(Re)connecting citizens

EuroPCom 2012
3rd European Conference on Public Communication
BRUSSELS
17-18 October 2012

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

www.cor.europa.eu/europcom
Over 700 communication managers and senior experts of local, regional, national and European authorities gathered in Brussels on 17 and 18 October 2012 for the third edition of EuroPCom. They spent two days sharing their strategic insights and practical experiences in recent communication challenges.

Plenary sessions and thematic workshops gave the floor to more than 60 experts on four main strands: communicating Europe; public participation and active citizenship; web communication and social media; and communication with specific target groups.

It is the ambition of the annual European Conference on Public Communication to inspire cities and regions, as well as EU players, in designing their future communication strategy, leading to new networks that transcend borders. It also encourages all levels of government to develop a decentralised communication policy for the EU, in particular for the 2013 European Year of Citizens and the 2014 European Parliament elections.

The conference is an initiative of the Committee of the Regions and co-organised by the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the Cyprus EU Presidency. In terms of concept, content and promotion, the conference was steered by the EuroPCom Advisory Board, which comprises representatives from the institutional partners, the 2010 and 2011 conference organisers (Belgian and Polish regional authorities) 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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Report opening session 3
Reports workshops

Web communications and social media
  Communication technologies: What’s hot, what’s not? 6
  Thinking strategy: How to best use social media? 8
  E-ambassadors: Engaging citizens in a digital world 10

Communicating Europe
  Understanding the public: Perceptions of the EU 12
  Europe going local 14
  Communicating commitments: Europe 2020 16

Public participation and active citizenship
  Involving the public 18
  Citizens’ movements: Understanding and responding 20
  Encouraging participation in European Parliament elections 22

Communicating with specific target groups
  Communicating with young citizens 24
  Communicating with senior generations 26
  Communicating with ethnic minorities 28

Report closing session 30
Conference conclusions and recommendations 32
EuroPCom 2013 34
Colophon 35
EUROBAROMETER FLASH – PUBLIC OPINION IN EU REGIONS

Highlights of the Eurobarometer Flash (survey no 356, October 2012), showing the public perception of the EU in 170 regions.

The opening plenary session discussed the current crisis in confidence among European citizens vis-à-vis the European Union and more generally in politics and public authorities at all governance levels. The session started with the presentation of a very recent Eurobarometer survey giving an overview of European public opinion in 170 regions. The results were presented by Leendert de Voogd, Global Head Political & Social of research company TNS. The Eurobarometer survey was then discussed in a high-level panel debate moderated by Graham Meadows. Panel members were Mercedes Bresso, First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions, Anni Podimata, Vice-President of the European Parliament, Andreas Mavroyiannis, Deputy Minister for European Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus and Gregory Paulger, Director-General for Communication at the European Commission.

At the end of the debate, Christian Blümelhuber, Professor Euromarketing at the Solvay Business School in Belgium, gave his comments and recommendations on the future of EU public communication.

The presentation of the new Eurobarometer was extremely compelling and highlighted a north-south divide among Europeans in terms of how they saw the economy. The EU-wide Eurobarometer focussed for the first time on 170 regions, with 300 people surveyed in each. Unemployment was the biggest concern of Europeans, environmental issues were least important. Only 27% drew a good picture of the state of the economy and regional differences were huge, with 0% of Greek respondents seeing the economy as sound. Leendert de Voogd stressed that Europeans saw their economies and quality of life deteriorating in the near future and that northern Europeans took a more positive view of their quality of life than southern and eastern Europeans. He also discerned a north-south divide in Europe in terms of prosperity perceptions. On the issue of public trust in the EU, the European map was very disparate, with major communication challenges in numerous regions, in particular in southern Europe, the UK and some parts of Germany. Respondents were also asked who they believed were best placed to communicate on Europe. Here again, the results were very diverse: in France and the UK it was regional and local politicians, in the northern member states it tended to be the national political level, whereas several eastern regions saw a role for their MEPs and the European Commissioners. In the discussion that followed on how to communicate Europe, Leendert De Voogd pointed out that everyone could help in this and that it had to be a key concern and goal at the regional level. Summing up, he said that we had to stop talking about regulations when communicating Europe and instead focus on real outcomes and achievements.
Anni Podimata said that one of the conclusions to draw from the Eurobarometer was that, before the European Parliament could tackle environmental issues, we needed to focus on the economy, and, above all, unemployment. At the end of the day, it was full stomachs and housing that should take priority, though good legislation was also key in improving the EU’s image. She insisted that coherent European responses to combat powerful global financial markets were needed more than ever before. And this could only happen by creating democracy at European level while also strengthening national parliaments. There was no way that summitry based on national interests could solve this crisis. Graham Meadows argued in a similar vein, saying that “Actions speak louder than words.”

Mercedes Bresso noted that the EU had to communicate a single and coherent message across all its institutions. In order to do that, however, Europe needed a face with which to communicate. After all, it was a big problem that the European Parliament did not enjoy the powers it should have, given its status as the elected chamber of the peoples in Europe. She also stressed that the EU’s digital strategies had to be improved, since the public were not getting the message. She concluded by saying that all this had to be backed up by real results.

Gregory Paulger echoed the fact that Europe needed to be communicated in partnership, with national ministers also having a duty to report better
on what the EU does for citizens to feel included and informed in European decision-making processes. He concluded that "we can listen twice as much as we talk", highlighting the fact that listening to Europeans must be part and parcel of a coherent communication strategy. Finally, it was important to get the message across that there was light at the end of the tunnel where the current crisis was concerned.

Andreas Mavroyiannis said that the Eurobarometer results were indeed gloomy. He was not surprised by this, but that it was nevertheless alarming how strongly the economic crisis affected people’s views on their quality of life. He believed that it was hard to change these perceptions without jumping-starting the economy and concluded that events were now beyond political systems. There was frustration with politics in general and European and national political systems were being put to the test at a time when financial and economic issues were global.

Christian Blümelhuber concluded the Opening Session with an interesting speech on Europe as a brand and what branding actually was. He had three points to make on branding Europe: Firstly, one should not expect too much, since there was no European dream: this was, at best, outlived and outdated. It was the regions, he said, that delivered real experiences to the people. Secondly, in order to brand Europe, faces were needed. Thirdly, Europe was important when size mattered. And when it came to attachment and experience, the regions came into play. The nation state in between the two was constantly dwindling in importance as Europeanisation and regionalisation progressed.
Stephen Clark introduced the panellists and the topic, which was to look into the latest trends, technologies and applications and their relevance for public sector communications. As he pointed out, public communicators can find it difficult to choose the right social media mix amidst the many tools and platforms available. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Flickr, Tumblr, Yammer, etc. There are plenty of tools and platforms for communicating with stakeholders and citizens, not to mention the numerous in-house networking e-media, mobile apps, and the interactive tools being developed by “traditional” media. Public communicators often find it difficult to choose the right social media mix. What are the latest trends, technologies and applications and their relevance for public-sector communications.

Mia Marttiini presented new media projects currently underway in Finland, focusing on Stadi.TV, a citizen-driven open and local city TV channel, which explicitly relies on citizens participating in producing content. At Stadi.TV amateurs and professionals work on this together, so the public are engaged in discussions at the grass roots level – in the run-up to local elections, for example. This has a direct empowering effect. It uses multi-platform distribution via web, cable TV, urban screens and mobile applications, and experiments with new technologies. The ‘pop-up city studio’ in the city centre makes it possible to involve stakeholders and the public, communicating with the audience and encouraging debate. Stadi.TV works closely with the libraries, that lend cameras, printers and other equipment to amateurs for documenting city life. Interested groups can either download their videos directly at the Stadi.TV website, or take part in a media workshop giving basic tools and training in content production. Ms Marttiini highlighted the importance of participatory media, social activism and social innovation. However, she noted privacy concerns linked to data storage, especially in the social media.
Seán Clarke stressed the need to think about the right medium for any specific communication strategy. Social media could be professional or personal, public or private, and the medium defines what can be achieved. Different media serve different goals and social media can serve different purposes: they can convey a message (Facebook), help to spread the message (Twitter), help to find someone (LinkedIn) or help to promote collaboration (Zeebox). Seán Clarke agreed that various groups of citizens were keen to work together and the public wanted to collate and comment on news. However, he warned against “hot news” circulating in the social media. He concluded by highlighting the need to study the public you wanted to reach out to, and where to find them, when deciding on which social media applications to incorporate into public sector communication strategies.

Helder Gonçalves spoke about the approach taken in his town of Matosinhos, where social media had been incorporated into the city’s communication strategy since 2008. Now Matosinhos has a profile in all the main social media so that it can be in touch with its citizens, reach out to and engage them and promote an increasingly active participation in community life. The aim is also to attract a younger population on issues related to the city, including council decisions. This implies a change from one-way to two-way communication, encouraging comments and suggestions from the public. Moreover, communication is possible outside of working hours, and made easier for the disabled, through website and social media. This includes a corporate webTV channel and easily accessible information on job opportunities, road works, emergency contacts and so on, as well as information for tourists. Mr Gonçalves emphasised the need to continuously monitor the usefulness of the profiles in different media and the importance of adapting the message to suit the chosen platform in order to maximise the benefits of using social media for public communication.

There was general agreement in the discussion that followed the presentations that a change in mind-set was necessary and that a digital mind-set needed to be mainstreamed and promoted in public organisations. There was also a concern about the privacy of the individual and education was needed on this. Concluding the workshop, moderator Stephen Clark noted that separate online-offline realities did not exist. Instead, we lived in one world, so it was important to examine what different platforms can offer. It was important to follow your public and choose your platform accordingly. Visual elements added to the attractiveness and thus effectiveness of the message.
Annette Denove opened the workshop by presenting the Bavarian Government’s online communication strategy, which included an internet website and YouTube and Facebook accounts, of which the latter was the most visited. This media mix makes it possible to reach out to and engage a broad public. It is not just about “pushing and pulling information”, but about achieving a more profound and sustainable engagement with the public, using live interviews and public consultations on topics such as what public financed projects invest in. This participatory method had proven successful and continued to inspire the further development of online communication strategy. However, traditional media such as newspapers had their importance alongside new media. It was crucial to analyse the sustainability and quality of the views and transmission of information.

Hannes Astok began by asking how citizens – especially the younger generation – communicate with government. If the young are to be engaged in the public debate and if public services are to be provided efficiently, governments have to develop new media applications, get online and further develop eGovernance and eParticipation. The eCitizen II project ("Towards citizen-centred eGovernment in European cities and regions") is designed to support cities and regions in their efforts to accelerate eGovernment by exploiting established networks, experience acquired and good practices in order to improve interaction between citizens and public authorities, better involve citizens in local decision-making and contribute to a change in operational culture and attitudes within public administrations. Mr Astok ended his presentation by urging the need for a pan-European on-line manual of eParticipation best practices (www.eparticipation.eu).
Sandra Bukovska stressed the importance of targeting the right audience and getting across a clear identity – “who we are” and “what we believe in” – in every message. The message should take into account the audience, the originating institution and the communicator and seek the point where they meet. How well the message is received depends on the commitment of the receiver, so it is crucial to invest in sustainable and long term communication. She went on to say it was important, in her experience, to gain the support of the political decision-makers for public on-line communication strategies. However, this could be difficult because of the generation gap. Nevertheless, political stakeholders could be involved in the use of social media if they were approached step by step and confidence was built up.

Darren Caveney agreed that since 2008 the importance of social media as an engagement tool had emerged and increased. It was a valuable tool for both public sector communicators and their customers. To make the most of the use of social media, he advised the following: Encourage experimentation and innovation and empower the workforce to speak for the organisation. Get good data on who and where your clients are, what channels they use and what topics interest them. Position social media as a communication channel, but start small, build excellence with trial and error, and review. Then roll it out, because the wider the integration, the better the customer contact; involve everyone, including the management and customer services. Create conversations and content and then listen. New media was about ongoing learning, and sharing and connecting with peers from across sectors is key. As platforms evolve, evolve with them. Darren Caveney concluded his presentation by pointing out the importance of thinking what a chosen social media strategy says about the organisation and knowing what people are saying about your organisation online.
How important is e-participation and what is the contribution of online tools for crowd sourcing and open data? Can the communication paradigm be controlled or managed? What is the current level of trust among the public? Is there a distance between public administration and the public? What channels can be used to improve public participation?

Aurélie Valtat opened the workshop by saying that the aims of public participation were to provide people with familiar and clear channels through which they could express their opinions. The question of a distance between public administration and citizens remains. We should recover the trust of citizens and e-participation could offer the necessary tools for this.

Carles Agustí i Hernàndez pondered the distance between public administrations and citizens in the context of the current crisis of political influence. In his view, public trust could be recovered by providing familiar and clear channels that enable people to express their opinions. These included associations, participatory bodies and electronic participation. The City of Barcelona, for example, had strong associations and 500 participatory bodies were given the opportunity to share their opinions with local government. Electronic participation via Web 2.0 was another key element. The use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook gave citizens an important communication tool. Once channels were in place it was up to government to take on board the input and respond. Anyone could send a question and the administration was strongly committed to responding within a week. Carles Agustí i Hernàndez also profiled the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP), a network that links more than 500 cities, associations, organisations and research centres around the world.
Steffen Albrecht outlined the process of participatory budgeting in the city of Cologne, Germany. This consultative process gives the public a chance to share their views not only on how the city budget should be spent, but also where budget cuts are needed. This participatory budgeting gives the public a better understanding and at the same time modernises administration. A number of channels were used to attract people’s attention, including information events, call-centres and mailing. On-line platforms were especially useful and the initiatives as a whole attracted 10,000 participants. The step from information to involvement was made through combining information, dialogue and monitoring the results. Among the lessons learned, Steffen Albrecht said that conflicts within the administration or conflicts about legitimacy should always be expected. Achieving total transparency would require long-term and repeated engagement on the part of citizens, which was a goal widely supported around the world.

Ángel Herrero Crespo focused on the new communication paradigm, according to which a lot of the information about places around the world comes from different individuals and not from administration. The main question is how administration is going to manage this situation. Social media are used ever increasingly and using a Facebook page as the official page for an event or a place enables people to interact. At the same time, a lot of the information that comes in cannot be controlled by the administration. The electronic word of mouth (eWOM) provides opportunities. On the one hand, it has a stronger influence than commercial communication, but on the other it is threatening, because there is no way of knowing who is posting something negative and what his purpose, affiliations, background and so on are. Angel Herrero stressed that this process was uncontrollable, but manageable. This would involve, firstly, monitoring and learning through different channels is necessary as part of this new communication paradigm. Secondly, real management could start through persuasion and influence. Focusing on moderating negative WOM (recovery strategy) or on maintaining an ongoing relationship with opinion leaders, for example bloggers, could have a positive effect. Even so, the commitment of local stakeholders to eWOM was an important aspect of the management part.

Xavier Crouan covered the topic of benefiting from open data. The future would not be about “top-down” decision-making, but about citizen participation through open data. He gave the example of the city of Rennes, where an open data programme was being launched. He conceded, however, that there were still administrative barriers, as well as barriers in the minds of people about whether such data should be released. Developing open data could also be beneficial in the private sector. One important aspect was not just to release data, but to go further so that people can have ownership of it. This means we should all come up with our own initiatives and the institutions should support innovation by citizens. Xavier Crouan also reflected on the question of trust, saying that these tools should be used wisely in order to regain public trust. Today’s democracy was not participatory but representative and a new form of governance, based on today’s very powerful digital revolution, should be put in place.
A thorough understanding of public opinion is key to policy development, in particular for designing, managing and evaluating communication strategies. At EU level, the European Commission’s Eurobarometer surveys and analyses help map trends, national and regional differences, etc. This workshop took a closer look at public opinion results, which were also presented during the opening plenary session, and discussed the implications for public communicators at local, regional and national level.

Luciano Morganti opened the workshop by explaining why understanding the feelings, values and beliefs of EU citizens is of primary importance for policy development. Eurobarometer helps to answer the question “Who are the Europeans?” It was all about the values that are important to citizens. The more we know about all of this, the easier it will be to understand each other and to unite and communicate Europe.

Leedert de Voogd presented the last Eurobarometer results, starting with a short explanation of the methodology of the surveys conducted. The results gave a general picture of Europeans’ main concerns. The two uppermost of these were by far unemployment (61%) and the economic situation (32%). The results also indicated what were Europeans’ sources of information about EU. More importantly, it showed the differences in trust from region to region. There was a range of answers to the question: “Who are best placed to explain how EU policies impact citizens?”

Moderator:
- Luciano Morganti, Professor Vesalius College Brussels and ECREA, Belgium

Speakers:
- Leendert de Voogd, Global Head, TNS Political & Social
- Rafał Jurkowianiec, Marshal, Lower Silesia region, Poland
- Stefano Rolando, President, Club of Venice, Italy
Rafał Jurkowlaniec said that effective communication was best at the local level. There are more than 500 million EU citizens, so in order to reach them effectively, he was convinced that communication with local media would be the most fruitful path to reach all kinds of targets. EU communication could be hermetic, he said, often using bureaucratic jargon that the public find difficult to understand. He also stressed the importance of social media involvement in the mechanism to get messages across to recipients. Local problems involving EU institutions could be more easily understood by the population involved and people could have an emotional response in reacting to particular certain topics that directly affect them. He gave an example of good practice after a flood disaster in Lower Silesia. The authorities used Facebook and saw that people were reacting on the platform, asking for help and voicing their difficulties. Rafał Jurkowlaniec concluded by referring to the Nobel Peace Prize that Europe had recently been awarded, saying that this could be an opportunity for greater integration. The EU should appeal to emotion to boost European sentiment among the public. Referring to the enormous interest in Felix Baumgartner’s jump from space, he said that this was the kind of story that Europe needed.

Stefano Rolando brought an academic perspective to the debate, explaining why media do not prefer statistics to polls. Statistics are difficult to understand and the media prefer the “storytelling” type of communication. The media make little reference to Eurobarometer because unfortunately Europe continues to be categorised as a foreign policy area.

On the EU’s priorities regarding communication, based on recent Eurobarometer surveys, he referred to the fact that eight out of ten EU people thought that the member states should step up their cooperation in response to the current crisis across Europe. Fiscal reform was not one of the top priorities for Europeans. He stressed the importance citizens attach to employment concerns (48%) and their economy (24%), which directly affects their wallets and housing. Stefano Rolando insisted that the EU should indeed go local in terms of communication, but it should also be heard worldwide.

Luciano Morganti said he believed the EU should improve its dialogue with its citizens by using simple and clear messages. Young people live in the present and tend to forget the continent’s history. In the floor debate that followed, participants agreed it was time to communicate less about institutions and more about Europe. The strong EU brands (such as Erasmus and Monet) should be used more actively. Communication on Europe should be decentralised and campaigns should enlist individuals whose faces the public are familiar with.
Communicating Europe

Setting the scene, Jan Buysse said that awareness, engagement and communication were the three-point challenge that the European Union now needed to overcome to bring Europe closer to its people. This was a shared responsibility, which meant that work needed to be done at all levels and Europe had to go local too as a part of this.

Jacek Jaworski spoke about a TV show he had co-developed entitled “The Great Knowledge Test on Europe: The European Funds explained” that was broadcast nationwide and told people how the EU affected everyone’s daily lives. The Poles, he said, tended to credit changes for the better mainly to the state, assuming the EU had no influence on them. The programme aimed, therefore, to challenge that assumption by trying to make people realise how the benefits of the EU reach all the way down – via the state – to their local level. Studio guests and viewers alike were asked 25 questions ranging from the promotion of local products to identifying the EU’s official mascot. Videos on the EU and EU funds were shown during the breaks. Involvement opportunities via a supporting website, presence on social networking sites and text-messaging services, as well as the possibility to win prizes, ensured the appeal to a wider audience. Among the advantages of such a project were its user-friendliness, the comprehensible manner in which knowledge was presented and the combining of information with entertainment.

Europe going local

Trying to win over public opinion is a pointless exercise unless messages are tailored to suit the regional and local reality on the ground and to finding the best possible synergies. What local, regional or national practices can we draw inspiration from to highlight the EU’s influence on European citizens’ daily life?

**Moderator:**
- Jan Buysse, General Director, Flanders-Europe Liaison Office (vleva), Belgium

**Speakers:**
- Jacek Jaworski, Main specialist, Department of Information, Promotion and Training, Ministry of Regional Development, Poland
- Hans-Peter Hubert, Managing Partner, Association for European and Local Politics (GEKO), Region of Brandenburg, Germany
- Juliette Garnier, Head of the European Information Unit, Region of Brittany, France
- Guillaume Dugravot, Internal Communication Officer, Public Service of Wallonia, Belgium

Setting the scene, Jan Buysse said that awareness, engagement and communication were the three-point challenge that the European Union now needed to overcome to bring Europe closer to its people. This was a shared responsibility, which meant that work needed to be done at all levels and Europe had to go local too as a part of this.
Next up, Hans-Peter Hubert presented the work done by his association in Brandenburg. By educating pupils about the work of the EU and informing them about the impact EU funds have in their local areas, the association wants to raise not just awareness levels of the impact of the European Union but also voter participation in European Parliament elections. The aim is that lecturers who come into schools and foster a direct dialogue with the students will give greater encouragement to young people to become socially aware citizens. GEKO staff also hold teacher and media training courses and evaluate class participation with both pupils and teachers. Although the work involves covering long distances in what is a rural state, Hans-Peter Hubert stressed the importance of face-to-face contact and direct debate as opposed to just one-on-one online interaction and educational campaigns for young people.

Juliette Garnier spoke about strengthening awareness. Her work focuses on both spreading knowledge about the work of the EU in Brittany and also about Brittany in Europe, how it is represented in Brussels and what stances it takes on various issues. Her recommendations included using games to consolidate a successful learning approach when focussing on young people. Since they are part of young people's everyday life, setting up role plays or engaging citizens in video competitions in which they set out their own views on Europe in less than a minute were doing well in Brittany. For the wider public, information about funds could be communicated in an easily understood way by, for instance, using examples to be found in project libraries.

Finally, Guillaume Dugravot presented the “Plus Haut” strategy, which incorporates 1,100 projects funded by the EU in Wallonia. An online database searchable by subject, location or keyword is the cornerstone of the strategy, which is for people want to learn about funds and identify the EU – and not, as often previously assumed, the regional government – as an investor in their neighbourhood. The site was advertised via traditional media – radio spots or posters – but gained most attention through open days involving beneficiaries of EU funds. Guillaume Dugravot described initial challenges in getting beneficiaries involved because they feared that their own logo and space for self-promotion would be overshadowed by the EU logo. However, once they understood the benefit of being listed on such a database, they were very involved in any initiative and remained in contact with the project organisers.

After some technical questions about communicating EU funds, the panel went on to conclude that talking about funds did not necessarily make people more “European” nor did it make them proud to be European. Jan Buyse summed this up by saying that citizens would only get involved if an emotional dimension was included in communication. It was crucial for Europe to stop being a “far-away world”. At the same time, however, we must avoid falling into the trap of disseminating Europe as a brand and instead focus on highlighting its democratic values, its single market, tolerance and so on. The public must not see Europe as a foreign affairs issue, but must move into the political centre as a matter of national affairs. In that sense, it makes no difference whether the stress is on online communication or on face-to-face debating because the most effective mechanism will depend on the target audience. The process begins with everyone who is already involved in working with the European Union institutions or in European affairs being ambassadors and starting to engage within the own environment.
Communicating commitments: Europe 2020

The Europe 2020 strategy and tackling the financial and economic crisis are issues at the top of the European policy agenda. They are also of crucial importance to national, regional and local governments and tie in with their strategies. It is therefore essential to coordinate EU and decentralised long-term policies, including in the field of communication.

Florence Ranson opened the workshop by briefly recapitulating the fact that Europe 2020 was the EU’s growth strategy for this decade. It aimed at combining smart, sustainable and an inclusive growth. To achieve that, EU had set objectives on very specific issues: employment, innovation, climate, energy and so on. We had to be conscious that euroscepticism was at a peak and that, for the moment, the public wanted less Europe, not more.

Sixtine Bouygues started by explaining that Europe 2020 did not mean anything to most people. She outlined the strategy in place within the EU to combat the crisis and described its two main pillars. The first aims at finding a remedy to the current crisis (short term). The second pillar would be to achieve stable growth in the long term. She explained how lack of competitiveness, at a time of expanding globalisation, is now challenging the foundations of Europe. Communicators should adopt simple language, explaining the long term vision that the EU is working on and making it attractive. Communication should not only come from the Brussels bubble, though its position is central, but also from local, regional and national authorities.
Gerald Angley presented Irish communication on economic policy as a case of good practice and spoke on Ireland’s many EU referendums, including the most recent one on the Fiscal Stability Treaty. On media coverage, he said that TV/radio debates on referendums were legally required to be balanced, with “for” and “against” given an equal say. In his view, the large numbers of people who had abstained had done so due to lack of information. Well-informed citizens knew enough to make a decision. As part of its information service, the Referendum Unit in the Prime Minister’s office used video channels to explain what is done at the EU level and raise awareness of the importance of voting. It also used TV spots to inform citizens where they can find available information. Gerald Angley believed that today, traditional media were still more effective than social media for this purpose but accepted that this would change.

Jiri Kubicek said that it was very difficult to communicate Europe 2020 in its entirety. It was very often associated with the Lisbon strategy issue, and that was the moment when people stopped listening. For the majority, communication so far on Europe 2020 was way too complicated, technical, heterogeneous and boring and had no tangible results. Europe 2020 was only worth communicating in its entirety on specific occasions, for instance when speaking to a specialised public (academics, stakeholders) or when a Council discussion was underway. At the same time, Jiri Kubicek said it was clearly essential to have full information about the Europe 2020 strategy available in the information offices and on websites in all 27 languages. For communicating the commitments of the European strategy to citizens, he proposed splitting the strategy into various topics. By doing this, there would be more natural opportunities to speak about it and the audience might be better targeted by using single topics such as employment policy, greenhouse gas reduction or schooling. He concluded by saying that communication about Europe 2020 was definitely a long-term task as it continues to be updated, to evolve and to be part of budget discussions.

Herbert Jakoby presented good practice on the 2020 strategy in the North Rhine-Westphalia region. His region can be considered as being in the heart of Europe, and its primary goals are to focus on R&D and innovation, though there are also goals in related social issues such as reducing the educational failure in schools. He explained that effective communication of the EU commitments could be achieved by targeting recipients and by using specific messages for intermediate multipliers. He also demonstrated the good practice of targeted conferences and workshops, which were organised every year by the German Länder during the European weeks, for instance by gathering opinion leaders of tomorrow, on student debates at universities. He explained that if communicators use non-abstract, simple language what they say is better received by the public. It was important to reiterate the need for Europe, to discuss the past, the future and most importantly, what it means for people's lives.

The panel discussion that followed focused on the branding of the Europe 2020 strategy, with arguments for and against a single abstract umbrella brand for a broad range of underlying specific initiatives. The common label should be “Europe”, with a focus on EU values and its care for citizens. The mission of EU institutions was to put emotion and values into these stories, while still leaving room for the “local” communicators to develop a tailor-made communications approach towards their specific audiences.
With the launch of the European Citizens’ Initiative, the European Year of Citizens in 2013 and the 2014 European Parliament election campaigns the European Union is making active citizenship a priority in its communication initiatives. Similar attempts are being made at national, regional and local level to increase citizens’ participation and involvement.

**Ylva Tivéus**, in charge of planning and implementation of the European Year of Citizens 2013, focussed on its priorities. “It’s about Europe, it’s about you” would be the slogan for the project, which aims to involve citizens as much as possible. The whole year had been conceived with a bottom-up rather than top-down approach. The focus would be on EU citizens’ rights, with the related benefits, opportunities and hurdles. Ylva Tivéus said she wanted to hear the concerns of citizens and to see an active civil society. A number of competences had been shifted from member states to the EU and the public were not very clear about what was happening. She insisted that the shared communication priorities of the EU institutions did answer the needs of EU citizens (employment, quality of life) as mapped in Eurobarometer. European citizenship was not only about rights and duties, but also about commitment and responsibilities. It was vital for the public to feel that the European Year of Citizens 2013 was their project and not a political one. In this sense, having it twelve months before the European elections would contribute to raising awareness.

**Thorsteinn Sigurðsson** described last year’s process of drafting a new Constitution in Iceland, partly through an online process and in a period of only four months. After the financial crash in 2008 the new government had wanted to write a new constitution for the country. Public involvement in the drafting process was facilitated by the fact that much of the Icelandic population has internet and is active online. Every week the committees of the Constitutional Court published new articles for the constitution. After a debate in the formal Council meetings, the proposals were published online for further debate. The constitution website was combined with an active use of social media: Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, etc. 5,600 friends on the Facebook page initiated 3,600 discussions concerning almost all the proposed articles. Thorsteinn Sigurðsson compared this to the process of writing a book chapter by chapter, having readers’ feedback every week. Many of the Council members themselves were active in the discussions and 51 in-house interviews with them were published on YouTube. Open source software such as Google Docs and Dropbox were also helpful during the process. The website of the Council received 40,000 unique visitors, and 30,000 of them were Icelanders, which is one tenth of the total population.
Laura Massoli spoke about citizens’ participation in evaluating the public services in Italy. Citizens were able to make their assessment within a co-production framework whose main aim was to enable citizens and local authorities to work together. It guaranteed citizens and the civic associations an active role in the permanent monitoring of public services through dialogue. It could also deliver useful outcomes for governments such as greater trust or cost reductions. Since 2010 the evaluation had focused on urban quality and on problems affecting people’s daily life. Pilot activities started “bottom-up” in 14 local municipalities in Southern Italy. Communication tools – social media, blog, web portals – were used for the initiative as a way maintaining the partnership among the participants and for informing the public about the result. The use of Web 2.0 helped to improve public trust. The main conclusions from the project were that citizen participation had to be increased and the results showed that the results were better at places where the political commitment was stronger. Laura Massoli added that future application of this methodology would be considered in other sectors, such as justice.

The discussion that followed, moderated by Paul Adamson, focused on the role of the average citizen in the decision-making process. A way to enable citizens to be better heard was via local reports. There was a challenge in finding the right balance vis-à-vis political decision-makers, who were often reluctant to take serious account of input from citizens.
Citizens’ movements, ranging from small-scale local action groups to international networks, are not a recent phenomenon, but their impact on public debate has increased tremendously over the last few years. Local politicians, national governments and European policy strategies are scrutinised and pressured by such initiatives as the Occupy Movement and the Indignados, as well as by a growing group of online activists. How can/should a public authority react to citizens’ actions? And what have public communicators learned from these movements?

Introducing the workshop, Wolfgang Petzold depicted how citizens’ movements unfold and what their aims and potential impacts and implications were. In order to respond, authorities needed to understand the interplay between citizens, the organisations involved and the influence of current trends.

Wolfgang Petzold
Milan Raskovic has vast hands-on experience as a trainer for CANVAS, an international NGO for knowledge, transfer to and support of citizens’ movements. Watching successful citizens’ movements all over the world in the last 2 years, he had observed some common trends and characteristics. Successful citizens’ movements needed a clear common purpose, well-planned organisation, and non-violent discipline. Non-violent actions were often less covered by the media, so creativity was a crucial ingredient. The good practice he suggested both as a means of activism and as personal philosophy was “Laughtivism”. The power of laughter in nonviolent struggle cannot be underestimated: it creates great enthusiasm among the citizens, breaks the culture of fear, leads to sympathy from the external world and often embarrasses the authorities. Milan Raskovic suggested that citizens’ movement leaders, but also political leaders, observe and learn from the successful examples in other countries.

Citizens’ movements: Understanding and responding

Moderator:
• Wolfgang Petzold, Head of Unit, Committee of the Regions

Speakers:
• Milan Raskovic, Trainer and Programme Director, Centre for Applied Non-Violent Action & Strategies (CANVAS), Serbia
• Javier Romero, Chief Editor, Directorate-General for Communication and Media, Community of Madrid, Spain
• Yiannis Boutselis, Communications Advisor and Coordinator, Office of the Ombudsman, Greece
• Jean-Christophe Gallien, CEO BRANDIPOLMACY and Associate Professor Paris 1 La Sorbonne University, France
Javier Romero used the recent mass protests against austerity measures in Madrid as a specific example of a government’s response to civil movements. He warned about the spill-over effect of this type of movement, as well as the snowball effect that can challenge and surprise governments, making it difficult for authorities to grasp the gravity of the situation and so making it hard to respond. The Madrid case showed that the movements often lack clear demands and leadership. One of the main responses by the authorities was to invest more in transparency. Social media were now used more actively to inform the people and to interact, in particular with young citizens. Observing the evolutions of the last months, after the heat of the demonstrations, Javier Romero believed that the impact of the movements was bigger in the media than in the social and political reality.

Jean-Christophe Gallien drew on his wide experience working with diverse citizens’ movements to share common insights regarding public and government responsibilities. He put the movements in a broader context of a society that faced many uncertainties and a political class that was failing to deliver strong answers and solutions to the current crisis. At the same time, reality was becoming immediate, the internet was widening the horizon of public spaces and providing a looser way in which citizens could organise their responses and reactions. Citizens were skipping intermediates such as the established media or representative political organisations in giving voice to their needs, and turning the public debate into a so-called “adhocracy”. His major recommendation for both citizens and government was “to take time” – to vote, to decide, and to evolve into “Citizenship 2.0”, which would lead to greater democracy.

Yiannis Boutselis based his recommendations on the recent developments in Greece. Despite the two elections, the public still had the feeling of not being heard by the authorities. The movements that arose were more systemic than earlier ones. Whereas previous initiatives had had specific demands, such as better wages or more jobs, the current movements expressed their disappointment in the social and economic establishment as a whole. This switch made it difficult for institutions such as an ombudsman to establish its position and to define its role in responding to the demands. Yiannis Boutselis believed that “the greatest risk nowadays is to become irrelevant”, which was why his ombudsman had suggested that there was a need to use social media (twitter, facebook, e-complaint) more in order to re-connect with the public sphere. On the same note, he called for “a new social contract” to fight apathy. National public institutions and European institutions must voice “a new message, a new narrative that addresses the basic concerns of the way we live”.

Yiannis Boutselis:

Javier Romero:

Jean-Christophe Gallien:

Public participation and active citizenship
The 2014 European Parliament elections pose a major challenge for public communicators at all governance levels: How to get EU citizens to vote? How to ensure that they get the best possible prior information? The European Parliament largely depends here on efforts carried out at national, regional and local level.

Dominic Lyle introduced the session by contextualising the need to encourage EU citizens to participate in the 2014 elections. Despite the European Parliament’s gradual increase in democratic powers, voter turnout for the EU elections had steadily declined since the first direct elections in 1979. He said the tendency for EU citizens to view campaign issues at a national or local level was one of many obstacles for voting.

Nastja Klemencic explained the significance of the 2014 elections. The Lisbon Treaty had made the European Parliament nearly equal to the Council and the forthcoming elections would be the first time the Council would have to consider the election results when suggesting a nominee for the Commission presidency. Votes in 2014, therefore, would have a greater democratic value than they did in the past. The European Parliament would also have the opportunity in these elections to further incorporate social media platforms into its communications strategy. Social media tools open up two-way conversations with citizens. The Parliament would streamline social media expertise, develop listening capacities and actively engage with social media users. In every aspect of its awareness campaign, the European Parliament’s expectation was to mount a politically neutral campaign which communicated EU values, policies and politics, paving the way for political parties to discuss important political issues on the public stage. The information campaign would rely on finding multipliers, such as the media, young people and external stakeholders, who would distribute the information to more Europeans. She stressed the importance of inter-institutional coordination, concluding that the elections were not about the European Parliament, but about Europe.
Christophoros Christophorou asked the audience a series of questions designed to provoke critical thought about establishing a specific objective for a communications strategy. He began by breaking down voter turnout percentages to show highest and lowest participation by country. In some countries, the low participation might be based on people’s tendency to attribute good policies to national politicians, while blaming bad things on the actions of a vague entity of “those politicians in Brussels.” He said what matters were people’s perceptions of the Parliament and whether they knew what the European Parliament had done for them. Without a method for analysing voter turnout statistics, one could not identify the voting participation trends unique to each member state and it became impossible to have a successful information campaign. He then asked what information about Europe comprised, whether it consisted solely of reports about recent legislation or whether it also involved telling citizens about projects that had made their lives easier. He noted the importance of demonstrating tangible solutions, since people would be more likely to participate in the EU elections if they saw direct results. In his concluding remarks, Christophoros Christophorou said that people gave voting its true value when they go to the polls to make their voices heard.

Eveline Hamelink-van Rens spoke about The Hague’s successful awareness campaign run in preparation for the 2009 European elections. Beginning their campaign a month before the elections, the campaign team members used several outreach methods: a local newspaper with accessible EU-related news, elections-related events at the Europe Direct Centre, campaigns at the universities, a series of diversified European debates for various audiences and even a live question-and-answers booth. The awareness campaign reached many people and the voter turnout increased by four per cent in The Hague – an impressive feat since the national average voter participation declined two to three per cent in that same election cycle. This year, they were working to resolve shortcomings they had discovered during the 2009 awareness campaign. Eveline Hamelink-van Rens said the EU campaign began too late for The Hague and the European Parliament material came too late. She reiterated that it is difficult to attract media attention to positive stories about the EU and that citizens often confused the elections for all the different governance levels. Nevertheless, she hoped to sustain higher voter participation in the forthcoming elections. In her view, it would help if the EP election campaign was supported by a recognisable visual branding, by a clear link between the national and European political debates and by permanent, long-term EU information and communication.

In the discussion, participants agreed that institutions and stakeholders should integrate their awareness campaign platforms to the fullest extent possible and work together to reach target groups. They also suggested that the focus might have got stuck on attempting to tell people to vote, whereas the EU should be putting effort into providing details about the debates and the issues. In concluding, Dominic Lyle cited the statistic that 70 percent of policies at the national and regional level had their origins in the supranational level. He said it was frightening that Europeans did not realise how much the EU affected their lives.
Communicating with specific target groups

Communicating with young citizens

It has always been a major challenge for communicators to involve young people in public dialogue. What is the attitude of young people towards media and political communication? How do “digital natives” interact with society? And what can we learn from recent communication campaigns?

Starting off the workshop, Katherine Khodorowsky set the scene by presenting some golden rules on how to understand and communicate best with young citizens. Firstly, it was paramount to have an idea of the values that matter to young people. Sincerity and respect were the most important ones because they created a trusting relationship between the communicator and the young person. In order to establish trust, however, confidence played a significant role and should be encouraged. This relationship of trust led to the second golden rule, namely that any communicator must strictly observe his natural role and not in any way try artificially to act young and “be cool”. Young citizens today believed first and foremost in facts and so would immediately reject any artificial talk that sought indirectly to influence their opinion. Thirdly, since young people today could be described as the “screen generation”, these communication channels also needed to be used in any communication processes. Specifically, in Europe today 90% of young people had access to a computer and spent around 50 hours a week in front of a screen, be it in front of a computer using social media networks checking incoming text messages on their phones. Fourthly, in order to use these sites most effectively and make the most of their sharing capacity, young citizens needed to be involved by helping them to understand what Europe did for them and for their peers. This aim would be achieved best by addressing them emotionally through, for example, the use of anecdotes.
Carmen Sandoval Sanchez presented the “Debate Joven” project that had been running since 2007 in the Spanish region of Murcia. This project aimed to spark a debate “with ordinary people” in order to inform about Europe by word of mouth. In particular, “Europe’s future” was targeted as the seed from which communication spreads through children and adolescents to their (family) environments. This was done by simulating debates about issues of current concern in Europe and for young Murcians. Every year up to 400 participants from schools, universities and other associations formed work groups and drafted initiatives and proposals about topics that should be regulated at EU level. In the final stage, they presented their conclusions at a conference and had them voted on. This final get-together was also attended by people from the EU institutions so that the participants’ work was shown publicly. A jury finally decided on winning proposals and their authors were invited to visit Brussels.

Charis Xirouchakis argued the need to get young citizens living in a virtual world into the real world and educate them to be active participants in civil society. As an example of this, he presented the EESC’s “Your Europe, Your Say” project, which invites pupils aged 17 to meet over language barriers and different backgrounds and discuss questions such as “What does it mean to be a citizen in a civil society today?” Running since 2009, the scheme invites applications and selects one pupil per school per member state to go to Brussels and take part in a role-play activity in which they draft amendments on an opinion they are given beforehand. They then argue their case in a plenary session to persuade others of the value of their changes. Eventually, a vote is taken to determine which amendments go through. With a launch appeal to over 25,000 schools all over Europe each year, more than 900 schools are applying. With so many institutions willing to take part, Charis Xirouchakis argued that the “Back to School” principle worked best for connecting with young people. Not only were foundations laid for pupils to engage in a hands-on manner away from their virtual environment, but they were also being connected with each other in the wake of the role-play activity, so the project was disseminated and European citizens were being raised.

Finally, Luigi Petito focussed on the web-based series “Boys and Girls”, established to promote healthy lifestyles among adolescents. The innovative aspect here lay with the involvement of children in the target group of 15 to 18 year olds in the pre-production phase. Given that the average age of beginning internet users was as early as 9 years old (even 7 in countries such as Denmark and Sweden) and that 86% of internet users watched videos online, the value of the project was evident. The involvement of children in the set-up of “Boys and Girls”, as well as the inclusion of academics and Hollywood directors, ensured that all aspects, from script development to the educational value and scientific soundness as well as the needs of the consumers, were being catered for by the most knowledgeable. To monitor its development, the project was supported by social media in the form of a web campaign on social networking platforms in six languages, with each having a Community manager in the target language.
Communicating with senior generations

The 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations makes clear that the impact and importance of the “silver generation” must not be underestimated in the current and future social circumstances. The role of this growing population will increase in the next decades and so will its voice in public debate. This workshop explored the specific communication profiles of senior citizens: what were their information needs, their media behaviour and their interaction profile?

Eugène Loos set out five myths regarding the elderly and the digitisation of society and proceeded to debunk them. Firstly, he believed there was no historical evidence for the myth that new media were a fad that would pass as fast as it had arrived. It was more a case of “history repeats itself,” he said. Next, he disagreed with the idea that younger people were digital natives and older people were digital immigrants in their own country. It would be far more accurate to talk of a digital spectrum. The third myth was that the generation of senior citizens that had problems with new media would automatically die out soon. Eugène Loos argued that life expectancy had grown and that media were also subject to development. Using an amusing video presentation, he exposed the fourth myth, namely that senior generations cannot learn to use new media. Finally, he explained that age was not the explanatory variable for differences in information search behaviour. Factors such as socialisation, life path, education and internet experience were at least as important as age.

In approaching communication strategy related to elderly services, Carl Smitterberg explained that the aim in Stockholm was to help elderly people to feel informed and he emphasised the importance of trust. In order to achieve these aims, he said the communication channels needed to be available, easy to find and use, relevant, straightforward and a tool for staff. He gave some lessons for decisive communication management that had been learnt in Stockholm. He suggested concentrating all relevant information in a kind of one-stop shop: for example, a single booklet for services and information that would last over time. He recommended a single website, preferably with the same information as the booklet. He also proposed having an information line for all services for elderly care – one city, one number, using Stockholm’s service hotline “Äldre direct” as an example. He also advised following up with new technology once the body was in place. Carl Smitterberg highlighted the importance of meetings in person, which was the most important communication channel, and emphasised the importance of ensuring staff understood that they were the most important communicators.

Moderator:
• Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary-General, AGE Platform

Speakers:
• Eugène Loos, Professor of Old and New Media in an Ageing Society, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
• David Sandbach, Founder, Shropshire Cares Info Central, UK
• Carl Smitterberg, Communications manager, Elderly services administration, City of Stockholm, Sweden
David Sandbach introduced his community knowledge management facility, “Shropshire Cares Info Central”. The aim of this was to provide customised social and health care local knowledge to citizens, particularly the elderly, under the maxim “Tell one! Tell all!” This facility serves approximately 460,000 senior citizens in the locality. The website is provided free of charge by Shropshire Council. However, David Sandbach was keen to improve the service. For example, seniors who lived in nursing homes could be recruited and trained to check for broken links and to contribute material. He suggested starting a “trip advisor” service – “Find me Great Care” – in order to help people to make informed choices about which organisation they would like their care from, including a feedback survey facility. Other specialist groups such as Mental Health could also be linked to the site.

Anne-Sophie Parent summed up by saying it was crucial to ensure that older people not only had food, warmth and shelter, but also access to communication tools. She pointed out that some countries invested in order to keep older people in their homes because they knew it pays dividends. She gave the example of Denmark, where each elderly person is given an interview in order to assess their individual needs. She also commented on a Swedish case study which demonstrated what can be achieved when a good governance structure is in place. She said the English case study was “a very inspiring example” of what can be achieved in the community. Another key message was that from the age of 65 upwards, there is a statistical information gap with regard to internet use by older people. The presentations echoed the importance of accessible information sources for citizens, both young and old.
Communicating with ethnic minorities

Migrant groups represent a large proportion of the population in many cities and regions all over Europe. Particular segments of this population often do not take part in active dialogue with public authorities because of their language, social situation, cultural differences and so on. How can public communicators develop an inclusive communication approach, stimulating these “new” citizens to engage?

Milica Pesic opened the debate by asking “What kind of devils do the media make of migrants?” and “How do we ourselves build bridges in our communities?”

Asma Ould Aissa and Joyce Koeman started their presentation with the remark that there was no “one-size-fits-all” communication approach in addressing ethnic minorities. The diverse cultural backgrounds called for a diversified media strategy. Though the numerous satellite dishes in certain neighbourhoods might give the impression that minorities focussed on their own media, most research showed there was a dual media use. But “western” media were regarded with more scepticism by people from ethnic minorities. According to their findings, access to media sources was now widespread and the information gap – or digital divide – had nearly disappeared. Asma Ould Aissa and Joyce Koeman advocated a peer-to-peer approach, more specifically “going into the community and using neighbourhoods” in order to overcome ethnic boundaries by addressing people on a certain aspect of their life. The key point in their presentation was that there is no universal solution to dealing with diversity within diversity, but rather looking at every ethnic group, avoiding stereotypes and finding common ground.

Moderator:
- Milica Pesic, Executive Director, Media Diversity Institute, UK

Speakers:
- Goran Novakovic, Integration and Diversity Officer, Vienna City Administration, Austria
- Deepak Naik, Consultant United Religions Initiative, UK
- Asma Ould Aissa, Trainer and Journalist, Verbal Vision, Belgium
- Joyce Koeman, Assistant Professor of Media Studies and Ethno communication, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium
Deepak Naik encouraged the audience to become aware of the other, and to get rid of the monoculture attitude where no efforts were made to build bridges between the parallel cultures in society. He believed in the ISM-approach for engaging with diversity: a mixture of Intelligence, Self-interest and Method. What intelligence did you gather from your groups? What was your interest in serving people that are different? Did you choose an inclusive or exclusive method? How were we engaging the groups? Keeping in mind that different people bring different kinds of wealth, he suggested investing in appreciative inquiry, living libraries and myth busting. He encouraged public institutions to use their in-house resources and involve their own staff members in the intercultural dialogue. He also pleaded for more empathy from communicators: minorities often felt bombarded by the overload of government information, just as any other citizen does.

Goran Novakovic used the example of social inclusion in Vienna to inspire good practice. He urged that diversity be seen as an opportunity: grasp it, use it, and promote it so that integration becomes an opportunity and not a deficit. Coaching programmes were offered to new migrants and multilingual information distributed under the heading “Vienna speaks many languages”. After 4 years of coaching and providing information, 86% of the target audience had been reached. Ethnic groups were also encouraged to organise micro projects and involve neighbourhoods, as a part of the Vienna Charta. One example of a successful project that could easily be adopted by other cities was OKTO Community TV, where different communities can broadcast their own programmes in their own languages with German subtitles.
Christophe Rouillon welcomed the fact that a large number of EuroPCOM participants were 30 to 35 years old and expressed his belief that they represented new communications ambassadors for Europe. Given that citizens were very worried about the current economic situation, he emphasised the need for a communication strategy that was not just a European strategy, but one that engaged with citizens too. He stressed the need for communication with the broader public, either through Facebook, Twitter or pamphlets, and that better use needed to be made of local media channels. He suggested ideas for good local-level communication, such as the distributing of material on a local level by the EU. He concluded by saying that while the EU may not be the current “flavour of the month”, citizens were nevertheless interested in what was going on in it.

Dominic Lyle showed a video of a new pan-European goodwill campaign called “This is my future”, launched by the European Association of Communication Agencies. It was aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs and would come be launched in March 2013. It had been created in response to the increasingly negative mood prevalent in Europe as a result of the economic crisis and its impact on prospects for recovery and growth. He explained that “This is my future” was designed to provoke and inspire young people to take action for themselves and create a positive self-sustaining movement.
Reijo Kemppinen spoke of the transition from websites to an integrated online working environment and explained that this was not just about a change of language, but a change that would affect how institutions work and collaborate. Referring to the europa.eu website, he said that there was little cooperation on the level of editorial governance. He stressed the need to develop platforms where the institutions could work together on this. He also pointed out that there was no explicit legal basis in the treaties for institutions’ communications activities. Consequently, each institution was doing this for itself at an unknown cost. He added that, at a time of austerity, it was more important than ever to learn from the private sector. Finally, public communicators should use “common sense” and improve their ability to cooperate and plan together to achieve their aspirations.

John Bell began by asking how the public communicator could deliver to constituents who demand a new way of communicating. Presenting what he called the “Public Leader’s Dilemma”, he gave a number of ideas that could help the public communicator. For example, he said translating the experience of the private sector was very important, as was listening to and trying to understand the needs of constituents. He emphasised the building of trust, using the Ford Company as an example, where 25 executives had been sent out to 100 cities to talk with customers and car dealers. He also observed that the public leader has to help people to transform by training, collaboration (i.e. Yammer) and new routines. His final point was that the public communicator has to build belief in fundamentals, such as listening closely to stakeholders in order to better understand their needs.

Neelie Kroes said it was obvious that internet and ICT were vitally important for the economy and members of the various institutions were acutely aware of the influence of ICT. However, she was uncertain as to whether they were always able and willing to “think outside the box”. She underlined the importance of changing mind-sets and called on the conference participants to be the “instruments” that were needed. She reiterated the fact that the right communication tools were needed not just, for example, when there were referenda, but on a daily basis. Neelie Kroes said it was great to know what could be done on the ICT front, but she asked: “Are we aware enough?”
• The regional Eurobarometer results confirm a segmentation of audiences

• EU communication must
  › focus on how policies respond to citizens’ needs
  › use appropriate channels and tools to communicate with the different target audiences
  › find the right media mix to reach out to different generations
  › bring a clear and single message from all EU institutions about the reason why Europe is needed/wanted

• “Going local” means
  › communicating in partnership: for global EU initiatives, the institutions need to provide good info package to regional/local partners
  › bringing concrete stories of EU: How does Europe affect and change our daily life?
  › bringing a multi-faced communication with MEPs and local elected politicians
  › giving an active participatory role to the citizens
At the end of EuroPCom 2012, 18 participants joined in an interactive debate and gave their conclusions and recommendations after two days of conferencing.

In their view, the EuroPCom conference was, and should be, an opportunity to learn and share best practices with communication practitioners, to exchange innovating, inspiring and motivating ideas about (new) tools and targets, and so fulfil a sort of “collective therapy” function. The conference format could be more participatory and interactive, with fewer up-front speakers and more debate, discussion and opportunities for networking.

They believed that the EU needs a decentralised network of ambassadors who can deliver the message. EU communication needed to engage with the numerous (new) influencers in the public debate and fulfil their demands for more transparency. EU communication delivery needed to be more decentralised, use and reward local communication intelligence that is much closer to the target, knows it better, and knows how to reach it and how to address it. “Listen before you talk, take it to the streets, and make it cool.” Local communicators should be active as well. Actually putting Europe into practice – being part of a project or a conference, work or live in another country, going on Erasmus exchange, etc. – helps to demonstrate what Europe does.

In terms of content, EuroPCom participants said a wake-up call to politicians and EU managers was needed. Public communicators urged the need for a coherent and global message about why we want/need the EU. We needed one voice and face for Europe, with a single message from all EU institutions, if possible also supported by national governments, who should avoid the blame-game of the past decades. This message must be value driven, not policy based, built on the fundamental “raison d’être” of the EU. Concrete results for citizens must find a place in this value driven message. The 2013 Year of Citizens was an opportunity to use best practices and send a clear and unified message about why citizens wanted Europe. The EU must prove that European (economic) integration had not only been a guarantee for peace, stability and prosperity in the past, but that it was also an answer – albeit imperfect – to today’s preoccupations about the economic crisis and unemployment.

(The concluding debate was organised by Béla Dajka, Nico Keppens, Antonia Fokkema, Andrea Puhl, Radu Tudose, Annamaria Erdei and Maite Marín García, all staff members of the European Commission)
Save the date

European Public Communication Awards 2013

EuroPCom aims to showcase best practice and to stimulate professional EU communication at all governance levels. To this end, the first European Public Communication Awards will be presented in 2013.

The Awards will go to public administrations at national, regional or local level that have developed an outstanding communication campaign or strategy about the EU. The campaigns will be judged on their creativity, impact and compatibility with the EU’s communication priorities. The award may also go to members of staff within administrations with long-term merits in the field of EU communication.

Proposals should be sent in before 1 May 2013. For more information about the rules and conditions, please visit: www.cor.europa.eu/europcom

European Year of Citizens 2013

Connecting citizens will also be a major theme for the EU institutions throughout 2013. During the European Year of Citizens, a range of communication activities will be rolled out, both by the institutions in Brussels and on the field in the member states, in close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders at national, regional and local level.

To learn more about the European Year, please visit: www.europa.eu/citizens-2013
The 2012 conference was an initiative of the Committee of the Regions, in partnership with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Club of Venice.

The conference organisation was steered by an interinstitutional Advisory Board, involving the partners listed below, as well as the 2010 and 2011 conference organisers (the Flemish, Walloon and Polish authorities), the European Economic and Social Committee and several professional European networks representing communication directors (Club of Venice and EACD), communication agencies (EACA) and researchers in the field of public communication, media and journalism (ECREA).

Advisory Board members:

- Laurent Thieule, Wolfgang Petzold, Santiago Mondragón, Boris Essender, Katie Owens and Tom De Smedt, Committee of the Regions
- Aleyda Hernandez, European Parliament
- Christine Roger, Cristina Gallach and Vincenzo Le Voci, Council of the EU
- Sixtine Bouygues, Ian Barber and Béla Dajka, European Commission
- Eleonora Gavrielides and Michalis Koumides, Government of Cyprus, EU Presidency 2012
- Monika Kapturska, Wielkopolska Region, Polish EU Presidency 2011
- Karl Musschoot, Flemish Government and Jacques Moisse, Walloon Government, Belgian EU Presidency 2010
- Karin Füssl, European Economic and Social Committee
- Hans Brunmayr and Niels Thøgersen, 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)

Reporting team

This proceedings brochure is based on the reports edited by the EuroPCom rapporteurs. The reporting team was chaired by Hans Brunmayr, Honorary Vice-President of the Club of Venice.

Rapporteurs: Pauliina Mäkäräinen, Joan Mc Donald, Nicolas Gauders, Manfred Kohler, Jennie Walters, Rebecca Weicht, Tsvetomir Tsekov and Silvana Precup.

For any further information or feedback, please contact the EuroPCom conference team:

www.cor.europa.eu/europcom
europcom@cor.europa.eu