

# convergences

#21  
2025

Public communication in Europe | Communication publique en Europe



## FOCUS ON

### Athens plenary, May 2025

- Synergies in countering disinformation, anti-FIMI strategies
  - Cooperation in resilience building
  - Digital transformation
- AI's intelligence influence on modern communication
- Public Diplomacy, country branding and security reputation

### London 8th Stratcom seminar, March 2025

- Strengthening cooperation in crisis communication,
- Neutralising foreign influence threats and information manipulation
  - Applying AI to communications

### Venice plenary, December 2024

- Post-EU elections cooperation on communicating Europe
- Countering disinformation on public health and climate change
- Digital trends and AI impact on governmental communication

**Geo-political challenges, infodemic  
and the impact of technology  
on modern communication**




Club of Venice | Club de Venise



# Summary



Ci ha lasciato la co-fondatrice del Club Nicole Chauvel	4
Club co-founder Nicole Chauvel has left us	6
Editorial : Le "métier" de "communicateur public", profession de foi ...	8
Editorial: The 'job' of the 'public communicator': a profession of faith...	12
<b>ATHENS plenary meeting (May 2025)</b>	
Programme	17
<b>LONDON Stratcom seminar (March 2025)</b>	
Programme	24
Outcome	25
<b>VENICE plenary meeting (December 2024)</b>	
Programme	27
Outcome	31
<b>EuroPCom (July 2025)</b>	
Introductory Speech	33
Programme	35
<b>FEATURING:</b>	
Inspiring organisational models - The UK GCS generative AI policy	38
Agenda 2030 e comunicazione in Europa	41
AI State of Play: The Technology, Strategic Communication Practice and Academia	44
Emotional Resilience: A tool for democratic defence against synthetic disinformation	50
Se réappropriier la rédaction du narratif européen : un impératif stratégique et historique	53
L'UE s'ambitionne « Continent de l'IA » mais se réalise en flot de bonnes intentions dans l'océan technologique mondial face aux USA et à la Chine ?	54
Sustainable Urban Net Zero Network for Ukraine (Sun4Ukraine)	56



Intelligenze artificiali generative, Large Language Models e differenze di genere: il ruolo delle istituzioni pubbliche nel contrasto alla discriminazione algoritmica e ai bias nella comunicazione abilitata dalle tecnologie.	57
Generative artificial intelligence, Large Language Models and gender differences: the role of public institutions in countering algorithmic discrimination and biases in technology-enabled communication.	58
On Tyranny	60
Rebranding Europe - Fundamentals for Communicating the United States of Europe	62
<b>CLUB NEWS:</b>	
Updated calendar of Club events	63
Chronology of the Club of Venice Meetings	65
Acknowledgments	75

Les textes n'engagent que la responsabilité de leurs auteurs.  
Ils peuvent être reproduits avec mention des sources.

The texts are the sole responsibility of their authors.  
They may be reproduced, provided that the source is acknowledged.





# Ci ha lasciato la co-fondatrice del Club Nicole Chauvelle



4

## Foto di gruppo per i primi 5 anni di vita del Club di Venezia (1990).

**Nicole Chauvelle** è la nona da destra verso sinistra, in prima fila e con il vestito più chiaro (in fotografia appare bianco). La seconda da sinistra è **Colette Flesch**, al tempo direttore generale *Cultura e Informazione* (la DG X) della Commissione, che era stata dal 1980 al 1984 ministro degli Esteri del Lussemburgo. Il settimo da sinistra è **Stefano Rolando** (al tempo direttore generale e Capo Dipartimento *Informazione ed Editoria* alla Presidenza del Consiglio del governo italiano).

In prima fila (con l'impermeabile al braccio) **Mieke Van den Berghe** (direttore generale della comunicazione del Governo belga). Il primo a sinistra è il direttore generale dell'Informazione del Parlamento europeo.

**Nicole Chauvelle** è stata parte fondatrice del Club di Venezia, perché responsabile delle relazioni internazionali del *Servizio di Informazione del Governo Francese* (allora SIG, operante presso Palais Matignon), tra il 1985 e il 1986 diretto da **Joseph Daniel** (governo Rocard) che fu il primo dei 15 rappresentanti "fondatori" ad accettare il progetto di costituzione di una rete permanente, avanzato da **Stefano Rolando**, con il patrocinio all'origine sia della Commissione (con patrocinio del Commissario alla Cultura e alla Informazione **Carlo Ripa di Meana**) che del Parlamento europeo. Subito dopo ci fu l'adesione di **Neville Taylor** (direttore generale del Central Office of Information britannico) su proposta italiana; e l'adesione del direttore generale del Bundespresseamt tedesco **Herbert Limmer** (su proposta francese). Su questa base di adesioni iniziali, arrivarono presto quella del direttore generale della Cultura e dell'Informazione della Commissione, il tedesco **Franz Froschmeier**; quelle dei direttori degli altri paesi fondatori dell'Europa unita: **Mieke Van den Berghe**, Belgio; **André Claude**, Lussemburgo; **J.D. van der Veet** Olanda. E quella di **Aurelio Sahagun Pool** (Spagna); di **José**

**Areal Alveada Cunha**, Portogallo; di **Henning Skarup**, Danimarca; di **Antonio Kourtis**, Grecia; di **Peter Prendergast**, Irlanda.

La discontinuità dei governi francesi al tempo lasciò **Daniel** solo per l'anno di costituzione e fu sostituito l'anno successivo (1987) alla plenaria di Venezia a metà ottobre dal prefetto **Jean Pierre Charveron**, sempre affiancato da **Nicole Chauvelle**. Insieme a tutti gli altri fondatori che tra il primo e il secondo ampliarono ulteriormente il parterre di avvio (tra cui **Hans Brunmayr**, austriaco, a Bruxelles capo delle Relazioni esterne e del Cerimoniale del Consiglio UE che completò l'adesione delle tre principali istituzioni europee).


Fin dall'inizio **Nicole Chauvelle** colse profondamente lo spirito europeo del Club, cioè la coesistenza di tutti i partecipanti attorno al principio di solidale confronto etico-professionale senza dover necessariamente far valere "interessi nazionali" e in un quadro di libero confronto e di importante scambio tra rappresentanti degli Stati membri e responsabili delle istituzioni che allora si chiamavano "comunitarie".

Rappresentando un Paese di grande rilievo come la Francia, aveva tratti aperti all'Europa e al mondo, ai più giovani, con sensibilità alle storie e alle vicende degli altri paesi, con un carattere professionale forgiato dall'ingresso nell'amministrazione degli Affari Esteri avvenuto negli anni '60. Era stata al servizio consolare francese a New Orleans negli Stati Uniti e poi rientrata nell'Amministrazione centrale degli Esteri per passare successivamente a Matignon.

Continuò negli anni (fino al suo pensionamento) a garantire la partecipazione francese al *Club di Venezia*, sia affiancando alcuni suoi direttori generali, sia assumendo direttamente la responsabilità della partecipazione e dando naturalmente tutta la sua disponibilità e competenza per gli eventi (tra

cui due plenarie) svolti a Parigi, la prima nel 1989 – anno del bicentenario della Rivoluzione francese – in occasione della Conferenza europea dell'audiovisivo che era co-presieduta dall'ambasciatore francese **Bernard Miyet** e dal direttore generale dell'informazione del governo italiano **Stefano Rolando**.

È stata negli anni una preziosa **componente dello Steering Committee del Club di Venezia** e a lei si deve l'idea e la realizzazione per i primi anni (insieme i belgi **Mieke Van den Berghe** e **Philippe Caroyez**) del periodico "**Convergences**" nei primi anni curato appunto dai Servizi di informazione del governo belga e del governo francese. Poi assicurato – fino ad oggi – dal Servizio belga.



A first editorial experience of the Club, initiated by the Belgian federal information service (SFI-FVD, Mieke van den Berghe) and the French government information service (SID, Nicole Chauvelle), consisted in the publication for a few years (1992 – 2000) of a newsletter called « Convergences ». This newsletter, printed in a limited number of copies, reported on the Club's activities. It was mainly intended for the members and their staff.

Following this successful experience, the members of the Club chose to renew this initiative and adopted, in November 2011, in Venice, the principles for re-launching « Convergences » as the periodic review of the Club of Venice. This time as an electronic review, intended for the members but also for a wider dissemination and thus for a wider audience.

5

Per la sua reputata dedizione professionale e istituzionale la Francia le ha conferito l'onorificenza di *Officier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*.

Nata a Parigi nel 1933, residente nella capitale in cui è morta il 19 marzo 2025, all'età di 92 anni. La cerimonia di congedo è avvenuta nella Chiesa di Saint François-Xavier, place du Président Mithouard, giovedì 27 marzo.

L'Web da notizia di **due curate pubblicazioni di Nicole Chauvelle**:

*Les fleuves du monde* scritto insieme a Marie-Pierre Cabello, con le prefazioni di Hervé Lethier e di Philippe Grapeloup-Roche, edito da Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie a Parigi nel 1991.

*A la table des écrivains russes* (144 ricette), scritto con Lucia Cathala-Galinskaïa, Editions de l'Aube, nel 2001.

Il Presidente del Club di Venezia **Stefano Rolando** ha scritto queste parole:

*"La scomparsa recente di Nicole Chauvelle muove a sincero e affettuoso cordoglio il Club di Venezia, per essere stata una figura importante del nostro sodalizio dalla costituzione nel 1986 fino al tempo del suo pensionamento, tempo lungo in cui ha mantenuto un contributo costante, sobrio, colto, spiritoso e concreto. Una persona elegante, una funzionaria affidabile, un'amica che aveva la virtù di unire le persone e di rispettare ogni provenienza e ogni rappresentanza, precisa con le parole, attenta alle forme, mai incline ai formalismi".*





# Club co-founder Nicole Chauvelle has left us



6

## Group photo for the first 5 years of the Club of Venice (1990).

**Nicole Chauvelle** is ninth from right to left, in the front row and wearing the lightest dress (in the photo it appears white). Second from the left is **Colette Flesch**, at the time Director General for Culture and Information (DG X) of the Commission, who had been Foreign Minister of Luxembourg from 1980 to 1984. Seventh from the left is **Stefano Rolando** (at the time Director General and Head of the Information and Publishing Department at the Presidency of the Council of the Italian Government).

In the front row (with a raincoat on her arm) **Mieke Van den Berghe** (Director General for Communication of the Belgian Government). First on the left is the **Director General for Information of the European Parliament**.

**Nicole Chauvelle** was a founding member of the Club of Venice, as she was responsible for international relations of the French Government Information Service (then SIG, operating at Palais Matignon), between 1985 and 1986 directed by **Joseph Daniel** (Rocard government) who was the first of the 15 "founding" representatives to accept the project to set up a permanent network, put forward by **Stefano Rolando**, with the patronage at the beginning of both the Commission (with the patronage of the Commissioner for Culture and Information **Carlo Ripa di Meana**) and the European Parliament. Immediately after came the accession of **Neville Taylor** (director general of the British Central Office of Information) on an Italian proposal; and the accession of the director general of the German Bundespresseamt **Herbert Limmer** (on a French proposal). On this basis of initial adhesions, that of the director general of Culture and Information of the Commission, the German **Franz Froschmeier**, soon arrived; those of the directors of the other founding countries of the united Europe: **Mieke Van den Berghe**, Belgium; **André Claude**, Luxembourg; **J.D. van der Veet**

Netherlands. And that of **Aurelio Sahagun Pool** (Spain); of **José Areal Alveada Cunha**, Portugal; of **Henning Skarup**, Denmark; of **Antonio Kourtis**, Greece; of **Peter Prendergast**, Ireland.

The discontinuity of the French governments at the time left **Daniel** alone for the year of constitution and he was replaced the following year (1987) at the plenary session in Venice in mid-October by the prefect **Jean Pierre Charveron**, always supported by **Nicole Chauvelle**. Together with all the other founders who between the first and the second further expanded the starting parterre (including **Hans Brunmayr**, Austrian, in Brussels head of External Relations and of the Protocol of the EU Council who completed the accession of the three main European institutions).

From the beginning, **Nicole Chauvelle** deeply grasped the European spirit of the Club, that is, the coexistence of all participants around the principle of ethical and professional solidarity without necessarily having to assert "national interests" and in a framework of free discussion and important exchange


between representatives of the member states and heads of the institutions that were then called "community".

Representing a country of great importance like France, she had traits open to Europe and the world, to the youngest, with sensitivity to the stories and events of other countries, with a professional character forged by her entry into the Foreign Affairs administration in the 1960s. She had been in the French consular service in New Orleans in the United States and then returned to the Central Foreign Administration to subsequently move to Matignon.

Over the years (until her retirement) she continued to ensure French participation in the *Club of Venice*, both by supporting some of its general directors and by directly assuming responsibility for participation and naturally giving all her availability

and expertise for the events (including two plenary sessions) held in Paris, the first in 1989 - the year of the bicentenary of the French Revolution - on the occasion of the European Audiovisual Conference which was co-chaired by the French ambassador **Bernard Miyet** and the general director of Information of the Italian government **Stefano Rolando**.

Over the years she has been a valuable member of the Steering Committee of the Club of Venice and she is responsible for the idea and the creation for the first years (together with the Belgians **Mieke Van den Berghe** and **Philippe Caroyez**) of the periodical "Convergences" in the early years edited precisely by the Information Services of the Belgian government and the French government. Then ensured - until today - by the Belgian Service.



A first editorial experience of the Club, initiated by the Belgian federal information service (SFI-FVD, Mieke van den Berghe) and the French government information service (SID, Nicole Chauvelle), consisted in the publication for a few years (1992 – 2000) of a newsletter called « Convergences ». This newsletter, printed in a limited number of copies, reported on the Club's activities. It was mainly intended for the members and their staff.

Following this successful experience, the members of the Club chose to renew this initiative and adopted, in November 2011, in Venice, the principles for re-launching « Convergences » as the periodic review of the Club of Venice. This time as an electronic review, intended for the members but also for a wider dissemination and thus for a wider audience.

7

For her renowned professional and institutional dedication, France awarded her the honor of *Officier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*.

Born in Paris in 1933, resident in the capital where she died on March 19, 2025, at the age of 92. The farewell ceremony took place in the Church of Saint François-Xavier, place du Président Mithouard, on Thursday, March 27.

The Web reports two edited publications by Nicole Chauvelle:

- *Les fleuves du monde* co-written with Marie-Pierre Cabello, with prefaces by Hervé Lethier and Philippe Grapeloup-Roche, published by Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie in Paris in 1991.
- *A la table des écrivains russes* (144 recipes), co-written with Lucia Cathala-Galinskaja, Editions de l'Aube, in 2001.

The President of the Club of Venice, Stefano Rolando, wrote these words:

*"The recent passing of Nicole Chauvelle moves the Club of Venice to sincere and affectionate condolences, for having been an important figure in our association from its foundation in 1986 until the time of her retirement, a long time in which she maintained a constant, sober, cultured, witty and concrete contribution. An elegant person, a reliable official, a friend who had the virtue of to unite people and to respect every origin and every representation, precise with words, attentive to forms, never inclined to formalisms".*





# Le “métier” de “communicateur public”, profession de foi ...

Par Philippe Caroyez et Vincenzo Le Voci

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master - that’s all.”

Lewis Carroll: Through the Looking-Glass

Nous nous sommes demandé “Mais de quoi la *communication publique* est-elle le nom ?”<sup>1</sup>. Comme dans un indissociable diptyque, nous voulons ici nous interroger sur le “métier” de ceux qui la font et qu’elle façonne aussi.

Nous revenons ainsi à notre conclusion ... et même, pour la précision, ajoutons des guillemets à “métier”.

*Le “métier” de « communicateur public », toujours mis en avant, relève plus d’un rôle, d’une fonction ou d’un statut qu’il ne concerne – au sens propre – une profession ; et si cet usage générique est nécessaire, il ne recouvre pas moins pour autant une multitude de métiers et professions... qui s’hybrident en s’appliquant tant à la fonction publique qu’à l’exercice de sa communication.*

Le vocable “communicateur public”<sup>2</sup> comme désignant un métier a cette particularité (ou cette caractéristique) qu’il ne recouvre ni une profession ni un métier à *proprement parler*, alors qu’il est systématiquement utilisé - d’ailleurs en tant que l’un et/ou l’autre - comme appellation commune du “métier” de celles et ceux qui travaillent dans le domaine de la communication publique.

Ce syntagme nominal, forgé sur celui de “communication publique”, même s’il est le produit de ceux qu’il désigne et principalement de leurs associations professionnelles qui nomment ainsi (et distinguent) ceux qu’elles représentent, constitue donc un concept ambigu auquel même le monde académique et universitaire a - comme tel et sans trop de débats - communément recours dans ses études et analyses.

Si cela nous semble compréhensible et acceptable de la part des milieux professionnels qui doivent pouvoir se fonder sur une appellation commune et fédératrice, ce l’est beaucoup moins de certains chercheurs ou sondeurs qui font de même en usant dès lors d’une *catégorie* ambiguë et équivoque, sans rarement en préciser la portée exacte et donc les limites, sans en questionner la validité sur les plans conceptuels et opératoires.

Aux niveaux professionnel et institutionnel, pour y voir plus clairement, il faut se tourner vers le processus d’institutionnalisation qui a été à l’œuvre (depuis les années 1980) pour la communication publique et subséquentement pour les “communicateurs publics”. Dominique Bessières use à cet égard, très justement, du terme de “solidification” des professionnels de la communication publique<sup>3</sup>.

Pour faire simple, tant la communication publique a dû s’imposer en se montrant nécessaire, complémentaire et participant à

1 Caroyez Philippe et Le Voci Vincenzo. “Mais de quoi la *communication publique* est-elle le nom ?” Convergences, Club de Venise, Bruxelles, n° 20, 2024, pp. 4-12.

2 Aussi appelé “communicant public” ou, plus anciennement, “fonctionnaire d’information”.

3 Bessières Dominique. “L’institutionnalisation des *communicateurs publics* : une tension longitudinale vers la professionnalisation pour une légitimation du groupe professionnel”. Revue “Pyramides”. Centre d’études et de recherches en administration publique. Université libre de Bruxelles. N°24, 2012, pp. 239 - 260, ici p. 240.



l'action publique, tant elle a dû se forger en service efficace et professionnel, tant elle s'est institutionnalisée, garantissant ainsi sa reconnaissance statutaire et sa pérennité.

Comme il ne s'aurait s'agir de nominalisme mais d'acteurs sociaux à l'œuvre dans des circonstances socio-politiques spécifiques, le même processus – qui vient d'eux ou qu'ils soutiennent – est à considérer pour ceux qui professionnellement sont chargés de faire la communication publique.

Et ainsi, *"cette institutionnalisation repose sur des formes de reconnaissance sociale – une distinction – d'une part, et sur les contours d'une professionnalisation, d'autre part. (...) [Elle] est à l'œuvre par la production de référents pour catégoriser et donc définir le groupe, offerts à ses membres mais aussi à l'extérieur. Derrière (...) perce une recherche de légitimation d'un groupe professionnel afin d'affermir et de pérenniser son existence et ses positions dans les organisations"*<sup>4</sup>.

Il s'agit donc d'une *construction sociale*, souvent lente et complexe, par laquelle un corps de métier (en l'espèce "de métiers" pour ce qui nous occupe ici) tend à s'organiser sur le modèle des professions établies. La sociologie des groupes professionnels<sup>5</sup> dégage les *actions sociales* qui y concourent et produisent les conditions de la production d'une identité professionnelle spécifique et de sa reconnaissance.

Sans entrer dans le détail, le cas du "communicateur public" n'accède qu'à des degrés très divers et donc certainement pas totalement à ce qui caractérise (formellement ou sociologiquement) une profession<sup>6</sup>.

En revanche, pour nous limiter au sujet de notre propos, la quête incessante de la professionnalisation de la communication publique et son institutionnalisation se sont nourries d'une rhétorique – professionnelle et performative, mais encore liée à la notion d'intérêt général – base d'une construction identitaire, fédérative et statutarisante, générant le "métier de 'communicateur public'".

Pour Dominique Bessières : *"les communicateurs publics sont un groupe imprécis et flou cherchant à obtenir une reconnaissance en se distinguant"*<sup>7</sup>. Pour Isabelle Pailliat : *"le flou des activités de communication permet de dissimuler la diversité de la profession et des professionnels, tout en permettant une représentation d'unité pour imposer ce (...) groupe professionnel [des "communicateurs publics"]"*<sup>8</sup>.

Autant que de professionnalisation, c'est aussi de "professionnisme"<sup>9</sup>, c'est-à-dire de stratégie militante, dont il s'agit.

Au regard de ces considérations et remarques, une déclaration, assertion de principe, de l'association professionnelle Cap'Com sonne comme un slogan fédérateur, à l'image de leur engagement sans faille : *"Le métier de communicant public est un métier à part entière"*<sup>10</sup>.

\*\*\*

Lançons ce pavé : tout agent d'une autorité publique en contact (direct ou indirect) avec le public (au sens large, citoyen, entreprise, association et même autre administration) n'est-il pas aussi un "communicateur public", en tant qu'il est le représentant (et le lien) de cette autorité, dont la communication est intrinsèquement dans ses missions et obligations.

Le raisonnement est bien sûr faux puisqu'il confond une dimension du travail de tout agent public, avec le travail même de ceux qui exercent dans les services publics une fonction spécifique de communication.

Cette *dimension informationnelle* du travail de tout agent public (et, partant, de toute unité administrative) n'est cependant pas à négliger (ou à minorer) par les "communicateurs publics" et leurs services.

Nous évoquons régulièrement à cet égard le rôle essentiel mais beaucoup trop négligé des agents d'accueil (in situ ou à distance) et des fonctionnaires de contact... certainement pas remplaçables totalement par de froids *chatbots* !

Mais c'est toute une chaîne qui est concernée, de ceux qui conçoivent des textes administratifs et légistiques à ceux qui gèrent des dossiers administratifs individuels, en passant par nos services de communication interne et externe...qui n'y occupent d'ailleurs qu'un rôle très limité. Il serait préjudiciable de se leurrer à ce dernier égard.

Il y a donc une pertinence intellectuelle et un intérêt opérationnel et stratégique pour le développement démocratique, pour le politique, nos autorités et nos services, à se fonder sur et à bâtir un écosystème large de la communication publique. Une nécessité et une obligation sur le plan des valeurs et du développement démocratiques d'agir en ce sens et dans ce cadre sans réduire la réflexion, l'approche et les actions à l'activité de nos seuls services...quand cette tentation peut être grande !

A l'inverse, au regard des études sur la fonction, son évolution et son état<sup>11</sup>, on peut relever que bien souvent le "métier de 'communicateur public'" y est limité et confondu avec la fonction de dirigeant d'un service de communication, le "*dir'com public*" ...celui dans l'organisation dont, par nature et a priori, la fonction, les compétences supposées et les responsabilités

4 Bessières Dominique, loc. cit.

5 Une intéressante synthèse des théories en la matière est faite dans l'article de Jean-Michel Chapoulie, «*Sur l'analyse sociologique des groupes professionnels*». Revue Française de Sociologie, vol. XIV, n° 1, 1973, pp. 86-114.

6 Revue "Savoirs". "La professionnalisation". Ed. L'Harmattan. 2008/2, n°17, 142 p. et plus particulièrement : Wittorski Richard. "La professionnalisation", pp.9-36.

7 Bessières Dominique. Op. cit., p. 240.

8 Pailliat Isabelle. "Les territoires de la communication". Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1993. 279 p., ici p.99. C'est nous qui soulignons.

9 Bourdoncle Raymond. "La professionnalisation des enseignants : analyses sociologiques anglaises et américaines". Revue française de pédagogie, n° 94, 1991, p. 73-92. Ce concept est défini page 76.

10 Cap'com, site internet. Depuis les années 80, Cap'Com fédère, anime et représente le réseau de la communication publique et territoriale en France et dans le cadre de relations internationales.

11 Comme c'est le cas pour "*L'état d'esprit des communicants publics*", baromètre on line mené tous les deux ans, auprès des directeurs et responsables de la communication de 2 000 grandes collectivités (grandes villes et agglomérations, métropoles et départements) par le réseau professionnel Cap'Com. C'est nous qui soulignons.

portent *holistiquement* sur l'ensemble des activités de communication d'une institution publique.

Si elle a le mérite de donner au concept de "communicateur public" une consistance circonscrite, la notion de "dir'com" (d'ailleurs plus fonction que profession ou même métier) est plus opérante sur le plan institutionnel (un rôle occupé dans un organigramme) que sur le plan réellement sociologique. Tout d'abord parce qu'elle ne recouvre pas la réalité de l'ensemble des professions et métiers à l'œuvre dans la communication publique, pas plus qu'elle ne le représente ; au risque même de les occulter. Ensuite parce que cette fonction recouvre objectivement une multitude de situations (biographique personnelle et organisationnelle) et de contenus liés aux caractères propres qui peuvent être fort variés des institutions et services en cause. Nous y voyons, par exemple, la direction de tout un service de communication, ce qui est généralement le cas, alors qu'il peut également s'agir du service d'une seule personne (le "*eenpersoonscommunicatiedienst*" pour lequel l'association professionnelle flamande Kortom se demande comment on peut y survivre<sup>12</sup>).

Entre "(quasi) tout fonctionnaire est un 'communicateur public'" et le "dir'com public", donc entre une vue maximaliste et une vue minimaliste de ce que pourrait être un "communicateur public", il y a la nécessité d'un moyen terme qui mette l'accent sur la réalité et la diversité des métiers et professions de la communication publique ...qui les reconnaissent et les valorisent.

Ils seraient, par exemple, plus de 7.000 au Royaume-Uni<sup>13</sup> et 25.000 en France<sup>14</sup> ...mais qui sont les personnes et leurs métiers derrière ces chiffres ?

Ces questions peuvent apparaître comme rhétoriques ou de peu d'importance, nous voyons pourtant qu'elles sont révélatrices d'enjeux majeurs dans les domaines aussi divers que, notamment :

- la connaissance, la reconnaissance et la promotion des métiers et professions œuvrant dans les services de communication ;
- la recherche professionnelle et sur la profession et les relations avec le monde académique en ces domaines ;
- la conception de profils de fonction et le recrutement adaptés ;
- la conception et la négociation avec le monde académique de formations spécifiques qualifiantes et leur diplomation ;
- la conception et la négociation avec l'autorité administrative de formations spécifiques qualifiantes et leur certification ;
- la constitution d'un corps de fonctionnaires d'information ;
- la constitution et l'animation de réseaux professionnels sectoriels d'échanges (par activités ou types de communication) ;
- la constitution de cadres réglementaires et déontologiques propres et l'encadrement par les pairs, ...

et qui sont tous essentiels dans la constitution de métiers et la reconnaissance professionnelle.

\*\*\*

L'association professionnelle Cap'Com précise<sup>15</sup> que "*le métier de communicant public (...) [est] apparu dans les années 70*" ; Dominique Mégard, pour la même époque du milieu des années 1970, pointe, elle, une forme d'événement fondateur – sorte de condition nécessaire d'apparition – dans l'estompement progressif de la "*(...) diabolisation initiale portée en particulier par la haute fonction publique qui a longtemps considéré la communication comme un dévoiement de l'action publique*"<sup>16</sup>. Elle nous suivra sûrement si nous y ajoutons "*...et la 'chasse gardée' des seuls politiques*". József Katus y donne un cadre sociétal en soulignant que "*For decades, the rise of the welfare state and political democratisation had been the most important driving forces in the development of government information*"<sup>17</sup> ; ce que Pierre Zémor croise avec la décentralisation de l'état et une "*demande sociale de proximité des services publics*"<sup>18</sup>.

Quoi qu'il en soit, il n'est plus à démontrer que "communicateur public" et "service de communication" (et le "statut" de l'un comme de l'autre et leur évolution) sont à voir en relation intime et dialectique dans l'écosystème de la fonction publique et de sa communication. On y ajoutera que la dimension intrinsèquement *politique* des enjeux démocratiques à l'œuvre dans l'action (ou l'inaction !) de communication publique semble porter de ses acteurs à un certain engagement, parfois quasi militant, pour le façonnage, le développement et la reconnaissance pérenne de leur service et métier(s). Nous le voyons à l'œuvre dans les associations professionnelles et des instances de rencontre – comme le Club de Venise ; c'est souvent un travail à chaque fois recommencé – sans baisser la garde – dans et avec nos services, dans et avec nos administrations, avec nos autorités politiques et face à elles...

Au fil des bientôt quarante années d'existence et d'activité du Club de Venise, s'il fallait ne retenir qu'un thème récurrent de réflexion, de préoccupation et – pour tout dire – de revendication ou d'actions, ce serait à coup sûr celui de "professionnalisation". Il est à prendre dans toutes ses dimensions : organisationnelles et managériales (par la recherche de performance de nos services et métiers) et institutionnelles et statutaires (par la nécessité de leurs reconnaissances et de leurs développements).

Pour faire bref propos, l'histoire récente de nos métiers et professions de "communicateurs publics" est celle de la "professionnalisation" (progressive) de métiers et professions existants, par hybridation nécessaire et adaptée à la pratique spécifique d'activités (multiples et variées) de communication publique, au sein de services ad hoc (progressivement) institutionnalisés dans des administrations ou auprès d'autorités du service public.

12 "*Hoe overleef je een eenpersoonscommunicatiedienst?*". Kortom, site internet, article du 28 décembre 2021.

13 "*We are over 7,000 professional communicators from across the UK, supporting and promoting the work of 25 ministerial departments, 21 non-ministerial departments and over 300 agencies and other public bodies*". Site internet du Government Communication Service, consulté le 3 mai 2025.

14 "*Cap'Com fédère, anime et représente les 25 000 professionnels de la communication publique et territoriale des collectivités locales, les administrations et organismes publics nationaux et locaux et du secteur associatif*". Site internet de Cap'Com, consulté le 3 mai 2025.

15 Cap'Com. Site internet. Op. cit.

16 Mégard Dominique. *La communication publique et territoriale*. Dunod, 2017. Pp. 24-25.

17 Katus József. "*Government communication: development, functions and principles*", p.28. In "*Government Communication in the Netherlands*". Ouvrage collectif. Sdu Uitgevers, La Haye, 2000.

18 Zémor Pierre. "*La communication publique*". Presses universitaires de France. Paris, 2005, p. 12.

Sans remonter au tambour de ville ou à l’afficheur communal<sup>19</sup>, nous passerons ainsi – pour faire très simple – du journaliste ou du collaborateur d’un élu qui *passent de l’autre côté* pour constituer un embryon de service d’information, voire du collaborateur venu de la publicité à l’époque dorée des grandes campagnes de communication publiques, en passant par tout qui avait même de vagues connaissances en informatique au moment du développement des bases de données et d’internet, à aujourd’hui, aux collaborateurs recrutés sur la base de profils de fonctions et de diplômes et expériences spécifiques requis... que nos services veilleront à “hybrider” (par formations internes et partages avec les pairs) aux codes et spécificités de la fonction publique et de sa communication.

Nous pourrions à cet égard solliciter le lecteur (d’ailleurs “communicateur public” ou pas) sur sa perception et/ou son expérience en la matière et le faire réfléchir à comment il voit l’évolution de la communication publique et de ses métiers (voire le sien) au fil du temps ... et à l’avenir.

	Cap’Com <sup>20</sup>	Dominique Mégard <sup>21</sup>
Années 1970	Le temps des précurseurs (faire participer les habitants)	L'apprentissage
Années 1980	Le temps de la pub (construire le sentiment identitaire, le modèle envié de la publicité)	L'explosion (influence de la publicité, naissance de réseaux professionnels)
Années 1990	Le temps de la gestion (les contraintes du cadre législatif, rendre les services publics locaux plus lisibles, naissance de la communication financière, de la télé locale à l'arrivée de NTIC)	L'apprentissage de la modestie (réguler, reconnaissance progressive, naissance de la concertation, communication levier de modernisation)
Années 2000	Le temps des territoires durables (territoires en mouvement, désengagement civique et communication de proximité)	Numérique, interactivité et changement d'échelle
Années 2010	Le temps des mutations (les communautés prennent en main leur communication, retour du marketing territorial, sous les effets de la crise, la communication interne valeur en hausse)	
Années 2020 <sup>22</sup>		

19 Deux figures historiques et emblématiques de “communicateur public”.

20 Cap’com. Site internet <https://www.cap-com.org/lhistoire-de-la-communication-publique-en-france>. *L’histoire de la communication publique en France. Cinq tableaux de la communication publique locale présentés par Bernard Deljarrie*. Consultation du 2 mai 2025.

21 Mégard Dominique. Op. cit, chapitre 2. “Histoire : trente ans pour devenir grande”, pp. 19-38 (2017)

22 Non spécifié ou postérieur aux sources concernées.

23 Revue “Communication & Organisation”. “La mutation du métier de communicant public”, n° 41, juin 2012. Presses universitaires de Bordeaux.

24 Revue “Communication & Organisation”, op. cit. Monseigneur Annick et Guilhaume Geneviève “Editorial. La mutation du métier de communicant public”, pp.5-11, ici p.5.

25 “L’apprentissage de la modestie”, voir le tableau.

26 On lira avec intérêt Dominique Wolton sur ce sujet essentiel :

- “Conclusion : penser l’incommunication”. Revue “Hermès” n°80, 2018/1, pp. 280-282.  
- “Penser l’incommunication”. Ed. Le bord de l’eau, Collection “Documents”. 2024, 140 pages.

Si les métiers de la communication ont beaucoup évolué du fait de développements endogènes (institutionnalisation, professionnalisation, déontologie, nouvelle gouvernance publique, ...) et exogènes (évolution des techniques, démocratisation de l’action publique et de la relation citoyenne, ...), en interrelation, nous ne parlerons toutefois pas de “mutation du métier de communicant public”<sup>23</sup>.

Il faut certes constater des changements de taille pour nos services, nos métiers et nos activités, de la “révolution numérique” au “*changement paradigmatique de la communication publique favorisant les pratiques managériales et la prégnance des dispositifs délibératifs*”<sup>24</sup> ... à moins qu’il ne s’agisse - plus prosaïquement - d’une forme d’*illusion techniciste*, d’un retour de balancier sur le plan budgétaire et des moyens<sup>25</sup>), d’une *flexibilisation* rampante de nos métiers et statuts pour les rendre plus aisément adaptables à l’évolution des techniques et moyens de communication, d’une attention pour le citoyen contrainte suite à des situations de mise en échec des démocraties et d’un épiphénomène de pseudo consultations sans lendemain ?

En tous cas, nous n’y voyons pas une “mutation”, à proprement parler, qui suppose un changement de nature ou de forme, mais bien une évolution continue, où des éléments et des conditions changent mais où l’essentiel reste (la relation d’autorité, la nécessité de lutter contre la tendance à l’a-communication et l’impératif de combler l’incommunication<sup>26</sup>, l’impossibilité d’une communication permanente et générale, la difficulté d’établir une communication conversante, la relativité d’un droit à l’information, ...sans parler d’autres travers et freins, comme une certaine bureaucratie, le cloisonnement des services et administrations, l’absence généralisée d’une politique globale et volontariste de la communication publique de la part des autorités et, sa conséquence, des actions non concertées et souvent ponctuelles et sans suite, une absence de mutualisation des ressources et moyens d’action, l’impossibilité pour l’état - vu le fractionnement de ses composantes - d’agir et de peser comme acheteur public unique, ... et l’absence de formations académiques présentant l’orientation “communication publique” et donc de titre, voire la faiblesse des formations propres à l’administration).

Il ne nous semble pas anodin de le souligner, parce qu’il y a là matière à réflexion pour l’amélioration de nos pratiques et des politiques publiques en la matière et, surtout, l’expression d’un parti pris, le choix d’une vue *humaniste* face à une certaine *idéologie techniciste*. S’il y a un *avant* et un *après le numérique* et ses applications dans le domaine de la communication, pour ce qui nous (pré)occupe, il serait faux intellectuellement et erroné professionnellement d’y voir (encore) un rapprochement significatif avec le citoyen et un bouleversement qualitatif de nos pratiques ; les écarts existants pourraient même



s'être creusés davantage. Et c'est avec la même attitude qu'il faut appréhender et utiliser les intelligences artificielles dans nos services et activités.

\*\*\*



12

## The 'job' of the 'public communicator': a profession of faith...

By Philippe Caroyez and Vincenzo Le Voci

Since much of the discussion revolves around terminology, the authors would like to point out that the original text was written in French, which was the language of most of the documentary sources. The English translations of the quotes from the French-language sources are our own.

*"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."*

*"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."*

*"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master— that's all."*

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*

We previously asked: "But what is *public communication* all about?"<sup>1</sup> We would like to address here an inextricably linked issue, namely the 'job' of those who are undertaking this communication and are also shaped by it.

We thus return to our conclusion from the previous editorial... but, for the sake of precision, adding quotation marks around the word 'job'.

*Despite its consistently high profile, the 'job' of 'public communicator' is more akin to a role, function or status than a profession in the proper sense of the term; and while this generic usage is necessary, the result is nonetheless that it covers a multitude of jobs and professions... which are (...) hybridised since they apply both to the public service and to the way it communicates.*

1 Caroyez P. and Le Voci V. 'But what is public communication all about?' *Convergences*, Club of Venice, Brussels, No. 20, 2024, pp. 4–12.

What is special about (or characteristic of) the term 'public communicator'<sup>2</sup> as the descriptor of a job is that rather than referring to a profession or a job in the strict sense, it is systematically used (incidentally for a profession and/or a job) as a cover term for the 'job' of those who work in public communication.

As a result, although it is the product of those it describes (and above all their professional associations who are thus naming, and marking out, the very people they represent), this noun phrase, based on its counterpart 'public communication', is an ambiguous concept which even the academic and university communities have commonly drawn on – 'as is' and without too much debate – in their studies and analyses.

We understand and tolerate this in the relevant professional circles, given the need for an underlying common and unifying label. However, it is much less understandable and acceptable for certain researchers or pollsters to use what therefore becomes an ambiguous and equivocal category, while scarcely managing to define its precise scope and so its boundaries and without challenging its conceptual and operational validity.

At professional and institutional levels, to see this more clearly we only need to look at the process of *institutionalisation* which has been at play since the 1980s for public communication and subsequently for 'public communicators'. Dominique Bessières rightly refers to this as the "solidification" of public communication professionals.<sup>3</sup>

To put this in simple terms, while public communication has managed to establish itself by proving itself to be necessary, complementary and involved in public action, it has also had to make itself an efficient and professional service-based activity and has become institutionalised, thus ensuring its statutory recognition and its sustainability.

As this is not a question of nominalism but of social actors operating in specific socio-political circumstances, the same process – which originates from these actors or which they support – should be considered for those who are professionally responsible for *undertaking* public communication.

Bessières thus writes that "this institutionalisation is based on forms of social recognition – a certain distinction – on the one hand, and on the contours of professionalisation on the other. (...) [This] manifests itself in the production of referents to categorise and so define the group, which are provided not only to its members but also to the outside world. Behind this (...) there is a search for legitimacy of a professional group in order to strengthen and perpetuate its existence and its positions in organisations".<sup>4</sup>

In other words, this is a process of often slow and *complex social construction*, in which a given line of activity (or activities in the case at hand) shifts towards organising itself in the mould of established professions. The sociology of professional groups<sup>5</sup> identifies the *social actions* contributing to this and yielding the conditions required for the establishment and recognition of a specific professional identity.

Without going into too much detail, the case of the 'public communicator' only exhibits the (formal or sociological) characteristics of a profession to very varying degrees, and so certainly not all of them.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, confining ourselves to just the subject under discussion here, the incessant quest for the professionalisation of public communication and its institutionalisation have been fed by a rhetoric that is professional and performative, but still linked to the notion of general interest. This has provided the basis for an identity-forming, unifying and regulatory construct making up the job of the 'public communicator'.

In the view of Dominique Bessières, "public communicators are an imprecise and fuzzy group seeking recognition by marking itself out".<sup>7</sup> According to Isabelle Paillart, "the vague nature of communication activities masks the diversity of the profession and professionals, while enabling the unitary portrayal of this (...) professional group [of 'public communicators'] to become the norm".<sup>8</sup>

As much as professionalisation, it is all about 'professionalism',<sup>9</sup> i.e. an activist approach.

In light of these considerations and remarks, a declaration, or statement of principles, from the French professional association Cap'Com sounds like a unifying slogan, reflecting their unwavering commitment: "The job of the public communicator is a job in its own right".<sup>10</sup>

\*\*\*

Let's get this straight: isn't any official of a public authority who is in direct or indirect contact with the public (in the broad sense, so citizens, businesses, associations and even other administrative authorities alike) also a 'public communicator', insofar as they are the representative of (and point of contact for) this authority, whose communication is an integral part of their duties and obligations?

This reasoning is of course flawed as it conflates one aspect of the work of any public official with the work of those who perform a specific communication function in public services.

However, this *information aspect* of the work of any public official (and, by extension, of any administrative unit) should

2 Also known by the older term 'public information officer'.

3 Bessières D., *L'institutionnalisation des communicateurs publics : une tension longitudinale vers la professionnalisation pour une légitimation du groupe professionnel*. 'Pyramides' journal. Centre d'Études et de Recherche en Administration Publique. Université Libre de Bruxelles. No. 24, 2012, pp. 239–260 (here p. 240).

4 Bessières D., loc. cit.

5 An interesting summary of theories in this regard is provided by the following article: Chapoulie J.-M., *Sur l'analyse sociologique des groupes professionnels*. Revue Française de Sociologie, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1973, pp. 86–114.

6 'Savoirs' journal, *La professionnalisation*. Ed. L'Harmattan. 2008/2, No. 17, 142 pages; and more specifically, Wittorski R., *La professionnalisation*, pp. 9–36.

7 Bessières D., op. cit., p. 240.

8 Paillart I., *Les territoires de la communication*. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1993. 279 pages (here p. 99). Emphasis added.

9 Bourdoncle R., *La professionnalisation des enseignants : analyses sociologiques anglaises et américaines*. Revue Française de Pédagogie, No. 94, 1991, pp. 73–92. This concept is defined on page 76.

10 Cap'Com website. Since the 1980s, Cap'Com has brought together, led and represented the public and regional communications network in France and in the sphere of international relations.

not be neglected (or minimised) by 'public communicators' and the services they work for.

In this regard, we often mention the essential but much-neglected role of on-site or remote reception staff and of officials serving as points of contact, who clearly cannot be replaced wholesale by unfeeling chatbots!

In fact, an entire chain of people is involved, from those who come up with administrative and legislative texts to those handling individual administrative cases (including our internal and external communication services, who – let's not fool ourselves here – only play a very limited role in this respect though).

This means that there is an intellectual relevance and an operational and strategic interest, for policymakers and our authorities and services alike, in democratic development, which will shape and be founded on a broad-based public communication ecosystem.

There is a need and a duty when it comes to democratic values and development to act to this end and within this framework without reducing the deliberations, approach and actions to the activity of our services alone, however tempting this might be!

Conversely, in terms of studies on its function, evolution and status,<sup>11</sup> we should point out that very often the job of the 'public communicator' is limited to and conflated with the function of the head of a communication service here, the 'director of public communications', so the person in an organisation whose function and supposed skills and responsibilities naturally and *a priori* relate *holistically* to all the communication activities of a public institution.

Although it has the advantage of lending the concept of 'public communicator' a level of circumscribed consistency, the notion of director of communications (incidentally more of a role than a profession or even a job) is more effective at institutional level (a role in an organisational chart) than at truly sociological level. This is first of all because it fails to cover or represent the reality of all the professions and jobs at play in public communication, and even runs the risk of hiding them from view. The second reason is that this function objectively covers a multitude of situations (both personal/biographical and organisational) and of subjects related to the specific and potentially very varied characteristics of the institutions and services in question. We see in this context, for example, the management of an entire communication service (in most cases), while it can also be a single-person service (known in Dutch as the *eenpersoons-communicatiedienst*, where the Flemish professional association Kortom wonders how the role can survive<sup>12</sup>).

Between the poles of (almost) every official being a 'public

communicator', on the one hand, and the 'director of public communications', on the other, so between maximalist and minimalist views of what a 'public communicator' could be, there is the need for a middle ground which emphasises the reality and diversity of the jobs and professions in public communication, and which recognises and values them.

There are, for example, said to be more than 7,000 of them in the UK<sup>13</sup> and 25,000 in France<sup>14</sup>... but who are the people behind these numbers and what are their jobs?

These questions may appear rhetorical or of little importance, but we view them as indicative of major issues in a wide range of areas, for example the following:

- the knowledge, recognition and promotion of jobs and professions involved in communication services;
- professional research and research about the profession and relations with academia in these areas;
- the design of suitable job profiles and recruitment;
- the design and negotiation with academia of specific qualifying training courses and their certification;
- the design and negotiation with the administrative authority of specific qualifying training courses and their certification;
- the creation of a body of public information officers;
- the creation and management of professional sectoral discussion networks (organised by communication activity or type);
- the creation of specific regulatory and ethical frameworks and peer supervision.

All these items are essential to the development of jobs and professional recognition.

\*\*\*

The professional association Cap'Com<sup>15</sup> states that "*the profession of public communicator (...) emerged in the 1970s*"; Dominique Mégard, referring to the same period of the mid-1970s, points out a form of founding event – a type of condition required for its emergence – in the gradual fading away of the "(...) initial demonisation fostered in particular by the upper echelons of the public service which has long considered communication to be a distortion of public action".<sup>16</sup> She would surely support us adding here "... and the exclusive domain of policymakers alone". József Katus provides a societal framework here by emphasising that "[f]or decades, the rise of the welfare state and political democratisation had been the most important driving forces in the development of government information";<sup>17</sup> Pierre Zémor brings this together with the decentralisation of the State and a "social demand for proximity of public services".<sup>18</sup>

11 This is the case for *L'état d'esprit des communicants publics* ('Attitudes of public communicators'), an online 'barometer' survey of the *directors of communication and communication officers* of 2,000 major local authorities (large towns and cities, metropolises and *départements*), conducted every two years by the Cap'Com professional network. Emphasis added.

12 *Hoe overleef je een eenpersoonscommunicatiedienst?* Kortom website, article of 28 December 2021.

13 "We are over 7,000 professional communicators from across the UK, supporting and promoting the work of 25 ministerial departments, 21 non-ministerial departments and over 300 agencies and other public bodies". Government Communication Service website, accessed 3 May 2025.

14 "Cap'Com brings together, leads and represents the 25,000 public and regional communication professionals of local authorities, national and local administrations and public bodies and the voluntary sector." Cap'Com website, accessed 3 May 2025.

15 Cap'Com website, op. cit.

16 Mégard D., *La communication publique et territoriale*. Dunod, 2017. pp. 24–25.

17 Katus J. *Government communication: development, functions and principles*, p. 28. In 'Government Communication in the Netherlands'. Edited volume. Sdu Uitgevers, The Hague, 2000.

18 Zémor P., *La communication publique*. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2005, p. 12.



In any case, there is no need now to show that 'public communicator' and the 'communication service' (and the 'status' and evolution of each of them) should be seen in an intimate and dialectic relationship in the ecosystem of the public service and its communication. We should add here that the intrinsically *political* aspect of democratic issues at play in the action (or inaction!) of public communication seems to lead its actors to a level of commitment, sometimes bordering on the militant, to the shaping, development and lasting recognition of their service and job(s). We see this at play in professional associations and in forums such as the Club of Venice. It is often a task that is started time and again – without letting our guard down – with and within our services, with and within our administrations, with our political authorities and in dealings with them...

Over the course of the almost 40 years of the Club of Venice's existence and activities, if we had to take away just one recurring topic of discussion, concern and – frankly – demands or actions, it would undoubtedly be that of 'professionalisation'. This must be taken in all its aspects: organisational and managerial (through the search for performance in our services and jobs) and institutional and statutory (through the need for their recognition and development).

In a nutshell, the recent history of our jobs and professions as 'public communicators' is one of the (gradual) 'professionalisation' of existing jobs and professions, through the hybridisation that is required and tailored to the specific practice of (multiple and varied) public communication activities, within ad hoc services (gradually) institutionalised in administrations or in public service authorities.

Without going back to the days of the town crier or the municipal billposter<sup>19</sup>, we will thus move – to put it very simply – from the journalist or the staff member of an elected official who *goes over to the other side* to establish an embryonic information service, or even from the staff member who came from advertising in the golden age of major public communication campaigns; via anyone who had even a vague knowledge of IT at the time of the development of databases and the internet; through to today's staff recruited on the basis of job profiles and required specific qualifications and experience... which our services will ensure are 'hybridised' (through internal training courses and sharing with peers) with the codes and specific practices of the public service and its communication.

In this regard, we might ask the reader (whether or not they are a 'public communicator') about their perception of and/or experience in this area and make them think about how they view the evolution of public communication and of the jobs involved in it (even their own) through time... and in the future.

	Cap'com <sup>20</sup>	Dominique Mégard <sup>21</sup>
1970s	Era of pioneers (involvement of residents)	Learning
1980s	Era of advertising (creating a sense of identity, the desired advertising blueprint)	The explosion (influence of advertising, birth of professional networks)
1990s	Era of management (the constraints of the legislative framework, an increase in the transparency of local public services, the emergence of financial communication, the shift from local television to the arrival of new information and communication technologies)	'Learning modesty' (regulation, progressive recognition, birth of consultation, communication as a driver for modernisation)
2000s	Era of sustainable regions (regions on the move, civic disengagement and proximity-focused communication)	Digitalisation, interactivity and change of scale
2010s	Era of change (communities taking control of their communication, the return of regional marketing; as a result of the financial crisis, increased value of internal communication)	
2020s <sup>22</sup>		

While communication jobs have changed a lot due to endogenous developments (institutionalisation, professionalisation, ethics, New Public Governance, etc.) and exogenous ones (technical/technological evolution, democratisation of public action and citizen relations, etc.), interrelated with each other, we will not refer to the "transformation of the job of the public communicator".<sup>23</sup>

We should point though to major changes to our services, jobs and activities, from the 'digital revolution' to the "paradigm shift in public communication supporting managerial practices and the prevalence of deliberative mechanisms"...<sup>24</sup> unless this involves – more prosaically – a form of *technical illusion*; the pendulum swinging back to the budgetary level and to the resources;<sup>25</sup> a creeping *flexibility* of our jobs and statuses to make them more easily adaptable to the evolution of technologies and means of communication; a focus on the citizen that is constrained following the failure of democracies; and an epiphenomenon of pseudo-consultations which are not followed up on.

19 Two iconic historical 'public communicators'.

20 Cap'Com website, <https://www.cap-com.org/lhistoire-de-la-communication-publique-en-france> (in French), *L'histoire de la communication publique en France. Cinq tableaux de la communication publique locale présentés par Bernard Deljarrie*. Accessed 2 May 2025.

21 Mégard D., op. cit, Chapter 2. 'Histoire : trente ans pour devenir grande', pp. 19–38 (2017).

22 Not specified or post-dates the relevant sources.

23 'Communication & Organisation' journal, 'La mutation du métier de communicant public', No. 41, June 2012. Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux.

24 'Communication & Organisation' journal, op. cit. Monseigne A. and Guillaume G., *Editorial. La mutation du métier de communicant public*, pp. 5–11 (here p. 5).

25 'Learning modesty' – see the table.

In any case, we do not see in this a 'transformation', strictly speaking, which presupposes a change of nature or form, but rather a continuous evolution, where elements and conditions change but where the essence remains. (This means the authority relationship; the need to fight against the tendency towards 'acommunication' and the imperative to fill the void of 'incommunication' (a lack of communication),<sup>26</sup> the impossibility of ongoing and general communication, the difficulty of establishing conversational communication, and the relativity of a right to information. This is not to mention other shortcomings and obstacles, such as a level of bureaucracy; the compartmentalisation of services and administrations; the general absence of an overall proactive policy of public communication on the part of the authorities and, as a consequence, uncoordinated and often one-off actions that are not followed up on; a lack of pooling of resources and means of action; the impossibility for the State – given the fragmentation of its components – to act and weigh in as a single public buyer; and the absence of academic training with a focus on 'public communication' and therefore of a relevant academic qualification/title, and even the weakness of administration-specific training.)

We do not find it immaterial to highlight this, because this offers food for thought for the improvement of our practices and public policies in this area and, above all, the expression of a bias, the adoption of a *humanist* perspective in the face of a certain *technocratic ideology*. Against the backdrop of a *pre-* and a *post-digital age* with the relevant applications in the field of communication, in our opinion it would be a mistake intellectually and professionally to find here a (continued) significant rapprochement with citizens and a qualitative upheaval in our practices; indeed, the existing gaps may have even widened further. And this is the mindset with which we must grasp and apply artificial intelligence in our services and activities.

\*\*\*



<sup>26</sup> It is worth reading Dominique Wolton's reflections on this key subject:

- Conclusion : penser l'incommunication ('Conclusion: Reflecting on a lack of communication'). 'Hermès' journal No. 80, 2018/1, pp. 280–282.  
- Penser l'incommunication. Ed. Le bord de l'eau, Collection 'Documents'. 2024, 140 pages.



# Club of Venice - Plenary Meeting

21 - 22 May 2025, Athens



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
GENERAL SECRETARIAT  
FOR GREEKS ABROAD AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

## Provisional Agenda

(as of 14.5.2025)

Meeting languages: Greek, French and English<sup>1</sup>

### DAY 1 - Tuesday 20 May 2025

19:45 - 21:45  
local time

#### Welcome reception and Introductory section

(Venue: Mappemonde Restaurant, Bar & Lounge", Athens Capital Hotel: 4, Eleftheriou Venizelou, Athens)

### DAY 2 - Wednesday 21 May 2025 (9:00 - 12:45 local time)

#### PLENARY MEETING

VENUE: Zappeion Megaron, Leof. Vasilissis Olgas, 105 57 Athens, Greece

8:30 - 9:00

#### Guest's registration

9:00 - 10:00

#### Opening Session

Welcome statements - representatives of the hosting Greek authorities and the European Institutions

- Yiannis LOVERDOS, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greece
- Maira MYROGIANNI, Secretary-General for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy, Greece
- Vincenzo LE VOCl, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice
- Constantinos TSOUTSOPLIDES, Head of the European Parliament's Liaison Office in Greece
- Niovi RINGOU, Head of the European Commission's Representation in Greece

10:00 - 10:15

#### Key address

- Stefano ROLANDO, President of the Club of Venice

10:15 - 10:30

#### Coffee break

10:15 - 12:45

#### Plenary session I - Round Table

"Government communication challenges: reinforcing a culture of resilience, recovery and development and building alliances"

- A case study: the Polish national advisory Resilience Council
- Synergies and common parameters in countering disinformation
- Expanding the national forum approach as a model to reinforce anti-FIMI strategies and amplify outreach
- Building alliances among national fora and between governments and EU institutions: a must to guarantee shared objectives, trustworthy preventive comms expertise and readiness in handling crises

17

<sup>1</sup> Interpretation provided by the European Parliament



**Moderator:**

- **Aedín DONNELLY**, Ireland, Communications Manager, Department of the Taoiseach

**Key Note speaker:**

- **Ewelina JELENKOWSKA-LUCA'**, Deputy-Director and Head of Unit, European Commission DG CNECT

**Panellists:**

- **Julia ZAWISZA**, Poland, Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Nikos ROMANOS**, Greece, Director of Digital Communications to the Prime Minister
- A representative from France Government Information Service (S.I.G.)
- **Andrei TARNEA**, Romania, Director for Public Diplomacy and Communication, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Mykola BALABAN**, Ukraine, Deputy Head, Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security (TBC)
- **Maryia SADOUSKAYA-KOMLACH**, Global Engagement Strategist, Free Press Unlimited, Amsterdam
- **Christian SPAHR**, Managing Director, [Lie Detectors](#)

12:45

**Family picture**

12:55 - 14:10

**Lunch<sup>2</sup>**

14:15 - 17:30

**Plenary session II**

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

- State of the art : governmental and institutional capacities at stake
- Outsourcing capacities vs. development of internal know-how and expertise
- Outreaching strategies
  - \* Selecting sustainable models and fostering Interconnectivity
  - \* Navigating the evolving communication and media landscape: investing in literacy and empowering citizens

**Moderator:**

- **Simon PIATEK**, Director, The Imagination Lab, UK

**Key Note speaker:**

- **Maia MAZURKIEWICZ**, President of PZU Foundation, Co-founder of Alliance4Europe, host of Anatomy of Disinformation, Poland

**Panellists:**

- **Konstantinos ANAGNOSTOPOULOS**, Greece, Director of [www.athenslegal.tech](http://www.athenslegal.tech)
- **Tiziana ANTONELLI**, Italy, Communications Officer, Department for European Policies, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **Anna EKSTRÖM**, Institute for Future Studies, Sweden
- **Jon ROOZENBEEK**, Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK (psychology of intergroup conflict and digital media effects) (from remote)
- **Richard BAGNALL**, global leader in PR and communications measurement and evaluation, UK (from remote)
- **Marco RICORDA**, Communication Officer at the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency (ECAT), European Commission (from remote)
- **Alberto MONTROND**, Senior Fellow, T.H. School of Public Health, Harvard, USA (from remote)
- **Elisa CHAMI-CASTALDI** or **David QUIN** (Saatchi World Services – Europe)
- **Q&A session**

16:00 - 16:15

**Coffee break**

17:15 - 17:30

**First day summing-up - issues emerged**

(Club Steering Group member + Greek representative)

20:30

**Dinner**

**Venue:** Restaurant of the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, 1 Koumbari St. & Vas. Sofias Ave., 106 74 Athens



## DAY 3 - Thursday 22 May 2023 (9:30 - 13:00 local time)

### PLENARY MEETING

9:00 - 9:30

Guest's registration

9:30 - 12:30

#### Plenary Session III

##### "Public Diplomacy and country branding and reputation"

- lessons learned from growing uncertainties in the geo-political scenarios
- revamping/rebuilding relationships and seeking new commonalities and shared values among democracies"

##### Moderator:

- **Kristina PLAVŠAK-KRAJNC**, Slovenia, Senior Advisor on Strategic Communication, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Minister's Private Office
- **Vincenzo LE VOCI**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

##### Key Note speaker:

- **Lara ROMANO**, Croatia, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

##### Panellists:

- **Nicholas CULL**, Professor of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communications
- **Kyra KAPI**, Greece, Director of Communications to the Prime Minister
- **John Ó LIODÁIN**, Head of Public Diplomacy and Social Media, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland
- **Polona PREŠEREN**, Slovenia, Communications Officer, Government Communications Office
- **Konrad JAGODZINSKI**, Place Branding Director, Brand Finance
- **Andrew DAVIES** and **Tunyan BAGRAT**, Senior Policy Advisors, OECD Headquarters

10:45 - 11:00

Coffee break

12:30 - 12:45

#### Closing Session

(Club Steering Group member + Greek representative)

- Reflections on the issues emerged during the plenary meeting
- Planning for 2nd semester 2025: key-events:
  - \* **Conference on migration narratives and EU enlargement** (in cooperation with the Belgian Government authorities, ICMPD, IOM, SEECOM and KAS) – Brussels, 3rd and 4th July 2025
  - \* **Seminar on crisis communication** (focus on countering disinformation and AI impact on governmental communication) (Warsaw, 9-10 October)
  - \* **Autumn 2025 plenary** (Venice, 4-5 December)
  - \* **2026**: publication to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Club of Venice
  - \* **Work in synergy with international partner organizations** (OECD, ICMPD, SEECOM, SEEMO, DEMSOC, CAP'COM, Harvard/Ca' Foscari, Council of Europe, HSS...)

12:45 - 14:00

Lunch

14:30

#### Cultural event organized by the hosting Greek authorities

Guided tour of the Acropolis Museum



## 8th Seminar on Strategic Communication

# Strengthening cooperation in crisis communication, neutralising foreign influence threats and information manipulation & applying AI to communications

12-13 March 2025, London

## Agenda

Meeting venue: FCDO King Charles Street Building, London, UK

### DAY 1 - Wednesday 12 March 2025 (18:00 - 20:00)

Evening reception + Introductory panel

Venue: Admiralty House Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AY

17:30

**Delegates' arrival and registration**

18:00 - 18:45

**Welcome and opening remarks**

Strategic communication and public diplomacy role in Government communications on the verge of a crucial geopolitical strategic shift & the changing communication landscape.

- The impact of recent changes on the global stage to CoV partners
- How are governments adapting communication approaches to reach target audiences?

**Speakers**

- **James STEWART**, Executive Committee Representative of the UK GCS
- **Vincenzo LE VOICI**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice
- **H.E. Piotr WILCZEK**, Ambassador of Poland to the United Kingdom
- **H.E. Siniša GRGIC**, Ambassador of Croatia to Sweden and Latvia
- **Luca Kadar**, Head of Division, Global Communications and Public Diplomacy, European External Action Service (EEAS)

18:45 - 19:45

**Drinks reception and networking**

19:45 - 20:00

**Closing remarks**

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



## DAY 2 - Thursday 13 March 2025 (8:30 - 17:30)

### Full day of sessions

Venue: Admiralty House Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AY

8:30 - 9:15	<b>Delegate arrival and registration</b> <i>Coffee on arrival</i>
9:15 - 9:30	<b>Opening remarks and agenda for the day</b> Scene setting of two main themes and the impact on communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Information Threats</li><li>▪ AI</li></ul> <b>Speakers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Simon BAUGH</b>, Executive Committee Representative of the UK Government Communications</li><li>▪ <b>Vincenzo LE VOICI</b>, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice</li></ul>
<b>THEME 1</b>	<b>Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference and the AI revolution</b>
9:30 - 10:30	<b>Strand 1</b> Government communication organisational <b>plans and methodologies to counter disinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference</b> : shared challenges, ongoing impact of modern digital campaigns on policies, procedures and political processes (European cooperation models and UK GCS RESIST 3 Model) <b>Moderator:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Angela KELLETT</b>, United Kingdom GCS, Head of Insights</li></ul> <b>Panellists:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Katarzyna SZARAN</b>, Poland, Acting Director of the Department for Strategic Communications and Countering Foreign Disinformation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (on the Resilience Council)</li><li>▪ <b>Viktorija URBONAVICIUTE</b>, Head of Communication/Spokesperson, Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU, Member of the Steering Group of the Club of Venice</li><li>▪ <b>Andrei TARNEA</b>, Director-General of Communication, Romania</li><li>▪ <b>Juliane VON REPPERT-BISMARCK</b>, Executive Director and Founder, Lie Detectors</li></ul>
10:30 - 11:30	<b>Strand 2</b> <b>Shaping the AI revolution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ tackling digital challenges and embracing and managing opportunities</li><li>▪ governmental and institutional plans and strategies in progress</li><li>▪ how to maintain a human-centric AI: analytics, interaction, workforce transformation</li></ul> <b>Moderators:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Amanda SVENSSON</b>, Deputy Director, Applied Data and Insight Team at the UK Cabinet Office</li><li>▪ <b>Siniša GRGIC</b>, Ambassador of Croatia to Sweden and Latvia</li></ul> <b>Panellists:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Simon PIATEK</b>, Director, The Imagination Lab, UK</li><li>▪ <b>Fabiana ZOLLO</b>, Professor of Computer Science, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, Italy (from remote)</li><li>▪ <b>Andrea BARONCHELLI</b>, Professor of Complexity Science, School of Science &amp; Technology, City St George's University of London, UK</li><li>▪ <b>Giulia DINO GIACOMELLI</b> and <b>Elliot GRAINGER</b>, DSC2 - Defence, Democracy Security Strategic Communication Community</li><li>▪ <b>Linda JAKOBSONE</b>, Civic Alliance Latvia, Expert in Strategic Communication and Policy Development (from remote)</li></ul>
11:30 - 11:45	<i>Coffee break</i>

11:45 - 12:30

## Strand 3

### The End of fact checking?: rebuilding deals with the web industry

#### Group/Panel discussion

- Choosing relevant algorithms to develop sustainable methodological models
- Investing in data exchange and interconnectivity
- **Trust and cooperation**
- **Q&A**

#### Moderator:

- **Maja MAZURKIEWICZ**, President of PZU Foundation, Co-founder of Alliance4Europe, host of Anatomy of Disinformation, Poland

#### Panellists:

- **Virginia PADOVESE**, NewsGuard, Managing Editor & Vice President, Partnerships, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (from remote)
- **Walter QUATTROCIOCHI**, Professor of Computer Science, Head of the Data and Complexity for Society Lab, Sapienza University, Rome, Italy (from remote)
- **Anthony ZACHARZEWSKI**, Director, The Democratic Society

12:30 - 12:40

## Group photos

12:40 - 13:30

## Lunch

13:30 - 13:55

## Strand 4

### Outline of the morning sessions and round table with

- **Carlotta ALFONSI**, senior policy analyst from the Open Governance Division, OECD Headquarters
- **Fiona SPEIRS**, head of the Communications Academy, UK Cabinet Office
- **Simon PIATEK**, Director of The Imagination Lab, UK

#### Moderator:

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

## THEME 2

## Crisis communications and monitoring and applying behavioural insights

14:00 - 14:45

## Strands 5 & 6

### Breakout Sessions

#### Strand 5: Monitoring behaviours and evaluating trends

- A lever for integrated communication strategies and focused work in partnership
- Ethics and transparency implications and security indicators

#### Moderator:

- **Susanne WEBER**, Austria, Head of the International Media Relations Unit, Federal Chancellery

#### Panellists:

- **Dr Moria NICOLSON**, UK GCS Behavioural Scientist
- **Chloe COLLINGWOOD**, UK GCS International Ukraine Team
- **Professor Riccardo VIALE**, Founder and Secretary-General of the Herbert Simon Society
- **Erik DEN HOEDT**, Netherlands, Director of Communications, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Vice President of the Club of Venice
- **Nikola HOŘEJŠ**, Executive Director, STEM Institute for Empirical Research, Prague, Czech Republic

#### Strand 6: Preparing for a crisis:

- Enhancing communication toolkits
- Focus on enhancing cooperation with scientific communities
- Optimising risk communication

#### Moderator:

- **Joseph PALASZ**, UK, Government Communication Service Crisis Team

#### Panellists:

- **Professor Elena SAVOIA**, Co-Director Emergency Preparedness Research Evaluation and Practice Program (EPREP), Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (from remote)
- **Paolo CARIDI**, Head of the Communication Unit, European Commission DG Climate Action
- **Francien MACHIELSE**, Netherlands, Communications specialist at National Coordinator for Counter-terrorism and Security (NCTV) and the National Crisis Center (NCC)
- **Natalie MAROUN**, France, Managing Partner, Element-EU, Crisis Management Expert

14:45 - 15:00

### Coffee Break

15:00 - 15:45

## Strands 7 & 8

### Breakout Sessions

#### Strand 7: Engaging in a rapidly evolving public diplomacy scenario

- contingencies, effective practice and threats to public trust
- impact of energy, climate, public health and social unrest on governmental and institutional reputation

#### Moderator:

- **Daniel HÖLTGEN**, Director of Communications, Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg

#### Panellists:

- **Mary KEENAN**, Ireland, Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services Division, Department of the Taoiseach
- **Pereric HÖGBERG**, Sweden, Ambassador, Head of Communications at the MFA
- **Luca KADAR**, Head of Division, Global Communications and Public Diplomacy, European External Action Service (EEAS)

#### Strand 8: Digital by default: not negotiable!

- Synergies between governmental and external digital platforms
- Synergies with digital specialized communities
- Investing in fostering **digital comm literacy**

#### Moderator:

- **Rachel COLDICUTT**, Executive Director, Careful Industries

#### Panellists:

- **Viktoras DAUKSAS**, Director, DebunkEU.org, Lithuania (from remote)
- **Ana ESTEBAN**, Acting Head of Section, Digital Outreach and Brand Section NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD)
- **Gemma TAYLOR**, Audience Lead, New Media Unit, UK Cabinet Office
- **Carys WHOMSLEY**, Digitalis Director, Digital Risk; Head of Research and Thought Leadership (from remote)
- **Rosa CAVALLARO**, Senior Officer, Italian Communication Regulatory Authority (AGCOM)

14:45 - 15:00

### Pause after Breakout Sessions



15:50 - 16:45

**Strand 9****Building alliances to respond to citizens' expectations and safeguarding democratic values**

- Investing in Strategic communications, fostering proactive resilience and strengthening capacities to navigate the evolving communication and media landscape

**Moderator:**

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

**Panellists:**

- **Ed BEARRYMAN**, UK Government Communications Service, New Media Unit
- **Ms Magdalena SOBKOWIAK-CZARNECKA**, Poland, Undersecretary of State, European Union Affairs Division
- **Tancredi FRANCESE**, Italy, Head of the StratCom Unit, Directorate General for Public and Cultural Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (from remote)
- **Brad MARSHALL**, UK Government Communications Service, International Project Lead
- **Mark GRAY**, European Commission, Head of Unit, Political Strategy and Communication, DG International Partnerships (INTPA)

16:45 - 17:00

**Closing remarks**

- **Gemma Walsh**, UK Government Communications Service
- **Vincenzo LE VOCI**, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice Vincenzo Le Voci, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

17:00

**Delegates depart**



For the 8th consecutive year, London hosted - on 12 and 13 March - the Seminar on Strategic Communication (StratCom), organized by the Club of Venice in close cooperation with the UK Government Communications Office.

## Objectives of the seminar

- Share analyses and proposals on the topics on the agenda
- Continue the reflection on European cooperation models to improve strategic communication (e.g. by designing integrated digital campaigns to communicate plans, policies, procedures and political processes)
- Address the AI revolution while maintaining human-centred communication
- Monitor behavioural trends (they are symptomatic in particular when reacting to fake news used for the purpose of personal attack, political attack, defamation, and to support pseudoscientific theories to an extent that makes them as relevant or threatening as never before) and identify new needs and expectations of citizens to increase the capacity of institutions to actively involve them
- Explore new possibilities for synergies between digital platforms (governmental and non-governmental) and with specialised digital communities, and for promoting digital literacy (it was also heard of an interesting expression of “generation of cognitive antibodies”).

The following main points emerged from the debate, which was qualified and rich in insights:

Emphasis was given to the communication principles to be followed during a public health crisis, with a comparison among the scale of principles highlighted from guidelines set by different international organisations.

In the context of the **crisis communication role in crisis management**, timeliness was one of the top priorities, owing to the need for a) acknowledging the level of scientific uncertainty supporting specific information released to the public and the likelihood that it will change over time; b) Improving the speed of the decision-making process and related communication activities in public health; c) improving the speed of the government-level clearance process for issuing messages to the public; d) communicating at regular intervals, and e) developing government communication strategies focused on leading the narrative.



Accent was put on timeliness as a fundamental component of communicator's integrity, together with an ethics-driven approach and trust. Access to information is a human right and different populations need different information to be accessible to them in a culture-responsive way. Moreover, there is an absolute need to avoid the politicisation of science (when a public health decision turns into a political issue, the health authority can quickly lose control over the narrative – and when science turns into a political issue, scientists quickly lose control over the narrative).



Furthermore, many speakers called for greater cooperation between governments, the media, academia and the private sector to ensure transparent and resilient information in the digital age. This was the qualifying theme of the inaugural session on 12 March, in which it was recognised as crucial – in a communication landscape marked by Russian threats, war and attacks on the information sphere – the commitment to join forces, among all countries and actors involved, to ensure the accuracy of information and national security in the new geopolitical context.

The active role played by the UK government, together with the European Union, in the fight against disinformation was particularly welcomed.

On the subject of **models of international cooperation**, an updated analysis of the successful UK project RESIST was presented. Some speakers highlighted the need for independence in the fight against disinformation. The value of many EU-funded projects, for example under Horizon, in pursuing effective solutions was recognised. In this sense, it is essential to adopt a research-based approach, with a common vision and language, even if for many governments the lack of an adequate legal framework poses a problem of long-term sustainability.

When discussing disinformation and national security, the link between these two issues was highlighted, underlining how the impact of disinformation must also be assessed in economic terms, since it is now recognized as a significant risk by the main international economic fora. It is important that the counteraction involves institutions, media and the legal sector, without transforming the government into a "ministry of truth". It is equally important to adopt the appropriate approach when reflecting on the refutation strategies (debunk or prebunk? Nudges? Boosts?)

On behavioural trends, the Dutch communications specialists of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) (NCTV) outlined a recent research into resilience

behaviours of the Dutch society in order to prepare the Dutch population more effectively for potential emergencies.

Some experts highlighted the need for teachers to be independent from government and private interests, the crucial role of education and journalism in tackling disinformation, the importance of digital tools and the "follow the money" method to track down sensitive content.

Around freedom of speech and regulation, attention was also drawn to a recent study carried out by the University of Oxford on the widespread support for content moderation of social media platforms (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2025-02-12-majority-support-moderation-social-media-platforms-global-survey-shows>).

The speed of disinformation spread was also highlighted: the public now seeks engaging stories and narratives. The most used platforms vary depending on the country (e.g. Facebook in Romania, Telegram in Moldova). For institutional communicators, the well-known golden rule according to which early intervention is less costly than late crisis management still applies.

In the session dedicated to artificial intelligence in communication, some delegates called for ethical regulation that considers the financial benefits and the impact on humans. Institutions need to hire AI experts to adapt to the new reality, working on a balance between the use of human resources (80%) and AI (20%).

AI can foster citizen participation and involvement, but it also poses risks related to trust and transparency. Between risks and opportunities, the key elements to which the communication specialists need to draw attention are:

- The need to take into account citizens' spontaneous behaviour
- The concentration of technological control in the hands of a few large companies
- Conflicts of interest between public and private actors.

With regard to relations with the web industry, the need to develop sustainable methodological models through appropriate algorithms, invest in data exchange and interconnectivity and strengthen trust and cooperation between the web industry, institutions and citizens was also stressed.

The reputational crisis of institutions (which will be tackled in the spring plenary of the Club of Venice foreseen on 21-22 May in Athens) is an increasingly challenging issue and the lack of recognition in international relations can compromise public perception. The cost-benefit ratio of political decisions needs to be better explained to citizens and the responsibility and accountability of the different offices in managing emergencies needs to be clearly acknowledged and shared."





# Club of Venice plenary meeting

Venice, 5-6 December 2024



## Agenda

Palazzo Franchetti, San Marco 2847, Venezia

### Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup> - Plenary Meeting

8:30 - 9:00

#### Guest's registration

9:00 - 9:45

#### Opening session

Welcome statements - representatives from the hosting Italian authorities and from the European Institutions

- Laura CAVALLO, Director-General, Department for European Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy
- Fabrizio SPADA, Head of the Institutional Relations Department, European Parliament Information Office in Italy
- Elena GRECH, Acting Head of the European Commission Representation in Italy
- Representatives from the regional/local authorities

9:45 - 10:00

#### Key address

- Stefano ROLANDO, President of the Club of Venice

10:00 - 10:15

#### Coffee Break

10:15

#### Plenary session I – round table

**Strengthening cooperation in public communication: new plans, enhanced strategies and narratives to regain citizens' trust, support policies and consolidate resiliencies**

- Public opinion trends: reliability and interpretation of facts and figures
- The EU institutions' new mandate and the impact on policy priorities and on cooperation with national authorities
- Capacity and capability building: from communication contingencies to structural communication investments
- Reinforcing cross-ministerial coordination and inter-governmental cooperation in the field of communication
- Reinforcing cooperation with civil society, the academic world and the media sector

#### Moderators:

- Kristina PLAVŠAK KRAJNC, Slovenia, Senior Advisor on Strategic Communication, Minister's Private Office, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
- Vincenzo LE VOICI, Secretary-General of the Club of Venice

#### Keynote speaker:

- Erik den HOEDT, Manager and communication expert for the Government of the Netherlands, Vice President of the Club of Venice

#### **Panellists:**

- Katarzyna SZARAN, Poland, Deputy Director, Department for Strategic Communication and Countering Foreign Disinformation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Paul GLEESON, Ireland, Director of Communications, Department of Foreign Affairs
- Luca KADAR, Head Of Division of Global Communications, International Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- Christian MANGOLD, European Parliament, Director-General of Internal Policies and Acting Director-General for Communication (tbc)
- Sophia ERIKSSON-WATERSCHOOT, European Commission, DG Communication, Deputy Director-General and acting Director of Directorate A - 'Political Communication and Services'
- Giuseppe ZAFFUTO, Head of Public Visibility, Analysis and Research Division, Directorate of Communications, Council of Europe
- Laure VAN HAUWAERT, Executive Director EU Institutions & Belgium, WPP - The Government and Public Sector Practice

**12:45 - 14:10**

#### **Lunch**

**14:15**

#### **Family Picture**

**14:15 - 16:00**

#### **Plenary session II<sup>1</sup>**

**Disinformation challenges in the field of public health and climate change: navigating science communication at the nexus of information, social and security issues**

**SESSION IIa – Building strategic communication for science and health: clarity, accuracy and reliability of the information environment level**

#### **Moderator:**

- Anna Hedin EKSTRÖM – Institute for Future Studies, Sweden

#### **Keynote speaker:**

- Elena SAVOIA, Principal Scientist, Co-Director, Emergency Preparedness, Research, Evaluation and Practice (EPREP) Programme, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, USA

#### **Panellists:**

- Roderick CARUANA, Malta, Director of Information, Prime Minister's Office
- Andrea LIEBMAN, Sweden, Senior Analyst, [Psychological Defense Agency](#)
- Katie ATTWELL, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Political Science and International Relations, University of Western Australia
- Nahoko SHINDO, World Health Organisation (WHO), Head of Unit, Biosecurity and Health Security Protection, Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Prevention Department (on line)
- Fabiana ZOLLO, Associate Professor of Computer Science, Ca' Foscari University, Venice
- Marco MAGHERI, Secretary-General, Associazione Italiana Comunicazione Pubblica e Istituzionale (Compubblica)
- Alessandro LOVARI, Associate Professor of Sociology of Communication, University of Cagliari
- Dr. Cesare BUQUICCHIO, University of Pisa, CRESP Project (social media infodemics and impact on public health) -Francesco MARAGLINO, Italy, Director, Office for Communicable Diseases Prevention and International Profilaxis, Ministry of Health (on line)

**16:00 - 16:15**

#### **Coffee break**

<sup>1</sup> This session is developed in collaboration with the Harvard Chan School EPREP Programme and supported by the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme, the Swedish Contingency Agency and Psychological Defense Agency in Sweden.

16:15 - 18:00

**SESSION IIb – Building strategic communication in the field of CLIMATE CHANGE: evidence and causes, vision and credibility**

**Moderator:**

- Carlotta ALFONSI, Policy Analyst, Open Government, Civic Space and Public Communication Unit, Open and Innovative Government Division, Public Governance Directorate, OECD

**Keynote speaker:**

- Anna PIRANI, Italy, senior research associate of the [Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Climate Change \(CMCC\)](#) research division "Risk assessment and adaptation strategies"

**Panellists:**

- a communication representative from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry for the Environment (tbc)
- Aedín DONNELLY, Ireland, Communications Manager, Government Information Service, Department of the Taoiseach
- Marija PUJO TADIĆ, Croatia, President of the International Institute for Climate Action (IICA), Climate Diplomacy Expert, board member of the Scientific Council of the COP-29 Presidency
- Paolo CARIDI, European Commission DG CLIMA, Head of Unit
- Giuseppe MACCA, ESG specialist and Founder of [Ethics4growth](#)
- Anthony ZACHARZEWSKI, Founder and President of [The Democratic Society](#)

18:00

**First day summing-up - issues emerged**

(Club Steering Group representative)

20:00

**Official Dinner (offered by the European Commission)**

Venue: ristorante Antico Martini, Campo Teatro Fenice 2007 (<https://www.anticomartini.com/>)

29

**Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

8:30 - 9:00

**Guests' registration**

9:00

**Plenary session II**

**Communicating Europe**

National initiatives: contributions by the steering group members of the Club of Venice:

- Caroline JORIS, Belgium, Director of External Communication, Chancellery of the Prime Minister
- Maira MYROGIANNI, Greece, Secretary-General for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

EU institutional approach:

- Mark GRAY, European Commission, Head of Unit, DG International Partnerships (INTPA), Political Strategy and Communication
- Dr. Silke TOENSHOFF, Head of Unit, Events and Local Dialogues, European Committee of the Regions, Directorate for Communication

10:00 - 12:45

## Capacity building in Artificial Intelligence, with focus on digital trends and threats and investments, including impact on crisis communication

- Artificial Intelligence systems and investments in progress: an outlook into transparency and complexities, ethical and security implications
- Governments' and institutions' communication strategies and investments:
  - 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
  - Regulatory challenges in a world of AI-generated disinformation and manipulation
  - Liaising with crisis comm networks, civil protection, prevention centres and analytical experts

### Moderators:

- Marco INCERTI, Advisor to the Secretary-General, European University Institute, Firenze-Fiesole (Italy)
- Danila CHIARO, Senior Governance Expert, Regional Office for the Mediterranean, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

### Keynote speaker:

- Simon PIATEK, Director, New Imagination Lab, UK

### Panellists:

- Susanne WEBER, Austria, Head of Digital Communication, Federal Chancellery
- -Fiona SPEIRS, Head of Academy, UK Government Communication Service (GCS)
- Dr. Siniša GRGIĆ, Ambassador of Croatia to Sweden
- Ing. Antonio Maria TAMBATO, Director, Digital Innovation and Transition, Agency for Digital Italy (AgID)
- Maja MAZURKIEWICZ, President of PZU Foundation, Co-founder of Alliance4Europe, host of Anatomy of Disinformation, Poland
- Yves STEVENS, Spokesperson, National Crisis Centre, Belgium, Chair of the EU IPCR Crisis Communication Network (CCN)
- Virginia PADOVESE, [NewsGuard](#), Managing Editor & Vice President, Partnerships, Europe, Australia and New Zealand
- Dr. Mario SCHARFBILLIG, European Commission Joint Research Centre, Unit S2: Science for Democracy and Evidence-Informed Policymaking
- Viktoras DAUKŠAS, Lithuania, Head of [DebunkEU.org](#) (on line)

12:45 - 13:00

## Closing Session

- Reflections on the issues emerged during the plenary meeting
- Planning for 2025 key-events:
  - 8th Stratcom seminar (in cooperation with the UK GCSI) - London, 12-13 March 2025
  - Spring 2025 plenary (May 2025, venue to be defined)
  - Seminars: Greece (spring 2025) and Poland (autumn 2025)
  - Work in synergy with international partner organizations (OECD, ICMPD, SEECOM, SEEMO, DEMSOC, CAP'COM, Harvard/Ca' Foscari, Council of Europe, HSS...)

13:00 - 14:30

## Lunch (offered by the Council of Europe)

15:00

## Social event organized by the hosting Italian authorities

Guided visit to the Fortuny Museum, San Marco 3958, Venice (<https://fortuny.visitmuve.it/en/home/>)  
(<https://fortuny.visitmuve.it/>)





# Outcome - Plenary Meeting in Venice

5 - 6 December 2024

**Strengthening cooperation in public communication: new plans, enhanced strategies and narratives to regain citizens' trust, support policies and consolidate resiliencies. Coping with disinformation challenges in the field of public health and climate change: navigating science communication at the nexus of information, social and security issues. Capacity building in Artificial Intelligence, with focus on digital trends and threats and investments, including impact on crisis communication. Relaunching the "Communicating Europe" process: investing in capacity- and strategic building while creating new intergovernmental and interinstitutional synergies to increase outreach and inclusiveness. Reinforcing participatory democracy and promoting a more inclusive European Union, both within its territory and in its relations with its international partners and with the development countries. Building stronger ties with civil society and with scientific communities in countering disinformation.**



Over 100 communication professionals representing 30 countries, 10 international organisations and 10 think tanks in presence and 20 connected from remote met in Venice to tackle the most challenging communication priorities for governments and institutions in the aftermath of the new mandates of the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The participants engaged in a brainstorming analysis of today's public opinion trends, which are inevitably deeply influenced by the geopolitical instability in several areas of the world. This is generating a loss of confidence in the public authorities and a general feeling of lack of protection often publicly expressed

by citizens who feel exposed to huge risks for their lives and for our democratic values.

As regards public opinion trends, the debate focused on the reliability and the interpretation of facts and figures, which will influence the EU institutions' new mandate and the impact on policy priorities and on cooperation with national authorities.

In this context, 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 afternoon sessions on 5th December, moderated by the Swedish Institute for Future Studies and by the OECD, and attended by eminent scientific experts (WHO, University of Western Australia, Venice Ca' Foscari, Cagliari and Pisa University) and by top communicators from the Croatian, Irish,





Italian and Maltese governments, focused on building strategic communication for science and health: clarity, accuracy and reliability of the information environment level and on the need to invest in strategic communication building in the field of climate change, based on solid evidence and on a sound knowledge of causes, vision and credibility.

The discussion in the plenary also touched upon concrete examples of campaigns developed by external partners (such as the example shared by Ethics4Growth, consisting of a "Social Innovation studio" for the development of sustainable and ethical business models with the aim to help organise communication of EU sustainability policies in peripheral economic contexts", with communication acquiring a strong educational connotation in order to instil a culture of structured growth, analysing the external variables that could condition the decision-making process towards a sustainable transition.)

At its plenary in December 2024, the Club pursued 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.

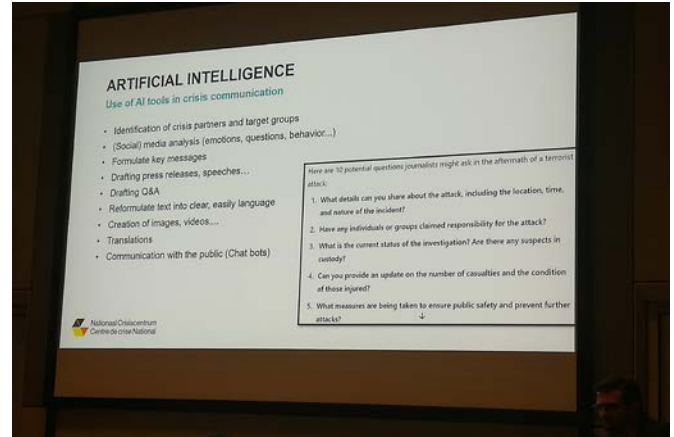
Crisis management remains in the spotlight because of the intrinsic complexity of the information and communication ecosystem and the risks that the lack of competencies and low level of knowledge of the digital developments may increasingly generate weaknesses and increase the gap between public communicators 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.

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 panelists 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 must 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.

While reflecting on how to ensure the provision of accurate information against this worrying scenario, the participants acknowledged the ongoing implementation of capacity building projects and were informed about the so-called "AI Disinformation Cycle" which is fuelled by propaganda machines

such as the threatening scenarios built up by Russia (false whistleblower testimonies created using deepfake technology ---> AI-generated articles ---> AI-generated images (logo, cartoons...) ---> chatbots repeating AI-generated narrative ---> return to the loop, often after a wild spreading of the false information.



Ad hoc surveys revealed 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 8th StratCom seminar that will be foreseen in London in mid-March 2025 in close cooperation with the UK Government Information Service.



# EuroPCom 2025

## “Beyond words – A story of trust”

By Silke Toenshoff



EuroPCom is the largest annual European conference for experts in public communication.

This event is organised by the European Committee of the Regions in close cooperation with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Investment Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Club of Venice and the VUB.

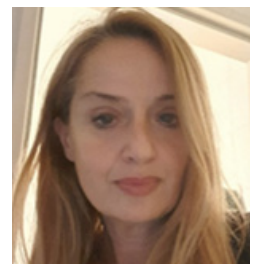
The 16th edition of EuroPCom will take place in Brussels on 3 and 4 July 2025.

This year's edition, entitled **“Beyond words – A story of trust”**, will explore one of the most pressing challenges of our time: how to build and maintain trust in public communication. The conference will focus on three key dimensions of this theme: **trust in institutions, trust in technology, and trust in communities**. At EuroPCom 2025, our focus shifts to the human faces behind public communication – citizens seeking reliable information, local leaders striving to connect with communities,

journalists navigating a changing media landscape, and communicators working to bridge the gap between policies and people's realities.

This year's conference will unfold like a story – one in which participants co-navigate challenges and explore shared solutions. Through workshops, idea labs, trainings, inspirational talks, and networking spaces, EuroPCom 2025 invites its community to help write the next chapter in the story of public communication in Europe.

The event language is English. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in French, Spanish and Italian.



**Silke Toenshoff** – Head of unit, Events and local dialogues, European Committee of the Regions

Silke Toenshoff is the Head of the Unit for Events and Local Dialogues at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR). She has a diverse background, having worked in consulting, politics, and as a senior think-tank analyst. Throughout her career, she has been involved in various roles, including working with the Berlin government and the think tank Rand Europe. At the CoR, she has been responsible for external relations, including partnerships with countries like Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia. Silke is known for mediation and negotiation skills, having worked on projects that promote decentralization and local governance.



Blockchain technology has the potential to significantly impact future integrated public communication strategies **by enhancing transparency, security, and trust** in government communications.

Here are some possible impacts of blockchain on public communication and suggestions on how governments can invest in this regard:

1. **Enhanced Transparency:** Blockchain's decentralized and immutable nature can provide a transparent platform for public communication. Governments can use blockchain to record and timestamp official announcements, policy updates, and press releases. This ensures that the information remains tamper-proof, auditable, and easily verifiable by the public.
2. **Improved Security:** Blockchain's cryptographic algorithms make it highly secure against data tampering and unauthorized access. Governments can leverage blockchain to secure sensitive information and communications, protecting them from hacking attempts and data breaches. This helps in maintaining the integrity of external communications.
3. **Increased Trust and Authenticity:** Blockchain enables the creation of digital signatures and certificates, which can be used to verify the authenticity of government communication. By using blockchain-based certificates, governments can ensure that the messages they send are genuine, thereby increasing trust among citizens and external stakeholders.
4. **Streamlined Collaboration:** Blockchain can facilitate efficient collaboration between government agencies and departments. By using blockchain-based platforms, **governments can securely share information, streamline workflows, and improve coordination. This can result in more effective and consistent external communication.**

**\*Decentralized Social Networks:** Traditional social networks are typically centralized and prone to issues such as censorship, data breaches, and privacy concerns. Blockchain-based social networks can distribute control and data across a decentralized network, empowering users and reducing the influence of intermediaries.

To strengthen their external communication and keep their outreach efficiency standards up, **governments should consider the following investments:**

1. **Blockchain Infrastructure:** Governments should invest in building robust blockchain infrastructure that can support their communication needs. This includes establishing secure networks, implementing consensus mechanisms, and developing smart contract capabilities. This is currently actively supported by the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (short EBSI), that is managed by the European Blockchain Partnership (composed by representatives of all EU Member States + Norway + Liechtenstein, as well as the European Commission).
2. **Training and Expertise:** Governments need skilled professionals who understand both the technical aspects of blockchain and the specific requirements of public communication. Investing in training programs and hiring experts in blockchain technology can ensure efficient implementation and utilization of blockchain for public communication purposes.

3. **Pilot Projects and Proof of Concepts:** Governments can start with **small-scale pilot projects** to test the effectiveness of blockchain in their communication strategies. By conducting proof of concepts and gathering feedback, governments can assess the feasibility and potential benefits before scaling up.
4. **Collaboration with Industry and Academia:** Governments should collaborate with industry experts, blockchain startups, and academic institutions to leverage their expertise and experience. Collaborative efforts can help in identifying innovative solutions, sharing best practices, and addressing any challenges associated with implementing blockchain in public communication.
5. **Regulatory Framework:** Governments should develop clear regulatory frameworks that address the legal, privacy, and security aspects of blockchain implementation in public communication. A well-defined framework will provide guidance to both the government and its stakeholders, ensuring compliance and trust in the system.

By investing in blockchain technology for public communication, governments can strengthen their outreach, improve transparency, and foster trust among citizens and external stakeholders. However, it is important to note that blockchain is not a one-size-fits-all solution as its widespread adoption and integration into existing systems will require addressing issues of scalability, usability and regulatory challenges. So, prior to any action it should be carefully evaluated and customized to meet specific communication needs and objectives.





# beyond words a story of trust



#europcom



## Programme 3rd July 2025

**15h00 - 16h00**  
**HEMICYCLE**  
**EUROPEAN**  
**PARLIAMENT**

*Webstreaming*

*EN-ES-FR-IT*

### OPENING SESSION

#### Introduction

Speaker TBC

#### Keynote by

**Beth SIMONE NOVECK**, Professor at Northeastern University

#### Opening Speeches by

**Kata TÜTTÖ**, President of the European Committee of the Regions

**Roberta METSOLA**, President of the European Parliament (TBC)

#### Moderation by

**Emna CHAOUCH**, Public speaking expert

**16h30 - 17h00**  
**ATRIUM 5**

*EN*

### EUROPCOM TALKS

#### Trust in institutions by

**Alice STOLLMEYER**, Founder and Executive Director of Defend Democracy

#### Trust in technology by

**Karim HALLAL PECHE**, YouTuber, El Viejo Continente

#### Trust in communities by

**Colombe CAHEN-SALVADOR**, Co-Founder of Atlas and Candidate for United Nations Secretary-General

### Strand 1: Trust in communities - Engaging citizens and local voices

**17h15 - 18h30**  
**JDE 52**

*Webstreaming*

*EN-ES-FR-IT*

### WORKSHOP 1 - CITIES AND REGIONS AS TRUST BUILDERS: SHAPING RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES AGAINST DISINFORMATION

#### Moderation by

**Tony LOCKETT**, Head of the Communication Unit, European Commission's Directorate General for Research and innovation

#### Speakers:

**Magdalena SOBKOWIAK-CZARNECKA**, Undersecretary of State at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in Poland (TBC)  
More speakers (TBC)

MARKET & NETWORKING PLACE AT FOYER 5

# beyond words a story of trust

#europcom



17h15 - 18h30

ATRIUM 6

EN

## IDEAS LAB 1 - TITLE

Facilitation by

**Matteo BRAMBILLA**, Founder of FROM (TBC)

17h15 - 18h30

JDE 53

EN

## TRAINING 1 - TRUST-BASED ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS: USING AI TO CONNECT, MOBILISE AND LISTEN

Training by

**Sebastian RODRIGUEZ**, Campaign strategist, European Movement International and Founder of the European Campaign Playbook

4th July 2025

08h30-09h00

Coffee

## Strand 2: Trust in technology - AI, social media and the digital public sphere

09h00 - 10h15

JDE 52

Webstreaming

EN-FR

## WORKSHOP 2 - PUBLIC COMMUNICATION IN THE AI AGE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Moderation by

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

Speakers:

**Victor RIPARBELLI**, CEO & Co-Founder of Synthesia

**Martha GABRIEL**, Futurist, bestselling author, Professor of Artificial Intelligence

SPEAKER 3 (TBC)

09h00 - 10h15

ATRIUM 5

EN

## IDEAS LAB 2 - RESKILLING FOR TRUST IN INNOVATION

Facilitation by

**Simon PIATEK**, Director, New Imagination Lab

**Elisa GAMBARDELLA**, Education and Lifelong Learning Coordinator, SOLIDAR Foundation (TBC)

09h00 - 10h15

JDE 53

EN

## TRAINING 2 - SIMULATION GAME ON DISINFORMATION AND INFORMATION THREAT

Training by

**Dmytro BILASH**, Co-Founder and Chief Business Development Officer, Osavul

10h15 - 10h45

Coffee break

MARKET & NETWORKING PLACE AT FOYER 5

(TBC) CIRCOM TRAINING FOR INVITED JOURNALISTS

# beyond words a story of trust



#europcom



## Strand 3: Trust in institutions - Communicating credibility, transparency and trustworthiness

10h45 - 11h45  
JDE 52

Webstreaming

EN-FR

### WORKSHOP 3 - REVITALIZING TRUST: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Moderation by

**Carlotta ALFONSI**, Open Governance Policy Officer, OECD

Speakers:

**Elizabeth FRY**, Head of Communications Assessment and Analysis, SHAPE/NATO

**Martin WÄHLISCH**, Associate Professor of Transformative Technologies, Innovation and Global Affairs, University of Birmingham

**Speaker 3** (TBC)

10h45 - 11h45  
ATRIUM 5  
EN

### IDEAS LAB 3 - TITLE

Facilitation by

**Name**, Title

10H45 - 11H45  
JDE 53  
EN

### TRAINING 3 - TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Training by

**Katarzyna KOWALEWSKA**, Social Media & Communication Consultant

### Break

12h00 - 12h45  
JDE 52

Webstreaming

EN-ES-FR-IT

### CLOSING SESSION

Trust in communities by

**Heike RAAB**, State Secretary for Europe and Media of Rhineland-Palatinate and Chair of the CoR's Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC) (TBC)

**Olivier RÖPKE**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (TBC)

Trust in technology by

**Nadia CALVIÑO**, President of the European Investment Bank (TBC)

**Elsa PILICHOWSKI**, Director for Public Governance, OECD (TBC)

Trust in institutions by

**Dana SPINANT**, Director General for Communication, European Commission's Directorate General for Communication (TBC)

**Council Representative** (TBC)

Moderation by

**Emna CHAOUCH**, Public speaking expert

12h45 - 13h30  
ATRIUM 5

### Networking lunch

(TBC) CIRCOM TRAINING FOR INVITED JOURNALISTS

MARKET & NETWORKING PLACE AT FOYER 5



# Inspiring organisational models

## The UK GCS generative AI policy<sup>1</sup>

38

The UK Government Communications Service (GCS) is committed to embracing responsible use of generative AI technology to deliver effective, engaging and increasingly relevant communications to the public.

Through the responsible use of generative AI and commitment to our public service values, we aim to set the standard for excellence in government communication in the AI age, and inspire trust and confidence. The policy set out clear principles for all GCS members to follow in their use of AI within their organisations.

Our aim is to seize the benefits of the revolution in generative AI, and ensure all of Government Communications can responsibly harness this exciting new technology, for the benefit of the public.

### Definition of generative AI technology

Generative AI is a specialised form of AI that can interpret and generate high-quality outputs including text and images; opening up the potential for opportunities for organisations, including delivering efficiency savings or developing new language capability.

- Artificial Intelligence (AI): computer systems able to perform tasks usually requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.
- Generative AI is a type of AI system capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts.

### Our principles for responsible adoption of generative AI

#### Government communications will:

- Always use generative AI in accordance with the latest official government guidance. For example: the [Generative AI framework for HM Government](#), the [Introduction to AI Assurance](#), and the GCS Ethical Framework for Responsible Innovation. This is in addition to the latest regulations and legislations in the UK. Please [see Annex A for more information](#). For GCS, acting responsibly in our use of generative AI means

operating consistently in line with our values. This includes the [Civil Service Code](#), the [Government Publicity Conventions](#), and is underpinned by the values of Democracy, Rule of Law, and Individual Liberty. See the [GCS Innovating with Impact Strategy](#) for further information.

- The central GCS team at the Cabinet Office will provide training on responsible use of generative AI to all government communicators, in particular around ensuring accuracy, inclusivity, and mitigating biases. For example, this could be biases against the race, religion, gender, age, of an individual or group.
- Require that all our contracted and framework suppliers adhere to this GCS policy on the responsible use of generative AI, and have safeguards in place to ensure this. Ultimately, our contracted and framework suppliers remain responsible for their use of the technology.
- Uphold factuality in our use of generative AI. This means not creating content that misleads, in addition to not altering or changing existing digital content in a way that removes or replaces its original meaning or messaging.
- Engage with appropriate government organisations, strategic suppliers, technology providers, and civil society, around significant developments in generative AI, and the implications for its use in government communications.
- Continue to review reputable research into the public's attitudes towards generative AI and consider how this policy should evolve in response.

Government Communications may use generative AI where it can drive increasingly effective, and engaging government communications, for the public good, in an ethical manner.

For example:

- Use generative AI to develop communications content. For example:
  - \* Use generative AI to assess and tailor communications to make them increasingly inclusive, accessible, helpful and relevant. For example, this could include generating automatic subtitles and translations.
  - \* Generate first draft text, visuals, or audio, for social media posts or website content, in order to better reach our audiences.
  - \* Inspire the creative and design process, supporting rapid ideation for designers and content creators.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the UK GCS web source [GCS generative AI policy - GCS](#). (Full text including Annex A can be downloaded from the web page concerned).



- \* Adapt existing visual content, such as resizing the aspect ratio of an existing image in order to fit different digital formats or screen sizes.
- \* Enhancing the quality and fidelity of existing audio or video content.
- Use generative AI to quickly apply best practices from industry and GCS standards and frameworks to our work. For example:
  - \* [GCS guide to campaign planning: OASIS](#)
  - \* [GCS Evaluation Cycle](#)
  - \* [COM-B Model for Behaviour Change](#)
  - \* [GCS Crisis Communications: Operating Model](#)
- Use generative AI to explore problems or topics. For example through:
  - \* Offering diverse perspectives and opening up thinking on a topic.
  - \* Providing critical analysis of a topic or proposed approach.
  - \* Identifying previously unconsidered risks and threats associated with a topic.
  - \* Supporting qualitative and quantitative research and surveys, at greater scale. Potentially through the use of conversational AI tools to encourage more detailed survey responses.

Government communications aims to build trust in our approach through acting transparently.

Therefore we will:

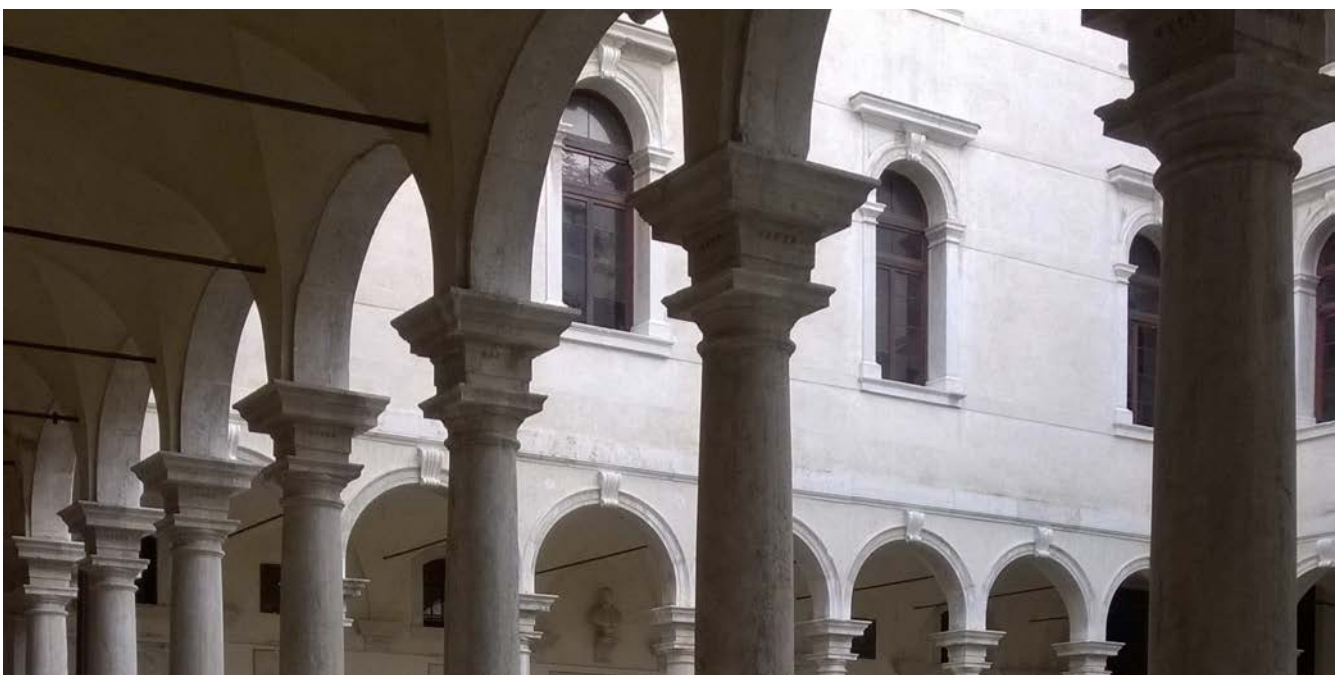
- Secure written consent from a human before their likeness is replicated using AI for the purposes of delivering government communications. In the limited number of cases we currently expect, a record of this will be made available to the interested public via an official channel, for example, listed on the GCS website. This is to ensure that legitimate government communications can be discerned from deep-fakes or other mis/dis-information. Our aim is to mitigate against any unintended consequences that may come from

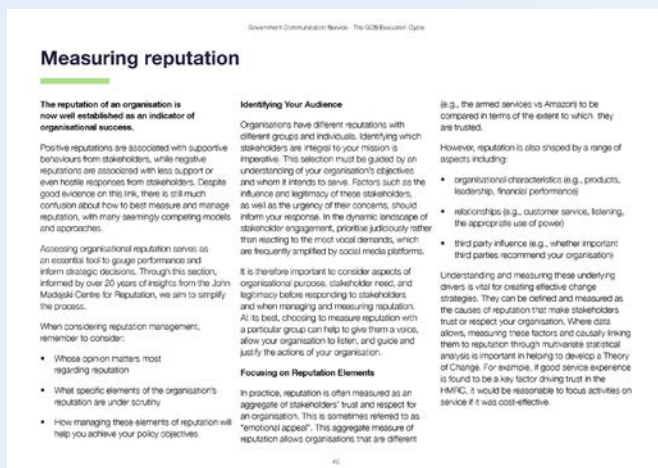
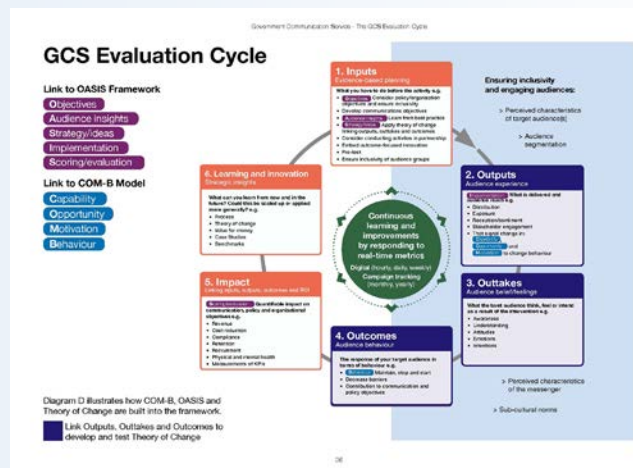
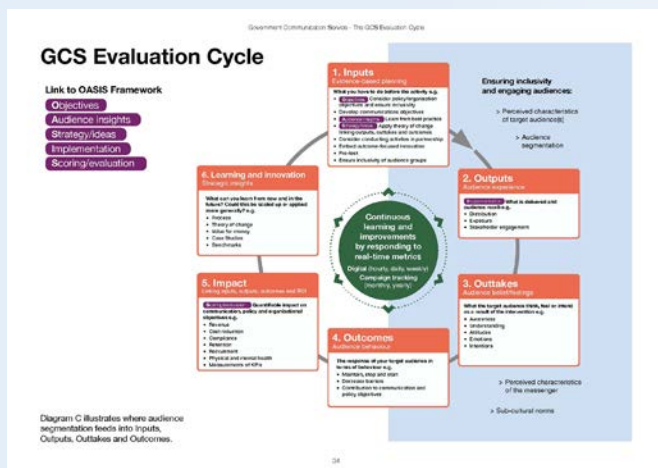
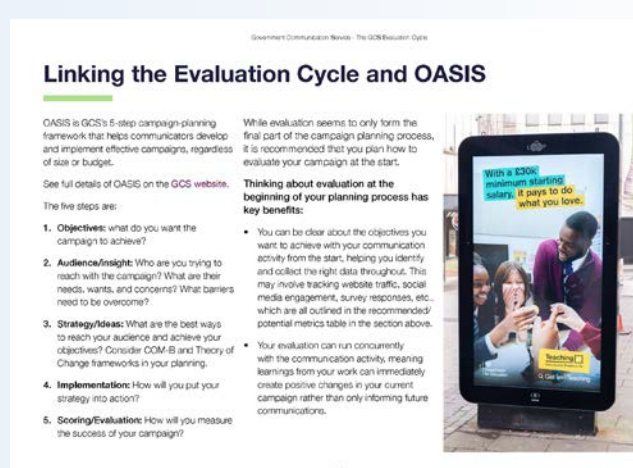
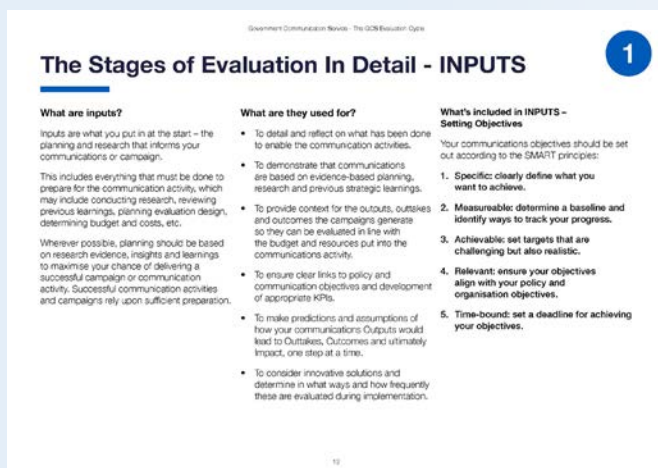
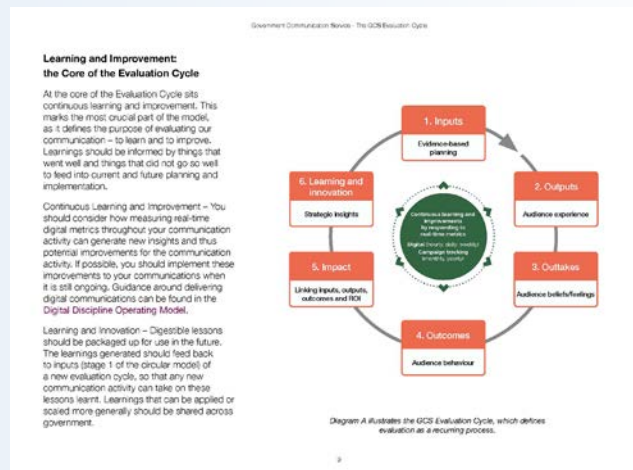
greater use of AI avatars in government communications.

- Clearly notify the public when they are interacting with a conversational AI service rather than a human. This will include to what extent, and for what purposes, an individual's interactions may be logged or used. For example, using anonymised data on interactions to improve the quality of the service.
- Publish a log of changes to this policy to the GCS website. Generative AI is a fast-developing field, and our approach will evolve and adapt to keep in line with emerging technologies, risks, thought leadership, and official government guidance.

### Government communications will not:

- Apply generative AI technologies where it conflicts with our values or principles, for example, as set out in the [Civil Service Code](#), the Government's publicity conventions, or [GCS guidance on proprietary and ethics](#).
- Use generative AI to deliver communications to the public without human oversight, to uphold accuracy, inclusivity and mitigate biases. Human oversight will either be part of:
  - \* The production and review stages for content that will remain static. For example this could include press releases, printed posters, and direct mail. In this scenario, human oversight includes the GCS member(s) creating the content, and the GCS lead responsible for the communications activity.
  - \* The production, testing and evaluation of dynamically generated or interactive communications before they go live. For example this could include chatbots, live conversational services, and services that dynamically generate digital advertising content. In this scenario, human oversight includes the technical team designing and developing the interactive communications, and the GCS lead responsible for the communications activity.
- Share any private, protected, or sensitive information with third-party AI providers without having appropriate data sharing and security agreements in place.





# Agenda 2030 e comunicazione in Europa

di Stefano Rolando

## Sostenibilità ambientale, sociale, economica e digitale per cittadini, imprese e istituzioni

*Conferenza presso la Sala europea intitolata a David Sassoli, Piazza Venezia 8 Roma – 9 aprile 2025*

Intervengo dopo un'utile focalizzazione degli scenari principali scelti come tema di questa conferenza: la sostenibilità, la transizione digitale, il ruolo del sistema universitario. Eccetera.

Credo che dedicare qualche riflessione alla “comunicazione pubblica” (poi precisiamo meglio il termine), per cogliere la soggettività di chi deve operare in quegli scenari, sia parte degli obiettivi della conferenza di oggi.

E per parte mia – come faccio da tempo, credo senza le prudenze di rappresentanze e appartenenze – provo a mantenere uno sguardo sugli importanti scenari opzionati, ma guardando in faccia anche la realtà di un sistema professionale e civile che ha problemi professionali e civili e al tempo stesso, malgrado la materia venga in qualche modo insegnata, non esiste disciplinarmente, dunque ha anche una imprecisione di ruolo nei processi formativi attorno a cui è bene discutere.

Titolo (*Europa al mediotermine*) e sottotitolo (*le forme integrate della sostenibilità*) mi hanno suggerito di dare un carattere al mio intervento (fatto a metà come operatore italiano, tra l'altro docente della materia; e a metà come operatore europeo, cioè come presidente della rete europea dei responsabili della comunicazione istituzionale dei paesi membri e delle istituzioni UE) attorno a un tema che macino da tempo ma che ancora non vedo né a regime né, per dir meglio, nella agenda vera del dibattito pubblico.

**Parto dall'evoluzione di significati della stessa espressione “comunicazione pubblica”.**

Scusate l'aneddotica, ma da oltre 20 anni ho provato a variare l'aggettivo “pubblica” in “pubblica utilità”, nel **convincimento che pubblico non voglia dire necessariamente “statale”**.

Tuttavia, se volessimo – come ancora molto si fa e si pensa – stringere il significato di “comunicazione pubblica” a “comunicazione istituzionale” (non è un caso che fondando l'Associazione

italiana facemmo qualcosa che al tempo non tutti capirono, cioè, di chiamarla **Associazione della comunicazione pubblica e istituzionale**, perché già nel 1990 si intuiva che bisognava differenziare i significati) ebbene se volessimo prendere una strada limitativa oggi saremmo in pieno dramma.

Lo dico perché prima di bearsi del “posto sicuro” si dovrebbe comprendere il tema principale di dover fronteggiare **una marea di sfiducia dei cittadini**. Il quadro istituzionale – tolto il Capo dello Stato e le Forze dell'Ordine – è oggi nella demoscopia sulla fiducia degli italiani tutto sotto la maggioranza di fiducia (fino a livelli paurosi dal punto di vista democratico). Non vedo questo tema al centro della riorganizzazione culturale e professionale.

E dovremmo soprattutto centuplicare il lavoro – che spesso avviene senza vero scopo sociale che si fa nel quadro istituzionale – per combattere **l'immensa marea di analfabetismo funzionale** che costituisce il cappio al collo di moderne funzioni istituzionali. Ma anche questa funzione fa sempre meno parte dell'engagement degli operatori che vedono prevalere – nel quadro delle istituzioni e della P.A. – compiti di servizio diciamo “anagrafici” e poca sostanza sociale, dovendo spesso lasciare la parola alle funzioni politiche (entrate in forza negli ambiti della comunicazione) che si dedicano a visibilità e consenso.

La **comunicazione istituzionale**, ormai lo si percepisce da anni, senza una vera e strategica proiezione operativa sulle condizioni dei cittadini, sui bisogni sociali, sulle problematiche di crescita e sviluppo, si trova in un ticket spesso poco produttivo e sotteraneamente conflittuale con **la comunicazione politica**.

**E tuttavia le crisi esistono**, i bisogni crescono, così che le necessità di fronteggiamento competente delle realtà esterne in tutta Europa assumono potenzialità e coerenza speciale.

In Italia esistono naturalmente casi virtuosi, ma esiste anche una realtà frenata nella tenaglia descritta. Così che parlando di comunicazione e sostenibilità plurale (economica, sociale, ambientale) il problema accennato diventa cruciale e prioritario.

**Va detto tuttavia che tutto evolve.** Anche nel quadro impressionante e globale di stravolgimento del campo d'azione. Dalla Russia agli Stati Uniti, per stare ai global player il mondo, sembra tutto un paradosso sconcertante. Ebbene un sobbalzo di pensiero critico si profila in Europa ed è parte dello slancio – ancor frenato e non del tutto fasato rispetto agli eventi – di **cercare vie di uscita proprio nella ricucitura del rapporto tra**



**istituzioni e cittadini** perché è qui che si gioca sia una partita identitaria (le radici dell'Europa) sia una partita di indipendenza su cui ora si vedono i contorni più attentamente, dentro questo repentino passaggio tra globalizzazione e deglobalizzazione che sembra giocarsi più sul terreno della "potenza" che su quello del "diritto". Non casualmente facciamo questa conferenza in un ambito europeo, insieme a M.E. che è parte di questa iniziativa di rigenerazione europea e lo facciamo in una sala dedicata a David Sassoli – nostro amico e collega – che è stato parte di questa stessa discussione in tanti modi e occasioni.

Il mio ragionamento sugli spazi che possono riaprirsi nel quadro descritto (lo svolgo anche nella sede europea del "Club di Venezia", per esempio alla prossima plenaria di maggio ad Atene) tiene conto di modifiche possibili di forma e sostanza.

Ci serve, per esempio, uno **sforzo concettuale** (e il titolo e il sottotitolo di questa conferenza aiutano a capire) per provare a **concepire l'espressione "pubblico" non come sinonimo di "statale" ma come senso di una comunicazione condivisa, cioè in comune**.

Così la vera funzione pubblica che oggi è riconoscibile diventa necessariamente quella di dare a questa professione (e ai suoi contenuti prevalenti) il senso di essere motore del **dialogo di sistema**. Per sistema si intende ciò che viene in mente quando si discute se una città, una regione, una nazione, **fanno o non fanno sistema**.

Cioè, parliamo, dell'efficienza e dell'efficacia di un **tavolo di lavoro al contempo pubblico, privato e sociale**. Non ci limitiamo alla sola convivenza frizionante tra apparato istituzionale e area della comunicazione politica.

Per altro è un tavolo che ben conosciamo, quando non è tanto in gioco la narrazione – spesso banale, anche se necessaria – dell'azione di governo (materia, infatti, spesso ricca di genericità e propagandismo). Ma quando sono in gioco soluzioni urgenti per accompagnare con presidio, costanza e valore aggiunto **tutto ciò che induce ad affrontare una crisi**.

Le situazioni di crisi sono all'ordine del giorno e sono il vero cantiere in cui il paradigma della comunicazione frenata può prendere altre strade.

**Una crisi per definizione è la rottura di quella sostenibilità** a cui fa riferimento il titolo della nostra conferenza. Sostenibilità non più come si diceva agli albori solo ambientale, ma – il professor Enrico Giovannini la ha descritta molto bene – oramai anche sociale, culturale, identitaria.

E sono proprio le condizioni di crisi a indurre l'adozione di un carattere stabile, in certi casi persino proceduralizzato, comunque convergente tra operatori pubblici e amministrativi, organizzazioni di impresa e di rappresentanze di interesse e soggetti della rappresentanza di valori e diritti.

È un carattere funzionale sempre **alla ricerca di denominatori comuni**. E viene da pensare a quanto lavoro pre-comunicativo ci sia in questa ricerca. Denominatori che danno valore aggiunto e condizioni di efficacia alla comunicazione. Comunicazione che al tempo stesso è di contrasto, di prevenzione e di rigenerazione.

Sappiamo per certo che **tanto la globalizzazione quanto la deglobalizzazione** – che fanno ora staffetta nella cornice globale – inducono i contesti nazionali a favorire questa trasversalità di un modello organizzativo, ancora rozzamente sperimentato e ancora casuale (sia dal punto di vista territoriale che tematico).

Sappiamo anche questa trasversalità si estende anche a territori gelosi dal punto di vista degli Stati. Penso alla sicurezza o all'ordine pubblico o ai territori di iniziativa mista ma con regole pubbliche come l'educazione e la salute.

Insomma – per volerla fare breve – questa **trasformazione strutturale della comunicazione pubblica** può anche consentirci di abbandonare un po' il frizionamento ormai perdente con la comunicazione politica (verranno tempi migliori, si riformeranno condizioni qualitative più accettabili), per prendersi la sua grande rivincita nel **dialogo di mondi (impresa e società) che hanno estremo bisogno di misurarsi – settore per settore – con chi rappresenta le responsabilità di attuazione delle normative**.

E ancora un pensiero va esplicitato partendo dalle cose che sono state dette finora.

In questa ricerca di comuni denominatori funzionali, ci sono **due trasversalità che oggi devono essere considerate pre-condizioni** nel contesto occidentale e in un paese come l'Italia di oggi in particolare.

- Una è la **trasversalità di un ripensamento strategico del rapporto con la transizione digitale** in cui non è detto che dobbiamo berci tutto il quadro pseudo-cognitivo che ci va imponendo il sistema bigtech mondiale. Non credo che (almeno a breve) noi europei potremmo mai trasformarci in una organizzazione cinese che appare oggi indipendente anche rispetto all'evoluzione dell'intelligenza artificiale. Ma credo che a fronte dello scenario che vediamo scatenarsi nel rapporto attuale di potenza che gli americani intendono esercitare con l'artiglieria digitale, beh, **il ripensamento passa attraverso una lettura condivisa che istituzioni, imprese e sociale farebbero bene a svolgere insieme**. In ogni caso questa trasversalità strategica ci fa dire che la tecnologia resta nella nostra cultura civile e professionale **un ineludibile mezzo non un fine**, perché il fine resta quello della modernizzazione delle istituzioni coniugato alla soluzione di problemi sociali.
- La seconda è – come si accennato – **la trasversalità dell'Europa**. Non la lascio certo per ultima perché essa è diventata **la cornice ineludibile di questo schema**, che anzi ora deve accelerare tempi e metodi.

Entrambi questi ambiti devo comunque indurre soprattutto le associazioni e le rappresentanze della comunicazione pubblica a **non pensare che la critica degli andamenti attuali significhi non avere dialogo e sollecitazione rispetto agli spazi che anche la politica mantiene in forma critica** circa le distorsioni che si sono andate creando. Lo spazio per **agire in quelle nicchie del sistema politico** che ancora vogliano essere **soggetto della modernizzazione democratica** e di salvaguardia di grandi tradizioni di libertà, ci sono sempre e il dialogo va mantenuto vivo e rispettoso.

L'intervento, tra gli ultimi di questa sessione, del Rettore dell'Università di Lecce in rappresentanza della CRUI, **prof. Fabio**



**Pollice**, per altro con visione generale interessante e condivisibile, mi spinge **ad un'ultima considerazione** che potrà anche impattare con i lavori del pomeriggio rispetto alle esperienze di molti amici e colleghi.

Resto convinto che per poter affrontare le trasversalità accennate e il senso di marcia che questa idea civile e professionale della comunicazione pubblica prefigura, **sia necessario non concepire questo processo solo come una burocratica variazione di procedura.**

Perché esso va intesa come **ripensamento dei codici civili, etici e politici che non dipendono se non per poche cose dai comunicatori.** E va intesa come una **gigantesca mission per il sistema universitario e della ricerca** per le ragioni che appunto il rettore prof. Pollice ha descritto.

E tuttavia **il sistema universitario deve farsi carico in questo rinnovamento di prospettive di due questioni grandi come una casa che ritengo irrisolte.**

- **La prima** è quella che è giusto dire che fare università vuol dire fare didattica, ricerca e cosiddetta terza missione (oggi - tenuto conto della sfortuna di tutto ciò che è "terzo" - sarebbe meglio dire *public engagement*). Tuttavia, non è frequente, se non raro, vedere oggi che si faccia carriera (vera), costruendo spazi di scuola accademica produttiva, con la didattica, la ricerca e la terza missione. L'up grading avviene per altre vie. Non mi dilungo su questo ma è in relazione a questa premessa che non vedo un reale spazio accademico adeguato circa la crescita di un ruolo strategico per questa materia.
- **La seconda** è la ragione più sostanziale di questa fragilità di ruolo. Cioè, che **le scienze della comunicazione** approdate a legittimità accademica 35 anni fa (fui parte della commissione ministeriale istitutiva, in una condizione, diciamo così, minoritaria) non hanno **mai avuto**, in un lasso di tempo così forte, **dignità disciplinare** perché gli ambiti disciplinari più forti d'origine dei docenti (cioè *Sociologia* ed *Economia*) non lo hanno mai consentito. In aggiunta i tecnologi e i giuristi che si occupano di comunicazione e comunicazioni sono rimasti ben protetti dai loro ambiti e così **la fusione interdisciplinare che si riferisce alla più importante economia del mondo oggi non ha un ambito disciplinare in cui esprimersi** e in cui comporre - perché oggi ci sono condizioni per *ricomporre* le parti - le separazioni tra comunicazione di impresa, comunicazione pubblica e comunicazione sociale (nel senso anche auspicato prima per creare condizioni di convergenza fattuale).

Magari un giorno anche su questi aspetti di scenario tenteremo l'avviamento di un rinnovato dialogo.



43



**Stefano Rolando**

Professore di Teoria e tecniche della Comunicazione pubblica all'Università IULM di Milano, Presidente del Club di Venezia

# AI State of Play: The Technology, Strategic Communication Practice and Academia<sup>1</sup>

Anne Gregory<sup>2</sup> & Brian G. Smith<sup>3</sup>

## Editorial

Discussions about Artificial Intelligence (AI) appear to infuse every aspect of human life, whether that be about relationships and human transactions, health, war, scientific developments, political systems, optimization of energy and other life support systems, space, the public sphere and business. It seems that AI has become a ubiquitous term to label almost anything that involves a computer generating an output that is not immediately recognizable as related to the direct human input that has prompted it. In this Special Issue, we use Wang's (2019) definition of AI: AI embraces a range of computing technologies resembling human intelligence, ranging from expert systems which are applications that make decisions based on complex rules or if/then logic, to applications that can emulate the common sense, free will and emotions of human beings.

The driving force behind commercially available AI, including to strategic communication professionals is a few, large global technology companies who have the resources to develop and the power to protect their innovations. However, the entry of DeepSeek's chatbot alongside its DeepSeek-R1 model into the market in January 2025, which was created at a fraction of the price of its competitors, has rocked the complacency of these big tech companies (BBC, 2025). These companies are driven by largely market imperatives to remain ahead in the AI race and the speed at which new innovations are being introduced is staggering. The global AI market is huge and projected to grow from \$621 billion in 2024 to \$2740 billion in 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2024).

As editors of this Special Issue, we are painfully aware that because of the fast-moving developments in AI, it will be out of date as soon as it is written. However, we believe we have a duty to capture a point in time on a difficult to project journey and to reflect on where we are and where we may be in the near future. While the number of articles on AI is increasing in the major strategic communication and public relations journals, scholarly output is still limited and theorizing immature. However, we were gratified to receive 57 abstracts, the largest number ever received by this Journal for a Special Issue and a clear indication that AI has arrived on the research agenda in our field. Our aim is to encourage more and faster output in this area and this Special Issue is a demonstration of the range of scholarship that is now emerging.

In putting together this introduction to the Special Issue, we have looked at three perspectives: developments in AI technology and its effects on strategic communication, developments in the practice, particularly patterns of AI adoption and finally, academic progress in writing about AI. It is the integration of these three elements that is difficult, mainly because it is almost impossible to keep up with the speed of technological innovations and therefore to implement in practice and analyse them through research. This logically calls for the creation of a community of practice that involves all three parties and for greater collaborative working not just to develop innovations in AI (where there is already good collaboration), but to think through its implications and what this means for individuals, organizations and society as a whole. Here, we would agree with Buhmann et al. (2020) that oversight by experts of all kinds, not just in technology, and civil society is desirable. We call for that community of practice collaboration to be created and are actively recruiting members.

First then, to technological developments.

## The advance of technology

When the Call for Abstracts and Papers for this Special Issue was announced at the end of 2023, CustomGPTs (Custom Generative Pretrained Transformer) was being launched (November 2023): within two months, users had created over 3 million custom versions (OpenAI, 2024a). Since then, the number of Artificial Intelligence (AI) products, tools and applications that have been made publicly available has been rising exponentially, as has the sophistication of these innovations. For example, in May 2024, ChatGPT 4.0 (OpenAI, 2024b) was launched, which, rather than accepting just text as input prompts, could take in videos and images, as well as accessing the internet in real time. It was made widely available via Microsoft's chatbot Copilot. Over the last 18 months chatbots have become increasingly sophisticated, multilingual and human-like to the point where they can hardly be distinguished from humans and in some situations are preferred over humans (E. Park, 2025 in this issue). During 2024 companies such as Synthesia and Adobe progressed their transformation of text to images or video and produced avatars of hyper-realistic quality. Google NotebookLM generated podcasts from text for the first time

These 'tools', which were eminently useful in operational communication work were accompanied by more general

<sup>1</sup> This article is the copyright of Taylor and Francis and should not be reproduced without permission.

<sup>2</sup> Huddersfield Business School, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK

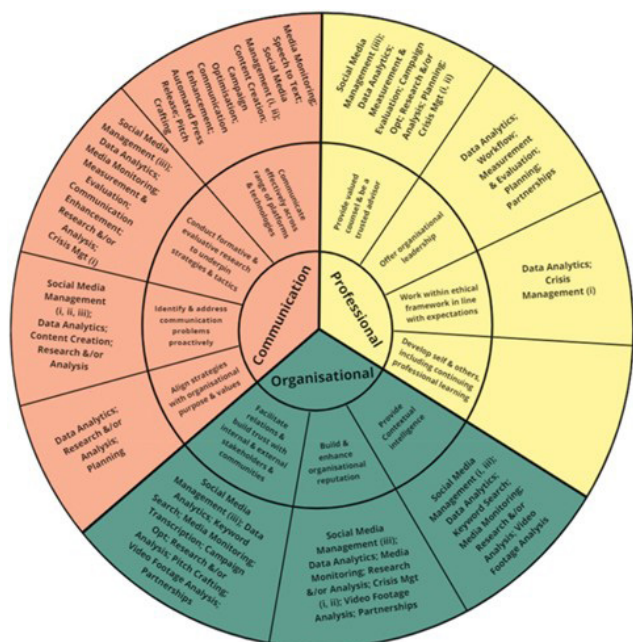
<sup>3</sup> Integrated Marketing Communications, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi, USA



The attributes that once seemed unique to the human such as empathy, an ability to strategize, to be aware of context and to build meaningful relationships (Gregory et al., 2023), now seem within reach of AI assistants (see applications above, Inzlicht et al., 2023; Oh & Ki, 2024). As Nothhaft and Seiffert-Brockmann (2023) state most academics in the humanities and social scientists at the beginning of the 2000's "still felt secure in their conviction that the human mind was safely beyond the reach of technology" (p. 152). This is no longer the case.

In the practice of strategic communication, use of generative AI tools was relatively restricted until the arrival of ChatGPT in November 2022 (Smith & Waddington, 2023; Yue et al., 2024). Since then there has been an explosion in use. The latest Microsoft/USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations Relevance Report (USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations, 2025), provides the results of a survey (details of survey and sample not available) conducted with WE Communications which

When matching these tasks to the Global Capability Framework for Public Relations and Communication Management (Gregory & Fawkes, 2019), Gregory et al. (2023) found (Figure 1) that AI use had penetrated the Communication capability category most, with significant proportions of work in some areas, such as *Communicate effectively across a range of platforms and technologies* and *Conduct formative and evaluative research*, being undertaken by AI.



In the Organizational capability category, AI was being used to assist strategic communication work, such as providing insights on which to *Facilitate relations and build trust . . .* and Provide contextual intelligence. What is striking is the Professional

capability category which shows the least penetration of AI. As a participant in the research stated, "strategic communication is more than a set of tasks". In 2023 it was extremely difficult for AI to Provide valued counsel, Offer leadership, and Work within ethical frameworks and it was in these areas that strategic communication professionals exercised their strategic expertise. Their expert understanding of considerations such as timing and context, their ability to integrate and calibrate decisions with judgement, empathy and an understanding of what is 'right' within a particular context, along with their ethical calibration was what gave them the edge over AI systems. That has changed in the last few months with the new reasoning models. With the correct prompts, these models can build in these factors now. This begs the question about the future role of the strategic communication professional. It is outside the scope of this introduction to explore this topic in any detail, but the conclusion of the practitioner community is that it has to be to move to the governance of these systems, not only in strategic communication, but for the whole organization (Annenberg Center for Public Relations, 2025; Buhmann & Gregory, 2023; Deloitte, 2024).

## The academy and AI

The sheer speed of developments in AI makes it difficult for the academy to keep pace and the publishing cycle means that many articles are dated when they appear. However, there are important observations to make from a position where there was very little published about AI in the leading strategic communication and public relations journals prior to 2022, to currently where there is a steady and increasing flow.

As with the academy's approach to the advent of social media, there have been numerous theoretical and applied articles on the operational uses of AI in strategic communication, for example, writing press releases (Suciati et al., 2021), use of chatbots in customer service interactions, health care, for social listening and in general (Jiang et al., 2022; Murtarelli et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2023); analyzing media clippings and social media discussions (Balaji et al., 2021) and the personalization of content (Hermann, 2022). Indeed, as Smith and Waddington (2023) and Brockhaus et al. (2023) discovered, there are thousands of applications available for use in strategic communication. Their adoption is driven by strategic communication professionals in a desire for efficiency, improved accuracy and enhanced decision-making (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022; López Jiménez & Ouariachi, 2021). They are also being driven by organizational leaders to use AI because of the perceived efficiencies it brings (Gregory et al., 2023; Zeffass et al., 2024), despite the risks it involves and despite capability issues (Gregory et al., 2023; Virmani & Gregory, 2021; Zeffass et al., 2020).

Beyond scholarship on the operational aspects of AI in strategic communication, the academy has a number of developing streams of research which include both theoretical and practical insights. A strong theme is around the ethics of AI systems including the inscrutability of the algorithmic black box, privacy and data security, bias and discrimination, the loss of human agency, governance, accountability and issues of trust (Bowen, 2024; Bachmann, 2019; Buhmann & Gregory, 2023; Germinder & Capizzo, 2025 in this issue; Logan & Waymer, 2024; K. Park & Yoon, 2024). Another emerging theme is AI in various functional and specialist areas such as internal communication; investor

relations, crisis communication and CSR (Laskin & D'Agostino, 2024; Jiang et al., 2025, Xiao & Yu, 2025; Yue et al., 2024). Indeed, as the articles in this Special Issues indicate, AI's role in crisis communication is coming through as a strong area of focus. A more sceptical strand in the growing literature revolves around the apparent blind acceptance that AI is 'a good thing', the naivety in the profession, its lack of capability to embrace AI and the future roles it will force, have gone alongside a technology optimism that betrays a lack of understanding of the profound changes and potential threats AI will bring (Bourne, 2019; Galloway & Swiatek, 2018; Swiatek et al., 2024; Zeffass et al., 2024).

Consideration of the literature in the field to date leads to the observation that it is still rather 'pick and mix'. There are a range of topics and perspectives that are being explored and while there are some emerging themes as the paragraph above indicates, there is much exploratory ground to cover. That is hardly surprising, since as been demonstrated, AI potentially affects every area of strategic communication work, the individuals who undertake it, the whole function, its future role in organizations and its societal obligations and accountabilities.

## The articles in the special issue

It is against this backdrop of technological, practice and academic endeavour that the ten articles in this Special Issue are located. They cover an eclectic range of topics, reflecting the long tentacles of AI into strategic communication.

The first three articles cover different aspects of the emerging theme of crisis communication and AI. The first (Liu, 2025) considers the dynamics of ethics of care messaging to mitigate crises arising from violations of social norms and values by AI applications. For example, a crisis was triggered when an AI image generator depicted people of color as Nazis. Results show that there is a clear interaction between crisis response strategy and ethics of care messaging in such circumstances and practical implications for reputation management are drawn from this.

The second article on crisis (Ray et al., 2025), explores whether a crisis response, disclosed as AI-scripted, will be accepted by stakeholders and what affects this may have on message credibility, attribution of responsibility, message acceptance, and organizational reputation. The results of an on-line experiment revealed no effect of disclosure on message credibility or attribution of responsibility. However, message acceptance served as a mediator between message credibility and attribution of responsibility on organizational reputation.

In the third article on crisis, Zhan et al. (2025) contend that the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) presents new opportunities for governments to respond to crises with greater efficiency. However, studies have paid limited attention to AI's role in such situations and its potential impact on public perceptions. In this study the authors conducted an on-line experiment with the results revealing that among crisis response strategies, the integration of instruction-based and care-based approaches elicited the highest levels of trust in government.

The fourth article (Lee & Mitson, 2025) examines how the rapid rise of AI has significantly transformed the gig economy and how work is managed and executed. The study investigates



gig workers' perceptions of artificial intelligence (AI)-driven managerial communication, focusing on leader authenticity and organizational transparency. Interviews with 26 active gig workers reveal that while gig apps are efficient in delivering necessary information, their communication often lacks empathy and human elements, leading to mixed perceptions of trust among gig workers. It underscores the importance of designing app-based communication that reflects organizational values and ethical standards which foster positive and transparent work environments.

The fifth article (Park, 2025) examines the use of AI versus human chat agents when discussing public health misinformation. In an experimental survey of 280 adults, empathy was found to be essential by either agent to encouraging use of online chat. AI delivered empathy was more effective when discussing embarrassing issues like sexually transmitted diseases, whereas human empathy was more effective for neutral topics. Practical advice on the mix of AI and human agents and the types of public health topics to be led by each, guides the development of customized online chat.

The sixth article (Kim et al., 2025) studies the issue of opinion spamming in eRulemaking where mass or fraudulent comments damage regulatory public engagement and put at risk policy outcomes. In-depth interviews with 14 agency professionals identified common challenges including the distortion of public opinion and trust erosion. The study puts forward a model to enhance public engagement while offering assurance about transparency and ethics. In the seventh article, the authors (Pimentel et al., 2025) explain how cause-related organizations use multiple channels to encourage spatial and social closeness with vulnerable populations, but this is not always provided by traditional media. Spatial computing and augmented reality (AR) can address this gap; however, resource scarcity and technical skill gaps within non-profits can limit their use. This case study is of one international non-profit and explores the feasibility and potential of spatial computing as a strategic communication tool. Using participatory design principles, the researchers co-created and integrated an AR-based experience for donor engagement and discovered how key spatial computing affordances can facilitate meaningful interactions bridging spatial divides. They also found that the creation of these experiences was within the capability of not-for-profit staff.

Article eight (Uysal & Deng, 2025) investigates a practical and theoretical gap in the literature which would assist senior public relations professionals in integrating AI into organizational operations. Using a mixed methods empirical approach, the research explores AI applications in public relations, then draws on the Model of Personal Computing Utilization (MPCU) from the field of Information Systems, to develop a robust framework to analyze AI's role and its impact on reshaping public relations practices. The findings show the critical influence of organizational dynamics on AI adoption and bring out the importance of dynamic capabilities in leveraging AI as a source of competitive advantage.

In article nine, Kaclova (2025) provides a unique look into AI adoption in strategic communication and public relations in a commonly overlooked region. Using Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Global Capability Framework shows that AI adoption is developed for tasks where the advantage is clear, like in content creation. Despite growing acceptance of

AI in public relations, the author calls for research to explore AI tool rejection. The final article (Germinder & Capizzo, 2025) explores ethical advocacy based on market-place theory for public relations and deontological concepts in implementing responsible artificial intelligence (RAI). Based on interviews with 21 strategic communication professionals, the study provides guidance for the ethical use of GAI. It recommends minimum standards to safeguard the communications space. These standards propose updated definitions of access, process, truth and disclosure and clarifies the importance of their role in implementing RAI to improve both strategic communications counsel and RAI policies and their implementation in organizations.

We recommend this Special Issue to you to enlarge your understanding and appreciation of the scholarly work that is now being conducted in the field.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## ORCID

Anne Gregory <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0711-7119>

Brian G. Smith <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7050-1463>

## References

- Annenberg Center for Public Relations. (2025). *The relevance report: AI activated*. UCS Annenberg Center for Public Relations. [https://issuu.com/uscannenberg/docs/usc\\_ascj\\_relevance\\_report\\_2025\\_1pg?fr=sZjA5MjcZMTA1NzY](https://issuu.com/uscannenberg/docs/usc_ascj_relevance_report_2025_1pg?fr=sZjA5MjcZMTA1NzY)
- Bachmann, P. (2019). Public relations in liquid modernity: How big data and automation cause moral blindness. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 8(3), 319–331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X19863833>
- Balaji, T. K., Annavarapu, C. S. R., & Bablani, A. (2021). Machine learning algorithms for social media analysis: A survey. *Computer Science Review*, 40, 100395. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosrev.2021.100395>
- BBC. (2025). *DeepSeek: The Chinese AI App that has the world talking*. January 27, 2025. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yv5976z9p0>
- Bourne, C. (2019). AI cheerleaders: Public relations, neo-liberalism and artificial intelligence. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 8(2), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X19835250>
- Bowen, S. A. (2024). "If it can be done, it will be done." AI ethical standards and a dual role for public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 50(5) Article 102515. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2024.102513>
- Brockhaus, J., Buhmann, A., & Zerfass, A. (2023). Digitalization in corporate communications: Understanding the emergence and consequences of CommTech and digital infrastructure. *Corporate Communications*, 28(2), 274–292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCJ-03-2022-0035>
- Buhmann, A., & Gregory, A. (2023). Digital corporate communication and artificial intelligence and future roles. In V. Luoma-Aho & M. Badham (Eds.), *Handbook of digital corporate communication* (pp. 281–296). Edward Elgar.
- Buhmann, A., Paßmann, J., & Fieseler, C. (2020). Managing algorithmic accountability: Balancing reputational concerns, engagement strategies, and the potential of rational discourse. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(2), 265–280. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04226-4>
- Chintalapati, S., & Pandey, S. K. (2022). Artificial intelligence in marketing: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Market Research*, 64(1), 38–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14707853211018428>
- Deloitte. (2024). *Volatility and value: A study of corporate affairs strategy*,

structures and operations in times of uncertainty. <https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/services/risk-advisory/research/corporate-affairs-report.html>

Fortune Business Insights. (2024). Technology. Artificial Intelligence. <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/industry-reports/artificial-intelligence-market-100114>

Galloway, C., & Swiatek, L. (2018). Public relations and artificial intelligence: It's not (just) about robots. *Public Relations Review*, 44, 734-740. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.10.008>

Germinder, L. A., & Capizzo, L. (2025). A strategic communication practitioner imperative: Contextualizing responsible AI as part of responsible advocacy. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2430959>

Google. (2025a). Gemini 2.0 flash thinking. <https://deepmind.google/technologies/gemini/flash-thinking/>

Google. (2025b). Now you can use deep research in gemini on the go. Dave Citron. February 18, 2025 <https://blog.google/feed/deep-research-gemini-mobile/#:-:text=Deep%20Research%2C%20your%20personal%20AI,just%20about%20any%20research%20topic>

Gregory, A., & Fawkes, J. (2019). A global capability framework: Reframing public relations for a changing world. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), Article 101781. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.05.002>

Gregory, A., Valin, J., & Virmani, S. (2023). *Humans needed more than ever*. Chartered Institute of Public Relations. [https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our\\_work/Policy/AI\\_in\\_PR/AI\\_in\\_PR\\_guides.aspx?WebsiteKey=0379ffac-bc76-433c-9a94-56a04331bf64](https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/AI_in_PR/AI_in_PR_guides.aspx?WebsiteKey=0379ffac-bc76-433c-9a94-56a04331bf64)

Hermann, E. (2022). Artificial intelligence and mass personalization of communication content - an ethical and literacy perspective. *New Media and Society*, 24(5), 1258-1277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211022702>

Inzlicht, M., Cameron, C. D., D'Cruz, J., & Bloom, P. (2023). In praise of empathic AI. *Science & Society*, 28(2), 89-91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2023.12.003>

Jiang, H., Cheng, Y., Park, K.-Y., & Gao, S. B. (2022). AI-powered chatbot communication with customers: Dialogic interactions, satisfaction, engagement, and customer behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 134, 107329. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107329>

Jiang, Y., Cheng, Y., & Wang, Y. (2025). Leveraging AI in CSR: How social-oriented chatbots influence Chinese consumers' supportive actions via dialogic communication. *Public Relations Review*, 51(1), Article 102541. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2025.102541>

Kaclova, M. (2025). Exploring the landscape: Generative AI adoption among central and eastern European PR professionals. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2436542>

Kim, J.-N., Perez, L. A., Lee, H., Hollenczer, J., Jensen, M. L., Bessarabova, E., Talbert, N., & Li, Y. (2025). Managing opinion spamming with AI in regulatory public engagement. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2).

Laskin, A. V., & D'Agostino, G. (2024). The delphi panel investigation of artificial intelligence in investor relations. *Public Relations Review*, 50(4), Article 102489. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2024.102489>

Lee, E., & Mitson, R. (2025). Understanding gig workers' perceptions of organizational authenticity and transparency through AI management. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2025.2470880>

Liu, J. (2025). Applying ethics of care-based response strategies to mitigate AI-related corporate crisis: The moderating role of crisis involvement. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2025.2459609>

Logan, N., & Waymer, D. (2024). Navigating artificial intelligence, public relations and race. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 36(4), 283-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2024.2308868>

López Jiménez, E. A., & Ouariachi, T. (2021). An exploration of the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation for communication professionals. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 19(2), 249-267. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JICES-03-2020-0034>

Murtarelli, G., Gregory, A., & Romenti, S. (2020). A conversation-based perspective for shaping ethical human-machine interactions: The particular challenge of chatbots. *Journal of Business Research*, 1299(2021). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.09.018>

Nothhaft, H., & Seiffert-Brockmann, J. (2023). From costly signals and Competitive niches to reciprocity, memes, and memory traces: Evolutionary psychology and strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 17(3), 151-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2023.2227958>

Oh, J., & Ki, E.-J. (2024). Can we build a relationship through artificial intelligence (AI)? Understanding the impact of AI on organization-public relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 50(4), 102469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2024.102469>

OpenAI. (2024a). Introducing the GPT store. January 10, 2024. <https://openai.com/index/introducing-the-gpt-store/>

OpenAI. (2024b). Hello GPT-4.0. <https://openai.com/index/hello-gpt-4o/>

OpenAI. (2025a). Introducing Operator. January 23, 2025. <https://openai.com/index/introducing-operator/>

OpenAI. (2025b). OpenAI O3-mini. <https://openai.com/index/openai-o3-mini/>

OpenAI. (2025c). Introducing deep research. <https://openai.com/index/introducing-deep-research/>

Park, E. (2025). I trust you, but let me talk to AI: The role of the chat agents, empathy, and health issues in misinformation guidance. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2025.2462087>

Park, K., & Yoon, H. Y. (2024). Beyond the code: The impact of AI algorithm transparency signaling on user trust and relational satisfaction. *Public Relations Review*, 50(5), Article 102507. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2024.102507>

Pimentel, D., Burrell, S., Madanume, E., Lorenzo, S., Ahn, S., Gattis, L., & Walker, L. (2025). Augmented philanthropy: A case study exploring the feasibility and impact of spatial computing in strategic communications. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2448207>

Ray, E. C., Merle, P. F., & Lane, K. (2025). Generating credibility in crisis: Will an AI-scripted response be accepted? *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2435494>

Smith, A. S. (2025a). Why all PR and comms professionals should be using AI reasoning models. *Front of your nose*. January 27, 2025 <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-all-pr-comms-professionals-should-using-ai-reasoning-smith-ymiae/?trackingId=1LYktkFTImy1Fypjh6RFQ%3D%3D>

Smith, A. S. (2025b). AI deep research: The next big PR and comms disruptor? *Front of your nose*. February 10, 2025 <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ai-deep-research-next-big-pr-comms-disruptor-andrew-bruce-smith-y6wt e/?trackingId=76SMFdxTtOqUtvkHt%2Bfsg%3D%3D>

Smith, A. S., & Waddington, S. (2023). *Artificial intelligence (AI) tools and the Impact on Public relations (PR) practice*. Chartered Institute of Public Relations. [https://cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our\\_work/Policy/AI\\_in\\_PR/AI\\_in\\_PR\\_guides.aspx](https://cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/AI_in_PR/AI_in_PR_guides.aspx)

Suciati, P., Maulidiyanti, M., & Wiwesa, N. R. (2021). The public relations acceptance towards press release application with artificial intelligence. *Communicare: Journal of Communication Studies*, 8 (1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.37535/101008120212>

Swiatek, L., Galloway, C., Vujnovic, M., & Kruckeberg, D. (2024). Humanoid artificial intelligence, media conferences and natural responses to journalists' questions: The end of (human-to-human) public relations? *Public Relations Inquiry*, 13(1), 113-121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X231221828>

Uysal, N., & Deng, T. (2025). The New brave world of public relations: The impact of organizational dynamics on adoption of AI. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2447019>

Virmani, S., & Gregory, A. (2021). *The big data and AI readiness report*. Chartered Institute of Public Relations. [https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our\\_work/Policy/AI\\_in\\_PR/AI\\_in\\_PR\\_guides.aspx](https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/AI_in_PR/AI_in_PR_guides.aspx)

Wang, P. (2019). On defining artificial intelligence. *Journal of Artificial General Intelligence*, 10(2), 1-37.

Xiao, Y., & Yu, S. (2025). Can ChatGPT replace humans in crisis communication? The effects of AI-mediated crisis communication on stakeholder satisfaction and responsibility attribution. *International Journal of Information Management*, (80) 102835, 80, 102835. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2024.102835>

Yue, C. A., Men, L. R., Davis, D. Z., Mitson, R., Zhou, A., & Al Rawi, A. (2024). Public relations meets artificial intelligence: Assessing utilization and outcomes. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 36 (6), 513–534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2024.2400622>

Zerfass, A., Buhmann, A., Laborde, A., Moreno, A., Romenti, S., & Tench, R. (2024). European communication monitor 2024. *Managing tensions in corporate communications in the context of geopolitical crises, artificial intelligence, and managerial learning*. European Public Relations Education and Research Association.

Zerfass, A., Hagelstein, J., & Tench, R. (2020). Artificial intelligence in communication management: A cross-national study on adoption and knowledge, impact, challenges and risks. *Journal of Communication Management*, 24(4), 377–389. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jcom-10-2019-0137>

Zhan, E., Zheng, Q., Dong, C., & Thorson, E. (2025). Does AI-generated caring message increase trust in government? The pivotal role of AI. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.801553118/X.2025.2471527>

Zhang, J., Oh, Y. J., Lange, P., Yu, Z., & Fukuoka, Y. (2020). Artificial intelligence chatbot behavior change model for designing artificial intelligence chatbots to promote physical activity and a healthy diet. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 22(9), e22845. <https://doi.org/10.2196/22845>

Zhou, A., Men, L. R., & Tsai, W. H. S. (2023). The power of AI-Enabled chatbots as an organizational social listening tool. In K. R. Place (Ed.), *Organizational listening for strategic communication: Building theory and practice* (pp. 63–80). Routledge.



**Anne Gregory**

*Professor Emeritus of Corporate Communication at the University of Huddersfield*



**Brian Smith**

*Chair and Professor of Integrated Marketing Communications*





# Emotional Resilience: A tool for democratic defence against synthetic disinformation

By Elliot Grainger

At the recent Club of Venice event in London (March 2025), two sessions - Shaping the AI Revolution and the End of Fact Checking - explored crucial issues for the information space. However, a key element wasn't adequately addressed: emotional governance and communication. From a strategic communication position, we too often see emotional context as an afterthought to improve audience engagement. In the age of AI, automated communication, and synthetic realities, this puts us at a disadvantage. We need to reverse this approach, beginning with understanding which emotions are at play, being exploited, or could undermine our security, and then develop strategies that counter this. It's not about facts—it's all about emotion.

In an era where synthetic media can create flawless fabrications and algorithms amplify divisive content, our democratic foundations face an unprecedented challenge. This battlefield is defined by the emotional well-being of citizens as they navigate a landscape where reality itself has become contested territory. This doesn't minimise the need for fact-based content, but recognises that without emotional resonance, facts won't land.

As extremist voices rise across democracies, skilfully weaponising "the politics of fear," defenders of the liberal democratic narrative remain unprepared. Caught between profound technological disruption and the emotional certainty offered by populist narratives, we've yet to articulate what democratic resilience truly means in this age of synthetic truth—and why emotional governance must become its cornerstone.

## Feeling Before Knowing: The Emotional Foundation of Democratic Engagement

The notion that communication and emotions are intertwined isn't new, but recent years have witnessed an 'emotional turn' in political discourse. This shift reflects growing recognition that citizens' political behaviour isn't primarily determined by rational self-interest but profoundly shaped by emotional responses to uncertainty, change, and perceived threats.

Emotions don't reside solely within individuals or exist as free-floating social forces—they stick to certain bodies, objects, and symbols through repeated associations. These emotional

associations move between people, creating collective emotional orientations toward public issues. Emotions operate at the boundary between individual and collective, simultaneously shaping both personal experience and public discourse. Democratic systems must acknowledge the need to engage with these emotional formations, and address where they've become negative undermining the shared narrative, rather than simply countering misinformation with more facts.

In the post-truth landscape, with rapidly spreading synthetic media, state security now requires the defence of these emotional formations to prevent their hijacking for malign purposes. When seemingly authentic video and audio can be generated of any public figure saying anything, the factual basis of democratic discourse becomes increasingly fragile.

## Beyond Fact-Checking: The Limitations of the Information Response

The emergence of 'post-truth politics'—where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief—has intensified the importance of emotional governance. In this environment, government communicators need to navigate terrain where citizens' sense of security and belonging can be profoundly destabilised by competing narratives about social reality.

When facts themselves become contested, the emotional dimension of citizenship takes on heightened significance. Citizens seek not only material security but also ontological security - a stable sense of reality and identity in an increasingly complex world. This complexity creates fertile ground for extremism and disinformation campaigns. When citizens feel overwhelmed by complexity, they often seek simplifying narratives that provide emotional clarity, even at the expense of nuance and accuracy.

The current governmental approach to disinformation - focused primarily on fact-checking and information correction - fundamentally misunderstands this dynamic. The belief that logical communication with more information and correct facts will counter the emotional resonance of disinformation has been thoroughly debunked. **People need to feel before they need to know; emotional resonance precedes and shapes cognitive processing.**

Communicating for security, for social resilience, in contemporary governance must also be understood in more expansive terms that encompass emotional and existential dimensions. Emotional vulnerabilities, particularly feelings of humiliation, alienation, and meaninglessness, create pathways to radicalisation that cannot be addressed through traditional security responses alone. Hybrid warfare tactics deliberately target citizens' emotional security, attempting to amplify confusion, fear, and division within democratic societies.

The socio-security dimension of emotional governance has taken on new urgency as societies navigate rapid technological change, particularly the integration of artificial intelligence and synthetic media. These transformations generate profound uncertainty about the future of work, privacy, and human agency, creating emotional vulnerabilities that can be exploited by those seeking to destabilise democratic systems.

Emotional governance, therefore, involves attending to these multiple dimensions of security - creating environments where citizens feel not only physically safe but also emotionally contained and socially valued. **Strategic communication efforts must shift focus: the inculcation of reconciled feelings towards our democratic system should be the strategic aim, not merely a factor within our strategic communication activity.**

## Democratic Plurality as Both Shield and Sword

The need to govern emotions presents distinctive challenges for democratic institutions. There is tension between acknowledging citizens' emotional responses and risking manipulation of those emotions for political gain. This tension is particularly acute in the synthetic truth environment, where emotional appeals can be deployed to undermine factual discourse and democratic deliberation. Effective emotional governance therefore requires striking a balance between acknowledging the legitimacy of citizens' feelings and fostering critical capacities needed to navigate complex policy choices. Democratic societies need to cultivate appropriate political emotions to maintain stability and inspire citizens to make sacrifices for the common good.

The flip side of this is that, **in theory, democracy itself, with its inherent plurality of voices and perspectives, represents one of our most powerful tools for fostering emotional resilience.** Healthy democratic systems should not suppress narrative conflict but channel it into constructive forms of contestation

that allow citizens to process complex emotions without resorting to violence or retreating into simplistic worldviews. In this way democratic plurality serves as both shield and sword against attempts to destabilise our societies. It functions as a shield by distributing emotional processing across multiple institutions and communities, preventing any single failure point from triggering systemic collapse. It functions as a sword by actively cultivating forms of emotional intelligence that inoculate citizens against manipulation.

The challenge therefore emerges in how to create communication architectures fostering emotional resilience amongst citizens. **This doesn't mean suppressing negative emotions or enforcing false consensus, but rather creating social and political conditions that enable individuals and communities to process difficult feelings without resorting to destructive responses.** Societies can develop collective capacities to acknowledge and work through painful emotions, creating spaces for mourning, meaning-making, and renewal. This approach rejects the false opposition between emotion and reason, recognising that good governance requires attention to both. It also plays to the strength of a strategic communication approach.

Moving beyond the synthetic truth impasse requires developing new models of democratic communication that take emotions seriously without surrendering to emotional manipulation; creating political institutions and practices that acknowledge citizens' feelings of insecurity, anger, or hope whilst also fostering critical engagement with complex realities. Our way forward involves approaches that acknowledge emotional needs while creating conditions for plurality. This includes developing 'emotional granularity' - helping citizens recognise and articulate more complex emotional states beyond simply fear and anger - and creating public spaces where complexity feels safe rather than threatening, where uncertainty is recognised as a strength of democratic societies rather than a weakness.

The upshot is that our communication as governments has to also fit in this nuanced emotional space - which is where **we are letting ourselves down when we resort to emotion as part of audience segmentation rather than the primary starting point in understanding what it is that needs to be addressed;** the emotional ground on which disinformation lands, not the disinformation itself.

## Conclusion: Feeling Our Way Forward

In an age where truth itself has become contested territory and synthetic media makes seeing no longer believing, attending to the emotional dimension of communication isn't optional but essential. The sense of security and belonging that citizens experience depends not only on objective conditions but on how those conditions are felt. Political leaders and institutions that ignore the emotional aspects of citizenship risk fuelling the very forms of resentment, anxiety, and distrust that undermine democratic governance - and leaving the space open to those who actively exploit it. Conversely, those who engage thoughtfully with communications that put public emotions first, acknowledging their legitimacy whilst fostering critical reflection, can help rebuild the affective foundations of democratic life.

This leaves a fundamental challenge: how to restore spaces for plurality in democratic discourse that have given way to emotional certainty created by simplistic narratives. **People seeking emotional safety in simplified worldviews aren't simply lacking information; they're satisfying deep psychological needs for coherence and security.**

The conversations we have on the fringes of the Club of Venice meetings seem to acknowledge this challenge; we know it, we see it. Strategically we need to realign the first principle of communication to address it. We need to integrate this understanding of emotional resilience into our broader conception of democratic communication. We need to develop governance

approaches that treat citizens' emotional needs not as secondary concerns, childish, misguided or part of audience segmentation and profiling, but as fundamental to societal stability and democratic vitality. In an age of synthetic truth, where seeing is no longer believing, feeling becomes our most reliable guide, not as a substitute for factual reality, but as the essential foundation upon which our collective understanding of truth must be rebuilt.



**Elliot Grainger** is a strategic communication expert, and currently a lead advisor to Ofcom on the impacts of AI on media literacy for navigating challenges to the synthetic information space. His career spans roles with the UN Counter-Terrorism Office, UK Home Office and the European Commission. He is a founding member of DSC2 - Defence, Democracy and Security Strategic Communication Community.





# Se réappropriier la rédaction du narratif européen : un impératif stratégique et historique

by Michaël Malherbe<sup>1</sup> – 5.5.2025

Dans un contexte mondial marqué par le retour de la géopolitique et des rivalités de grande puissance, l'Europe se trouve à un carrefour historique soulignant la nécessité pour les Européens de redéfinir leur place dans le monde. Inspirés par les réflexions de Luuk van Middelaar, [“The Return of History to the Present” du Brussels Institute for Geopolitics](#), il est impératif pour l'Europe de se ressaisir de son narratif stratégique et historique. Comment l'Europe peut-elle renouveler sa compréhension de l'histoire pour renforcer son identité collective et sa capacité d'action ?

## Le retour de l'Histoire : une réalité incontournable

Le réveil brutal de l'Europe : Comme le souligne Luuk van Middelaar, « les événements de 1989 ont pu nous faire croire en Europe que (...) nous étions en paix, mais en réalité, ce qui s'est passé était un grand désarmement ». Mais pas seulement un désarmement militaire, bien sûr, en fait, surtout un désarmement de nos armes linguistiques pour nous définir, pour nous décrire comme Européens. La montée des rivalités entre grandes puissances brise cette illusion, marquant un tournant décisif dans l'ère post-guerre froide.

Une nouvelle ère historique : La reconnaissance de cette nouvelle ère historique est cruciale. Selon van Middelaar, « il y a une prise de conscience vague que nous entrons dans une nouvelle ère historique », accompagnée d'un sentiment général de désorientation. Pour naviguer dans cette période incertaine, l'Europe doit développer une boussole temporelle, une histoire qui l'ancre et la guide vers l'avenir.

## Repenser l'Histoire : une discipline essentielle

La nécessité d'une pensée de l'Histoire : Le récit historique ne se limite pas à l'accumulation de faits – même si ce travail est plus que jamais nécessaire avec les fake news – elle exige une pensée critique qui nous aide à comprendre les dynamiques du changement historique. Comme le dit Hajo Holborn, cité par van Middelaar « un traitement constructif des problèmes européens actuels appelle une pensée historique, qui est quelque chose de plus que la simple connaissance historique ».

Caractéristiques de la pensée historique :

1. **Les dynamiques du changement** : L'histoire nous enseigne que le changement peut être rapide ou lent, nécessitant une vigilance constante face aux transformations inattendues.
2. **La nature du temps** : Différencier Chronos (le temps mesuré) de Kairos (le moment opportun) est essentiel pour saisir les moments critiques où l'action est nécessaire.
3. **Ironie et surprise** : L'histoire est pleine de surprises et d'ironie, soulignant l'importance de rester flexible et adaptable.
4. **Tragédie** : Reconnaître les conflits inévitables entre valeurs positives (comme le dilemme de la paix contre la justice) est crucial pour une compréhension nuancée du monde.
5. **Liberté** : Malgré les contraintes du passé, l'histoire offre des possibilités de nouveaux commencements, renforçant notre capacité à agir librement.

## Construire un récit politique européen

**L'importance d'un protagoniste commun** : L'histoire est intrinsèquement politique, impliquant le choix d'un protagoniste qui définit un « nous ». Pour l'Europe, cela signifie construire un récit collectif qui transcende les appartenances nationales tout en respectant les diversités culturelles. Pour Luuk van Middelaar, « Dire « Nous, Européens » n'est pas chose facile pour nous, déchirés comme nous le sommes entre une aspiration universelle et, souvent, une appartenance nationale ».

**Écrire notre propre Histoire** : Face aux récits imposés par d'autres puissances, l'Europe doit prendre la plume pour écrire son propre récit. Comme l'a fait remarquer Winston Churchill, « l'histoire sera clémente avec moi, car j'ai l'intention de l'écrire ». En définissant un narratif européen, nous pouvons mieux comprendre notre passé, affirmer notre présent et façonner notre avenir.

**Le retour des événements historiques impose à l'Europe de réinvestir dans son narratif stratégique en embrassant une pensée historique et en construisant un récit politique afin de renforcer notre identité collective et notre capacité à agir sur la scène mondiale. Il est temps pour les Européens de se ressaisir de leur histoire.**

1 First published in [“Décrypter la com européenne”](#)

# L'UE s'ambitionne « Continent de l'IA » mais se réalise en îlot de bonnes intentions dans l'océan technologique mondial face aux USA et à la Chine ?

de Michaël Malherbe<sup>1</sup> - 28.4.2025

Bruxelles nous invite à rêver : l'Europe deviendrait le « Continent de l'IA », une ambition parée des vertus de l'éthique, du respect des droits et de notre précieux humanisme. Le [plan d'action de l'UE](#) décline infrastructures (les fameuses « AI Factories » et « Gigafactories »), données (« une Union des données »), régulation des algorithmes, recrutement des talents et, bien sûr, révision de l'AI Act. Un édifice intellectuellement séduisant. Mais osons poser des questions qui fâchent. Cette vision, quoiqu'ambitieuse sur le papier, est-elle réellement calibrée pour la compétition féroce et quasi-existentielle qui se joue ? Sommes-nous en train de bâtir un leader mondial, ou de nous draper dans une supériorité morale pendant que d'autres définissent de *facto* l'avenir technologique ? Tout effort de communication, bien qu'indispensable pour faire la pédagogie, ne risque-t-elle pas de n'être qu'un murmure face au vacarme des investissements et des déploiements américains et chinois ?

## L'ambition concrètement, entre réalité chiffrée et illusion d'échelle ?

Regardons les chiffres annoncés : 10 milliards d'euros (public/privé) pour le supercalcul et les AI Factories jusqu'en 2027, un objectif de mobilisation de 200 milliards via InvestAI. Impressionnant ? Peut-être à l'échelle européenne. Mais est-ce seulement comparable aux *centaines de milliards* injectés par les fonds de capital-risque américains dans une poignée de géants de la tech, ou aux investissements massifs et dirigés par l'État chinois pour intégrer l'IA à toutes les strates de son économie et de sa société ? Quand une seule entreprise américaine, Nvidia, pèse plus en bourse que l'ensemble du CAC 40, pouvons-nous sérieusement parler de jouer dans la même cour avec nos budgets actuels, même mobilisés ? Ne sommes-nous pas en train de financer des laboratoires là où d'autres construisent des empires ?

## Le temps institutionnel de l'UE face à la vitesse quantique de l'IA aux USA et en Chine

Le plan mentionne l'urgence, la nécessité d'agir vite (« Swift policy action is of highest priority »). Pourtant, les échéances clés semblent s'étirer : fin 2025, début 2026 pour des appels ou des législations structurantes, une application complète de l'AI Act s'étalant jusqu'en... 2027. Pendant ce temps, chaque trimestre voit émerger de nouveaux modèles fondamentaux aux États-Unis, potentiellement disruptifs, tandis que la Chine déploie l'IA à une échelle et une vitesse qui défient l'entendement européen. Ne sommes-nous pas condamnés à réguler hier les technologies

que d'autres inventent aujourd'hui et déploieront demain ? Notre sens de la mesure et du processus démocratique, si précieux soit-il, est-il compatible avec la temporalité brutale de cette révolution ?

## La primauté réglementaire : un bouclier protecteur ou un frein à main ?

L'AI Act est présenté comme notre avantage compétitif : la confiance, l'éthique. Mais cette primauté accordée à la règle avant l'innovation massive n'est-elle pas un pari risqué ? Alors que les États-Unis misent sur une innovation largement débridée (quitte à en gérer les conséquences *a posteriori*) et que la Chine optimise pour l'efficacité et le contrôle, ne risquons-nous pas de créer l'écosystème d'IA le plus éthique... mais le moins pertinent économiquement et géopolitiquement ? L'intention de faciliter la conformité pour les PME est louable, mais suffit-elle à compenser la complexité inhérente et le signal envoyé au marché : « innovez, mais faites attention » ?

## Le déficit narratif : peut-on « communiquer » avec succès un géant aux pieds d'argile ?

Au-delà des budgets et des agendas, il y a le récit. Le plan d'action est un document technique, pas une épopée mobilisatrice. Où est la vision vibrante qui peut inspirer nos chercheurs, attirer les meilleurs talents mondiaux face aux sirènes de la Silicon Valley, convaincre nos PME d'adopter l'IA avec audace, et rassurer un public européen légitimement perplexe ? Est-il même possible pour une structure aussi complexe et consensuelle que l'UE de produire un récit aussi puissant et direct que celui des GAFA ?

Le « Continent de l'IA » risque fort de rester un slogan technocratique si nous n'investissons pas massivement, non pas dans la « communication » au sens traditionnel, mais dans la *construction culturelle et politique* d'une ambition partagée.

Il s'agit de dépasser l'illusion que l'adhésion à un projet aussi transformateur que l'intelligence artificielle à l'échelle européenne puisse être obtenue par des techniques de communication classiques – campagnes d'information, relations publiques, vulgarisation technique. Ces approches sont nécessaires mais radicalement insuffisantes face à l'ampleur du défi.

Pourquoi la communication traditionnelle ne suffirait pas à transformer l'UE en « continent de l'IA » ?

<sup>1</sup> First published in 'Décrypter la com européenne'

1. **Les limites d'une communication descendante** : L'IA n'est pas un produit de consommation ordinaire ou une simple politique sectorielle. Elle touche aux fondements de nos sociétés : travail, vie privée, démocratie, identité, éthique. Tenter de « vendre » une vision pré-définie par les institutions, aussi bien intentionnée soit-elle, se heurte inévitablement à un mélange d'incompréhension, d'anxiété légitime et de scepticisme. La communication traditionnelle informe, mais elle ne crée pas intrinsèquement l'appropriation ni la confiance profonde requises ici. Elle peine à répondre au besoin fondamental de sens et de contrôle des citoyens face à une technologie perçue comme complexe et potentiellement déstabilisante.

2. **Le besoin d'une « acculturation » à l'IA** : Parler d'une construction culturelle, c'est reconnaître que l'IA doit devenir un sujet de société largement débattu, compris (même sans expertise technique) et intégré dans notre paysage mental collectif. Cela implique :

- \* Une éducation massive : Aller bien au-delà des spécialistes et intégrer une compréhension critique et pratique de l'IA à tous les niveaux du système éducatif, de l'école primaire à la formation continue des adultes.
- \* Une dialogue public structuré : Créer des espaces permanents et accessibles (forums citoyens, débats locaux et nationaux, plateformes en ligne dédiées) où les enjeux éthiques, sociaux et économiques de l'IA sont discutés ouvertement, sans jargon, et où les préoccupations peuvent être exprimées et entendues.
- \* Un soutien à la création et à la médiation : Encourager les artistes, les écrivains, les cinéastes, les journalistes à s'emparer du sujet de l'IA, à explorer ses potentialités et ses ambiguïtés, contribuant ainsi à forger un imaginaire collectif européen autour de cette technologie. Soutenir les musées, les centres de science pour rendre l'IA tangible et compréhensible.
- \* Une visibilité des bénéfices tangibles : Mettre en lumière non seulement les plans, mais surtout les réalisations concrètes et les histoires humaines qui montrent comment l'IA « made in Europe » améliorera la santé, l'environnement, le travail, la culture – ancrer la vision dans le réel vécu.

3. **L'indispensable ancrage politique** : La construction politique va au-delà des déclarations de la Commission ou des votes au Parlement européen. Elle nécessite :

- \* Un Consensus transpartisan et transnational : Faire de l'IA européenne une priorité partagée qui dépasse les clivages politiques habituels et les intérêts nationaux. Cela demande un engagement fort et constant des chefs d'État et de gouvernement, des parlements nationaux.
- \* Une co-construction de la vision : Impliquer activement les citoyens, les partenaires sociaux, la société civile dans la définition même des priorités et des garde-fous de l'IA européenne. Le projet ne doit pas être perçu comme imposé par « Bruxelles », mais comme émanant d'une volonté collective.
- \* L'IA comme élément structurant du projet européen : Intégrer explicitement la vision d'une IA européenne souveraine et éthique au cœur du narratif politique global de l'Union, au même titre que la paix, la démocratie ou le marché unique. Ce n'est pas juste un dossier technique, c'est une dimension essentielle de l'avenir de l'Europe.

Investir dans une construction européenne culturelle et politique,

c'est reconnaître que la légitimité et le succès du « Continent de l'IA » ne se décrètent ni depuis des bureaux ministériels ni dans des laboratoires de recherche. C'est un mouvement de société qui se construit patiemment dans les esprits, les cœurs et les débats démocratiques de millions d'Européens. Sans cet investissement massif dans le « logiciel » humain, culturel et politique, le « matériel » – les supercalculateurs, les data centers, les algorithmes – risque de tourner à vide, faute d'une appropriation collective et d'une direction politique claire et partagée. Le slogan restera lettre morte s'il ne devient pas une ambition vécue et portée par la société européenne dans son ensemble.

## Quelle audace raisonnable entre puissance et marché pour l'Europe de l'IA ?

L'heure n'est plus aux demi-mesures ou aux satisfecits sur nos intentions vertueuses. L'Europe veut-elle être un acteur de premier plan dans la définition de l'avenir technologique mondial, avec les risques et les investissements colossaux que cela implique ? Ou se contente-t-elle d'être le régulateur bienveillant d'innovations conçues ailleurs, un « marché » plutôt qu'une « puissance » ?

La véritable audace ne réside pas seulement dans l'écriture de plans ambitieux, mais dans la lucidité de nos diagnostics, la rapidité de nos actions, l'échelle de nos investissements et, surtout, dans notre capacité à forger et à porter un récit qui transcende la technique pour toucher à l'imaginaire collectif. Sans un sursaut radical sur tous ces fronts, le « Continent de l'IA » risque de n'être qu'une note de bas de page dans l'histoire que d'autres sont en train d'écrire. Avons-nous encore le temps et la volonté politique de changer la donne ? La question reste douloureusement ouverte.



**Michaël Malherbe**

Deputy Practice Leader Digital chez Burson Cohn & Wolfe (groupe WPP). Depuis plus de 12 ans, il développe une activité de conseil en communication digitale (stratégies en e-campagne, e-influence et e-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 « Etudes européennes » de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle, Paris III et « Affaires européennes » de la SorbonneParis IV et précédemment à l'ENA et à SciencesPo 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.cation Community.



# Sustainable Urban Net Zero Network for Ukraine (Sun4Ukraine)<sup>1</sup>

## News from the Democratic Society<sup>2</sup>

By Adriana Colquechambi Zea O'Phelan, Alcía Puig Fernández and Zsolt Nagy - 2 April 2025

### What

The Sustainable Urban Net Zero Network for Ukraine (SUN4Ukraine) is a four-year initiative aimed at guiding Ukrainian cities towards climate neutrality. Ukrainian cities are paired with those participating in the EU 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, fostering learning and knowledge exchange to accelerate their climate transition.

Through a tailored capacity-building programme and comprehensive technical support, this project empowers Ukrainian cities to seamlessly integrate Climate Neutrality Plans into their recovery strategies, paving the way for sustainable and resilient urban development.

### Why It Matters

Ukraine has demonstrated its commitment to climate action through the signing of its Environmental Security and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in 2022 and its aspirations for EU membership. The commitment is reflected in its determination to integrate reconstruction efforts with environmental reforms.

Ukraine's ongoing efforts to advance towards climate neutrality by 2060 were disrupted by the Ukraine-Russia War in 2022. Nevertheless, Ukrainian cities remain determined to integrate climate goals into their reconstruction plans as part of the country's post-war recovery strategy. With an estimated recovery cost of €452,8 billion, the country needs a comprehensive strategy centered on cities as leaders of transformative change.

### Objectives

The goals of SUN4Ukraine are:

- Provide technical support and expertise to Ukrainian cities through a capacity building programme.
- Foster collaboration and learning with Mission Cities to share best practices and innovative solutions for a successful climate transition.
- Promote sustainable urban planning, citizen and stakeholder engagement, and effective governance models to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

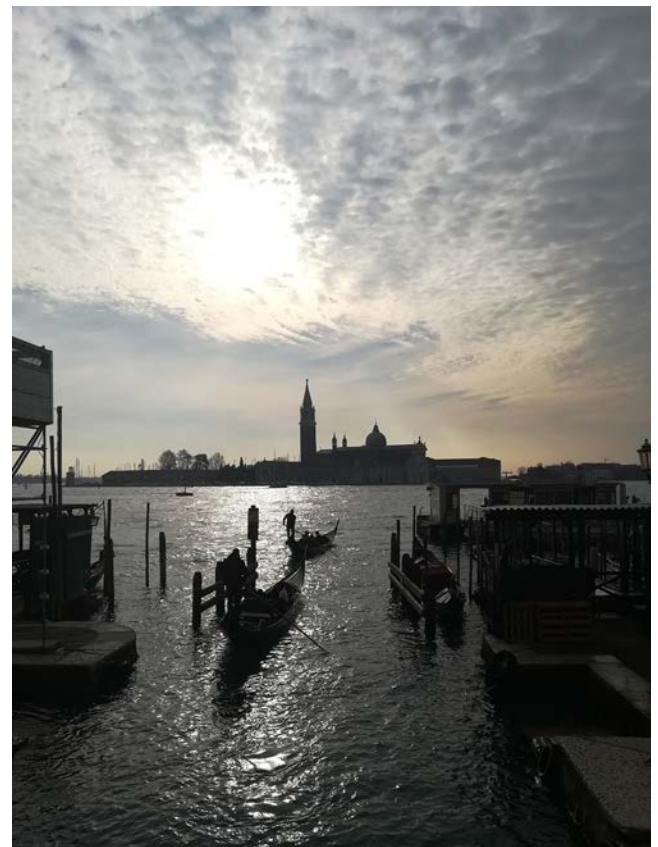
### How It Works

SUN4Ukraine will be implemented in three steps:

- *Foundation: Building a strong basis for climate neutrality through workshops and training sessions.*
- *Partnership: Pairing Ukrainian cities with Mission Cities for hands-on mentorship and knowledge exchange.*
- *Replication: Scaling successful strategies and practices across other Ukrainian cities.*

### Get Involved

- Follow the news with [Sun4Ukraine newsletter](#).
- Participate in our [local and international events](#).
- Check out the resources on the [official website](#).



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.demsoc.org/projects/sustainable-urban-net-zero-network-for-ukraine-sun4ukraine>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.demsoc.org/>

# Intelligenze artificiali generative, Large Language Models e differenze di genere: il ruolo delle istituzioni pubbliche nel contrasto alla discriminazione algoritmica e ai bias nella comunicazione abilitata dalle tecnologie.

di Leda Guidi, maggio 2025

Quando si parla di Intelligenze artificiali generative e LLM (Large Language Models) e questioni di genere ci si riferisce, in primo luogo, a come contrastare la discriminazione algoritmica e i bias nella comunicazione abilitata dalle tecnologie, a come la parità di genere (o meglio la ancora drammatica non parità, come ci ricordano recenti report europei e nazionali, per quanto riguarda l'Italia) sia influenzata negativamente da applicativi e dispositivi che ampliano le disuguaglianze, invece che combatterle anche con l'innovazione digitale.

I divari che riguardano le donne - anche nell'infosfera - sono generati da molteplici ragioni, storiche, culturali, sociali, economiche che influiscono su scelte e percorsi formativi e professionali, anche autoescludenti, che riflettono stereotipi consolidati nel tempo, difficili da decostruire. Ostacoli concreti e barriere culturali che limitano - consapevolmente o inconsapevolmente - la partecipazione e il contributo progettuale, creativo e scientifico femminile nella produzione di ambienti e dispositivi digitali, nel "dare forma" a nuovi scenari e possibili sviluppi comunicativi, relazionali, occupazionali che le tecnologie rendono possibili, magari desiderabili, se pensate come eque e inclusive by design.

Mi riferisco, ad esempio, ai "gemelli digitali" delle nostre città, che rischiano di essere pensati e disegnati fin dalla visione e dalla declinazione delle funzionalità, a cominciare da quelle predittive, in modo non corrispondente alla varietà dei bisogni, degli usi e delle aspettative specifici delle persone nella fruizione degli spazi urbani, alla pluralità dei punti di vista sul mondo, in primis delle donne. Pregiudizi e modelli di ruolo sono rafforzati anche chatbot ed agenti intelligenti sempre più spesso adottati dalle Pubbliche Amministrazioni, soprattutto nella comunicazione on line con i cittadini, applicativi quasi sempre femminilizzati, assumendo che forme, voci e posture delle donne siano "più accoglienti e adatte" a gestire relazioni di cura e di servizio, anche nella dimensione immateriale, riproponendo in questo modo cliché simbolici convenzionali ancillari, magari con le migliori intenzioni.

Come Associazione Italiana della Comunicazione pubblica e Istituzionale -Compubblica siamo impegnati, sia sul fronte del perimetro teorico che su quello delle pratiche professionali, in un confronto costante - con Istituzioni pubbliche, Università, mondo della ricerca e delle professioni, organizzazioni della società civile e dell'attivismo - sui temi che riguardano direttamente, o incrociano, la comunicazione pubblica come disciplina, professione, funzione istituzionale e organizzativa strategica e, soprattutto, come strumento civico necessario alla connessione costante delle Pubbliche Amministrazioni con le persone, generativa di fiducia e di valore pubblico.

In questo quadro, la nostra attività di riflessione e di analisi si indirizza anche a come - attraverso quali dinamiche, linguaggi, forme - la Comunicazione delle istituzioni pubbliche si inserisca nel processo di trasformazione digitale e mediale e nel suo inarrestabile dispiegarsi nella società, e come sia indispensabile per promuovere e mantenere relazioni positive, dialogiche ed efficaci con le comunità, estendendo l'accesso all'ecosistema digitale, rendendolo usabile, equo e abilitante - facendo perno sull'alfabetizzazione, la sensibilizzazione, la multicanalità e la differenziazione delle modalità di interazione - e non una nuova potenziale forma di esclusione per parti della società.

Soprattutto dopo la pandemia che ha dematerializzato significativamente rapporti e servizi da e con la Pubblica Amministrazione, la trasformazione digitale incalzante ha troppo spesso replicato (e ampliato) le ingiustizie e le distorsioni sociali, come quelle che riguardano le donne, tradizionalmente in Italia ai margini dell'innovazione tecnologica, sia come numero di professioniste ed esperte attive - sia nel pubblico che nel privato (secondo l'Eurostat l'Italia è terzultima in Europa per scienziati e ingegneri donna <https://www.eunews.it/2025/02/11/italia-innovazione-non-e-donna/>) -, che come utenti consapevoli di opportunità e di rischi, anche specificamente legati al genere (EIGE - [https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/cyber-violence-against-women?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/cyber-violence-against-women?language_content_entity=en)).

La comunicazione per e con i cittadini e le cittadine è una leva potenzialmente dirompente per il cambiamento dentro e fuori le Pubbliche Amministrazioni, se agita accogliendo l'innovazione tecnologica senza subirla, abitandola contrastando e superando le asimmetrie di genere e intersezionali, in alleanza e in collaborazione con le comunità. La formazione e il consolidamento delle competenze medial e digitali di chi opera nella comunicazione nelle Pubbliche Amministrazioni sono tra i nostri obiettivi statutari e valoriali, e una condizione per la collaborazione con la società civile, per il bene comune.

Sono convinta che l'approccio femminista - dal punto di vista valoriale, metodologico e relazionale - basato sull'ascolto e sull'empowerment delle persone e il riconoscimento delle diversità, in primo luogo quelle di genere, possa essere fondamentale per affrontare problematiche complesse, e anche disorientanti, come la GenAI, che implicano una discontinuità concettuale, un cambio di paradigma e dunque hanno bisogno di sguardi e di contenuti plurali, per non diventare distopia.

L'accelerazione impressa dall'arrivo sul mercato e sui nostri dispositivi della GenAI ci sollecita a riflettere assieme su prospettive, criticità, problemi aperti - in particolare dal punto di vista etico e deontologico e della tutela dei diritti, del

protagonismo delle persone, in particolare delle donne, la cui presenza in questi processi non solo deve contare, ma è necessaria, a livello europeo, nazionale e locale. Abbiamo imparato a familiarizzare in questi anni con definizioni quali la discriminazione algoritmica, i bias cognitivi e la riproduzione di stereotipi di genere alimentati da piattaforme sociali e da motori di ricerca che propagano modelli precostituiti e “premiano” da un lato il conformismo (le bolle relazionali!) e dall'altro le polarizzazioni manichee e muscolari.

I sistemi di Intelligenza artificiale, quasi sempre opachi e proprietari, il più delle volte allenati su dati non adeguatamente diversificati e rappresentativi, dati che invisibilizzano le presenze femminili e le soggettività più socialmente deboli, ci sollecitano a condividere in modo trasversale, intersezionale direi, saperi scientifici, tecnici, comunicativi, educativi, comunitari per accogliere questa nuova presenza “intelligente” come una possibilità che va guidata e indirizzata anche con i dati, i contenuti e le progettualità delle donne e che interessano le donne.

Le Pubbliche Amministrazioni a tutti i livelli, settoriali e territoriali, dovrebbero prevedere nei piani di formazione, nelle policies e nelle linee guida che riguardano l'acquisizione e l'uso di applicativi e dispositivi digitali - in particolare oggi quelli che si basano su LLM e big data - indicazioni, criteri, strumenti e metodi di verifica, indicatori trasparenti in grado di accompagnare gli staff - auspicabilmente trasversali per competenze - a scegliere ambienti aperti, inclusivi e sviluppati in modo etico.

Cambiare la cultura delle organizzazioni complesse, che tende alla conservazione, è un percorso difficile che una comunicazione - all'interno e verso/con l'esterno - adeguata nelle parole, nella promozione di comportamenti corretti e orientati all'ascolto, rispettosa delle differenze nelle interazioni attivate, può efficacemente supportare e promuovere. In questa ottica la collaborazione e la sinergia con le persone responsabili del digitale e delle politiche per la parità è fondamentale, e la disponibilità dei comunicatori e delle comunicatrici al confronto con l'innovazione tecnologica nei diversi settori delle istituzioni è fondamentale.

---

## Generative artificial intelligence, Large Language Models and gender differences: the role of public institutions in countering algorithmic discrimination and biases in technology-enabled communication.

by Leda Guidi, May 2025

When we talk about Generative Artificial Intelligence and LLM and gender issues, we are primarily referring to how to deal with algorithmic discrimination and bias in technology-enabled communication, how gender equality (or rather the still dramatic non-equality, as recent European and national reports remind us, as far as Italy is concerned) is negatively influenced by applications and devices that widen and deepen inequalities, instead of fighting them also with digital innovation.

Gaps that affect women - even in the infosphere - are generated by multiple reasons, historical, cultural, social, economic that influence educational and professional choices, careers and paths, even self-exclusive ones, which reflect stereotypes consolidated over time, difficult to deconstruct. Concrete obstacles and cultural barriers that limit - consciously or unconsciously - female participation and contribution in the design of digital environments, platforms and devices, in “giving shape” to new scenarios and possible communicative, relational, occupational developments that technologies could make possible, perhaps desirable, if thought of as fair and inclusive by design. I am referring, for example, to the “digital twins” of our cities, which risk being conceptualized and designed starting from the vision and the functionalities, firstly from the predictive ones, - and then used - in a way that does not correspond to the variety of needs, expectations and

specificities of people in inhabiting urban spaces and having a plurality of points of view on the world, especially women. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering e Mathematics) related jobs and careers still lack of women. Prejudices and role models are also reinforced by chatbots and intelligent agents increasingly adopted by Public Administrations, especially in online communication with citizens, almost always feminized applications, assuming that women's forms, voices and postures are “more welcoming and suitable” to manage relationships related to caring activities and welfare services for people wellbeing, in the immaterial dimension too, thus re-proposing conventional ancillary symbolic clichés, perhaps with the best intentions.

As Associazione Compubblica we are committed, both on the theoretical perimeter and on that of professional practices, in a constant dialogue - with public institutions, universities, the world of research and professions, civil society organizations and activism - on issues that directly concern, or intersect with public communication, as a discipline, profession, strategic institutional and organizational function and, above all, a civic tool necessary for the constant connection of Public Administration with society and generative of trust and public value, also in the process of digital transformation seen as an inclusive process.



In this framework, our reflection and analysis activity also addresses how - through which dynamics, languages, forms and methods - the Communication of public institutions fits into the digital and media transformation and its unstoppable unfolding in society, and - having said that - it is indispensable to promote and maintain positive, dialogic and effective relationships with communities, extending access to the on line ecosystems, making them usable, fair and enabling - by focusing on literacy, awareness, multi-channel and differentiation of interaction methods - and not a new potential form of exclusion for parts of society.

Especially after the pandemic that significantly dematerialized relationships and services from and with the Public Administration, the looming digital transformation has too often replicated (and expanded) social injustices and distortions, such as those affecting women, "traditionally" on the margins of technological innovation in Italy, both in terms of the number of active professionals and experts - in the public and private sectors (according to Eurostat, Italy is third to last in Europe for female scientists and engineers <https://www.eunews.it/2025/02/11/italia-innovazione-non-e-donna/>) -, and as users aware of opportunities and risks, also specifically related to gender (EIGE - [https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/cyber-violence-against-women?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/cyber-violence-against-women?language_content_entity=en)).

Communication for and with citizens is a potentially disruptive (in a positive sense) lever for change inside and outside Public Administrations, if it is acted by welcoming technological innovation without being subjected to it or driven by it, but inhabiting it by contrasting and overcoming gender and intersectional asymmetries, in alliance and in dialogue with communities. The training and consolidation of media and digital skills of those who work in communication in Public Administrations are among our statutory and value objectives, and a condition for collaboration with civil society, for the common good.

I am convinced that the feminist approach - from a value, methodological and relational point of view - based on listening attitude and on the empowerment of people and the recognition of diversity, first of all gender diversity, can be fundamental to address complex and even disorienting issues, such as GenAI, which imply a conceptual discontinuity, a paradigm shift and therefore need plural perspectives, views and contents, in order not to become dystopia.

The acceleration given by the arrival of GenAI on the market and on our devices in a pervasive way urges us to reflect together on perspectives, critical issues, open problems - in particular from the ethical and deontological point of view - and on the protection of rights, on the desirable protagonism of people, especially women, whose presence in these processes not only must count, but is necessary, at European, national and local level. In recent years we have learned to familiarize ourselves with definitions such as algorithmic discrimination, cognitive biases and the reproduction of gender stereotypes fueled by social/global platforms and search engines that propagate pre-established models and "reward" on the one hand conformism (relational bubbles!) and on the other manichean and muscular polarizations.

Artificial Intelligence systems, almost always opaque and proprietary, most of the time trained on data that are not adequately diversified and representative, data that invisibilize

female presences and the most socially weak subjectivities, urge us to share in a transversal, I would say intersectional, way scientific, technical, communicative, educational, community knowledge to welcome this new "intelligent" tech presence as a possibility that must be guided and addressed to fair goals also with the data, contents, projects, design capacity of women and that are meaningful for women.

Public Administrations at all levels, sectorial and territorial, should include in training plans, policies and guidelines regarding the selection procedures and the uses of digital applications and devices - especially today those based on LLM and big data - guidelines, criteria, tools and verification methods, transparent indicators capable of accompanying staff - hopefully transversal in terms of skills and capabilities - to choose open, inclusive and ethically developed environments/platforms/apps that are of interest to women.

Changing the culture of complex organizations, which tends to be conservative, is a difficult path that communication - internally and towards/with the outside - adequate in words and language adopted, in the promotion of correct and listening-oriented behaviors, respectful of the differences in the interactions activated, can effectively support and promote successfully. In this perspective, collaboration and synergy with the people responsible for digital and equality policies in Public Administrations is fundamental, and the availability and willingness of communicators to deal with technological innovation in the different sectors of the institutions is mandatory.



#### Leda Guidi

Public Communication and Digital Agenda adjunct professor-University of Bologna. Iperbole Civic Network co-founder, former Head of Bologna Digital Agenda. Consulting, teaching and implementing activities for civic networks, portals, e-gov, e-inclusion, smart cities for organisations, at academic level too. Senior in EU and national co-founded projects on digital services and strategies for PAs. Papers and articles on civic media and multichannel communication for the development of territories. Speaker at national and international conferences, and at Universities/Research Centres (MEDIALAB-MIT, IPTS-Seville, OCDE,...) on digital innovation, community and e-divides. President of Italian Association COMPUBBLICA. Until 31/12/2023 board of Foundation for Urban Innovation-Bologna. Expert in WG Networks and Services of AGCOM National Users Council. Co-founder Period Think Tank, ONG on Data Feminism and gender digital gaps.

# On Tyranny<sup>1</sup>

By Stavros Papagiannenas

Earlier this year, Mark Zuckerberg announced that fact-checking on Facebook and Instagram will soon be something of the past. This means everyone must learn how to find real and liable information on social media. All kind of conspiracy theories, fake news and rumours are now totally legal, even though they can cause harm.

The end of fact-checking puts democracy at risk. In an age of misinformation, facts suffer. During the January session, the European Parliament members debated the influence that large tech companies have on our societies today. It seems that left-wing and right-wing parties can not agree on the exact definition of freedom of speech.

The rise of tech giants has challenged the rule of law and regulatory frameworks in many regions, including the EU. These companies, such as Tesla, Google, Apple and Meta, operate across borders, making it difficult for countries to regulate them effectively. This has led to concerns about their influence over markets, political processes, and personal data and their ability to evade certain legal restrictions and the rule of law.

The EU has been proactive in trying to regulate big tech through initiatives like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and, more recently, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA). However, enforcement is complex, and tech

giants often have the resources to push back, delay, or navigate around regulations. This can undermine the effectiveness of EU laws and create a sense of unequal treatment, especially when smaller companies are subject to stricter rules.

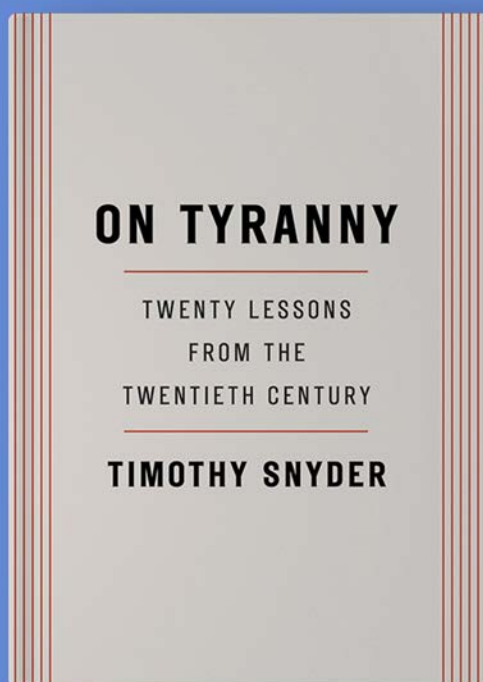
Many Big Tech companies gather vast amounts of data about their users, raising concerns over privacy and surveillance. The EU has strict rules about data protection, but enforcement can be inconsistent, especially when tech giants operate in multiple jurisdictions. If their data practices are not effectively regulated, these companies could erode individual privacy rights or undermine the liberty of EU citizens.

Given their global reach and influence, tech giants wield significant geopolitical power. Some argue that these companies can undermine EU sovereignty by prioritizing business interests over national or EU-level policies. Their ability to influence public opinion through platforms like social media or by shaping policy debates through lobbying raises concerns about their impact on democratic processes and governance within the EU.

However, what is happening today has happened before. All the phenomena we see around us today have happened before - perhaps in a slightly different way, with slightly different consequences, with different means, on a different scale - but all the same very similar.



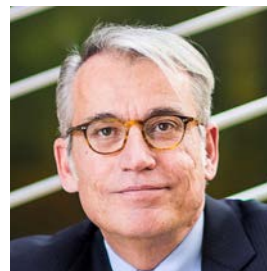
1 <https://www.stpcommunications.com/post/on-tyranny>



Politicians and opinionmakers squealing about the dangers of immigration? It has been done before. Super-rich oligarchs who turn out to be racists and supporters of authoritarian regimes? We have seen it before. Crooks spreading extreme, unscientific lies and propaganda to the vulnerable masses. It happened before.

A leader who constantly lies, repeats the same catchy phrases over and over again, attacks the media, and demands total submission and loyalty? Nothing original, all dictators did the same. [Victor Klemperer](#) has described all these tricks in detail almost seventy years ago. And what about all those everyday citizens who suddenly fall victim to such leaders, unbelievable conspiracy theories and rampant scaremongering?

In 2017, [Timothy Snyder](#) published "On Tyranny". The book describes what 20th-century history teaches us about authoritarianism and the dangers that threaten liberal democracy. The author, horrified by Trump's first election, explains the similarities between the MAGA movement and the fascist movements of the 20th century in their messages, behaviours, promises, and rhetoric. As he writes, "Americans are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism and communism. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience." Yet to be confirmed.



### Stavros Papagiannas

Founder of Steps4Europe - Managing Director StP Communications - Author Rebranding Europe With a background including positions such as Communication Officer at the European Commission and Press Officer and Spokesperson to diplomatic missions in Brussels, Stavros Papagiannas is currently the Managing Director of PR consultancy StP Communications & the founder of Steps4Europe. This non-profit association aims to reinforce the European Public Sphere & promote the values of the EU. He is a senior communications leader with more than 25 years' experience in corporate & public communications, public affairs, PR, digital & social media. In 2017, 2018 & 2019, Stavros was named by the pan-European news platform Euractiv as one of the TOP 40 EU INFLUENCERS and, is a public speaker & blogger. Stavros has been a member of the Working Party on Information of the Council of the European Union. He is the author of the books : Rebranding Europe; Powerful Online Communication; Saving Your reputation in the Digital Age and, many articles in EU media like Euractiv, New Europe, Euronews, Europe's World, L' Echo, De Tijd, Communication Director, Irish Tech News & Research Europe. Stavros is a graduate in Communication Sciences from the VUB University of Brussels and has given lectures in universities across Europe: University of Cantabria, University of Vilnius, University of Brussels (VUB), Institute of European Studies (IES), Thomas More University, Université Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne.



# REBRANDING EUROPE

## Fundamentals for Communicating the United States of Europe

By Vincenzo Le Voci<sup>1</sup>

Europe has been caught in the most complex crisis since WW II. Once the world's bastion of liberal, democratic values, Europe has to confront demons it thought it had laid to rest. The old pathologies of antisemitism, populist nationalism, and territorial aggression are threatening to tear the European postwar consensus apart.

With two significant crises in just two years (the coronavirus crisis, the brutal invasion of Ukraine), there is an absolute need for Europe to reposition itself in the global arena. The Union must craft a distinct and clear message for internal and external stakeholders. With growing instability around the world and the rise of authoritarianism and disinformation, the EU should take the lead in strengthening multilateral partnerships and in protecting and promoting democracy and human rights around the world.

The EU must also ensure its strategic sovereignty and be less dependent on key technological areas, critical infrastructure, and supply chains. If the Union is to affirm its global leadership role, what is required is strong political will and decisive steps.

REBRANDING EUROPE 2024 (2nd edition, after a first issue published in 2017) illustrates how Europe can be rebranded by providing key recommendations on conveying the added value of the EU into citizens' daily lives.

The author, Stavros Papagianneas, has been cooperating with the Club of Venice since 2015. His publications and his web platform <https://www.stpcommunications.com/blog-1> provide a valuable source for reflection on the big challenges for today's public communicators: the growing impact of the New Digital Age and AI, the common concern for hybrid threats and widening disinformation, trust, reputation and the art of communicative leadership, strategic approaches to mapping and monitoring public opinion trends, the role of media in shaping EU public opinion, crisis communication as a key component of crisis management and prevention, and investments in capacity and capability building.

REBRANDING EUROPE amplifies an undisputable message for governmental and institutional communicators: the need for competence building, responsiveness, ethics, inclusiveness, multilingualism, decentralised communication, sustainable investments in digital technics and in education and literacy, as key elements to achieve successful objectives and safeguard trust and reputation in today's challenging world.



<sup>1</sup> This short outline includes an abstract from <https://www.stpcommunications.com/post/rebranding-europe-2024-the-book>

# CLUB OF VENICE

## Provisional programme 2025-2027



2025
London, 12-13 March 2025 8th Stratcom seminar
Athens, Greece, 21-22 May 2025 Plenary meeting
Brussels, 3-4 July 2025 Seminar on communicating migration and EU enlargement (in cooperation with IOM, ICMPD and SEECOM)
Poland, 9-10 October 2025 Thematic seminar on countering FIMI
Venice, 4-5 December 2025 Plenary meeting

2026
Croatia, March 2026 9th Stratcom seminar
Latvia or Lithuania, May 2026 (venue to be confirmed) Plenary meeting
September/October 2026 (venue to be confirmed) Thematic seminar
Venice, end November 2026 Plenary meeting of the 40th Anniversary of the Club of Venice
2027
Croatia, March 2027 10th Stratcom seminar
April 2027 Thematic seminar Relations between public communication and the media sector
June 2027 (dates and venue to be defined) Plenary meeting
Venice, December 2027 Plenary meeting





# CHRONOLOGY OF THE CLUB OF VENICE MEETINGS

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	25-28 May	Barcelona-Seville	plenary	on the occasion of the Olympic Games in Barcelona and Seville World Expo
7	1989	30 September - 2 October	Paris	plenary	at the occasion of the European Conference on audiovisual
8	1989	20-22 October	Venice	plenary	
9	1990	18 April	London	plenary	Presentation of the new COI statute
10	1990	16-18 November	Venice	plenary	
11	1991	25-27 October	Venice	plenary	
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	
16	1994	4-5 November	Venice	plenary	
17	1995	26-27 April	Brussels	plenary	1st meeting with EP communicators
18	1995	3-5 November	Venice	plenary	10th anniversary of the Club of Venice

No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
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
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	20th 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	50th anniversary of the Rome Treaties
39	2008	25 February	Brussels	workshop on audiovisual and interactive communication	
40	2008	5-6 June	Ljubljana -Postojna	plenary	

No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
41	2008	21-22 November	Venice	plenary	Break-out groups: a) Capacity building b) Public diplomacy 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	
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: a) Capacity building b) Audiovisual and interactive communication c) Journalism and new media
56	2011	10 February	Brussels	workshop on web-communication & social media and communicating enlargement	



No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
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	
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	

No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
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"	
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"	

No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
89	2017	23-24 November	Venice	Plenary	
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 - Vilnius Charter on Societal Resilience to Disinformation and Propaganda in a Challenging Digital Landscape - 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	2nd 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	- 2nd 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 Hellenic Government
				- High Level Event	- 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	3rd Stratcom Seminar: "Strategy, Science and Standards - building effective European public communication in the 20's"	
	2020	4-5 June	Dubrovnik	Plenary	Cancelled, owing to the COVID-19 crisis lockdown measures
102	2020	15 June	On line mtg coordinated by the Croatian authorities	Webinar on "Crisis Communication - Managing communication on the Covid-19 - Challenges, Analysis and Lessons Learned"	Co-organised with the Croatian government authorities
103	2020	30 September	On line meeting	1st OECD Expert Group on Public Communication	In cooperation with the OECD Headquarters and the UK GCS
104	2020	10-11 November	On line meeting	3rd EURO-Med EMM4 Workshop	In cooperation with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
105	2020	3-4 December	On line meeting	Plenary	Co-organised with the Italian government authorities
106	2021	25 February	On line meeting	4th Stratcom Seminar: "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 meeting	Workshop on "Communication and Open Governance in a Time of Crisis"	Co-organised with the OGNfE, DEMSOC, HSS, OGP and OECD



No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
108	2021	10-11 June	On line meeting	Plenary	Co-organised with the government of the Republic of Serbia
109	2021	4 October	On line meeting	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	4rd EURO-Med EMM5 Workshop "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	2nd 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
114	2022	18 February	On line meeting	3rd meeting of the ad hoc working group of comms experts in resilience vs. hybrid threats	
115	2022	30-31 March	London	5th Stratcom seminar "Professionalizing Strategic Communication to tackle social and technological challenges"	Co-organised with the UK GCS
116	2022	31 June - 1st 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

No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
119	2022	10-11 November	Rabat	5th EURO-Med – EMM5 Migration Workshop “Understanding the governance of migration narratives in the Euro-Mediterranean region” + 2nd 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 Department for European Policies, Presidency of the Council of Minister of the Italian Government
121	2023	9-10 March	London	6th StratCom Seminar Shared understanding and campaign work among European strategic communicators	Co-organised with the UK GCS
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 – 1st 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	7th 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

No.	YEAR	DATE	VENUE	MEETING	REMARKS
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
131	2025	12-13 March	London	8th Stratcom Seminar "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



# Acknowledgments

The Club expresses its gratitude to its members from  
Belgium, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom

Many thanks also to the Steering Group and the Advisory Committee of the Club,  
the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions,  
the Italian Association of Public Communicators (COMPUBLICA),  
Elliot Grainger, Anne Gregory, Leda Guidi, Michael Malherbe,  
Stavros Papagiannenas, Simon Piatek, Brian Smith and Anthony Zacharzewski  
for their proactive support

This edition was made possible thanks to the collaboration  
of the Directorate-General for External Communication of the  
Chancellery of the Prime Minister in Belgium



