



## Factsheet on the "Club of Venice"

### Composition and Purpose

The "Club of Venice" is the informal gathering of the Directors-General / Directors / Heads of the information and communication services of the EU Member States and the EU Institutions (more precisely, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission)<sup>1</sup>. It was founded in 1986 under the auspices of the acting Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Since 2003, it also includes the Heads of government communication offices of the countries candidate to accession to the EU; and from 2008 to 2012 have been granted membership statuses respectively the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Central Bank.

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

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



activities carried out by the Club alone or in association with other peer organisations.

### A. Plenary sessions

The Club meets twice a year: usually in Venice, in November<sup>2</sup>, and in the country holding the EU Presidency, or in another Member country willing to host the plenary on a voluntary basis, in the spring season.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed composition of the new Steering Group, please refer to annex I.

<sup>2</sup> In November 2007 the plenary meeting of the Club was hosted in Rome, since the Italian authorities decided to invite the Club members exceptionally to the capital, in the framework of the celebrative events commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Rome Treaties.

The Club's plenary meetings bring the members together for presentations, discussions and a comprehensive exchange of best practice on communication topics, including communication techniques.

The plenaries exchange their feedback concerning the different debates, in order to update recent issues carried out by national authorities and EU institutions concerning the different activities of public diplomacy and the governmental communication trends.

The draft agenda of the plenary sessions has two components: a) public communication on issues of trans-national interest; b) communication on EU issues.



The most recent plenary sessions of the Club of Venice took place in:

- a. Tallinn (Estonia) on 6-7 June 2013
- b. Venice (Italy) on 15-16 November 2012
- c. Protaras (Cyprus) on 24-25 May 2012
- d. Venice on 10-11 November 2011 (marking the celebration of the Club's 25th Anniversary)
- e. Warsaw on 26-27 May 2011
- f. Venice on 18-19 November 2010 (hosting a debate on capacity building and the role of governmental and interinstitutional communication)
- g. Gozo (Malta) on 3-4 June 2010



In June 2013 the Club debate in Tallinn (Estonia) was centred on an analysis of today's role of governmental and institutional communication, the perception of the role of the EU in the different states and government and institutions mobilisations to [re]gain citizens' confidence, also in view of the 2014 European elections.

Moreover, discussion focussed on the impact of participatory democracy, the role of civil administration in government communication and, applied at both national and EU scale, public diplomacy and reputation management.

In November 2012 (Venice) the Club debate was centred on Communication in time of financial crisis and on the economic recovery, capacity building and government communication training, with particular emphasis on the agenda of the European Year of Citizens 2013 and the European elections foreseen in 2014.

During the meeting, the commitment in "e-governance" and "Open Government" approach was expressed and new challenges were identified such as the awareness-raising among policy makers and wide public about the new dynamics of policy making.



The spring plenary in Cyprus (24-25 May 2012) enabled the Club Members to share their opinions and latest news on how to pave the way for coherent communication initiatives aiming to regain the EU citizens' confidence in the European values and the rights and benefits stemming from EU citizenship, with a view to the European elections in 2014.



Discussions also covered techniques to monitor and engage in social media activities, cooperation with EU's neighbour countries in the field of communication and governmental and institutional activities to communicate EU's proximity and engagement in safeguarding public confidence contrasting the crisis.

The programme of the plenary meeting in Cyprus finally included a window on the strategy to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Single Market throughout the whole year, recalling its achievements and present and discuss new initiatives to stimulate growth and mobilise consumers, entrepreneurs, SMEs and the young generation.

The joint initiatives carried out to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by the Single Market comprise a competition for young people, seminars for journalists, Single Market Weeks organized in all Member States and a final event in Brussels.

Discussions also covered the importance of engaging mutual cooperation through interactive channels such as social media, web consultations and deliberate polling, but also by encouraging effective participation with a view to gauging the true public's view.

In the plenary sessions organised in 2011 (respectively in Warsaw on 26-27 May and in Venice on 10-11 November), the Club discussed orientations for impact assessment on communication, the impact of the Treaty of Lisbon on the role of the rolling presidencies, government and institutions' branding.

Discussion also covered the role of public communicators in a variety of crisis communication scenarios (including information strategies in the field of enlargement), capacity building, web data mining to capitalize from public opinion trends and key developments in the audiovisual and interactive communication.



## **B. Seminars and Workshops**

Thematic meetings and workshops are arranged on specific issues such as web communication, opinion polls, TV and radio activities, other interactive techniques, crisis communication, public diplomacy, ethics, etc.

With regard to the new perspectives for communication strategies, on 20 October 2010 the Club of Venice organized a workshop in Brussels on *social media and interactive communication* as well as on *capacity building*.

This event was followed by a seminar on web-communication and social media and on communication on the enlargement, which took place in Brussels on 10 February 2011.

The new trends in online communication were also examined in a joint seminar on "*The impact of social media on journalism*", co-organised by the Club of Venice and the Council Working Party on Information on 7 October 2011 in the premises of the General Secretariat of the Council.



Future perspectives stemming from the increasing role played by the social network as a crucial component of government communication were discussed at a follow-up joint seminar on "*The Next Web and its Impact on Government Communication*" held in Brussels on 16 February 2012, with the participation of governmental, institutional and external specialists.

The debate focused on how public communicators prepare future election campaigns, on governments' engagement with social media, their interplay with portals, and on new applications to deliver the "public service of the future".

The following seminar on web communication, which took place still in Brussels on 4 October 2012, focused on "*Open Government/Open Data and citizens' involvement in policies development*".

The event was centred on the growing digital agenda and on public authorities' strategies to optimise information provision and enhance interaction with citizens and stakeholders.

What appeared evident was that the "Open Government" approach is one of the most challenging issues for government authorities and institutions.



The genuine objective of "Open Government" remains to enhance transparency standards and provide user-friendlier access to information for an effective and equanimous public oversight. The Club supports and encourages Member States' increasing efforts (alone or in partnerships) in this field.

The last seminar organised by the Club in this domain took place on 22 March 2013 and focused on "*Public Communication in the evolving media landscape: adapt or resist?*", with the aim to facilitate transition into the social media space, drawing inspiration from successful governmental and institutional experiences as well as from independent practitioners keen on digital and social media. Participants discussed how public authorities in charge of communication could increasingly invest energies to adapt their strategies in order to better interact with the general public online.

The impact of on-line information is also discussed in the context of *crisis communication*, another crucial topic tackled by the Club to exchange know-how and experiences on coordinated strategies to face emergencies.



A first meeting on crisis communication was held in Istanbul in April 2011 and was followed by a seminar hosted in Sofia on 29-30 March 2012, where the Club examined, among others, the freedom of press in the Balkans and the perspectives for cooperation with the public communicators from the emerging democracies of the Arab Spring world.

2012 and 2013 are years of tough challenges, with dominating issues such as Europe's response to the economic and financial crisis, measures to ensure recovery and sustainable growth and cooperation in the implementation of communication strategies in view of the European elections. In order to tackle jointly and promptly all the new emerging communication priorities the Club stands ready to organize ad hoc events such as :



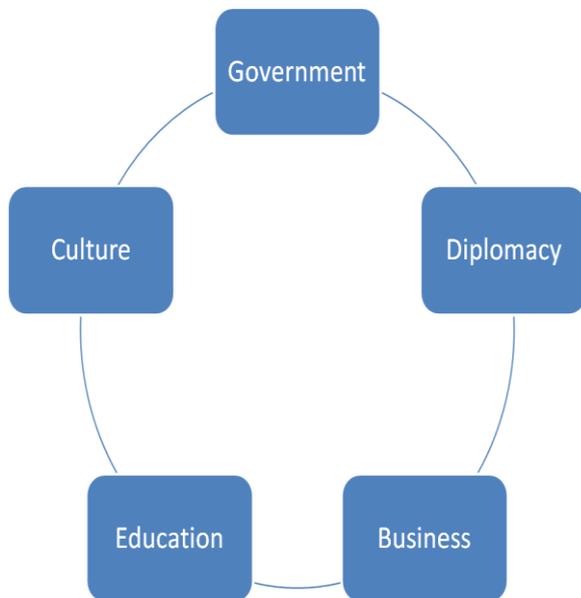
- a. seminars on Partnerships (4th edition hosted in Vienna on 1st Feb 2013 by the Press and Information Office of the Austrian State Chancellery);
- b. the above-mentioned meetings focusing on web (Open Data/Open Government, the impact of the new media landscape on government communication) and crisis communication;
- c. workshops on Public Diplomacy, branding and reputation management (last meeting held in Cyprus in May 2012, followed by an interactive session at the plenary meeting in Estonia in June 2013);
- d. conferences on communicating the EU enlargement;
- e. workshops on capacity building;
- f. seminars on communication in schools.

Finally, "Public Diplomacy" continues to be among the core subjects on the Club agenda. France, Malta and Poland hosted three annual workshops (respectively in 2009, 2010 and 2011).

A fourth seminar on this challenging topic was hosted in Cyprus on 23 May 2012 and focussed on new techniques to rate the countries' PD strategies in their efforts to influence society and promote their identity/image/purpose worldwide.



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



- a. studying PD strategies in progress in old and new EU Member States as well as in countries with strong or emerging economies;
- b. analysing comparative PD rating models and soft power trends;
- c. discussing how to prepare the ground for a more efficient diplomatic action in times of financial constraints;
- d. extending capacity building with a view to operate as far as possible in a coherent multi-sectoral coordination framework;
- e. following closely the development of international strategies for an effective communication of the EU external policy and its possible impact on national foreign policies.

***Objective soft power indicators***

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## ANNEX I

### The CLUB OF VENICE

#### Composition of the Steering Group

-as of 31 May 2013-

NAME	COUNTRY or INSTITUTION	FUNCTIONS
DE BAUW Pierre-Emmanuel	BE	General Director, Directorate-general for External Communication, Chancellery of the Prime Minister
den HOEDT Erik	NL	Director, Public Information and Communication Office, Ministry of General Affairs
FRKA-PETEŠIĆ Zvonimir	HR	Head of the Public Diplomacy Service, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
GAVRIELIDES Eleonora	CY	Director, Press and Information Office, Ministry of Interior
HEIMBACH Sabine	DE	Deputy Government Spokeswoman, Press and Information Office, Federal Government
HÖRR Claus	AT	Director, Department 7/2, Press and Media Service, Bundeskanzleramt
LE VOCI Vincenzo	Council of the EU	Secretary-General of the Club of Venice Administrator, Information Policy, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU
VILLA Anna Maria	IT	Director/Coordinator Office for the European Citizenship, EU Policies, Presidency of the Council of Ministers



**The CLUB OF VENICE**  
**Composition of the Advisory Group**  
-as of 31 May 2013-

<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY or INSTITUTION</b>	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>
ROLANDO Stefano	IT	Honorary President of the Club of Venice
VAN DEN BERGHE Mieke	BE	Honorary Vice-President of the Club of Venice
GYÁRFÁS FEKETE Judit	HU	Honorary Vice-President of the Club of Venice
BRUNMAYR Hans	AT	Honorary Vice-President of the Club of Venice
THØGERSEN Niels Jørgen	DK	Honorary Vice-President of the Club of Venice
GRANATT Mike	UK	Club of Venice Coordinator