

**Natalia Karpchuk**

Lesia Ukrainka Eastern European National University in Lutsk, Ukraine

## **COMMUNICATION POLICY AS THE SOURCE OF CITIZENS' TRUST**

### **ABSTRACT**

The article focuses on the national dimensions of the EU communication policy, namely, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The cornerstone of the EU communication policy is the dialogue with citizens about the policies and the future of the EU. It is based on openness, transparency and accountability which greatly contribute to building citizens' trust in the authorities' activity. EU communication policy is realized through e-governance, language policy and the policy in the sphere of mass media. The aim of the article is to analyze the experience and best practices of top 3 EU countries (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) in terms of the assessment of national policies in the field of ICT and digital skills of citizens in the sphere of communication policy. The hypothesis is that these states being the leaders as to citizens' digital literacy have introduced efficient channels of involving citizens in the decision making process.

### **Key words**

Communication policy, e-participation, language policy, participatory democracy

### **Introduction**

Exploring the problem of the role of communication in the development of nations and peoples, Karl Deutsch concluded that "... the communication process is the basis of the cohesion of societies, cultures and even individuals"<sup>1</sup>. The scientist believes that any collaboration of human beings needs communication, and the more organized the society is, the greater there is the need for communication.

In 1972 since its founding UNESCO has paid great attention to information and communication and offered the first definition of the communication policy: "Communication Policy is a set of principles and rules established to control the

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<sup>1</sup>К. Дойч, *Народи, нації та комунікація*, "Націоналізм: антологія". Київ, Смолоскип, 2000.

behavior of communication systems. Their orientation is fundamental and long-term, but they can also have short-term operational objectives. They are formed in the context of an overall approach of the society to communication, originate from political ideology, social and economic conditions of the country, its values. Communication policies exist in every society, although they may be latent, not consistent and not clearly articulated”<sup>2</sup>.

Since then the discussion of communication policies has been conducted both at the national and international levels and often relates to such issues as the balanced flow of information, technology transfer activities of transnational corporations. Communication penetrates the development processes and covers media, telecommunications, ICT, organized interpersonal communication and all the resources used by society to ensure the flow of information. The purpose of communication is to inform, promote, persuade, educate, entertain and motivate people, build trust at the level of interpersonal and public interrelation, and provoke changes in behavior that contribute to national development.

Considering the above said Florangel Rosario Braid and colleagues believe that communication policy refers to guidelines on ownership, distribution and use of communication resources; defines the role of communication in society, the relations between the media, government and business; provides a framework within which the said structures can evolve to support the goal of building a just and humane society<sup>3</sup>.

In this research the communication policy is understood as the complex of principles and measures directed at objective and unbiased information dissemination, establishing transparent relations between government and civil society, listening to the needs and demands of citizens, involving citizens in the decision making process. Concerning the relations “state authority – citizens”

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<sup>2</sup> M.A.R. Dias, J.A.R. Lee, K. Nordenstreng O.A. Wiio, *National communication Policy Councils: Principles and Experiences*, 1979, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0003/000370/037074eo.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>3</sup> F.R. Braid, R.R. Tuazon, and N.O. Gamolo, (2007). *A Reader on Information and Communication Technology*, <http://ww2.aijc.com.ph/PCCF/mediamuseum/who'who/whos'who-comm-ed-braid.htm> [access 25.01.2015].

efficient communication policy allows to develop the reliance of citizens on the state authority bodies, their activity and decisions and creates confidence in government.

To provide efficient communication and ensure trust in state authority, communication policy should be grounded on the next fundamental principles,

*transparency*: the state provides full information in accordance with national requirements and the needs of the public;

*honesty*: citizens are given immediate full and comprehensive answers to all enquiries in accordance with the national legislation;

*equal access*: all citizens, institutions and organizations should have equal access to information from all areas of the society, except the information which disclosure is restricted by national legislation;

*reliability*: all information is supplied from a reliable source, its probability is not questioned, and, consequently, any distortion or manipulation is minimized;

*high quality*: high quality of both the information and forms of communication and presentation of information and communication materials is guaranteed;

*coordination*: all components of communication policy must comply with the requirements of the public and the political and economic situation in the country.

### **Fundamentals of the EU communication policy**

The EU institutions focus on the rights and opportunities of EU citizens and on influence of actions, policies of the EU institutions on citizens. The European Commission defines communication as establishing contacts and initiating dialogue with European citizens, listening to and communication with them<sup>4</sup>. EU Communication policy is a perspective direction of the EU activity, grounded on evidence-based system of communication tools usage to enhance the image, reputation and trust in the EU and, as the result, the efficiency of European integration.

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<sup>4</sup> Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/comm-initiatives/2005-action-plan-improve-communicating-europe-by-commission-sec2005-985\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/comm-initiatives/2005-action-plan-improve-communicating-europe-by-commission-sec2005-985_en.pdf) [access 25.01.2015].

In October 2004 Friends of Europe and Gallup Europe presented the report “Can EU hear me” giving the opinions of senior officials of the EU institutions on their understanding of the concepts of “information” and “communication”, “communication policy” and related problems<sup>5</sup>. The survey resulted in the publication of a number of documents on communication policy and commitments to include issues of public communications to all EU policies, namely,

- Action Plan to improve communicating Europe, 2005<sup>6</sup> with the aim to guarantee efficient communication about Europe;

- Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, 2005<sup>7</sup>, its goal was to involve member states to organize broad public debates on the future of the EU, attracting citizens, civil society, social partners, national Parliaments and political parties supported by the EU institutions;

- White Paper on a European Communication Policy, 2006<sup>8</sup>, its main goal was to make a step forward and invite all players to offer their own ideas as to the cooperation to fill the communication gap with the citizens;

- Communicating Europe in Partnership, 2007<sup>9</sup> aimed at strengthening the relations and interaction between the activity of the EU institutions and member states in order to offer citizens better access to and better understanding of EU policies influence at European, national and local levels.

Today countries are looking for ways to implement common standards to the infrastructures of their info spaces, to build public policies based on the latest communication technologies, including the assurance of effective communication of authorities with citizens and businesses. Communication policy helps to clarify the

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<sup>5</sup> Can EU hear me? How to get the EU's message out. Friends Of Europe, October 2004, <http://www.euractiv.ro/www/storage/analize/140.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>6</sup> Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/comm-initiatives/2005-action-plan-improve-communicating-europe-by-commission-sec2005-985\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/comm-initiatives/2005-action-plan-improve-communicating-europe-by-commission-sec2005-985_en.pdf) [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>7</sup> Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/institutional\\_affairs/decisionmaking\\_process/a30000\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/decisionmaking_process/a30000_en.htm) [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>8</sup> White Paper on a European Communication Policy, [http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white\\_papers/pdf/com2006\\_35\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com2006_35_en.pdf) [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>9</sup> Communicating Europe in Partnership, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/declaration\\_insti/declaration\\_final\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/declaration_insti/declaration_final_EN.pdf) [access 25.01.2015].

responsible relationship of government and the people, the consistent implementation of the democratic way of functioning. The hypothesis of this paper is the next: the countries with the highest level of ICT have developed an effective communication policy that provides political trust and can serve as a model for the world.

In 2010 the European Commission asked an independent consulting firm Empirica to conduct a study on evaluation of national policies in the field of ICT and digital skills of citizens of all countries (27 at the time) of the EU<sup>10</sup>. According to this study the first and highest category is represented by two groups of countries

- Group A includes countries with very high level of digital literacy and e-skills of labor force: Sweden, Finland and Denmark. In these countries, digital literacy is the result of both successful policies initiated in the past, and education and training. However, there is still a need for highly skilled IT specialists in the industry;

- Group B includes countries with high level of digital literacy and skills or with very well developed public policy in this area: the Netherlands, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria and Estonia.

The paper presents the study of communication policy of the Group A. It should be stressed that in Sweden, Finland and Denmark there is no specific document outlining key areas of the communication policy. However, there are a number of regulations, individual initiatives and activities that are focused on the implementation of the communication policy, particularly in the field of e-government, language policy and media.

### **Communication policy of Sweden**

Modern communication technologies provide a much stronger interaction between government and citizens. They offer an opportunity to create a better public scrutiny of political activity, create better informed electorate and ensure accountability of government officials. In 1999 the Swedish government announced

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<sup>10</sup> T. Husing, and W.B. Korte, *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Communication of the European Commission E-Skills for the 21 century*, October 2010, [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/files/reports/eskills21\\_final\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/files/reports/eskills21_final_report_en.pdf) [access 25.01.2015].

its goal to build a real information society available to everyone within 24 hours. In 2010 the Government suggested the policy “as easy as possible for as many as possible - from strategy to action for e-administration”<sup>11</sup>. Keywords of the politics were "simple, open, accessible, efficient and secure e-government”.

The Swedish Government considers public confidence in ICT and policy coordination to be the basis of sustainable and fully inclusive information society. To consolidate the leading position of the state in the sphere of ICT in 2009 the Strategy was adopted aimed at providing 90% of all households and businesses with the access to broadband Internet with a minimum speed of 100 megabytes by 2020. Sweden has the lowest percentage of people who have never used the Internet - 7%. The advantages of e-government are widely used by ordinary citizens and business.

The Government Commission on Swedish Democracy, established in October 1997, launched a study of e-participation policy in Sweden, involving more than 100 scientists. The final report “A Sustainable Democracy” does not only emphasize the need for participatory democracy in Sweden, but also recognizes the importance of experiments with e-participation<sup>12</sup>.

In this context the next two democratic projects financed by the government are of utmost importance:

- “Time for Democracy”, which aim is to increase participation and awareness of the political process, focusing particular attention to national elections. In 2000-2002 142 educational projects received grants with a total value of SEK 19 million;

- “Participating Sweden” aimed at combating social exclusion and enhancing wider participation of Swedish society. The project ran from 2006 to 2009 with the budget of SEK 22 million<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> I. Bernhard, *E-government and E-governance – Swedish Case Studies with Focus on the Local Level*. October 2013, <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:663249/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>12</sup> En uthållig demokrati! Politik för folkstyrelse på 2000-talet : Demokratiutredningens betänkande. - Stockholm 2000. <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c4/06/24/1c43643c.pdf> [access 20.01.2015].

<sup>13</sup> Citizen centric e-participation. A trilateral collaboration for democratic innovation. Case studies on e-participation policy: Sweden, Estonia and Iceland. – 2013. [http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine\\_ja\\_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/citizen\\_centric\\_e\\_participation\\_veebi.pdf](http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/citizen_centric_e_participation_veebi.pdf) [access 20.01.2015].

A proportion of the budget (SEK 4 million) was dedicated specifically to promoting public participation and dialogue among citizens. However, it should be noted that Sweden has not got a specially designed program or policy of e-participation or e-democracy, all the initiatives come from the local community or civic organizations. For example, an online advisory referendums were held in such cities as Kalix, Malmö, Vara and Sigtuna. In Sigtuna ten online referendums were conducted in one year and the results were generally encouraging: a relatively high percentage of citizens took part at some stage in these online referendums (between 30% and 60%), the socioeconomic characteristics of participants were fairly well balanced, and the contributions made by participants did have an impact on final policy decisions.

In late 2004 the city of Gothenburg launched an online forum in relation to a large redevelopment project as part of an innovative effort to break with traditional structures for policy-making and planning. The limited activity of the early stage increased in 2006 and 980 posts were registered. After heated debates and suggestions in the local museum the exhibition was opened devoted to city planning and its communication. The feature of this project was that politicians kept out of discussing, all debates were held at the informal level, and politicians preserved the right to take independent decision in the end. However, expectations of ordinary citizens and financial capacity of decision makers varied considerably, so the online forum was more about sharing problems than about sharing power<sup>14</sup>.

Sweden's first e-petitioning system was launched in 2008 in the city of Malmö. Its success depended on the willingness of public authorities to take petitions seriously when preparing an institutional response. During the first year 200 electronic applications were received, which officials (both political and administrative) refused to answer, and the public accepted it as normal. Over the next 16 months an average of 10 requests per month were reported. The survey showed

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<sup>14</sup> Citizen centric e-participation. A trilateral collaboration for democratic innovation. Case studies on e-participation policy: Sweden, Estonia and Iceland. – 2013. [http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine\\_ja\\_kodanike%C3%BCchiskond/citizen\\_centric\\_e\\_participation\\_veebi.pdf](http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BCchiskond/citizen_centric_e_participation_veebi.pdf) [access 20.01.2015].

that 80% of respondents expected politicians to read the appeal; 70% hoped for feedback and that the appropriate committee or council would be informed. 13% of respondents confirmed that they received a response from local politicians.

Swedish Government recognizes the lack of dialogue between the decision makers and citizens (and people without citizenship), which results in poor management, corruption, exclusion of citizens, discrimination of vulnerable groups (people living in poverty, rural residents, minorities). When the interaction is poor or there is a lack of interaction, officials cannot understand the expectations of citizens and do not implement initiatives to meet these expectations. Consequently, all these failures lead to citizens' distrust.

The rapid development of ICT, the steady growth of mobile phone users, the increasing use of smart phones and the Internet offer opportunities to innovative ideas that enable citizens to expose corruption, to fill gaps in service provision and encourage governments to develop new ways to fight corruption and report to their citizens effectively, actively and quickly.

In December 2011 the Swedish government began an experiment @Sweden - account on Twitter, which is unique as every week one Swede controls all @Sweden. This curator is elected by the Swedish Institute, the Swedish official tourist website VisitSweden, which is a government agency, and the Swedish advertising company Volontaire. The project is called "Curators of Sweden"<sup>15</sup>.

The original purpose is to promote tourist attractions of the country, but because @Sweden defies censorship, it has become a tool of free expression. Here, citizens also discuss political issues according to their priority of importance rather than to the government's agenda. The experiment aims to study and show how social media reflect social changes that initiate and maintain a dialogue between citizens, as they serve as a means of public diplomacy.

The Grand Challenge for Development: Making All Voices Count (MAVC) was founded in 2013 to support innovative ideas to improve citizens' involvement in government activity which can lead to the decrease of corruption and to more

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<sup>15</sup> @Sweden: Connecting Citizens through a National Voice, <http://takefiveblog.org/2012/06/12/connecting-citizens-through-a-national-voice/> [access 25.01.2015].



efficient government's response to citizens' needs. The Fund activity is based on the idea that involved citizens are the pledge of democracy; without them democracy is meaningless with politicians removed from people; dynamic world needs constant interaction (not only each 4 years during parliamentary races)<sup>16</sup>.

By supporting innovative technology platforms for citizen engagement, Making All Voices Count seeks to involve citizens and government officials in sending, receiving and re-connecting information, which will enable open, democratic governance through citizen feedback on government performance. The fund has been set up by USAID (usaid.gov), UK Department of International Development (DfID), investing firm Omidyar Network and Sweden Government Agency on Cooperation Development Sida. The project costs \$ 45 million for 4 years and is realized through research grants providing financial and technical support of cooperation initiatives between government and civil society.

In 2013 p. British Organization Publish What You Fund (PWYF) presented the Index of transparency aid under which Sweden occupied the 9<sup>th</sup> position among 67 organizations and countries<sup>17</sup>. The web-site Openaid.se – Sweden Initiative of Transparency was specially rewarded. This online service was developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden and Sida for the general public and stakeholders to easily see when, to whom and for what purpose Swedish financial aid was allocated. The basic idea of the site is to share information about the aid over the Internet rather than to encourage interested parties to request to the appropriate agency. Openaid.se forwards in the search of information regarding the contributions of decisions, reports and evaluation of funding outcomes<sup>18</sup>.

EU Communication policy emphasizes that all citizens of the Union shall have access to information in their languages; at the same time it emphasizes the need to study 2 more foreign languages. In 2009 the Law on Languages was adopted which guarantees the use of the Swedish language as the language of Swedish government

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<sup>16</sup> Making All Voices Count – Engaging Citizens through Innovation and Technology, <http://www.sida.se/English/Partners/Private-sector/Collaboration-opportunities/Challenge-Funds/Making-All-Voices-Count/> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>17</sup> Sweden praised for aid transparency <http://www.government.se/sb/d/17191/a/227158> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>18</sup> Openaid.se <http://www.openaid.se/en/start> [access 20.01.2015].

and other public institutions, including universities and museums<sup>19</sup>. The government measures to support the official language and to recognize the minorities' languages are directed by the Swedish Language Council. In 1999, five minority languages were declared official in Sweden: Sami (all varieties), Finnish, Meänkieli (historically known as Tornedal Finnish), Romani Chib (all varieties) and Yiddish. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was ratified by Sweden in January 2000 with regard to these minority languages. Swedish sign language has also been declared an official language<sup>20</sup>.

Freedom of expression, access and diversity of content are considered to be the measures of the Swedish government objectives in the field of culture and media. Newspapers, supported by government grants, commercial channels, access to international channels via satellite, Internet, pay TV provide a range of opinions, attitudes, images, ensuring media pluralism<sup>21</sup>. Activities of media are based on the principle of public access to official documents, allowing the Swedes receive full and transparent information about the government and local authorities, preventing abuse of power. This principle requires civil servants and government agencies to inform the media about what they know (with the exception of confidential and secret information).

### **Communication policy of Finland**

Finland has been effectively implementing innovations and ICT in politics and economics to improve the quality of the environment, international competition and the welfare of citizens. The Finnish National Strategy of broadband Internet provides 99% coverage of households, business and public administration by the end of 2015.

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<sup>19</sup> Sweden/ 4.2 Specific policy issues and recent debates  
<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/sweden.php?aid=425> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem

<sup>21</sup> 4.2.6 Media pluralism and content diversity,  
<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/sweden.php?aid=426> [access 20.01.2015].

Finland dominates in terms of population that uses the Internet to search for health information, participation in training and reading newspapers. E-governance is based on anthropocentric approach which means that citizens are at the center of all services.

For the last 10-15 years in Finland the discussions have been held around the problems related to public participation in decision-making concerning the welfare of the state, public alienation from the political process and the quality of public services. All discussions led to the understanding of the need to strengthen the role of civil society, so since the late 90's various projects and initiatives have been launched.

In 1995-1999 individual projects were developed, and during 1999-2003 the Program of civic participation was implemented as one of the key single-level programs of the Government program for the period of 2003-2007. During 2007-2011 the Finnish government implemented a program of e-services and e-democracy “Open, fair and confident Finland”<sup>22</sup>, in which transparency and citizens' right to good administration, participation in decision-making and access to information are considered the foundation of the local administration. Local laws force authorities to inform and engage in communication with citizens for it to be open, active and timely. This is facilitated by electronic communication.

In 1997 the Ministry of Internal Affairs launched the Participation Project to prevent exclusion of citizens of the state from the communication process. In 2000 the Ministry of Finance launched a discussion forum [www.otakantaa.fi](http://www.otakantaa.fi) = “Share Your Views with Us” to use the potential of ICTs for consultation with citizens<sup>23</sup>. Currently Forum is moderated by the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry of Finance implemented the project “Hear the citizens” as part of the Central Government Reform of 2000-2003. The project originated from the idea that the consultation and participation would increase the openness of the government. The Ministry of Justice prepared a draft strategy for e-counseling and e-participation for the period of 2007-2008. The government also created the Advisory

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<sup>22</sup> Agreement on the new Government Programme - An open, fair and confident Finland, <http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=223256&contentlan=2&culture=en-US> [access 20.01.2015].

<sup>23</sup> Otakantaa, <https://www.otakantaa.fi/fi-FI> [access 20.01.2015].

Board on Civil Society Policy to strengthen dialogue between the administration and civil society; the Ministry established a democratic network between other ministries to coordinate and strengthen citizens' participation<sup>24</sup>.

In the spring of 2010 Principles of Promoting Democracy were presented consisting of 32 proposals, including strengthening representative democracy, strengthening civil society, new channels of participation and democratic education. Open Government Action Plan, which implementation began in July 2013, encourages citizens' participation and is based on the following principles: Visibility (*Open procedures*), Comprehensibility (*Clear language*) and Facts (*Open knowledge*)<sup>25</sup>.

The Department of Communications is responsible for the communication of the Prime Minister and government, foreign and internal communication of the Office of Prime Minister and ministries as well as for joint intranet of ministries. It also contributes to the ministers in disseminating information and coordinating and developing the main government posts to the public. The Department provides information on government decisions and official meetings, evening sessions and committees; it organizes press conferences of the Prime Minister and the government; controls the distribution of government information on the level of the EU etc.<sup>26</sup>.

Website [www.2030.fi](http://www.2030.fi) is launched to create a forum to bloggers to speak about their vision for the future of Finland up to 2030. This new project provides the involvement of citizens through social media for their views and ideas to be heard even at an early stage. This method of inclusion is considered new in the history of Finland. The newly created website provides access to articles on the future and selected topics from blogs and other sources of the network. Anyone can register the blog. Website is managed by the chief editor that changes every two weeks. The chief

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<sup>24</sup>Finland's Action Plan on Open Government, [http://www.google.com.ua/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDEQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.opengovpartnership.org%2Ffile%2F1320%2Fdownload&ei=iYx4U\\_fxE9KK4gSBkYDIAg&usg=AFQjCNFUM9yu0JMruEsXTUd9ooZ7eW2IXw](http://www.google.com.ua/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDEQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.opengovpartnership.org%2Ffile%2F1320%2Fdownload&ei=iYx4U_fxE9KK4gSBkYDIAg&usg=AFQjCNFUM9yu0JMruEsXTUd9ooZ7eW2IXw) [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem

<sup>26</sup> Government Communications Department, <http://vnk.fi/ministerio/organisaatio/Viestintaesosasto/name.jsp> [access 20.01.2015].

editor is responsible for stimulating discussions; the appointed heads and members of the thematic groups leave their comments. These discussions are resulted in the report. In addition, during 2012 seven regional consultative forums were organized for citizens from different parts of the country to openly express their ideas about the future of the state<sup>27</sup>.

Transparency and access to information are the basic principles of the local government in Finland. The Local Government Act emphasizes the importance of representative democracy and the impact of residents and service users on local affairs. Local authorities are obliged to provide information on current community issues being considered; on the plans that directly affect people and the way they are implemented; on decisions already taken and their consequences. Citizens are advised how to speak and offer their ideas to the officials in charge<sup>28</sup>.

In early 2010 a concept Helsinki Region Infoshare was developed. The first version started in March 2011 and by the end of 2012 web service offered a wide range of data for residents of Helsinki and the surrounding area. By the end of 2013 web service became part of the usual activities of local authorities. The main objective of Helsinki Region Infoshare is to make regional information easily accessible to everyone. Since its creation the web service addresses the exchange of public information between the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen. Today it is the source of statistics, information on living conditions, welfare, economic development, employment and transport<sup>29</sup>.

In March of 2013 Helsinki launched a web service Open Ahjo, which allows citizens of the capital to know the agenda of discussions and decisions taken by local authorities and elected MPs. Open Ahjo is the latest version of the decision-making system Ahjo, which is used by the City Council and other bodies of Helsinki. The basic idea of the introduction of the service is “openness is a guiding principle; secrecy is an exception to the rule”. The service makes possible free access to all city

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<sup>27</sup>Citizens involved in shaping the future of Finland, <http://vnk.fi/ajankohtaista/tiedotteet/tiedote/fi.jsp?oid=366665> [access 02.11.2014].

<sup>28</sup>Democracy and Transparency, <http://www.localfinland.fi/en/authorities/democracy/Pages/default.aspx> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>29</sup> Helsinki Region Infoshare, <http://www.hri.fi/en/> [access 25.01.2015].

records, because all records are automatically copied to the Open Ahjo<sup>30</sup>.

At the core of the language policy of Finland there are two ideologies of Finnish culture; one is based on the Finnish language, the other - on Swedish. The rights of the Swedish speaking population are guaranteed by the revised in 1999 Constitution of Finland and are fixed in a special Language Act, which ensures equality in the official use and access to education and career. Swedish is studied as the second native language since primary school. The Language Act, as well as the Sami Language Act – providing for the right to use Sami as an official language in the Sami homeland area, were revised in 2003 and enacted in 2004. Sami is the only recognized indigenous culture in Finland. Besides the Sami, the Constitution gives a special position also to the Roma people and to the users of sign language, and guarantees all three groups the right to maintain and develop a language and culture of their own<sup>31</sup>.

Communication policy of Finland aims to provide basic communications services for all citizens and to promote transparency in decision-making by officials by ensuring the availability of official documents. The Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Education and Culture are responsible for the media activities. The Ministry of Transport and Communications of Finland is developing legislation on communications networks, protection against piracy, data protection policy frequencies; licenses and subsidies to the press. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland is responsible for the content copyright protection, education, archiving, and research<sup>32</sup>. In 2011 the Act on audiovisual programs and the Act on the Finnish center of media education and audio-visual programs were adopted focused on the protection of children from pornography and violence; the Centre of media education and audio-visual media began its work in 2012<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Helsinki - transparency pioneer in Finland, <http://www.epsiplatform.eu/content/helsinki-transparency-pioneer-finland> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>31</sup>Finland/ 4.2 Specific policy issues and recent debates, <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/finland.php?aid=422> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>32</sup> Background information report. *Media policies and regulatory practices in a selected set of European countries, the EU and the Council of Europe: The case of Finland. October 2010*, <http://www.mediadem.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Finland.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>33</sup>Finland/ 4.2 Specific policy issues and recent debates,

## Communication policy of Denmark

In January 2010 the Government of Denmark offered 40 recommendations on how to make the country high-speed society. To achieve this ambitious goal the government has planned to invest in technology to create new ways of working and organizational structure up to 2015 (projects for social and health care). The Danes prefer the Internet to search for information about products and services, make online purchases and to download games. 100% of enterprises and 75% of people use the services of e-government<sup>34</sup>.

Due to the small size of the country, where “everyone knows each other” the consultation process (formal and informal) with key stakeholders and government is considered to be the traditional feature of Denmark. Consultations are based on political culture, search for a consensus among the coalition parties and a compromise. In recent years, Danish Ministries launched a consultation process through public hearings and thematic websites to stimulate public debate and citizens’ participation<sup>35</sup>.

In 2005 to support transparency Consultation Portal (Høringsportalen) was created at borger.dk, which collects consultation documents since mid-2005 concerning the preparation of the provisions by all ministries and agencies; draft laws and orders are to be published; political and strategic documents, the drafts of the European Commission regulations are displayed. After the consultation period the government publishes the adopted decisions<sup>36</sup>.

The Government of Denmark occupies a proactive position as to the availability

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<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/finland.php?aid=422> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>34</sup> The digital path for future welfare: e-government strategy 2011-2015 [http://www.google.com.ua/url?sa=t&rc=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.digst.dk%2F~%2Fmedia%2FFiles%2FDigitaliseringsstrategi%2FEngelsk\\_strategi\\_tilgaengelig.pdf&ei=Kd3EVNL-BYKoygOEioDgBQ&usg=AFQjCNHVJzFJ4PRp\\_udwgSPtq87rrdG1Vg](http://www.google.com.ua/url?sa=t&rc=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.digst.dk%2F~%2Fmedia%2FFiles%2FDigitaliseringsstrategi%2FEngelsk_strategi_tilgaengelig.pdf&ei=Kd3EVNL-BYKoygOEioDgBQ&usg=AFQjCNHVJzFJ4PRp_udwgSPtq87rrdG1Vg) [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>35</sup> Transparency through consultation and communication <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/44912344.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>36</sup> Høringsportalen, [www.borger.dk/forside/lovgivning/hoeringsportale](http://www.borger.dk/forside/lovgivning/hoeringsportale) [access 20.01.2015].

of government regulations over the Internet to the public. Hence, the new legislation is published in the official newspaper Lovtidende.dk, which has had an electronic format since January 1, 2008. Website Retsinformation.dk has been providing access to the state legal system since January 1, 2008 p. Retsinformation.dk is updated at least once daily; it provides the search for laws, regulations issued by ministries, government agencies, with the exception of the documents related to the current parliamentary debate. The site connects to the base of the parliamentary website, and offers access to Lovtidende.dk and ministerial newspaper Ministerialtidende.dk<sup>37</sup>.

As a part of the government's program of e-government, website Virk.dk focused on business was created. Here entrepreneurs can get information on rules and registration in Denmark, samples of documents<sup>38</sup>. Public portal Borger.dk (existing since 2007) provides easy access to public sector information, helps resolve issues related to the provision of services<sup>39</sup> (Portal is focused mainly on local residents and provides information only in Danish, unlike the aforementioned portals that offer also an English version).

E-government Strategy 2011-2015 sets the next initiatives of the Denmark's government: efficient digital communication with citizens, digital technology for business (digital mail for all companies, access to the companies' data through business portal, data available to the public, etc.), IT in schools, digital communication with patients, IT for social initiatives, IT support of the work search, digital universities, a common platform for efficient environmental management etc.<sup>40</sup>.

The Government recognizes the urgent need for more effective communication between citizens and government. Digital channels of communication should not just be an alternative to traditional paper reports, they should replace them. As a result, all

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<sup>37</sup> Transparency through consultation and communication, <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/44912344.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>38</sup> Virk.dk, <http://english.virk.dk/home.html> [access 20.01.2015].

<sup>39</sup> Borger.dk, <https://www.borger.dk/Sider/default.aspx> [access 20.01.2015].

<sup>40</sup> E-government Strategy 2011-2015. The Danish Government/Danish Regions/Local Government. Denmark. August 2011, [http://www.digst.dk/~media/Files/Digitaliseringsstrategi/Engelsk\\_strategi\\_tilgaengelig.pdf](http://www.digst.dk/~media/Files/Digitaliseringsstrategi/Engelsk_strategi_tilgaengelig.pdf) [access 25.01.2015].



individuals should use the internet anywhere to meet their information and communication needs. Those who are unfamiliar with digital channels of communication will be provided the assistance; special attention is paid to people with disabilities. It is assumed that at the latest by the end of 2014 all citizens would have their own digital boxes, where they will get the information from the authorities. Public portal Borger.dk will provide the safe access points; “My page” on Borger.dk will provide direct access to all personal information about housing, health care, taxes, rights and responsibilities.

Efficient communication policy is conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, which improves and corrects the plans of communication every three years. Thus, in the communication policy of Denmark the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has outlined the following strategic priorities:

- “proactive press activity” refers to external communication. Press activity is a matter of being open and accessible, answering questions and actively endeavouring to provide information. Today many journalists regard the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an open organisation;

- strengthened dialogue through social media which provides new opportunities for the Ministry to engage in direct dialogue with key target groups;

- live pictures: the communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is often text-based. Live pictures may lend credibility to communication because they give “ocular proof” and make communication more immediate and interesting;

- strengthened corporate communication contributes to achieving greater job satisfaction, higher quality in the performance of tasks and more efficient operation. MFA website and intranet are the main communication channels<sup>41</sup>.

Danish is the official language of Denmark, which has approximately 5,500,000 inhabitants. 90% of these are ethnic Danes with Danish as their mother tongue. For the remaining 10%, only one minority language, German, is recognized officially. In the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the law of autonomy guarantees the official status of the Faroese and Greenlandic languages. In 1987

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Communication Policy 2010 – 2013, <http://um.dk/en/politics-and-diplomacy/> [access 22.01.2015].

Denmark has ratified the Nordic Language Convention, which secures the right of Nordic citizens to use their own language to communicate with the authorities in all Nordic countries. In 2006 Denmark has also ratified the Nordic Language Declaration which is a joint policy document of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It states that both national and minority languages should be supported and protected<sup>42</sup>.

In 2011 the report “Democracy Support – Tomorrow's Public Media Support” was presented. The key parameters are determined by technology, customers’ market development and internationalization increase. The aim of the report is to promote social and cultural information, to strengthen democratic discussion in the society, to ensure diversity and variety of media of Denmark, to build citizens’ trust in authorities’ activity. Powerful media are seen as significant support for democratic values and society through independent production and distribution of news and information that encourages the search for information and participation in public hearings<sup>43</sup>. The whole process of information gathering is carried under the Information Act (Offentlighedsloven), which contains provisions on transparency and access to documents of public administration<sup>44</sup>.

## **Conclusions**

So, communication policy is a set of principles and measures directed at objective and unbiased information dissemination, establishing transparent relations between government and civil society, listening to the needs and demands of citizens, involving citizens in the participation in the decision making. The basic principles of communication policy are transparency; honesty; equal access; reliability; high quality; coordination.

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<sup>42</sup> Language rich Europe: Denmark, <http://www.language-rich.eu/home/country-profiles/profiles-overview/denmark.html> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>43</sup>Denmark/ 4.2 Specific policy issues and recent debates, <http://www.worldcp.org/denmark.php?aid=425> [access 25.01.2015].

<sup>44</sup> Background information report. *Media policies and regulatory practices in a selected set of European countries, the EU and the Council of Europe: The case of Denmark*, <http://www.mediadem.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Denmark.pdf> [access 25.01.2015].

The cornerstone of the EU communication policy is dialogue with citizens on policies and the future of the Union. This dialogue which is held by means of e-government, language policy and policy in the media promotes trust building in the decision making of the authorities.

Sweden, Finland and Denmark are top 3 EU countries in terms of the assessment of national policies in the field of ICT and digital skills of citizens, though they did not elaborate any specific document regulating state communication policy, but actively develop and implement measures to involve citizens into the political and administrative process. In particular, the sites with the access to important public information are created with a possibility of interactive discussion; language policy is oriented to guarantee opportunities for citizens to speak out and be heard; media are treated as powerful and effective tool for democracy.