EUPRERA 2014
International congress:
“Communication Ethics in a Connected World”

European Public Relation Education and Research Association
LASCO laboratory
Université catholique de Louvain
IHECS institute
Brussels, 11-13 September

CALL FOR PAPERS
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: 28 FEBRUARY 2014
EUPRERA

The European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) is an independent organization that aims at stimulating and promoting innovative knowledge and practices of strategic communication, organizational communication and public relations across Europe. Founded in 1959 and previously named “CERP Education & Research,” EUPRERA is a network where academics and professionals attract, convey, disseminate and create innovations in the field. Several cross-national and comparative researches and education projects are organized by members and affiliated universities. In order to spread new methodologies and research results, EUPRERA has been organizing its highly regarded academic Annual Congress for 15 years. Every year, it is held in collaboration with a selected university in Europe. At the congress, recent research results are presented, based on peer-reviewed papers and panel sessions; PhD students also have the opportunity to continue the experience through the PhD Seminar, which follows the Annual Congress. The congress is a major event to exchange research insights and to start collaborations in this specific field in Europe. More information on www.euprera.org

Université Catholique de Louvain (Catholic University of Louvain) – UCL

Founded in 1425, UCL is one of Europe’s oldest universities, with more than 28,000 students on six sites. In the 2012 QS World University Rankings, UCL was ranked 127th, making it Belgium’s leading French-speaking university. UCL attracts every year 5,000 international students from around the globe. With one Nobel Prize, 21 Francqui Prizes (“the Belgian Nobel”) and numerous international awards which means UCL teaching courses are based on solid research and innovation, with a lot of applications for society (50 spin-offs and 197 enterprises in the 3 scientific parks of the university). UCL has been developing teaching and research on communication since 1946; it is today a leading university for organizational communication and public relations research and education in the French-speaking part of Belgium. More information on the following website: www.uclouvain.be

The LASCO laboratory (Laboratory for the analysis of organizational communication systems) is part of UCL and works in cooperation with IHECS, Brussels. It brings together researchers of different origins, united by the common aim of observation and analysis of internal and external, strategic and spontaneous phenomena of organizational communication. The address for additional information: www.uclouvain.be/hasco.html

IHECS Institute (Institut des Hautes Études des Communications Sociales)

IHECS, founded in 1958, provides university-level education (Bachelor and Master degrees) in communication: Applied communication, Journalism, Public relations, Advertising and commercial communication, Socio-cultural activities and lifelong learning (Media, culture and society), Communication and European affairs. It also offers a range of Lifelong Learning courses. Its focus is teaching for career development, combining theory courses with practical experience of the media and foreign languages (English, Dutch or German, Spanish). IHECS is a department of the Haute école Galilée (Brussels) and is part of the university-level social form of higher education. It is organized by the free network that is supported financially by the French-speaking Community of Belgium. http://www.ihecs.be
Theme: “Communication Ethics in a connected world”

Public relations, strategic communication and organizational communication always had an important and complex relation with ethics: the work on opinion and reputation puts communication professionals directly in touch with all sorts of ethical issues, and this reality is even more apparent today. The 2012 edition of the *European Communication Monitor* gives a clear sign of this situation: a majority of communication professionals in Europe have been confronted with one or more ethical challenges each year in their work, and their amount increases in time. The international and intercultural nature of contemporary communication practice, together with the increase of social media, make the ethical dimension of communication more and more evident and demanding.

Many different professional associations around the world have proposed deontological principles and charts. Transparency is often evoked as a necessity for today’s organizational and communication practices. On the other side, the reputation of communication professionals has been continually under scrutiny and submitted to heavy criticism. The reputation of the professionals in charge of companies’ reputation is thus at stake. At the same time, researchers have contributed to the criticism and legitimization of professional communication with different arguments – raging from philosophers like Jürgen Habermas who described public relations as an “engineering of consent” (recuperating the famous expression of Edward L. Bernays), to James E. Grunig who suggest that strategic communication can be symmetrical and Robert L. Heath who argue it can help to foster good in society. Concepts like “dialogue”, “symmetry” and “transparency” included in those theories are challenged from normative and empirical perspectives in recent research and many new perspectives are emerging.

Many questions can indeed be raised about the relation between public relations, organizational communication, strategic communication and ethics today, from different points of view. What place does ethics have in today’s communication practice? What is the relation between ethical issues, power, (different forms of) capital distribution and rhetorical construction of communication and discourse? How is ethics evoked in strategic communication campaigns and discourses, which are the semiotic and rhetorical forms of its presence in communication documents and situations? Which ethics, which principles can be identified as universal references for PR practice? How are ethical forms of communication developed? We propose a list of different areas in which these questions arise.
Subthemes:

1 Public relations, new media and ethics. In the era of Web 2.0 and “conversation”, in which interaction and some forms of symmetry seem to emerge, can we really talk about an “ethical turn” in PR practice? How can new communication technologies impact the ethical dimension of PR work, and how are normative concepts interwoven into theoretical concepts about social media communication?

2 Ethical issues of strategic communication in a multi-cultural world. In the era of extreme globalization and interconnection of cultures and value systems, communication professionals operate in a complex context, in which they have to deal with different moral and religious systems. How can the intercultural context of today’s PR and communication be conceptualized and analyzed, from its ethical dimensions? How can PR research and education help in developing a positive and constructive attitude about concrete complex ethical situations?

3 Ethical aspects of the public relations profession and professionalisation. Ethics and deontology are important parts of professionalism in communication. The conference invites researchers who work on the evolution of the communication professions and professional competences today. Some authors affirm that communication experts should be a kind of ethical advisor for managers and companies: is this position a reality or another sort of “myth”? How does this relate to other professions who develop ethical competencies and sensibilities for compliance issues (human resources, business ethics). How can the concept of “responsible communication” be theorized, and which forms does it take in concrete situations?

4 Public affairs, lobbying, and ethics. The discussion on how to regulate lobbying practices is at the center of the public debate in many European countries. This evolving situation can be analyzed from an empirical and a theoretical point of view. How is ethics present in the interaction between professionals, public authorities and other groups? Is it possible to construct good lobbying and public affairs practices and norms? The location of the congress (Brussels, one of the world biggest centers of lobbying and strategic communication) is particularly related to these themes.

5 Sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and public relations. The imperative of sustainable development and the enormous development of CSR in today’s management practices and discourse are important sources of ethical engagement and challenges for the communication function. Public opinion and Non-Governmental Organizations strongly question businesses and public authorities about their real engagement in defense of human rights and environmental issues. On the other side, businesses and public authorities look for new discursive ways to propose their engagement towards society and the environment. In this context, we are encouraging presentations of researches on communication practices that turn around CSR and sustainable development issues.

6 Theoretical and empirical approaches to strategic communication (Open session). In order to open up the annual congress to the most recent and thought-provoking research, we also invite high-quality papers that present research on other aspects of public relations and organizational communication. We are especially looking for innovative methodologies and approaches, interdisciplinarity, empirical evidence from European countries, and cross-cultural and cross-national studies.
Call for contributions

Academics and practitioners are invited to submit papers relating to the general theme and to one or more of the sub-themes. All relevant academic and interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed, including, among others, media and communication studies, sociology, psychology, business theory, and organizational theory. Analytical, quantitative and qualitative methods are welcome. Papers from PhD students are also welcomed. Panel proposals are also possible (see below).

Awards

The scientific committee of the congress will select the three best papers, which will be awarded at the congress. More details will be published in Spring 2014 on http://www.euprera.org/

Publication of papers

All papers presented during the congress will be uploaded in a reserved area of the congress website. The best papers related to the congress topic will be selected for submission to a special edition of the “Journal of Communication Management” or for an edited book published by Peter Lang (New York) after the congress. Each publication will have strict editing criteria (available on the congress website) to be applied to the paper and a further selection process by a dedicated editorial team will follow.

Abstract and paper submission: length and details

Abstracts should be 800 words, excluding tables and figures. Full papers should be between 30,000 to 40,000 characters (including blanks; excluding pictures and tables). Papers selected for the Journal of Communication Management will have to be 40,000 characters long (including blanks; excluding pictures and tables). Papers selected for the EUPRERA congress book may have to be reduced to 30,000 characters (including blanks; excluding pictures and tables). Only those papers fulfilling the attached format requirements will be considered for publication.

Language for both abstracts and full papers: English.

Panel sessions submission

A few panel sessions are also possible. Proposals can be submitted like paper abstracts via the web platform mentioned below and will be assessed. Panel proposals have to include:

• Title and rationale/abstract for the panel, relating it to the overall topic of the conference and the body of knowledge of public relations research.
• Title and short description for each contribution.
• Name and affiliation of each contributor with a two-line bio, which shows his or her specific profile regarding the panel topics. Each panel should be designed for a 60 minutes session with at least 15 minutes included for discussion with the audience. A panel should consist of 1 chairperson, 3 presenters, and (mandatory) 1 respondent. No-one should take two roles. Panelists should represent various organizations and countries / cultures, if possible.
Relevant dates for panel sessions and abstract submission:
   a. Deadline for abstracts and panel proposals: February 28, 2014
   b. Feedback on abstracts and panels: March 28, 2014
   c. Deadline for full papers: June 20, 2014
   d. Feedback on full papers: July 18, 2014
   e. Deadline for final version of full papers: August 31, 2014

Website for both abstract and full paper submissions:
www.euprera.org/congress2014

Authors who receive positive feedback on their abstract or panel session proposition will immediately be able to plan their travel, book the hotel and register for the congress.

The scientific committee and board of reviewers will be indicated on the website of the conference: www.euprera.org/congress2014
Contact

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