

Keynote

Communication of values

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Dear Minister Mitov,
Dear Minister Abrashi,
Dear Ambassadors,
Dear Vincenzo,
Dear colleagues and friends,

A very warm welcome to Sofia and to this conference which is merging so many aspects of our profession: It connects digital work and life with our passion for Europe and modern political communication. It brings 80 leading experts from all regions of the continent together – Western, Central, Eastern, Southern and South East Europe. And, last but not least, it interconnects different think tanks and professional organisations that support a professional and ethical communication of politics. Dear Vincenzo, it is a pleasure for us to host this conference together with the Club of Venice.

The Club of Venice has become a great partner, both, for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and for the co-host of this event, the South East European communication association SEECOM. As a guest speaker at your conferences, Vincenzo, I could see that our organisations pursue a common goal: More transparency and citizen orientation in government communication, constant improvement of methods for public participation, and a more successful storytelling for the European Union and its values.

Besides that, our joint efforts enable an exchange between our memberships: On one hand – the Communication directors of the EU and Foreign Ministries who gather in the Club of Venice. On the other hand – the Public Sector spokespersons from new EU member states and candidate countries who cooperate with SEECOM and the KAS Media Program. Furthermore, we have invited a few colleagues from political parties in our region, because we believe that a modern, dialogue-oriented understanding of communication is crucial to them as well.

I am glad that we have another strong partner on board today, the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. It is a Brussels-based think tank which shares the values of KAS and has been an authentic partner for many years. The Wilfried Martens Centre is represented here by its Communication Officer Ioana Lung. Ioana, thank you for your support.

In this conference, we will talk about some of the newest strategies for a dialogue with citizens. Even more intensively, we will discuss whether the EU and its member states have clear messages in the current worldwide competition of political models and values. Doubts on that are more than allowed. For many of us, the democratic model is something established. We have learned to treasure it. But many are no longer aware how the institutions actually work and how one can participate in democratic decision-making.

Particularly younger EU citizens, the so called “digital natives”, no longer have experience of war and lack of freedom. Therefore, the advantages of an open society are constantly in need of explanation. Moreover, representative democracy is a complex issue: It has to consider the interests of many different stakeholders. By nature, authoritarian regimes have simpler and more emotional messages. We need to think how to reply to their messages – in a world which is globally connected by the Internet, but less and less stable and peaceful in many regions.

I am looking forward to a very fruitful exchange with all of you.
Thank you very much for being here, and for your attention.