



Conference of European Churches Governing Board

Brussels, 20-22 November 2019

Communication Task Force (CTF) Progress Report (only)

The CTF was established by Board decision at the meeting in November 2018 with the purpose to analyse and evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of the communication work in CEC in order to prepare for a renewed Communication Strategy.

The composition of the CTF became as follows:

Ian Aurelian (Communicator, Romanian Orthodox Church), Stephen Brown (Independent Communicator, former co-editor of Ecumenical News Int.), Aude Millet Lopez (French Protestant Federation), Christiane Gebauer (EKD), Maria Hattunen (Communicator, Orthodox Church, Finland), A representative from the Evangelical Press Service (EPD, Germany), Emma Johnson (Board Member), Anders Gadegaard (Board Member).

The CTF met twice in Brussels for a one-day meeting, July 2nd and October 15th. Naveen Qayyum has, as the only CEC Communication staff person at present, served as coordinator for the group.

At its first meeting the CTF listened to those of the CEC executive staff that were present in the house and listed a number of challenges for the present Comm. Work. We realized that this collection of staff perspectives was too superficial, so consequently we decided to request from an external consultant an analysis of how the staff regards the role of Communication within CEC and to which degree they utilize communication approaches in their work. The Director of Communication Point Ltd., Sara Speicher (former employee of The World Council of Churches) was hired for the task.

On the second meeting in October, Sara Speicher presented her report to the CTF – and a week later to the entire staff. Before concluding the meeting, the CTF collected a number of recommendations for the future comm. work.

CEC Communication Analytics – a summary

1. CEC Press releases:

CEC issued around 207 press releases (!) from January 2018 to October 2019, including media alerts. A number of press releases were jointly issued with Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) and Council of European Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE). Some were translated in French, German (mostly) and Russian (occasionally). Over 60 news briefs were included in the CEC Weekly Update.

2. Media list:

CEC has 212 contacts in its Media list, out of which 170 are subscribers (e.g. 80% have requested to be on the list). These are primarily Church Media.

Approval: Final sign off for CEC press releases come from concerned executive staff and general secretary, and in case of content involving presidents, they approve final drafts.

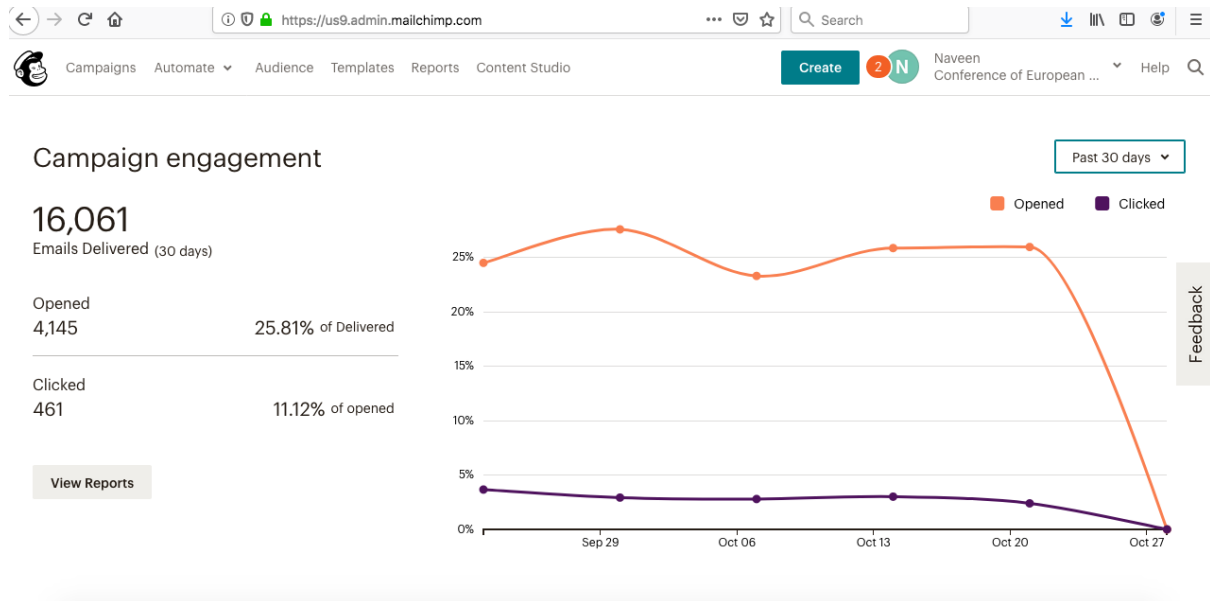
Pick up: CEC does not have a tracking program but Communication staff manually track pick up of press releases through Google alerts and searches of keywords. **It is estimated that there are 3-5 pick-ups/mentions each month**, more during a bigger event such as the assembly or Paris peace conference where journalists are invited.

Comment: The percentage of subscribers interested in CEC news is a strength; the media list is a strong targeted one. Pick up may be improved by proactive content, looking at format, and timeliness.

3. CEC Weekly:

CEC sends a weekly news summary, aiming for delivery each Wednesday.

Reach: CEC has 4,011 contacts in its Global list, out of which 2,309 are subscribers (e.g. 58 percent have requested to be on the list.)



A snapshot of Weeklies opened over 30 days shows an almost 26% open rate, which is 2% higher than the average non-profit rate and slightly higher than the “religion” rate (25.33%). The rate of “clicks”, e.g. those who click to read more of a story, on the graph shows approximately 3-4% which again is slightly higher than the non-profit and religion average.

4. Social Media:

Facebook: CEC page benefited significantly from the Novi Sad assembly, and has continued to grow, slowly but steadily:



CEC’s Facebook following is larger than a number of similar, Brussels-based organisations (COMECE at 1,900; Quaker Council for European Affairs 1,600; Eurodiaconia 1,100; CCME: 1,000).

Facebook engagement (reactions/comments/shares) understandably peaked with the Assembly but there is steady interaction on posts, with approximately 3-7 posts per week.

Twitter: @ceceurope again is larger than a number of similar organisations with 2,680 followers (CIDSE: 3,471 followers; COMECE: 1,917; Eurodiaconia: 1,753; ACT Alliance EU: 264).

YouTube: The CEC channel currently has 74 videos. The most viewed is a Refugees and Migrants video posted one year ago with 1,400 views; in general, the Easter and Christmas messages receive more views than short personal statements, perhaps due to wider relevance.

The CEC YouTube channel performs quite well compared to other similar organisations – COMECE doesn't seem to have one, Eurodiaconia's is not active. CIDSE has a much stronger reach in general (with one video from 3 years ago on Mining Coltan in the DRC reaching 33,000 views).

Additional information:

There is a Flickr account, but it is not maintained regularly due to insufficient high quality photos. Should there be an increased emphasis on photos, one recommendation would be to have a CEC presence in Instagram to reach younger audiences (see under recommendations)

5. Website: ceceurope.org

Over the past year, the CEC website had 21,000 users with a bounce rate of 60% (this means users only visiting one page; the percentage is quite high but would need more research to understand why) and an average session duration of 2m24s (which is industry average). On the whole, people seem to search specifically for CEC related information. The top 10 pages most visited in the last 90 days are:

What pages do your users visit?

| Page | Pageviews | Page Value |
|---|-----------|------------|
| / | 4,606 | \$0.00 |
| /?event=peace-conference-2019 | 790 | \$0.00 |
| /who-we-are/introduction/ | 671 | \$0.00 |
| /staff/ | 600 | \$0.00 |
| /member-churches/ | 458 | \$0.00 |
| /governing-board/ | 452 | \$0.00 |
| /iams-europe-confere...s-european-missions/ | 411 | \$0.00 |
| /gene-editing-humans-playing-god/ | 365 | \$0.00 |
| /documents-from-201...peace-conference-2/ | 356 | \$0.00 |
| /contact/ | 332 | \$0.00 |

Last 90 days ▼ [PAGES REPORT >](#)

Most of the current web users access the website 9am to 6pm Monday through Friday, demonstrating that the web is seen primarily as a working resource. Access to the website is primarily by desktop (64%) but also a significant proportion by mobile phone (32%). Access via tablet is at 4%.

OVERALL

CEC is showing good activity and audience reach in its channels. There is a **good basis for increasing outreach** through stronger strategic communication and content tailored to younger audiences.

CEC internal communication:

The internal comm. among staff is primarily concentrated on sharing of calendar engagements. The weekly video conference call for all staff is seen as a very positive and beneficial tool. The collegium of executive staff is regarded to happen too rarely, and when it happens, it does not always include a communication staff person, which is seen as unfortunate. The sharing of priorities and current challenges/experiences ought to be of vital importance to everyone in staff in order to ensure clear procedures applied organizationally in terms of planning, and connecting programme planning to communication

planning. If this does not happen, the effectiveness of messages, creativity in output and overall visibility is reduced.

External communication:

It is not always clear who speaks for CEC on the various issues. Is it Executive staff? The GS? All 3 or one of the presidents?" Similar it is unclear who signs off press releases.

There is a wide consensus that the first audience for CEC is its member churches. But firstly, what does that mean – try to break it down: is it church leaders? Interchurch office staff? Those already working with CEC? When it comes to the people in the parishes, they do not know what CEC is all about? Churches aren't very clear about what CEC is doing in Brussels, nor how we do it, nor how they can use CEC's services. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, shouldn't CEC be more occupied with the secular audience being the public European voice of its member churches? Perhaps THIS is the first audience. This requires a new emphasis on CEC's public press strategy. There is a tendency to always involving the same people. That reduces the ability to reach a bigger audience, and show fresh and new ideas.

Recommendations for strengthening and improving the Communication work

a. Short term recommendations

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive communication strategy in CEC, which shall accompany the organisation's strategic plan. BUT: this need can only be rectified together with a GS who is committed to create strengthened coherent cooperation among staff on strategic priorities and with the position of a Communications Coordinator in place.

CEC needs clear guidelines for fewer (!) press releases in order to make them focused, targeting a specific purpose and audience and with clarity on who speaks for CEC when (President, GS, executive staff, communication dpt.). And also a clear process for and an understanding of the necessity of right timing. And a follow up on their impact should always be implemented.

A template should be elaborated for how to develop a communication plan to accompany an activity or a programmatic process (events, conferences also). Professional photography including video clips and their distribution should be a priority (avoiding too many photos of people gathered at conferences/meetings). Increased internal staff communication and collaboration and mutual priorities should immediately be implemented, not only on calendar adjustments.

Elaborate clear social media guidelines – when do I speak for CEC? How? How to provoke and handle debate?

Updating of the web design including making the website more interactive.

Face to face communication – visits/receptions/networking arrangement in the office building making CEC visible in Brussels including the buildings expression in the street.

The nurturing of relationships with Member Church communicators should be a priority for the CEC communication staff. Networking in order to share much more info among Member Churches.

b. Longer term recommendations

We need to move away from a reactive approach to Communication seeing it as a merely administrative service putting out what is given to it. And even also leaving the traditional approach of regarding Communication as an isolated professional program that helps shape messages. Instead Communication needs to be an integral part of the organization and the various programs, managed professionally and dynamically. Asking communication questions from the outset help shape objectives, outputs and outcomes. And in each case there is a need to distinguish between fellowship comm., media comm., advocacy comm. And to identify which audiences should be targeted for which purposes. This requires that all staff are sufficiently trained in utilizing communication in their endeavours. Communication training should be offered all executive staff.

We can do so much on media now – webinars, livestreaming, Instagram, Flickr, other social media – so many possibilities – we need to think what works best for us and what is most useful for us.

Increase the use of internet for a forum for open debates on important issues. Create a directory of social media of Member Churches on the CEC webpage.

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