



Communication Saves Lives: Communication Experts Call for Ethical and Effective Communications to Handle Covid-19 Global Pandemic

Brussels, 15 April 2021 – EUPRERA, with the international professional and academic associations of public relations and communicators launched the Statement on Communication of Covid-19 Pandemic calling for honest and effective communication.

More than a year since the World Health Organization first declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (IHR), numerous problems emerged concerning the coordination of communication across institutions about the virus, protective measures, correct responses and vaccination.

Despite several warnings from the scientific community and the availability of information and lessons from previous infectious disease emergencies, governments and authorities around the world have shown a limited capacity to respond effectively to health emergency outbreaks.

Recent research evidence from the EUPRERA Com-Covid Network, a global series of national research projects organized by the European Public Relations Education and Research Associations have shown poor communication management along with low trust in information sources and authorities. Ángeles Moreno, President of EUPRERA said: “We know that ethical professional communication can save lives. Excellent practitioners are key to managing a pandemic as they can facilitate and maintain relations and mutual understanding between institutions and the public”.

The capacity to relay the right information quickly and clearly across different media platforms is essential to manage a public health emergency in an unbounded media landscape. In contrast, unclear and dishonest information can multiply the opportunities for miscommunication, in addition to leading to the dissemination of fake news, conspiracy theories and the spread of counter-behaviours that can compromise the abilities of societies to control the virus. Misleading messages and contradictory hints from leaders and institutions compromise trust, which can hamper a successful collective response.

With this statement, international professional and academic associations of strategic communication and public relations want to identify the mistakes for authorities and citizens and help with effective solutions.

Ángeles Moreno, President of EUPRERA, states: “Someone had to say it from an expert assessment: first, international and national authorities have not managed communications correctly during the pandemic in too many cases and second, PR and communication recognized professionals and researchers are here to help.”

The full Statement is attached and available at: bit.ly/CStatement

The statement is supported by:

EUPRERA. European Public Relations Education and Research Association. Ángeles Moreno, President

EACD European Association of Communication Directors. Kim Larsen, President

ECREA European Communication Research and Education Association Section for Organisational and Strategic Communication (OSC). Isabel Ruiz-Mora, OSC Chair

FERPI Federazione Relazioni Pubbliche Italiana. Rosella Sobrero, President

Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management. Justin Green, President

ICA International Communication Association Public Relations Division. Flora Hung-Baesecke, Division Chair

Institute for Public Relations. Tina McCorkindale, President

INTERDECOM International Declaration of Communications Professionals and Researchers for a healthier, viable, better world. Solange Tremblay, Leading Author – Thierry Libaert, Co-author

IPRA International Public Relations Association. Philippe Borremans, President

NORA The Nordic Alliance for Communication & Management. Alexander Buhmann, Director

The Museum of Public Relations. Shelley J. Spector, President

Women in PR North America. Talia Beckett Davis, President

BledCom International Public Relations Research Symposium. Dejan Verčič, Co-founder

Additional quotes

EUPRERA European Public Relations Education and Research Association. Ángeles Moreno, President

“Someone had to say it from an expert assessment: first, international and national authorities have not managed communications correctly during the pandemic in too many cases and second, PR and communication recognized professionals and researchers are here to help”.

EACD European Association of Communication Directors. Kim Larsen, President

“Lending the EACD voice to this statement will enable communication leaders across Europe to strengthen their knowledge positions with relevant stakeholders”

Board member, Phil Riggins added “Words matter. They can encourage socially responsible behaviour or they can reinforce fears that make people reluctant to do what is needed. Communication professionals, especially during crises, are critical partners with government in finding our collective way through times like these.”

INTERDECOM International Declaration of Communications Professionals and Researchers for a healthier, viable, better world, Solange Tremblay, Leading Author

"Knowing how to stand when our world is shaking is a responsibility that is a matter of urgency. In the face of this global health emergency and the accelerating climate crisis that is intertwined, it is more than necessary to tighten the cohesion of communication and information forces, to mobilize the roles and responsibilities, knowledge and expertise of communication academics and professionals on an international scale. It is no longer enough to agree, today's issues call for commitment and action. We have a collective responsibility to the future."

IPRA International Public Relations Association. Philippe Borremans, President

"Having worked on the ground with emergency teams as a Risk Communication Consultant in Asia and Africa I have seen how transparent and clear communication can save lives. As PRresident of IPRA, I am convinced we need to take this pandemic as an opportunity to build bridges among health stakeholders, government and our communities. Let's combine our experience in both crisis and risk communication to support an inclusive and ethical communication effort on a global scale. The "general public" does not exist, so above all else let's make sure messages are localised and taking into account social and cultural backgrounds and realities. Public Relations professionals worldwide are here to help and ready to support the challenging times ahead."

FERPI Federazione Relazioni Pubbliche Italiana. Rosella Sobrero, President

"Ferpi is on the first line to support the role of public relations and communication professionals, networking with industry global bodies and European associations. We are enthusiastic to participate in this effort, strongly convinced that as an Association of PR professionals we can and must *advise, consult and facilitate access to expert members to enable individuals and organisations to communicate ethically and with professionalism.*"

BledCom International Public Relations Research Symposium. Dejan Verčič, Co-founder

"COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, is a communicable disease and should be a subject of communication sciences as much as medical sciences. While originating in nature, its spread is social. Its control, rehabilitation of our societies, development of preventive behaviours, and readiness to prevent and contain future viruses and other communicable diseases is possible only in cooperation with natural and social sciences, professions and practices. It is therefore of utmost importance that decision-makers, influencers and society at large comprehend the role of social scientific knowledge and social technologies founded on it. This statement is an important expression of will from researchers and professionals in risk communication to help in saving and normalising lives in risk societies in which we all live."

Press contact for interviews and more information

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