



Berenschot

EU Trend Scan Communication

Brief report for the participants of the Club of Venice 2021

Preface

What trends and developments do you foresee for the coming years in the field of communications? What impact do they have on your organization and the communications department? What role does the communications department have in the organization? What will the communication department look like in the future?

These and other issues are addressed by the Berenschot communications benchmark. We have ten years of experience with this benchmark in the Netherlands. Many organizations, mainly in the public sector, have participated over the years. This gives us an excellent insight in the latest strategic developments that communication teams are facing.

In preparation of the meeting of the club of Venice on December 2nd and 3rd 2021, an informal network of communications managers from EU member states, institutions and other European countries, we have asked the participants to fill out a survey about upcoming trends and developments in the field of communication. This brief report is a summary of the outcomes of this survey.

All mentioned data are indicative based on a quick scan but provide interesting insights in the challenges communications managers in Europe are facing. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions concerning the insights or our approach to benchmarking.

Content

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- 2 The impact of current strategic issues
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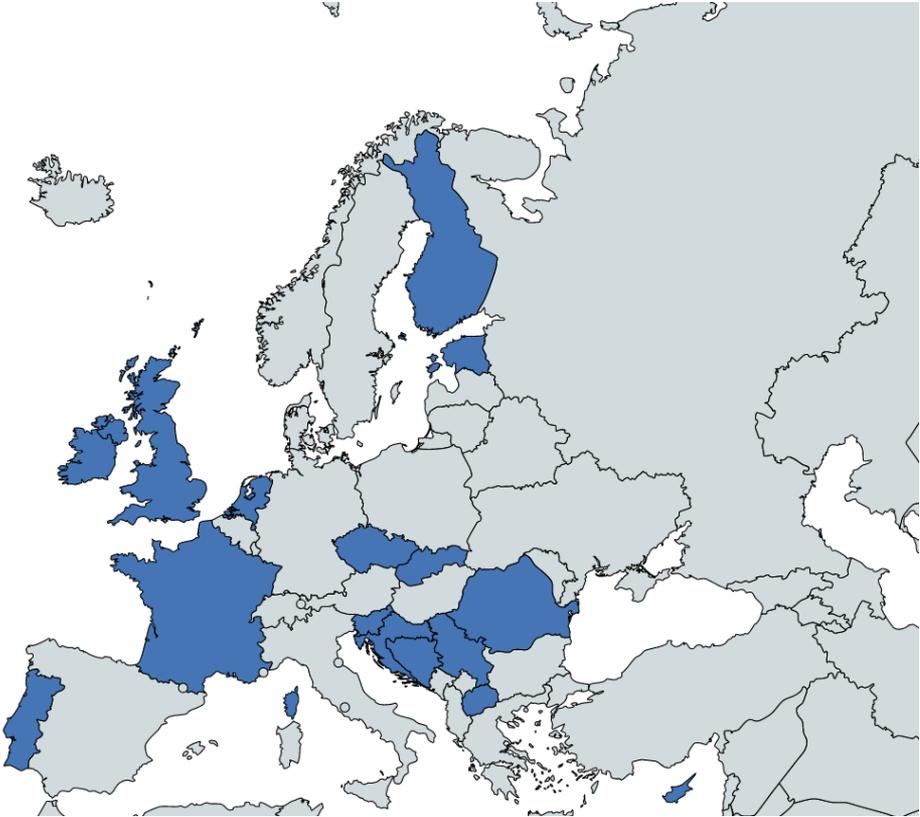




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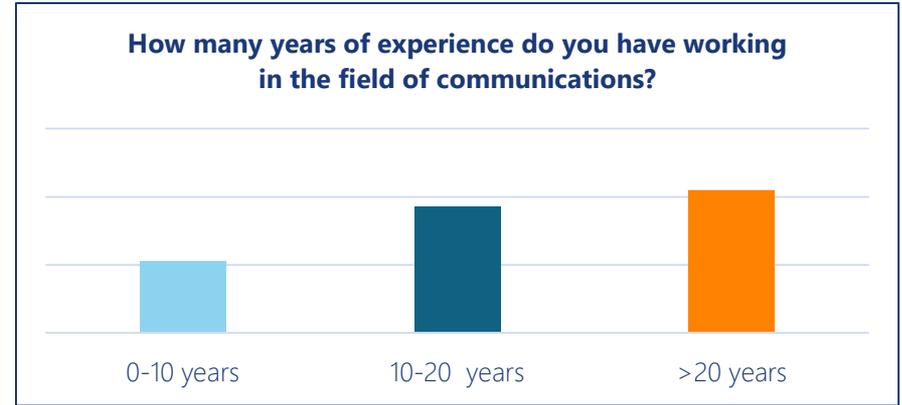
General insights

Members of various countries throughout Europe participated in the study



Participants consist of mostly head of communications and have more than 20 years of experience in the field of communication

- Most respondents have more than 20 years of experience in the field of communication.
- More than half of the survey respondents are director or head of communications
- Almost all respondents are employed by a government organization. One respondent is employed at a private company
- All participants are members of the Club of Venice
- The spread of countries from which respondents come is distributed throughout Europe
- Government organizations differ from one another and range from the office of the prime minister to the ministry of foreign affairs



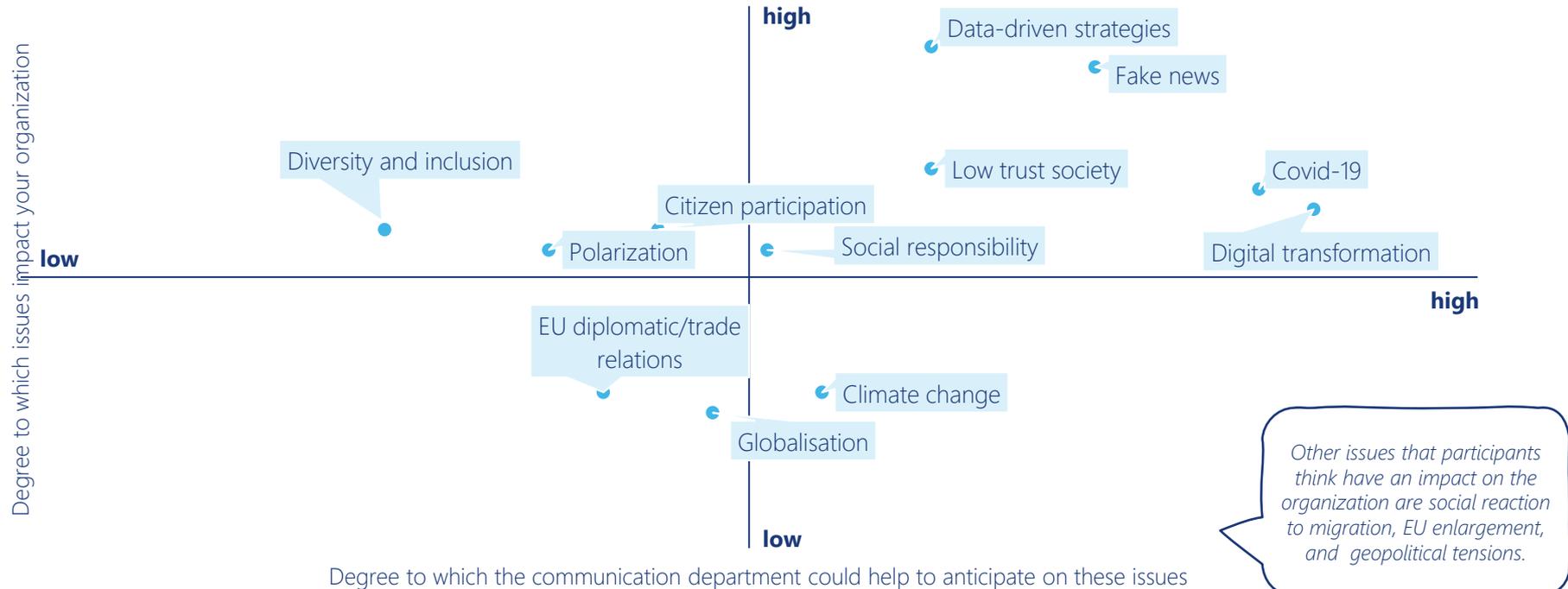


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The impact of current strategic issues on organizations and communication departments

Data-driven strategies, fake news, COVID-19 and digital transformation are the most important issues for organisations and communication departments

Please indicate the degree to which you expect the following issues to impact your organisation and the degree to which communication could help to anticipate on these issues





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Quick scan of current developments of communication departments

The five roles in the modern communications department

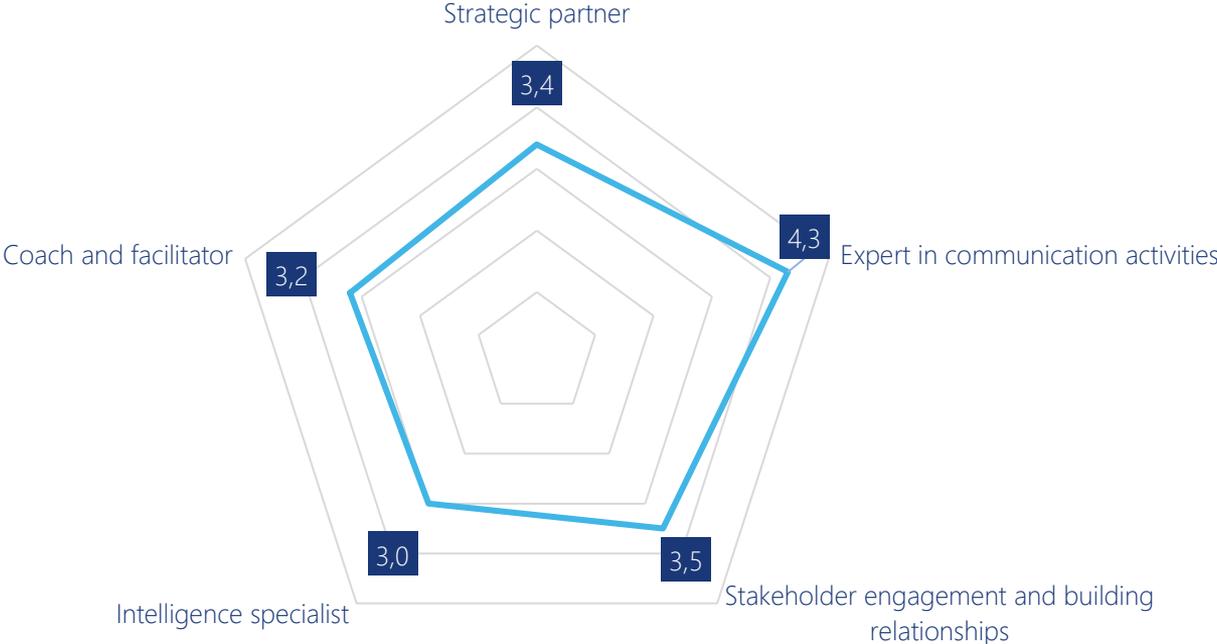
In the modern communications department, five roles can be distinguished. We define these roles as follows:

- **Strategic partner to the board:** consulting and advising the board and top management of the organization
- **Expert in communication activities:** delivering day-to-day communication activities that support all functions of the organization, dealing with the press: answering press questions, writing press releases and spokesperson
- **Stakeholder engagement and building relationships:** Communicating the corporate strategy to stakeholders and interested publics, building stakeholder relations
- **Specialist in intelligence and monitoring:** gathering day-to-day insights from media, stakeholders etc.
- **Coach and facilitator of communications:** coaching all members of the organization and enabling them to communicate professionally



Results indicate that the expert role is most established amongst participants

How would you classify the current performance of your communication department on the five roles?



Participants indicate the expert role is most important to develop the coming years, followed by the role of communication as strategic partner to the board

Please prioritize the further development of the five roles in your team up until 2023



1 Expert in communication activities



2 Strategic partner to the board

3 Coach and facilitator of communications

4 Specialist in intelligence and monitoring

5 Stakeholder engagement and building relationships

Interestingly, results from various studies in the Netherlands reveal that the most prioritized role amongst communication professionals working at governments, is the strategic partner of to the board.

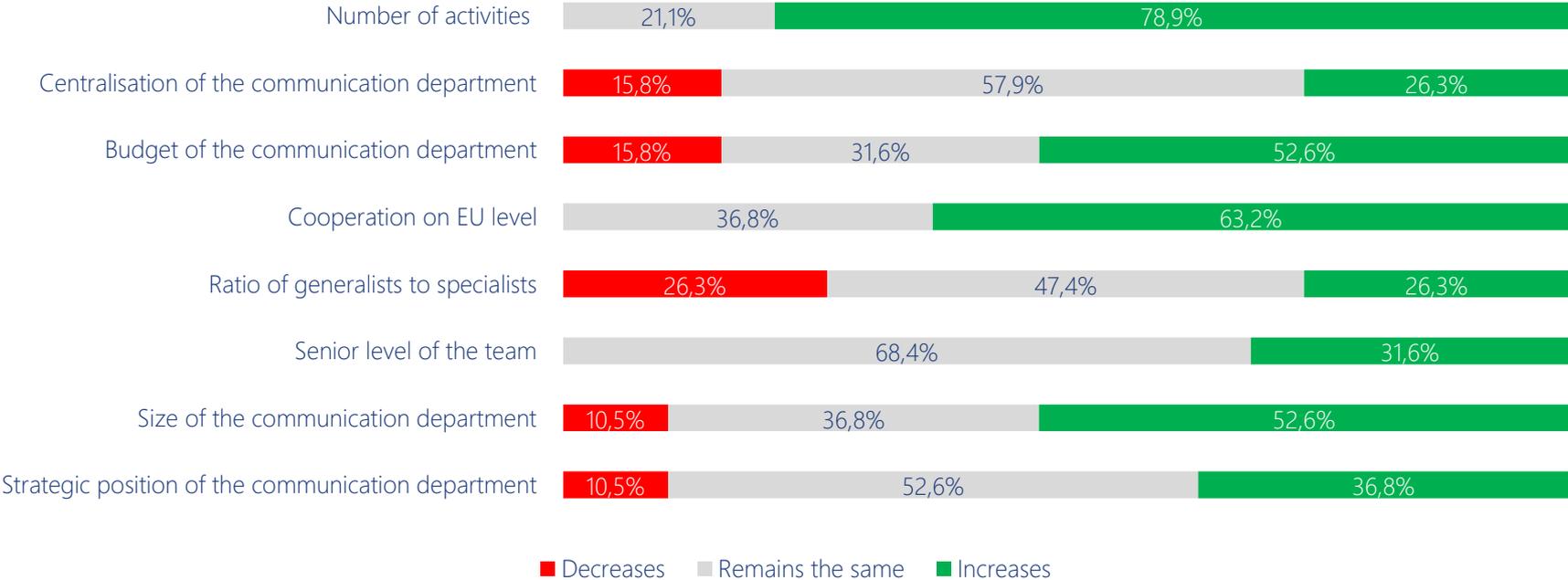


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Trends in the organization of communication departments

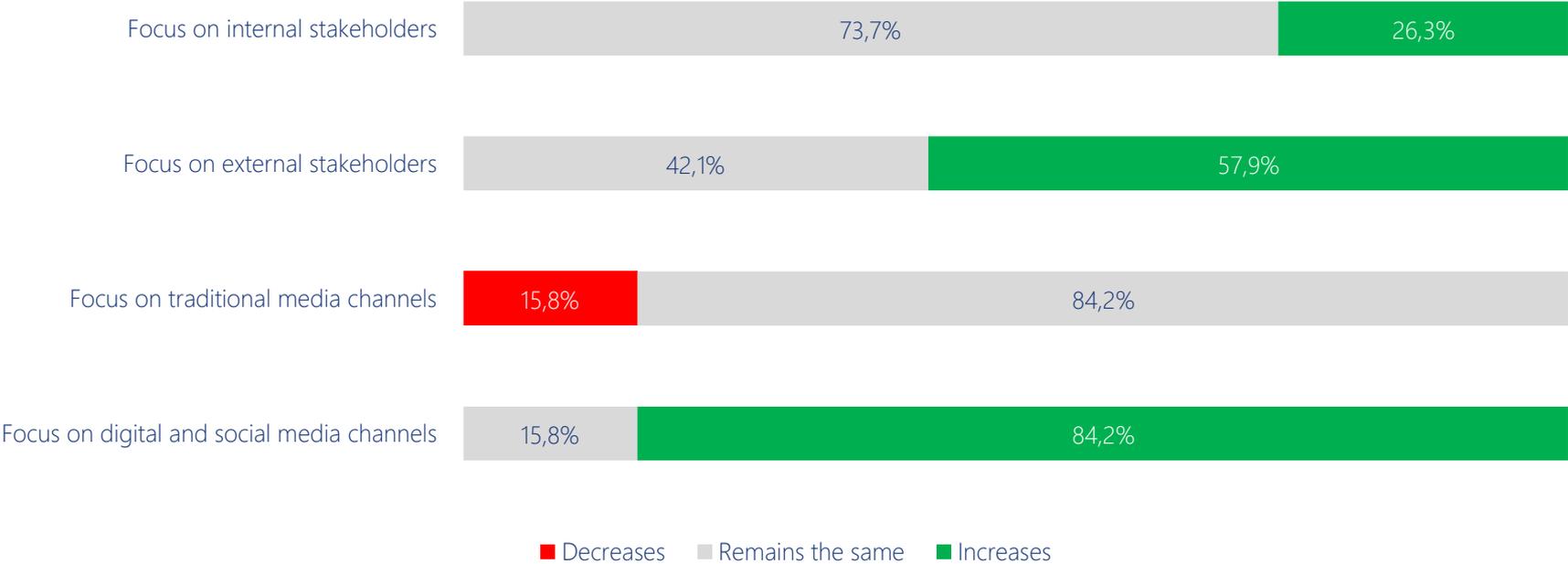
Participants expect that the number of activities, budget, size of the communication department and the cooperation on EU level will increase

What will be the trend in the organization of the communication department until 2023?



Participants expect that the focus on digital and social media channels and the focus on external stakeholders will relatively increase

What do you think will be the trend in the focus of the communication department until 2023?



Participants would like to exchange best practices regarding the organization of communication, strategies, how to deal with main challenges, and more

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Communication case studies and share of best practices
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Information environment analyses
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Monitoring and evaluation of communication strategies
”

How to anticipate and monitor trends in communications with the help of data science analysis
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How to deal with main challenges such as fake news, governmental crisis communication management and a decrease of societal trust
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Adoption of modern style of the communication
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How are other organizations organized in terms of human resources and where they are investing in terms of skill development.
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How to adopt data-driven communication strategies
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Conclusions and proposed agenda for capacity building

Conclusions

- The EU Trend Scan gives us insight in the latest strategic developments in the field of (governmental) communication.
- The results show that data-driven strategies, fake news, COVID-19 and digital transformation are the most important issues for organizations and communication departments. Less important issues are EU diplomatic/trade relations and globalization.
- Regarding the five roles in the modern communications department, results indicate that the expert role is most established amongst participants. In the coming years, participants indicate the expert role is most important to develop, followed by the role of communication as strategic partner to the board.
- Looking to the future and trends regarding the organization of communications, participants expect that the number of activities, budget, size of the communication department and the cooperation on EU level will increase. Moreover, the expectation is that also the focus on digital and social media channels and the focus on external stakeholders will relatively increase.
- Finally, participants indicated that they would like to exchange best practices with other organizations regarding how to deal with main challenges, how other organizations are organized in terms of human resources and where they are investing in terms of skill development, how to adopt data-driven communication strategies, and other and other issues and skills that communication involves.

Agenda for capacity building

- Strategic communications and participative government are important for communication teams all across Europe. To achieve public consent and to counter low trust society stakeholder engagement will be crucial. Fighting fake news is also on top of the agenda.
- Countries are faced with the challenge to build and maintain commitment for the EU amongst their citizens. This requires communication efforts and a participative government In turn, these challenges require capacity building and an investment in the size (number of communications quality (professional level and scope) of communication departments.
- Strengthening the strategic position of the communication means a further investment in technological tools and participation and stakeholder alliances
- Capacity building is an important theme. Exchange of good practices and dialogue on how to strengthen the position of communication in the organization could be further strengthened within the framework of the Club of Venice.

About Berenschot consultancy

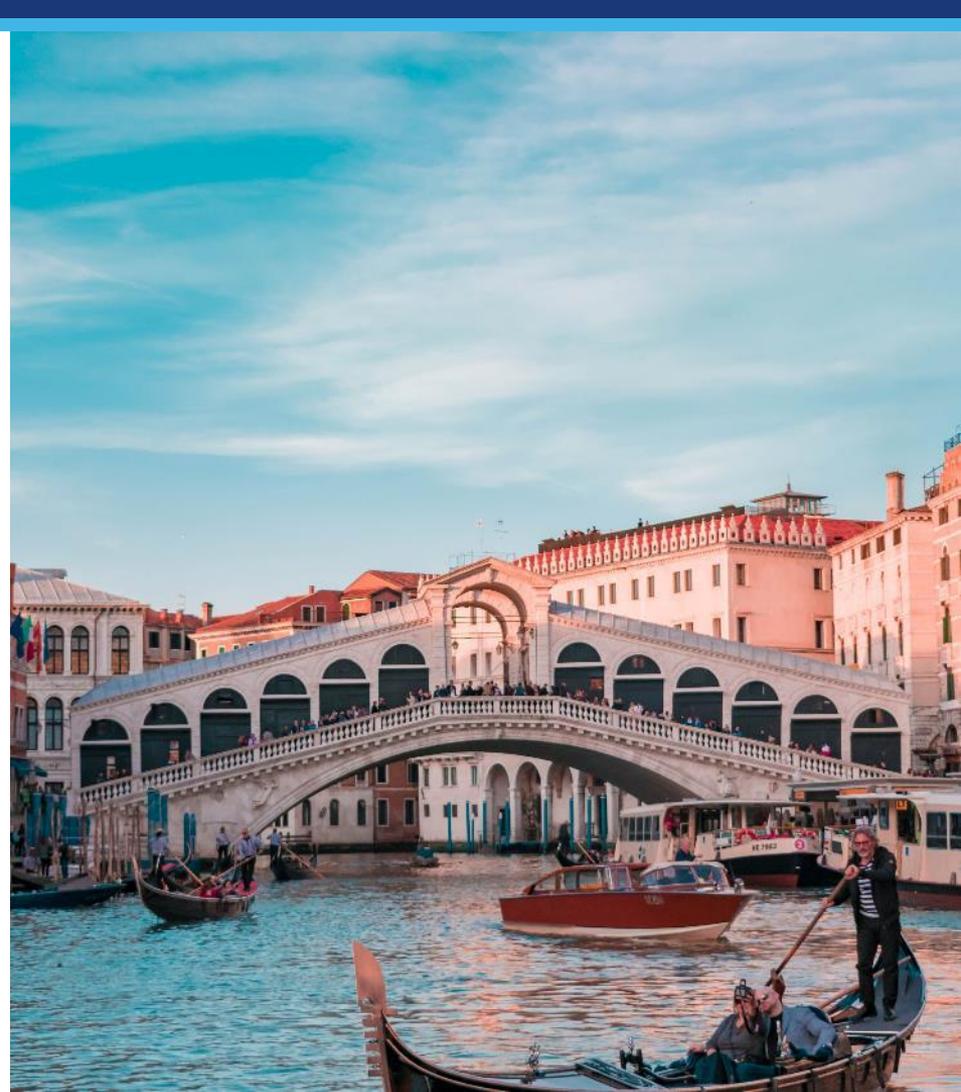
Berenschot is an independent management consultancy firm with 400 employees worldwide. For over 80 years, we have impressed our clients in the public and business sectors with smart, new insights.

We acquire these new insights and turn them into something practicable. We do this by combining innovation and creativity. Clients prefer Berenschot because our advice gives them a head start.

Berenschot is experienced in raising the standard of communications within government organizations, institutions and companies. We help our clients to increase their impact by improving the strategic position of the communications department.

If you wish more information, please visit [our website](#) or contact Robert Wester by [e-mail](mailto:R.wester@berenschot.nl).
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