

# Competencies and Role Requirements of Communication Professionals in Europe. Insights from quantitative and qualitative studies.

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The ECOPSI (European Communication Professionals Skills and Innovation Programme) [www.ecopsi.org.uk](http://www.ecopsi.org.uk) is a European Union funded project that includes partners from the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey.

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## 1 MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This report reflects 15 months work on the ECOPSI (European Communication Professionals Skills and Innovation) Programme to map and evaluate the current and future communication management skills of practitioners across Europe. It details contextual work, including literature review, summarised in the ECOPSI Benchmark report (Tench, Zerfass, Verhoeven, Moreno and Verčič, 2012) and extends this to include primary data collected from communication practitioners across Europe. This data has been collected in two forms; (1) quantitative, through an online survey of nearly 2,200 practitioners in 42 countries and (2) qualitatively through a small number of focus groups and 53 individual interviews with communicators from four role groups: chief communications officers, crisis communicators, internal communicators and social media managers, across 6 geographically distinct regions of Europe.

The principle focus of the project is to develop understanding of the competencies held by senior communications practitioners and the contributing knowledge, skills and personal attributes that are relevant to their role and that of future managers in a similar role. These findings will feed into the second half of the ECOPSI programme to develop diagnostic tools and an ECOPSI portal. Full findings and results will be reported in October 2013.

The interview schedule and framework for the qualitative research was orientated around the ECOPSI Communication Role Matrix (Table 3), devised from a synthesised competency list developed as a result of the literature review. The interviews were also an opportunity to probe on specifics about the future competencies of communications practitioners in the areas of new media competency, the development of cross-cultural competencies and understanding of how to support the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills relating to management and business.

The findings from the research suggest and support the hypothesis that public relations and communication is a maturing discipline with many shared experiences but little organized life-long learning or evidence of recognized CPD pathways. There are on-going gaps and deficiencies in the development of the individuals as well as broad variation in how practitioners identify needs and access appropriate interventions. This presents numerous opportunities for deeper and on-going professional training and development to build consistency and support good practice in moving away from a hands-on, learning on-the-job approach to more focused knowledge acquisition and development.

Social Media knowledge is an acknowledged weakness that people feel they need to improve in and the industry also needs to look closely at how it can foster intercultural relationships and cross-cultural working by setting up accredited and recognized programmes of exchange, secondment and internship. Coaching and mentoring has a significant part to play in the development of communicators, as it potentially offers more formal, organised and supported career development that is both on-the-job and in-situ. This, together with committed involvement in networks and knowledge exchange activity and a review of the current content of more formal training/qualifications may help to bridge on-going and self-acknowledged gaps in the development of communication practitioners.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background to the research

The ECOPSI (European Communication Professionals Skills and Innovation Programme) [www.ecopsi.org.uk](http://www.ecopsi.org.uk) is a European funded project, which aims to map and evaluate the current and future communication management skills of practitioners across Europe (ERASMUS 2011 Ref No: 517691-LLP-1-2011-1-UK-ERASMUS-ECUE). The project includes partners from the UK, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey.

The project focuses on the communication sector in Europe, which has developed significantly in the last 20 years. This expansion has been influenced by political, economic and cultural shifts which have seen profit and non-profit organisations recognise the significant role played by communication departments in achieving organisational goals. Part of this recognition is of the role played by communication practitioners. The ECOPSI programme is concerned with communication practitioners operating within this growing communication sector and even more specifically in Europe. A key outcome of this project is to build a European theory of communication management and a framework to support the professionalisation and ethical development of communication practitioners.

The programme started in October 2011 and will report its full findings and outputs in October 2013. This report details the contextual work summarised in the ECOPSI Benchmark report published in April 2012 (Tench, Zerfass, Verhoeven, Moreno and Verčič, 2012) and extends this to include the primary data collected from communication practitioners across Europe. This data has been collected in two forms; (1) quantitative, through an online survey of nearly 2,200 practitioners in 42 countries and (2) qualitatively through focus groups and interviews. Focus groups were held with four role groups: chief communications officers, crisis communicators, internal communicators and social media managers. Interviews have been held across 6 geographically distinct regions of Europe with a total of 53 communications practitioners at different levels and performing different roles.

#### 2.1.1 Aim of the research

The principle focus of the project is to develop understanding of the competencies held by senior communications practitioners and the contributing knowledge, skills and personal attributes that are relevant to their role and that of future managers in a similar role. These findings will feed into the second half of the ECOPSI programme to develop diagnostic tools and an ECOPSI portal.



### 3 LITERATURE REVIEW (THE ECOPSI CONTEXT)

#### 3.1 Strands of related public relations research

The first stage of ECOPSI involved country specific literature reviews on PR, specifically on 1) education, and 2) the skills, knowledge and personal attributes of PR practitioners. The reviews revealed that PR research across Europe is dominated by two strands of research. These are: (1) Professionalisation, including qualifications, course accreditation and ethical codes; and (2) Communication management and “doing” PR.

##### 3.1.1 Professionalisation: qualifications, course accreditation and ethical codes

Although there is a drive towards professionalisation, it remains inconsistent and the responsibility to professionalise PR within specific countries is spread across professional bodies, accredited universities and private education institutes, with little coordination. In Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, there are so many courses being offered “often of questionable quality [that] it is impossible to verify their claims and qualifications” (Tench et al., 2012, p2). In Germany, “the topics of seminars in the PR programs at the different universities vary considerably. There is no common curriculum” (Tench et al., 2012, p2).

Professionalisation is an underlying purpose of all member institutes that cater for PR professionals (e.g. CIPR, Logeion, Global Alliance). These bodies drive the professionalisation agenda in-country, yet they do not appear to interact with each other. Each literature review emphasises that there are no active measures to stop people without formal qualifications practising their “versions” of PR. This is true for all countries/regions but is particularly highlighted in the Turkey report where there is a high volume of graduate education but limited employment opportunities. In addition in Turkey the practice field is dominated by practitioners without formal public relations education despite the high numbers of qualified graduates (Tench et al., 2012).

In the UK, professionalisation equates to students completing an accredited Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) course, either through a university or through the CIPR itself. However, job searches for PR and Communication roles do not ask for potential staff to be members of the CIPR, nor do they insist on a formal qualification in PR. Universities, however, do ask for CIPR membership of their PR/communication academics, particularly if their institution hosts an accredited course. This suggests that the drive to professionalise PR in the UK is limited to the training and education sectors, having yet to penetrate the business sector with any real or lasting impact (Tench et al., 2012).

There is some overlap in the criteria set by PR associations and what is taught at universities. For example, the Dutch association Logeion outlines the skills and knowledge needed to become a Corporate Communications Director, which is in line with what the UK-based CIPR advocate as necessary to gain a degree in PR and Communications (see Table 1).

Professionalisation is linked strongly with qualifications (Rottger, 2010). Whilst there are studies on the academic qualifications of PR and communication practitioners in Germany (Bentele, Großkurt and Seidenglanz, 2009); (Szyszka, Schütte, and Urbahn, 2009), Slovenia (PRSS, 2005), Croatia (HUOJ,

2009) and Serbia (DSOJ, 2010), no recent similar studies exist for the UK, Turkey, Spain, or the Netherlands.

Further afield, the Global Alliance's Code of Ethics suggests pursuing professional accreditation only "where available" ([www.globalalliancepr.org](http://www.globalalliancepr.org)). They are in a good position as a global umbrella body of PR institutes to encourage more accreditation options for member countries, yet appear to lack the power to do so.

An overlap in UK and German literature is the use of a code of ethics within the profession. However, there is no evidence of punitive measures of practitioners, such as debarring from the profession if practitioners are caught acting outside of the code of ethics, in a similar way in which lawyers and doctors are debarred from their profession. Both professional bodies, the UK institute (CIPR) and the German Council of Public Relations (DRPR) do have sanctions available but there is little evidence of them being applied or used as they can be for other professional associations. This background calls to question the power of a code of ethics, as well as the power of the associations that insist their members adhere to a code of ethics.

Awarding bodies like to categorise students and tailor the content of the course accordingly. For example, in The Netherlands, it is possible to enrol for training in public schools and colleges specialising in vocational education, however, university courses in Communication Science do not offer PR as a module, only as a 'track' within broader programmes (Tench et al., 2012, p3). In the UK, the CIPR offers similarly tailored courses according to student type, for example, Foundation Awards for school-leavers, Advanced Certificates for graduates and Diplomas to develop management skills and "support your progression into a more senior role" (Tench et al., 2012, p3).

Businesses in the UK complain that graduates do not have the relevant skills to work in communications and PR, even after they have graduated from accredited courses. This suggests a disconnect between more generalised practice and academia. In the US, McCleneghan (2006) describes the concerns expressed in a survey of American PR executives about the quality of writing skills among college graduates. This view is backed up by Kim and Johnson (2009) and Corner and Cole (2008) whose interviews with members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) revealed that despite 'writing for the news' or 'writing for persuasion' being the most important PR skill, almost 70 per cent felt that graduates were only a little prepared to write in this way. Hardin and Pompper (2004) also observed graduates' lacklustre writing skills (p.358) in their research. The feedback from businesses on the skills of students highlights the importance of technical skills needed to be a PR practitioner.

### 3.1.2 Communication management and 'doing' PR

The reviews highlight the extensive research undertaken throughout the partner countries into the skills, knowledge and some personal attributes needed to be an efficient PR practitioner. ECOPSI can use this prior research to inform this study. Much of the research across Europe focuses on either communication management, identifying activities typically undertaken by PR practitioners, or a combination of both. Broadly, such research is about practitioner roles. In this sense, it is influenced heavily by U.S. theory; for example, practice and academic teaching in the UK is dominated by U.S. literature, namely research into practitioner roles theory (Dozier and Broom, 2006). Indeed, this U.S.

research remains the cornerstone of much European research into practitioner roles (Wienand, 2003; Zerfass, 1998).

Research that separates 'management' and 'technical' aspects of PR often use descriptions of the work, which inevitably end up listing activities that constitute either managerial or technical aspects of the practitioner's role. An example of both the management and technical focus of research can be seen in the EBOK project where participants found key skills to be "listening and writing on the one hand and management skills on the other hand." (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi and Flodin, 2000, p17). More detailed examples of skills include van Ruler's (2000) 10 most common tasks of communication professionals, listed as: providing press information, performing internal communication tasks, assessing texts produced by others, performing external policy/company communication activities, performing communication projects, writing press releases, consultancy about the performance of communication activities, editing written communications, providing public information and coordinating press contacts (van Ruler, 2000 p415). Indeed, typical skills identified in other research include writing (writing press releases, persuasive writing, speech writing) and oral communication (pitches, presentations and press conferences).

Van Ruler (2000) then identified 5 nuclear tasks of PR practitioners as the production of texts, managing content and production of websites (internet, intranet, extranet), consultation about means and media of communication, coordination of communication projects and monitoring the quality of communication. In the Netherlands, Logeion (2012) developed the ABCD model of tasks and job descriptions of PR and communication professionals (BVC, 2002) further into six nuclear roles, which are: Analysing, Counselling, Creating, Organizing, Guiding/supporting, and Managing.

Logeion's (2012) study is an important springboard for ECOPSI as the nuclear tasks offer useful umbrella terms which ECOPSI could look for during the data analysis. Their terminology is useful because the terms are not too specific; they are broad enough to encompass many activities and general enough to be applied to any of the 4 roles that ECOPSI wants to examine (chief communications officer, crisis communication manager, internal communications manager and social media manager). It could be argued that because they assume a broad remit, they are managerial in essence. It could also be argued that more technical terms, such as 'writing press releases' tend to isolate the work of the practitioner and are somewhat reductionist in the process. Therefore, technical tasks help define the profession but the managerial tasks help define the more rounded role. The two together give a more rounded view of the contemporary PR landscape. Furthermore, using the 6 nuclear tasks in ECOPSI to map out the skills and knowledge across Europe is in line with Logeion's call for "a deepening of understanding (more specialization) and a broadening of the horizon (interaction with other disciplines)" (Tench et al., 2012, p38).

### 3.2 The roles of practitioners

Work for the Local Government Communication Leaders Development Programme in the United Kingdom (Oughton, 2004) has identified the core *disciplines* of local government communication, the 'most established' of which are: consultation, web function, design function, print/publication, advertising/sponsorship/income generation, media relations and marketing/promotions. It is apparent that identifying the range of duties can be a complex process, especially given the variety of organisational circumstances and the different terminology used to describe what effectively are

the same responsibilities. Table 1 below presents the responsibilities of the practitioner as identified by particular researchers in surveys of public relations professionals.

**Table 1**

**Responsibilities of PR practitioners**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Pieczka</b>	<b>Goodman</b>	<b>Sha</b>	<b>Jeffrey and Brunton</b>	<b>Liu et al</b>	<b>Beurer-Zuellig et al</b>	<b>Hutton et al</b>
Media relations (including social media relations)	√	√	√	√* 'Stakeholder reputation'	√	√	√
Crisis communications		√	√	√			√
Executive communications		√		√* 'Managing the managers'		√	
Internal/employee relations	√	√	√			√	√
Strategic planning		√* 'Communication policy and strategy'	√		√	√	
Programme planning			√				
Reputation management	√			√* 'Managing own reputation'			

Role	Pieczka	Goodman	Sha	Jeffrey and Brunton	Liu et al	Beurer-Zuellig et al	Hutton et al
Stakeholder relations	√* 'Investor relations'		√	√* 'Stakeholder decision making'			
Issues management	√		√	√* 'Managing risk'	√* 'Tracking media clips'		
Events management			√				
Public affairs	√						
Web site management					√	√	
Networking					√		
Annual/interim reports							√
Speech writing							√
Organisational publications							√

Sources: (Goodman, 2006; Beurer-Zuellig, Fieseler, and Meckel, 2009; Liu et al, 2010; Sha, 2011), analysis of critical incidents cited by communications professionals (Brunton and Jeffrey, 2010), through the allocation of resources in PR departmental budgets (Hutton, 2001). \* indicates that the definitions are markedly different from the rest of the literature.

### 3.3 Dissecting the role of the practitioner

Dissecting the role of the practitioner into either managerial or technical elements has spawned an infinite number of variables that go towards identifying the makeup of a contemporary PR practitioner, i.e a snapshot of the type of practitioner who took part in that particular research at that particular time. These results are specific to industry sectors (such as public or private) or role hierarchies (Logeion, 2012) and the findings are used to generalise about the nature of PR and

communications work. The literature reviews show that there is no consistency of research on the 4 specific roles that ECOPSI has chosen to focus on, which highlights a gap in knowledge. For the purposes of this study it will be helpful to maintain a distinction between knowledge and skill in order to consider how each may be acquired, though it is worth bearing in mind how the two may overlap.

The European literature review reveals that there are no consistent definitions of roles or of specialisations such as a social media practitioner or internal communications practitioner. There are, however, any number of labels given to types of PR/communications activities and any number of titles given to people who perform these sets of activities.

In essence, the labels attributed through prior research are something that the ECOPSI project is trying to avoid in designing this research. The rigidity of 'labels' and 'levels' does not allow practitioners to adapt to changes, nor does it allow the industry to adapt. The nature of PR/communications work should be looked at as a whole, instead of as a set of components that constitute the whole. The design of the qualitative portion of ECOPSI avoids any pre-determined labels, categories or roles. (Tench et al., 2012, p3).

### **3.4 Identifying skills, knowledge and personal attributes**

#### **3.4.1 Core skills**

The Corporate Communications Institute's (CCI) Corporate Communication Practices and Trends 2005 Study, (Goodman, 2006) lists 23 separate skills that form a "skill set necessary for success as a corporate communicator in a global business environment". Of these, writing was identified by respondents as the core skill with 'thorough knowledge of the company and of business principles' nominated as 'essential' (p.203). These two skill and knowledge areas are identified frequently in the literature as very important to communications practitioners (Oughton, 2004; Brown and Fall, 2005; McCleneghan, 2006; Jeffrey and Brunton, 2011 and Sha, 2011).

Another key skill area identified in the literature is that of critical thinking or its related terms – problem solving, analytical skills or strategic thinking. McCleneghan (2006) ranks critical thinking alongside writing skills as the most important communication skills. DiStaso, Stacks and Botan (2009) put writing skills and critical thinking/problem solving skills as the two most important skills for getting an entry-level job in public relations. Szyszka (1995) offers a fuller explanation of skills, knowledge and personal attributes from a German perspective and differentiates between three categories:

- knowledge in the field of PR [Fachkompetenz]. This includes scientific knowledge about a) communication, society, economics, psychology, technical aspects, law, politics, history, lobbying and b) aspects of strategic communication like analysis of problems, setting objectives, conception, realisation, evaluation;
- attributes like "soft skills", leadership, the ability to work in a team, analytical skills to monitor issues, presentation skills, rhetorical skills, fluency in text and language, self-management, professional experience, fancifulness, creativity, loyalty; and

- expertise in subject matter and general education.

These standards imply knowledge about the field of occupation, target groups, strategies and techniques of PR, media relations, internal communication, events, product-PR, crises communication, public affairs, corporate identity and legal and ethical questions. Further fields are economy, politics, the media system and psychological and sociological aspects of communication. Practical skills are interpersonal communication, rhetoric and presentations.

### 3.4.2 Personal attributes

Personal attributes can also be known as ‘soft skills’ or ‘employability skills.’ According to Ahles (2004) success in employment depends on having these employability skills. Personal attributes are defined in the literature as separate from competencies but they are important in terms of determining how well a competency is performed. Personal attributes can also be said to be modelled or fostered (Jeffrey and Brunton, 2011 p.69).

### 3.5 Skills deficit

The most common skills deficit is related to ‘commercial nous’, which is arguably similar to business knowledge. Other deficits identified were in networking skills, knowledge of legislative framework and social media skills. The last of these - social media skills - was the top area selected by respondents in which they need to improve. The lack of research into social media practices can be seen in all the European literature reviews, particularly the Turkish review. A German study (News aktuell 2011) identified a lack of social media skills and points to the importance of developing a greater breadth of social media skills.

There is some research, however, into aspects of social media work. Riedel (2011) outlines the knowledge, skills and mindsets of social media. *Knowledge* about social media describes knowledge about the complexity of the social web, knowledge about technical aspects, regulatory frameworks, ethical codes, knowledge about ones own company and its products and being “up-to-date”. Social media *skills* refer to strategic skills, journalistic skills, project management, knowledge about human nature, readiness of mind, empathy, capacity to accept criticism, networking, creativity, organisation of information, evaluation, relationship management and identity management. *Personal attributes* include proactiveness, availability through different channels nearly 24/7, commitment, service mentality, acknowledging own mistakes. The table below (2) provides some indication of the range of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that have been mentioned in the literature as being important to work in PR and communications.

Table 2

Range of skills, knowledge and personal attributes identified in the European literature

Skills	Knowledge	Personal attributes
Writing and oral communication	Business knowledge/literacy	Handling pressure

Project planning and management	Current awareness	Leadership
Critical thinking	Theoretical knowledge	Integrity/ honesty/ethical
Problem solving	Knowledge of PR history	Objectivity
Media skills	Knowledge of other cultures	Listening
Persuasion	Knowledge of communication models	Confidence/ ambition
Strategic thinking	Knowledge of how to apply PR theory	Team player
Mentoring and coaching		Energy/ motivation
Advanced communication skills		Discipline
IT skills (including new media channels)		Intelligence
Crisis management		Ability to get on with others/ interpersonal skills
Research		Wide interests
Reading comprehension		Intellectual curiosity
Community relations		Creativity
Consumer relations		Flexibility
Employee relations		Judgement and decision making
Professional service skills		Time management
Social responsibility		Respect for hierarchy
PR ethics		Follows organisational 'rules'
		Honesty
		Adaptability
		Integrity



		Ambition
		Reliable attendance
		Willingness to accept assignments
		Completes work on time

Source: Pieczka (2002), Ahles (2004), Oughton (2004), Brown and Fall (2005), DPRG (2005), Goodman (2006), McCleneghan (2006), Schumann (2007), Gregory (2008), Schick and Mickleit (2010), Jeffrey and Brunton (2011) and Sha (2011).

### 3.6 Competencies

What is clear from the studies of skills, knowledge and personal attributes is that they overlap in terminology and that there is a pattern forming about how skills, knowledge and personal attributes lead to broader competencies. Gregory (2008) uses the following definition of competencies in a study of senior communication managers in the UK: “behavioral sets or sets of behaviors that support the attainment of organizational objectives. How knowledge and skills are used in performance” (p216). This is probably the most appropriate definition for use in this study as it effectively distinguishes competencies from skills, knowledge and personal attributes. Jeffrey and Brunton (2011) highlight the advantage of studying competencies over roles as; “roles outline tasks and responsibilities in the job description, in today’s dynamic workplace these same roles are likely to change frequently. In contrast, competencies are the underlying foundational abilities that are integral to successfully carrying out the tasks and responsibilities, and thus remain a stable blueprint for practice over time” (p60).

The difficulty in establishing a workable definition of competencies has been discussed in work for the European Centre for the Development of Vocational training (CEDEFOP) which aimed to clarify the concepts of knowledge, skills and competences (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist and Stringfellow, 2005). This highlights the usefulness of competences as providing a link between education (and skills) and job requirements (roles). For example, there is

1. ‘conceptual competence’ which refers to knowledge about an entire domain;
2. ‘procedural competence’ which refers to the application of conceptual competence in a particular situation; and
3. ‘performance competence’ which is required to assess problems and select a suitable strategy for solving them (p.15).

In the context of public relations, Oughton (2004) suggests that there is a difficulty with defining competency because it can refer either to the ability to perform a task or how people should behave in order to carry out the role. Szyszka (1995) identifies two categories of competencies for PR practitioners: (1) specific qualifications – those qualifications which are directly connected to the topic of public relations; and (2) unspecific qualifications – those qualifications, like leadership, which can be seen as a core competence for PR practitioners. Both, specific and unspecific

qualifications are seen as valuable to practitioners when it comes to factors that “help to earn a higher-than average-salary” (News aktuell / Faktenkontor, 2011).

### 3.7 On-going research on competencies

Jeffrey and Brunton’s (2011) combined approach of focus groups and a needs assessment questionnaire conducted with practitioners and academics in New Zealand identified the competencies that are required to achieve their two superordinate goals of *strategically managing the communication process* and *managing relationships*. This study continues (<http://icp.quickendev.co.nz/>) and they are using critical incidents as the focus for competencies. The ECOPSI programme has focused on mapping competencies across the European countries for this study rather than with critical incidents at this stage. However, as Jeffrey and Brunton (2011) suggest, a competency framework for communications practice should reflect the influences of different cultures and settings and, therefore, more research is required to enhance our understanding of communications practice (p72). ECOPSI responds to this call for reflecting on cultural influences, for example, the EBOK project conceptualised practitioner roles as technical, managerial, educational and reflective. However, each needs its own set of competencies, but this was not further studied in the EBOK project. Studies of competencies have produced useful frameworks for ECOPSI to build upon, such as Gregory’s (2008) study of the competencies of senior communication managers in the UK, which used the Universal Competency Framework and resulted in 10 competencies, each attributed to private and public sector professionals competencies.

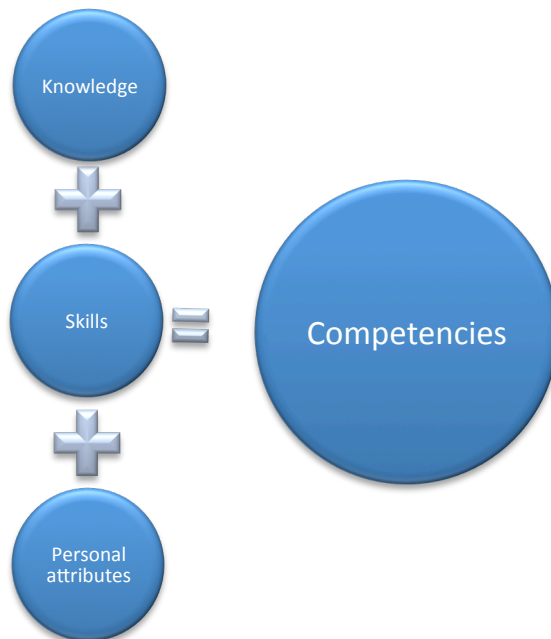
### 3.8 How the literature review guides ECOPSI

Although research focuses on the skills, knowledge and personal attributes of practitioners, there is no definitive research that brings these elements together in a Europe-wide study. Given the focus on roles and labelling practitioners according to the tasks they undertake, or where they are in the organisational hierarchy, specialisms are difficult to define. What is also clear from the literature reviews is that there is a lack of research on social media practice within the PR sector and the skills, knowledge and personal attributes needed to fulfil this role efficiently.

ECOPSI takes the broad labels provided by prior research and uses them to examine 4 roles: chief communications officers, crisis managers, internal communications managers and social media managers. This will fill a gap in knowledge about how the roles are enacted across Europe and the skills, knowledge and personal attributes needed for these roles which subsequently contribute to competencies needed by practitioners to fulfil these roles efficiently. Figure 1 illustrates how ECOPSI views skills, knowledge and personal attributes.

Figure 1

Skills, knowledge and personal attributes contributing to competencies



### Some definitions

**Knowledge:** can be defined as what practitioners are required to know in order to do their job/role effectively (Commission on Public Relations Education, 1999; 2006 and Gregory, 2008).

**Skills:** are the things practitioners are able to do to perform their job/role effectively (Katz, 1974, Goodman, 2006, Commission on Public Relations Education 1999; 2006 and Gregory, 2008). Identifying 'skill' will be a complex process but a useful definition by Proctor and Duttan (1995) will help with us: "goal-directed, well-organised behaviour that is acquired through practice and performed with economy of effort" (p18).

**Personal attributes:** are defined in the literature as separate from competencies. The distinction being that personal attributes can determine how well a competency is performed and secondly competencies can be taught while personal attributes are modelled or fostered (Jeffrey and Brunton, 2011 p.69).

**Competencies:** are the sets of behaviours the person can perform. These behaviours are based on the application, combination and potential integration of knowledge and skills (Boyatzis, 1982; Bartram 2005; Gregory 2008; Jeffrey and Brunton 2011).

**\*Competences:** are broader concepts that encompass demonstrable performance outputs as well as behaviour input – often in HR terms relating to a set of (minimum) standards required for effective performance at work (CIPD, 2012).

Competencies are therefore based on a combination of skills and knowledge held by a practitioner which combine with personal attributes to produce behaviours.

## 4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Although the ECOPSI programme aims to map current and future communication management skills, we believe that prior research on the skills and knowledge of communication practitioners has been reductionist in its approach and this is something we are keen to avoid. There is value in viewing practitioners as more than the sum of their parts, i.e. as more than having a set number of skills and types of knowledge. The European literature review reveals that although skills, knowledge and personal attributes are dominant areas of research within PR, practitioners' competencies – a concept that is more abstract – is less of a focus in research. "There is no research that takes competences and the underlying constructs as a starting point" (Tench et al., 2012, p16).

The aims of the research are therefore to:

1. Identify which competencies are needed for chief communication officer roles, crisis communication roles, internal communication roles and social media roles; and
2. Identify the skills, knowledge and personal attributes that are perceived to be important for competencies in each of the 4 roles.

There will inevitably be areas where skills, knowledge and personal attributes will overlap; for example, being seen as trustworthy and this will vary across the countries taking part in this research. It is at this intersection of what practitioners consider to be important skills, knowledge and personal attributes across the different countries that will provide a substantial contribution to knowledge and help develop training materials aimed at current and future practitioners.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The ECOPSI project was designed with a research methodology which included data collection from three instruments using both qualitative and quantitative methods i.e. a quantitative survey, qualitative focus groups and qualitative interviews. The section below details the initial findings and discussions from the quantitative survey which feeds into the focus groups and interviews.

### 5.1 Quantitative survey

An online survey was developed with questions focused on hypotheses for the ECOPSI project about the education, skills and competencies of communications practitioners. The online survey was then distributed via professional networks to communications practitioners from 42 countries across Europe. The questionnaire used for the survey covered 19 sections and 30 questions covering issues on practice trends as well as the questions focused around the aims of the ECOPSI project. The English language survey was distributed online in March 2012 for four weeks. 4,107 respondents started the survey. In order to fulfil the highest empirical standards, only 2,185 fully completed replies by participants, who were clearly identified as part of the profession, were evaluated and analysed using SPSS and a variety of statistical tests like Pearson's chi-square, Spearman's and Kendall's rank correlation, ANOVA/Scheffé post-hoc and T-tests.

#### 5.1.1 Demographics

The demographics show that 71.7 per cent of the respondents work on the first or second level of the communication hierarchy as heads of communication, unit leaders or agency CEOs. The average age is 41.5 years and nearly 68 per cent have worked in communications for more than ten years. Based on this, it can be claimed that the results are founded on statements of those who take responsibility for the profession today and who will shape its future in Europe. The distribution of gender (57.6 per cent female, 42.4 per cent male) and the regions (29.6 per cent Northern Europe, 30.5 per cent Western Europe, 10.7 per cent Eastern Europe, 29.2 per cent Southern Europe) reflects the diversity of the profession (see Chart 1).

Chart 1

## Countries and regions represented in the study

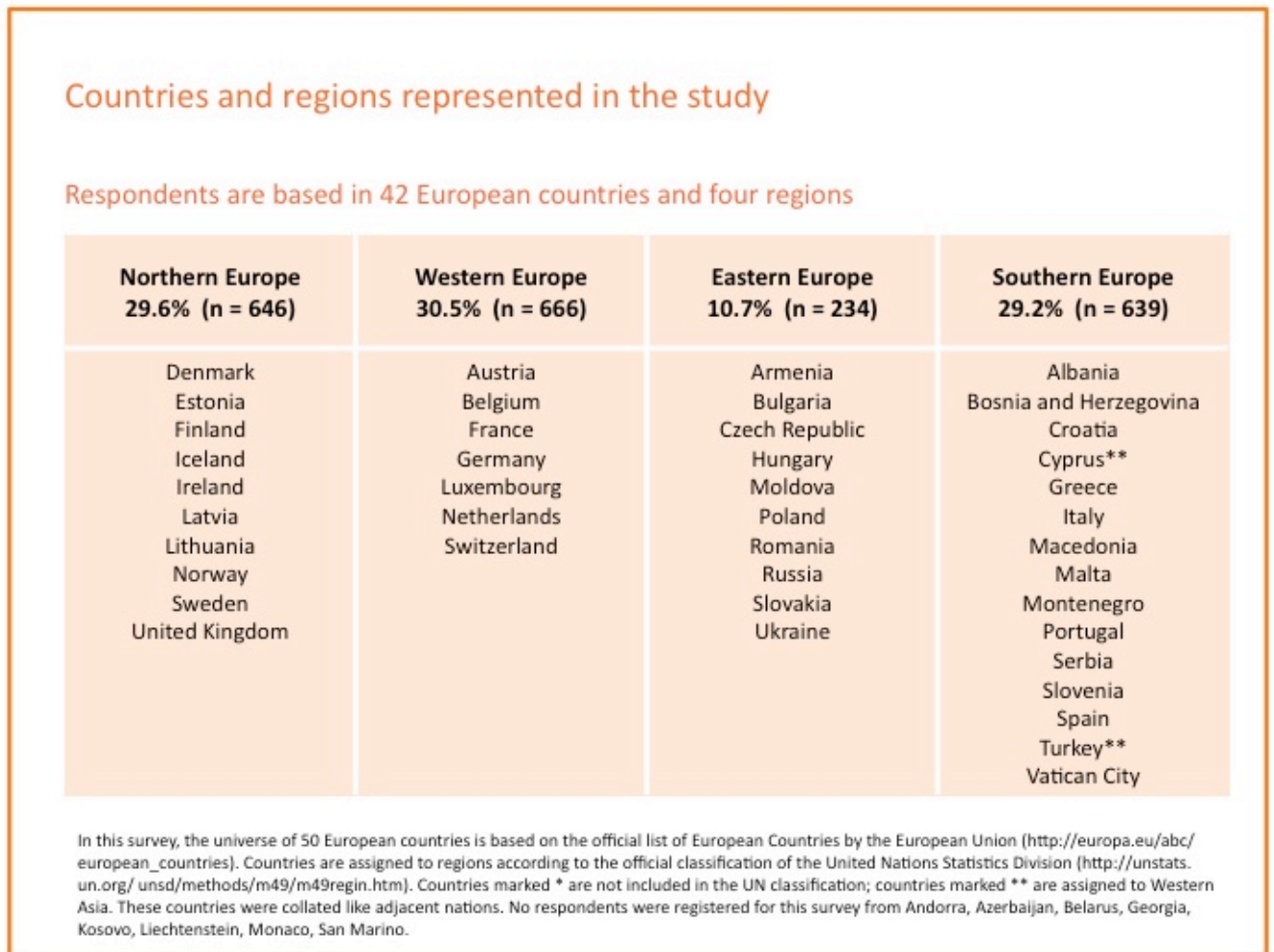
Respondents are based in 42 European countries and four regions

<b>Northern Europe</b> 29.6% (n = 646)	<b>Western Europe</b> 30.5% (n = 666)	<b>Eastern Europe</b> 10.7% (n = 234)	<b>Southern Europe</b> 29.2% (n = 639)
Denmark Estonia Finland Iceland Ireland Latvia Lithuania Norway Sweden United Kingdom	Austria Belgium France Germany Luxembourg Netherlands Switzerland	Armenia Bulgaria Czech Republic Hungary Moldova Poland Romania Russia Slovakia Ukraine	Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatia Cyprus** Greece Italy Macedonia Malta Montenegro Portugal Serbia Slovenia Spain Turkey** Vatican City

In this survey, the universe of 50 European countries is based on the official list of European Countries by the European Union ([http://europa.eu/abc/european\\_countries](http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries)). Countries are assigned to regions according to the official classification of the United Nations Statistics Division (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>). Countries marked \* are not included in the UN classification; countries marked \*\* are assigned to Western Asia. These countries were collated like adjacent nations. No respondents were registered for this survey from Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino.

Chart 2 provides details on the level of education of the respondents to the survey.

Chart 2



## 5.2 Qualitative focus groups

The focus groups were used to test findings from the quantitative survey, benchmarking and literature review work with senior specialists. The aim was to develop deeper understanding of four roles (chief communications officer, crisis communications manager, internal communications manager and social media manager) in conversation with senior specialists from the EACD (European Association of Communication Directors). The focus groups were held with practitioners from each of the four roles where the facilitators ‘tested’ the role competences (ECOPSI Matrix) to inform the research team in advance of further data collection during interviews with regional practitioners in the autumn of 2012. The focus groups were held with EACD members at the annual Communications Summit in Brussels on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2012. Each focus group used the following structure:

1. Discuss the 'communication role matrix' for each role specifically looking at:
  - a. Competencies and related Skills
  - b. Competencies and related Knowledge
  - c. Competencies and related Personal Attributes
2. The next generation - future development of your role. The following questions were used as prompts

<b>2.1</b>	<b>If you think about the next generation of practitioners – how do you feel your role will develop in the future?</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Do you feel future successors to your role will need to develop new skills or learn new areas of knowledge?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Skills/Knowledge? Why?</li> </ul>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>What do you feel would be the best ways for future successors to develop these new skills or learn new areas of knowledge?</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>What personal attributes do you feel will be important for your role in the future?</b>

Each session took approximately one hour and was audio recorded to support analysis of the discussion. The focus groups were facilitated by the partners from Germany, Netherlands and the UK. From the focus groups the practitioner roles were explored more deeply to refine and develop the qualitative interview framework and template.

### 5.3 Qualitative interviews

Following the survey and focus groups, the final data collection for the ECOPSI project was the in depth interviews with practitioners. The interview schedule and framework was devised from the synthesised competency list which was developed from the literature. This schedule aimed to evaluate the input components of knowledge, skills (hard and soft) and personal attributes that go to make up the competencies for the four defined communication roles (Chief Communication Officer, Crisis Communication Manager, Internal Communication Manager and Social Media Manager). The competencies are broad managerial competencies (i.e. focusing on management level competencies of communication practitioners). They are defined in the Matrix as follows, (under the acronym COMPAS):

- **C**ounselling (build relationships, consulting, coaching)
- **O**rganising/executing (planning, making it happen)
- **M**anaging (cross functional awareness, business focus)
- **P**erforming and creating (craft e.g. writing, design, presentation)
- **A**nalysing/interpreting (research, listening)
- **S**upporting/guiding (vision and standards, ethics, developing others)



Source adapted from Logeion, 2012; Dewhurst and FitzPatrick, 2007 and SHL www.shl.com)

The intention was to test and further develop the detailed understanding of the input elements to these competencies for each role i.e. the Knowledge, Skills and Personal Attributes that make up the competencies. Please see the table below (3) for a copy of the matrix. Suggestions and additions made as a result of the focus groups and individual interviews are highlighted in blue and red.

Table 3

ECOPSI Communication Role Matrix – all four roles

Competency	Knowledge	Skills		Personal attributes	
		Hard	Soft (human and conceptual)		
Counselling (build relationships, consulting, coaching)	Languages Intercultural theory and issues  Learning curves of co-workers Personality profiles	Diversity Consulting Consensus building Negotiation	Team building Conflict resolution Persuasive communication Motivation	Empathy Trustworthiness Team minded (worker) Negotiation Sympathetic Political intuition Authenticity Integrity Patience/tolerance	Participative Sociable Authority Calmness Self-criticism Responsiveness Self awareness Humour
Organising/executing (planning, making it happen)	Corporate strategy Financial systems Planning systems Project management	Writing Strategy Planning Project management Time management Administration Organisational skills Creativity with budgets	Strategic thinking Planning Decision making	Composure Energy Competitive Leadership Enthusiasm Perseverance/resilience	Self-reliance Multi-tasking Proactivity Agility/Flexibility Results orientation
Managing (cross functional awareness, business focus)	Management Economics Branding Law Knowledge about own organisation Business systems General knowledge Risk management Stakeholder management Public affairs/political dynamics Change management Language of the Board Understanding of	Mapping (organisational network systems) Leadership	Negotiation Influencing Delegating Managing people Sense of timing (when to communicate)	Confidence Global and strategic vision Diplomacy Experience Courage Daring/Risk Taking (and being willing to fail and learn from this) Stress resistance Adaptability	

	own business model			
Performing and creating (craft e.g. writing, design, presentation)	New technologies Communication processes Web 2.0 tools and effects on organisational communication Media systems and structures  Intercultural aspects of communication messages and products Global media environment	Writing Editing Design skills Computer writing skills Multi media skills Visioning Verbal coherence/concision	Communication Presentation Creative problem solving Story telling	Communicative Entrepreneurial Polyvalence/supporting diverse and differing perceptions Initiative Lifelong learner Innovative and creative Enquiring Openness Pioneering
Analysing/interpreting (research, listening)	Research and analysis methods Human Resources (HR) policies and links to communication Prediction/forecasting Monitoring tools Web monitoring tools Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies Recognising trends	Critical thinking Reading comprehension Research Social environmental analysis	Forecasting Listening	Curiosity Questioning Good judgement Strong instincts
Supporting/guiding (vision and standards, ethics, developing others)	Corporate governance Ethics/ethical frameworks Legal issues		Visioning	Ethical and socially responsible Authority Integrity Honesty Influence Reputation Sincerity Objectivity Sensitivity/humanity

\*Additional suggestions from the focus groups

\*Additional suggestions from the interviews

From the literature review, quantitative data and summary of the focus group findings the interviews aimed to extend the research by exploring more deeply the ECOPSI role matrix to test and validate its applicability. The interviews were also an opportunity to probe on specifics about the future competencies of communications practitioners specifically in the areas of:

1. New media competency and how to respond to environmental and role changes (see Institute for the Future, 2011)
2. Development of cross-cultural competencies as identified as a core future employment skill (again Institute for the Future, 2011)
3. Understanding of how to support communications practitioners in the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills relating to management and business (skills gap, ECM, 2012)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the six partner regions of the UK, Germany and Austria, Spain, Slovenia, the Netherlands and Turkey. The interview schedule was designed to collate data from participants in six key areas including; their current role, the matrix, the most important knowledge, skills and personal attributes necessary to perform their role and thoughts on the future development of the role.

**Table 4**

**Breakdown of interviews via region**

	UK	Germany and Austria	Spain	Slovenia	The Netherlands	Turkey	Total Number Interviews
<b>Role</b>							
Internal communications	3	3		3	4		13
Crisis communications			3	3	4	4	14
Social media	2	3	3			4	12
Chief communications officer	4	3	3		4		14
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>53</b>

### 5.3.1 Research participant company representation and demographics

Interviews were conducted with communicators from the four role groups: chief communications officers, crisis communicators, internal communicators and social media managers, from a number of organisations from across the 6 regions. The company logos of those who took part are represented in Table 5. The total number of interviews and the number of companies represented differ because there were a number of instances where interviewees in different roles or countries worked for the same organisation and because two of the interviewees did not want their company name reported.

Table 5

Company logos

**PETROL**



Dienst Landelijk Gebied  
Ministerie van Economische Zaken,  
Landbouw en Innovatie

Kingfisher

 **AVIVA**

 **Koç**



**A&Y**

 **BASF**  
The Chemical Company

**BBVA**  
INNOVATION  
CENTER  


**Chill**  
INSURANCE  
WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE

**achmea** 

**NOS**



**ING** 

 **NOVARTIS**

**“MM”**  
**MUTUAMADRILEÑA**



Table 6 overleaf contains demographic information about the interviewees including their job role, the country/region in which they were interviewed, gender, age range, company name and job title.

Table 6

## Demographics of participants

Job Role	Country	Gender	Age Range	Company Name*	Job Title
C	Netherlands	Female	35-39	Jeroen Bosch Ziekenhuis	Communication Adviser
C	Netherlands	Male	45-49	ECN – Nuclear Energy Research Institution	Manager Corporate Communications
C	Netherlands	Male	40-44	Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS)	Director Corporate Communications
C	Netherlands	Female	50-54	Schiphol Group	Manager Press Relations and Senior Spokesperson
C	Turkey	Female	45-49	IGDAS Istanbul Gas Distribution Industry and Trade Inc. Co	Corporate Communication Manager
C	Turkey	Male	45-49	Sabancı Group (industrial and Financial Conglomerate).	Director of Corporate Communication
C	Turkey	Female	35-39	Borusan Holding	Corporate Communication Manager
C	Turkey	Female	45-49	McDonalds Turkey	Corporate Communications Manager
C	Slovenia	Male	30-34	**Financial Institution	Head of public relations and digital
C	Slovenia	Female	35-39	UKCL University Medical Centre Ljubljana Largest hospital in Slovenia	Public Relations Manager
C	Slovenia	Female	35-39	Elektro-Slovenija, d.o.o (transmission network system operator)	Head of Corporate Communications
C	Spain	Male	55-59	Unidad Militar de Emergencias	Head of Public Communication Office
C	Spain	Male	50-54	Group ZED (Spanish Multinational – multiplatform digital entertainment)	General Manager of Communication
C	Spain	Male	55-59	CLH Compania Logistica de Hidrocarburos (transport and storage of petroleum).	Director of Communication and Institutional Relations
I	Netherlands	Female	25-29	DHL	Communications Officer
I	Netherlands	Female	45-49	Dienst Landelijk Gebied DLG	Internal Communication Manager
I	Netherlands	Male	50-54	Government Agency Rotterdam	Communication Manager
I	Netherlands	Female	40-44	University of Utrecht	Senior Consultant Internal Communication
I	Germany	Female	35-39	DB Mobility Logistics AG German national railway company	Senior Manager PR and Internal Communications
I	Germany	Female	45-49	Henkel AG &Co Global company, Home Care, Personal Care and adhesives, sealants and surface treatment.	Head of Internal Communications
I	Germany	Female	50-54	Deutsche Post DHL	Head of Internal Communications
I	Slovenia	Female	35-39	Si Mobil d.d. Mobile operator	Corporate Communication and HRM Director
I	Slovenia	Male	40-44	Petrol d.d. Ljubljana (leading energy company in Slo)	Head of Corporate Communications

Job Role	Country	Gender	Age Range	Company	Job Title
I	Slovenia	Female	40-44	Sava d.d. (business group active in tourism, real estate, finance)	Head of Corporate Communication
I	UK	Female	40-44	Kingfisher Group	Head of Group Internal Communications
I	UK	Female	30-34	Aviva UK	Head of Internal Communications
I	UK	Male	45-49	**Utility and Energy Company	Head of Engagement
S	Turkey	Male	40-44	Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen Airport	Corporate Communication Manager
S	Turkey	Male	30-34	Koc Holding Inc. Co	Corporate Brand Manager
S	Turkey	Female	30-34	Mars Entertainment Group Theatre, cinema, matches	Digital Marketing Manager
S	Turkey	Male	30-34	A7Y Marka Magazacilik	Social Media Department Executive
S	Germany	Male	40-44	Deutsche Post DHL	Team Lead Internet, eMedia
S	Germany	Male	45-49	Daimler	Manager Corporate Blogging & Social Media Strategy
S	Germany	Male	40-44	BASF SE	Head of Global Online and Employee Communications
S	Spain	Female	40-44	Grupo Vitalia (Care of the elderly)	Director of Communication and Marketing
S	Spain	Male	35-39	Indal	Director of Corporate Communication
S	Spain	Male	45-49	BBVA Innovation Centre (Financial Group)	Director of Innovation and Communication
S	UK	Male	25-29	Chill Insurance	Digital Marketing Manager
S	UK	Male	25-29	Anglo American	Senior Advisor Web and Social Media
CCO	Netherlands	Male	50-54	Achmea	Chief Communication Officer
CCO	Netherlands	Male	35-39	NOS(Public broadcaster)	Head of Marketing and Communication
CCO	Netherlands	Male	40-44	Philips	Vice President Corporate Communications
CCO	Netherlands	Male	50-54	Shell	Vice President of Communication
CCO	Germany	Male	50-54	ING-DiBa AG	Head of Corporate Communications
CCO	Germany	Female	45-49	B. Braun-Melsungen	Director Corporate Communication and Knowledge Management
CCO	Germany	Male	45-49	Deutsche Post DHL	Executive Vice President Corporate Communications and responsibility
CCO	Spain	Female	55-59	Novartis	Director of Communication
CCO	Spain	Male	55-59	Mutua Madrilenia	Director of Corporate Communication, Corporate Identity and RSC
CCO	Spain	Male	45-49	FCC (Infrastructure and Renewable Energies).	Manager of Communication and Corporate Responsibility
CCO	UK	Female	50-54	Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF)	External Affairs Director
CCO	UK	Male	40-44	Leeds Teaching Hospital's Trust	Director, External Affairs and communications
CCO	UK	Female	40-44	Northumbria Healthcare	Director of Communications and Corporate Affairs
CCO	UK	Female	35-39	Telefonica UK Ltd	Head of Communications and Reputation



Key to Table 6:

C = Crisis Communication Manager

I = Internal Communication Manager

S = Social Media Manager

CCO = Chief Communications Officer

\*Short descriptions of the companies are included in Table 17, Appendix 1.

\*\*Did not want company named in any reporting.

## 6 FINDINGS

### 6.1 Quantitative findings (42 countries)

The findings have been broken down into five sections for analysis and discussion: (1) Types of professional training and development in Europe; (2) Professionalisation and accreditation; (3) Understanding and responding to competency needs in Europe; (4) Role evolution and specialist competence – social media; (5) The future – young professionals, their recruitment and development.

#### 6.1.1 Types of professional training and development in Europe

As professional communicators are moving from mostly operational to more managerial, educational and reflective levels, building competencies and skills is the next big challenge both for individuals and organisations (Tench, 2012; Sha, 2011; Jeffrey & Brunton, 2011). In a complex world, one would assume that communication professionals align their development with academic learning. But besides initial university education, communicators in Europe rely on professional associations and commercial training providers for further professional development. Moreover, current levels of knowledge and needs for further development are mostly evaluated through informal self-assessments: comparing oneself with colleagues and peers in other organisations is the most important method across all sectors (65%). Breaking out of this fallacious circle by consulting academic knowledge or using formal self-evaluation systems by organisations is only valued by 27% and 17% respectively (Chart 3).

Chart 3

### How communication professionals evaluate knowledge and development needs

#### Most important means to self-assess knowledge and needs



www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2012 / n = 2,185 PR professionals. Q 14: Which of the following means do you use to identify the level of your professional knowledge and potential development needs? Please pick the three most important! Figure displays percentage of respondents who chose items as Top-3 issue.

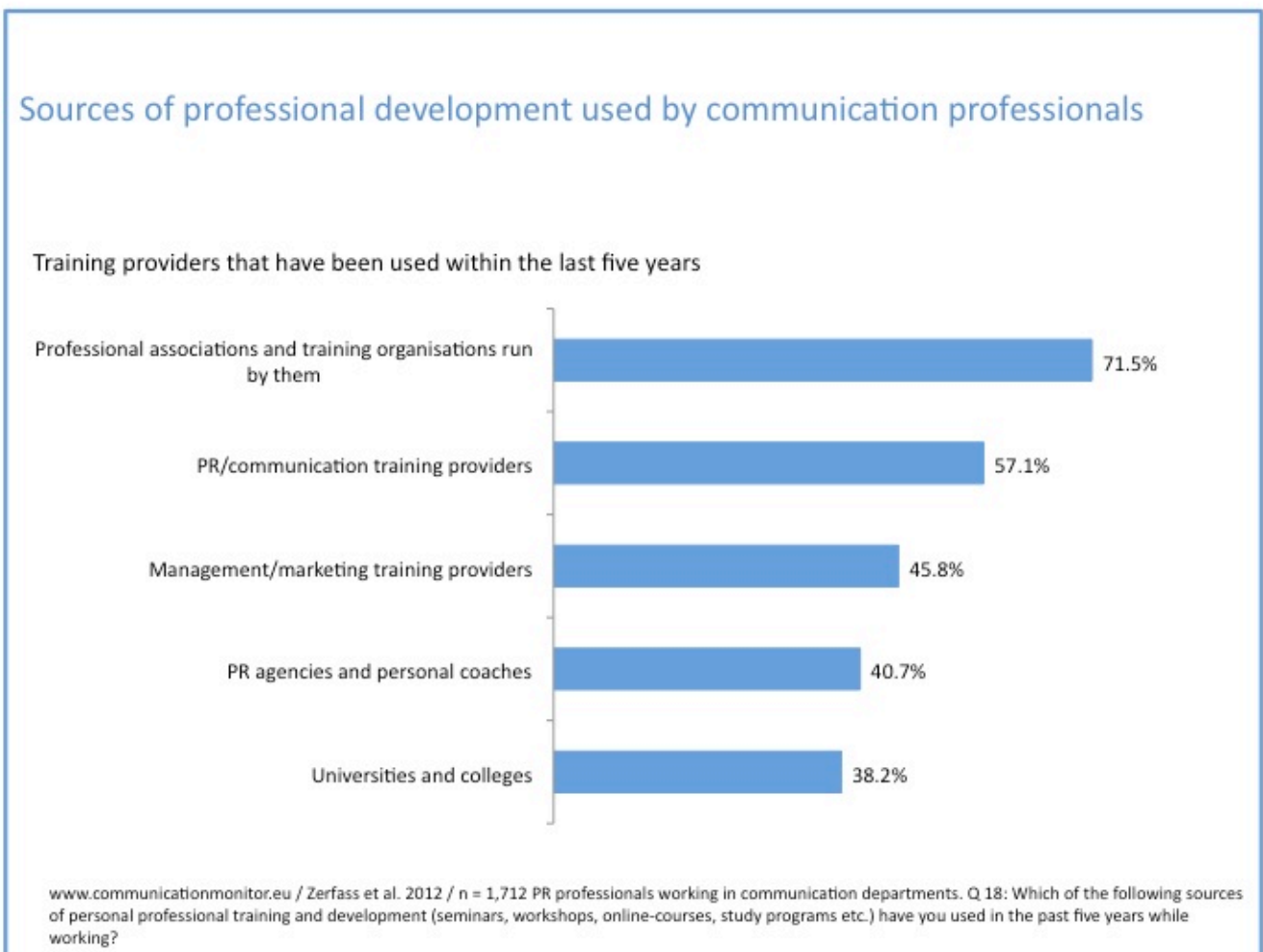
An ambiguous picture evolves when measuring the days spent by European communication professionals on personal training in 2011 and comparing this to the plans for 2012. The percentage of people who did not train at all is increased to 14% in 2012 from 9% in 2011. Continuing this theme, the percentage of those who will train one to three days or 4 to 5 days has gone down. But at the same time, percentages for longer training periods are rising: for six to ten days from 16% to 19% and for those lasting more than 15 days from 16% to almost 18%. What is interesting to see is that days spent on education and training are significantly longer in Southern and Eastern Europe than Western or Northern Europe: personal training lasting more than 15 days is planned by roughly 10% of Western and Northern Europeans with a median of 4 to 5 days but by 22% of Eastern Europeans and 27% of Southern Europeans (median: 6-10 days). Spain and Serbia spend the highest amounts of time on development activities, while France and the United Kingdom the least.

Numbers, however, do not speak for themselves and there are several possible alternative explanations: the East and South have professionally much to catch-up and are therefore investing in education and training to do so; intensity of work in the East and South is lower than in the North West, so it is easier to leave one's organisation for several days on development; payment packages are different and Westerners and Northerners get more in cash while Easterners and Southerners are

compensated also through provisions for training; inadequate basic academic education in the East and South demands more investment in staff training by employers; and governments sometimes use education and training policies as a labour market tool. In order to prove or sort out some of these explanations, further research is needed.

The most important training providers in Europe are national professional associations and training organisations run by them, followed by further education institutions specialised in public relation and communication (Chart 4). Companies use universities and colleges significantly more often (42%) than governmental (32%) and non-governmental organisations (31%).

Chart 4

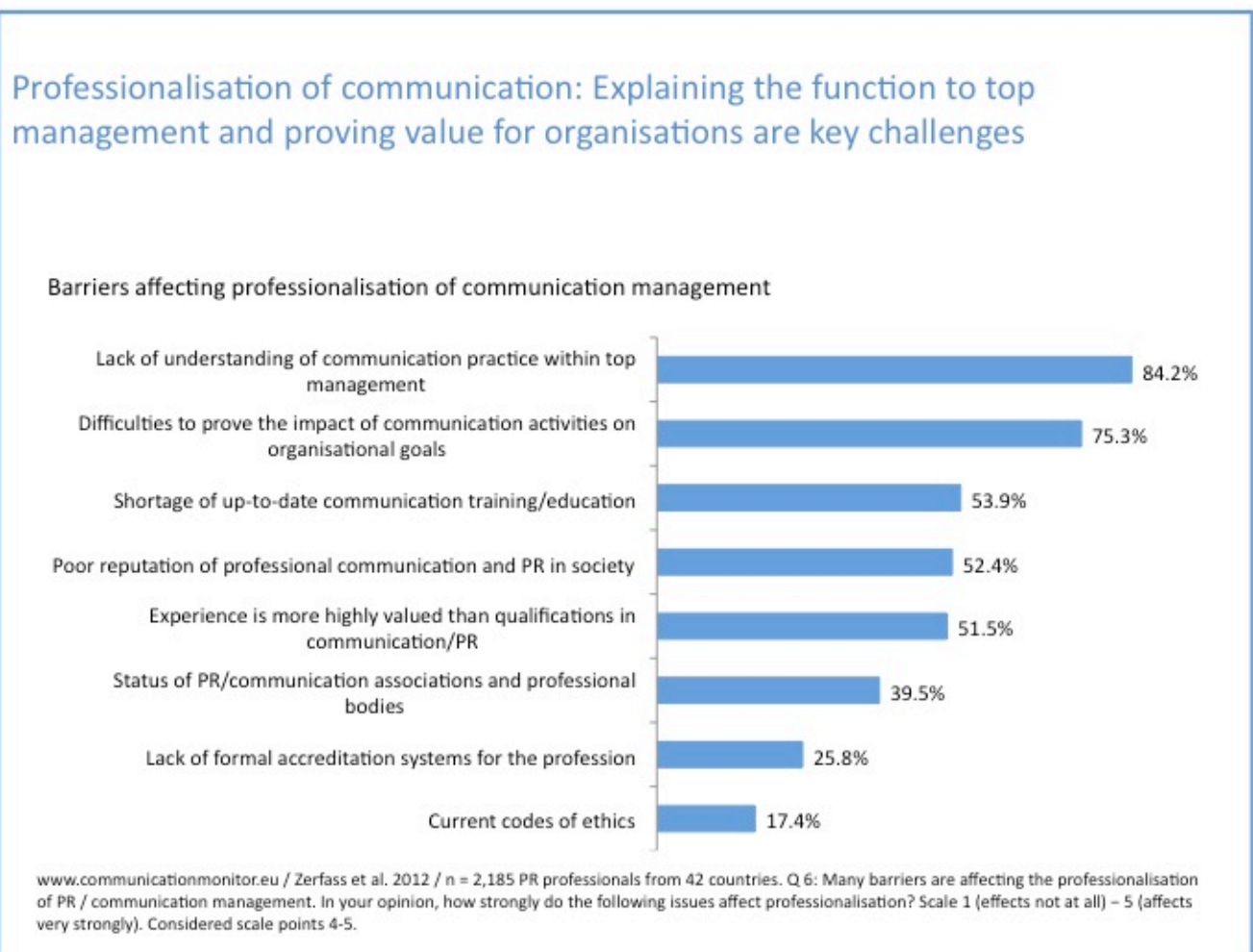


### 6.1.2 Professionalisation and accreditation

One of the ongoing issues in communication management is the further professionalisation of the practice. Research has identified manifold drivers which foster or hinder achievements in the field. Some of the most important barriers in Europe were identified in this survey (Chart 5). A large majority of the respondents state that a lack of understanding of communication practice within the top management (84%) and difficulties of the profession itself to prove the impact of communication

activities on organisational goals (75%) are the main barriers for further professionalisation of the practice. So the key challenges for European communication professionals are to explain the communication function to top management and to prove the value of communication for organisations. Other barriers are, in decreasing order, a shortage of up-to-date communication training (54%), a poor reputation of professional communication and public relations in society (52%), the phenomenon that experience is valued more highly than formal qualifications in communication or public relations (52%), the status of PR and communication associations and professional bodies (40%).

Chart 5



Although a lack of formal accreditation systems for the profession is only seen as a large barrier by every fourth respondent, most practitioners do see advantages of such systems, which are already in place in the United Kingdom, Brazil and other countries. They think however that the impact of these systems will be mainly on the reputation of the field and much less on quality. 70% of the respondents think that national or international accreditation can help to improve the recognition and the reputation of the field. But only 58% agree that a global accreditation system will help to standardise the practice of public relations and 54% believe that accreditation ensures that practitioners will have proper knowledge of recent communication tools and trends. Furthermore, more than six out of ten of

respondents are convinced that, regardless of any accreditation system, organisations will always find ways to hire the best people for communication jobs. This questions the real value of such systems.

The results of the monitor also show that there are significant regional differences in the way professionals think about accreditation systems. Practitioners in Eastern and Southern Europe have a stronger belief in accreditation systems than their colleagues in Northern and Western Europe. Furthermore, communication practitioners working in non-profit organisations believe to a lesser extent in the standardisation power of accreditation compared to practitioners in private or joint stock companies. The opinions differ especially on the belief in global standardisation of the practice. Also, non-profits are more sceptical about the positive reputation and recognition gained by formal qualification systems.

### 6.1.3 Understanding and responding to competency needs

The survey revealed significant gaps between the development needs of communication professionals in Europe and the training opportunities currently offered by their organisations (Chart 6). The only field in which supply meets demand is traditional communication skills, i.e. written, oral and message production. The largest gap (almost 31%) is in management knowledge (current affairs, social and political trends, legal, ethical). This is particularly important as this is exactly the type of knowledge delivered at universities which communicators and their employers use the least for their development, as shown in the last section (3.2). Major gaps also exist in business knowledge (markets, products, competitors) and management skills (decision making, planning, organising, leading) with 22% each. Interestingly, these are also the three areas where most participants report a need for personal development. The areas are consistently top rated even among practitioners with more than ten years of experience on the job – which indicates that on-the-job training is simply not enough, although for the majority of management capabilities mileage counts.

Chart 6

### Relevance of competency fields for communication professionals

Skills and knowledge	... need to be developed	...training offered / facilitated in own organisation	Gap between need and offering
Management skills (decision making, planning, organising, leading, human resources, self management)	45.8%	23.7%	-22.1%
Management knowledge (current affairs, social and political trends, legal, ethical)	42.2%	11.7%	-30.6%
Business knowledge (markets, products, competitors)	38.5%	16.2%	-22.3%
Business skills (dealing with budgets, invoices, contracts, taxation)	32.8%	17.0%	-15.8%
Communication knowledge (theory and principles, e. g. audiences, program development, campaigning, evaluation etc.)	27.4%	10.6%	-16.7%
Communication skills (written, oral, message production)	18.6%	19.4%	+1.4%

www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2012 / n<sup>min</sup> = 1,673 PR professionals working in communication departments. Q 20: Thinking of yourself, your current capabilities and your future development, which of the following skills and knowledge areas do you believe are in need of developing? Does your organisation already offer training programmes in these fields? Scale 1 (no need to develop) – 5 (strong need to develop). Considered scale points 4-5.

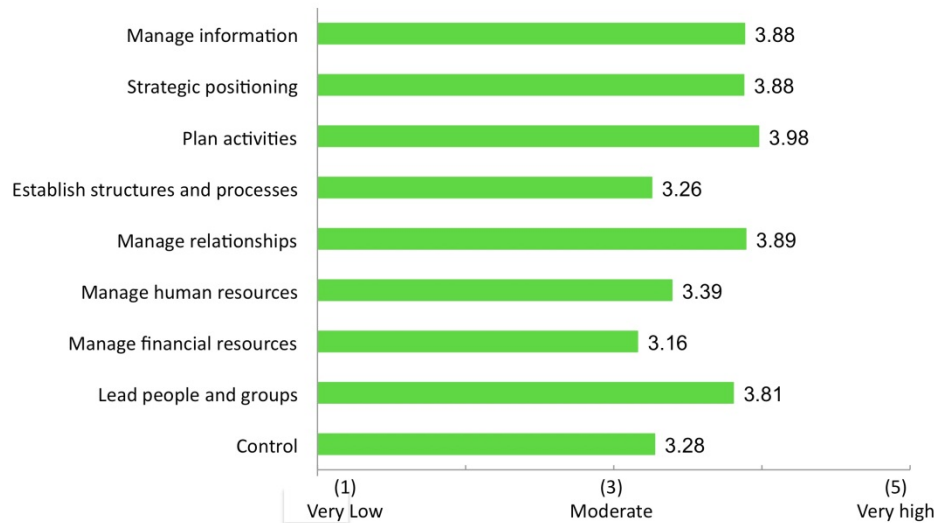
As expected, needs for development are the strongest in Eastern and Southern Europe, particularly for management skills, management and business knowledge. Perceived need for education and training is consistently the strongest in joint stock companies, except for communication skills where government communicators take the lead.

When reporting about their management skills in detail, communication professionals across Europe feel relatively competent in planning activities, managing relationships and information, as well as strategic positioning and leadership (values 3.89 to 3.81 on a scale ranging from 1 very low to 5 very high).

Chart 7

Management skills: Practitioners are self confident in the fields of analysing, planning and leadership; but less in terms of finances, organisation and control

Self-assessment of management capabilities

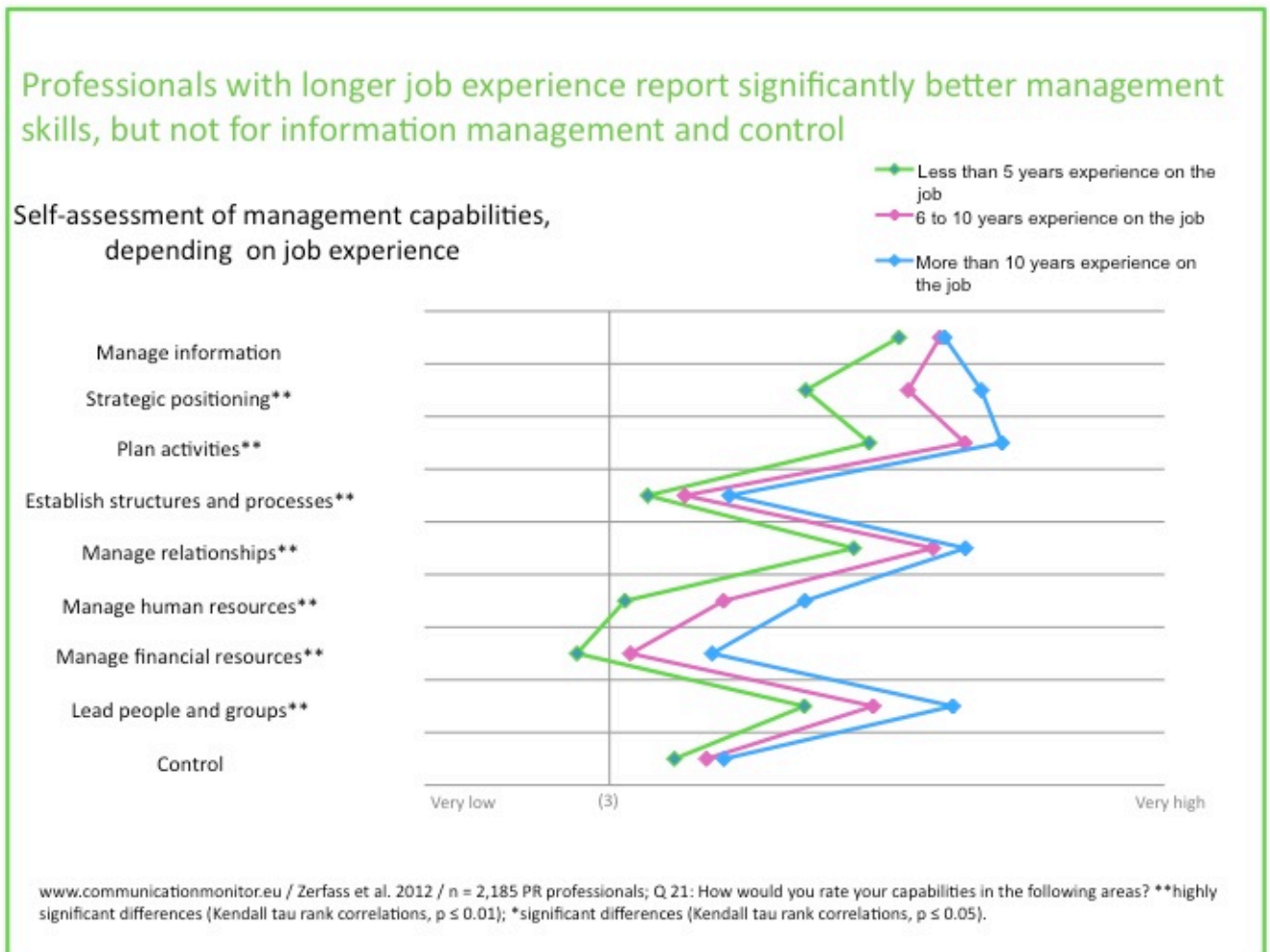


www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2012 / n = 2,185 PR professionals; Q 21: How would you rate your capabilities in the following areas? Scale 1 (= very low) -5 (= very high), considered scale points 4-5 / Q 21.

Chart 8 details how professionals with longer job experience report significantly better management skills, but not for information management and control (see Chart 8).



Chart 8

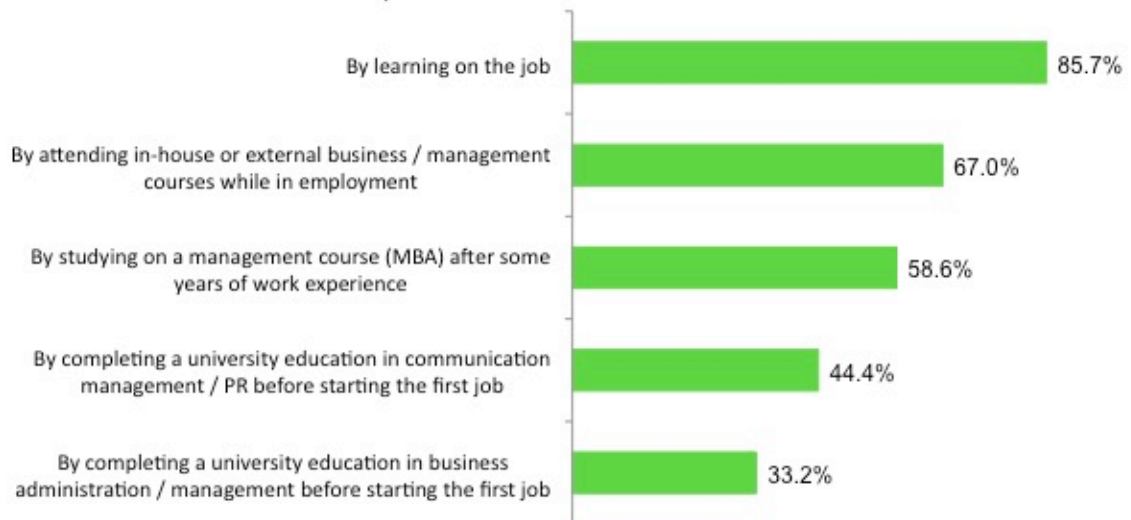


From such a self-perception it is understandable that the respondents rate learning on the job as being the most effective way for gaining management capabilities relevant for communication professionals (86%), followed by attending in-house or external business/management courses while in employment (67%, see Charts 9 and 10). However, less prevalent capabilities like establishing structures and processes, managing financial resources and controlling are usually not part of these approaches to further development. Those aspects might be trained when taking an MBA after some years of work experience or completing a university education in communication management before starting the first job, two options which are favoured by 59% and 44% of the respondents. Studying business administration before starting the job is an option recommended by only one third of the professionals.

Chart 9

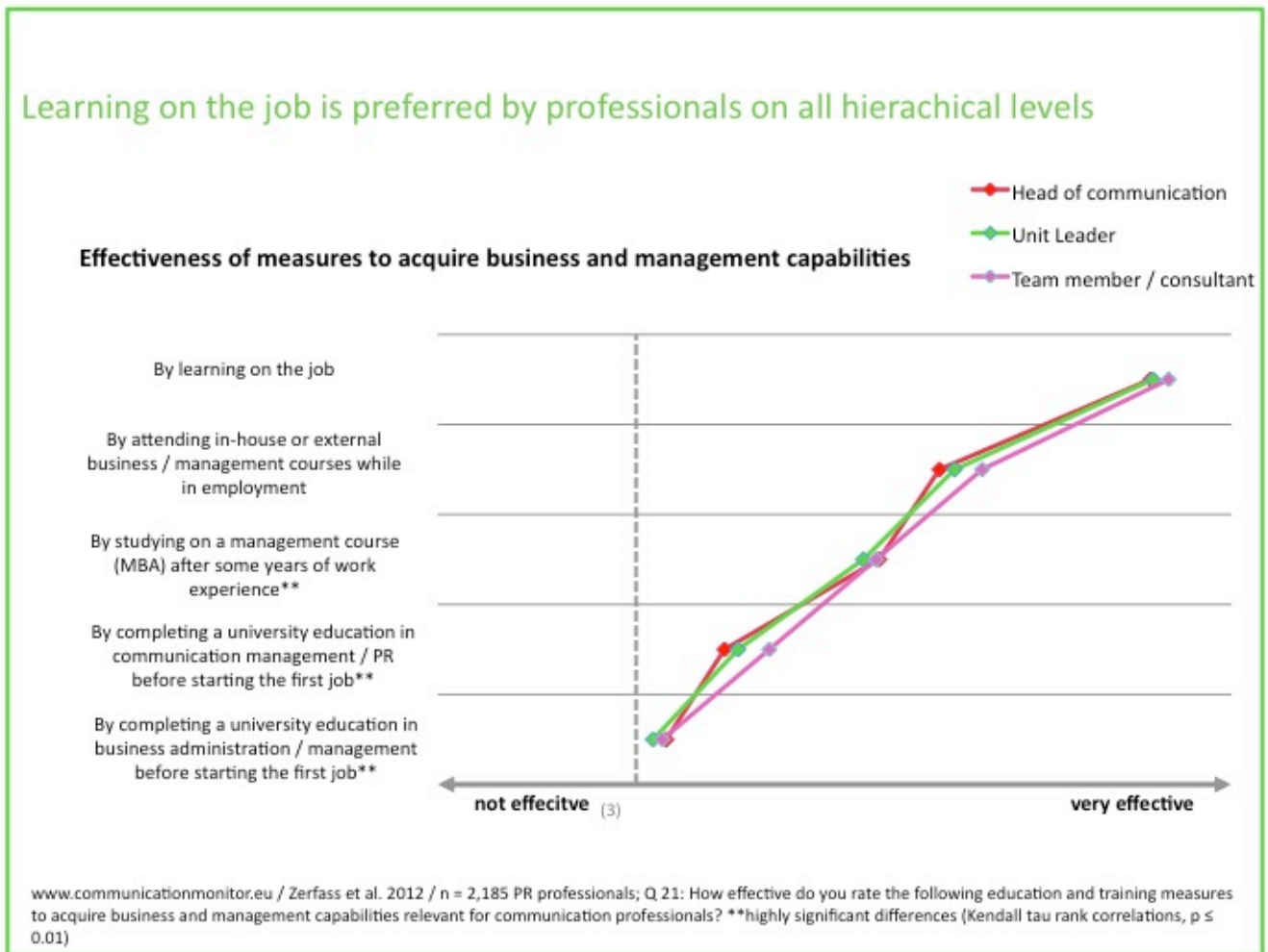
## Training and development measures for enhancing management capabilities

### Effectiveness of measures to acquire business and management capabilities



www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2012 / n = 2,185 PR professionals; Q 21: How effective do you rate the following education and training measures to acquire business and management capabilities relevant for communication professionals?

Chart 10

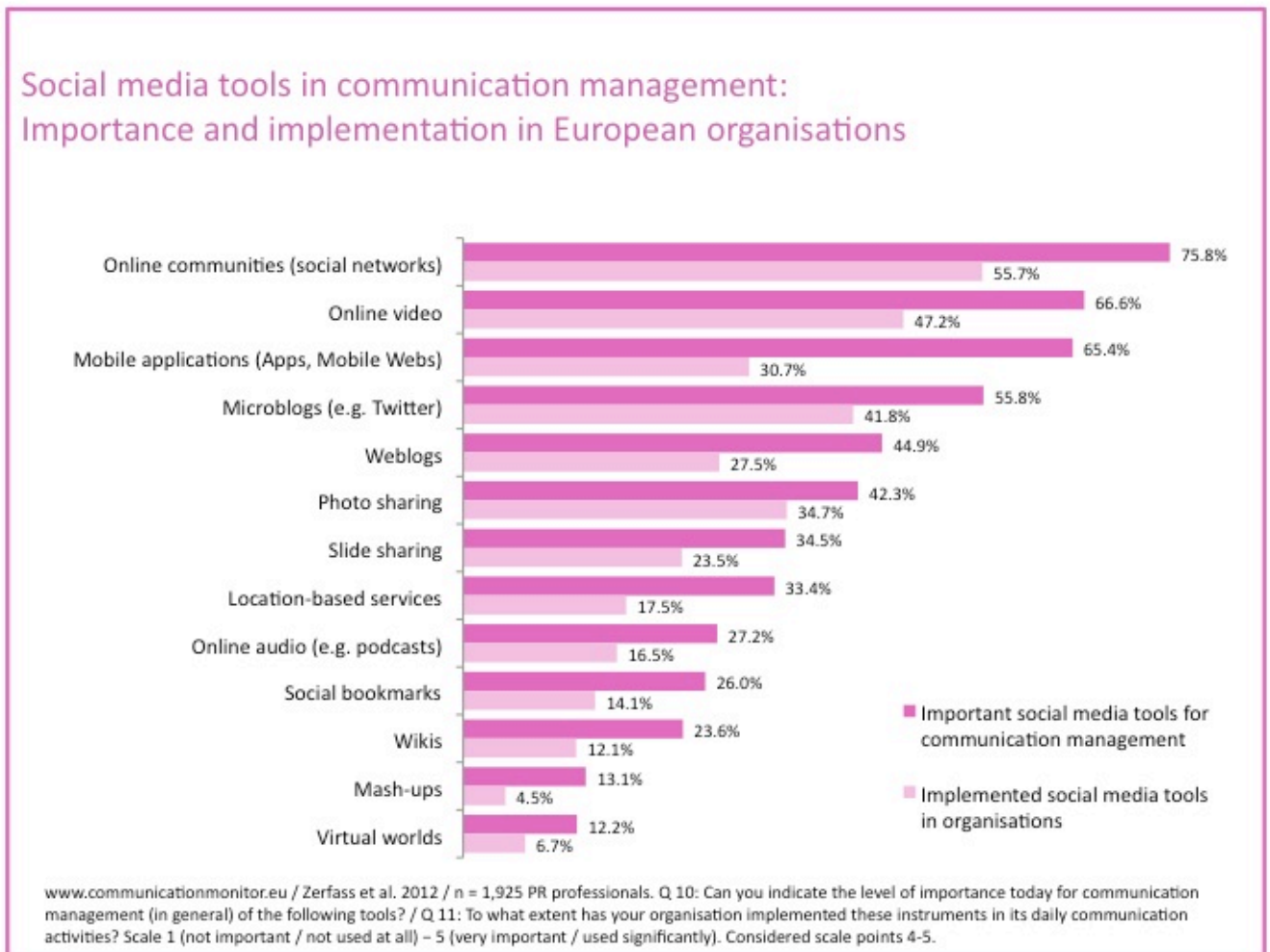


However, there are significant differences between countries regarding the support for different education measure. The United Kingdom values any kind of academic education in communication or management the least. Spain rates an academic education in communication and Serbia an academic education in management higher than any other country. In general, it can be concluded that academic education and expectations of communication professionals regarding management, business and communication qualifications are not matched and that this is a serious problem for both sides to address: i.e. for academia to (re)claim relevance and professionals to get access to the type of knowledge they need.

#### 6.1.4 Role evolution and specialist competence – social media

The survey reveals a large gap between the perceived importance of social media tools for communication and the actual rate of implementation in European organisations (see Chart 11). Most obviously, mobile applications have entered the top three ranks of important social media platforms, but at the same time the backlog of implementation is higher than in any other field.

Chart 11

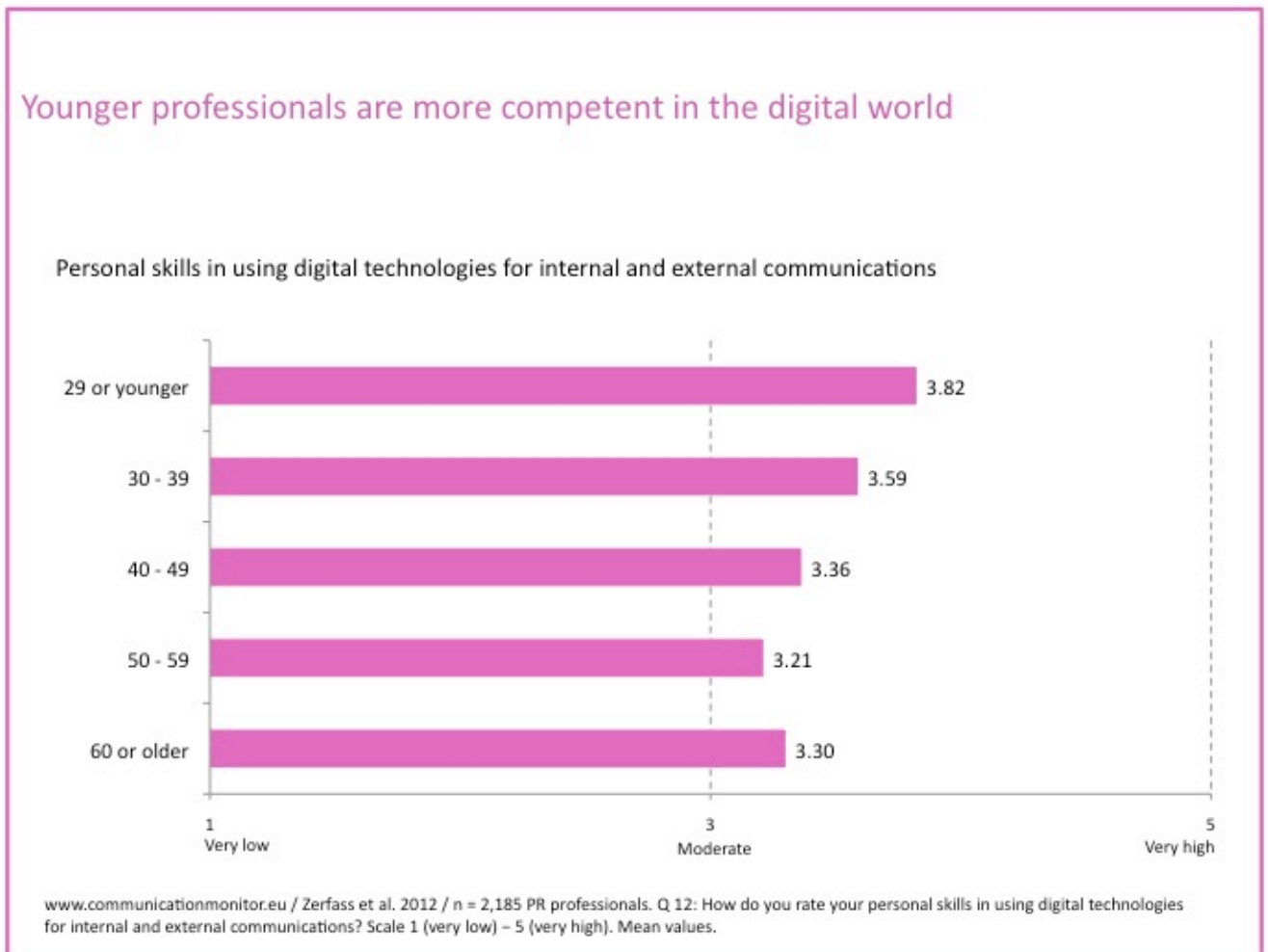


European communication professionals consider online communities or social networks as by far the most important social media tools available. With more than 75% support by respondents, it is leading the list of important social media tools. Online communities are followed by online videos ranking second in importance (67%), mobile applications like apps and mobile webs ranking third (65%), micro blogs (e.g. Twitter) ranking fourth (56%) and weblogs ranking fifth (45%). However, less than 56% of the communication departments actually use online communities in their communication, a gap of more than 20% compared to the importance this tool is given by the practitioners. The biggest difference between importance (65%) and implementation (31%) is found for mobile applications, a gap of almost 35%. A cross-matrix analysis shows that mobile applications, weblogs and photo sharing are considered the most important opportunities in social media communication.

The results show differences in social media use by communication professionals in Europe and in the United States as well as differences in support for the use of certain tools between European regions. Surprisingly communication practitioners have overestimated the growth of social media use by their organisations. In 2011 they predicted a bigger increase in importance than was actually recorded that year.



Chart 13

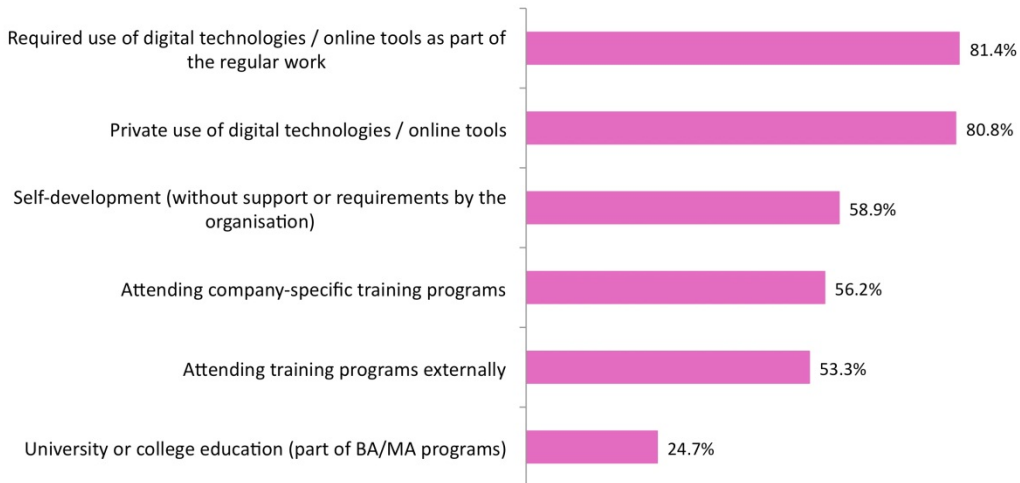


Despite the unsatisfactory level of digital skills, only every second respondent thinks that training is useful (Chart 14). Informal approaches to enhance those skills are clearly favoured. Eight out of ten European professionals think that the best way to learn about online tools is to use them as part of the regular work as well as privately. These two ways of learning are by far the most popular among communication practitioners.

Chart 14

Informal approaches to enhance digital skills are clearly favored by professionals; only every second respondent thinks that more formal training is useful

Suitable ways to learn online skills for communication practitioners



www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2012 / n = 2,185 PR professionals. Q 13: In your opinion, what is the best way that communication practitioners learn how to use such technologies? Scale 1 (not useful) – 5 (very useful). Considered scale points 4-5.

### 6.1.5 The future – young professionals, their recruitment and development

When the survey research findings are considered alongside Tench et al. (2012) it is clear that strategic communication is a professionalising occupation. For example, university level education in communication management or public relations has become the most important qualification when organisations recruit early career professionals (Chart 15). This criterion was named by 59% of the professionals surveyed as one of the top three attributes to consider. The next important qualifications in descending order are knowledge of the English language (52%), internships or on the job training (45%), professional qualification in public relations or communication as trained by associations and training institutes (43%), university education in any or another subject (29%) and international experience (28%). Less sought for are business and management qualifications, extra languages and a university education in business administration. University education in communication management is the most important in governmental organisations and non-profit organisations, while consultancies rate internships a bit more highly and companies consider fluent English as important as studying communication management.

Chart 15

### Employers prefer young professionals with a dedicated academic education in communication management

Most important qualifications when recruiting early career professionals

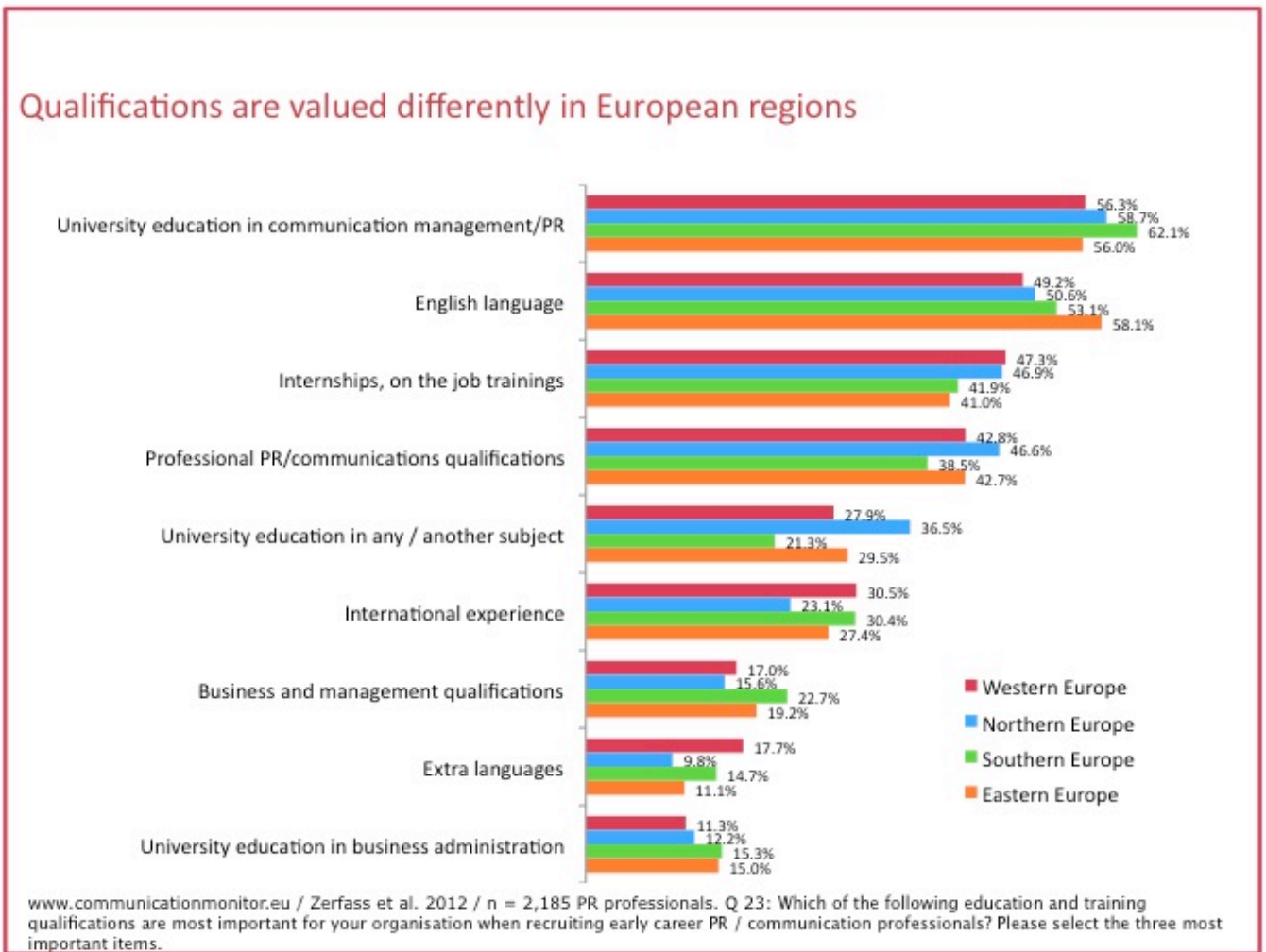


www.communicationmonitor.eu / Zerfass et al. 2012 / n = 2,185 PR professionals. Q.23: Which of the following education and training qualifications are most important for your organisation when recruiting early career PR / communication professionals? Please select the three most important items.

University education is most valued in Southern Europe (62%), followed by Northern Europe (59%), Western Europe (56%) and Eastern Europe (56%). There are interesting differences in selection processes for young professionals between different countries. In the United Kingdom, university education in public relations is rated only half as important as the European average (30% versus 59%). On the contrary, university level education in the field is highly valued in Norway (79%), Spain (77%), Sweden (74%) and the Netherlands (73%). See Chart 16.



Chart 16



English language proficiency in the UK is more than twice as important than a university education in public relations. Indeed, in the UK university education in any subject is much more important than in public relations. Even internships and on the job training are rated more important by British respondents. These results contradict national UK employment statistics for public relations graduates and their demand in the workplace. Therefore there are several possible explanations for such a situation: public relations may be perceived in the UK as not having any disciplinary foundation and studying it at the university level is a waste of time. Another possibility is that practitioners in the UK continue to prefer generic graduates open to on the job training, or they are not satisfied with ways and places in which public relations is taught.

Practitioners in Germany and Switzerland are also below the average in valuing university education in communication management and place the highest importance on internships and on the job training, probably reflecting a deep respect towards vocational education in these countries. Professional communication qualifications in PR are most valued in the Netherlands (57%) and international experience in Italy (44%). These differences in preferences reveal differences in educational and

occupational traditions and present a great challenge to attempts for a greater mobility in occupations across Europe – here in the case of strategic communication.

### 6.1.6 Summary

The largest gap (almost 31%) is in management knowledge (current affairs, social and political trends, legal, ethical). This is particularly important as this is exactly the type of knowledge delivered at universities but which communicators and their employers use the least for their development, as shown in the last section (3.2). Major gaps also exist in business knowledge (markets, products, competitors) and management skills (decision making, planning, organising, leading) with 22% each. Interestingly, these are also the three areas where most participants report a need for personal development. The areas are consistently top rated even among practitioners with more than ten years of experience on the job – which indicates that on-the-job training is simply not enough, although for the majority of management capabilities mileage counts.

In general, it can be concluded that academic education and expectations of communication professionals regarding management, business and communication qualifications are not matched and that this is a serious problem for both sides to address: i.e. for academia to (re)claim relevance and professionals to get access to the type of knowledge they need.

Quite logically, digital skills increase when the age of the professionals questioned decreases. Younger professionals report higher personal skills in using online and similar technology than their older colleagues (Chart 13). Reported digital skills also differ according to the area professionals are working in. Professionals working in overall communication, international and public affairs, media relations and marketing communications score lower than professionals working in strategy, internal communication and of course online communication.

## 7 INTERVIEWS (SIX REGIONS, FOUR ROLES)

### Analysis

All the translated interview write-ups from each of the 6 partners were collated by the research team at Leeds. A significant period of familiarisation then took place when all of the interview write-ups and any other accompanying materials were read and reviewed. The data was then analysed according to a framework based on the different sections of the interview schedule. This involved a systematic process of sifting, charting and sorting material according to the key issues and themes of the research and then recording these responses so that they could be cross-referenced back to the source interview. Key trends, associations and insights were mapped to aid in seeking explanation for any patterns that might be found (Richie and Spencer 1993).

The findings have been broken down into sections for analysis and discussion: (1) The matrix; (2) Current roles; (3) Knowledge acquisition, development and weaknesses; (4) Skills acquisition, development and weaknesses; (5) Personal Attributes; (6) Role evolution and specialist competence.

#### 7.1 The matrix

##### 7.1.1 Thoughts on the matrix

Devised from the synthesised competency list, developed from the literature and detailing the components of knowledge, skills (hard and soft) and personal attributes that go to make up the competencies for the four defined communication roles that are the focus of the study. Interviewees were asked for their thoughts on the matrix (please see Table 3). They felt the matrix represented the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for their role. Most felt that it did and that it was a comprehensive tool for doing so. There was however, also criticism regarding the comprehensiveness of the matrix, with some interviewees feeling that this reduced its value to that of an exhaustive and repetitive list, too general to pick up the particular nuances of their specific role. Other more isolated comments questioned where certain knowledge and skills had been placed within the matrix and the ability of the matrix to capture progression and levels of seniority within their particular role. However, despite these criticisms there was much positivity towards the matrix in terms of its usefulness in helping to capture what it is that a communications professional actually does and the requirements that are necessary to perform in the role.

##### 7.1.2 Usefulness and audiences

It was felt that the matrix was useful in a number of ways and to a variety of different audiences. Uppermost in interviewees' thoughts was the helpfulness of the matrix in helping to understand and recruit for the role as well as in the design of job descriptions, advertisements and performance, evaluation and development materials. In some instances this usefulness related directly to use by the role holder (e.g. for headhunting, managing others or as a tool to aid self-reflection or self-evaluation, to use as a 'roadmap' for career development and to identify individual training needs). Others viewed the matrix as useful for Human Resources departments to use in recruitment and selection, and in the training and development, of communications professionals as well as to facilitate discussions with coaches and mentors.

Other suggestions for audiences that might be able to benefit from the compilation of the matrix included potential students of PR and Communication and new recruits to the profession. Those that suggested these audiences felt that the matrix helped to lend deeper and fuller understanding of what is involved in being a communications professional so that people may embark on studying for a career or entering a profession with a much more comprehensive knowledge of what the role entails and the knowledge, skills and attributes that are necessary to successfully perform the role. It was felt that this might also serve to deter those less serious about a career in communications and to raise awareness and expectation of the competencies necessary to succeed. Another potential audience for the matrix, as quoted by a couple of interviewees, was their own CEO or Senior Management Team. In this instance the matrix was seen as useful in helping to explain the role of the communications professional and the communication function more generally as well as where communications sits within the context of the business as a whole, perhaps helping to illustrate more fully where communications can and can't add value.

### 7.1.3 Alternatives

A small number of interviewees referred to alternative competency frameworks that they were aware of, have used in the past or use in their current role. These included those created by Logeion, ENGAGE (used by the public sector in the UK) and two designed by the particular companies of the role holders (Philips and Shell). The role holder from Shell felt it important to note that their company matrix separates leadership and management competencies from more specific communication orientated activities.

### 7.1.4 Is there anything missing?

A large proportion of those interviewed felt that the matrix was complete, exhaustive or comprehensive and they had nothing else to add. This was particularly true of Social Media Managers. A small number of Crisis Communication Managers felt strongly that the matrix was too generic to capture the dynamic of Crisis Communications, either because it did not encapsulate the different phases of a crisis or the unpredictable nature of working in this area meant that there wasn't really a blueprint you could follow. Internal Communication Managers and Chief Communication Officers were the most likely to identify additional knowledge, skills and personal attributes necessary for their role that they felt were missing from the matrix.

In a number of cases these apparent 'omissions' actually represented different interpretations of certain concepts already present in the matrix (e.g. visioning as being understood as how to effectively utilise the efforts of others when organizing/executing, or stakeholder management being more about managing relationships than actual individuals) resulting in role holders wanting to re-position to which competency the particular skill or knowledge belonged (e.g. wanting to move visioning from *Supporting/guiding* to *Organising/executing* and viewing stakeholder management as a *Counselling*, rather than a *Managing* competency). It might also be argued that another addition that was suggested - 'knowledge of company products' - might also be at least partly assumed in knowledge areas already included in the matrix (namely, 'knowledge about own organisation'). It should also be noted that a number of interviewees also pointed out what they believed were additions to the matrix which were in actual fact already included – they had just not seen them when they had initially reviewed the document.

There were fewer suggestions for new additional knowledge areas within the matrix than there were for both, new skills or new personal attributes. Please see the table below for details. Most suggestions were made by only one interviewee but where more than one proposed the same addition this has been indicated.

**Table 7**

**Missing from the matrix - additional knowledge, skills and personal attributes suggested by interviewees**

Knowledge	Skills	Personal Attributes
Change management (2 Internal Communications)	Managing people	Pioneering
Language of the board (2 CCO)	Verbal coherence/concision	Perseverance/resilience (2 Crisis Management)
Understanding of own company business model	Creativity with budgets	Patience/tolerance
Social environmental analysis	Sense of timing (when to communicate)	Good judgment
		Stress resistance
		Adaptability
		Strong instincts

## 7.2 Current roles

Interviewees were asked to talk a little about their current role, including how long they had been with the company, how long in their current role, whether they worked in a team, whether they had line management responsibility and whether they were part of senior management team or reported to the board.

All CCO's had line management responsibility and responsibility for the training and development of their staff. The majority reported to the Board or the CEO. Teams varied in size from just three to one hundred and fifty. Some of those interviewed also held positions outside of their role with professional bodies or universities. All German CCO's possessed a PhD, and those from Spain had either an MA or MBA qualifications. Postgraduate and professional qualifications were also held by a couple of CCO's in the UK. The backgrounds of people in these roles included journalism, political communications, consultancy and marketing.

Crisis Communication Managers predominantly had line management and training and development responsibility for small teams of around six employees, although a number of the interviewees worked alone and one had a team of thirty-three staff. Most reported to the Board or the senior management team. Undergraduate qualifications in Journalism, Communications, International Relations and Marketing were noted. A number had consultancy backgrounds and most believed strongly in learning on the job.

Over three quarters of Internal Communication Managers had been in post 3 years or less but the majority had been with their company (in a different role) for significantly longer. A quarter did not have any line management responsibility and only two were part of the senior management team. It was not always recorded who they reported to but in those instances where detail was present there

was little consistency. Some reported into HR, others to the Head of Communications and there were also instances of Marketing and Employee Relations. Team sizes varied dramatically from one person to up to sixty people. For those with line management responsibility, most also had responsibility for training and development of their team. Where reported, most had undergraduate qualifications, (in subjects such as Informatics, Economics, HR, and Communications) with a small number having a postgraduate qualification such as an MA or a PhD (Germany). It should be noted that in some countries such as Germany there were not any undergraduate qualifications until fairly recently.

Social Media Managers worked predominantly in small teams with an average of 3 members. The largest team size was twelve. Responsibility for the learning and development of others varied across the role. A quarter of those interviewed were not part of a team and worked on their own. A small number reported into the Board. A similar number reported to the CCO and others to the Marketing Department. The length of time in their current role varied from six months to four years but some had been with their organisations longer than this. Undergraduate qualifications in Journalism and the Social Sciences were noted along with Law, Economics and PR and Communication. A couple of interviewees had multiple postgraduate qualifications including MA as well as MBA qualifications (Spain).

### **7.3 Knowledge acquisition and development, specific knowledge and weaknesses**

#### **7.3.1 The three most important knowledge areas**

Interviewees were asked to identify from the matrix (or to add to it) the three most important knowledge areas for their role. The most frequently cited across all four roles were Knowledge about organisation, Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies and Corporate strategy. These were the three most (frequently cited) important knowledge areas for Crisis Communication Managers, Internal Communication Managers and Social Media Managers. For CCO's Corporate strategy was pushed out of third most frequently cited knowledge area by Project management and Communication processes. Crisis Managers also saw Project management and Web 2.0 tools and effects on organisational communication as important knowledge areas and for some Internal Communications managers, Human Resource (HR) policies and links to Communication were seen as one of the most important areas. Social Media Managers mentioned the importance of Web 2.0 tools and effects on organisational communication and Web monitoring tools.

Table 8

The most important knowledge areas via role (ranked in order of the most frequently cited)

Chief Communications Officer	Crisis Communication Manager	Internal Communication Manager	Social Media Manager
Knowledge about organisation	Knowledge about organisation	Knowledge about organisation	Knowledge about organisation
Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies	Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies	Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies	Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies
Project management	Corporate strategy	Corporate strategy	Corporate strategy
Communication processes	Project management	Human Resource (HR) policies and links to communication	Web 2.0 tools and effects on organisational communication
	Web 2.0 tools and effects on organisational communication		Web monitoring tools

### 7.3.2 Knowledge acquisition and development

Most interviewees stated that they had acquired the most important knowledge areas for their role on-the-job, in either their current or previous roles. This would appear to be logical given the business/company specific nature of the three most important (frequently cited) knowledge areas. Learning by doing (the job) was perceived as very important and for some the only true way to gain and develop applied knowledge. This knowledge was not, however, acquired in isolation. The support of colleagues, role models, bosses and formal and informal mentors whilst on-the-job was also acknowledged and, to a lesser extent, the importance of belonging to relevant networks and forums. Both senior and younger colleagues were acknowledged, (particularly those that were perceived as more Internet savvy). Involvement in cross team projects was another way in which knowledge had been acquired.

For those that listed other knowledge areas as the most important (such as Project management or Communication processes), the contribution of in-house and external training was highlighted, along with more formal education such as undergraduate and postgraduate/MBA programmes. Some companies had extensive internal training programmes or Internal Academies that some interviewees had clearly valued and utilised; others had not had access to these training resources and highlighted the role of self-study. Social Media Managers emphasised that they had developed their Web 2.0 or Web monitoring knowledge largely through self-study using the Internet and Blogs because this was

the most up-to-date source of knowledge. Self-study in other knowledge areas was through more traditional channels such as books and publications.

For those that pointed to the contribution of previous roles to their acquisition of knowledge, previous agency and consultancy experience was perceived as being particularly valuable. Experience in similar roles to those currently being performed was also seen as important.

### 7.3.3 Specific knowledge

Interviewees were asked if they had needed to learn any specific areas of knowledge for their current role. Although some said they had experienced no such need, the majority communicated that they had. The most popular responses included areas of knowledge specific to the nature of the company or business they were working for. This included knowledge about the sector, details of company products, internal processes/procedures, understanding of how the business makes money or business strategy. Other areas of knowledge that were given highlight the sometime difficulty of distinction between what is perceived to be an area of knowledge and what is seen as a skill. Negotiating, Knowledge of managing senior members of staff and Coaching were all other areas of knowledge that were mentioned. In addition to Project management, Web 2.0, New technologies, Corporate publishing, Political affairs, Investor relations, Financial aspects and Legal issues.

Interviewees were also asked if they felt that any areas of knowledge that they had mentioned were specific to their own country of operation. There were few responses to this, including differences in legal system and job profiles but what was revealed were some interesting cultural observations from communication professionals on their fellow colleagues and the communications industry in their given region. Communicators from The Netherlands described their colleagues as direct, open and honest in their communication with a desire to be heard. One particular interviewee described the character of their fellow countrymen as 'Bourgeois obedient', meaning that they don't necessarily like to do as the boss says and another felt that you should always have an answer ready because the Dutch like to question and challenge what is presented to them. One Spanish interviewee felt that the Communications function was less developed than in other regions; another pointed out the huge uptake and influence of social media throughout Spain and its integration into mainstream Spanish culture. Speaking the Spanish language was also mentioned as an advantage because it is also spoken in Latin America. In Slovenia there was said to be an emphasis on multiculturalism and a difficulty in making decisions due to a culturally driven desire to reach consensus and agreement. In the UK knowledge of political affairs was said to be an important area of knowledge.

### 7.3.4 Knowledge - weaknesses

A significant number of interviewees expressed that there were knowledge areas that they felt weak in or that they would like to develop. The most prevalent were the areas of new technology, social media and Web 2.0. For CCO's this knowledge was about the strategic application of such media channels and finding out more about the return on investment that might be realised from their implementation. When asked what would be the best ways of improving knowledge in these areas there were also some interesting variations according to job role. CCO's and a number of Crisis Managers felt that the best way to develop their knowledge was to talk to peers or (younger) members of their own team already working in this area as well as by hiring new people (or in one instance a team of people) with this specialist knowledge. For Social Media Managers this could take the form of self-study using the



internet or perhaps attending specialist short courses and learning more about these areas meant studying different platforms or learning new codes.

Other areas of weakness included finance, economics, human resource management and legal issues, as well as risk management, political affairs, psychology and the management of others. These responses confirmed in advance, the existence of a potential gap for communication professionals between the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills relating to management and business which was the next question in the discussion schedule.

Nearly all interviewees agreed that there was a gap, although some qualified that this did not relate to them (or to their colleagues) but to professionals working at a lower level. For some this disconnect stemmed from a need for communications departments to work more closely and engage more fully with other areas of the business. Mentorship was seen as an important way of knowledge transfer that had the advantage of being both on-the-job and set within the context of the business. Participation in cross team projects could also help. Internal and external courses were felt to be useful with a number of interviewees having recently completed 'finance for non-financial managers' courses. It was also pointed out how job rotation, secondment and sharing knowledge within professional networks might also build up and develop this knowledge.

For others the gap was perceived to stem from failures in the formal education of communication professionals to incorporate this area into current undergraduate PR and communication qualifications, or because significant numbers of employees come to the Communications profession from a wide variety of non-business backgrounds such as journalism (Spain) or the social sciences (Germany). Some felt that this gap could be filled effectively by studying at post-graduate level for an MA or MBA qualification, although there was also criticism of the suitability of such courses for working professionals. Other professional courses (such as the CIPR) were also mentioned but again only to point out their deficiencies in plugging this knowledge gap. One interviewee from the UK had indeed opted to pursue another professional qualification (Institute of Directors) because they believed this to offer better grounding in business and financial issues.

## **7.4 Skills acquisition and development, specific skills and weaknesses**

### **7.4.1 The three most important skills**

Responses to the request to select from (or add to) the matrix to identify the three most important skills for their role reflect a wealth of diversity both across and within roles. There were also a number of additions that role holders wanted to add to the matrix (as detailed previously in Table 8). The most agreement (as represented by the frequency of interviewees mentioning the same skills) was found within the role of Crisis Managers. Please see Table 9 for details.

Table 9

The most important skill of Crisis Communication Managers (ranked in order of the most frequently cited)

Crisis Communication Manager
Leadership
Critical thinking
Organisational skills
Strategic thinking

There was much less consensus in the frequency of responses across the other roles but for CCO's Strategic thinking was by far the most popular response. For Internal Communications Managers Listening was the most agreed upon skill and for Social Media Managers, Planning and Multi-media skills were viewed as important. Two interviewees (Internal Communications Manager and CCO) quoted Storytelling as one of the most important skills and both had just attended 'good' courses to develop their knowledge and application of this skill.

#### 7.4.2 Skills acquisition and development

The acquisition and development of the skills most important for role holders was achieved in a number of different ways and through a variety of different channels. University and high school were more frequently credited with attribution than they were in the accumulation of knowledge. On-the-job experience in current and previous roles and self-study using books and online resources was also seen by many as key ways to develop skills. Mentors, role models, previous and current bosses (either through their observation of handling certain situations or through more formal or informal coaching activity) and exchange with colleagues and membership of professional associations (such as Melcrum) were also valued. A number of interviewees also mentioned their family as influential in their development of certain skills necessary for their role (negotiation, motivation). Internal and external courses were less frequently mentioned than in the area of knowledge development but several interviewees acknowledged the value of Management or Leadership training to help develop their skills in this area.

#### 7.4.3 Specific skills

Interviewees were asked if they had needed to learn any specific skills for their current role. There were a significant minority who said that they had not had to learn any specific skills and a couple of CCO's qualified this by saying that you do not get to the position of CCO without already having the skills necessary to do the job. However, the majority said they had had to learn new skills. The most frequently mentioned of these were Negotiation and Delegation (perhaps reflective of a change in status from worker to manager/leader).

Interviewees were also asked if there were any skills necessary for their role that they felt were specific to their own country of operation. There were few responses but those there were throw interesting light on different cultural aspects of the regions taking part in the study and their impact upon the communications profession. In The Netherlands interviewees observed a broad range of stakeholders involved in communications and that vague hierarchies within and across organisations can mean that delegation is difficult. The Dutch are also perceived to be direct in their communication which can

mean that they need help in learning how to give constructive feedback. In Slovenia it was observed that professionals may need help with visioning because there has been a lack of planning for the longer term. In Spain weakness in performing presentations, said to stem from deficits in primary education, highlights a skill that needs to be strengthened along with time-management, where it is felt that a lot can be learned from consultants or taught courses. Strengths in creativity, passion and problem solving are believed to represent valuable skills of Spanish communication professionals.

#### 7.4.4 Skills - weaknesses

A significant number of interviewees expressed that there were knowledge areas that they felt weak in or that they would like to develop. Skills in Social media were far less frequently mentioned than *knowledge* of Social media, perhaps representing a distinction between the majority of role holders needing to understand *why* and *when* to use social media rather than *how* to use specific social media technology or platforms. Writing (press releases and good headlines), Time management, Financial management and Negotiation, particularly with senior staff; (a skill one interviewee may have been referring to when they described wanting to be able to say no, whilst preserving the relationship with that individual or department), were the most commonly acknowledged weaknesses. Visual design and organisational skills were also mentioned as areas for improvement.

#### 7.5 Personal attributes

Interviewees were asked to identify the three most important personal attributes for their role. Responses reflected the diversity of those included in the matrix, as well as a number of additions (as detailed in Table 10). CCO's demonstrated the greatest spread in their answers, so much so that only Integrity and Daring/Risk taking featured more than twice across all 14 interviews. Crisis Communication Managers responses showed the most consensus with Trustworthiness being mentioned by nearly half of all those interviewed.

Table 10

The most important personal attributes via role (ranked in order of the most frequently cited)

Chief Communications Officer	Crisis Communication Manager	Internal Communication Manager	Social Media Manager
Integrity	Trustworthiness	Empathy	Curiosity
Daring/Risk Taking	Empathy	Courage	Empathy
*(Empathy; Results orientation; Lifelong learner; Authenticity; Innovative and creative)	Multi-tasking	Curiosity	Daring/Risk Taking

\* A selection of the responses mentioned by 2 interviewees (at the most).

Opinion varied among respondents as to whether personal attributes are something that training and development can help to improve. Most were of the opinion that some of them can but that others are inherent in a persons character, intuitive or instilled into them through upbringing. If respondents did

feel that personal attributes could be improved or developed there was an understanding that this can take hard work and concerted effort. Personal motivation to change, learn and develop was said to be important, as was the ability for self-reflection and to know your own weaknesses. Mentorship and coaching were thought to be particularly effective ways of improving certain personal attributes, as was experience. Development through training was a less common response.

## **7.6 Role evolution and specialist competence**

### **7.6.1 Cross-cultural competence**

Interviewees were asked if they agreed with research that suggests Cross-cultural competence is an increasingly important skill for communication practitioners. The majority agreed that it was, although a small number added that this has always been an important skill. Interviewees commonly interpreted this question to mean that roles were becoming more internationally or globally focused. However, a minority of interviewees were keen to add that in their current role this skill was not important because the concentration of their particular organisation is based wholly on the domestic market.

The importance of localising a global message in order to reach certain markets and audiences, while remaining true to the authenticity and heritage of the organisation was one way in which the need for this skill was said to be emerging; another was through the desire for diversity within and across teams in order to make them more reflective, effective and motivated. The ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to respond to new contexts was also explained, (particularly by Internal Communications Managers), through the need to adapt to and interpret increasing rates of organisational and cultural change as well as wider sector or societal change.

In order to develop/improve skills in this area a number of ways were suggested. A popular means was through a prolonged stay of working abroad to gain international experience, perhaps through an exchange or secondment programme, in order to gain hands-on practical knowledge and skills from working in another country and context. The existing Student Erasmus Exchange Programme was held in particularly high regard by a number of interviewees. Observing others and mentorship would also be helpful in strengthening skills in this area. A number of the interviewees had, in current or previous roles, undertaken in-house training in cross-cultural issues that found to be helpful. Others felt that training for this skill should be incorporated into formal undergraduate and postgraduate PR and communication as well as MBA qualifications because they did not feel that this was adequately covered in the current curriculum. One interviewee asked specifically for more clarity around models and concepts of cross-cultural working that might be adopted or adapted.

### **7.6.2 The future – young professionals and their development**

Interviewees were asked if they felt that successors to their role would need to develop new skills or learn new areas of knowledge. Only 2 respondents felt that the role requirements would stay the same. The most popular related to the area of social media and in particular the increased need to monitor and analyse, as well as, contribute to communications through this channel. A number of Internal Communications Managers commented that social media is blurring the line between internal and external communication. The need to target and reach individuals rather than groups, (with tailored messages), through the use of new technologies was also a view that was expressed by a number of role holders. It was also seen as important to be able to capitalise on visual mediums in order to relay

impactful communications. Being able to understand and converse using business language and to have an overview of the different departments within business was also seen as important. The ability to be a 'generalist communications specialist' is a concept that emerges from these two divergent themes of individualised communication married with a general understanding of how organisations work and make money. Separately, interviewees expressed the need for future incumbents to have a good foundation in communications theory, intercultural knowledge, insight, writing and public affairs as well as possessing personal attributes such as empathy and loyalty which some interviewees felt were currently lacking in some of their younger colleagues.

### 7.6.3 Working with new media forms

It should be noted that a number of interviewees touched upon themes such as the need to critically assess and filter information as well as to develop content using new media in the question relating to the skills and knowledge requirements for future successors. Most interviewees were agreed that this is an important area for the future. As a result, checking facts, analysis, monitoring, being quick to read and respond and knowing when and when not to act were all seen as important skills. It was also felt that general commercial acumen will be needed along with a good foundation in communications. Some interviewees felt that there might need to be amendments and additions to the current curriculum of formal taught PR and communication courses to make sure that these skills needs were met. The importance of on-the-job experience was again reiterated as well as the view that communications professionals will need to continue to work hard with the business to help organisations to acknowledge and realise the benefits of the communications function.

Interviewees were also asked for their thoughts on the importance of working as a member of a virtual team. There were a significant number of role holders who confirmed that they were already working in this way, either across teams, departments or across the organisation. This type of working brings about both opportunities and threats. There was a fear that although virtual working may improve efficiencies and allow workers who sit remotely to work collectively, it can erode interpersonal skills and that technology should not be seen as a replacement of face-to-face interaction. The capacity of social media to create online networks and communities of practice was welcomed by a number of respondents but it was acknowledged that current technology to facilitate virtual teams was not always up to the job. Improvements in both the capacity and guidance in the strategic application of such platforms, programmes and equipment would be helpful in supporting virtual teams in the future. Internal training, mentorship and working in project teams would also help to strengthen skills and knowledge in this area.

## 7.7 Interpretation

The matrix was largely viewed with positivity in helping to capture what it is that a communications professional does and the requirements that are necessary to perform in the role. It is clear that there are a number of audiences, such as HR, potential students of PR and Communication, new recruits to the profession, practitioners themselves and other areas of the business that can potentially benefit from the tool and that might be considered in the future development and product design of the practitioner diagnostic tool in the next phase of the project.

The two additions to knowledge which were posed by Internal Communications Managers (Change Management) and the CCO's (Language of the Board) lead to greater understanding of these roles both

in terms of day-to-day tasks and responsibilities but also in predicting future trends and needs. Organisations worldwide are currently undergoing phenomenal amounts of change, driven largely by pressures to improve profits and to make cost efficiencies. Internal Communications Managers are increasingly being tasked to help support, implement and drive organisational change through employee engagement and communication activity. For CCO's, a place on the board is becoming more commonplace as Communications is coming to be seen as integral to the financial and commercial success of organisations. To be able to hold your own against other board members and to champion the benefits of effective communications through demonstrated return on investment will be ever more important. Asking communications practitioners their views on a possible gap relating to the acquisition and development of skills relating to management and business (skills gap, ECM, 2012), was of course one of the aims of this research as well as identifying ways that development in these areas may be supported.

Evidence from the interviews largely confirms the existence of this knowledge and skills gap (and not confirmation of the knowledge and skills that they may have been acquired through education). However, this skills gap may not necessarily be felt at senior/leadership level. It was thought by some to relate more to communications professionals at lower levels. Bridging this gap raises several challenges given the phenomenon that experience is valued more highly than formal qualifications. This preference was revealed through the quantitative survey and appears to be borne out by the interviews, with many communication professionals explaining how they acquired and developed the most important knowledge and skills to perform their roles through on-the-job experience in current or previous roles. To this end mentorship and coaching may be seen as an important method of knowledge transfer in this area as it has both the advantage of being on-the-job and set within the context of the business. This takes on renewed significance given that knowledge about own organisation was the most important knowledge area for communications practitioners across all four roles, (followed by Listening, understanding and interpreting trends, linking them to business strategies), in that much of this knowledge can arguably only be learnt on-the-job.

The development of cross-cultural competencies as identified as a core future employment skill (Institute for the Future, 2011) was rated as important by some communications professionals but not by all. These individuals acknowledged that within their own organisations the focus was on the home market and there was little or no demand for skills in this area. This questions the potential worth of incorporating this skill into formal or informal training programmes but reiterates the possible importance of incorporating in-situ learning such as a prolonged stay of working abroad through an organised exchange or secondment programme in order to gain valuable hands-on practical knowledge and skills from working in another country and context.

Knowledge of new media was an area in which many communications practitioners felt weak or that they would like to develop. With the exception of Social Media Managers, learning more about this area was more about the strategic application of such media channels than particular technologies or platforms. It was clear that this is something that many are leaving to younger or more specialist members of the team sometimes qualifying that they do not need to know how to use the technology but that they would benefit from greater understanding of how it can be used and what can be achieved. This explains why practitioners felt they had less weakness in Social media *skills* than in their *knowledge* of Social media.

## 7.8 Regional overview

In addition to the interview write-ups project partners were asked to provide a regional overview based upon their interviews, consisting of any thoughts on how communication roles are structured in their region. This was to make note of any significant political, economic or social factors affecting communication roles or the skills and knowledge necessary to develop these roles and any emerging trends for the profession in the future.

From these overviews and the interviews themselves there appear to be few regionally specific differences across the roles but there are differences in the backgrounds of practitioners and possibly subtle differences in the styles of communication professionals from different regions. What *is* more important than region, in terms of differences, is the nature of the organisation that the communications professional is working for. This can clearly effect the knowledge and skills necessary to perform in the role, especially given the importance of knowing about the organisation. The context and situation of the organisation will in turn have direct influence on the need for cross-cultural competence, business and management knowledge and knowledge of social media.

Social media is viewed by all regions as a growing area but not all are necessarily viewing this as a threat but more as another media channel (Germany). In Turkey it is acknowledged how social media has been a great leveller through the fact that it adopted social media at the same time as the rest of the world. The Turkish economy is also growing fast and the communications profession with it. In contrast Spanish communications professionals possibly need to hone their negotiation and conflict resolution skills as a result of what is happening in their own troubled economy and the subsequent labour market tensions.

## 8 CASE STUDIES

This section explores the practitioner’s perspective in more detail through a sample of five interviews that were chosen as case studies. Each study starts by highlighting the top skills, knowledge and personal attributes chosen by each interviewee and then elaborates on each of the items. The case study ends by outlining the future trends identified by the interviewee.

### 8.1 Case Study 1

#### 8.1.1 Conceptual Background

Table 11 identifies the top knowledge, skills and personal attributes identified by Tamara who works with a mobile telecommunications company in Slovenia. The sections on the following pages draw upon the Communication Role Matrix.

Table 11

Communication Role Matrix – Case 1

Item		Development of Item
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate strategy</li> <li>• Knowledge about the organization</li> <li>• New technologies</li> <li>• Intercultural</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Ethics</li> </ul>	Current organization
<b>Skill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Influencing</li> <li>• Convincing</li> </ul>	
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Team mindedness</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> <li>• Diplomacy</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Sensitivity</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> </ul>	Some can be learned while others need to be developed through a mentor.



### 8.1.2 Profile

**Name:** Tamara  
**Country:** Slovenia  
**Age:** 35-39

**Organization:** Si.Mobil d.d.  
**Industry Sector:** Mobile  
**Job Title:** Corporate Communication and HRM Director  
**Role:** Internal Communications

### 8.1.3 Current Role

Tamara has been working for Si.Mobil d.d for 10 years and has been in her current role for 5 years. She is responsible for:

- overseeing two teams;
- managing corporate communications and human resources;
- handling all internal and external stakeholders including professional associations and regulatory agencies;
- compliance;
- the strategy process at a corporate level.

Tamara considers herself as a counsel to members of the board and to senior management.

### 8.1.4 Knowledge

Tamara learned knowledge in strategy and new technologies in her current role.

Intercultural knowledge is important for her line of work since Slovenia is a small country where you are in touch with people from many different cultures

Tamara believes “communication is a strategic function” and sees the value in acquiring business management knowledge and skills. She volunteered in her organization to become a strategy owner that forced her to go to business school for additional training and required her to read a lot.

Tamara notes, “We [Si.Mobil d.d] had an excellent strategist, a strategy officer in our company who started to lay down our strategy. According to that strategy, I as a communication function, would not have a value proposition in strategy but I got it through my HR function. I had to learn what is a strategy and how it develops, what is it composed of, what is a value proposition, what is a KPI [key performance indicator]. Through that process I have learned what kind of knowledge I needed and I started to learn many things.” Si.Mobil d.d is a company that can offer internal and external education for employees. Tamara says if you are not intrinsically interested or if you do not read relevant publications on the internet such as the Harvard Business Review or do not ask colleagues from other disciplines then nobody can help you. Tamara was not ashamed to ask when she did not understand something such as the definition of a key performance indicator.

### 8.1.5 Skills

Tamara’s business coach played a critical role in developing specific skills. In order for Tamara to survive in her current role and be accepted by others, she had to learn how to be very influential and convincing and had to have strong problem solving drive.

Tamara also believes cross-cultural competency is very important for Slovenia. There is a need not only to understand people from different cultures but also to understand how to engage people from other age groups or people from other disciplines.

#### 8.1.6 Future Trends

Tamara believes the main challenges of the future are managing diverse work styles and managing stakeholder relationships. One of the key questions is how do you balance technology while still maintaining a human touch? Teleworking will become more common in the future and will require organizations to be more flexible if employees, for example, decide only to work six months per year. As the younger generation demands a new working style, organizations will be faced with the task of keeping track of the employees who are coming and going while trying to integrate them faster into the company. As Tamara states, “We need to be able to have people not here but still on loop, only three clicks away.”

Another future trend is the generation communication gap for new technologies between senior and junior employees. Senior employees tend to use older forms of technology while junior employees are up to date with the latest digital platforms. It is challenging for Tamara to keep pace with the digital evolution since it is taking place rapidly so she keeps pace with the current social media knowledge by learning from her younger colleagues. It is important to note that she is not even 40 years old yet.

## 8.2 Case Study 2

### 8.2.1 Conceptual Background

Table 12 identifies the top knowledge, skills and personal attributes identified by Lorenzo who works with an insurance company in Spain. The sections on the following pages draw upon the Communication Role Matrix.

Table 12

Communication Role Matrix – Case 2

<b>Item</b>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic vision</li><li>• Socioeconomically environmental analysis</li><li>• Project management</li></ul>
<b>Skill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership</li><li>• Negotiation</li><li>• Communication</li></ul>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathy</li><li>• Innovation and Creative</li><li>• Ethic and social responsibility</li></ul>

### 8.2.2 Profile

**Name:** Lorenzo

**Country:** Spain

**Age:** 55-59

**Organization:** Mutua Madrileña

**Industry Sector:** Insurance

**Job Title:** Director of Corporate Comunicación, Identity and CSR of Group Mutua Madrileña and CEO of Fundación Mutua

**Role:** Chief Communications Officer

### 8.2.3 Current Role

Lorenzo's been working in his position with Mutua Madrileña for four years and reports to the President in the Board of Directors of Mutua Madrileña. The company is a mutual insurance company that operates in Spain and has strategic plans to expand internationally. The company has a consolidated profit of 179 million Euros and a patrimony of 5745 million Euros in 2011. His past jobs include being the chief communication officer (CCO) for 12 years.

Lorenzo is responsible for the internal and external communication team. His team provides support to other areas internally such as marketing, human resources and to the president. He describes the relationship with internal stakeholders as fluid and collaborative. The relationship with external stakeholders such as traditional and new media journalists is also fluid. The Monitor for Corporate Responsibility and journalists consider Mutua one of the most transparent companies that operates in an ethical manner.

### 8.2.4 Knowledge

Lorenzo considers that one of the main objectives of the director of communication is to create the best image and reputation for the company. He believes that strategic vision is needed to achieve long-term goals. He also feels social environment analysis is important. He considers it absolutely necessary to know some specifics about managing public affairs in Spain in order to succeed in the position. He considers that those people who come to a CCO role from undergraduate degrees in journalism (the majority in Spain), humanities or in social sciences have gaps in business management knowledge and skills.

Lorenzo acquired project management and strategic vision through experience in previous roles as director of communication and through his MBA education. He learned social environment analysis through experience and self-study. Although Lorenzo never had a formal coach or mentor in his career, he has had some good bosses who helped him develop certain knowledge areas.

Lorenzo understood early in his career that he needed a deeper understanding of business organizations and realized he would need additional training to fill his gaps in knowledge. He decided to develop this knowledge through self-study and by using his own resources. When he was a journalist for economic newspapers, he noticed he needed financial education and decided to pursue an MBA. Later when he began to work in consultancy, he noticed that he had lacked knowledge on how to build relationships with clients and how to create a general vision for the business. At this point, he decided to take a general management program that allowed him to gain understanding in the area of organizing and managing knowledge.

Lorenzo did not need to learn any new specific knowledge for his current position as he had acquired it prior to starting this position. He would like to know more about research methods, but he does not think it is necessary for this current position. He believes external education is more enriching than in-house education because knowledge is built and shared with professionals from other disciplines and sectors.

### 8.2.5 Skills

Through Lorenzo's experience, university education and external courses, he has received specific education in all the three selected skills in table 13. He has received extensive training on leadership because the companies where he had worked during his career prioritized it.

Lorenzo would also like to improve his organizational and multimedia skills even though there are people in the company who support these areas. Cross-cultural competency is not necessary for his current position as his company only operates in Spain at the moment. This competency was more relevant when he was working in consultancy. Lorenzo, who himself comes from an international family, thinks in-house training is the most suitable when developing cross-cultural competency.

### 8.2.6 Future Trends

Lorenzo believes that future practitioners who will hold undergraduate degrees in Public Relations and Audio Visual Communication will be better prepared than current CCO in Spain.

Lorenzo believes that teams will never be completely virtual because it needs to be supported by face-to-face interactions. He feels "it is important to know that you are there, to feel you will be there".

He believes the best way for future practitioners to develop new skills or learn new areas of knowledge is through external courses, experience and mentorship. Lorenzo believes that "Nothing can substitute experience". Future practitioners will need to be able to identify their weaknesses and transform them into strengths through education and experience.

## 8.3 Case Study 3

### 8.3.1 Conceptual Background

Table 13 identifies the top knowledge, skills and personal attributes identified by Uwe who works with an automotive company in Germany. The sections on the following pages draw upon the Communication Role Matrix.

Table 13

Communication Role Matrix – Case 3

Item		Development of Item
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge about own organization</li> <li>• Stakeholder management</li> <li>• Communication processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In current role</li> <li>• In previous role(s)/on-the-job</li> <li>• At university</li> </ul>
<b>Skill</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Multimedia skills</li> <li>2. Research, listening, forecasting</li> <li>3. Team building</li> <li>4. Motivation, delegation (trust in employees)</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In current role (1)*</li> <li>• At university (economics) (2)*</li> <li>• In Previous role(s)/on-the-job (3)*</li> <li>• Daimler executive courses</li> <li>• Role models</li> <li>• Coaching/Mentoring</li> <li>• Books on social media</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative and creative</li> <li>• Multi-tasking</li> <li>• Team minded (worker)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal attributes are grounded in a person's character.</li> </ul>

\* Each number is linked to specific skills in previous column.

### 8.3.2 Profile

#### Profile

**Name:** Uwe Knaus

**Country:** Germany

**Age:** 45-49

**Organization:** Daimler AG

**Industry Sector:** Automotive

**Job Title:** Manager Corporate Blogging & Social Media Strategy

**Role:** Social Media

### 8.3.3 Current Role

Uwe has been working with Daimler AG (formerly Daimler Chrysler) since 1991 in various capacities. Daimler AG is a German multinational automotive corporation that also manufactures buses and financial services through its Daimler Financial Services arm. In 1999, he started working in the corporate strategy department and later changed to the corporate communication department team where he was a member of the corporate strategy team and also responsible for knowledge management. In 2005, he started as a project manager for the emerging field of online communications. He was first responsible for the creation and management of the corporate Daimler-Blog that is still in existence today.

Since 2007, his main responsibilities include managing the corporate Daimler-Blog and other social media activities such as, Twitter, Slideshare, or YouTube. He also tries to coordinate and give certain guidelines for all social media activities of all Daimler brands (e.g. Mercedes-Benz, Setra and Smart) worldwide although these are produced and filled with content by the national communications departments. He currently manages a team of 3 people and is responsible for their training and development. He reports directly to a Senior Manager.

Uwe interaction with his staff is very team oriented and he believes he can learn a lot from them. He feels that having trust and confidence in the abilities of his employees is very important. Much of the interaction with his colleagues or team members is through direct communication. Uwe holds regular meetings with colleagues from other departments in the company such as IT, HR and Law where he has many discussions about social media governance, content and legal challenges. Globally, Uwe tries to make sure that national branches and their corporate communication departments stick to the corporate social media guidelines. To ensure his knowledge and skills are current, he:

- visits many communication congresses;
- speaks to colleagues and peers from other companies/agencies; and
- engages in research and teaching at several universities.

### 8.3.4 Knowledge

Daimler is a multinational company with many brands and this means you cannot manage everything. Uwe trusts that his national colleagues will do things right and he acknowledges that not everything will be conducted according to official company rules. Social media is a very fast changing business and is of high importance at the Daimler AG. Uwe has a lot of freedom within the communication department that many of his peers in other companies do not enjoy.

Uwe learned knowledge about legal issues and new technologies for his current role. He believes it is important to have a generalist perspective rather than an in-depth knowledge in one particular area. Uwe would like to continuously improve his knowledge on general legal issues and data privacy law which he considers of major importance for his future job.

### 8.3.5 Skills

Uwe believes that cross-cultural competency manifests itself through various forms listed below. In his opinion, the best way to develop these skills is through on the job learning.

- communicating with international colleagues;
- understanding national needs and cultural differences;
- recognizing different social media environments all over the world; and
- appreciating different social media consumers and actors globally (e.g. media freedom challenges in China)

For Uwe's current position, he had to learn human resource management and team management skills. He would also like to develop his leadership, administration and human resource management skills through in-house training courses and by applying the philosophy 'learning by doing'.

### 8.3.6 Future Trends

Uwe believes that future practitioners will need to be generalists rather than specialists. He feels specialists will do operational work but managers need a general overview and be able to evaluate things. He thinks communication will be more important because more people are communicating and there will be a greater need to be able to make yourself heard. Being able to tell a good story or having a good story to tell will be important. Another related skill will be coaching since more people will be communicating internally and externally. Other important skills and knowledge areas include:

- Language
- Critical thinking
- Strategic thinking
- Human resource management including openness, diplomacy, change management and caring about people

Uwe thinks that as the speed of communication increases, it is important to assess and interpret content faster and be able to react immediately to content that affects your company. As a result, the importance of virtual teams will increase since they are faster and more flexible. In the future there will be no time to wait until every team member can find a timeslot in his/her calendar. The best way to develop these new skills and areas of knowledge is through on the job experience.



## 8.4 Case Study 4

### 8.4.1 Conceptual Background

Table 14 identifies the top knowledge, skills and personal attributes identified by Gülaçar who works with a gas distribution company in Turkey. The sections on the following pages draw upon the Communication Role Matrix.

Table 14

Communication Role Matrix – Case 4

Item	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate strategy</li> <li>• Knowledge about own organization</li> <li>• Communication processes</li> </ul>
<b>Skill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing strategy</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> <li>• Daring/Risk Taking</li> <li>• Initiative</li> </ul>

#### 8.4.2 Profile

**Name:** Gülaçar  
**Country:** Turkey  
**Age:** 45-49

**Organization:** iGDAS  
**Industry Sector:** Gas  
**Job Title:** Corporate Communication Manager  
**Role:** Crisis Communication

#### 8.4.3 Current Role

Gülaçar is responsible for all corporate communication and media relations of iGDAS, the only corporation active in distributing and selling natural gas in Istanbul. She is continuously in touch and interacting with other departments internally and with external stakeholders. She notes that all natural gas subscribers in Istanbul are her stakeholders so her function is broad in scope. Her team consists of 7 people and she is responsible for their training and development. She also has line management responsibility and works directly with the senior management team and reports to the general manager.

#### 8.4.4 Knowledge

Gülaçar needs to be well versed in corporate strategy in order to do her job effectively. She states that she not only has one but many bosses to report to and as a result she needs to consider a wide variety of strategies at once.

During a crisis, Gülaçar says it is important to have an in-depth understanding about the organization, its structure, its stakeholders and how it functions. iGDAS is a public company and is directly connected to other public organizations. This means that any statement made in a time of crisis may affect other organizations. The importance of acquiring knowledge about the organization was illustrated to Gülaçar when a serious crisis arose when she first started working and she had troubles managing it since her knowledge about the company was limited.

In times of crisis, Gülaçar needs to be knowledgeable about the iGDAS' communication processes. One of her jobs is to influence the highest ranked executives. This is achieved by knowing what statement should be made to the media and knowing how to engage with them effectively.

Gülaçar acquired most of the knowledge listed in Table 15 with her current company as well as her previous job where she dealt with internal crisis. She underlines that she took the initiative to learn many things by herself especially since she already knew the content in the training sessions she attended. Gülaçar also says that she did not learn any of these items while she was studying at university or high school. She also thinks that the three knowledge areas are universal and not specific to working in Turkey.

She would also like to improve her knowledge in new technologies. Gülaçar says the best way to improve her knowledge in this area is to spare some time and show interest in it but states that it does not appeal to her at all. Gülaçar has individuals on her team who are experts in this area so she does not feel compelled to acquire new knowledge.

Gülaçar observes there is a gap in knowledge in the area of business knowledge on her team. She feels uncomfortable that everyone is so dependent on her and that when she is absent from the office things go wrong.

#### 8.4.5 Skills

Knowing what and how to write is crucial in crisis management. It is important to write substantial and fundamental information and not get oneself into trouble. Gülaçar recounts one example when workers got poisoned on a construction site in Istanbul around which people saw a boiler, alleging that intoxication had been caused by natural gas. Because Gülaçar knew that there had been no natural gas connection on the scene of the accident, she asked her teammates to write a press release indicating so. The press release that was prepared was long and outlined the advantages of natural gas. Gülaçar said her colleagues should have written simply, “There is no natural gas connection in the region where the accident occurred. May god rest their souls”. Gülaçar’s writing talent emerged in the public establishment, TV and radio stations where she worked previously and was responsible for writing news stories and press releases. She underlines that she improved her writing abilities primarily in iGDAS because she has worked for 12 years in the company.

Leadership is also an important skill since Gülaçar is the only person who manages the communication for the media. She advocates that in order to consider criticisms that may be encountered in times of crisis management, critical thinking is crucial.

Since iGDAS is a Turkish organization it is not important for Gülaçar to have cross-cultural competency in her current position, but she does agree that it is a necessary competency for communication practitioners. The best way to improve this competency is through experience, on-line tailored courses, in-house training, external specialist courses or mentorship. Gülaçar believes that there are no skills specific to her operation or work in Turkey. She does feel that their application or reflections may be different in Turkey than in other countries.

#### 8.4.6 Personal Attributes

Gülaçar feels that some personal attributes may be improved through education, learning, experience and doing by seeing. She feels any of the above methods would be useful.

#### 8.4.7 Future Trends

Gülaçar believes that future practitioners will have to learn new skills and acquire new areas of knowledge through on the job experience. She feels they will have to establish empathy and they will not have to deal with what Gülaçar has to deal with currently. She says that future practitioners will need to critically assess and develop content that uses new media forms and have the ability to discriminate and filter information. It is an important issue, but she believes the new generation is already living with it so they should simply learn how to manage this area.

## 8.5 Case Study 5

### 8.5.1 Conceptual Background

Table 16 identifies the top knowledge, skills and personal attributes identified by Bert who works with an oil and gas company in the Netherlands. The sections on the following pages draw upon the Communication Role Matrix.

Table 15

Communication Role Matrix – Case 5

Item	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New technologies</li> <li>• Corporate strategies</li> <li>• Listening, understanding and interpreting trends</li> </ul>
<b>Skill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulting</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Strategic thinking</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Polyvalence</li> </ul>

### 8.5.2 Profile

**Name:** Bert  
**Country:** Netherlands  
**Age:** 50-54

**Organization:** Shell  
**Industry Sector:** Oil and Gas  
**Job Title:** Vice president of Communications  
**Role:** Director

### 8.5.3 Current Role

Bert has been working for Shell since 1991 and is working in his current role since early 2012. He is responsible for communication and reputation management. Bert is leading teams in Hague, Amsterdam, Rijswijk, Pernis, Assen and Paris. He has line management responsibilities for his team and has training and development responsibilities for its members.

Bert explains that communication on its own has no issues, but is mutually dependent on other departments such as Legal, R&D and business units. Other departments identify issues in society and communication facilitates good implementation. In Bert's opinion, you have to be seen as a partner. He describes his interactions with other departments as cooperative, constructive and pleasant.

Communication is part of the management team, but Bert does not report to the president-director. Bert reports to the executive global communication president who reports to someone of the executive committee.

### 8.5.4 Knowledge

Bert believes you do not need to know everything when it comes to new technologies, but you should be able to know what is going on and identify relevant developments. In communication, you need to be innovative in research methods, in the use of social media and in terms of how you achieve your organizational goals.

For directors, it is also important to have an understanding of the organization, what are its aspirations and what is the vision. In communication, it is about how to get the organization from point A to point B. If you do not understand the corporate strategy then you are not able to communicate effectively.

One of the essential functions of the communication manager is to interpret trends and link them to business strategies by listening and understanding. Through contacts within and outside the organization, you need to get an idea about how the organization is perceived within society. Bert believes it is also important to know how your employees perceive the organization.

Bert acquired the knowledge listed in table 16 on the job, through networking and occasionally from some congresses. According to Bert, these areas of knowledge are not specifically tailored to working in the Netherlands. When he was studying there were no specific communication programs at universities. Nowadays, Shell employs people who have some background in communication in terms of education; however, the new practitioners still have to know how to bring knowledge into practices. Bert believes this is learned on the job. Shell also has its own education programs where employees learn about the communication process and the organization through case studies and

seminars. Shell also provides new employees with literature, on the job coaching and residential training courses to help them succeed in the workplace.

Bert feels Shell is not particularly good in using social media. Organizations that are more consumer focused are better in using social media effectively. Shell is now looking into this area. Bert would also like to strengthen his knowledge in social media and understand how to measure reputation and learn how to translate reputation into concrete terms.

Bert agrees that there is a gap between the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills relating to management and business. He thinks this challenge differs for each organization and in his opinion Shell is very poor in this area. He believes this gap can be reduced through in-house training. At Shell they offer internal and external training courses for employees so they can be trained in leadership and management.

### 8.5.5 Skills

Storytelling is an important skill for employees at all levels. Everything communication practitioners do is for an important part of telling a persuasive story. Being able to frame a story is a very good way to get your story across. Bert feels that there are good courses that are offered internally at Shell and other that are offered externally to employees wishing to strengthen this skill. At Shell, they use focus groups so employees can test several strategies and get feedback on their storytelling. Bert also thinks for a large part, storytelling is about trial and error that is mostly learned on the job.

Bert feels consulting is an important skill because you need to provide sound advice to management. Strategic thinking is also crucial because it is important to have a clear idea about how certain goals can be achieved. Strategic thinking is a skill that Bert learned for his current position. His team expects him to come up with a vision and solutions.

Bert would like to strengthen his ability to tell stories in pictures using social media platforms such as YouTube. Shell is now working on narratives to get a good reputation rather than simply reporting on the figures. Bert feels a total communication package is needed to solve this challenge. As society continues developing at a rapid pace, stakeholders now make value judgements about organizations instantaneously and organizations need to find a way to deal with this issue. Communication managers in general should also find ways to get the organization to follow their advices on these types of issues.

Bert believes that you need to have some sense about the country in which you work, but he thinks this is mostly by just making judgments about them based on common sense rather than learning a specific set of skills. He believes that cross-cultural competency is an important skill. He explains that you need to have the ability to operate in different cultural settings. Although Shell uses the same strategy worldwide, they do communicate messages differently according to the cultural setting. Bert illustrates this by using the example of publishing a book on the role of Shell within a society. In the Netherlands you would simply create and publish a nice book whereas in the Middle East, the book would start with a picture of the Sheikh and a story about him. The core message needs to remain the same while local issues are taken into consideration. At Shell responsibility is assigned at the lower level of the organization so employees can build their confidence and develop

this competency. Using this approach, the company is able to react quicker to sudden changes and new contexts.

#### 8.5.6 Personal Attributes

Brining your own personality to the organization is an important part of being authentic. Bert also thinks that if you do not have courage then you will not achieve anything. His philosophy is that it is better to make decisions even if they do not work out as expected than not to take a decision at all. Lastly, Bert advocated that the quality of decisions is better when you have a more diverse team surrounding you. As a result, polyvalence is key. He also states that personally you should be able to look at issues from multiple perspectives.

Bert believes that personal attributes are often part of someone's character and therefore they are hard to change compared to knowledge or skills. Instead he feels that you should focus on the strengths of an employee's character.

#### 8.5.7 Future Trends

In the future, Bert feels that there will be practitioners who will be specialists and generalists. Future practitioners will also need to be up to date with new technologies not only in media, but also in organization related technologies. In the function of vice president of communication, the management function will be increasingly important. Employees will also stand out and be successful if they are able to tweeze out the relevant information from a society that is overloaded with information. Bert encourages future practitioners to find the right format to present the information.

Bert views virtual teams as already being important. At this point, Shell already works in cross-country virtual team but there are some difficulties because it is harder to build a substantive relationship virtually.

Bert feels that core knowledge areas and specialities should be taught in the educational programs but also believes that bringing this into practice is something that will always be subjective to organisations and therefore on the job training is equally important.

## 9 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

This report reflects 15 months of desk and empirical work by the research team in three core phases: (1) the benchmarking report based on literature reviews in each country region; (2) quantitative data collection from communication practitioners in 42 countries across Europe; (3) qualitative data from 53 interviews across four senior practitioner roles in the 6 regions of the study's focus. From this breadth of primary and secondary data the team has been able to expand significantly the knowledge and understanding on the key questions for the ECOPSI project which is to develop insight into the current competencies of communications specialists in Europe, as well as understanding of their future development needs.

From the findings discussed in the report a number of headline discussion points emerge namely:

- There is little organized life-long learning or evidence of recognized CPD pathways and the value of formal undergraduate and postgraduate education is questioned. The profession needs to challenge both what Communication and PR education currently consists of and how it is delivered.
- Social Media knowledge may be an acknowledged weakness that people feel they need to improve in, but this does not mean that most practitioners want or need practical skills or training in this area. What the majority feel they need is greater understanding of its strategic application. There was significant evidence of intergenerational team working with valued contribution from younger members deemed more technology savvy.
- The industry needs to look closely at how it can foster intercultural relationships and cross-cultural working by setting up accredited and recognised programmes of exchange/secondment/internship with different companies in different countries. Existing student exchange programmes, such as Erasmus were found to be held in particularly high regard.
- Models of coaching and mentoring within the sector need to be devised and shared in an attempt to offer more formal, organised and supported career development that is on-the-job and in-situ. This could involve internal and external schemes, which again could be certified or accredited by a professional association or body.
- The value of observing others and learning from them is noted. Networks and Forums are a recognized support for practitioners at senior and lower levels but there may well be a gap in the middle ranks where professionals are more guarded of sharing knowledge, experience and weaknesses.



- There is evidence of an emerging future need to be a 'generalist communications specialist'.

From the findings it is evident there are synergies in the understanding and interpretation of the four roles studied within the 53 interviews carried out across the six regions, despite an emerging future need to be a 'generalist communications specialist'. This suggests and supports the hypothesis that public relations and communication is a maturing discipline in the European context with many shared experiences. Despite this development for the practice there are on-going gaps and deficiencies in the development of the individuals as well as broad variation in how practitioners identify needs and access appropriate interventions.

What does this research and its detailed findings mean for practice? It clearly suggests there are numerous opportunities for deeper and on-going professional training and development to build this consistency and support the practice in moving away from a hands-on, learning on-the-job approach to knowledge acquisition and development. Formal in-house coaching and mentoring and recognized training for both internal and external coaches may have a significant part to play, together with committed involvement in networks for communications professionals and knowledge exchange activity.

To move this agenda forward the ECOPSI programme aims to develop a diagnostic tool that will support individual practitioners in benchmarking their current knowledge, skills and personal attributes with those of their colleagues and peers across Europe. The intention with this diagnostic is that it will be an awareness-raising and intervention tool for individuals to seek out and interact with continuing professional development programmes to address the generic competencies as defined in the ECOPSI skills matrix.

This will be based within an ECOPSI portal that will facilitate the knowledge sharing and networking opportunities identified as currently missing and required by many of the participants and realise some of the uses for the Matrix, as identified by those interviewed, such as providing material for job descriptions, advertisements, recruitment and selection, head hunting, managing others, performance evaluation, training and development, self-reflection, career 'road-mapping' and coaching and mentorship. The portal will also be able to facilitate access to the Matrix and other helpful communication related resources to new and wider audiences identified by those interviewed, such as potential communications students and new recruits to the profession.

The diagnostic tool and portal parts of the ECOPSI programme will report and go 'live' in the autumn of 2013.

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## 11 APPENDIX











Table 16




### Company Descriptions

Company	Logo	Description
Jeroen Bosch Ziekenhuis		Jeroen Bosch Ziekenhuis is one of the largest teaching hospitals in the Netherlands with 240 medical specialties.
ECN – Nuclear Energy Research Institution		ECN is the largest energy research institute in the Netherlands and is known internationally for its work in the areas of wind energy, solar energy, policy studies and biomass & energy efficiency.
Schiphol Group		Schiphol Group is an airport company with Amsterdam Airport Schiphol as its main asset. The company has four main business areas: aviation, consumer products and services and real estate and alliances and participation.
IGDAS - Istanbul Gas Distribution Industry and Trade Inc. Co		IGDAS is a Turkish company active in distributing and selling natural gas in Istanbul.
Sabancı Group		Sabancı group is an industrial and financial conglomerate in Turkey and operates in 18 countries across Europe, the Middle East, Asia, North Africa and North and South America.
Borusan Holding		Borusan Holding is one of the largest Turkish conglomerates and is involved in energy, steel logistics and distribution.


<p>McDonalds Turkey</p>		<p>McDonald's is a global fast food retailer with over 200 stores in Turkey.</p>
<p>UKCL - University Medical Centre Ljubljana</p>		<p>The University Medical Centre Ljubljana is the largest public health care institution in Slovenia and provides medical services at secondary and tertiary level.</p>
<p>Elektro- Slovenija, d.o.o</p>		<p>Elektro-Slovenija, d.o.o is a transmission network system operating company in Slovenia.</p>
<p>Unidad Militar de Emergencias</p>		<p>Unidad Militar de Emergencias is a branch of the Spanish Armed Forces and provides disaster relief.</p>
<p>Group ZED</p>		<p>Zed is a company providing multi-platform marketing solutions and digital value-added content in over 65 countries worldwide.</p>
<p>CLH Compania Logistica de Hidrocarburos</p>		<p>CLH Compania Logistica de Hidrocarburos is a private company involved in oil production, transportation and storage in Spain.</p>
<p>DHL</p>		<p>DHL is private company operating in the logistics industry specialising in the transportation of letters, goods and information. The company is present in over 220 countries worldwide.</p>



Government Agency Rotterdam	 Gemeente Rotterdam	The government agency of Rotterdam is responsible for the day to day running of the city of Rotterdam in Netherlands.
University of Utrecht	 Universiteit Utrecht	Utrecht University is a research university comprising of seven faculties which collectively cover the full spectrum of research and education in the Netherlands.
DB Mobility Logistics	 DB Mobility Networks Logistics	DB Mobility Logistics offers logistical services and operates in over 130 countries worldwide. In Germany its core business is the railway.
Henkel AG & Co	 Henkel	Henkel AG & Co is a company focusing on home care, beauty care and adhesive technology products. The company operates in more than 75 countries worldwide.
Si Mobil d.d.	 Si Mobil	Si Mobil d.d. is a major mobile phone operator in the telecommunications industry in Slovenia.
Petrol d.d. Ljubljana	 PETROL	Petrol d.d. Ljubljana is a company that supplies oil and other energy products to the Slovenian market. The company operates 348 service stations in Slovenia and abroad.
Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG)	 Dienst Landelijk Gebied Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Landbouw en Innovatie	Dienst Landelijk Gebied is an agency under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation within the Government of the Netherlands and is responsible for land and water management.
Sava d.d.	 Sava	Sava d.d. is a business group active in real estate, finance and tourism in Slovenia and its neighbouring countries.
Kingfisher Group	 Kingfisher	Kingfisher is a home improvement retail group with over 1,000 stores in eight countries in Europe and Asia.
Aviva UK	 AVIVA	Aviva provides insurance, savings and investment products to customers in the UK and worldwide.

<p>Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen Airport</p>		<p>Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport is responsible for the management of the terminal buildings, car park, ground handling, cargo and aircraft refueling operations, the airport hotel.</p>
<p>Koc Holding Inc. Co</p>		<p>Koc Holding Inc. Co is a Turkish conglomerate with its core business in energy, automotives, consumer durables and the finance sectors. The business is focused on the global market with an emphasis on Turkey and Europe.</p>
<p>Mars Entertainment Group</p>		<p>Mars Entertainment Group focuses on the entertainment industry in Turkey and has two strategic business units: cinemas and sports clubs.</p>
<p>Daimler AG</p>		<p>Daimler AG is a global multinational corporation that produces cars and commercial vehicles. Its brand portfolio includes Mercedes-Benz, Maybach and Freightliner.</p>
<p>A&amp;Y Marka Magazacilik</p>		<p>A&amp;Y Marka Magazacilik is a Turkish company that owns and operates a retail apparel store.</p>
<p>BASF SE</p>		<p>BASF SE is a petrochemical company with a portfolio that includes chemicals, plastics, performance products and crop protection products to oil and gas. The company has six Verbund sites and approximately 380 other production sites worldwide.</p>

<p>Grupo Vitalia</p>		<p>Grupo Vitalia operates care centres for the elderly in Spain.</p>
<p>BBVA Innovation Centre</p>		<p>BBVA Innovation Centre operates in the banking sector Spain and four other countries globally.</p>
<p>Chill Insurance</p>		<p>Chill Insurance is an Irish independent online insurance company.</p>
<p>Anglo American</p>		<p>Anglo American is a British multinational mining company with core business units including iron ore, manganese, metallurgical coal, thermal coal, copper, nickel, platinum, diamonds and other mining and industrial products. The company is present in Africa, Europe, South and North America, Australia and Asia.</p>
<p>Achmea</p>		<p>Achmea is a holding company of insurance brands. The company is active in 8 European countries.</p>
<p>NOS</p>		<p>NOS is the public broadcaster in the Netherlands and provides news and sports programming to the public television stations and radio services.</p>
<p>Philips</p>		<p>Philips is a Dutch multinational company that designs and produces products in the area of healthcare, lifestyle and lighting. The company is present in over 60 countries worldwide.</p>

Shell		<p>Shell is a global group of energy and petrochemicals companies present in over 80 countries.</p>
ING		<p>ING is a global financial institution of Dutch origin, currently offering banking, investments, life insurance and retirement services in over 40 countries worldwide.</p>
B. Braun-Melsungen		<p>B. Braun-Melsungen is a company catering to the healthcare sector in 58 countries. The company provides products for anesthesia, intensive medicine, cardiology, extra corporeal blood treatment and surgery, as well as services for hospitals, general practitioners and the homecare sector.</p>
Novartis		<p>Novartis provides healthcare solutions to patients in over 140 countries. Its portfolio includes medicines, eye care, cost-saving generic pharmaceuticals, preventive vaccines and diagnostic tools, over-the-counter and animal health products.</p>
Mutua Madrileña		<p>Mutua Madrileña is a Spanish insurance company that provides life, automobile, health and accident insurance as well as pension and investment funds.</p>
FCC		<p>FCC is a Spanish company whose business activity focuses on the areas of infrastructure, services and energy. FCC is present in over 50 countries.</p>

<p>Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF)</p>		<p>EEF is the manufacturers' organization for UK manufacturing companies.</p>
<p>National Health Service (NHS)</p>		<p>The National Health Service is the publicly funded healthcare system within the United Kingdom.</p>
<p>Telefonica UK Ltd</p>		<p>Telefonica is a global multinational in the telecommunications sector with presence in 25 countries in Europe and Latin America.</p>
<p>Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS)</p>		<p>Nederlandse Spoorwegen is the main railway operator in the Netherlands</p>
<p>Deutsche Post DHL</p>		<p>Deutsche Post DHL is a postal and logistics services group. Its integrated DHL and Deutsche Post brands offer services in international transportation and contract logistics. Deutsche Post is Germany's provider of postal services. It is also a provider of dialogue marketing, press distribution services and corporate communications solutions.</p>

The total number of interviews and the number of companies represented differs because there were a number of instances where interviewees in different roles or countries worked for the same organisation and because a number of interviewees did not want their company name reported.