

## The status quo and trends for the communication profession in Europe Results of a survey in 44 countries

The 2020 edition of the world's largest study into strategic communication and public relations has explored current practices and future developments of communications in companies, non-profits and other organisations including communication agencies across Europe. The full report, based on interviewing more than 2,300 communication leaders and practitioners, includes insights on ethical challenges and resources, cyber security and communications, gender equality in the profession, as well as the status quo and future requirements for competency development. Salaries, the most important strategic issues and communication channels, and characteristics of excellent communication departments are identified as well. Detailed analyses are available for 22 countries and different types of organisations in the full report – available for free on [www.communicationmonitor.eu](http://www.communicationmonitor.eu).

### Moral challenges and ethical resources

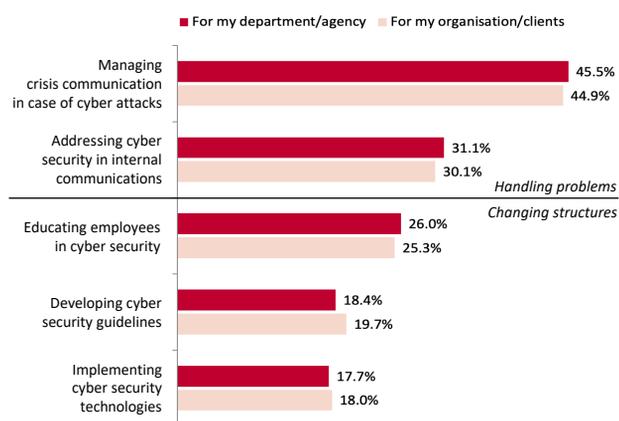
Almost every second practitioner (47%) has **experienced several ethical challenges** in their day to day work during the last 12 months. A smaller portion reports about one issue of that kind (18%). The frequency of moral hazards has grown within the last years. When dealing with these issues, a clear majority relied on **personal values and beliefs** (86%). **Organisational guidelines** (77%) and **professional codes of ethics** (58%) are less relevant. Digital communication practices pose **new moral challenges** (see table) – perhaps because only a minority of practitioners has participated in **ethics training** within the past three years.

#### Amount of practitioners with strong ethical concerns on ...

Using bots to generate feedback and followers on social media	67.6%
Exploiting audiences' data by applying big data analyses	58.1%
Paying social media influencers to communicate favourably	55.4%
Using regularly looking sponsored social media posts and sponsored articles on news websites	54.0%
Motivating employees to spread organisational messages on their private social media accounts	40.8%
Profiling and targeting audiences based on their age, gender, ethnicity, job, or interests	30.2%
Editing entries about my organisation on public wikis	27.2%

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### How communicators are fighting cyber criminality



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### Cyber security and communications

Two thirds of the surveyed professionals (63%) have given **attention to the public debate** about cyber security, and 59% of them see cyber security as **relevant for their daily work** in their communication departments or agencies. The major concerns are that cyber criminals could **hack websites and/or social media accounts** (42%) or **close down digital infrastructures** (29%). Governmental and public sector entities are more threatened than other types of organisations. More than half (54%) of communication practitioners in Europe have already **experienced cyber attacks** on their own organisations. Communication professionals are often involved in **handling cyber security issues**; but only a minority is helping to **build resilience** (see figure).

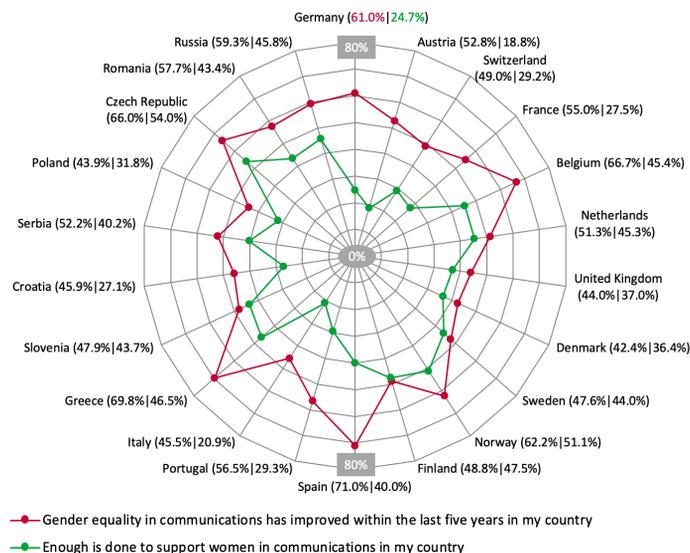
### Strategic issues and communication channels

42% of respondents believe that **building and maintaining trust** will be the most important strategic issue for the profession for the next three years, followed by **dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility** (38%). When asked about the **importance of different communication channels**, practitioners named social media and social networks (88%), online communication via web-sites, e-mails and intranets (82%), face-to-face communication (82%), online mass media (80%), and mobile communication (75%) as the most relevant instruments.

## Competency development

Almost half of the respondents (43%) agree that competencies are **intensively discussed in their country**, highlighting their importance to communicators across the continent. Most practitioners (81%) believe in the **need for constant improvement**. The awareness for competency development is strongest in Western and Northern Europe. 69% of practitioners believe that **technological competence** is important, but only 51% report a highly developed competence in this area. Despite **data handling** being an important skill for all communicators, a lack of data competencies is particularly striking across all levels, with 51% of communicators under-skilled in this key area. Communication professionals have completed an average of **19 training days per year** in 2019, with 10 of those taking place in the free time (weekends, holidays or evenings). Most practitioners (84%) report that **individuals should invest in their own development**, but many (83%) plead for **development programmes at the organisational level**.

### How gender equality is assessed in different European countries



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## About the study

The European Communication Monitor 2020 is based on responses from 2,324 communication professionals from 44 European countries, most of them senior leaders with more than 10 years tenure in the field. The strict selection of participants, a unique research framework based on established theories and statistical analyses fulfilling academic standards are key features of the study. Lead researchers Professors Ansgar Zerfass (Leipzig), Piet Verhoeven (Amsterdam), Ángeles Moreno (Madrid), Ralph Tench (Leeds) and Dejan Verčič (Ljubljana) are supported by national research collaborators who are professors at renowned universities across the continent.

Download the full report (PDF, 132 pp.) for free: [www.communicationmonitor.eu](http://www.communicationmonitor.eu)

## Assessing and advancing gender equality

Gender issues remain a particular concern in an industry where **three out of four departments and agencies in Europe employ more women than men**, but still only **one out of two top leaders are women**. Over half of practitioners observe an **improvement in gender equality** in their country, but disagreement arises when it comes to evaluating **how much has actually been done** to support female practitioners (see figure). The majority identify barriers for women at the organisational level: **lack of flexibility to take care of family obligations** (62%) and **intransparent promotion policies** (58%).

**Excellent communication departments**, which have been identified in the study based on the well-established Comparative Excellence Framework, report less issues with gender inequalities. Females working there are less affected by a *glass ceiling* problem that hinders their career plans.



*"The study provides insights that can stimulate debates in communication teams about their future set-up, and the data can be used to benchmark your own position with similar organisations or professionals in the sample."*

Professor Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Leipzig University  
Lead researcher, European Communication Monitor

*"We are very proud to present this report, a joint project with EUPRERA for more than a decade. It sheds light on some of the key issues and opportunities we are facing as communicators."*

Kim Larsen, EVP, Head of Group Communications, Brand & Marketing, Danske Bank  
Acting President, European Association of Communication Directors (EACD)



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