

Press release

Brussels, July 1, 2011

## **European Communication Monitor 2011: Survey on the status of public relations across 43 countries reveals rising influence and salaries, but practitioners still have to develop social media skills and business knowledge**

The new edition of the European Communication Monitor, the most comprehensive study in the field of public relations and communication management worldwide, paints an ambiguous picture on the status of the profession. The results released today by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) and the European Association of Communication Directors (EACD) show that most communication professionals have a broad level of responsibilities and direct access to the top management level. However, only a minority believe that they generate financial and immaterial assets for their organisations. Decision making is rational rather than risk-taking, which contrasts with their counterparts in the United States.

Findings of the European Communication Monitor 2011 are based on replies from 2,209 senior professionals based in 43 countries. The annual survey is conducted by a research group of professors from renowned universities in 11 countries, led by Professor Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Germany. The research has been supported by the media monitoring company Infopaq as well as Grayling, the world's second largest independent public relations consultancy. A free PDF report (139 pages) with the results is available at [www.communicationmonitor.eu](http://www.communicationmonitor.eu).

Some of the key findings are:

- **Power of communication departments:** The communication function has gained influence in Europe: In three out of four organisations it is taken seriously by senior management and likely to be involved in planning organisational strategies. Communication professionals are getting access to the top management in organisations with 18 per cent being board members and 60 per cent reporting directly to the CEO. But this hierarchical power is not necessarily mirrored in close relationships with other organisational functions: Collaboration with internal strategy units is rather weak and only a minority (48 per cent) of the communication professionals believe that their department generates financial and immaterial assets for the organisation. However, communication has extended its function beyond generating publicity and managing media relations: In eight out of ten organisations the communication department is responsible for communicating with a wide range of stakeholders such as the media, consumers, employees, investors, or politicians.
- **Role enactment and decision making:** 68 per cent of the surveyed practitioners identify themselves with the advanced 'strategic facilitator' role, meaning they not only support organisational goals by executing communication, but also help to define business strategies. This number has risen by ten per cent over the last two years. The enhanced role for communicators brings up new challenges for job-related decision making. A large majority (85 per cent) report that they make a thorough evaluation of the situation based on all available information before taking decisions in their job. 68 per cent think it is useful to rely on best practices used by similar organisations, but only a minority (45 per cent) take risks when making decisions.
- **Credibility of public relations:** 42 per cent of the survey participants regard the term 'public relations' (PR) as a discredited label for the profession. A reason for this might be the poor media image of the term and the practice: 42 per cent of the communication professionals report on negative connotations of PR in the mass

media. As a consequence, many respondents favour alternative labels, such as 'corporate communications' (68 per cent), 'strategic communication' (61 per cent) and 'communication management' (56 per cent).

- **ROI of communication:** Although every second surveyed practitioner claims to use the term 'return on investment' (ROI) to evaluate communication activities, many are still lacking basic knowledge about the concept: 47 per cent did not agree with the standard definition of ROI as the ratio of financial profit resulting from an activity against its actual cost, and only 38 per cent knew that it has to be defined in monetary terms.
- **Strategic issues and trust:** The survey identifies two main issues relevant in the next years: 'Coping with the digital evolution and the social web' continues to be the most important issue according to 55 per cent of the communication professionals. 44 per cent identified 'linking communication efforts with business goals' as an ongoing challenge for the communication function. 'Building and maintaining trust' has lost ground as a hot issue for communication practitioners, but it is important to note that 93 per cent claim they want to enhance trust in the organisation and/or its brands rather than in leaders or businesses at large.
- **Development of disciplines and channels:** Corporate communication continues to have the leading role, followed by marketing and consumer communication. Online instruments are expected to lead the media mix utilised by communication management in the near future. However, a longitudinal analysis reveals that professionals tend to overestimate the growth of disciplines and especially online channels.
- **Social media governance and skills and activities:** Even though professionals expect social media channels to grow even more, adequate management and governance structures are still underdeveloped: Only four out of ten professionals working in communication departments report the existence of social media guidelines and no more than every third organisation has established tools for monitoring the social web. Furthermore, social media skills of communication professionals such as initiating web-based dialogues or knowing the legal framework for social media are poorly understood and developed.
- **Future qualification needs and training:** The top five future qualification needs and knowledge areas are the effects of traditional and new media (named by 83 per cent), relationship building (82 per cent) and communication technologies (80 per cent), followed by hands-on skills such as public speaking/presenting (79 per cent) and coaching (75 per cent). A comparison between the needs identified and the training programmes offered by organisations today reveals a large gap in every field.

## About the organisers

The European Public Relations Education and Research Association (Euprera) is an autonomous organisation, with members from more than 30 countries, that aims at stimulating and promoting the knowledge and practice of communication management in Europe. Academic scholars and experienced practitioners work together to advance fundamental and applied research. More information is available at: [www.euprera.org](http://www.euprera.org)

The European Association of Communication Directors (EACD) is the leading network for communication professionals across Europe with more than 1,600 members. The non-partisan association lobbies for the profession, establishes common quality standards and promotes the advancement of professional qualification by organising events and providing services and materials. More information is available at: [www.eacd-online.eu](http://www.eacd-online.eu)

## Press contact

Prof. Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Lead Researcher, EUPRERA, [zerfass@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:zerfass@uni-leipzig.de), Phone +49 341 97 35040  
Herbert Heitmann, President, EACD, [herbert.heitmann@eacd-online.eu](mailto:herbert.heitmann@eacd-online.eu), Phone +32 2 219 22 90

**Sample charts from the European Communication Monitor 2011 survey**

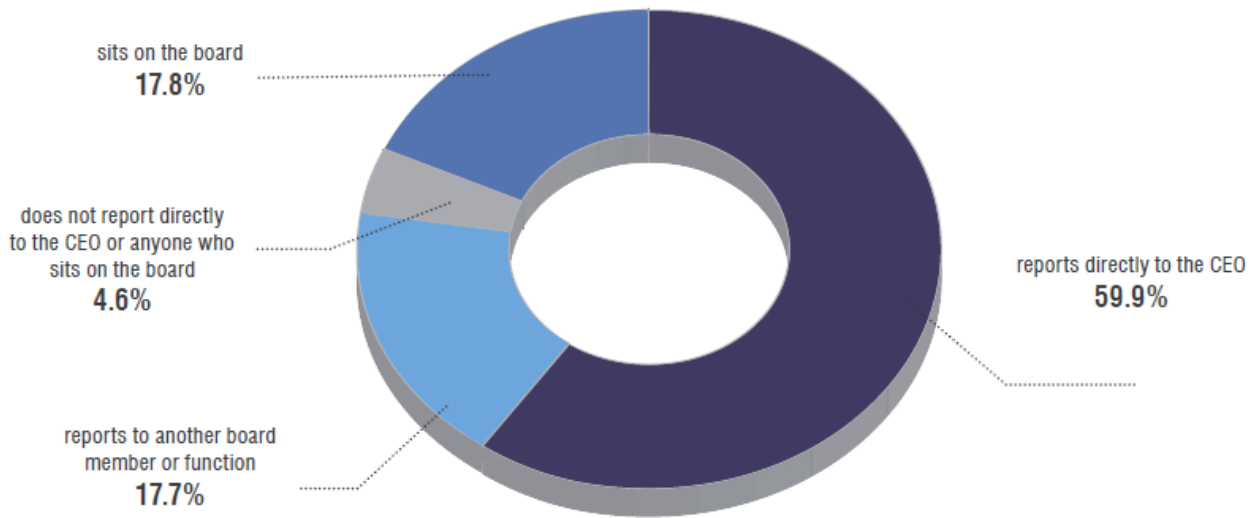
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High-res versions of the figures are available for download at [www.ecacd-online.eu](http://www.ecacd-online.eu) in the Press Room section.

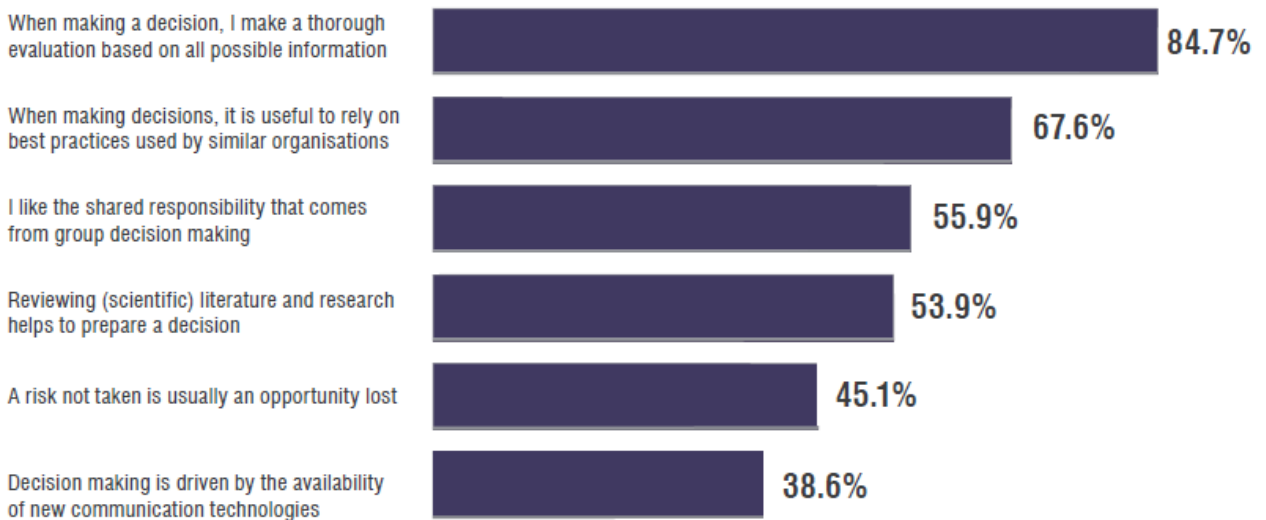
**Reporting lines and hierarchy: The majority of top level communication managers reports directly to the CEO**

*The top communication manager within the organisation...*



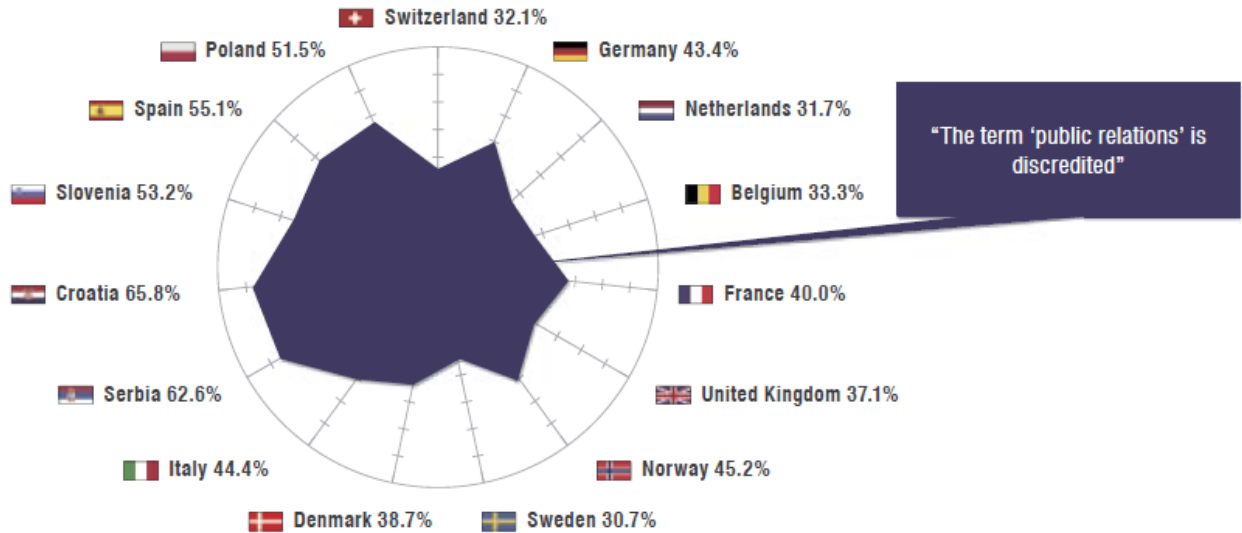
www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2011 / n = 1,450 PR professionals in communication departments; Q 5: Within your organisation, the top communication manager ...

**Decision making: Most professionals rely on rational approaches and best practices; only a minority take risks**



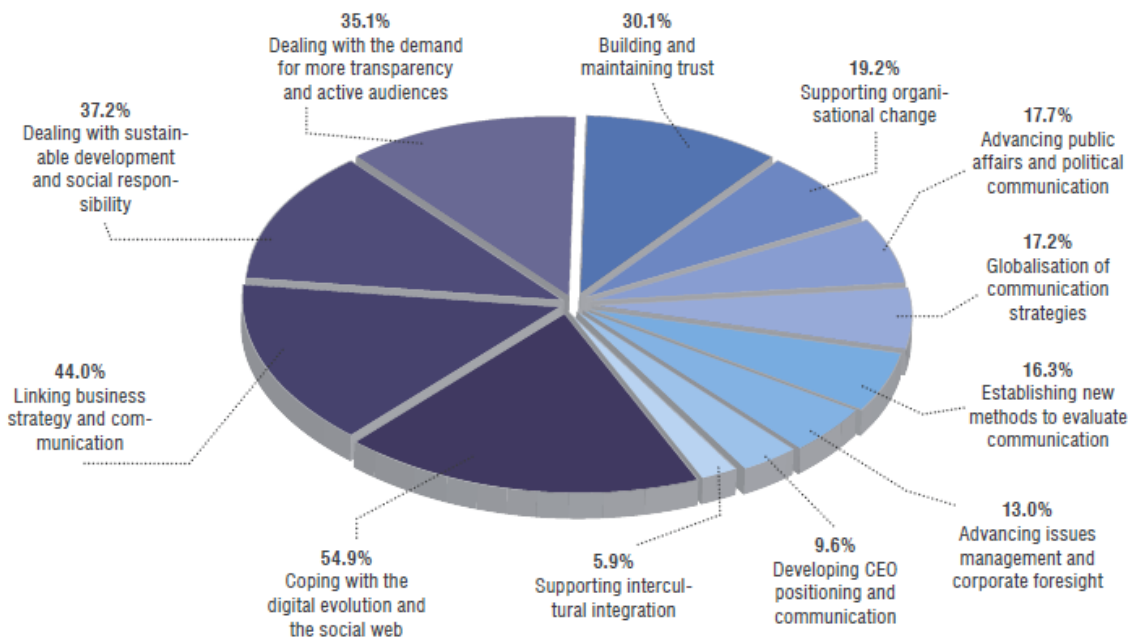
www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2011 / n = 2,209 PR professionals; Q 3: How do you make decisions as a communication professional? Scale 1-5, considered scale points 4-5. Types of decision making partly derived from Werder & Holzhausen 2011.

### The term ‘public relations’ is discredited in most countries



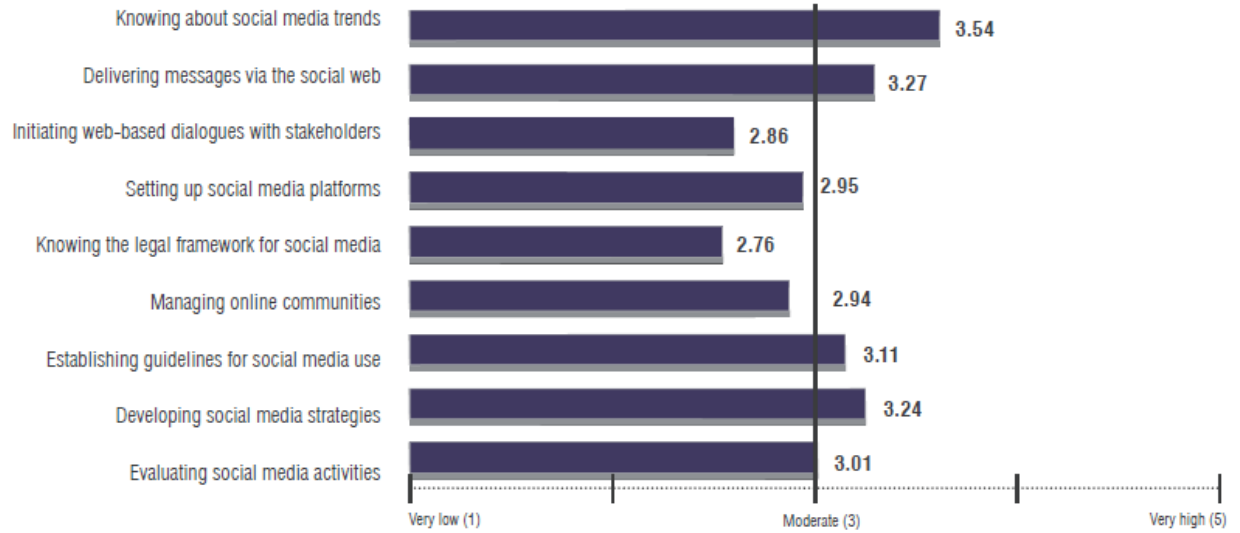
www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2011 / n = 2,209 PR professionals; Q 1: In many European countries public relations (PR) has negative connotations in the media. PR is often reduced to press relations and publicity. Professionals are sometimes labeled as ‘spin doctors’ and ‘propagandists’. What do you think of these statements? The term ‘public relations’ is discredited. Scale 1-5, considered scale points 4-5 / Q 20.

### Strategic issues for communication management until 2014



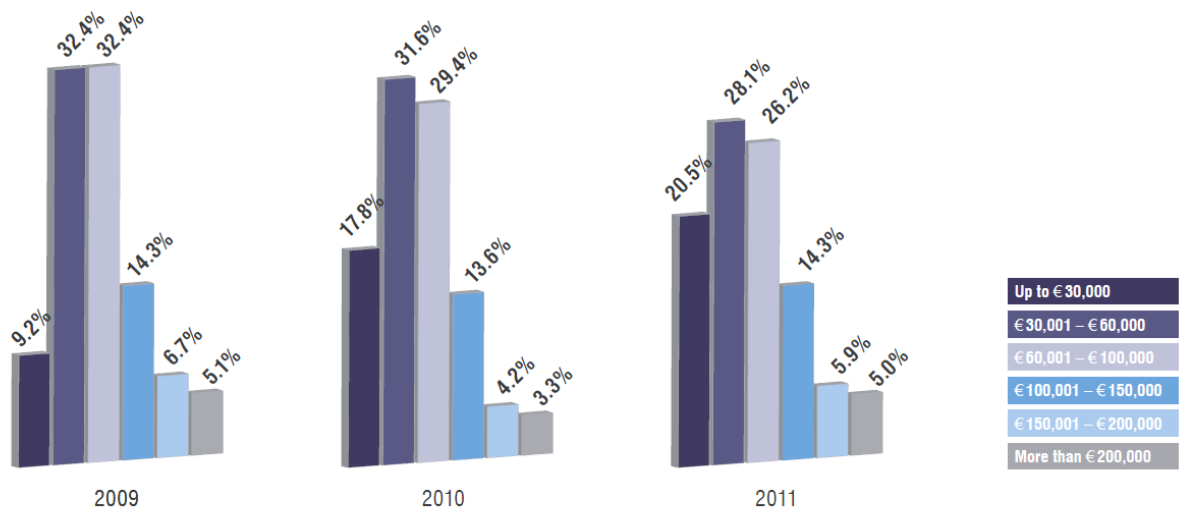
www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2011 / n = 2,209 PR professionals; Q 12: Here are some issues that might become relevant for public relations and communication management within the next three years. Please pick those three which are most important from your point of view.

### Social media skills and knowledge: Communication managers report rather moderate capabilities



www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2011 / n = 2,209 PR professionals; Q 14: How would you rate your capabilities in the following areas? Scale 1 (= Very low) - 5 (= Very high); mean values.

### Development of salaries: More professionals have entered the top ranks, but the low-paid cluster is also growing



www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2011 / n = 1,814 PR professionals; Q 20; Zerfass et al. 2010 / n = 1,688; Q 19; Zerfass et al. 2009 / n = 1,768; Q 17: In which of the following bands does your basic annual salary fall?