

Competency development in the communication profession in Europe Results of a survey in 44 countries

The status quo and future requirements for competency development in the communication profession are key topics explored in the European Communication Monitor 2020. Results are based on interviewing more than 2,300 practitioners working in companies, non-profits and other organisations including communication agencies across Europe. Detailed analyses are available for 22 countries and different types of organisations. Apart from competencies, the full report for this year’s monitor also includes insights on ethical challenges and resources, cyber security and communications, as well as gender equality in the profession. The full report is available for free on www.communicationmonitor.eu.

Status quo and future needs

Almost half of respondents (43%) in this study agree that **competencies are intensively discussed** in their country, highlighting their importance to communicators across the continent. Reflecting this, most practitioners (81%) believe in the **need for constant improvement** (see figure). But the importance of building competencies varies by experience and location. Experienced communication professionals are more aware of the need to develop competencies, whilst one quarter of practitioners in their 20s report only little or moderate need for competency development. The awareness for competency development is strongest in Western and Northern Europe.

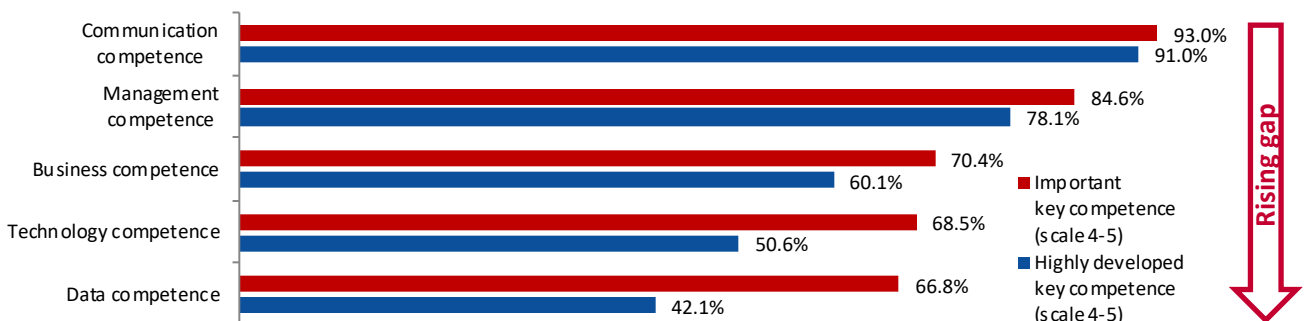


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Key competencies of communication professionals in Europe

There are discrepancies between perceived importance of competencies and current qualification level of individuals. For instance, **68% of practitioners report that technological competence is important, but only 51% report a highly developed competence in this area** (see figure below). Communication leaders are skilled in business, management and communication skills, exceeding their subordinates across these areas. Younger professionals report the greatest skill in handling technology. **Gender disparities in competencies exist**, with female practitioners confident in their communication and management competencies, whilst male practitioners rate their business and technology skills significantly higher.

Competencies in communications: Perceived importance and personal level



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Training and development

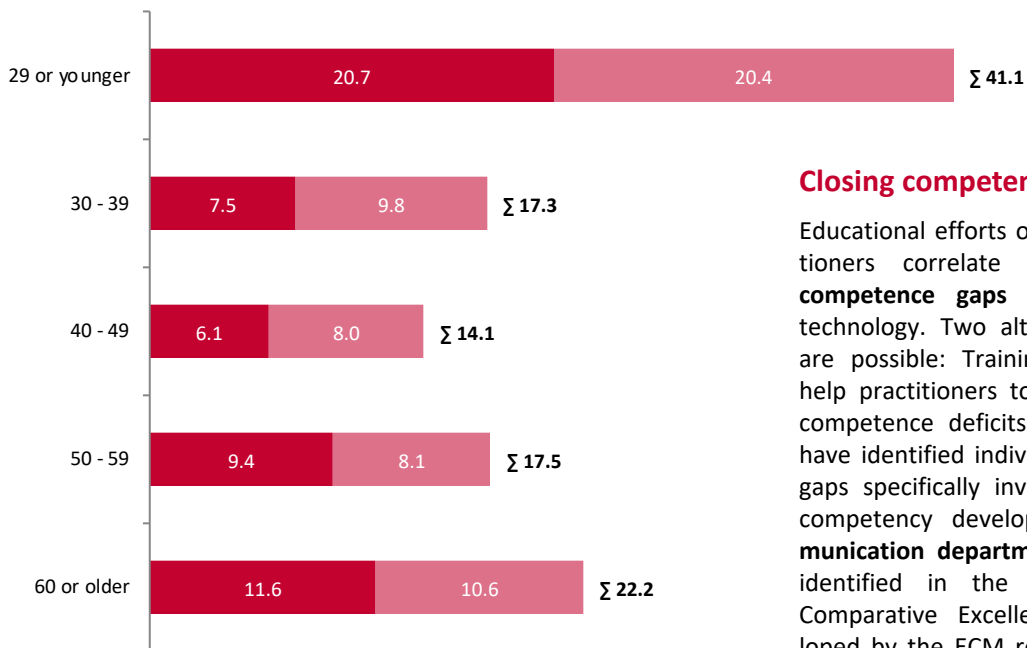
Across Europe, communication professionals have completed an **average of 19 training days per year in 2019**, with 10 of those taking place in the practitioner's free time (weekends, holidays or evenings). Most time for personal development is invested by those working in consultancies and agencies, and lowest amongst those working in joint stock companies. There are significant **differences between practitioner age groups**, with younger professionals (29 years or younger) investing over eight weeks of work and leisure time in further study, compared to only two weeks for those between 40 and 49 (see figure below). In terms of **who should be responsible for further competency development**, most respondents (84%) report that individuals should invest in their own development, but many (83%) plead for programmes at the organisational level.

About the study

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

Download the full report (PDF, 132 pp.) for free:
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Average number of full days spent for training and development



- Number of days of invested work time on personal training and development
- Number of days of invested free time on personal training and development

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Closing competency gaps

Educational efforts of communication practitioners correlate with the **closing of competence gaps** in handling data and technology. Two alternative interpretations are possible: Training efforts could either help practitioners to reduce tech and data competence deficits. Or, practitioners who have identified individual tech and data skill gaps specifically invest more time in their competency development. **Excellent communication departments**, which have been identified in the study based on the Comparative Excellence Framework developed by the ECM researchers, **invest more time in training and personal development of their staff**. Consistently, they report smaller skills gaps.



"Strong competencies – both communication-specific and general – have been identified as a key driver of success for outstanding communication departments. Practitioners need to upskill their technology and data skills, as this allows them to deal with current and upcoming challenges for their organisations."

Thomas Leitner, Vice President, CISION D/A/CH

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