EuroPCom session report

Checking the numbers: evaluation of communication campaigns

Thursday, 7 November 14h30-16h00

Speakers: Richard Addy, Co-founder and director of AKAS; **Philipp Schulmeister**, Head of the Public Monitoring Unit, European Parliament; **Frank Knecht,** Deputy Head of the Strategy Unit for Corporate Communications, DG COMM, European Commission

Moderator: Fabian Breuer, Head of Communication Planning, Evaluation and Campaigns Unit, European Investment Bank

"We're good at measuring output or at least we're getting better at measuring output, but what does it say about impact?" Moderator **Fabian Breuer** began with a question to introduce the main focus of Thursday's panel: KPIs, the Key Performance Indicators.

Frank Knecht, the panel's first speaker, stressed that evaluation is a basic management task and that it is central to all communication professionals' work. **Mr Knecht** introduced a seven-step process for the evaluation of communication campaigns of the European Commission, which looked at research and metrics. Research refers to segmenting your audience and aspiring to understand their values, i.e. what specifically makes them different. When needed, it uses Eurobarometer data. Metrics involves setting a basis for output and measuring your activities, results and impact, i.e. where genuine change happens. Did your message change opinions? Did you gain trust or has the public's perception of you changed? It is then possible to look at setting a meaningful baseline, holding focus groups, ongoing measurements and mid- and final-term assessments, with a final data collection stage and future benchmarks. When asked about specific aspects that worked in the #EUandMe Campaign, **Mr Knecht** listed: having a baseline when setting your targets, regular testing as you get to know your audience, avoiding being "easily impressed" by data, and prioritizing result-oriented metrics over output. He ended with his most important piece of advice to the audience: "*Evaluation is a cultural thing. Evaluation means to figure out what has worked and what has not worked. And with regard to what has not worked, we need to have the guts to say it… acknowledge failure. Create a corporate culture that allows for failure... if we sweep it under the carpet, the people who follow us will make the same mistakes. This has been the biggest lesson I have learnt in my professional life".*

Philipp Schulmeister's presentation was linked to the 2019 European elections, calling them *"the game-changing moment for Parliament's digi-communications"*, and explaining that *"it was in many respects a campaign of firsts"*. Although noting that the communications campaign may not have been the main factor driving voters, it did have an impact by raising awareness. One of the aforementioned firsts was a full segmentation process, targeting 97 groups designed mainly by open-source data (EuroBarometer) across 28 Member States. Among the groups targeted, 50% had a higher turnout than the national averages across the EU, election turnout

increased by 8% and youth participation doubled in 2019. Alongside the continuous evaluation of evidence, audiences, channels and efficiency, reporting of activities was structured around four types of activities and four pillars of reporting.

Four types of activities: media, digital and social, public events and journalistic events.

Four pillars of reporting: reach, engagement, resonance and impact.

Activity Type / Indicator / Outcome	Description	Reach	Engagement	Resonance	Impact
Media Activity	Advertising or exposure with offline media such as TV and press	Activity tracker Teletrax	Social listening		Google Trends Post-election survey
Digital and Social	Online ads, exposure and newsletters including across social networks and communities, influencers and websites	Activity tracker Paid Media performance	Groundgame app Owned media performance Webcomm and EPLO inputs Google Adverts		Google Trends POMU post-election survey
Public Events	Debates, seminars, exhibitions, stakeholder dialogues or similar.	Activity tracker		Dedicated "post-event" questionnaires	
Journalistic Events	Press conferences, briefings, and other journalist-specific events	Activity tracker MSU summary			MIU: number of articles across key sources

Using this matrix, alongside meetings, monthly reports and applied analysis with stakeholders, the campaign was deemed a success. **Mr Schulmeister** summarised, "[Metrics] are not the end; this is actually the start of a process. We learned from that, we had a ton of takeaways that we now have to engage and work with for the next five years".

Richard Addy tailored his tactics to the world of non-profits, starting his presentation by moving away from the idea of output-based measurements and moving towards the concept of a multilateral partnership instead. He pointed to a possible impact framework developed through working with media, NGOs, foundations, and global institutions, namely the European Investment Bank, *The Guardian*, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Hromadske. The goal? To understand your input, content and output metrics in the digital space so as to critically analyse audiences and improve stories. "We shouldn't forget the really impactful place that stories have when we're looking at the difference we're making", he added, "you can't get anywhere without the data but stories often bring more life and colour to your data". Only 31% of non-profits have some form of metrics on impact.

With a view to getting started with impact-based metrics, **Mr Addy** set out seven "buckets" that will capture the success of your campaign or project. These included strategic input/processes, content, outcome, publics, influencers and decision makers, which relate to mission and campaign objectives. Reaching your maximum potential means taking advantage of tools like Eurobarometer, ethnography and focus groups, among others, in order to focus on why certain groups would engage with your content.

When asked a question regarding measuring and ensuring the effectiveness of communications campaigns on a budget, **Mr Addy** had two recommendations. Firstly, look for third-party data surveys. Secondly, search for freely available data such as Google Trends. However, he cautioned, "be careful of data to justify your existence". The point of your campaign is to get closer to the people you serve and to disseminate truth — as such face what works and what does not.