THE RIPPLE EFFECT

How can the EU facilitate online dialogue?

CRONOS
EUROPA

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OVERLAPPING RIPPLES

Cronos Europa presents "The Ripple Effect": a collaborative strategy for EU institutions, built around an engaged network of creative partners, committed to strengthening the EU's online presence by facilitating meaningful conversations around European priorities.

Online communication today can feel like throwing a heavy stone into choppy waters – it creates a little splash and sinks, swallowed up among the endless waves of information and emotions that wash over social media audiences daily.

Effective communication is not about making a splash – it is about creating sustained ripples that interact and reinforce each other. For messages to be carried and spread authentically by audiences online, steady and repeated efforts are necessary.

With the right resources and networks, the EU can help foster dialogue that resonates throughout information hubs and online communities to strengthen and spread EU messages. Communications should be like a stone skipping lightly over the surface of the water, creating interconnected ripples that legitimise and transmit the EU's priorities.

Understanding the water you'll be throwing the stone into is essential. Today's information arena is characterised by speed, fragmentation, geopolitical hybrid threats, and constant technological disruption – all challenging citizens' engagement with European democracy.

To successfully navigate this environment and effectively communicate, the EU needs the right mix of data intelligence, technological know-how, community activation and authentic dialogue. With these elements, the stone will glide over the water and create overlapping ripples – sustaining democratic conversation.
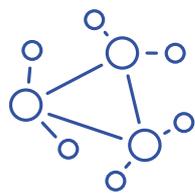
ABOUT CRONOS EUROPA

Cronos Europa is an IT, web, and communication consultancy exclusively dedicated to supporting innovation and digital transformation across the European institutions. With over 1,300 experts in data analytics, digital communication, and web design – and as part of the Cronos Group, the largest IT ecosystem in the Benelux – we help the EU institutions innovate communication via technology.

We have more than 20 years of experience supporting institutions including the European Parliament, European Commission, the European Council and numerous EU Agencies, positioning Cronos Europa as a reliable strategic partner to the EU.

Cronos Europa is the central hub connecting EU institutions with a dynamic ecosystem of innovative service providers. Over the past years, we have built a pan-European network of 80+ companies and more than 100 communication experts — from start-ups to academic and research organisations, all the way to established players in the European communication industry. This network expands the expertise, innovation capacity, and specialised services available to EU institutions far beyond what any single provider could offer.

25+
FRAMEWORK
CONTRACTS

1300+
DEDICATED
CONSULTANTS

300+
ACTIVE
PARTNERSHIPS
WITH VENDORS
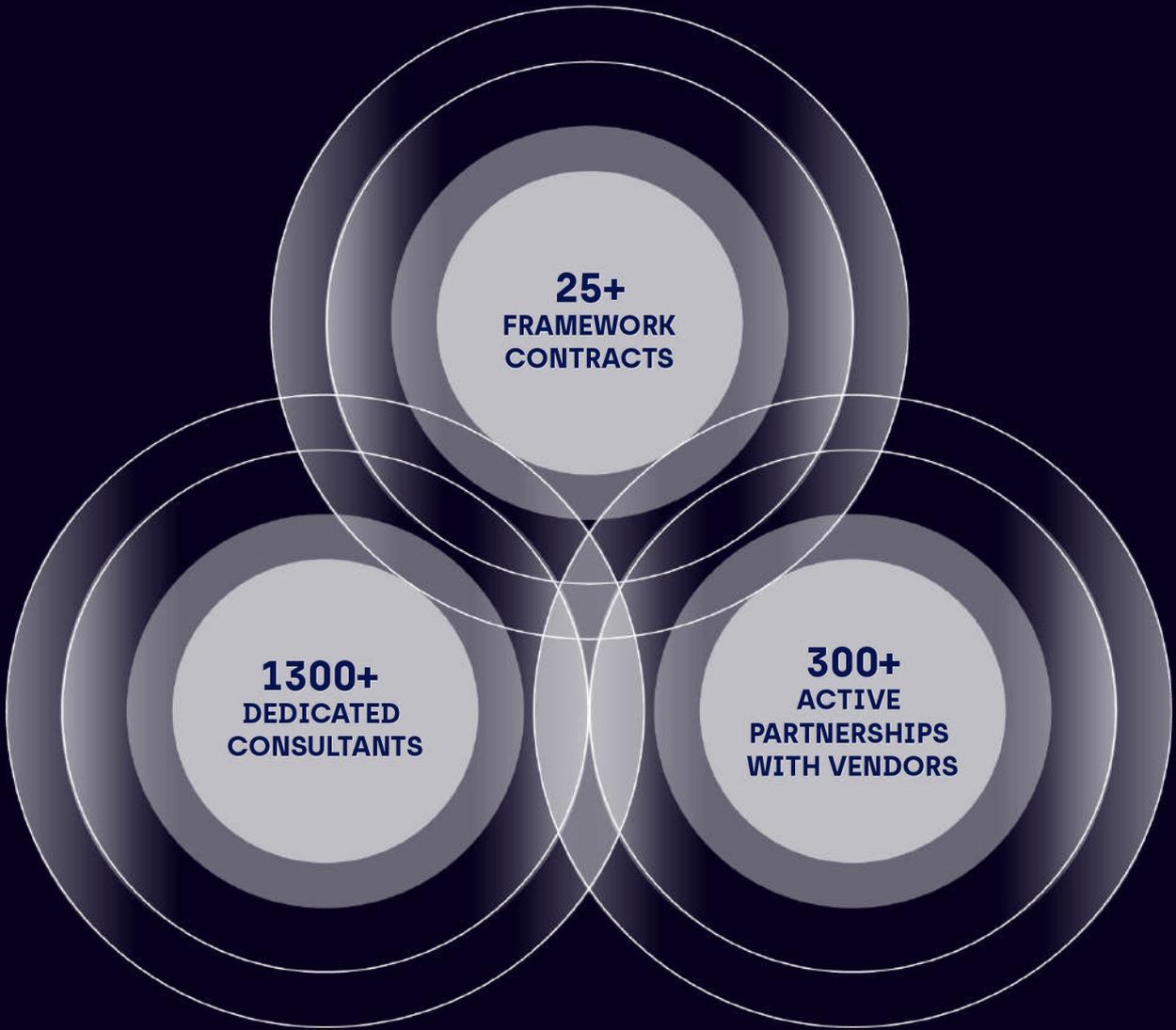
TESTING THE WATERS

MODERN AUDIENCES

Media consumption, trust, and engagement patterns are shifting across generations.

Understanding the current communication landscape and risks.

The Eurobarometer Social Media Survey (2025) highlights a profound shift in how Europeans consume information. Digital channels are now the primary source for 59% of citizens, and for 65% of young people aged 15–24, social media has become the leading source of current affairs. Political content is often encountered indirectly, with 76% of Europeans exposed to it incidentally, while 74% of young people follow content creators who increasingly mediate public information. Yet engagement with EU politics remains low, with only 22% of young Europeans following it regularly, while exposure to disinformation is widespread (66%) and confidence in identifying it remains limited (61%).

The public sphere is also increasingly fragmented. Citizens no longer gather around the same media, the same narratives, or even the same platforms. They navigate a constellation of micro-communities: from messaging apps to hyper-local networks and creator economies. Today, traditional top-down communication simply cannot reach or resonate as it once did.

These are important shifts to recognise. They show that the model of broadcasting centrally designed messages is unsustainable – audiences must be reached through channels where trust already exists – in communities, through creator-audience relationships, and in relatable and authentic spaces.
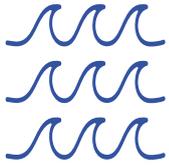
NAVIGATING CHOPPY WATERS

Europe finds itself in a fast-moving, fragmented, and geopolitically contested information space.

Technological innovation and AI are revolutionising the information arena. Content is produced, replicated and weaponised at a pace that institutions struggle to match. The result is a widening gap between the speed of public conversation and the speed of institutional reaction. This gap is not only technical, but cultural: slow, centralised communication processes collide with decentralised digital ecosystems shaped by immediacy, authenticity, and community dynamics.

Geopolitical shifts are turning social media platforms into political tools. In Autumn 2025, Meta decided to suspend all paid political and social-issue advertising across the EU, in response to the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising Regulation (TTPA). This reaction is widely viewed as disproportionate to the regulation's aims and believed to be motivated by geopolitical considerations. Other tech companies have taken a similarly uncooperative approach – or in the case of Elon Musk's X, an openly hostile one to EU interests and stability, even going so far as to close the European Commission's paid advertising account.

Foreign powers are already waging a hybrid information war that erodes citizens' trust in institutions, threatening to divide Europe at a time when unity is paramount to its resilience. Thus, the EU is surrounded by geopolitical powers that aim to destabilise it. Disinformation and polarisation make reliable public dialogue, on commonly agreed upon and understood terms, increasingly difficult. Shared priorities, narratives and experiences must be strengthened and promoted through reliable channels to counter these efforts.

It is in this context that the EU must find a new way to reach and mobilise audiences – to create stable, resonating ripples of dialogue. It is time to take back ownership of the approach to reaching and mobilising citizens. Now is the moment to build resilient, European communication ecosystems.

To cast your stone, it is important to first take a good look at which waters you'll be throwing it into.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

In an information environment defined by fragmentation, speed, and distrust, isolated messages disappear quickly. What endures are messages that are carried forward by communities and reinforced through interaction. European institutions must therefore shift from top-down communication efforts to strategies that generate overlapping, self-sustaining waves of engagement.

Our strategy is built on four strategic shifts that redefine how EU institutions communicate in the digital public sphere:

1. From assumptions to intelligence

Communication must begin with a clear reading of the environment. Decisions about narratives, formats, channels, and partnerships should be guided by evidence rather than assumptions – enabling institutions to act with precision, anticipate risks, and adapt continuously.

2. From tools as support to technology as enabler

Technology is no longer a background function. Platforms, AI, and digital infrastructures actively shape visibility, trust, and speed. Institutions must master these tools ethically and strategically to remain present and credible in fast-moving, decentralised ecosystems.

3. From audiences to communities

Citizens are not passive recipients of information. They participate in networks of trust – creators, local groups, issue-based communities – where meaning is negotiated and shared. Communication becomes effective when it enters these spaces respectfully and collaboratively.

4. From broadcasting to dialogue

Legitimacy grows through interaction, not repetition. Sustainable communication resonates: it listens, responds, and evolves over time. By facilitating exchange rather than delivering monologues, institutions strengthen democratic connection and resilience.

In practice, The Ripple Effect operates as a continuous cycle: listening and analysis to understand the information landscape; activation through technology and trusted networks; authentic and participatory dialogue within communities; and ongoing adaptation based on real-time feedback and data.

The future of European communication is not about buying visibility — it is about facilitating dialogue.

'THE RIPPLE EFFECT': OUR SOLUTION

Our strategy operates through four interconnected pillars, each addressing a core dimension of institutional communication in the new environment. The pillars become effective only when transformed into structured, repeatable actions supported by the right partners and tools.
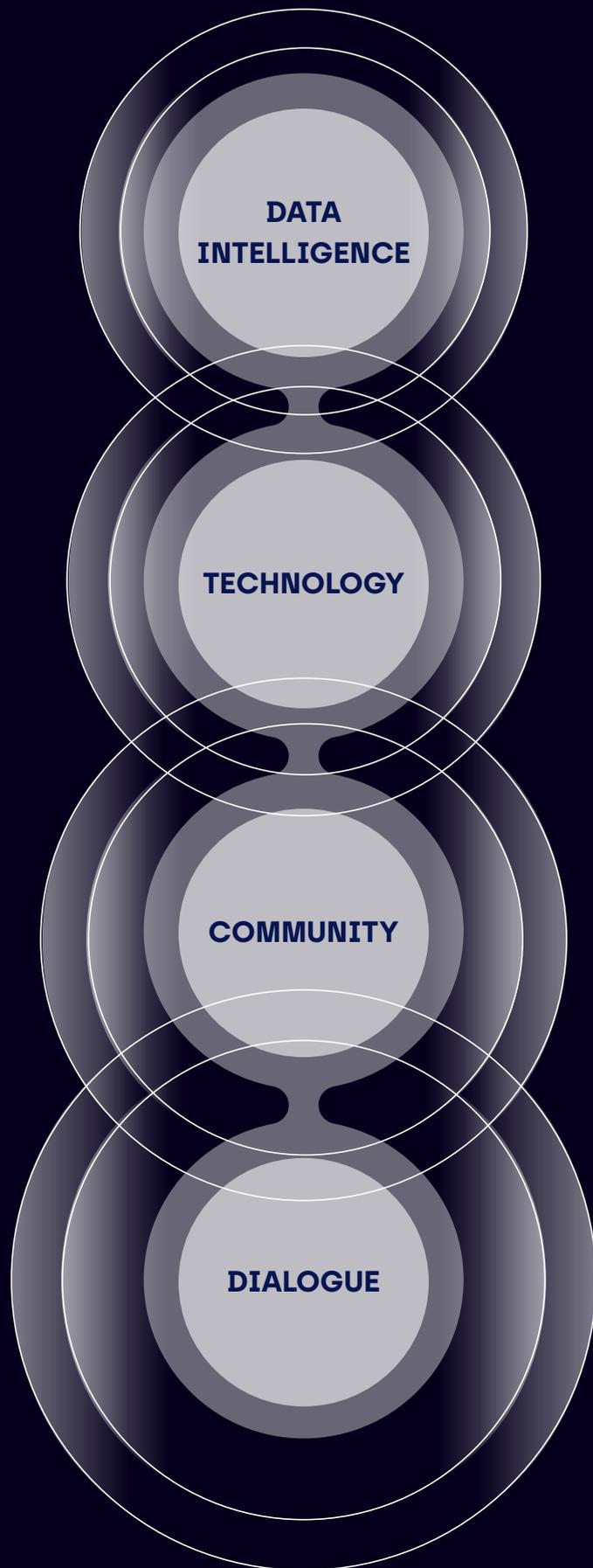
1. DATA INTELLIGENCE: MEASURE AND EVALUATE

This is the foundation – picking the right stone for the occasion, that will bounce and create the most ripples.

This pillar ensures that communication decisions are not based on assumptions, but on evidence. This helps guide where to intervene, which communities to engage, and how to adapt messages over time.

Every phase of communication – from processing audience insights and crafting narratives to selecting communities and evaluating impact – is guided by Cronos Europa's Strategic Data Intelligence methodology. This ensures that decisions are evidence-based, risks are anticipated early, and campaigns evolve continuously based on real audience behaviour and results.

The Strategic Data Intelligence methodology is a flexible and adaptable framework designed by Cronos Europa for the diverse needs of EU institutions. It identifies trends, anticipates risks, tailors messages, and assesses impact with precision. By grounding communication in solid data, institutions can design campaigns that are creative and high-quality, but also accountable, effective, and aligned with real citizen behaviour.

We use European, GDPR-compliant data to determine:

- which audiences to target;
- which creators or communities are most relevant;
- what narratives are emerging;
- what formats work best;
- what needs to be adjusted;
- what are the relevant KPIs to evaluate the performance of EU campaigns granularly or widely.

Concrete deliverables

- Audience heatmaps
- Social media audit
- Narrative trend reports
- Real-time data dashboard
- Monthly optimisation insights
- Impact evaluation reports

2. TECHNOLOGICAL KNOW-HOW: THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

You need steady footing and the right technique for a good throw.

In today's information environment technology determines not only how fast institutions can act, but whether they can act at all. Platforms, formats, algorithms, and AI-driven systems shape visibility, trust, and reach. Technological know-how is therefore not a support function, but a strategic enabler of communication.

Cronos Europa brings years of expertise in EU digital ecosystems and IT services, enabling institutions to adopt the right tools in a way that is secure and aligned with European values. This pillar ensures that communication strategies are operationally feasible, scalable, and resilient in a fast-moving, platform-dependent environment.

Technology is also what allows institutions to shift from one-off campaigns to continuous engagement – enabling rapid testing, adaptation, and optimisation while maintaining institutional accountability.

What this means operationally
We help EU institutions:

- select and deploy the right EUDPR-compliant digital tools for communication and engagement;

- integrate ethical AI solutions for content creation, moderation, analysis, and insight generation;

- adapt formats and workflows to platform-specific dynamics and constraints;

- accelerate production and reaction times without compromising quality or compliance;

- ensure GDPR and EUDPR compliance, security, and transparency across all digital operations.

Concrete deliverables

- Platform and tool audits

- AI-supported content and analysis workflows

- Automation and optimisation frameworks

- Secure data intelligence and dashboards

- Technology integration roadmaps

3. COMMUNITY: WHERE TO BOUNCE

Picking where to throw the stone, so that it will bounce and create ripples.

Audiences no longer exist as a single, addressable public. They are organised into communities – creators and followers, local networks, issue-based groups, and platform-native cultures where trust already exists. This pillar focuses on identifying, activating, and collaborating with those communities rather than attempting to rebuild trust from scratch.

Community activation allows EU institutions to reach citizens in environments where messages are not imposed, but shared, discussed, and adapted. It shifts communication from broadcasting to participation – from visibility alone to engagement and legitimacy.

Through our network of European partners, Cronos Europa enables institutions to engage communities strategically and cooperatively, ensuring alignment between institutional objectives and community values.

What this means operationally
We work with institutions and partners to:

- identify relevant communities, creators, and intermediary actors across Europe;
- assess credibility, reach, and alignment with EU values and policy goals;
- design partnership models that respect community autonomy and authenticity;
- activate decentralised networks to amplify messages organically;
- foster co-creation rather than top-down dissemination.

Concrete deliverables

- Community and creator mapping
- Partner activation plans
- Co-creation and participation frameworks
- Campaigns delivered through trusted community nodes
- Case studies and community impact summaries

4. DIALOGUE: RESONATING RIPPLES

You've thrown the stone. Now the ripples are overlapping and reinforcing each other.

Dialogue is the outcome of the previous pillars working together. When data informs decisions, technology enables execution, and communities carry messages forward, communication becomes a living process rather than a static output.

This pillar focuses on sustaining meaningful exchange – enabling institutions to listen, respond, and adapt over time. Real dialogue goes beyond community management. When carried out properly, it strengthens democratic legitimacy by turning communication into a shared space where narratives are clarified, contested, and reinforced through cooperative interaction.

In a fragmented and polarised environment, dialogue is also a key defence against disinformation, helping rebuild trust through transparency, presence, and continuity.

What this means operationally
We support institutions in:

- designing communication flows that encourage feedback and interaction;
- sustaining conversations beyond campaign cycles;
- integrating citizen input into communication strategies;
- monitoring sentiment and emerging concerns in real time;
- responding credibly and consistently across platforms and communities.

Concrete deliverables

- Citizen consultation platforms
- Dialogue and engagement strategies
- Feedback and listening mechanisms
- Sentiment and discourse analysis reports
- Moderation and response frameworks
- Long-term engagement roadmaps

PARTNERS: CREATING RIPPLES TOGETHER

The Ripple Effect cannot be created by institutions alone. Just as a stone only generates meaningful ripples when it interacts with the surface of the water, effective European communication emerges through collaboration with the right partners and communities.

Cronos Europa's approach differs from others because rather than delivering a fixed set of tasks or a pre-defined strategy, we work alongside our clients as long-term partners. We listen, adapt, and continuously refine the approach together – combining data intelligence, technological expertise, community activation, and dialogue to generate waves of engagement that reinforce one another. Through our established network of EU-wide partners, institutions gain immediate access to complementary capabilities that help messages travel further, last longer, and reach citizens through trusted channels.

For each project, Cronos Europa assembles the right mix of strategic, creative, and technical expertise to match the specific context and objectives of an institution or campaign. Our role is to connect the dots: designing the overarching framework, ensuring coherence across actors, and providing the data, infrastructure, and governance that allow communication efforts to scale into sustained impact.

Each partner contributes a distinct and complementary methodology aligned with one or more pillars of our strategy. Together, they bring the civic, creative, and participatory dimensions that transform institutional communication from isolated messages into durable ripples of public dialogue across Europe.

MAKE.ORG

European civic tech for citizen engagement and digital democracy.

Make.org is one of Europe's leading large-scale citizen participation platforms, running activities from the European to the local level. We help create large-scale, structured, and constructive democratic consultations on key societal issues.

Across all our platforms, citizens are invited to share ideas, react to others' proposals, and collectively identify priorities. This process enables thousands - or even millions - of voices to be aggregated in a meaningful way, moving beyond symbolic participation toward actionable outcomes. These outcomes are legitimate both in terms of quantity (massive participation) and quality (balanced representation of participants).

The technology

At the core of the platforms we've made are a set of guiding principles that define the strength of our approaches, methodologies, and technologies:

[1] **Simplicity**: We keep things to a minimum, enabling users to understand both the platform and the topic at first glance.

[2] **Accessibility**: Our tools are designed to be widely accessible, using clear language, strong visuals, and an engaging user experience.

[3] **Intuition**: Our data shows that citizens should not have to learn how the platform or the topic works. Users must be able to jump in immediately, without any onboarding process.

[4] **Low entry barriers**: Reducing barriers to participation is essential. This applies to login requirements as well as to the overall user journey.

[5] **Participation from the first click**: The very first action on the platform is a direct interaction with another citizen or with the topic itself.

True dialogue

What makes this approach particularly effective is the combination of inclusiveness and impact. Participation is open to everyone, and the results are translated into concrete action plans by our Citizens' Insights team. This team specialises in making sense of the input and data generated on our platforms and, in partnership with public institutions, shaping them into outputs

that can be directly used for public policymaking and communication.

By closing the loop between citizen input and real-world implementation, Make.org helps reinforce trust in democratic processes and improves democratic dialogue - demonstrating to participants that their ideas are not only heard, but can lead to tangible change.

Practical experience

Make.org has extensive experience supporting public institutions with landmark public consultation campaigns.

The EurHope initiative serves as a lighthouse project, having successfully engaged many young people ahead of the 2024 European Elections.

EurHope

Participation: 1.500.330 votes, 5.069 contributions | Engagement: May - October 2023 | Scope: EU27

In our experience, when people are invited to share their views, they do so willingly and in large numbers. Contributions collected on the Make.org platform proved to be significantly more positive and constructive than those typically observed on social media. The data gathered in 2023 also showed the more conservative trend among young voters that the 2024 European elections confirmed – an indicator of the validity of our methodology. The results demonstrates that it is possible to engage young people across Europe at scale and to obtain statistically representative results through open digital participation platforms.

Below are a handful of other campaigns we have done:

Forum against Fakes
Participation: 1.509.720 votes, 3.314 contributions | Engagement: January - April 2024 | Scope: Germany

Comment lutter contre la manipulation de l'information due aux ingérences numériques étrangères ?
Participation: 103.619 votes, 691 contributions| Engagement: December 2025 - January 2026 | Scope: France

How can compulsory service in Switzerland be rethought for everyone?
Participation: 107.271 votes, 360 contributions| Engagement: October - November 2025 | Scope: Switzerland

Canadian Gen(Z)AI Youth Assembly on AI
Participation: 3763 votes, 1365 contributions|
Engagement: December 2025 (limited
acquisition resources due to pilot nature
of the project) | Scope: Canada

Besides these listed projects on the national level,
we have also worked very closely with the Committee
of the Regions in engaging citizens with the EU. We
employed our Panoramic tool in their key events, such
as EuroPCom and the European Week of the Regions and
Cities. Additionally, we provide the analysis process
for the European Commission's DG COMM, with whom
we are working in the Citizens' Engagement platform
as their analytical team.

**Within The Ripple Effect strategy, Make.org plays a key
role in transforming institutional communication into
participatory dialogue. Our platforms enable citizens
across Member States to co-create priorities, express
perspectives, and feed structured input directly into
institutional communication and policy reflection
processes – strengthening meaningful engagement and
democratic dialogue.**

COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITIES

**Activating citizens and brands through bottom-up
networks of belonging.**

Communities helps institutions move from chasing
attention to earning legitimacy. Not only by targeting
audiences, but by belonging alongside the communities
people already trust.

Our belief is simple: Beyond targeting. Belonging.

We specialize in community marketing through an
approach we call Community Pairing: identifying,
partnering with, and co-creating alongside active
communities with a clear win-win-win mindset for
institutions, communities, and citizens.

What do we mean by "Community"?

Communities have transformed. Now digital and hybrid,
they are visible, organized, and culturally powerful,
forming around shared passions like running, food, or
climate. Unlike an audience, a community is a living
ecosystem of trust and participation. When institutions
and these communities align on values, they can co-
create authentic, useful, and human initiatives, naturally
boosting public interest and trust in the European
project.

By communities, we mean for example: young parents, teachers, creatives, urban gardeners, gamers, foodies, etc.

Why belonging matters now, especially for EU institutions

Current communication often treats citizens as passive recipients, hindering trust and sustained involvement. Citizens engage better when information spreads through existing peer networks built on shared interests and trust. Communities—professional, thematic, or citizen-led—serve as natural peer-to-peer channels where information is discussed, contextualized, and validated. This dynamic enhances credibility, fosters spontaneous participation, and offers institutions a more direct, authentic, and relevant way to reach citizens.

The multiplier effect

Influencer marketing's impact is significantly stronger when embedded within active communities. Research indicates micro-communities and community figureheads yield up to 60% more engagement and 22x more conversion than large, top-down campaigns. This offers European institutions a unique chance to connect with citizens within their existing, trusted communities.

In addition, community participants are super-communicators – natural amplifiers who share initiatives on- and offline. Typically, 10–35% of members actively reshare content, extending reach well beyond the original group. A community of 10,000 engaged members can generate hundreds of thousands of trusted, organic impressions, driven by pride of belonging.

Network of Trust

For institutions, reach alone is no longer enough. Impact requires trust. A community-first activation provides direct access to what we call a "Network of Trust". In other words, groups of citizens that are already connected by shared values, passions, and mutual recognition.

When institutions engage communities respectfully, they move from visibility to legitimacy, from messaging to dialogue. This is The Ripple Effect in action: small, meaningful actions inside trusted spaces creating disproportionate public impact.

How can an institution successfully earn the trust of a community?

Trust is earned, not bought. Belonging is never claimed. It is earned through contribution. Institutions must bring value first. And it takes the form of an Initiative.

Real life has become rare and therefore valuable. As the world grows more synthetic, people seek human-scale, intimate, and authentic social connection.

The role of the EU institutions is not to speak louder — but to participate better.

Concretely, a community-first action or activation designed with and for the community. Some examples:

- Workshops, roundtable events to facilitate meaningful conversations
- Online or offline platform with educational or inspiring content
- Challenges, tools, or services that help communities do better
- A unique experience (Trip, dinner, exhibition, game, …)
- And more. This is not an exhaustive list.

Real dialogues that ripple

When an initiative is thoughtfully designed and co-created with a community, it sparks a dialogue that lives both within and beyond that community. That dialogue translates into multiple assets that can be amplified and distributed: platforms, websites, content, videos, etc.

To enable a distribution to the largest audience possible, we combine multiple tactics: collaboration with content creators, smart seeding across similar communities, participation in forums like Reddit and beyond, complemented by intentional paid distribution on relevant platforms and through community-owned channels.

This approach creates citizen-to-citizen dialogues that unfold across multiple dimensions.

Within The Ripple Effect strategy, Communities creates bridges between institutions and communities – enabling institutions to tap into existing trust networks and support co-creation, substance, and long-term relationships rather than transactional outreach.

BEINFLUENCE

European creator agency delivering authentic, scalable reach across the EU.

BeInfluence is a European social-first agency powered by content creators. We connect brands with the right creators in all 27 EU member states and beyond through strategic, creative, and performance-driven campaigns. Data-led and scalable across markets, we operate with one clear belief: "We are creative rebels", putting creativity back at the heart of influencer marketing.

Being social-first means creators are at the core of everything we do. From organic campaigns and paid activations to PR & events, UGC, and content production, every strategy starts with the creators themselves.

Case study: FOOD2030 – Activating Europe's food transition

Food2030 is the EU's long-term initiative to build healthier, more sustainable, and resilient food systems by connecting policy, research, and innovation with citizens' everyday lives. Its success depends on translating institutional ambitions into relatable, lived experiences.

Within this ecosystem, BeInfluence acts as a strategic activation layer, mobilising trusted creators and changemakers to turn complex food-policy themes into authentic, community-driven narratives. Rather than amplifying top-down messages, BeInfluence engages creators who combine professional knowledge with community influence, strengthening credibility and deepening the quality of public dialogue around food systems.

For institutional projects, the bridge between policy and daily life is essential. Influencer and creator marketing plays a unique role here by connecting online storytelling with offline behaviour. They demonstrate EU priorities through everyday practices such as cooking, shopping, growing food, and participating in local initiatives. Through our work on platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn, Food2030 functions as a living community where citizens, creators, experts, and institutions interact, learn, and inspire one another.

Creating ripples that last

BeInfluence helps institutional campaigns move beyond awareness into collective ownership by aligning institutional objectives with creator credibility and cultural relevance. Europe's policy communication succeeds when it is shared, visible, and participatory.

By embedding creators and communities at the heart of each project, BeInfluence supports the shift from institutional messaging to collective ownership by turning vision into action, and action into movement – creating ripples that resonate locally while reinforcing a coherent European vision.

Within The Ripple Effect strategy, BeInfluence contributes to authentic and engaging messaging by activating trusted creator networks that allow EU messages to travel through relatable voices. Creator-led campaigns translate institutional priorities into narratives that resonate within existing communities – enabling messages to ripple outward through trust-based relationships rather than top-down broadcasting.

LET'S START A DIALOGUE

Europe's democratic conversation cannot be sustained through visibility alone. It requires continuous listening, trusted intermediaries, and the ability to turn participation into meaningful dialogue. The Ripple Effect shows how European institutions can move from broadcasting messages to facilitating shared ownership of communication surrounding Europe's future.

The Ripple Effect is not a campaign model, but a complete communication framework. It enables European institutions to create long-term, resonant democratic dialogue in an increasingly fragmented digital public sphere.

Cronos Europa stands ready to work with institutions and partners to translate this approach into concrete initiatives. We bring the structure, coordination, and operational capacity to make this collaboration work – connecting institutional objectives with trusted partners and building networks of trust across Europe.

Let's explore how The Ripple Effect can be applied to your priorities. Together, we can design a first pilot initiative that tests, learns, and builds a resilient European communication ecosystem.

CONTACT

Victoria Henderson
Head of Communication Services
Victoria.Henderson@cronoseuropa.com
Zoé Graham
Service Manager for Communication Services
Zoe.Graham@cronoseuropa.com
Alberto A. Levi
Business Development Manager for Communication
Services
Alberto.Levi@cronoseuropa.com

CREDITS

Ideation and Strategy development
Filippo De Fabrizio, Alberto A. Levi
Writing and editing
David C. Joon
Graphic design
Alessandro Cravotta, Aline Mercy
Strategic consultation
Robert Klimacki