



Finland
PR Country Landscape 2014

Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management

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Acknowledgments

'HEI!'

(an informal greeting in Finnish, pronounced, 'Hey!')

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Public Relations in Finland

A brief history of public relations

Finland, a country that has experienced several wars and which is sparsely populated, ranks highly in international comparisons, such as Forbes' Best Countries for Business, Future Brand's Country Brand Index (2012), and the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2012 Global Competitiveness Report. According to the United Nations' World Happiness Report, Finland sits among the three happiest nations in the world (Finland in World Rankings 2012), and, as a nation, places a high emphasis on reaching consensus. These trends are also apparent in the description of communications professionals.

While the first documented public relations actions date back to the 1910s, the majority of growth in public relations practices started in subsequent decades (von Hertzen, Melgin, and Åberg 2012). The first push originated from a growing interest in advertising in the 1920s. In the public sector, growth began in the end of 1930s after military and ministry press officer duties became more common. The first Finnish propaganda association, Propaganda Union (Propagandaliitto), was established on the eve of the Second World War in 1937 to promote the Finland-hosted Olympics, which were planned for 1940 (and which were called off due to the war). All wartime propaganda organizations with diverse names, such as the Finlandia Union, were closed down after the WWII. First peacetime association for public relations professionals Information Men (Tiedotusmiehet) born 1947 was the direct successor to the Propaganda Union and other related wartime propaganda organizations. Tiedotusmiehet - Finnish Society of Public Relations (called today ProCom), is the one of the oldest peacetime public relations association of its kind in Europe. (Melgin 2014, 2015).

Similar to many European countries, the public relations profession in Finland is tied to the development of journalism, advertising, and marketing. Between the 1950s and 1970s, the importance of public relations grew in both the private and public sectors and paved the way for the current state of the profession. During these decades, internal communications activities within organisations were developed and laws were established for public sector communications activities (von Hertzen, Melgin, and Åberg 2012). Most researchers consider the 1980s as the period of maturation of the discipline. During that period, Finnish universities began recognising the public relations field (Lehtonen 2004).

The current state of public relations in Finland

According to a study of the membership structure of all central public relations associations conducted in Finland in autumn 2013, 89.2% of those working in the industry were women, representing the most female dominated public relations field. This feminine domination of the industry started early. Even as early as 1983, a total of 58% of respondents in a survey conducted among all Finnish public relations associations were women. Furthermore, virtually no gender pay gap in leadership positions in the public relations field in Finland exists. The tax data from 2013 shows that women in leadership positions in marketing communications actually earn more than men. Finally, no differences in the pay for those in leadership positions were found and public debates have not identified salaries as a problem (Melgin 2013).

Over four-fifths of Finnish practitioners perceive their academic education as the most important aspect benefitting their career development (European Communication Monitor 2014). Compared with other European countries, Finnish communications management is more prominent among executive boards (Lehtonen 2013; European Communication Monitor 2014). In Finland, communications management operates at the executive management level in over 60% of organisations (Communication professionals 2013 research; European Communication Monitor 2014).

The digital era has transformed the priorities of public relations professionals' tasks. While traditional tasks included internal communications activities, the legacy of media relations and the production of magazines and publications remain important; however, website content creation and analytics have become similarly important tasks in the field. The portion of time public relations professionals spend on social media has also increased. As such, the most significant trends to which communications professionals wish to focus more attention in the period 2014 to 2016 relate to developing social media skills and expertise, strategic communications, and communications management capabilities (Communication professionals 2013 research). Much like the rest of Europe, combining communications with business strategy remains a top priority in Finland.

In Finland, professional networking through social media is more popular than in other European countries (European Communication Monitor 2014). LinkedIn and Twitter are seen as the most important channels for networking, while connections through blogging and Facebook are also valued to some degree. Simultaneously, face-to-face meetings and phone calls are still considered important means of professional networking compared with the situation in other European countries.

Media and the communications landscape in Finland

Despite rapid digital development in Finland, the traditional media sphere continues to thrive, with more than seven daily newspapers in circulation, the most found in any other Nordic country (Finnish Newspapers Association Annual Review 2013). The Finnish National Broadcasting Company, known as YLE, was established in the 1920s. Today, it is mostly financed by taxpayers and extends to various radio and television channels. Alongside YLE, multiple private and commercial broadcasters operate on the market.

As the media business model is challenged, new forms of brand collaboration and sponsored content have also emerged in Finland. Recently, the corporate media giant Sanoma established an in-house content marketing agency headed by a public relations professional headhunted from the consumer goods industry, highlighting the current transition towards open collaboration between marketing and journalism. This trend towards content marketing is becoming visible through the increasing recognition of the value communications professionals provide to organisations.

Finland is a sparsely inhabited country (~17 persons per km²). But, when it comes to media access and telecommunications networks, long distances are not an issue. Thanks to the country's wireless mobile connections and fast optical fibre networks, internet access is widely available across the entire country. The media system in Finland is quite liberal and free-ranging—blogs, the internet, and traditional daily newspapers are at everyone's disposal through local libraries and municipal services, and internet access is considered a right of every citizen, accessible even in the most remote and smallest villages. News content is increasingly consumed through the use of smartphones and tablets, and location-related services are under development.

Print

Newspapers represent the largest share of media in Finland; about 200 individual newspapers are in circulation with a combined distribution of 3 million copies. Helsingin Sanomat, with more than 300 000 subscribers, remains the most dominant publication, with other publications often mirroring its content. Approximately 30 newspapers are issued daily and newspapers reach about 80% of citizens (Finnish Newspapers Association Annual Review 2013). Most papers are delivered to subscribers early in the morning, although recent trends include the introduction of extra evening editions supplementing morning newspapers (Helsingin Sanomat September 2014). Despite the strong history of print, recent trends in Finland also include a decline in print media. At the same time, the use of electronic versions of newspapers has increased. Despite the acceleration of monetising digital newspaper content, the share of investments in printed newspapers by media advertisers stands at more than one-third.

Finland's worst economic depression in the early 1990s led to a restructuring of the media landscape. As a result, the Finnish media industry consolidated into larger entities. The largest media entities in Finland today include Alma Media and Sanoma Media. In addition, a co-operative network exists among several regional and local newspapers. The newspaper market in Finland can be divided roughly into the following segments based on areas of circulation:

1. national (entertainment) newspapers (e.g. Iltasanomat and Iltalehti);
2. regional publications published seven days a week (e.g. Helsingin Sanomat, Aamulehti, Turun Sanomat, Kaleva, and Keski-suomalainen);
3. local newspapers usually published once or twice a week (e.g. Suur-Jyväskylä Lehti); and
4. free papers (e.g. Metro and Metropoli).

Television

Finns watch on average 182 minutes of television a day. For the first time in 4 years, the time Finns spent in front of a television decreased slightly in 2013 (Finnpanel Annual Review 2013). However, Finns are watching television 45 minutes longer each day than they did 20 years ago. Traditionally, all foreign programmes aired in Finland have featured subtitles, using the original soundtracks and maintaining the originality of individual programmes.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company (known as YLE or Yleisradio oy), which is owned by the Finnish State, is the largest operator on the domestic television market and operates four national television channels. For decades, licence fees to fund YLE were collected from citizens. To replace the licence fees, a public broadcasting tax was introduced in 2013, which is collected from all individuals and corporations with an annual income above €7813.

All television programmes in Finland have been digitalised since 2007. In addition to YLE's television channels, many privately funded channels (both free and premium) are available. The most watched freely distributed channels in 2013 included YLE TV1, YLE TV2, MTV3, and Nelonen (Finnpanel Annual Review 2013). Today, the Finnish television market is also greatly shaped by various cable and internet service providers. According to data on internet use in Finland in 2013, 64% of viewers aged 16 to 74 had watched broadcasting companies' web-based services in the past 3 months.

Radio

The first radio broadcasts began shortly after YLE was established in 1926. Today, YLE airs four national radio channels heard across the country. The first commercially funded radio stations were founded in 1985, and, in 2013, numerous commercial (both local and national) radio stations were broadcasting. In addition to YLE, the largest actors included Nelonen Media and SBS (Finnpanel Annual Review 2013).

On a daily basis, 75% of citizens are reached via radio in Finland, primarily during commutes. Average listening time in the country stands at approximately 180 minutes a day. Commercial stations reach 49% of all daily listeners, while YLE reaches 41% of all daily listeners (Finnpanel Annual Review 2013).

Telecommunications

Both the development of the Nordic Mobile Telephone (NMT) network in the 1980s and the first GSM network call made globally in 1991 boosted the rise of the Finnish mobile phone industry. The success of Nokia in the late 1990s and early 2000s greatly affected the development of telecommunications in Finland, which in turn influenced the entire national economy. Recently, new companies such as Jolla have emerged in an attempt to fill the gap created by the sale of industry giant Nokia to Microsoft.

Today, increasing digitalisation, the increasing use of smartphones (61% of the population between 16 and 74 are smartphone users), and new mobile devices shape the Finnish telecommunications industry (Official Statistics of Finland 2013a). In a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014), Finland ranked highest in wireless broadband connections per capita in the world, with a mobile connection penetration rate of 123% compared with the global average of 72%. Increasingly, organisations offer mobile applications and services such as paying via mobile phone or digital identification for accessing health services.

Wireless mobile service areas cover almost the entirety of the country. The use of older GSM networks stands alongside faster 3G and 4G connections, which are increasingly available across Finland. In 2013, the number of mobile phone subscriptions in Finland reached approximately 9.3 million (Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority Statistics 2013).

Internet and social media

The Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority ensures that all Finns have access to the internet. Basic communications services in Finland are considered universal, meaning that internet connections are essential and, thus, all consumers and companies in the country are entitled to access them.

Finns are heavy users of the internet. In 2013, 92% of the population between 16 and 74 had used the internet in the past 3 months and 66% used it several times a day. At the same time, internet use among the oldest age group (75 to 89) increased ten-fold annually (Official Statistics of Finland 2013b).

Younger generations represent more enthusiastic users of social media, with 87% of the population between 16 and 24 following some social media network service in the past 3 months.

In 2013, the share of the population following social network services increased to 51% (Official Statistics of Finland 2013b).

Further information about various media channels can be found at the following links:

http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2013/sutivi_2013_2013-11-07_tie_001_en.html

<http://www.finnpanel.fi/index.php>

http://www.sanomalehdet.fi/sanomalehtien_liitto/in_english/annual_review_2013

<https://www.viestintavirasto.fi/en/index.html>

<http://tnsmatrix.tns-gallup.fi/public/?lang=en>

http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/finland

Legislation and regulations

Transparency, non-corruption, and free public debate shapes Finland's public relations climate (Transparency International 2013). Everyone enjoys freedom of speech in Finland, which is also apparent in professional practices. Individual citizens as well as public institutions (both commercial and otherwise) have the right to express, publish, and receive information, opinions, and other messages without fear of censorship. Slandering others, however, is not permissible, and open attacks against competitors through advertising or communications are considered unethical. Finnish law grants citizens the right to respond to and correct false information concerning one's self.

Finnish media is self-regulated. Since 1968, the Council for Mass Media (CMM) has defined good professional practice and defended the right to freedom of speech and publication nationally. However, CMM does not exercise any legal jurisdiction since its responsibility surrounds upholding ethical standards across print, broadcast, and online media (Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland 2013). For the fourth consecutive year, Finland topped the World Press Freedom index. This index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders, found that press freedom in Finland was based on strong legal foundations supported by a genuine culture of individual liberty (World Press Freedom Index 2014).

Laws governing copyright influence data acquisition and use in Finland. Individuals may legally make a limited number of copies from copyrighted material such as music or publications for their own personal use. Copyrighted material may also be used for research purposes and a researcher may refer to such material by following the relevant research conduct. Similarly, public events are open to photography. It is illegal, however, to make copies of computer programs and games, and to download illegally distributed material from the internet (tekijänoikeus.fi 2014).

Further information about legislation and regulations may be found at the following links:

<http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=46303&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>

<http://oikeusministerio.fi/en/index/basicprovisions/legislation/actontheopennessofgovernmentactivities.html>

<http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>

Future media developments

The future development of media in Finland should follow emerging global trends. The Finnish Association of Communications Professionals has identified several megatrends for the coming years (ProCom 2012). Due to the availability of information and the thoroughly networked society, reputation management has become more important (Lehtonen 2013; Luoma-aho et al., 2010). Likewise, transparency and authenticity are increasingly important to public relations professionals.

In future, additional participatory and interactive forms of media will be introduced and individuals will be able to engage more easily with journalists and producers. Readers, listeners, and watchers will become producers. Traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television will be increasingly accessed through web-based services rather than through the use of traditional devices and platforms (Federation of the Finnish Media Industry 2014).

While the consumption of traditional media formats is declining, new business solutions must simultaneously be implemented (Federation of the Finnish Media Industry 2014). The ability to access media content anywhere and anytime has transformed media-centred consumers into content-centred consumers. Crowdsourcing is supported by Finns given that membership in associations and non-governmental organisations is quite common.

Further information related to future media developments may be found in the following links:

http://www.stat.fi/til/jvie/2012/jvie_2012_2013-11-27_tie_001_en.html

http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2013/sutivi_2013_2013-11-07_tie_001_en.html

Finland: country background

Finland is a relatively young country, only gaining independence in 1917. Historically, Finland has been a part of Sweden as well as an autonomous region of Russia. While Finland is the sixth largest country in Europe, it is sparsely populated. As of early 2014, Finland's population stood at a little over 5.4 million. It features a total of 320 municipalities, while the majority of the population (about 1.25 million) lives in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Other population concentrations can be found in Oulu, Tampere, and Turku. The Finnish age structure is considerably skewed with almost 20% of the population aged 65 and over and about 15% aged 55 to 64. At the same time, those 14 and under represent 16% of the population, with another 12% aged 15 to 24. A little less than 40% of the population is aged 25 to 54 (Central Intelligence Agency 2014; Official statistics Finland 2014).

Despite popular perception, Finland is not a formal part of Scandinavia, situated instead within Fennoscandia. The Finnish language differs from Scandinavian language traditions and belongs to the Finno-Ugrian language family along with languages such as Hungarian and Estonian. Because of the historical heritage, however, there is a comparably large Swedish-speaking population in Finland, where Swedish is recognised as an official language. While Finnish is spoken by 91% of inhabitants, Swedish is spoken by 5.4%. In addition, Sámi is also an official language spoken by a small population of Sámi people inhabiting northern Lapland.

Finland is known as the best country in the world in which to live (Newsweek 2012). Very little corruption exists within society (Transparency International 2014) and its press freedom tops world rankings according to Reporters Without Borders (World Press Freedom Index 2014). Trust is implicitly understood within society, and organisations and individuals are, in general, trusted to do the right thing (European Social Survey 2009). Official rules, contracts, and promises are highly emphasised, and Finns place a high value on keeping their word.

To summarise, the following statement provides the rationale regarding why Finland is the best place to live, which may partially explain why communications professionals in Finland are quite satisfied (Newsweek 2012): 'Despite the long winter, Finland is a pretty great place to be—the best, actually. It ranked the highest overall and also comes in as the best small country, the best high-income country, and the best country for education.'

Political environment

Finland is a parliamentary democracy, and a member of the European Union and United Nations. Politically, Finland is one of the most stable countries in the world and has one of the best functioning democracies, resulting in its highest ranking for the political environment according to the Global Innovation Index (2014). The political environment is globally characterised by the most effective government, press freedom, the second highest political stability, and the absence of violence and terrorism. In terms of the regulatory environment, Finland ranks sixth given that society is highly structured by the rule of law and the quality of regulations as determined by the 2014 Global Innovation Index (Dutta et al., eds. 2014).

Finland's political environment lacks corruption (Freedom House 2013b) and features one of the world's most transparent public institutions (Global Competitiveness Report 2014–2015; Corruption Perception Index 2013). In 2013, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranked

Finland as the third least corrupted country in the world. Finland is also characterised as a considerably free country. In a Freedom House Report (2013b), Finland received the best scores for all sectors of freedom and political rights including civil liberties.

Economic environment

Finnish economic development and growth began following the Second World War since Finland was forced to pay reparations to the Soviet Union (Ministry of Employment and Economy 2011). As of the end of 2012, more than 322 000 enterprises were registered in Finland, where small- and medium-sized enterprises formed 99.8% of the total business field. While the number of large enterprises represents a mere 0.2% of all entities, they employ more than 36% of the total Finnish labour force (Official Statistics of Finland 2012). Today, Finland is an export-driven economy and its most important partners include Germany, Russia, and Sweden. Exports from Finland are primarily related to electrical equipment, machinery, transportation equipment, paper and pulp products, and chemicals. Its largest import partners—also Germany, Russia, and Sweden—depend on the importation of energy and commodities to Finland.

Praised for its business capabilities, Finland ranks ninth in the Economic Intelligence Unit's country forecast as the best country in which to do business in the coming years (eiu.com). Similarly, Forbes (2014) named Finland as the sixth best country for business in 2014. The Freedom House (2013b) report stated, 'There are no major obstacles to establish[ing] business, which boasts a well-regulated, transparent, and open economy.' Despite this freedom, Finland carries a high tax rate, which is used to support its strong public sector, with several different taxes applied to businesses and private citizens including a tax burden on sold and inherited goods.

Finland is one of the most competitive economies in the world according to WEF's Global Competitiveness Report, in which the country was ranked fourth for 2014–2015. According to the Global Innovation Index (2014), Finland occupies the sixth position in terms of global innovation capabilities. Its primary strengths lie in its government effectiveness, the number of researchers, communications, ICT, and business model creation. Finland has, however, faced several challenges. The future challenges for Finnish society include, for example, its aging population and uncertainties related to its exports.

Cultural environment

Today, Finland offers solid living and working conditions for its citizens. In fact, Finnish society has received much international attention. Newsweek (2010), for example, nominated Finland as the best country in the world and the Huffington Post (2013) suggested that, in order to realise the American dream, individuals should go to Finland. In addition, Finland ranked sixth among the most peaceful places globally according to the Global Peace Index (2014), ranked second in gender equality according to Global Gender Gap Report (2013), and ranked among the happiest nations according to the United Nations' Happiness Report (2013).

Finland is globally esteemed for its education system (e.g. Business Insider 2012). Despite a slight decline in Finland's 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, it is still one of the global leaders in educational performance (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013; The Learning Curve 2014). Its national workforce is highly educated, whereby 25% of men and 31% of women have a higher education qualification (EURES 2014). Compulsory basic education is

required for all Finnish citizens, and illiteracy is non-existent. Finland offers free basic education through the higher education levels, including university, polytechnic, or applied sciences degrees (TE Services 2014).

Finland is considered a free country on several levels, including human rights and minority rights (Freedom House 2014b). While freedom of religion is granted in Finland, most of its citizens belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As of the end of 2013, a total of 75.2% of the country's population belonged to the church, although recent trends suggest that an increasing number of members are resigning (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church Member Statistics 2013). Known as the promised land of associations and clubs, freedom to associate proliferates in Finland, where 136 000 associations exist (Infopankki 2014). Roughly three out of every four Finnish employees are a member of some trade union, which, together with the employer's associations, specify the minimum terms of employment vis-à-vis salary, working hours, and annual leave (EURES 2014).

Finns are more individualistic than collectivist (World Business Culture 2013). According to the Geert-Hofstede Index, Finnish work culture is characterised by a low hierarchy and equal rights and empowerment (The Hofstede Centre 2014). This manifests in activities related to direct and informal communication. Finns are commonly described as relatively silent, which is true to some extent. Finns, however, are also straight-talking and vocalise their opinions. Yet, this only happens when they perceive something is important to voice. Finns value precision and punctuality as well as individual freedom. They organise their time sensibly and follow agreements; hence, agreed upon timetables should be adhered to. In Finland, merit is earned through hard work, and the work culture is based on honesty and reliability (Infopankki 2014).

Strict regulations related to employer working hours persist in Finland (EURES 2014). Working 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week is considered the maximum. Overtime rules dictate that a maximum of 250 hours may be worked per year with a leeway of 80 hours. Yet, only 138 overtime hours may be logged during a four-month period. Traditionally, July is the national holiday month, when multiple organisations and businesses close entirely.

Players in the Finnish public relations environment

Professional associations

Several professional public relations associations operate in Finland. ProCom, the Finnish Association of Communications Professionals, fosters the professional development of its members and promotes the status of communications in the country. ProCom also updates and revises the ethical standards governing the industry and sustains communications research in Finland.

Association of Communications Professionals in Finland (ProCom)

<http://procom.fi/english/>

tel. +358 9 135 7775

procom@procom.fi

Viesti ry, a trade organisation for communications and public relations professionals in Finland, offers support for those employed and earnings-related security for unemployed professionals in the field.

Trade Organisation of Finnish Communications Professionals (Viesti ry)

<http://www.viesti.fi/>

tel. +358 40 068 2377

toimisto@viesti.fi

Other professional associations operating in the country include Julkisen alan tiedottajat ry, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's Communications Centre, and the Finnish Association of Marketing Communications Agencies. Numerous communications associations also operate at the local level.

Commercial firms

Hundreds of commercial communications agencies exist in the country, with the number of staff employed by them ranging from 1 to 50. According to research commissioned by the Finnish Association of Marketing Communications Agencies (MTL), the three largest commercial communications agencies operating in Finland in 2012 were Hill and Knowlton Finland Oy, Milton Oy, and Pohjoisranta Burson-Marsteller Oy.

The complete list of commercial firms can be found at

http://mtl.fi/sites/default/files/page/fields/field_attachments/suurimmat_viestintatoimistot_2012.pdf

Academic institutions

Various academic institutions offer public relations education in Finland. Two Finnish universities offer Master's degrees in the fields of public relations and organisational communications. The Department of Communications at the University of Jyväskylä offers both BA and MA degrees in organisational communications and public relations, preparing students to work in communications management and strategic communications. Additionally, Aalto University's School of Business and Economics offers an MA degree in corporate communications. The University of Helsinki and the University of Vaasa offer MA degrees in communications with a specialisation in organisational communications available.

Furthermore, the School of Communications, Media and Theatre at the University of Tampere, the University of Lapland, the University of Eastern Finland, the University of Vaasa, and the University of Turku all have media and communications-related studies and programmes, but do not place as high of an emphasis on organisational communications and public relations. The programmes include subjects such as journalism and mass communications, communications research, speech communication, and intercultural communication. Various applied science universities such as Haaga Helia feature study programmes related to media and communications, only one of which offers a degree programme in communications management in organisations. Numerous consultancies and training institutes offer short courses related to public relations and corporate communications.

Research

One of the biggest actors in research, in general, is Statistics Finland, which also offers media and communications–related research information. Various media and communications agencies also carry out communications research in the country. Further information can be found at http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html.

Finnpanel's research focuses on monitoring television and radio trends. Further information may be found at <http://www.finnpanel.fi/en/index.php>.

TNS Metrix offers weekly statistics of Finnish websites, including magazines, newspapers, and online discussion forums. Further information may be found at <http://tnsmetrix.tns-gallup.fi/public/?lang=en>.

The Finnish Newspaper Association publishes several statistical analyses as well as information about Finnish newspapers. These include data on media habits, information about media advertising, circulation, and so on. Further information may be found at <http://www.sanomalehdet.fi/sanomalehtitieto>.

In addition, different communications and business associations produce and commission various studies. These include the following:

- ProCom (<http://procom.fi/viestintaala/tutkimus/>)
- MTL (<http://mtl.fi/fi/ala/tutkimukset>)
- Mainostajien liitto (<http://www.mainostajat.fi/mliitto/index.asp>)

The largest funders of communications, media, and public relations research include the Academy of Finland (www.aka.fi), Tekes (www.tekes.fi), and the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation (hssaatio.fi).

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The Global Alliance is always interested in cooperating with local institutions and associations to provide profiles of the social, economic and media context of member countries, along with details on the local public relations industry, its main activities and tips on successful local practice.

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