



The Normative Dimension of EU Communication

Final Conference of the Jean Monnet Chair

Verba volant, sed imperant? The Legal Challenges of EU Communication

University of Ferrara | Department of Law | Prof. Jacopo Alberti

Call for papers

Background and Rationale of the Final Conference

In recent years, communication – particularly in its digital dimension – has become a structural component of the European Union’s action. Far from being merely ancillary, it increasingly contributes to shaping behaviours, expectations and, ultimately, the legal positions of individuals and legal entities.

Traditionally, legal scholarship has approached communication as a phenomenon devoid of autonomous legal relevance, in line with the well-known Latin maxim *verba volant, scripta manent*. Developments in the contemporary information society, however, have progressively called this assumption into question. Decisions announced through press releases, public statements or social media have proved capable of significantly affecting the rights and interests of individuals and companies, even in the absence of a formal legal act.

The literature has extensively explored the unwritten dimension of law (including general principles and customary norms), as well as the category of *soft law*, commonly understood as encompassing instruments that are formally non-binding yet capable of producing *de facto* effects. By contrast, comparatively little attention has been paid to purely communicative forms of action, which may not even qualify as legal acts and yet may operate as instruments of regulation.



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Communicative measures increasingly influence the rights and interests of companies, individuals, States and society at large. International trade and diplomatic relations are often shaped by announcements, press releases and social media content, as are the choices of businesses and consumers. Only in some instances are such communications subsequently translated into legal acts, and even then, the content does not always correspond to what was previously communicated. This raises the question whether such communicative measures may, under certain conditions, produce legal effects, generate legitimate expectations or give rise to liability.

Against this background, the final conference aims to move beyond a general analysis of ‘regulation by communication’ and to examine the normative dimension of EU communication. It seeks to explore whether, and under what conditions, communicative acts of EU institutions and political actors may acquire legal relevance within the EU legal order. Particular attention will be devoted to the interaction between communication and foundational principles of EU law, including legal certainty, transparency, accountability and effective judicial protection. The analysis will also address how EU institutions engage in communicative practices, as well as the interplay between national and EU communication, including its judicial dimension.

The Call for Papers

In this context, the Chair invites innovative contributions addressing the normative dimension of EU communication, also in light of recent transformations of the European information space.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited, to:

- **Theoretical questions**

The regulatory potential of communication has long been recognised in fields such as monetary policy and banking, as well as in what political science has, for several decades, described as ‘regulation by information’. In light of the rise of social media, how is this phenomenon evolving across different EU



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policy areas? Does current practice suggest a transformation in the concept of ‘act’ within EU law?

- **Communication in the EU multilevel governance framework**

The EU’s multilevel structure raises questions as to how communication operates across different levels of governance. To what extent are communicative strategies used by EU and national bodies to expand or defend institutional prerogatives? Do such practices affect internal balances of power (e.g. between legislative and executive authorities, or between central governments and independent bodies)?

- **Communication in the EU system of judicial protection**

The EU system of judicial protection must also be assessed in light of the challenges posed by communicative regulation. How has the Court of Justice approached press releases, public statements, announcements or social media communications? Under what conditions have such instruments been regarded as capable of producing legal effects? Is the approach adopted by EU courts consistent with that developed in national case law?

- **Reviewability and access to justice**

The rise of communicative acts raises questions as to the adequacy of existing standards of judicial review at both EU and national level. To what extent do traditional admissibility criteria (e.g. acts producing legal effects, direct and individual concern) capture the impact of such measures? Does the case law reveal gaps in judicial protection, and how might these be addressed?

- **EU institutions as communicators**

Given its sui generis nature – neither a mere international organisation nor (yet?) a State – the European Union increasingly relies on communication strategies, including in response to major crises (e.g. the euro crisis). What are the internal rules and practices governing communication within EU institutions? How do such practices affect their institutional role and the



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principle of institutional balance? More broadly, what is the impact of multilingualism on EU communication strategies?

Conference and Young Researchers Platform

The best papers will be presented at the final Conference of the Jean Monnet Chair (2023–2026), which will take place in October 2nd, 2026 at the University of Ferrara, with a high-level line-up of speakers from academia and EU institutions.

Authors of selected papers, as well as other outstanding applicants, may be invited to join the Young Researchers Platform (YRP), an international network aimed at fostering discussion and collaboration on the topics covered by the Chair.

Practical Information

Please submit a 500-word abstract of your proposed paper, together with a short CV, by July 15th, 2026 to: jmchair.eulaw@unife.it.

The call is open to early-career scholars (PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers) as well as practitioners.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome shortly after the submission deadline. Travel and accommodation expenses for selected participants will be reimbursed in accordance with Jean Monnet financial rules.

Selected authors will be required to submit a preliminary draft of their paper by September 15th, 2026 and a final version by November 30th, 2026. The conference proceedings will be considered for publication as a Special Issue in a leading legal journal.

Abstracts and papers shall be submitted in English, which will be the working language of the conference.



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