself, but also the capacity for critical thought and access to a broad spectrum of perspectives.

The addictive design of social media compounds these issues. Platforms are intentionally designed to capture and hold attention, encouraging compulsive use. This reduces the time and mental space available for reflection, critical thinking, and meaningful civic engagement.

Rather than engaging actively in democratic processes, people become passive recipients of algorithmically curated content, thereby contributing to the erosion of democratic culture and individual freedom.

## Education and legislation are key

Addressing these multifaceted challenges is both complex and imperative. Enhanced transparency regarding the operational mechanisms of algorithms constitutes a crucial initial step. It is essential that users develop a clearer understanding of the rationale underlying the content they encounter and the ways in which their data are used.

In addition, more robust regulatory frameworks are necessary to ensure that social media platforms are held accountable for the societal consequences of their algorithmic systems, especially in relation to the dissemination of misinformation and the facilitation of political manipulation.

Education constitutes a pivotal factor in addressing these issues. Media literacy programmes are instrumental in equipping individuals with the skills necessary to critically evaluate information, identify bias, and resist manipulation. By cultivating a greater awareness of the operational dynamics of social media, citizens are better positioned to make informed decisions and decrease their vulnerability to propaganda.

## How algorithms reshape human thought and the high vulnerability of young adults

A report published by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, an organisation accountable to Finland's parliament, links social media algorithms to risks for democratic debate.

Based on research conducted by the British Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and the Finnish data company Bondata, the study revealed that 67% of political content recommended to young users in Finland exhibits a tendency toward right-leaning political perspectives.

The team created virtual social media profiles aged 18 to 24 on TikTok, Instagram and X to observe what political content algorithms suggested in Finland, France and Romania. The findings show that provocative or emotional political posts receive the most promotion. About half of young European adults report feeling anger, fear, or disappointment when encountering political content online.

About one third of young adults in Finland say they often see misinformation, hate speech, or conspiracy theories in their social media feeds. Sitra says that bot accounts spreading harmful content have become more common in recent years, and much of this material now comes from artificial intelligence systems.

European regulators have started to take action against major tech platforms. The European Union's Digital Services Act now requires companies to reveal how they target users with ads and who pays for political advertising. Earlier this year, the European Commission warned TikTok that if it does not reduce addictive features, it could face fines of up to 6% of its parent company ByteDance's global turnover.

Social media could help people take part in democracy, but the way it works now often does the opposite. Algorithms, targeted propaganda, and misinformation can shape public opinion in misleading ways and weaken the foundations of democracy.

If nothing is done, this influence could lead to a society where people's freedom to think is limited and democracy is weakened. Making sure social media helps the public instead of harming it is one of the biggest challenges we face today.

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# Public communication in times of fractured realities

By Mario Scharfbillig

## Why fighting misinformation isn't enough – and what that means for communicators



When my coauthors and I started working on *Fractured Reality*, a new JRC report on the influence of technology on democracy, we wanted to sort out the discussion around the impact of misinformation. The further we got into the evidence, the clearer it became that misinformation is not only the disease – it is also, perhaps even more so, the symptom. And that has real consequences for how those

working on communication for democratic institutions should think about their work, and which actions we as a society should invest time and money in.

## The misdiagnosis

We have heard and said this before ourselves: citizens are exposed to false content, false content shifts beliefs, and that will ultimately change behaviour. Therefore, we need to correct false content. Each step in that chain is still true. Exposure to misinformation changes beliefs, creates distrust in society and generates opportunities for scammers to exploit. Typical responses like fact-checking do work – it reliably improves the accuracy of beliefs, even after a single exposure. Inoculation through pre-bunking works. Media literacy, lateral reading and other approaches that teach individuals important competences work. We reviewed the evidence, and the individual-level toolbox is working, but only to an extent (see 'how' in Chapter 2 of the report).

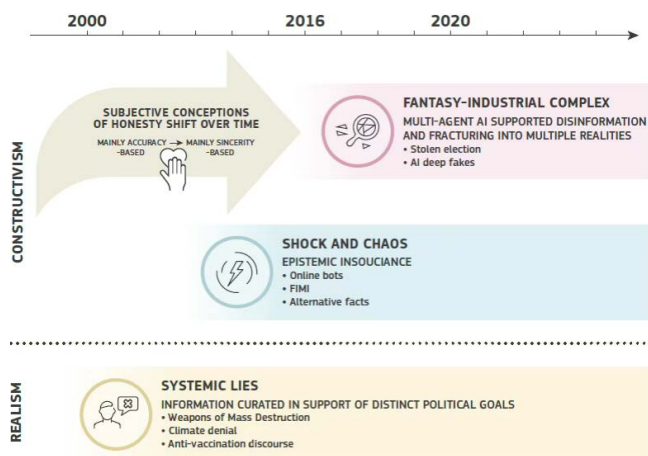
However, the effects are modest, and the reach is often limited, while incentives for bad-faith actors remain strong.

During the 2020 US election (in the five weeks around the election), only 13% of voters visited a fact-checking website (down from 25% in the previous election). Even if people see them, reading fact-checks doesn't eliminate the belief in the false claim completely. Misinformation simply travels faster than corrections, and the corrections rarely find the people who saw the original claim, and when they do, they only attenuate the misinformation beliefs without eliminating them. Scientists can keep refining these tools – and they should – and governments should use them, but these tools on their own cannot rebuild a shared reality that is needed for democratic discourse.

## What the evidence points to

What's driving the fracturing of public discourse is not primarily the supply of false claims. It's the algorithmic architecture that surfaces, ranks and rewards content – false, misleading and true alike. Engagement-based business models structurally privilege content that is negative, emotional and conflictual, because that is what captures attention – and that is how the platforms make money. A loose ecosystem of politicians, influencers and platform owners exploits that new attention architecture – in what we call the 'fantasy-industrial complex' – where the goal of misinformation is no longer to make people believe specific falsehoods but to generate distrust, sow distraction and make finding common ground impossible. This in turn reduces the ability of society to hold bad actors accountable when their transgressions are lost in the daily outrage cycles.

The figure below showcases how misinformation has moved over time from targeted lies (e.g., systemic lies around climate change) towards a new information space where misinformation is used to construct completely different realities. Blaming individuals for being misinformed, in this context, is a misdiagnosis. The responsibility lies further upstream.



**Source:** Scharfbillig et al. (2026), Figure 2.3. FIMI = Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference.

## Dare to be first

A lot of the evidence we describe above is still emerging. We wrote this report under what we call a 'minimum viable evidence' regime – the idea that, in a fast-moving information space, waiting for conclusive evidence before acting is itself a choice with consequences. That applies to research, but it applies to communication too. The experiments we run in our campaigns, the platforms we choose to be present on, the influencers we work with, the deliberative formats we pilot, the spaces we create – they help us create evidence on what works if we evaluate properly. If we want to improve democracy, we need to experiment more with democracy.

## What this means for public communicators

In the report we offer numerous insights on what policymakers can do on the systemic level, from how to change business models through taxation, signalling of information quality through markets and investing in sovereign digital solutions. For communicators, we believe that means the following three things:

First, we should reprioritise. Better fact-checking, debunking and media literacy matter, but they are reactive and insufficient. The real work is structural: supporting deliberative spaces (e.g. Decidim, vTaiwan, the Commission's own Citizens' Engagement Platform), reinforcing crowd-sourced knowledge commons like Wikipedia and building the physical and technological infrastructure for citizens to deliberate on shared facts rather than simply consume curated personalised outrage. This also includes training civil servants and public communicators on how to use these infrastructures.

Second, it changes how we think about authenticity. One of the more uncomfortable findings in our report is that citizens increasingly judge honesty by perceived sincerity rather than factual accuracy. We are not arguing for abandoning accuracy – we are arguing for pairing it with a trusted human voice. This means helping train influencers on how to assess evidence quality and onboarding scientific experts to platforms, e.g. as done by the WHO. Polished institutional factual messaging that evades the real question may read as dishonest, even when every word is technically correct. Defending a system that citizens have come to distrust may be seen as problematic, not reassuring.

Third, we should rethink which platforms we use for our work, not just the content we produce. It's common knowledge that communicators need to be where the audiences are. However, only posting on the biggest platforms where citizens are captured in fractured realities creates lock-in effects for them and the institutions. While we should attempt to pierce bubbles, we should also cross-post to new decentralised alternatives (e.g. Bluesky, Mastodon, Euroskey). The reach may currently be a fraction – but that's exactly why early institutional presence matters. As we argue in the report, a sovereign continent should not outsource its public communications layer. Locking in audiences on toxic platforms is not a sustainable strategy; we need to actively help new platforms to emerge.

## Links

Link to the report: [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/projects-activities/fractured-reality-%E2%80%93-how-democracy-can-win-global-struggle-over-information\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/projects-activities/fractured-reality-%E2%80%93-how-democracy-can-win-global-struggle-over-information_en)

Link to the Enlightenment 2.0 research programme: [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/evidence-informed-policy-making/topic/enlightenment-20\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/evidence-informed-policy-making/topic/enlightenment-20_en)

Link to the JRC Competence Centre on Deliberative and Participatory Democracy: [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/participatory-democracy/about\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/participatory-democracy/about_en)

### Mario Scharfbillig

works at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, where he leads the [Enlightenment 2.0 research programme](#). The programme provides interdisciplinary scientific foundations for understanding how political decision-making is evolving in an increasingly polarised, complex, and uncertain world. He also advises various Horizon projects, ALLEA, the Club of Venice, EGU, and ISC.

Mario holds a PhD in economics from the University of Mainz, where he specialised in behavioural economics, public policy, and corporate governance. For his [work advising policymakers](#), Apolitical named him among its "50+1 Influential Researchers Whose Work Could Help Shape 21st-Century Politicians."





# CLUB MEETING 2026-2028



## Provisionnal programme

| 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zagreb (Croatia), 12-14 March 2026<br>9 <sup>th</sup> Stratcom seminar                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Rome, 6-7 May 2026<br>Seminar on Synergies in Communicating Europe :<br>fostering young people and civil society engagement<br>and triggering cooperation with scientific communities                                                          |
| Madrid, 11-12 June 2026<br>Plenary meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| London, 8-9 October 2026<br>Crisis communication seminar                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Montenegro, 21 October 2026 (date to be confirmed)<br>Seminar in Communicating the Western Balkans Agenda,<br>[Reinforcing Cooperation in Countering FIMI]<br>and strengthening relations<br>between public communicators and the media sector |
| Venice, 10-11 December 2026<br>Plenary meeting of the 40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Club of Venice                                                                                                                                       |

## 2027

**Croatia, March 2027**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Stratcom seminar**

**April 2027 (venue to be defined)**  
**Crisis communication seminar Thematic seminar**  
**Relations between public communication and the media sector**

**(poss.) Lithuania or Estonia, June 2027 (venue to be confirmed)**  
**Plenary meeting**

**(poss.) London, September/October 2027**  
**Crisis communication seminar**

**Venice, December 2027**  
**Plenary meeting**

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## 2028

**Croatia, March 2028**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Stratcom seminar**

**Latvia, 6-7 June 2028**  
**Plenary meeting**

**September or October 2028 (venue to be defined)**  
**Seminar on public diplomacy and country branding developments**  
**and analysis of public opinion trends**

**Venice, November or December 2028**  
**Plenary meeting**

# CHRONOLOGY OF THE CLUB OF VENICE MEETINGS



98

| No. | Year | Date                     | Venue             | Meeting | Remarks                                                                  |
|-----|------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | 1986 | 3-4 October              | Venice            | Plenary | Founding of the Club of Venice                                           |
| 2   | 1987 | 16-17 October            | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 3   | 1988 | 7 June                   | Brussels          | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 4   | 1988 | 28-29 October            | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 5   | 1989 | 16 February              | Strasbourg        | Plenary | Survey «European Parliament and public opinion»                          |
| 6   | 1989 | 30 September - 2 October | Paris             | Plenary | At the occasion of the European Conference on audiovisual                |
| 7   | 1989 | 20-22 October            | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 8   | 1990 | 18 April                 | London            | Plenary | Presentation of the new COI statute                                      |
| 9   | 1990 | 16-18 November           | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 10  | 1991 | 25-27 October            | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 11  | 1992 | 25-28 May                | Barcelona-Seville | Plenary | On the occasion of the Olympic Games in Barcelona and Seville World Expo |
| 12  | 1992 | 30-31 October            | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 13  | 1993 | 13-14 May                | Bonn              | Plenary | Discussion of the communication structure in Central and Eastern Europe  |
| 14  | 1993 | 5-7 November             | Venice            | Plenary |                                                                          |
| 15  | 1994 | 18 March                 | Paris             | Plenary |                                                                          |

| No. | Year | Date                     | Venue              | Meeting                           | Remarks                                                                                     |
|-----|------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16  | 1994 | 4-5 November             | Venice             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 17  | 1995 | 26-27 April              | Brussels           | Plenary                           | 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting with EP communicators                                               |
| 18  | 1995 | 3-5 November             | Venice             | Plenary                           | 10 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club of Venice                                          |
| 19  | 1997 | 12-14 November           | Bruges             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 20  | 1998 | 16-18 December           | Bruges             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 21  | 1999 | 10-12 October            | Santorini (Greece) | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 22  | 2000 | 4-6 October              | La Rochelle        | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 23  | 2001 | 29 November - 1 December | Venice             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 24  | 2002 | 24 April                 | Brussels           | Informal meeting on opinion polls |                                                                                             |
| 25  | 2002 | 13-14 June               | Copenhagen - Malmö | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 26  | 2002 | 21-23 November           | Venice             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 27  | 2003 | 27 February - 2 March    | Loutraki (Greece)  | Plenary                           | Loutraki declaration containing drafting suggestions to the European Convention             |
| 28  | 2003 | 7-10 September           | Venice             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 29  | 2004 | 13-15 April              | Bratislava         | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 30  | 2004 | 18-19 November           | Venice             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 31  | 2005 | 14 January               | Istanbul           | Plenary                           | Preparatory meeting and first meeting in a candidate country                                |
| 32  | 2005 | 13-15 April              | The Hague          | Plenary                           | 14 April: workshops on Government communication, Communicating Europe and crisis management |
| 33  | 2005 | 3-4 November             | Venice             | Plenary                           | 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club of Venice                                          |
| 34  | 2006 | 10 February              | Brussels           | Workshop on call centers          |                                                                                             |
| 35  | 2006 | 27-28 April              | Prague             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 36  | 2006 | 16-17 November           | Venice             | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 37  | 2007 | 25-26 April              | Vienna - Budapest  | Plenary                           |                                                                                             |
| 38  | 2007 | 15-16 November           | Rome               | Plenary                           | 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rome Treaties                                           |



| No. | Year | Date           | Venue               | Meeting                                                                            | Remarks                                                                                                                 |
|-----|------|----------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 39  | 2008 | 25 February    | Brussels            | Workshop on audiovisual and interactive communication                              |                                                                                                                         |
| 40  | 2008 | 5-6 June       | Ljubljana -Postojna | Plenary                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |
| 41  | 2008 | 21-22 November | Venice              | Plenary                                                                            | Break-out groups:<br>a) Capacity building<br>b) Public diplomacy<br>c) Code of conduct, ethics and professional statute |
| 42  | 2009 | 13 February    | Vienna              | Workshop on management and strategic partnership agreements                        |                                                                                                                         |
| 43  | 2009 | 17 April       | Brussels            | Workshop on interactive Web 2.0 comm. and session on communicating on EP elections |                                                                                                                         |
| 44  | 2009 | 27 May         | Paris               | Workshop on public diplomacy                                                       |                                                                                                                         |
| 45  | 2009 | 28-29 May      | Paris               | Plenary                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |
| 46  | 2009 | 15 October     | Brussels            | Workshop on capacity building                                                      |                                                                                                                         |
| 47  | 2009 | 19-20 November | Venice              | Plenary                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |
| 48  | 2009 | 21 November    | Poreč (Croatia)     | Thematic meeting on communicating pre- and post-enlargement                        |                                                                                                                         |
| 49  | 2010 | 19 February    | Vienna              | Workshop on management and strategic partnership agreements                        |                                                                                                                         |
| 50  | 2010 | 19 March       | London              | Workshop on digital strategies for public communication                            |                                                                                                                         |
| 51  | 2010 | 29-30 April    | Istanbul            | Thematic meeting on crisis communication                                           |                                                                                                                         |
| 52  | 2010 | 2 June         | Gozo (Malta)        | Workshop on public diplomacy                                                       |                                                                                                                         |
| 53  | 2010 | 3-4 June       | Gozo (Malta)        | Plenary                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |

| No. | Year | Date           | Venue             | Meeting                                                                          | Remarks                                                                                                                                     |
|-----|------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 54  | 2010 | 20 October     | Brussels          | Workshop on social media & web 3.0 and on capacity building                      |                                                                                                                                             |
| 55  | 2010 | 18-19 November | Venice            | Plenary                                                                          | Break-out groups:<br>a) Capacity building<br>b) Audiovisual and interactive communication<br>c) Journalism and new media                    |
| 56  | 2011 | 10 February    | Brussels          | Workshop on web-communication & social media and communicating enlargement       |                                                                                                                                             |
| 57  | 2011 | 12-13 April    | Budapest          | Thematic meeting «Communicating Europe in schools»                               | 12/04: «Teaching about the EU - LIVE» : observe a lesson with English-speaking students with innovative ICT method of teaching about the EU |
| 58  | 2011 | 25 May         | Warsaw            | Workshop on public diplomacy                                                     |                                                                                                                                             |
| 59  | 2011 | 26-27 May      | Warsaw            | Plenary                                                                          |                                                                                                                                             |
| 60  | 2011 | 7 October      | Brussels          | Joint WPI/CoV seminar on the impact of social media on journalism                |                                                                                                                                             |
| 61  | 2011 | 10-11 November | Venice            | Plenary of the 25 years                                                          |                                                                                                                                             |
| 62  | 2012 | 27 January     | Vienna            | Workshop on management and strategic partnership agreements                      |                                                                                                                                             |
| 63  | 2012 | 16 February    | Brussels          | Joint WPI/CoV seminar on The Next Web and its Impact on Government Communication |                                                                                                                                             |
| 64  | 2012 | 29-30 March    | Sofia             | Workshop on crisis communication                                                 |                                                                                                                                             |
| 65  | 2012 | 23 May         | Protaras (Cyprus) | Workshop on public diplomacy                                                     |                                                                                                                                             |
| 66  | 2012 | 24-25 May      | Protaras (Cyprus) | Plenary                                                                          |                                                                                                                                             |

| No. | Year | Date           | Venue    | Meeting                                                                                                                                                                              | Remarks                              |
|-----|------|----------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 67  | 2012 | 4 October      | Brussels | Joint WPI/ CoV seminar on «Open Government in the Making»                                                                                                                            |                                      |
| 68  | 2012 | 15-16 November | Venice   | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                              | Spokespersons' seminar on 14.12.2012 |
| 69  | 2013 | 1 February     | Vienna   | Workshop on management and strategic partnership agreements                                                                                                                          |                                      |
| 70  | 2013 | 22 March       | Brussels | Joint WPI/ CoV seminar on «Public communication in the evolving media landscape: adapt or resist?»                                                                                   |                                      |
| 71  | 2013 | 6-7 June       | Tallinn  | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
| 72  | 2013 | 14-15 November | Venice   | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
| 73  | 2014 | 21 February    | Brussels | Seminar on Digital Communication Trends                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
| 74  | 2014 | 27/28 March    | Athens   | Joint seminar (with the GR Presidency and GR Gen.Sec. of Information and Communication) «Public communication: re-gaining citizens' confidence in times of crisis»                   |                                      |
| 75  | 2014 | 5-6 June       | Riga     | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
| 76  | 2014 | 13-14 November | Rome     | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
| 77  | 2015 | 26-27 March    | Sofia    | Joint conference (with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Wilfred Martens Centre for European Studies and SEECOM) «Digital communication: New Challenges for Governments and EU Institutions» |                                      |

| No. | Year | Date            | Venue                              | Meeting                                                                                                              | Remarks                                                   |
|-----|------|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 78  | 2015 | 11-12 June      | Vienna                             | Plenary                                                                                                              |                                                           |
| 79  | 2015 | 22-23 October   | Milan                              | Plenary                                                                                                              | On the occasion of the Universal EXPO 2015                |
| 80  | 2015 | 9 December      | Brussels                           | Joint workshop (with the Council Working Party on Information) on communication challenges in the field of migration |                                                           |
| 81  | 2016 | 9 April         | Lesbos                             | Seminar "The refugee and migration crisis: dealing with a European problem»                                          |                                                           |
| 82  | 2016 | 26-27 May       | The Hague                          | Plenary                                                                                                              |                                                           |
| 83  | 2016 | 30 September    | Brussels                           | Seminar on «Terrorism: Challenges for Crisis Communication»                                                          |                                                           |
| 84  | 2016 | 10-11 November  | Venice                             | Plenary of the 30 years                                                                                              |                                                           |
| 85  | 2017 | 17 March        | London                             | 1st Seminar on «StratCom - strategic communication challenges for Europe»                                            | Adoption of the London Charter on Strategic Communication |
| 86  | 2017 | 18-19 May       | Sliema (Malta)                     | Plenary                                                                                                              |                                                           |
| 87  | 2017 | 19 May          | Sliema (Malta)                     | Seminar on «The refugees and migration Crisis: a crucial test for public communicators»                              |                                                           |
| 88  | 2017 | 23-24 September | Athens-Thebes-Livadia-Thessaloniki | Seminar on «Mobilising communicators in the field of the refugee and migration crisis»                               |                                                           |
| 89  | 2017 | 23-24 November  | Venice                             | Plenary                                                                                                              |                                                           |



| No. | Year | Date            | Venue            | Meeting                                                                                                                                        | Remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----|------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 90  | 2018 | 8-9 March       | Luxembourg       | Seminar «Open Government and Open Data: New Horizons for Communication and Public Access to Information»                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 91  | 2018 | 7-8 June        | Vilnius          | Plenary                                                                                                                                        | Adoption of the<br>- Vilnius Charter on Societal Resilience to Disinformation and Propaganda in a Challenging Digital Landscape<br>- Vilnius Charter shaping professionalism in communication (Capacity Building) |
| 92  | 2018 | 18-19 September | Tunis            | 1st Euro-Mediterranean workshop for communicators «Providing Clarity in Complexity: Creating an evidence-based public discussion on migration» | Joint meeting co-organized with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the Government of Tunisia                                                                                   |
| 93  | 2018 | 22-23 November  | Venice           | Plenary                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 94  | 2018 | 13-14 December  | London           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Stratcom Seminar: «Truth, Tech and Trends - The issues that European communicators need to address in 2019»                    | Joint meeting organised in cooperation with the UK Government Communication Service                                                                                                                               |
| 95  | 2019 | 5-6 April       | Athens           | Seminar on «The Role of Communication in Crisis Management: planning, coordination, cooperation»                                               | Joint meeting organised with the Greek Ministry for Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media                                                                                                                  |
| 96  | 2019 | 6-7 June        | Bar (Montenegro) | Plenary                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 97  | 2019 | 23 October      | Brussels         | Seminar on «Country Reputation - Perceptions and management»                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

| No.   | Year | Date           | Venue                                                      | Meeting                                                                                                                                                                               | Remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------|------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 98-99 | 2019 | 11-12 November | Athens                                                     | - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Euro-Mediterranean workshop for communicators<br>«Providing Clarity in Complexity: Creating an evidence-based public discussion on migration»<br>- High Level Event | - Joint meeting co-organized with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the Hellenic Government<br>- Round table / Meeting with the Hellenic Deputy Minister for Citizen Protection, the ICMPD Director-General, Commission DG NEAR Deputy DG, the Director of the MPI at the EUI and the President of the Club of Venice |
| 100   | 2019 | 5-6 December   | Venice                                                     | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                               | Adoption of the Action Plan on synergies between public communication and the media sector                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 101   | 2020 | 6-7 February   | London                                                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Stratcom Seminar:<br>«Strategy, Science and Standards<br>- building effective European public communication in the 20's»                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|       | 2020 | 4-5 June       | Dubrovnik                                                  | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>Cancelled, owing to the COVID-19 crisis lockdown measures</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 102   | 2020 | 15 June        | <i>On line mtg coordinated by the Croatian authorities</i> | Webinar on «Crisis Communication<br>- Managing communication on the Covid-19<br>- Challenges, Analysis and Lessons Learned»                                                           | <i>Co-organised with the Croatian government authorities</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 103   | 2020 | 30 September   | <i>On line mtg</i>                                         | 1 <sup>st</sup> OECD Expert Group on Public Communication                                                                                                                             | <i>In cooperation with the OECD Headquarters and the UK GCS</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 104   | 2020 | 10-11 November | <i>On line mtg</i>                                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> EURO-Med EMM4 Workshop                                                                                                                                                | <i>In cooperation with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 105   | 2020 | 3-4 December   | <i>On line mtg</i>                                         | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>Co-organised with the Italian government authorities</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 106   | 2021 | 25 February    | <i>On line mtg</i>                                         | 4 <sup>th</sup> Stratcom Seminar:<br>«Key challenges and future communication strategies: crisis management, effectiveness and trust»                                                 | <i>Co-organised with the UK Government Communications Office</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

| No. | Year | Date           | Venue                                    | Meeting                                                                                                                                                   | Remarks                                                                                              |
|-----|------|----------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 106 | 2021 | 25 February    | On line mtg                              | 4 <sup>th</sup> Stratcom Seminar:<br>«Key challenges and future communication strategies: crisis management, effectiveness and trust»                     | Co-organised with the UK Government Communications Office                                            |
| 107 | 2021 | 18 March       | On line mtg                              | Workshop on «Communication and Open Governance in a Time of Crisis»                                                                                       | Co-organised with the OGNFE, DEMSOC, HSS, OGP and OECD                                               |
| 108 | 2021 | 10-11 June     | On line mtg                              | Plenary                                                                                                                                                   | Co-organised with the government of the Republic of Serbia                                           |
| 109 | 2021 | 4 October      | On line mtg                              | Constitutive meeting of the ad hoc working group on resilience vs. hybrid threats                                                                         | Co-organised with REOC Communications                                                                |
| 110 | 2021 | 2-3 November   | Mtg held in presence (Paris) and on line | 4 <sup>rd</sup> EURO-Med EMM5 Workshop<br>«Re-defining migration partnerships in the Euro-Mediterranean region: the role of communication and narratives» | Co-organised with the ICMPD and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs                    |
| 111 | 2021 | 23 November    | On line meeting                          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting of the ad hoc working group of comms experts in resilience vs. hybrid threats                                                     |                                                                                                      |
| 112 | 2021 | 2-3 December   | Venice (resuming meetings in presence)   | Plenary meeting of the 35 years of activity of the Club                                                                                                   | Co-organised with the Italian government authorities                                                 |
| 113 | 2022 | 16-17 February | Toulouse (hybrid)                        | Joint international seminar on citizenship and civic participation - the role of local public communication in the different EU countries                 | In cooperation with Cap'Com and in partnership with the Region Occitanie and the European Parliament |

| No. | Year | Date                           | Venue                    | Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Remarks                                                                                                                                       |
|-----|------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 114 | 2022 | 18 February                    | On line meeting          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting of the ad hoc working group of comms experts in resilience vs. hybrid threats                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                               |
| 115 | 2022 | 30-31 March                    | London                   | 5 <sup>th</sup> Stratcom seminar «Professionalizing Strategic Communication to tackle social and technological challenges»                                                                                     | Co-organised with the UK GCS                                                                                                                  |
| 116 | 2022 | 31 June - 1 <sup>st</sup> July | Fiesole (Firenze), Italy | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                                                        | In cooperation with the European University Institute (EUI)                                                                                   |
| 117 | 2022 | 13-14 October                  | Prague                   | Seminar on Government Communication Challenges in times of crisis                                                                                                                                              | In cooperation with the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU                                                                             |
| 118 | 2022 | 21 October                     | Virtual event            | Communication on EU funded projects                                                                                                                                                                            | Preliminary brainstorming to prepare for a future seminar in 2023 or 2024                                                                     |
| 119 | 2022 | 10-11 November                 | Rabat                    | 5 <sup>th</sup> EURO-Med – EMM5 Migration Workshop «Understanding the governance of migration narratives in the Euro-Mediterranean region» + 2 <sup>nd</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Migration Narrative Conference | Co-organised with the ICMPD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco                                                     |
| 120 | 2022 | 24-25 November                 | Venice                   | Plenary                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Co-organised with the Co-organised with the Department for European Policies, Presidency of the Council of Minister of the Italian Government |
| 121 | 2023 | 9-10 March                     | London                   | 6 <sup>th</sup> StratCom Seminar Shared understanding and campaign work among European strategic communicators                                                                                                 | Co-organised with the UK GCS                                                                                                                  |



| No. | Year | Date                                   | Venue                     | Meeting                                                                                                                          | Remarks                                                                                                                      |
|-----|------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 122 | 2023 | 1-2 June                               | Nicosia, Cyprus           | Plenary                                                                                                                          | Co-organised with the Department of Press and Information of the government of Cyprus                                        |
| 123 | 2023 | 28-29 September                        | Dubrovnik, Croatia        | Seminar on communicating EU enlargement and the EU macro-regional strategies                                                     | Co-organised with the Central Government authorities and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia             |
| 124 | 2023 | 5-6 October                            | Valletta, Malta           | Euro-Mediterranean Migration Narrative Conference                                                                                | Co-organised with the ICMPD and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of the Maltese government             |
| 125 | 2023 | 30 November – 1 <sup>st</sup> December | Venice, Italy             | Plenary meeting                                                                                                                  | Co-organised with the Department for European Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Minister of the Italian Government       |
| 126 | 2024 | 14-15 March                            | London                    | 7 <sup>th</sup> Stratcom Seminar Recipes to optimise strategic comm - suggested models for European governments and institutions | Co-organised with the UK Government Communication Service                                                                    |
| 127 | 2024 | 25-26 April                            | Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia | Seminar on challenges in communicating EU enlargement and progress in countering disinformation                                  | Co-organised with the Slovenian Government Communication Office                                                              |
| 128 | 2024 | 23 May                                 | Strasbourg, France        | Seminar on synergies in the fight against disinformation and on media literacy                                                   | Co-organised with Cap'Com                                                                                                    |
| 129 | 2024 | 20-21 June                             | Dublin, Ireland           | Plenary meeting                                                                                                                  | Co-organised with the Department of the Taoiseach and the Directorate of Communications of the Department of Foreign Affairs |
| 130 | 2024 | 5-6 December                           | Venice, Italy             | Plenary meeting                                                                                                                  | Co-organised with the Italian PM Office Department for European Affairs                                                      |

| No. | Year | Date         | Venue    | Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                      | Remarks                                                                                                                       |
|-----|------|--------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 131 | 2025 | 12-13 March  | London   | 8 <sup>th</sup> Stratcom Seminar<br>"Strengthening cooperation in crisis communication, neutralising foreign influence threats and information manipulation & applying AI to communications" | Co-organised with the UK Government Communication Service                                                                     |
| 132 | 2025 | 21-22 May    | Athens   | Plenary meeting                                                                                                                                                                              | Co-organised with the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece |
| 133 | 2025 | 3-4 July     | Brussels | Seminar on navigating migration narratives and communicating EU enlargement                                                                                                                  | Co-organised with ICMPD, IOM and SEECOM                                                                                       |
| 134 | 2025 | 9-10 October | Warsaw   | Seminar on strategic communication (countering FIMI, resilience building, AI's impact on government communication plans and investments)                                                     | Co-organised with the Department of Strategic Communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland      |
| 135 | 2025 | 4-5 December | Venice   | Plenary meeting                                                                                                                                                                              | Co-organised with the Italian PM Office Department for European Affairs                                                       |
| 136 | 2026 | 9-10 March   | Zagreb   | Seminar on Strategic Communication                                                                                                                                                           | Co-organised with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia                                                     |
| 137 | 2026 | 6-7 May      | Rome     | Seminar on "Strengthening synergies in Communicating Europe"                                                                                                                                 | Co-organised with Cap'Com, the European Parliament Liaison Office in Italy and the Sapienza University of Rome                |

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