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**MODERNISING THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ONLINE: IMPROVING THE
COMMUNICATION OF THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION'S EUROPEAN
PARTNERSHIPS**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this master's thesis is to suggest ways to improve the online communication of the European Partnerships of the Emilia-Romagna Region's Department of European Policies and International Relations. The theoretical part of the thesis includes a background of Italian laws put in place in order to make communication and transparency duties of the public administration. Ideas of the internet as an arena for a recreated Habermasian public sphere are discussed and criticised as well as ideas on creating a more participatory democratic system. Guidelines on public sector communication online and offline on a European, Italian and regional level are listed. The methodological part consists of a communication plan for internal and external communication, following Alessandro Rovinetti's model (2010). The practical results of an internship at the department, that took place between November 2012 and May 2013, were the creation of dossiers on nine European partner regions, for both internal use as well as external use on the website. The text on the website of the European Partnerships was rewritten following the guidelines on clear writing and a paragraph in English was added. The main conclusions of the thesis are that the modernised and simplified recent new web portal of the region becomes a complicated reform when the internal structure of the public administration remains unchanged and when the project behind the new web portal is not communicated to the employees. The work done during the internship improving the website of the European Partnerships shows how a single department can create a more user-friendly website with a clearly written text, both in Italian and in English, in order to be able to reach out to all citizens and to foreign partners, despite the restrictions of the new web portal. The concept of *total communication* (Grandi, 2007), that includes the organisation of offices that citizens come into contact with, makes it necessary to mirror the improved web and communication strategy offline as well, especially since a modernisation that takes place online only ignores the 37 % of the Italian population that have never accessed the internet (Digital Agenda Scoreboard, 2012). The thesis argues that innovation online should serve as a strategic guiding light in the project to modernise and reform the internal structure of the public administration, making it more transparent, communicating and therefore presumably more accessible and legitimised to its citizens, both online and offline. The practical reality of the department and of the region however, where no reform of the internal structure was planned, showed that improving a website can be a simple way to create a more communicating public administration, especially with little resources at hand.

Keywords: public sector communication, Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy, Europe, public sphere, internet, simplification, communication plan, transparency, e-government.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	6
1. 1 The purpose of the thesis	6
1.2 Acknowledgments	7
2. The theoretical background and the legal framework.....	8
2.1 The theoretical background	8
2.1.1 Public sector communication.....	8
2.1.2 Historical overview of the public administration in Italy	10
2.1.3 Communicating the public administration to citizens	13
2.1.4 Write clearly	14
2.1.5 Internal communication	15
2.1.6 Technology and the public administration	16
2.1.7 The public sphere.....	17
2.1.8 The public sphere online.....	18
2.1.9 Criticisms of the public sphere online	18
2.1.10 Transparency and the public administration.....	20
2.1.11 Access to documents	22
2.1.12 International guidelines to make public administrations more transparent.....	22
2.1.13 E-democracy.....	23
2.1.14 Experiences of the implementation of e-democracy	24
2.1.15 Problems that obstruct the implementation of e-democracy tools	25
2.1.16 Symptoms of a crisis of democracy.....	25
2.1.17 “Democratise democracy”	28

2.1.18 Direct democracy.....	28
2.1.19 Continuous democracy	29
2.1.20 Participatory democracy	29
2.1.21 Deliberative democracy	30
2.2 Guidelines and white papers.....	31
2.2.1 European level	31
Europe 2020.....	31
2.2.2 Digital Agenda for Europe	32
2.2.3 White Paper on a European Communication Policy	34
2.2.4 Clear writing (EU)	35
2.2.5 Writing for the web.....	36
2.2.6 Italian level	37
2.2.7 The Code for the Digital Administration.....	37
2.2.8 Italian guidelines for the websites of the public administration	38
2.2.9 Clear writing (Italy)	42
2.2.10 Regional level - Emilia-Romagna	42
2.2.11 Telematic Plan of Emilia-Romagna 2011-2013	42
2.2.12 The Emilia-Romagna web guidelines.....	44
2.2.13 Structure of the web portal of the Emilia-Romagna Region	44
2.2.14 Social media and public administration.....	45
3. Methodology	48
3.1 Communication plan for the European Partnerships	48
3.1.1 Internal communication	48

3.1.2 External communication.....	49
4. Results and findings.....	53
4.1 Results and implementation of the communication plan.....	53
4.1.1 Internal communication plan for the European Partnerships: the internal dossiers .	53
4.1.2 Internal communication plan for the European Partnerships: a shared folder of contact information.....	57
4.2 External communication.....	59
4.2.1 External communication plan for the European Partnerships: background	59
4.2.2 Reorganisation of the website.....	60
4.2.3 The lack of a common communication strategy on Europe	61
4.2.4 External communication plan for the European Partnerships: the website and the external dossiers	62
4.2.5 The text of the website.....	67
4.2.6 The result: the published website	69
5. Evaluation	71
6. Conclusions.....	74
7. References.....	77
8. Appendix.....	85
Appendix 1: Contact Folder of the European Partnerships.	85
Appendix 2: The theme "Europe"	86
Appendix 3: SpazioEuropa and the links of SpazioEuropa.....	87
Appendix 4: The old website of the European Partnerships	88
Appendix 5: The external dossier for Aquitaine.	91
Appendix 6: The new website of the European Partnerships.....	98

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