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## Effective Communication and Public Relations in State Institutions in Albania\*

*Efektywna komunikacja i public relations w instytucjach  
państwowych w Albanii*

### ABSTRACT

Today, due to the dynamics of development, state institutions need to interact both vertically and horizontally to efficiently manage the challenges of the present times. In addition to the internal and external communication of an institution, its relationship with the public is also very important. In countries with weak institutions, as is the case of Albania, where the tradition of relations with the public started very late, specifically after the 1990s, an effort to give the proper weight to this process is noticed. Reports of many international institutions indicate that Albania has had many difficulties for internal coordination between institutions and for proper interaction with the public. The fact that relations with the public entered very late in the communication strategies of the Albanian state institutions has made the necessary changes for the correct implementation of their internal and external communication to be made with difficulty. Precisely this aspect is addressed in this study, focusing

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on the Prime Minister's Office of Albania and the paths it has taken to avoid the lack of communication in line with other institutions and the public. The centralization of this process necessitates that the right units be set up in the organization chart of state institutions and the right people be placed, trained with the latest communication methodologies through digitalization. The case study presented in this article concerns the Prime Minister's Office of Albania and the ways it has followed to avoid the lack of communication in line with other institutions and the public.

**Keywords:** government institutions; public relations; communication; public administration

## INTRODUCTION

Public administration in Albania, but also around the world, is responsible for informing and preserving information that goes to the mass public. Communication instruments that enable recognition, information and making public the various processes of the state institution, are found in the face of dependence on technology and digitalization.

State institutions, in addition to the obligation to responsibly perform their duties as local governments, also have the priority of attracting the opinion of the community regarding the work they do. For this reason, these institutions consider public relations (PR) very necessary. They work to maintain a reputation and for this they need interactivity with the public. Otherwise, their existence would be problematic and not in the service of the latter.

The use of communication to influence public opinion and human behavior is as old as civilization. Farm bulletins telling farmers how to grow their crops were being issued 1,800 years before Christ was born.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of this information to the public opinion will only bring misunderstanding and dissatisfaction from the latter. Public relations is an obligation for the community to understand how local government works. State institutions have a variety of media at their disposal in order to influence the masses. They use news, media, activities, lobbying, etc.

The object of the study in this paper is the centralization of internal and external communication within the Prime Minister's Office through the director of communication, as well as the development and importance of relations with the public in Albanian state institutions.

The research questions raised in this study are as follows: What makes communication effective in the Albanian Prime Minister's Office? What impact does information technology have on improving the PR of the Prime Minister's Office?

The hypothesis of this study is as follows: In order for communication to be as effective as possible, Albanian state institutions should centralize internal and

<sup>1</sup> S.M. Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations: A History*, Hillsdale 1994.

external communication as well as embrace the latest innovations in information technology for PR.

Effective communication is influenced by the degree of centralization of internal and external communication, as well as the degree of use of information technology for PR. Relations with the public are necessary and affect the image of the institution and the realization of communication between it and the public.

Correct communication between the institution and the public requires complete centralization of internal and external communication of the first-mentioned, as well as embracing information technology. Today, information technology has a positive effect on increasing the possibility for the correct realization of relations with the public of the state administration.

## COMMUNICATION OF STATE INSTITUTIONS IN ALBANIA – THEORITICAL CONTEXT

State institutions must work hard to preserve their reputation.<sup>2</sup> The lack of communication of their latest strategies and developments with the public, who is interested in understanding what is happening with the local government they voted for, leads to such an imbalance where the bridge of communication between them is broken. The destruction of this communication bridge only brings damage to cooperation as well as damage to the image of the institution itself.<sup>3</sup>

Albanian state institutions have the obligation to avoid the lack of communication or conveying an incomplete message to the public. They do this based on:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed at the UN General Assembly in 1948, which lists universal human rights, including the right to information, expressed in Article 19: “Every person enjoys freedom of thought and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and without frontiers”.<sup>4</sup>
2. The European Convention of Human Rights, signed in Rome in 1950 and amended several times until 1966 in Strasbourg. According to the second paragraph of its Article 10, the right to information is a responsibility and has limitations for everyone who knows it and is its implementer. Restrict-

<sup>2</sup> A. Guisinger, S. Alastair, *Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political Institutions in International Crises*, “Journal of Conflict Resolution” 2002, vol. 46(2), pp. 175–200.

<sup>3</sup> K. Daugirdas, *Reputation as a Disciplinarian of International Organizations*, “American Journal of International Law” 2019, vol. 113(2), pp. 221–271.

<sup>4</sup> See Q. Qerimi, R. Istrefi, F. Sylejmani, *Përbledhje e marrëveshjeve dhe instrumenteve ligjore ndërkombëtare*, Prishtinë 2016.

tions are related to national and public security, as well as the protection of health, morals and reputation.

3. The Committee of Ministers Declaration on the Freedom of Expression and Information (1982), which defines the main principles regarding the right to information and its role in society.

The above declarations and the European Convention of Human Rights are intended to serve as regulatory acts which the Albanian administration has the obligation to implement, while maintaining national and public security, protection of health, morality and reputation, maintaining confidentiality, crime prevention and ensuring the impartiality of the judiciary. A state or private institution to exist must appear and therefore needs to be in constant communication.<sup>5</sup> Every manifestation of the actions and activities of an institution is a way of communication, which, in order to be well perceived by the public, needs to be well realized. Society develops only if freedom of expression and information is strictly respected. Albania and all member states have the obligation not to allow the violation of information rights, as well as to ensure that they resist the opposite, regardless of the economic and political changes that may occur in the country.

For about five centuries (from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>), Albania has been under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for a long time. As a result, the ban on schools, the written language and Albanian culture made it possible for more oral culture to develop in Albania. While the world had progressed in PR, Albania managed to build an educated generation only during the 1940s. Until the 1930s, it was the *tellalli*<sup>6</sup> who applied the practice of information distribution in Albanian cities and villages.<sup>7</sup> So in that period, *tellalli* was equivalent to a PR specialist. The first relations with the public of the Albanian state institutions were the publications of Ismail Qemali's government in 1912.

The lack of experience in the field of communication, as well as the lack of importance that communication takes as an instrument in the interaction of the community with the institution, has brought all the shortcomings that the process of the relationship between the Albanian administration and the public has today. In the history of Albania, the first PR offices started to exist after 1990, where the role of liaison and transmitter of the message was assumed by the spokesperson. The latter was tasked with communicating with the press. The spokesperson communicated with the press and communicated all the activities of the institution he was responsible for.

<sup>5</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Communicating in a Crisis: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials*, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> The one who announced loudly in the center or on the main streets of the city about the orders and decisions of the government, about news, and important events.

<sup>7</sup> A. Tartari, *Marrëdhëni me publikun*, Tiranë 2021.

If we refer to the 1990s and after, as well as the real task of a PR specialist, we can say that from the beginning it seems that the Albanian institutions did not start the communication process with the public correctly. A real PR specialist has the duty not only to send a message to the public, but also to receive feedback from it.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it seems that in this way there is no interactivity and we remain only with the message sender who gives a message and we do not have a message receiver who gives feedback. In the process of communication, feedback is essential, otherwise there can be no relationship between the parties. If we focus on the relationship between the state institution and the public, it is understood that the institution not only needs to convey the message of how it is working, but also to know the opinion of the public if the work is appropriately done, or needs to be partially or totally improved. The primary condition is that the messages are clear and understandable to everyone. The needs, formations, convictions and tendencies are not the same for everyone, but everyone needs to understand correctly. For this reason, the institution has the obligation to take all measures so that its message is understood by the public. Communications that may seem unimportant can be extremely important if the information they carry is complete and effective.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, a state or private institution is interested in having the minimum of resistance from the public to oppose its decisions or activities. And if there is no feedback, how is this achieved? For this reason, the process of PR is very important for an institution, whether state or private.

Referring to the Department of Public Administration (DAP), “the spokesperson of the press dealt only with the organization of articles and information for the press, while the PR specialist dealt only with the collection of complaints or requests from citizens”.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the PR specialist has exercised an incomplete task by not fulfilling the real role defined, based on the theory of the well-functioning of PR, where, according to S.M. Cutlip, a PR specialist is a problem finder but also a good describer of their solutions. In contrast, he did not play his exact role with the four main functions, but was only a spokesperson. A PR specialist must cooperate well with the leaders of other units to contribute to problem solving and relief, to be a good mediator, and to provide technical communication services.<sup>11</sup> This problem of turning the PR specialist into a simple press spokesperson has been very widespread in the Albanian public administration. Perhaps because the culture of PR entered Albania only after the 1990s and was embraced more quickly

<sup>8</sup> J. Grunig, *Ethics Problems and Theories in Public Relations*, “Revue internationale de communication sociale et publique” 2014, vol. 11, pp. 9–14.

<sup>9</sup> A. Koxhaj, F. Tomini, *Menaxhimi i komunikimit*, Tirana 2002.

<sup>10</sup> E. Taska, N. Zela, *Administrata Shqiptare drejt Komunikimit. Efektiv përmes Marrëdhënieve Publike*, <https://www.dap.gov.al/images/revstat/revista9.pdf> (access: 25.12.2025), pp. 104–105.

<sup>11</sup> S.M. Cutlip, *op. cit.*

by political parties, which needed PR during their electoral campaigns, to continue in the state administration.

Why is it important that information within the institution and that which is distributed to the public is managed by one source and not different? If we want communication to be effective for both the public and private institutions, the main emphasis is on the fact that internal and external communication are fully coherent, coordinated and managed by the same source. If this happens, then both types of communication can contribute to the effectiveness of the PR specialist's process, who, having become familiar with all the links of the institution, having found ways that facilitate communication inside and outside it, as well as having found the right ways to communicate with the public, manages to convey the right message through his techniques as an expert in PR.

The PR specialist is always in alert to understand what happens inside the institution, in order to turn it into information for the public. He must make sure that this communication is realized in a profitable way for the enterprise, which is considered as an objective in itself, or as an activity, the ways and objectives of which include an analysis of the whole organization.<sup>12</sup> Through transparency and correct delivery of the message, he needs to maintain good relations with the public. Internal and external communication of an institution cannot be managed by two separate units, but by a single one. The universal access to communication channels, data transmitting devices, and the speed of changing publications in the visual, auditory and text layers make it more and more difficult to determine what is true and what is not.<sup>13</sup>

The unit that deals with the internal and external communication of the institution prioritizes the management of the entire process of internal interaction in the institution and that with the public. In this case, good management of the communicated message and received information is required. If it only has the information but does not own the communication, then the process is incomplete. It is also incomplete again and *vice versa*, if it is able to communicate, but has no information. The union of internal and external communication makes the work of the PR specialist more effective, keeping the interaction with the public constant and showing ethics and responsibility towards the institution.

Nowadays, the PR specialist has the obligation to be in constant interaction with the media, and he does this through the information departments, but also not leaving aside some qualities that help him in his work. The PR representative, or spokesperson, must express self-confidence, reliability, control, clarity, and consistency.<sup>14</sup> It is worth emphasizing the fact that it is not always easy to find

<sup>12</sup> F. Pira, *Si të krijosh një zyre shtypi*, Tiranë 2002, pp. 29–30.

<sup>13</sup> M. Barańska, *The Subjective Dimension of Fake News*, "Studia Iuridica Lublinensia" 2021, vol. 30(5).

<sup>14</sup> A. Neza, *Marrëdhëni publikë. Strategjitet dhe taktikat*, Tiranë 2016.

a suitable individual. Transparency is not a negative thing, but the PR specialist of each institution is charged anyway with the assurance of control, truthfulness and correctness of information.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is the review analysis of the development and role of PR in state institutions, where the centralization in internal and external communication and the use of information technology innovations bring productivity in the interaction between it and the public. Also in the study, comparative analysis is used to highlight the role of variables: internal and external centralization of communication, as well as technology in the function of PR and effective communication as a whole.

The theoretical literature provides both the logical framework and multiple researchers' opinions on the role played by the integration of internal and external communication as well as the importance of PR for effective communication in an institution. In the meantime, empirical analysis is used, in order to see how communication in Albanian state institutions has gone towards improvement.

After a description of how communication has developed in state institutions, a more detailed analysis is made based on the path followed by the Prime Ministry of Albania, as a very important institution.

The study was done based on the changes that the organizational chart of this institution has undergone, as far as the communication unit is concerned. The data used during the analysis were taken from the organizational structure of this institution, and more specifically, from the organizational structures after the two decisions of the Prime Minister, i.a. from 2017 and 2022. On the basis of comparative methods in different periods regarding the development of the communication process in this institution, it is intended to reach the conclusion that state institutions, although with deficiencies in the communication tradition, have managed to move towards improvement in communication.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has some limitations regarding the data of several organizational structures of the Prime Minister's Office over the years for the functioning of internal units. However, the collected data clearly highlights the change that communication and relations with the public have undergone from 2013 to 2023 (three mandates of Mr. Edi Rama in the Prime Ministry of Albania), in the Albanian state institution, namely the Prime Minister's Office of Albania.

Albania has embraced the tradition of PR very late. Public relations offices were created after the 1990s, and yet during the study an effort of state institutions to improve the communication scheme between it and the public as well as to approach EU standards is noticed.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It is worth emphasizing the fact that the Albanian state administration is continuing to improve communication, even though the tradition in the field of communication is not great. An example for improving the communication of state institutions is the change made by the Prime Minister's Office of Albania. With the first mandate of the Prime Minister Mr. Edi Rama, in 2013, the Directorate of Public Relations was named the Directorate of Relations with Citizens. This directorate was responsible for every correspondence and complaint addressed to the Prime Minister of the country. This directorate functioned under the Department of Communication in the Prime Minister's Office.

In 2017, this department was demobilized. The reception office of citizens and business continued to exist for complaints, requests and clarifications physically and online, but this office was now under the Directorate of Communication in the Prime Minister's Office, which until the Prime Minister's decision on the organizational structure in the Prime Minister's Office, was not visible in the organizational chart.

In 2017, it seems that this state institution started to improve again the part of collecting and managing information to the public, thus creating the Agency for Dialogue and Co-governance. This agency has administrative functions: the guarantee of the state administration for accountability during communication with citizens, interaction between ministries, as well as the direct provision of public services. All these functions already after 2017 made public and transparent for all interested parties. The Prime Minister's Office, the ministries, the institutions subordinate to them, and the entire civil society are already in an open and extensive dialogue for all the interactions between them.

In support of Article 6 of Law no. 90/2012 "On the organization and functioning of the state administration", with the proposal of the Prime Minister, the Council of Ministers decided the creation of the Agency for Dialogue and Co-governance<sup>15</sup> as a legal, public institution under the Prime Minister.

In addition to the transition from the department to the directorate, relations with the citizens were and are maintained through the co-governance portal "Për Shqipërinë që duam".<sup>16</sup> This portal gives every citizen or business the opportunity

<sup>15</sup> Regulation no. 638 of 6 November 2017.

<sup>16</sup> "For the Albania we want". See <https://www.shqiperiaqeduam.al> (access: 25.12.2025).

to express their concern and receive answers in real time. “Për Shqipërinë që duam” is an opportunity for interaction between citizens and the government. Every citizen can give his opinion about every sector of work in state institutions on this platform that is accessible to everyone, regardless of political beliefs.

Referring to the DAP documentation,<sup>17</sup> it appears that until the creation of this platform, two separate units were operating in the Prime Minister’s Office, which covered the relationship with the public. The first unit was the Directorate of Relations with Citizens (where public complaints were addressed), and the second unit was the Information Directorate at the Prime Minister’s Office (spokesman of the Prime Minister). Based on this division, it is understood that within this institution the two units have been working for defined but separate tasks.

The communications specialist and the spokesman of the Prime Minister was not assigned from the same unit, were not the same person, and were not managed by the same directorate. Until the Prime Minister’s Order of 8 February 2022, “For the approval and structure of the Prime Minister’s Office”, the communication of this high state institution has functioned as above, the important part of the communication specialist of this institution not being well defined.

After this decision, there is now only one directorate in this institution, which is called the Directorate of Communication Security Management, under the Department of Administration and Welfare. This directorate consists of a director and two coordinators.

Another very important aspect for effective communication, as far as the Prime Minister’s Office and the public are concerned, is the obvious placement of the Directorate of Communication in the organizational chart after the decision of 2022. If we refer to the two organizational charts of the Prime Minister’s Office, that of 2019 and 2022, it is noted that the Directorate of Communication is visible in the organization chart only in 2022, exactly under the direction of the Department of Good Administration. In the organizational chart of 2019, the Office of the Communication Directorate was only implied as a unit dependent on the General Secretary, under the name of the Management Office under the General Secretary.

In addition to this unit already announced in the organization chart of the Prime Minister’s Office, the co-government portal also operates, where every citizen, after being registered on the e-Albania platform, sends their complaint or concern to this portal. Meanwhile, the Office of Relations with Citizens works in the Prime Minister’s Office for all complaints by mail of citizens or businesses. Internal communication is responsible for all information exchange between units within the institution.

Being always aware of the information that circulates internally, based on a certain agenda, makes it easier to pass the correct information to the public.

<sup>17</sup> E. Taska, N. Zela, *op. cit.*

Now, appeal procedures, recruitments, results and achievements of the institution become known to the public in record time. The development of technology has affected all areas of humanity, making the process of communication easier. Even in this case, the electronic platform used in the Prime Minister's Office only after 2017, has made it possible for the government-public interaction to be much more interactive. Everyone knows everything that belongs to them and everyone gets answers in immediate time.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study analyzes how the internal and external communication process of an institution is an important link that affects its success and longevity.

The review and comparative analysis show how the effective communication of an institution affects its image and good reputation. For an institution, communication is effective when everyone is aware of what the institution does and the institution itself is aware of what is being said about it. Relations with the public of state institutions are said to be well realized when there is a bridge of communication between them and the public.

The case study that was examined shows that the centralization of internal communication and external communication of the state institution makes it possible for communication with the public to be well managed and to be at the service of two parties: the reputation of the state institution and the needs of the public.

The existence of the state administration should be for the benefit of the citizen, regardless of political beliefs. In Albania, even though the culture of relations with the public entered late as a process, the facts have shown that efforts have always been made to do it correctly.

The social and economic development of a country depends not only on the decisions of the government, but also on the consultation or participation of the public for whom these decisions are made.

The transmission of information from the state institution to the citizen requires some centralization of the internal and external message, as well as legal support for the right and limits of information.

The direction of a state can be right when it is at a high level, in terms of reputation, transparency of decisions, and citizen trust. In communication sciences, it is emphasized that communication is the process that can turn the majority into the minority and *vice versa*.

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### ABSTRAKT

Obecnie, w związku z dynamiką rozwoju, instytucje państwowie muszą współpracować w układzie zarówno pionowym, jak i poziomym, aby skutecznie zarządzać wyzwaniami współczesności. Obok komunikacji wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej instytucji szczególnie znaczenie ma jej relacja z opinią publiczną. W państwach o słabych instytucjach, do których zalicza się Albania, gdzie tradycja relacji z otoczeniem publicznym ukształtowała się stosunkowo późno, bo dopiero w latach 90. XX w., aktualnie dostrzegalne są wysiłki zmierzające do nadania temu procesowi należnej rangi. Raporty licznych instytucji międzynarodowych wskazują, że Albania napotykała istotne trudności zarówno w zakresie koordynacji wewnętrznej pomiędzy instytucjami, jak i w obszarze właściwej interakcji z opinią publiczną. Późne włączenie relacji z otoczeniem publicznym do strategii komunikacyjnych albańskich instytucji państwowych spowodowało, że niezbędne zmiany służące prawidłowej realizacji komunikacji wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej były wprowadzane z dużymi trudnościami. Właśnie temu zagadnieniu poświęcone jest niniejsze opracowanie, które koncentruje się na Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów Albanii oraz na działaniach podejmowanych w celu przewyciężenia deficytów komunikacyjnych w relacjach z innymi instytucjami oraz z opinią publiczną. Centralizacja tego procesu wymaga tworzenia odpowiednich komórek organizacyjnych w strukturze instytucji państwowych oraz zatrudniania właściwie przygotowanych kadr, szkolonych z wykorzystaniem najnowszych metod ko-

munikacji, w szczególności w kontekście postępującej cyfryzacji. Studium przypadku przedstawione w artykule dotyczy Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów Albanii oraz rozwiązań, jakie zastosowano w celu usprawnienia komunikacji z innymi instytucjami i społeczeństwem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** instytucje rządowe; public relations; komunikacja; administracja publiczna