[S]electing Europe

EuroPCom
4th European Conference on Public Communication
Brussels
16-17 October 2013

EUROPEAN UNION
Committee of the Regions
Conference proceedings
Over 650 communication managers and senior experts from local, regional, national and European authorities and organisations gathered in Brussels on 16 and 17 October 2013 for the fourth EuroPCom conference. They spent two days sharing strategic insights and practical experiences in the area of recent communication challenges.

More than 75 experts spoke during plenary sessions and workshops focusing on the upcoming European elections in 2014 and, more generally, on the role and position of public communicators during an election period.

It is the aim of the annual European Conference on Public Communication to inspire cities and regions, as well as EU players, as they design their future communication strategy, forming new networks that transcend borders. It also encourages all levels of government to develop a decentralised communication policy for the EU.

The conference is an initiative of the Committee of the Regions and organised jointly by the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the EU and its Lithuanian Presidency and the European Economic and Social Committee. The concept, content and promotion of the 2013 conference were defined by the EuroPCom Advisory Board, which comprises representatives of the institutional partners, regional partners from previous conferences and several European networks of communication directors (Club of Venice and EACD), communication agencies (EACA) and researchers in the field of public communication, media and journalism (ECREA).

All conference presentations and documentation can be found at www.cor.europa.eu/europcom
| EuroPCom 2013: lessons learnt for EU communication | 4 |
| Opening session From bailout to ballot | 6 |
| Workshop Campaigning for Europe | 8 |
| Workshop European elections going local | 10 |
| Workshop Candidates going European | 12 |
| Workshop Online public communication: from tools to strategies | 14 |
| Workshop e-government, e-citizens, e-lusions? | 16 |
| Conversation session It’s all about social | 18 |
| Workshop Public communication and politics | 20 |
| Workshop Putting communication on the policy agenda | 22 |
| Key note lecture Perspectives for public communication and citizen engagement | 24 |
| Workshop Monitoring and evaluating strategies and campaigns | 26 |
| Workshop Strengthening your administration’s reputation | 28 |
| Workshop Administrators or ambassadors | 30 |
| Workshop Reputation of the EU institutions | 32 |
| Workshop Storytelling in public communication | 34 |
| Workshop Talking about EU projects | 36 |
| Conversation session What’s your story? | 38 |
| Closing session Public communication: the way ahead | 40 |
| EuroPCom 2013 online | 42 |
| About the EuroPCom 2013 and 2014 conferences | 44 |
Various studies and surveys held in the run-up to the 2014 elections confirm that regional and local authorities and other institutions can play a significant role in putting across the EU and its policies.

Not only are Europe’s regions and cities implementing and benefiting from EU policies, they are also often in charge of services such as education, culture, press and media, which have a genuine impact on public opinion, and have developed cross-border partnerships and exchange in various fields. In addition, local and regional implementation of EU Structural and Investment Funds programmes, for example, includes legal obligations requiring strategies, staff, tools and budgetary resources for informing the general public about the impact of EU support.

It appears that certain narratives about the EU might not work for all generations and Member States anymore; hence the search for new narratives. With respect to communication by the EU institutions, better coordination of the cacophony of parallel, mostly institutional messages and activities is needed.

The rise of euroscepticism is not a recent phenomenon and should be understood as deeply rooted in national discourses on what the EU stands for and what its purpose is. It is too short-sighted to interpret the current lack of trust in the EU and its institutions as peoples’ reaction to the crisis and its management at EU level or as yet another example of depoliticising politics in general.

Protectionist reflexes, “leave the EU” debates, blaming migrants for migration, constitutional court judgments with regard to the EU Treaties etc. all can fuel doubts about European integration and distrust of the political system of the European Union. Eurosceptic language is apparently not confined to populist parties. On the other side, there is still a widespread belief that, at times of crisis and in view of the global character of many problems, greater coordination between governments and a power shift towards the EU are the way forward.

It appears that certain narratives about the EU might not work for all generations and Member States anymore; hence the search for new narratives. With respect to communication by the EU institutions, better coordination of the cacophony of parallel, mostly institutional messages and activities is needed.

At EuroPCom, there seemed to be agreement that the question of whether the EU needs one or several new narratives can only be answered once a democratically legitimated consensus exists about its final objective. Either way, such narratives need to be embedded in national, regional and local contexts; this is clearly necessary for the construction of a European public sphere.

---

**Regions and cities matter in communicating the EU**

**Communication cannot be a quick fix for the lack of trust in the EU**

**Does Europe need new narratives?**
There seems to be widespread agreement among experts that communication on EU issues needs to be more "pull" than "push" oriented. In practice, this would favour citizen-driven and interactive forms of communication such as town hall meetings, campaigns using social media, etc., over information provision. Lessons can be drawn from a number of good practices presented at EuroPCom such as the European Commission’s Citizens’ Dialogues, the Debating Europe campaign and the Bremen experience.

The problem of lack of trust should be overcome with authentic, open communication activities built on sharing and networking rather than top-down information. Providing unwanted information, advertising and propaganda cannot be the way forward. In this context, the importance of transparency, "open government" and social media and authentic stories was highlighted in several presentations.

In the current times of shrinking communication budgets and growing scrutiny from the political hierarchies, stakeholders and the citizens, more efforts are needed to make public communication more accountable. Monitoring and evaluation are – or should be – a structural part of each step in the development and roll-out of a communication strategy. This requires the definition of Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) targets and key performance indicators, structured measurement (e.g. using balanced scorecards) before and during the process and, finally, open and honest communication about the evaluation and feedback results at the end of the process.

The debates on the topic during EuroPCom revealed huge disparities in professional approaches to monitoring and evaluation, not only between administrations of different Member States but also within the EU institutions.

Using the momentum of the EP election campaign, local partners and intermediaries should become actively involved in communication activities. Windows of opportunity exist around the specific priorities (jobs; Europe in the world; money; quality of life; economy) as presented by the EP’s institutional campaign between October 2013 and February 2014.

The new approach of political campaigning with “presidential candidates” can make a difference. Here, much of the impact will depend on the efforts of the political parties in the Member States and the way they profile their candidates.
Opening session

From bailout to ballot

The European elections in 2014 will be a key opportunity to map the public’s views on the future of Europe. More generally, the elections will also reflect the level of public trust in politics and institutions after several years of economic crisis. The opening plenary session of EuroPCOM 2013 focused on the role of public communicators before, during and after this election period.

Matthew McGregor, Director of digital rapid response on Obama’s 2012 re-election campaign and political director at Blue State Digital, set the tone by sharing his insights and recommendations in his introductory keynote lecture. The following debate, moderated by the Irish journalist, Karen Coleman, included speeches by high-level representatives of the European institutions: Anni Podimata, Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mercedes Bresso, First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions, Vytaius Leškevičius, Lithuanian Minister for European Affairs, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, Jane Morrice, Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee, and Jean-Pierre Vandersteen, Deputy Director-General for Communication of the European Commission. At the end of the session, the first European Public Communication Award was given to the region of Brandenburg in Germany for its successful EU communication strategy.

Matthew McGregor explained in his dynamic keynote presentation the main strategies used during the re-election campaign of Barack Obama in 2012 and the relevant parallels for the upcoming European election campaigns. The first thing to make clear to the citizens is that elections have consequences. They must be aware of the impact of the choices they make. He also stressed that campaigns must enlist community support, involving the citizens and using all possible means and technologies to disseminate the message. Matthew McGregor was aware that this is easier in the US than in Europe because of the cultural differences and the different privacy and data protection legal frameworks.

To enlist the support of the citizens, we should try to make the campaign easy and accessible. Campaigners should not ask whether the citizens have access to the message; they should make sure that the message directly reaches the public. Today there are plenty of ways to get the message to potential voters. But it is not only a matter of using the right technology: we also need to think about the emotional side of the campaign and appeal to people’s feelings. That is what the successful viral videos circulating on social networks have in common: they touch the hearts of millions of viewers.

Matthew McGregor’s final recommendation was not to be lame. The message will have more lasting impact if it is presented in a distracting or funny way, even if it is about abstract or technical issues such as tax policy.

Anni Podimata showed the campaign video of the European Parliament (“Act. React. Impact.”), which received mixed reactions from the audience. She also referred to the motto of next year’s elections: “This time it’s different”. 2014 will be different because of the economic crisis, and in particular because of the crisis in public confidence vis-à-vis the EU and politics in general. It will be different because of the Lisbon Treaty which has now come into force and made the fully-developed powers of the European Parliament tangible. And it will be different for European communicators, because the challenge is no longer to get Europe on the agenda of the public debate, but rather to come to an objective debate based on facts.

Citizens must be informed about the real stakes, so they can decide on what will (not) happen in the EU. Europe should always be a political project, not a faceless bureaucracy. Election publicity in the coming months will endeavour to take this approach, with debates on topics relevant to everyday life, showing that there is scope for change and improvement.
Vytautas Leškevičius called on the communication specialists to stimulate pro-European movement in the European Union more actively and help citizens to better understand what the European Union stands for and what it is against. He emphasised that these efforts are significant in ensuring that, next year, the European Parliament will be able to withstand the gradually-expanding radical anti-European movements that pose a danger to European values.

The slogan of the European Parliament’s election campaign, “Act. React. Impact.”, is perfect for communication specialists, because the race for European hearts and minds next year will not be easy.

Jane Morrice wondered why 50 per cent of Europeans choose not to go to the polls. And she called for the communication campaign to specifically focus on three groups that do not seek to exercise their right to vote. First, there are the people who do not vote because they lack information. Second, there is a segment of society that does not want to know, on the basis of erroneous or incomplete perceptions, and to which we need to explain the importance of “Brussels” politics in their daily lives. And finally, there are the non-voters who simply do not care about Brussels and all that it represents.

A proper understanding of our citizens’ needs and motivations, and differentiated and targeted approaches, are of key importance in our communication strategy for the next years.
Workshop

Campaigning for Europe

Despite growing euroscepticism, grassroots initiatives are emerging as a way of promoting the EU’s values or – at the very least – stimulating an in-depth debate among EU citizens on Europe’s future. This workshop discussed different examples of “pro-Europe” campaigns and looked in particular at the underlying narratives they use.

The workshop was moderated by Wolfgang Petzold, Head of Unit at the Directorate for Communication, Press and Events of the Committee of the Regions. Christine Ehrig, Communication Manager at the Stiftung Mercator in Germany, Adam Nyman, Director of Debating Europe, and Joachim Ott, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission’s DG Communication, presented three case studies. Yuri Borgmann-Prebil, Scientific Officer at the European Commission’s DG Research and Innovation, gave some academic reflections on the theme. And finally Sahil Deo (Hertie School of Governance), Lindsay Aqui (London School of Economics) and Christian Freudlsperger (Sciences Po Paris) shared experiences of an international student project on a future narrative for Europe.

Wolfgang Petzold opened the workshop by talking about the 2014 European election campaign at a time of high euroscepticism. He hoped that the workshop would be able to provide some critical thought on the design and organisation of local EU communication campaigns by public authorities and civil society organisations.

Christine Ehrig presented the campaign "Ich will Europa", launched in 2012 by eleven German foundations, aiming to highlight the benefits, achievements and future of Europe in order to change its recent negative image. The campaign, an online platform, mainly seeks to start a public debate on the current challenges of building a sustainable European future. She highlighted the use of social media as a way to provide a direct debate between political representatives and the citizens. The initiative had visible impact and led to controversial discussions. Ms Ehrig also presented several examples of the citizens’ – mainly positive – feedback on social media. The platform had one hundred thousand visitors, eight thousands likes on Facebook and a huge media response.
Joachim Ott presented the debates on the Future of Europe held this year by the European Commission in the Members States. He pointed out that the Commission felt it was reconnecting with citizens after a huge decrease in their trust. The local debates had been launched in order to increase connection, with initiatives such as the New Narrative for Europe, aiming at greater democratisation of European decisions. The live debates are a good complement to the other forms of participation such as the social media projects from Debating Europe and others. These debates are having considerable impact, which is reflected in the figures, with ten thousand participants and four and a half thousand web-streamers. Joachim Ott added that the feedback came from multiple sources and was mainly positive, to the point that Member States such as France were copying the concept.

Adam Nyman spoke about the Debating Europe campaign, a platform for online debate between policymakers and citizens on vital issues for Europe’s future such as the 2014 European elections. The platform launched what was known as the VOTE 2014 campaign, the first pan-European online e-Vote, in order to encourage citizens to participate in the EU in a more active way. About six hundred policymakers answered questions raised by the citizens, involving them in the creation of the European project. Adam Nyman added that although the e-Vote did not represent all European citizens’ opinions, considering the small percentage of participants it was a significant representation of what the Europeans would vote for.

Lindsay Aqui explained the main research carried out by a second working group on the policy proposals for Intelligent Governance for the 21st Century. Comparing the strengths and weaknesses of different governance models, the group wanted to propose new forms of policy design for the European Union. Ms Aqui said that there is a dichotomy between young people’s expectations of politicians and what politicians really do. She underlined the lack of response that results from this and added that what young European want is to be more connected to the European Union. Consequently, the contradiction shows frustration among the younger generations, who want real, concrete solutions such as more job opportunities.

Christian Freudlsperger presented the Europe 2025 project as a way of building a future vision of Europe among young people from inside and outside Europe, and redesigning and modernising the existing institutions. He stressed that young people have to be actively involved in the EU process and given access to the tools and platforms, with two-way cooperation between policymakers and young citizens.

Yuri Borgmann-Prebil presented the 7th Framework Programme on Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), launched by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. The research project focuses on the creation of European Union citizenship and highlights the obstacles to the exercising of citizenship rights in the EU. The program searches to remove barriers, to stimulate communication between citizens and to define the elements of a European identity and the benefits of EU integration for the citizens. The purpose is to get an overview of what facilitates the transition from an unconscious to a conscious feeling of being European.
Workshop

European elections going local

“This time it’s different”. This is one of the key messages of the European Parliament’s communication campaign for the 2014 elections. The communication approach will also be different from that of previous elections, with a high level of involvement from local communicators.

Luciano Morganti opened the workshop by explaining the specific context of next year’s elections and by raising the question of what role local, regional and national administrations can play in the election communication campaign.

Stephen Clark was glad to hear that the European Parliament’s campaign clip “Act. React. Impact.” had generated substantial reactions and discussion: it is the first time that such a campaign has really been grounded in reality rather than being reserved for the Brussels “Eurobubble”. The film shows everyday situations which affect each and every citizen of the EU. As mentioned by the Vice-President, Ms Podimata, in the opening session, the campaign reflects the different context of the upcoming elections.

The debate about the match between Brussels’ expectations and the local reality was moderated by Luciano Morganti, Professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and at Vesalius College in Belgium. Stephen Clark, Director for Relations with Citizens at the European Parliament, outlined the EP’s approach to communication. Kolja Raube, researcher at the Centre for Global Governance Studies of the University of Leuven, Belgium, outlined the conclusions and recommendations of a recent study among local and regional public communicators. Johannes Maier, Head of the Unit for European Affairs in the Government of Carinthia, Austria, and Eleftherios Kousoulis, communication strategist and adviser in Greece, gave their insights from a practitioner’s perspective.

The campaign material is meant to reach all EU citizens: logos, visuals and other material were developed in a way that made them easy to adapt and include in the national, regional or local advertising campaigns. The “kick-off” took place in September 2013 with the launch of the film, online promotion, dissemination of posters and toolkits with USB keys which reached almost 160 million citizens. The second phase, called the “themes” phase, started in October. On five major themes - Jobs, Europe in the world, Money, Quality of life and Economy - communication material such as leaflets, posters, infographic material and videos were produced. This phase has also been accompanied by the so-called “ReAct events – Real world encounters”, with the first taking place on 15 October in Paris, to be followed shortly by events in Warsaw, Madrid, etc. For these events, all the EP offices of the 28 countries have been involved and asked to organise local events. From March to May 2014, the third phase, “Go to vote”, will be implemented, with TV spots, films and outdoor advertising on buses, in airports, etc. and, of course, on social media (Facebook, twitter, etc.). It will
be backed up with debates between candidates, open days and, for the first time, an election night at the Parliament. The last phase, “the outcome”, will be the presentation of the new Commission president, hearings, the new Commission and, as in the USA, an “inauguration day”. The whole campaign needs the active involvement not only of the Parliament offices but also of local and regional authorities, NGOs and all associations willing to invest in Europe.

Kolja Raube was in charge of the 2013 study commissioned by the Committee of the Regions on the EU communication potential of local and regional authorities. He presented the results of the study, which is based on literature and interviews with questions linked to communication with a view to the 2014 elections: Are regions and cities willing and able to support EU communication, and what additional support would they need to be more engaged? The findings of the study were the following: communication needs to be active and transparent and involve citizens’ input at all levels of EU governance. Local and regional authorities are key in decentralised communication, particularly given that EU citizens are becoming more and more sceptical and indifferent to EU affairs and the voter turnout might be even lower in 2014 than in 2009. Regions and cities can use a variety of communication channels and toolkits and they already work extensively with other cities and regions. Overall, most of the respondents said that the European elections were not (yet) a priority in their communication strategy. Kolja Raube said that local authorities need to be convinced of why it is important for them to contribute to the Parliament’s campaign and to convince the EU citizens to vote and thus make an impact on EU politics. The CoR and its members need to involve LRAs as facilitators and give concrete examples of how the EU can help citizens. In conclusion, different communication tools need to be used and all the EU institutions need to work together to coordinate their messages.

Next up, Eleftherios Kousoulis, a professor and consultant involved in political campaigns and top-level public communication in Greece, gave his views on the European elections and how they were seen in his country. Considering the major crisis Greece has been facing over the last years, he doubts that there will be any interest in the 2014 European elections and, if there is any, it will most probably be anti-Europe. In his opinion, it will not be possible to mount local or regional campaigns for the elections – there is no real interest, no financial means, no affinity with Europe and no long-term vision for the moment. Only the national authorities will show some interest.

Johannes Maier has been coordinating all EU affairs at the Office of the Regional Government of Carinthia for almost 20 years. He developed and implemented innovative “EU Dialogue Projects” on communicating EU themes at regional level. He is convinced that each country has its specific characteristics and its own “emotional” themes, and that these need to be addressed if you want to convince the citizens. Last year he worked with the regional branch of the Austrian Broadcasting Company, showing how Carinthians really benefit from EU funds. In conclusion, he mentioned that most of the time the problem of communication on European affairs lies in the fact that local governments lack know-how and generally fail to get the necessary political support they need.

The different presentations generated many questions from the audience, mainly about the various communication tools mentioned by the speakers to promote the European elections at all levels of governance.
As stated in the Lisbon Treaty, the 2014 elections will play a decisive role in the appointment of the new president of the European Commission. For the first time in the history of the European Parliament, this change will lead to pan-European political campaigns. The workshop looked at the plans and aims of the European political parties and how they are trying to coordinate their communication strategies with national and regional parties.

The moderator of the debate was Christophe Leclercq, founder of the EU media network, Euractiv. Communication experts from four European political parties were on the panel: Antti Timonen, Head of Communications in the Group of the European People’s Party in the European Parliament, Brian Synnott, Media and Campaigns Adviser in the Party of European Socialists, Didrik de Schaetzen, Head of Communications in the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party, and Johannes Hillje, Campaign Manager in the European Green Party.

Antti Timonen was the first to reveal some details of the European People’s Party (EPP)’s selection of candidates for the primary elections for European Commission president. He acknowledged that the EPP claims the credit for the progress made in the EU presidency procedure with the current agreement on nomination by parties. For the EPP, the candidate should have top executive experience as a head of state, minister or commissioner. The candidates will probably still be nominated as national candidates although, with some effort, a European element can also be brought in. The candidate put forward by the party, whether male or female, will be selected at the Dublin congress in March 2014. Late primary election timing is not seen as a concern given that the candidate will be high-profile; late nomination can only benefit them as it will reduce the likelihood of any conflict with their current executive post.

Mr Timonen was aware of the risk that the process will not lead to one of the parties’ candidates being elected as Commission President, given the success of populist parties across Europe. However, in his view, it would - on the one hand - put the spotlight on populist problem-seekers, and – on the other - also act as an incentive for European parties to seek a common solution.
Brian Synnott revealed the Party of European Socialists’ (PES) stance: the party sees the path leading to the election of the European Commission president as an evolving process for the entire political culture that takes into account lessons learned along the way. Under the Irish EU presidency, a robust process was designed that is both politically credible and strong. In November 2013, their nominees would be announced, which would signify the beginning of the final selection process, culminating in the official candidate being declared on 28 February, along with an unveiling of a common PES manifesto. This timespan gives the candidates plenty of time to promote their candidacy and the process itself on the grand European scale before the elections. Although PES was the main advocate of a primary election system, it could very well be that they would have one single candidate to nominate. What really matters is that the number of voices increases; the objective is to have a face that listens to all those voices.

Didrik de Schaetzen started by highlighting the candidate selection approach of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party. On 30 November 2013, they will launch the process by adopting their manifesto at the Party Congress in London. The ALDE Party is proud to be the first of the European Political parties to adopt their manifesto and the first to hold an electoral meeting to appoint their candidate on 1 February in Brussels. They are supporting the presidential debate proposal of the Committee of the Regions to be held in Athens in early March 2014. This event should preferably be followed by more debates along the lines of the US-style presidential debates.

The ALDE Party indicated their strong presence on social media but they are aware that the use of online tools does not mean success in itself. It is how one uses these tools that counts. Mentioning the financial crisis, they believe in a third way between the austerity or solidarity solutions. The debate should not be for-or-against Europe but how to make Europe simpler and stronger.

They are worried about the possibility of low voter turnout but will rely on their Europe-wide individual members to boost participation.

Johannes Hillje presented the ambitious, web-focused European primary project planned thus far by the European Green Party. Theirs will be a Europe-wide campaign with a strong online focus, open to all European citizens with both men and women on the candidate list. Citizens, particularly young people, will be invited to participate in the online vote between 10 November and 28 February, thus determining the winner. They will hold debates between the candidates, heavily relying on a key set of new technologies and the internet, making it an e-experiment. The party takes its inspiration from US caucuses which have incorporated 21st century tools and practices. The real aim is therefore to capture the imagination of the European public sphere.

The Achilles’ heel of the campaign would be if it remained solely within the confines of the so-called Eurobubble. They also see a larger issue of legitimacy for the primary elections if the primary turnout is high while voters in the European elections turn out in lower numbers.

Christophe Leclercq remarked that, unlike the US presidential elections, EU presidential elections have little time to make their case. He presented the Greens’ approach as an inspiration for all European parties and sparked further debate on how the outcome of the European elections could diminish legitimacy. Pushing speakers to disclose tools and strategies for the upcoming campaigns, he concluded that the big challenge of the European elections would be to convince the public that, this time, it could be different. Surely, there is potential for this tactic to be utilised.
Workshop

Online public communication: from tools to strategies

After years of focusing on tools and technologies, public communicators want social media to be seen as more than just a trendy web 2.0 instrument. How can we integrate web communications into the global strategy of a public authority? How can we prepare administrations for new ways of interacting with the public?

Andy Williamson, CEO and founder of London-based Digital Future, who recently published Inter-Parliamentary Union Guidelines on Social Media for Parliaments, was the expert lecturer in this workshop. He was introduced by Thibault Lesénécal, acting head of the Web Communication Unit at the European Parliament, who was also moderator of the debate with the audience.

Andy Williamson’s speech was entitled Putting citizens at the centre of our democracy. He had three principles: you do not own the conversation, no medium is an island, and the value is in the network. These three principles cannot be used without the key element of trust.

He had observed the strained relationship between general government entities and their citizens, and suggested that governments should be more open to the citizens because the relationship will then develop into co-creation of ideas and conversation. Brands are engaging with their consumers on more personal levels and this line of thought could be transferred to governmental relations with citizens. He introduced several examples of engaging brands such as Peugeot, which recognises that buying a car is a two-way conversation between them and their customers.
Another principle was “no medium is an island”: in other words, all media need to be connected to each other to meet the objectives for a specific campaign. This will allow the right tool to be used at the right time for the right purpose. The traditional media mix runs parallel to or converges with digital media. Television is more than broadcasting because it can show communication on social media in real time. Successful campaigns move outside their centre. Showing the public what was done with their input shows credibility and authenticity.

The last principle, “the value is in the network”, shows how powerful social media have become. Andy Williamson described LinkedIn as the least sexy social network, but it is a hugely powerful communication network due to the multiplying factor - it is network built upon network. Even if an organisation has a small network, there are ways to build impact; all one needs is a mobile phone and a solid network to get a message out.

In summary, society is moving towards intimacy and connectivity. All elements used need to be connected in some way. Communicators need to go where the people are and listen and find out what they are saying. Communicators need to be silent, authentic, real with a human element. The digital platform is part of “business as usual”, so learn how to use it and get people to be your advocates. Draw people in and connect them to the brand, or the government entity, and above all, innovate and keep your goals in mind.
This workshop presented some case studies of how local, regional and national authorities incorporate social media into their communication strategy.

The session was chaired by Andreea Hanganu, founder of DigitalDiplomacy.ro in Romania. Project presentations were given by Luis Petrikorena Arbelaitz, Director for Open Government at the Basque Government, Spain, Liia Hänni, Programme Director for e-democracy and e-participation at the E-Governance Academy, Estonia, Eila Vähäkuopus, Communications Manager in the City of Oulu, Finland, and Tomislav Korman, Head of the Online Communication Department of the Government of Croatia.

Luis Petrikorena Arbelaitz outlined the Basque Open Government strategy, a participatory and collaborative approach opening up regional government. It focuses on transparency of information, participation and collaboration. To succeed, it is important to have a clear objective and active lead in the open government process, while being open, humble and willing to accept citizens’ views which might differ from the government’s views. The open government approach requires all content to be relevant and meaningful enough to deserve citizens’ participation. Information must be accurate and created and updated continuously. In the Basque example, information on flooding risks is updated on the website as well as all other information relevant to local needs. Like any initiative, the open government participates in networks, including social networks, to create communities and to drive and encourage participation. It is important to build an emotional link with voters over party lines and to create communities.

Mr Petrikorena Arbelaitz explained how the government, like any corporate identity, must build its identity step by step: this process begins with awareness and building a reputation, moving to differentiation and positioning, and aims to reach experience and build an emotional link with the public. However, it begins with a “seed”, creating the right environment. Open government is exposed to invasion from different networks, and so it is important to actively manage and moderate it. The official government message must be adapted for social media and open government must earn the citizens’ respect through credibility and transparency.
Liia Hänni explained how Estonian internet voting works from a citizen's point of view. The Estonian digital ID-card has allowed internet voting (iVote) from "personal polling stations" since 2005. The number of votes cast by the remote electronic voting system steadily increased between the 2005 local elections and the 2011 national elections. Citizens of all ages use the i-voting system, in similar proportions (21 to 27%). Similarly, the iVote is almost equally popular amongst men (46%) and women (54%). The main reasons for i-voting are that it is easy and accessible, convenient and a trusted means of voting. Moreover, in Estonia, it is considered to be a logical step towards citizen-centric e-government.

Ms Hänni then elaborated on the potential risks that the iVote entails, such as i-voting system failure, possible distrust of political origin and rising global concern about internet security in general. The political risk could come, for example, from party lines through an appreciation of the number of votes cast by i-vote over paper vote. However, it is a question of taking account of and managing the political risk. Even if trust in i-voting has slightly decreased over time, in general i-voting is considered to be sustainable and will continue. Ms Hänni concluded by stressing that when citizens are on line, the governments need to be on line, too.

Eila Vähäkuopus talked about online tools as part of the communication strategy of the city of Oulu. The city's tools include the official webpages, the city customer service online chat, live broadcasts online related to participation and decision-making, and blogs. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are used for information and guidance, while facts are published on the city webpages. Moreover, online participatory tools have proven successful: for example, "Aloiteolulle.fi" is an online service allowing citizens to launch initiatives concerning city services and local administration, to follow the progress of the initiative, to receive texts or email status updates and to browse, search and comment on other initiatives. "Otakantaa.fi", a national e-participation environment managed by the Ministry of Justice, allows dialogue and interaction between citizens, politicians and public servants. The service collects citizens' experiences and opinions to enhance and support planning, preparation and decision-making regarding city services and activities.

In his presentation, Tomislav Korman focused on the Croatian government’s experiences of using social media and on the importance of listening to citizens. The Croatian government appeared on social networks in early 2011, and is today among the world’s most communicative governments on social media. Prior that, the information flows were controlled by the government, and thus a major change was necessary. Social media tools proved to be a cost-effective way of enhancing and opening up communication flows and engaging citizens. The online community interested in the modernisation of public services advised the government's key opinion-makers. The first actions taken included the gathering of questions and proposals online to be addressed to a minister on the topic of unemployment (of which 70% were usable ideas), to be followed by more online discussions on topics such as the freedom of assembly and public gathering act. The next step involved the prime minister, who replied to questions addressing plans important to citizens, online.

Now social media and websites are regularly used for public consulting. Tomislav Korman highlighted the need to be respectful but to enjoy the possibilities that social media offer: openness and rapidity and the advantages of a 2-way channel. It is important not only to promote an idea, but also to create conversation. In addition, in 2013, the government adopted the e-citizens project and launched the central government's official procurement web portal.
Conversation session

It’s all about social

“What an interesting approach! I’ve never thought of this way of communicating. Can you give me your business card?” She seemed really excited after listening to the idea of the man sitting next to her at a table with four more people she had never met in her life before.

That was exactly the purpose of first interactive conversation session during the EuroPCom conference. This successful and innovative session invited local administration delegates, institutional administrators and external communication experts to explore the world of social media. Their objective was to identify where we stand now with web communication and social media, and what steps we could take next to make these tools more efficient.

The method

Creativity, out-of-the-box thinking and engagement were key elements in the success of the session. The World Café method is widely used in brainstorming meetings in order to encourage participatory leadership and decision-making.

Participants had to address core questions on the issue at hand, sitting around tables with four to five colleagues. The process consisted of three rounds, each of which was meant to provoke deep thought and discussion in the field of social media.

The communicators involved were encouraged to sit with people who they had not met before. After the first, introductory round, they had to change tables and discuss the next question with other people with different backgrounds and ideas.

The ideas which emerged in the small group discussions were written down by the table hosts and collected on cards. The whole conversation session was facilitated by Stien Michiels and Anita Paalvast, with the support of a team of volunteers from the European Commission: Béla Dajka, Dimitrios Koskeridis, Nico Keppens and Marina Bergamelli.
Round 1:
“What successful results did I achieve by using social media and what were the ingredients that led to this success?”

The first question, aimed at breaking the ice, served its purpose and, in no time, the first smiling faces started popping out and fresh ideas were already on the table. “The real purpose of social media: to enable people to talk as human beings, not impersonal organisations”, said a PR agent.

“It is about telling stories to each other. Stories that really matter to ourselves and our audience.” Many trends and tips on how to use social media as a tool to attract and engage followers were shared among the groups and the enthusiasm was high.

When using social media, the following recommendations came to the fore:
• Combine different platforms;
• Timing is essential;
• Connect journalists and traditional media;
• Appreciate feedback;
• Have confidence in the #hashtag;
• Make the message interesting with photos and videos;
• Promote discussion and debate;
• Combine online with physical events;
• Have a clear focus on the target audience.

Round 2:
What are we really intending to achieve as public communicators by using social media?

During the second phase of discussion EU delegates and PR professionals had to define the purpose of using social media for public communication. Most of them seemed to have already engaged with the brainstorming and started visualising their ideas by sketching on the flipcharts. A personal connection between them had been established and they were now ready to share their stories!

Social media are tools that should be used by communicators to (re)connect with their audience, spark debate and boost engagement. This was the real purpose of social media in public communication, as identified by most of the participants in the workshop.

Others noted the need to achieve two-way communication and even human contact, or to offer an accessible image to institutions in order to increase web traffic and raise awareness. All of them agreed, however, that the key for success is sharing content - spreading the word and trying to reach audiences outside the local community or institution.

Round 3:
What challenges might come our way and how might we meet them?

One of the main difficulties when using social media for public communication is the control of nasty or prejudiced comments. How do you handle a user who makes inappropriate comments underneath your post? Always try to be authentic and accurate, educate with your comments and base your opinions on facts and figures, is what the participants said. Using the right tone of voice when expressing comments on the web is extremely important in order to sustain the dialogue.

In order to overcome management challenges such as deciding on the right tools and channels or getting the message across, communicators should define the main lines of their topics and have a consistent content strategy.

Much of the time, a certain type of audience can be passive, pulling the levels of social engagement and debate downwards. In this case, the communicator has to provoke self-interest by rethinking the message. Being flexible and more relevant is the key.

Last but not least, professionals agreed that a specialised social media manager is vital for the success of the communication campaign. An experienced manager can ensure proper definition and coordination of the marketing strategy.

All in all, the team concluded that even though social media seem to make communication easier, sometimes it doesn’t work! What is certain is that, after the conversation session, everybody had the right tools to re-think their approach and re-focus it for a successful communication strategy.
Election periods are usually challenging times for communicators in public administrations. This workshop tried to address the most important questions/dilemmas for public communicators. How can they develop and manage a long-term communication strategy for their administration in line with political priorities? How can they strike a balance between loyalty and neutrality?

Caroline Ollivier-Yaniv talked about the depoliticisation of public communication and explained why the chosen theme was particularly interesting for citizens. While the definitions of “political communication” and “public communication” were intended to make a distinction between the two, there was growing interdependence between them and looking at the relationship would lead to better understanding of the communication sector. Caroline Ollivier-Yaniv identified four aspects of relevance for the relationship. First, there was a process of professionalisation of public communicators, consolidation of a common identity. Besides the election periods, characterised by an obvious discrepancy between the timescale of an institution and political stakeholders, there was a more general problem, namely the relationship with politicians in the construction and institutionalisation of public communication as a specific area of activity (distinctive tasks of communicators within organisations; inclusion in trade registers; sectorial professional associations and dedicated training courses). Secondly, know-how and the focus on ideas to serve the common good would not lead to the disappearance of politics, but to a process of transformation from politics to policy, while the reverse was also true, namely that uncontroversial issues could and would be politicised. Finally, the diverse career pathways of public communicators also need to be taken into account, since they are often connected with politics.

In the light of the interdependencies between public communicators and politicians and the transferability of resources from one sphere to another, Caroline Ollivier-Yaniv concluded that refusing interdependence can become counterproductive and affect the credibility of communicators. Therefore, an integrated model of communication in political and public life would be a useful tool for good governance.
Stefano Rolando called for greater European engagement to address the status of public communication from both ethical and professional perspectives. The relationship between policymakers and administration was becoming more complex. It used to be a one-way, top-down relationship, whereas now it was developing into a two-way channel. The political sphere was setting the agenda and the administration was validating policy, needing to strike a balance between being loyal to government and respecting the law. However, there was no unified paradigm to deal with relations between communication and policymakers and Europe’s involvement was complicated, because ethics varied across the EU. National and local administrations in the EU were not able to deal with citizens on an equal footing. The policymakers-administration-society relationship should be governed by common rules in all European countries – otherwise there is the risk that public communication remains the voice of power rather than being at the service of citizens.

Eleonora Gavrielides tried to paint the picture of a relationship between political and public communicators that could work in practice, building on a model of two intersecting circles: one representing public communication, which provided information that impacts on daily lives, and the other representing political communication, the purpose of which was to use the media to influence political decisions. In her view the common area in both circles is growing, although the centres of gravity are different. Public communicators should take into account the legitimate communication needs of the political masters, but endeavour to strike the right balance; otherwise they become irrelevant. If public communicators are wholly identified with the government, they cannot help politicians controlling the message. For their part, politicians would also benefit from effective public communication since they are not always communication experts, and it is they who can create the best possible conditions for the activity of public communication. Finally, it is the public who benefit from a good relationship between politicians and public communicators. This requires mutual respect, trust and good will, and consideration for each other’s priorities.

The discussion with the audience revealed that communication was a central tool in governance and that it clearly needed some regulation. Opinions were mixed as to whether legislation was needed to ensure political neutrality or whether the political dimension of communication just needed to be accepted by everyone.

Vincenzo Le Voci concluded that the common objective for political and public communication was to respond to the legitimate needs and expectations of citizens, and that communicators should seek interdependence to do the job well. Public communicators should use their expertise to establish dialogue with politicians and perform a kind of advisory function. As such, their role could become more influential. Finally, he felt that the debate should not be limited to outlining the existing problems, but should continue to look at developing strategies to overcome them. These could include professional training, exchange of good practice and the use of professional networks.
The start of a new legislative period is often the moment when communicators need to redesign and re-defend their long-term strategy. How can we develop an effective approach, safeguarding the merits of the past, integrating the desired changes and guaranteeing the necessary resources?

Susanne Hegelund opened the workshop, stressing that communication should not be top-down or only for peers, but that through modern communication tools communicators today have faster and more direct access to their target groups. However, they are not the only ones. The traditional media are in crisis, since social media have become the new “kings of communication”. Due to new media platforms, the good old evening news is no longer the public’s main information source. Many of us access the internet several times a day via smart phones or some other means. While the news multiplies exponentially, the number of journalists in newsrooms remains the same. Therefore, communicators should see themselves as news producers and media conductors, which calls for a strong sense of ethics. At the same time they are in a permanent power struggle with other information sources targeting the same audience.

Dejan Verčič pointed out the differences between the public sector and the corporate sector, as illustrated in the annual European Communication Monitor and other studies he coordinated. While for many years already there has been at least one communication specialist high up in the companies’ hierarchy, communication specialists are hardly ever to be found in leading roles in public administrations. Giving communicators executive powers, from advising to decision-making, seems difficult to accept in local authorities or ministries. Yet communication should help to explain complex issues such as Europe, making it meaningful. While one finds more daring communication in private firms, public communication often remains over-cautious. Not to mention the problem that communicators are often replaced when politicians change.

Dejan Verčič then explained three communication problems a CEO has to solve. First, making things less complex: CEOs articulate and symbolise what their organisations are and what they stand for. They have to be clear and focused in an ever-changing cultural, economic and financial environment. Second, getting attention: changing users’ communication habits is posing communication problems for corporate CEOs. And third, time pressure: time is a very limited resource for CEOs, but they still have to be present at events in person. This becomes increasingly complicated when operating in different time zones.
Paulijn de Bruijne presented the work of the Academy of Government Communication and the Dutch central government communication service. The idea was to join forces in the areas of manpower, finances and communication in order to develop a shared mission and strategy. Easy access for the citizens is guaranteed, as there is only one main phone number and only one website for the government. The services provided can be more effective when they are provided together by several specialists. This leads to a strong corporate image and one mission statement under only one logo. She stressed that 80% of the civil servants’ work is communication, because they are in direct contact with the citizens.

A central concept in the Dutch approach is the so-called Factor C. According to this concept, government policies are developed in a communicative way, taking into account input and feedback from society. Stakeholder analyses, core messages responding to the real needs of the public and process management are required in order to develop a good plan from the start. Ms de Bruijne concluded that the more communicative civil servants become, the more they are eager for advice and coaching. Hence the work of the academy is facilitation more than anything, because nowadays it is not possible to control the information flow.

Erik Hansen kicked off by saying that communicating is part of the law-making process and existing law in Norway. The right to be informed leads to communication, which should be political, as in, for example, a city information policy. In terms of information economy he mentioned the bad example of a mailshot sent to 2,000 households, which triggered 1,800 phone calls because people simply did not understand the letter. In order to avoid this, Erik Hansen proposes that the rules be established by explaining communication and expected results through meetings and presentations. Communication experts in an administration have to dig their heels in not to be overruled. Information is a key element of public administration, so communicators have to defend their role in the process.

Jaume Duch started by speaking about the special situation of the European Parliament’s press service. There is no one single approach, since the different voices from the political parties need to be reflected. For the EP communicators, political background knowledge is a must. Editors have to be able to choose what to communicate when from a multitude of topics. Communicators need to understand the mindset of politicians: they need to know what MEP’s read, what they say and what they would not say. In the institutional communication competition with other EU bodies, the EP press service has to provide more convincing arguments, delivering facts to journalists without “buying” them. The agenda is a tricky issue for a travelling Parliament, as is the presence of journalists when you have to organise the information flow during four-day Strasbourg part-sessions. Jaume Duch mentioned next year’s EP elections - “This time it’s different” - in connection with the upcoming election of the Commission president. However, the media still need to be convinced of the added value to pick up the news.

One important point during the following discussion was the question of the neutrality of public communication. Is it the role of public authorities to write news or is it the role of independent journalists to decide what is newsworthy? Jaume Duch replied: “By explaining complex issues to the journalists, we try to help them, but ultimately the information has to reach the citizen via the media.”
What does the future of communications hold? The keynote lecture discussed the future of public communication and citizen engagement. The presentation kicked off with Laurent Thieule, Director for Communication, Press and Events at the Committee of the Regions, who explained that EuroPCom was created in order to address the citizens of Europe and the Member States, helping them to network and exchange ideas. He introduced Johan Peter Paludan, futurist and Honorary Director of the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS), Denmark.

Johan Peter Paludan’s lecture focused on the future of public communication, how to engage citizens and where trends are leading in the industry. He spoke of the future of communications and how communicators can only make predictions. The past, present, future model is too primitive according to him. Everyone is still guessing the past, which is what historians do, and we as a whole mentally expand the present. The future is a continual, never-ending process.

On the issue of the boundary line between public and private communication, there is no boundary anymore and it is all blurring together. With the recent leaks of classified, private information, he said that all communication is becoming public. There are things that can be taken from current trends for communicators to inspire and achieve change and awareness, and one is that people do not want to be pushed or overwhelmed with data; they want to be individuals. The public will get better at creating barriers and communication professionals need to see and realise this. Communicators need to meet the people where they are, which is increasingly on social media. On this point, he remarked that there is a steady coming and going in the social media landscape, so the question is what big platform will be the next to boom.

Johan Peter Paludan said communication trends are shifting from a push to a pull market. There will be more increases in social media content and usage. With the introduction of myProfile, all information and purchasing power can be accessed through smart phone applications. Companies are digging deep and are able to follow customer relationship management (CRM) on the basis of psychographic criteria. All of these things can be tracked in this “Big Brother” world.

The reason for implementing these systems is that they will be non-interruptive. Public communicators need more personal connection with their citizens. Companies and public sectors have access to all this data but do not know how to utilise it. This leads to gamification or using games in new contexts. People do not want to be bored; they want rewards, results, and the feeling of instant gratification. Life is too short for boring messages. The most potent thing is the ability to get instant feedback now. It encourages concrete actions from the customer and retains their interest. It creates community-building and active connection between the customer and the brand.

Johan Peter Paludan suggested that communication may be being carried out the wrong way. He said that communicators need to reverse the order, so as to first find the meaning, and then find the solution in order to use the right technology product for communication. This led to discussion of T.I.P.S, or touch, information, payment, and sharing. It is one big step in integrating everything. The person using the system can access all their information through their mobile smart phone and can share it through Near Field Communication (NFC), which is safe, with no hacking, and avoids all problems with the cloud. The goal is to integrate all transactions, he said.

Johan Peter Paludan raised the question of whether public communication equalled communication in general. The two are not all that different and are soon going to look like one another. He concluded that society is going from puritanism to hedonism by combining fun and entertainment, or “edutainment”. The European Union needs to make its communication fun in order to keep the public’s interest, he said.
Where do all our communication efforts lead? This question is one that is not only raised by political leaders or the public, it is also a natural reflex for each communication professional. What efficient and innovative ways are available to evaluate and measure the impact of our daily communication work?

The workshop answering the above questions was chaired by Roser Domenech, Head of the Communication Unit of DG Health and Consumer Affairs, European Commission. Three experts took part in the panel debate: Cathelijne Janssen, Organisation and Communication Advisor, the Netherlands; Laure Van Hauwaert, Institutional Communications Director at the Ogilvy communication agency, Belgium; and Kevin Traverse-Healy, Strategic Consultant from the United Kingdom.

Ms Janssen then explained how an evaluation instrument such as the communication balanced scorecard, an audit tool, helps to evaluate communication policy at a strategic level. For public organisations, it focuses on domains such as...
corporate, policy, internal and organisation of communication, and on dimensions such as clarity, environmental focus, consistency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency. The scoreboard reflects the results of a questionnaire on indicators relating to these domains and dimensions, and highlights potential strengths and weaknesses in the communication policy. She encouraged holding of accountability sessions with what is known as “zero-measurement”, involving communication advisers, management and internal clients in the procedure, as a tool to improve communication strategy. An accountability session leads to better insight into what communication means to the organisation, and clarifies the priorities of the communication strategy and points for improvement. Ms Janssen concluded by stressing the importance of the management’s commitment to the communication policy and of setting Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) objectives with a focus on decision-making accountability.

Laure Van Hauwaert emphasised that measurement must not come only at the end of the project but that intermediate measures count and make constant campaign optimisation possible. Considering data from across the marketing mix can be used to advance knowledge and facilitate advocacy. Desk and market research, client workshops and expert contributions can be made use of. However, it is key to decide on the benchmarks and the measuring methodology at the beginning of the project. Laure Van Hauwaert gave an overview of the Ogilvy methodology, which begins with a specific business aim and includes metrics (market share, sales margin, sales growth, etc.). For public policy, it would be about awareness, behaviour or knowledge but it should be specific, e.g. increase the number of respondents saying “my voice counts” by xx%. Short-, mid- and long-term measurement levels help to analyse the outputs, impacts and outcomes respectively.

Moreover, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) provide a top-line view of the success of communication efforts, aligned to the business objectives. Diagnostic metrics identify what changes need to be made to strategy in order to improve KPI performance. Measurement should be part of the budget planning, with marketing/communication assets allocated where they will generate the highest possible returns. Knowing the target groups is key: evaluations show that fame and emotion sell and, for example, brand choices are usually made emotionally while rational calculations come second. Moreover, as the number of media channels used increases so does effectiveness: multichannel selling. Furthermore, it is important also to measure the “what if no campaign” option and the value of incremental sales. In short: successful communicators should “embrace statistics to validate their sound instincts”.

Kevin Traverse-Healy outlined the improvements in the recent UK government communication reform, which introduced evaluation as a mandatory part of any communication campaign. Greater emphasis is put on the quality of measurement as well as on SMART objectives. Measurement is possible at every stage and it should cover both internal and external factors: inputs describe the details of communications activities carried out while outputs describe the reach and frequency, reflecting the impacts. Outcomes focus on “know, think and feel” – factors: how recipients recognise and recall the message and how they understand it; have they engaged and changed attitudes and beliefs?

Kevin Traverse-Healy stated that awareness-raising as such is not an acceptable objective, but it should be considered as a step towards changes in behaviour. Outcomes include “talk and do” factors – has there been direct or indirect response? – and the measurement of actual behavioural change. It is possible to measure the extent of this before, by calculating activity costs (value for money) and numbers of people reached and responses, measured increase in awareness etc. (by cost per result). The final outcomes – the number achieving end outcome, can be measured with ROMI (return on marketing investment). Kevin Traverse-Healy emphasised that even in a public communication campaign it is possible – and important – to show numbers such as cost per result; cost per 000, cost per % change in preference, per intention to act, per click, per request etc., and to prove the return on investment, comprising the amount of money returned by the activity after subtracting costs, for every euro spent. Where it is not possible to calculate meaningful payback figures, the focus should be on cost per result.

The subsequent discussion with the audience, moderated by Roser Domenech, revolved around the complexity of measuring and evaluating public communication and institutional campaigns. Existing statistics such as the Eurobarometer could be used as base research in monitoring to put a number on campaigns results. The zero-measurement approach could also be used as a backdrop for results. A lively exchange of experiences followed on the topic of use of social media by the public sector. A key question to be analysed is why Facebook or other social media should be used, what their added value is and what goals the organisation would want to reach with them. An analysis of the target audience is necessary to see if a certain social medium is the right channel for reaching it. If using social media means either saving money (inexpensive media) or adding value to a strategy, it would be a good choice, as it entails a necessary investment in manpower. At their best, social media increase exposure and outreach, create new contacts and result in engagement. An organisation can succeed in growing organically in social media Europe-wide with a small budget (notwithstanding the linguistic challenge), even if they are already crowded media, if the activities are well segmented and targeted. Like any campaign tool, the use of social media must be evaluated and monitored. The debate concluded with a reminder of the need to report the evaluation and feedback results to close the loop, and encouragement to involve management and make it commit to measurement and monitoring – to engage it in implementing the evaluation results.
Civil services are – more than ever – under pressure, and are often considered to be inefficient and costly bureaucracies. This workshop introduced the challenge for public communicators of monitoring and directing the reputation of their administration.

The workshop was moderated by Florence Ranson, Vice-President of the European Association of Communication Directors. Fiona Narburgh, Head of Strategy and Communications at Wychavon District Council, UK, presented her work as joint chair of the New Reputation Project within the LGComms public communication network. Kim A. Bak, Director of the Danish Tax Authorities, added his personal insights and experiences on the topic.

Florence Ranson started the workshop by introducing the speakers and explaining the importance of a reputation management strategy, especially for troubleshooting situations, but also for the preservation of a good reputation that has already been achieved.

Fiona Narburgh stressed that by managing well what people see, the services they get and the information they read, you can improve your reputation. There are three big reputation issues: leadership – clarity about what you stand for, clear core values and vision; brand – clear sense of purpose and living your values; communications – getting your messages out.

She added that having and maintaining a good reputation is not only the communicator’s job; it is the hard work of all the staff in the administration. She then gave the five rules of reputation, explaining that these rules had been distilled from lots of crunched data. They are: prove you provide value for money; make sure you are informing and engaging residents and staff; build trust and confidence in what you do; improve key services, showing you are doing so; focus on changing lives for the better. While explaining the reasoning behind each of these rules, she stressed the importance of being honest, admitting mistakes and apologising for them.

Furthermore, Ms Narburgh emphasised the importance of sharing information backed up by facts, explaining what you do and why, following the logic: “you told us … so we did”. She also outlined the important role the staff have in building and maintaining a good reputation for the administration, calling them its ambassadors. After applying these rules, local councils in the UK are now trusted more than the national government and are seen as the most efficient part of the public sector, although there is still more to do.
Kim A. Bak brought a practical perspective to the debate, explaining that even a tax administration can have a good reputation in a country like Denmark, a country with one of the highest levels of taxation in the world – the Danish Tax Administration collects more than EUR 100 billion, 50% of citizens’ income – and where the administration is under budget cut pressure.

In addition, he stated that there are three main reputation builders. The first is the media. In his opinion, it is very important to have a proactive media strategy and to know how to tell the good stories, but also the bad ones. One should be open and fair, efficient and genuine. The second builder is the staff. If the staff are proud to work within the administration they will spread the word and this will be very beneficial for its reputation, as well as for attracting new staff with high qualifications when needed. The last builders mentioned are the clients (citizens and enterprises) who now, in the social media era, can spread the news and influence others, even more than before.

Mr Bak went on to answer the question: Why is reputation important?, and proved that in this particular case a good reputation can result in compliance. A tax administration needs citizens and enterprises to pay their taxes – if it has a bad reputation they will be reluctant to do so. The speaker explained that they measure their reputation by conducting surveys and that their benchmark is to be more popular than the police and other related sectors, or at least as popular.

He concluded that you can lose your reputation quickly, and to rebuild it you have to start all over again from the beginning.

There was general agreement in the debate that followed that public administrations must get used to the idea that their reputation is challenged by people who are more and more critical and can use social media to spread their criticisms. The administration should not be arrogant in confronting these situations, but open. Answering one of the audience’s questions on how to deal with things going very wrong, both speakers agreed that the administration should not hide its mistakes, first of all, and secondly, it should also focus on preventing things going wrong.
Workshop

Administrators or ambassadors

Staff members are by definition an organisation’s ambassadors. This EuroPCCom workshop discussed how to involve the civil servants of an administration in explaining, defending or promoting the public authority’s policies and activities.

Peter Lindvald Nielsen, Head of Communications at the European Economic and Social Committee, chaired the workshop. Case studies were presented by Guillermo Martínez Suárez, Regional Minister for the Presidency and Communications in the Government of Asturias, Spain, Delyth Evans, Press and Communications Manager of the European Personnel Selection Office, Linda Jākobsone, Head of the Department of Presidency Communication and Public Relations in the Government of Latvia, and Alex Sheerazi, Communication Manager of the Amsterdam Metro Project, the Netherlands.

Peter Lindvald Nielsen opened the workshop by stating that being a civil servant gives you obligations and provides the code of ethics for the ground rules you have to respect and live up to. As far as codes of good conduct go in the digital age, the rules have not changed even though they were laid down a long time ago. In this rapidly evolving world, even emails seem old-fashioned. With Facebook and Twitter growing exponentially, control may slip beyond our grasp; however, we can still set the guidelines for conduct. He opened the debate on communication in the light of the social media revolution by challenging the speakers to share their take on whether it is feasible to take control or better to let go of it.

Guillermo Martínez outlined his view that the first step towards resolving modern challenges is to acknowledge that we come from a Cartesian society. Consequently, we need to work on a communication strategy that takes this into account by including everyone, together with public opinion, and places an emphasis on interaction. As public authorities and civil servants, we need to make an effort and put direct communication at the forefront of our communication strategy in order to make sure citizens understand what a government truly consists of. In his region of Asturias, its one million inhabitants are subject to the first Spanish e-administration. Its existence is founded on two pillars: transparency and multi-level governance. That means hard work to make sure that every civil servant understands and works towards both of them. They are all also provided with training in the use of modern communication tools.

There are several regional issues that this approach will help address, including integration of immigrants, mitigating local industrial collapse and putting the EU on the public agenda. However, several challenges for Asturias and other regional administrations are still on the horizon, which include determining how far the EU affects citizens’ lives, the future of regions and their authority over important issues like health and education. The vision of Europe that he would like to convey and strive towards is a Europe which is relevant for all citizens, effectively driven, above all, by ambition.
Next up, Delyth Evans offered her take on the EU elections. She sees them as a good opportunity to talk about the opportunities the EU brings to people as well as about the people who work behind the scenes. Her preferred strategy is to replace the image of faceless bureaucrats with real people and their authentic stories. This was also the goal of EPSO under her management. They revamped their website by placing EPSO under her management. They stories. This was also the goal of

holding specific profiles that were sought during active recruitment processes. For the major translators’ competition campaign, the EPSO team interviewed translators already working in the European institutions, broadcasting that information on dedicated blogs and feeding the information further to social networks, particularly Facebook pages in national languages.

She recounted the four main points of the strategy to follow. Start by establishing internal guidelines. Second, plan the use of social media on both a weekly and a monthly basis. Then set up an internal platform such as Yammer for consistency in messages and replies. And fourth, set up external guidelines to steer users and adjust their expectations regarding different channels. For example, if Facebook or a blog is meant for a certain range of topics, deviations from that range are not permitted.

------------------------

Linda Jākobsone presented the development highlights for an on-going project of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU, to come into effect in 2015. She said that the main internal objective of her efforts is for every public employee to successfully pass a hypothetical elevator pitch situation test in which they are asked what the Council presidency is in 30 seconds. This vision will bring success in their support for the overall work of the presidency and increase capacities and knowledge about the European Union within the state administration, and, at the same time, complement public interest in the presidency. As a result, all staff will be better placed to provide messages and information and it will become easier to transfer that knowledge to many other organisations which are involved. A major challenge is the fact that 35% of Latvian public sector employees are currently unaware that the presidency is coming up.

At the present time, the presidency’s communication relies on transferable best practices from previous presidencies. It consists of secretariat news, a pre-presidency website and activity on social networks such as Twitter and Draugiem - the Latvian equivalent of Facebook. It will also seize the opportunity to promote involvement, growth and sustainability, the main principles of the presidency, among Latvian public servants.

Finally, Alex Sheerazi shared a captivating account of lessons learned from the hardships of the Amsterdam Metro construction project. Initially making a commitment to deliver its construction completion on time, respecting the budget, with technical excellence and without disrupting local life, the project eventually failed to meet all of its goals and experienced a total collapse of credibility. The communication strategy that was subsequently adopted to salvage the project’s former reputation and restore citizens’ trust shifted the project’s emotional value and distanced it from an aura of technicality. The project acknowledged its own perceived image of a menacing gorilla and changed its image from a display of power to a display of the sensibilities that it possessed - listening with sincere interest in the citizens. The real people working on the project and their stories became the central point of an effort to personify the narrative. The construction sites increased their personal proximity to citizens by becoming more accessible, for instance via open days which brought visitors into awe-inspiring underground tunnels. An online social media dashboard was set up in the form of a website to allow people to become involved with the project, and with one another, without any editorial or filtering capacity. Lastly, they found the best attitude was to take others seriously while not taking themselves too seriously.

This strategy helped to highlight the project’s emotional value and distanced it from an aura of technicality. The project acknowledged its own perceived image of a menacing gorilla and changed its image from a display of power to a display of the sensibilities that it possessed - listening with sincere interest in the citizens. The real people working on the project and their stories became the central point of an effort to personify the narrative. The construction sites increased their personal proximity to citizens by becoming more accessible, for instance via open days which brought visitors into awe-inspiring underground tunnels. An online social media dashboard was set up in the form of a website to allow people to become involved with the project, and with one another, without any editorial or filtering capacity. Lastly, they found the best attitude was to take others seriously while not taking themselves too seriously.

that everyone would communicate. More importantly, they did not distribute any handbooks or incorporate endless social media guidelines; instead, they adopted a simple, down-to-earth rule: don’t be stupid.
Public criticism of the European institutions is on the rise. What is the impact of this on support for the European Union? What tools and strategies can be developed to fight myths and clichés and to set up balanced dialogue with the public?

These questions were discussed in a debate moderated by Rob Heirbaut, a European affairs TV journalist from the Belgian national broadcasting company, VRT. The panel members were Sixtine Bouygues, Director for Strategy and Corporate Communication at the European Commission, Sjerp van der Vaart, Head of the European Parliament Information Office in Belgium, Antonia Mochan, Head of Communication, Partnerships and Networks at the European Commission Representation in the UK, Simona Guerra, Lecturer in politics and expert on euroscepticism at the University of Leicester, United Kingdom, and Mélanie McCluskey, Senior consultant at akkanto/Reputation Institute, Belgium.

Rob Heirbaut opened the debate by contextualising the particular moment of time through which Europe is living, where decisions taken (such as immigration policy or the austerity project directly affecting the EU’s image) are not always perceived as positive. He introduced the question of the EU’s reputation, talking about the so-called “blame game”. Essentially, Brussels is the place which is often criticised and shown as top of the scandal list, which has an impact on how citizens perceive the EU institutions.

Simona Guerra brought her academic experience to the debate, introducing and explaining her research carried out at the University of Leicester on European citizens’ integration and European identity. Firstly, the results of her study show how the citizens’ opinion of the EU differs across Europe from east to west, with the media playing a big role in this impact. Moreover, there is a worrying trend concerning mainly Eastern Europe: people’s perception of the EU is quite idealistic, but at the same time, paradoxically, there is a fundamental lack of relevant information on the agenda of the European Parliament and the European Commission. This also brings a lot of uncertainty with regard to the mechanisms leading to the 2014 European elections and people are currently ignoring basic information on whom they could vote for. There is a strong demand for concrete information which focuses on the European agenda, taking into account at the same time its impact on the local reality. Secondly, her research identifies lack of interest and knowledge concerning the EU and its institutions, pointing out how people identify positively with the EU in terms of common identity, but that they are too informed and insufficiently informed at the same time. Therefore, continuity, clarity and relevance are the key words if we want to avoid the gap between politicians and decision-makers and the citizens.
Mélanie McCluskey, who has worked as a consultant on various reputation projects for the EU institutions, indicated that the EU should take into consideration five factors. First, we should have a clear definition of the EU institutions’ identity, in order to build a more specific structure. Second, the institutions should identify their stakeholders and relate to the policymaking process. The third important challenge is to understand how citizens perceive the European institutions. The fourth task is to organise the way the institutions operate so that they contribute to delivering one common identity. And finally, the institutions should act more consistently: the EU should not focus only on improving communication, but also provide concrete information in order to be accountable towards its stakeholders. The main objective of “eurocrats”, though, should not be citizens’ awareness of the EU and its institutions, but rather to regain citizens’ support.

Sjerp van der Vaart explained that, in order to be more effective in terms of communication in each country, it is essential for the EU to be “politically” well represented in the different Member States in order to foster an EU political debate at national level. He also mentioned the extremely high level of responsibility that the EU has towards the citizens (particularly at a time of economic, social and political crisis) and highlighted that the European Parliament is in the front line in this regard. The way communication is used has a direct impact on citizens’ trust; that is why there is a lack of legitimacy. He also listed three important requisites for acting responsibly. First, stay close to what the EU institutions are, by sending a clear message that the European Parliament exists to support and represent the citizens. Second, have clear rules of governance which enable both the Parliament and the Commission to act clearly and coherently towards citizens, creating closer links with them and keeping them accurately informed. That is what being responsible entails. Mr van der Vaart strongly believes that the European Parliament is more than ever playing an important role in this context.

Antonia Mochan stressed the need for the EU to send a solid message to the citizens and to do so efficiently, adapting the language used according to the audiences. A survey which ran in the UK shows that citizens from that country know little about the role of the EU, and continue lack interest in it: “They know that they don’t know and don’t want to know”, she said. That means that, in the communication process, it is crucial for the EU to adapt its “jargon” and its approach towards citizens who ignore or have a negating attitude towards its institutions. One cannot speak about the EU institutions to people that ignore them. She disagreed with the way the EU institutions tend to distinguish themselves from each other and recommended introducing a new strategy tailoring messages to the recipients, using their language, creating proximity to their daily reality, putting the emphasis on what people worry about and on their real interests.

Sixtine Bouygues set out some points regarding the EU’s reputation and emphasised that public opinion, while varied because of Member States’ different sensibilities, should not be neglected. However, referring to the last Eurobarometer, she mentioned that the public is still quite negative towards national authorities, whilst its opinion of European authorities has become slightly more positive. Thus, the EU institutions have a fundamental role to play in terms of information provision and need to send out a message of hope rather than putting across an image of defeat. Ms Bouygues proposed selling Europe as a place of opportunities, a nice place to live, full of freedom, rights and responsibilities. In addition, she deemed it essential to combat the stereotype of Brussels as a place where everything is decided.
Workshop

Storytelling in public communication

Public communicators are searching for new and innovative ways to bring their messages to the public. In these times of information overload and political apathy among the general public, the development of effective narratives about government projects is a truly challenging task. Can storytelling – which has been trending in commercial marketing communications for some years now – be of use in public communication?

Three expert speakers took the floor in this introductory workshop on storytelling. Paul Arnold, a communications consultant, facilitator and trainer from United Kingdom, chaired the session. Franck Plasse, Head of Cabinet in the City of Lieusaint, France, and author of a French handbook on storytelling, and Isabelle Gaudeul-Ehrhart, speechwriter, European Commission, shared their expertise.

In his introduction, Paul Arnold reminded the audience that people love stories: stories are a part of our social functioning and give relevance and importance to a message. Stories help connect emotion and reason.

Franck Plasse started his presentation by clarifying that storytelling is not just about telling stories: it is a way of using narrative structures to put across a message. This message has to be relevant and be part of a smart communication strategy. So the first and main question in developing a storytelling approach is to make clear what message you want to share, with what effect, to which audience.

Franck Plasse illustrated the potential of storytelling in public communication with three concrete examples from his experiences in Lieusaint. First, the storytelling approach gave an expected positive impetus to the territorial branding strategy. By inventing and spreading a local legend about “the Blue Lady”, a shared identity was constructed in only five years, supported by citizens, cultural partners and private companies. A second example was how the use of a communicative story helped the city in creating an eco-district, leading to a quality label and additional sponsor revenues which could be used for new social projects. A third, very pragmatic, example was how public support was gained for the city’s efforts in struggling with the logistical problems of winter by presenting the city’s civil servants as heroes on social media.
Through her work as a speech-writer, Isabelle Gaudeul-Ehrhart discovered that formulating the right arguments is only part of the job. To get and keep the audience’s attention, to help them remember and share the content of the speech, and to change their opinion, other elements are necessary. She listed three “forgotten treasures” that formed the basis of good storytelling.

The first key element is authenticity. Good storytellers dare to be vulnerable by sharing personal experiences. She gave the example of Commission President, Mr Barroso, who caught the audience’s attention and empathy by sharing his experience of the fall of the dictatorship when he was a student.

A second ingredient of successful storytelling is emotion. Emotion - be it positive or negative – is a tool to connect with the audience and make them susceptible to rational arguments. Here, she referred to examples given in the EuroPCom opening session, such as the Act – React – Impact campaign.

The third forgotten treasure was meaning. People do not want more information; they want relevant stories that lead to new insights.

Following some questions and comments from the audience, Paul Arnold concluded that the role of storytelling in public communication will increase in the coming years. Citizens are open and willing to make decisions on the basis of a message that connects their emotions and their reason. Stories add real value: they lead to shared identity and bring communities together.
The EU invests intensively at local level and offers a range of possibilities to all kinds of stakeholders to develop cross-border strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth. This workshop gave an overview of the means that can be used to make EU policies successfully visible at local level, and to involve public and private partners in the communication strategy.

Talking about EU projects

The moderator of the session was Yves Van Landeghem, CEO and Head of Strategy of the Saatchi & Saatchi agency in Brussels, Belgium. Case studies were presented by Emilio del Río, Regional Minister for the Presidency and Justice in the government of La Rioja, Spain, Jan Buysse, Managing Director of the Flanders-Europe Liaison Agency, Belgium, Judit Szűcs of the National Development Agency in Hungary, Gabriel Alvarez and Dorothee Fischer, coordinating the Interact – European Cooperation Day, and Horst Seele-Liebetanz, Coordinator of the EuropaPunktBremen in Germany.

Emilio Del Río presented the Rioja region’s European Year of Citizens project entitled “Ciudadano Riojano Europeo”. This project is intended to honour the work of people in La Rioja who have made a relevant contribution to promoting European values. He explained the concept of the project, which comes at a time when 6 out of 10 citizens do not know their rights and where the current economic crisis has also induced a crisis of values in La Rioja. The challenge was to find out how to make the local people understand that they are as important for the EU as the people in Brussels. The campaign they set up together with Europe Direct was based on the need to focus on real people, to show what EU funds can be used for and, each month, to reward an “unknown” citizen who has done something valuable and/or innovative in this field. The various fields were agricultural policy, Grundtvig Go +50, arts, tourism, information technologies, Erasmus and mobility of workers. The campaign received a lot of media interest. The project was so successful that it might even be reproduced at national level.

Horst Seele-Liebetanz recounted his experiences at the regional EU information point in Bremen, which attracts over 6,000 visitors a year. In May 2013 the EuropaPunktBremen held its annual event, known as the Mai-Woche, in a difficult European climate of loss of public confidence in the EU, depoliticisation and lower election turnouts, etc. There was a clear need to diversify the target groups and means of communication. The Bremen team then decided to ask people what they wanted and, to this end, worked with a private company, which set up an interactive programme: from 6 to 10 May, twelve sessions were organised at the EuropaPunktBremen which attracted more than 200 participants. The main question asked was “What do you want Europe to look like in 2020?”. The groups of participants were mixed and they worked together, answering questions on a laptop. The feedback was very positive although they thought that the technical involvement was a bit too high. To conclude, the project helped to re-engage people in the discussion and might have a positive effect on turn-out in the European elections.
Jan Buysse addressed the question of how civil society in Flanders is involved in EU affairs. He described the situation of Flanders, which is represented in the EU through the Belgian Permanent Representation but also through vleva, the Flanders-Europe Liaison Agency. vleva's aim is to bring the EU closer to Flanders. In order to succeed in this task, the main motto is “Communicate, communicate, communicate!” But only the right information at the right time using various tools such as a guide to EU funding, a daily EU monitoring website, networking, bilateral contacts and events and, especially for the EP 2014 elections, a “wake up call”.

Judit Szűcs presented the “Huge Numbers” campaign, which ran in the summer of 2012 in Hungary and showed the real effects of EU developments on people’s everyday lives using an unconventional method of communication. She introduced the subject by setting the scene and explaining that emotional attachment was traditionally lacking when communicating about the impact of EU funds in Hungary. There was a need for something entertaining; hence the involvement of artists, who created seven interactive installations all over the country highlighting seven different projects, covering competitiveness, healthcare, road networks, vocational training, etc. The campaign was a huge success and people can still enjoy the artwork that was produced. It also received a lot of attention on Facebook, where a competition was organised and prizes given.

Gabriel Alvarez and Dorothee Fischer are both communication officers for the EU INTERACT programme in charge of the European Cooperation Day Campaign. The European Cooperation Day took place for the second time in September 2013 and showed the results of territorial cooperation across Europe and its external borders. They showcased good project examples, telling – with limited resources - how the lives of people improved across borders through cooperation. In order to do so, partners are encouraged to use publications, videos and social media and to organise events. The European Cooperation Day project is meant for the general public and is also supported by the Commission, the Parliament and the Committee of the Regions though its OPEN DAYS – Local events. It involves a huge number of countries and programmes and attracts thousands of citizens from Europe and beyond.

To close the workshop, moderator Yves Van Landeghem highlighted again the fact that the EU and its institutions are really a brand in their own right; hence the need for each EU country to adapt the messages and communication to the values, feelings, etc. of its people. As one of the speakers said, if you want your communication to be relevant, it needs to matter to your own mum or dad.
Conversation session

What’s your story?

“I have to communicate to my citizens the benefits of the restructuring of our public sector. Many people will have to be fired and others moved to positions away from their homes and/or suffer cuts in wages and privileges. How do I convince society that this is necessary?”

This was one of the ten real-life stories that were discussed during the second EuroPCom conversation session. What does storytelling look like in practice? What are people’s experiences of developing an appealing storyline for policy projects? What can we learn from our colleagues’ ongoing?

Institutional communicators, local administration staff and external communication experts were invited to actively contribute ideas in the joint creation of a project.

This innovative participatory method, known as the Pro-action Café, encourages people to engage and creatively contribute to someone else’s project through brainstorming. Once the facilitators, Stien Michiels and Anita Paalvast, had explained how the “game” was played, ten of the participants had to stand up and write and stick up on a specially formatted wall their idea for a project. In the three rounds that followed the introduction, people would move from one table to another sharing advice and ideas about different projects.

Each time, they would have to talk to people from different countries, with different cultural backgrounds and who they had never met before. A great opportunity to mingle and have conversations that matter about concrete projects. The questions became more and more specific and targeted from one round to the next, and participants seemed even more eager to engage and help.

The conversation not only helped the ten project initiators, it also generated some common general recommendations for developing successful stories:

- provide concrete examples of what you have achieved or you are planning if you want to change perception;
- testimonies of beneficiaries about the human benefit and how your activity affects their daily lives are powerful tools to pass on messages;
- use civil servants to tell their story – N.B. first better internal communication will be needed to revive their pride in what the organisation achieves;
- involve stakeholders in your communication;
- create spaces to bring people together;
- use a metaphor to explain your message in a simple way.
The closing session looked at the main findings from the conference’s debates and at how the debate on the state of European public communication should be continued.

The session was moderated by Karen Coleman, an independent Irish journalist and conference host. Anthony Zacharzewski, Chief Executive of the Democratic Society, United Kingdom, and Simon Anholt, independent government advisor, United Kingdom, gave their views in two keynote speeches. Christophe Rouillon, Mayor of Coulaines, France, Vice-President of the Association of French Mayors and Member of the Committee of the Regions, concluded the conference.

Anthony Zacharzewski put the case that efforts have to be invested as of now in winning the next elections. His presentation was therefore targeting the European elections of 2019 and every single national election in the run-up to that event. Since public communication was a play-off involving many players on multiple fields, European communication feels like scoring a few goals, but finally losing the match with a 3-5 score. One needs to target the impact in the long term and build up defence to stop extra goals getting in – e.g. letting others take credit for what the EU is doing. He also noticed a “frozen horror” among people, when talking about European vision and values. If such statements seemed naive to people, they were most probably thinking about the wrong things. There are a set of successes that are usually taken for granted and Europe is not successful enough in owning them.

Mr Zacharzewski gave some recommendations on how to win the game: by not becoming focused on what people are arguing about, but on where people are arguing about it; by creating networked politics (subsidiarity would be the word for that); by not cramming and by building trust. Trust can be built through consistency of action and interaction. That was the meaning behind the 2014 electoral slogan: ACT. REACT. IMPACT. React stands for opening up and getting involved in spaces you cannot control. Opening up and being vulnerable are part of the trust-building exercise.
Simon Anholt referred to his last appearance as speaker during EuroPCom 2011, reiterating the statements he made at that time. Listening to the debates, he still felt a lot of communication was inappropriate, either taking the form of propaganda, of advertising, without any product being sold, or providing information which no one was asking for. He accused the language used in communication as being almost entirely a language of commerce, of antagonism, defining a relationship between salesperson and customer, not a language of democracy. Terms such as “campaign” and “strategy” came from warfare. In his view, democracy was the opposite of branding. News was made by contradictory voices and debate, not by communicating good performance or about a shared goal. There was no need to use taxpayers’ money to report on how well this money was spent. Achievements speak for themselves and social media provide the propaganda for those who do it right.

Mr Anholt shared seven statements, which may sound extreme but which he judged it useful to check once in a while to make sure that they do not apply: 1) branding is fascism; 2) communication is propaganda; 3) public service is not business; 4) diplomacy is not public relations; 5) governance is not management; 6) leadership is not customer service; and 7) Europe is a community, and not a corporation.

Europe should figure out what its role is, and it could build on being the only successful case of functioning multilateralism in human history. Europe could show the world how to work as a planet and European citizens should be ambassadors for multilateralism. Therefore, the European institutions should not regard their citizens as targets, but as collaborators. Instead of asking “What do we say to them?” ask “What are we going to do together?”.

Karen Coleman launched the panel debate with the question of practical lessons to be drawn for those that are still trying to engage in electoral communication for May 2014. On the one hand it was felt that if there was no communication about the upcoming elections people would miss a democratic exercise. On the other hand, making people interested in the European elections was not a communication issue but an educational issue. And speaking about education, learning about Europe was not a compulsory subject in schools, so creating a fairly similar level of understanding of European affairs had to rely on communication, at least when it came to raising awareness. Another concern raised was the fact that there were more and more communicators, while the number of journalists was decreasing and the investigative approach could not be replaced by the internet (although maybe by some emerging curated spaces). The conclusion was that communication should be an instrument to serve democracy and create policy space.

but are there to stimulate debate and try and involve people. Being closest to the people, the local dimension can play an essential role in pioneering participation. Citizens should be contributors to policy and participate in the European adventure. The main challenge faced by Europe is the rise of populism. Communicators need to cast out demagogy, re-establish the truth and talk about the impact of European policies in daily lives. It was high time we stopped attributing Europe’s failures to Brussels and all achievements to national governments. Europe’s citizens need to be convinced to continue the European dream. Mr Rouillon invited participants to step out as EU ambassadors after the debates witnessed over the past couple of days and to return for the next EuroPCom conference on 15-16 October 2014.

Christophe Rouillon delivered the closing remarks. He welcomed EuroPCom’s aim of combating preconceived ideas and tackling the issue of communication at every level of administration. Communicators are not just information providers, but are there to stimulate debate and try and involve people. Being closest to the people, the local dimension can play an essential role in pioneering participation. Citizens should be contributors to policy and participate in the European adventure. The main challenge faced by Europe is the rise of populism. Communicators need to cast out demagogy, re-establish the truth and talk about the impact of European policies in daily lives. It was high time we stopped attributing Europe’s failures to Brussels and all achievements to national governments. Europe’s citizens need to be convinced to continue the European dream. Mr Rouillon invited participants to step out as EU ambassadors after the debates witnessed over the past couple of days and to return for the next EuroPCom conference on 15-16 October 2014.
The 2013 conference was not only attended by a live audience of more than 650 communication experts – it also had large online outreach. The webpage with the live video stream attracted another 680 unique visits. And during the two conference days, 3,500 tweets were sent out with the EuroPCom hashtag by 490 different Twitter users, which made it the top trending topic in Belgium during those days.

### 30 things to learn from EuroPCom

1. EU comms is by definition high level. With 500 million residents and dozens of languages it maybe needs to be. But how well do big picture messages play out to people?

2. There are people who work at the EU who are absolutely passionate about working for the EU. It’s vocational and they’re proud of what they do. They go back to their community and make a point of telling people about what they do. Why not invest in social media to give those passionate people a voice?

3. You will regularly see an informal meeting between half a dozen people all from different countries conducting a high-level meeting in English, with none of them having English as a mother tongue.

4. Our recent history of 60 years without a major war in Europe is because of the EU. This is fact. But how many people take it for granted?

5. Engagement fails because nothing happens afterwards.

6. If you don’t know who you are talking to it won’t matter what you say.

7. If you use technical language on Twitter you get a technical audience.

8. Success isn’t having big numbers. It’s having the right numbers.


11. If you do those things you stand a chance of being a success.

12. As a comms person you don’t have to be the person who clicks send to get the message out. Be an enabler.
13. Social media is conversation. You can’t control it. You can contribute to it.
14. There are cultural differences in the use of social media. In Greece, people don’t like using social media if they have to give their real name.
15. Just because you can do digital doesn’t mean you should.
16. The EU – or any part of government – should be planning for the next election the day after the polls are closed and the results are announced. It should be relevant every day.
17. Comms people have a massive role in making that happen.
18. Research and stats can back up a communicator’s hunch.
19. Having awareness as the point of a campaign or a bit of comms is a bit pointless. Don’t do it.
20. The EU should think of doing more of its communicating at a local level. At a really, really local level. At a county, city and parish level.
21. Everyone in Europe has something to be thankful to Europe for. Whether it’s that summer holiday, or the bottle of wine on the table or the job that has been safeguarded in Wales by the engineering project in Italy.
22. Trust is built through repeated action.
23. The best social media advice remains: “Don’t make your boss look stupid”.
24. Failure is Europeanised and success is nationalised.
25. There is a Northern European way of doing things and a Southern European way. The northern way involves jokes and being self-deprecating. The Southern is being serious with facts and research.
26. Comms people based in Brussels would do well to visit and talk to colleagues from different parts of Europe. Like in a kind of exchange scheme. Or town twinning.
27. EU people would be well served to read Jim Garrow’s post on trust. In short, no-one trusts the people at the top. They trust the people at the bottom more.
28. Ignore email at your peril.
29. Do your evaluation before you start communicating.
30. Just because you make controversial comments at a conference doesn’t mean you are right. But challenge is always good…
EuroPCom aims to showcase best practices and to promote professional EU communication at all levels of governance. Accordingly, the second European Public Communication Award will be presented in 2014 to those public administrations at national, regional or local level which have developed an outstanding communications campaign or strategy on the EU. The campaigns will be judged on their creativity, impact and how they tie in with the EU’s communication priorities.

The closing date for nominations is 1 May 2014. For more information about rules and conditions, please go to www.cor.europa.eu/europcom.

The 2013 conference

The 2013 conference is an initiative of the Committee of the Regions, in partnership with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Club of Venice.

The conference was prepared by an inter-institutional advisory board made up of the partners listed above and representatives of regional authorities and several professional European networks representing communications directors (EACD), communications agencies (EACA) and researchers in the field of public communications, media and journalism (ECREA).

An online evaluation survey among the participants, filled in by 84 respondents (ca. 12%) showed on overall positive evaluation of the conference. All workshops and sessions – and in particular the plenary parts (opening, key note lecture, closing) – were marked by a majority of the participants as (very) relevant. 93% of the respondents plan to come back to a next edition, and nearly all would (probably) recommend the conference to colleagues.

Reporting team

This proceedings brochure is based on the reports edited by the EuroPCom rapporteurs: Darren Caveney, Tom De Smedt, Cristina Dascalu, Chantal Gennen, Dimitrios Koskeridis, Paulina Makarainen, Milica Neacsu, Jens Nordmeyer, Pablo Ojer Ojer, Wolfgang Petzold, Kimmi Phillips, Lucia Romeu Leder, Benoît Sauvage, Dan Slee and Ariel Zealot.

For any further information or feedback, please contact the EuroPCom conference team:
www.cor.europa.eu/europcom
europcom@cor.europa.eu

Save the date

EuroPCom 2014
5th European Conference on Public Communication
Brussels, 15-16 October 2014

All further announcements, updates and call for proposals will be published on the conference website www.cor.europa.eu/europcom, on Twitter (#europcom) and on the EuroPCom group on Linkedin.
Members of the 2013 advisory board:

- Laurent Thieule, Wolfgang Petzold, Gustavo Lopez, Santiago Mondragón, Boris Essender, Inês Roseta, Katie Owens and Tom De Smedt, Committee of the Regions
- Aleyda Hernandez, European Parliament
- Paul Reiderman, Cristina Gallach and Vincenzo Le Voci, Council of the EU
- Sixtine Bouygues, Béla Dajka and Peter Fischer, European Commission
- Vyčintas Pugaciauskas, Lithuanian EU Presidency 2013
- Peter Lindvald-Nielsen and Anna Comi, European Economic and Social Committee
- Niels Thøgersen and Philippe Caroyez, Club of Venice
- Dominic Lyle, European Association of Communication Agencies (EACA)
- Florence Ranson, European Association of Communication Directors (EACD)
- Luciano Morganti, European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA)
- Karl Musschoot, Flemish Government and Jacques Moisse, Walloon Government, on behalf of the Europcom Association
- Monika Kapturska, Wielkopolska Region