

# The status quo and trends for the communication profession in Europe

## Results of a survey in 46 countries

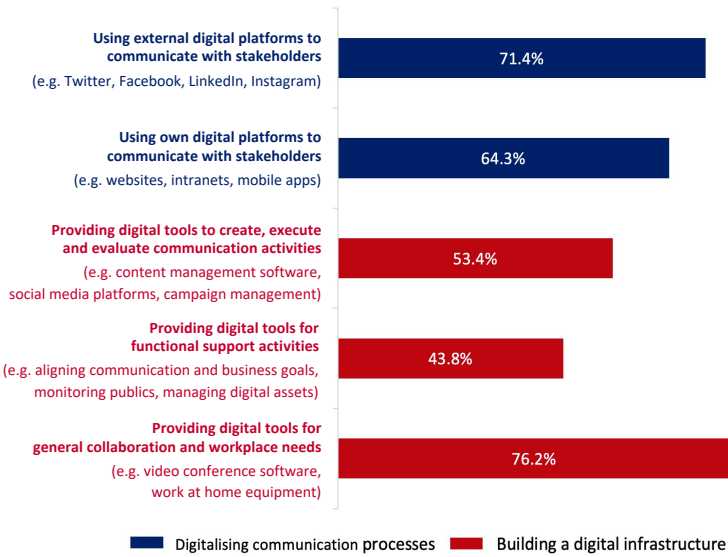
The 2021 edition of the world’s largest study into strategic communication and public relations has explored current practices and future developments of communications in companies, non-profits and other organisations including communication agencies across Europe. The full report, based on interviewing more than 2,600 communication leaders and practitioners, includes insights on CommTech and digital infrastructure, video-conferencing for stakeholder communications, and future roles for communication professionals. The most important strategic issues for the profession in the next years and characteristics of excellent communication departments are identified as well. Detailed analyses are available for 22 countries and different types of organisations in the full report – available for free on [www.communicationmonitor.eu](http://www.communicationmonitor.eu).

### CommTech and digital infrastructure

A vast majority of practitioners across Europe highlight the **importance of digitalising stakeholder communications** (87.7%) and **building a digital infrastructure** (83.9%). The **current level of digital maturity**, however, is often unsatisfactory: Only a minority (43.8%) of communication departments and agencies is considered mature when it comes to providing digital tools for support activities that are specific for communications (see figure).

**Strategies for digital transformation** are crucial for mastering the future of communications. The study shows that strategies for transforming structure (42.1%) or people (41.9%) and especially for modifying tasks (39.4%) are less prevalent than approaches for using technology (48.3%). Statistical analyses with a regression model show that **developing strategies for all dimensions helps to boost digital maturity**.

### Digital maturity level of communication departments and agencies



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Drivers for the continued use of video-conferencing after the pandemic	
Using video-conferencing will be effective for me	70.2%
Using video-conferencing will be easy for me	68.3%
My organisation will support me in using video-conferencing	62.0%
My colleagues will expect me to use video-conferencing	73.5%
Stakeholders will find video-conferencing effective when engaging with my organisation	71.5%
Stakeholders will expect me to use video-conferencing when engaging with them	70.5%

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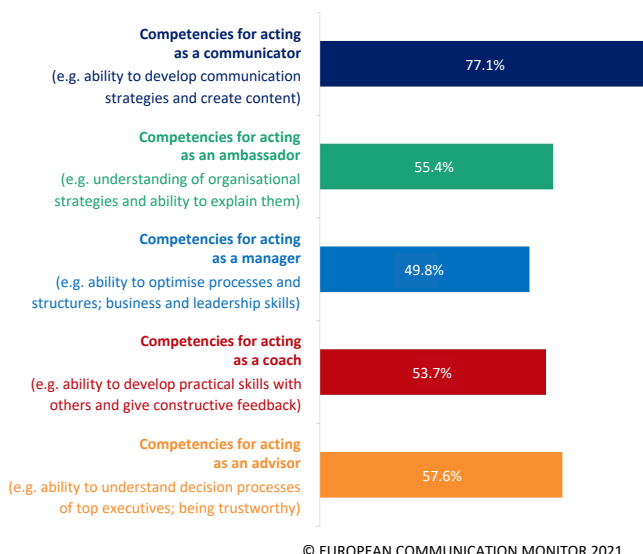
### Video-conferencing for stakeholder communications

Video-conferencing has clearly taken over during the pandemic, with **89.2% of communication professionals across Europe using it** for stakeholder communications during the past year. The most frequent use can be seen in **internal communications for informing and engaging employees** (92.5%). **Bigger screens and more stationary conference-room and desktop setups** (53.9%) are prioritised over smaller, more versatile equipment such as laptops (40.6%) or smartphones and tablets (4.8%).

When looking at effectiveness, usefulness, and expectations to **use video-conferencing in a ‘post-Covid’ world**, a majority sees the technology continuously as an effective tool for organisational communication and equally expect their stakeholders to share this opinion (see figure for details).

All in all, three out of four practitioners (72.8%) intend to use it for stakeholder communications **even when the pandemic is over**.

## Competencies for different roles



## Future roles for communication professionals

Today, communication **professionals devote most of their worktime** to the traditional Communicator role (42.8%), followed by the Manager role (31.1%). While one quarter of the respondents spend a substantial share of their worktime as a Coach (27.7%) or Advisor (26.2%) as of now, more than half of the surveyed practitioners expect that these two roles will rise in importance in the next three years. When it comes to the **competencies and personal attributes relevant to the various roles**, it is not surprising that a majority consider themselves well equipped to communicate on behalf of organisations (77.1%), but only one in two consider their management competencies to be high (see figure).

Practitioners who perform the Advisor role **most often advise top managers or heads of other departments on strategic business decisions**, rather than middle managers. These advisors often have more than 10 years of professional experience and they have received training in management concepts and strategic decision-making.

## Characteristics of excellent communication departments

The **Comparative Excellence Framework for Communication Management (CEF)** has been applied to identify high-performing communication departments and their attributes. These excellent communication departments put a **stronger emphasis on using big data and algorithms** ( $\Delta +2.1\%$ ) and on **digitalising communication processes** ( $\Delta +2.9\%$ ). They are significantly **more mature both in digitalising stakeholder communications and in building a digital infrastructure** and their strategies for transforming technology, people, structure and tasks are all **better developed**.

Along this line, excellent departments **are more likely to continue using video-conferencing** even after the pandemic. All in all, they are characterised by **moving ahead in digitalising internal workflows and stakeholder interactions** – even if they are already better than the rest.

## About the study

The European Communication Monitor 2021 is based on responses from 2,664 communication professionals from 46 European countries, most of them senior leaders with more than 10 years tenure in the field. The strict selection of participants, a unique research framework based on established theories and statistical analyses fulfilling academic standards are key features of the study. Lead researchers Professors Ansgar Zerfass (Leipzig), Alexander Buhmann (Oslo), Ralph Tench (Leeds), Dejan Verčič (Ljubljana) and Ángeles Moreno (Madrid) are supported by national research collaborators who are professors at renowned universities across the continent.

**Download the full report (PDF, 108 pp.) for free:**  
[www.communicationmonitor.eu](http://www.communicationmonitor.eu)



***"There will be neither a return to the old familiar nor a new normal that reflects today's practices. Instead, communications in the 'post-Covid' world will be transformed by digitalisation on all levels, as explored in this study."***

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

***"Change is constant and communicators must be able to adapt as the world starts to transition from crisis to recovery. This comes with lots of opportunities. The European Communication Monitor helps to reflect upon them."***

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

