



**REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA**  
**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

# **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DIRECTIVE**

**2021**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Communication Directive (SCD) is based on the entirety of the current geostrategic, political and economic framework in which the Defence operates today, as well as on an assessment of key trends that will shape national security and the international environment in the future.

Analyzing global instability, as well as the complex and uncontrollable phenomena of the environment that surrounds us, it is therefore highlighted the need for a predictable, stable, interoperable and integrated national military system with that of the Allies. Political choices on defense issues should be accompanied by a Strategic Communication activity involving all stakeholders taking part in the decision-making process.

Society and media have been faced with great changes. The way we communicate should adapt to these changes, allowing us to better reflect the audience culture, attitudes and expectations.

In recent years, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania have made significant efforts to improve communication. Even organizations such as NATO and the European Union have felt the need to be provided with strategic documents of more effective communication to meet the great challenges posed by change,.

SCD aims to increase the reputation of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania , both internally and externally, by having an impact on the understanding, activities and perceptions of domestic, national and international audiences. The clarity and consistency of our communication directly affects the way internal and external actors view the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania in the accomplishment of the constitutional mission for the defense of the territorial integrity.

Through SCD, the MoD aims to provide a new communication approach, as well as ensure qualified and active participation in all fora where national security guidelines are formulated.

The main topics and messages of communication are in line with the strategic objectives of Albania and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania, and will enable clarity and consistency in the Defence communication and engagement activities.

SCD is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the law on the right of information, the National Security Strategy, the Military Strategy and the Strategic Defence Review, as well as NATO's guidelines in the field of public relations and Strategic Communication.

SCD is the initial and binding framework for the activities and public appearances of officials, as well as all employees in the MoD and members of the Albanian Armed Forces.

## **2. OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of SCD is to promote, contribute and support the accomplishment of the constitutional mission to defend Albania and its national interests.

SCD will provide strategic communication directions for the MoD and the Armed Forces. The main principles, topics, narrative and messages in this directive should be to support the communication activity by ensuring strong, consistent and fundamentally linked messages.

SCD aims to provide the institution with a communication policy based on the new approach to communication, structuring and coordinating communication activities, according to a single organic plan, as well as orienting communication towards clearly identified objectives.

SCD will provide cohesion and quality in the planning and execution of communication, in support of the priorities of the MoD and the Armed Forces. The directive also conveys confidence to the military and civilian personnel of the MoD and the Armed Forces, stakeholders and the community.

The scope and aim can be achieved by ensuring that we are communicating a clear, coherent, compelling and true narrative. The MoD and the Armed Forces actively engage with internal and external audiences in order to better explain the Defence and gain support for what we do. To achieve this we will need to have a more efficient and effective use of communication resources throughout the MoD and the Armed Forces, to ensure that all communication activities are mutually supportive and aligned, complementary focused on important objectives and accessible.

## **3. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DEFINITION**

The term "Strategic Communication" summarizes concepts, actions and operational tools of various types, aimed at achieving the objectives of an organization or institution. Institutional communication becomes "strategic" when it produces knowledge and awareness, becoming an effective tool for the development of a public organization.

Strategic Communication is understood as a coordinated set of communication actions and initiatives, aimed at generating knowledge and sharing it in the target audience, in the service of meeting institutional goals and protecting national interests.

The theory and practice of communication is based on the following concepts:

- Communication is done through the preparation and distribution of messages (written, audio, video, etc.), but also through actions (examples, the behavior, gestures, etc.);
- It includes information activities in order to reach and promote consensus;
- It identifies the segments of the audience to be reached and the communication channel;
- It sets and achieves common objectives at all levels.

#### 4. PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

The main principles on which effective, harmonized and appropriate communication is based are:

- a) **Credibility** of messages in relation to the source and in terms of the distribution channel. It should not be forgotten that actions and the behavior both constitute messages, and decisively contribute to the credibility of an institution. It is important to consider the key role that Defence plays in the country's international profile.
- b) **Coherence, continuity and timely consistency** of the communication activity. The stories, themes and messages developed should be conveyed vertically and horizontally, not only within the Defence, but also in other interested institutions and ministries, the public, and where necessary, with international partners. The repetition of messages and the continuity of timely communication efforts are necessary to ensure the sustainability of the effects of communicative action.
- c) **Active and multidimensional involvement** in the process of taking and implementing the initiative. To be successful, Strategic Communication requires an active, ongoing and synergistic role of all actors and organizational elements involved (not just institutional communicators).
- d) **Complementarity and segregation** are understood as criteria for the segregation of functions between different levels of decision-making, in order to meet the most satisfactory requirements of citizens, in accordance with the objectives of communication.
- e) **The accuracy, clarity and timeliness** with which the public is informed are key elements to an organization's credibility. The speed of response is also a critical factor.
- f) **Transparency** as an obligation for the Public Administration to reflect the actions taken, and as a citizen's right to use resources and be informed about the objectives and activity of public entities.
- g) **Respect for the public**, by providing timely information, always in the pursuit of protecting the privacy and security of staff or ongoing operations.
- h) **The adaptability** of messages in accordance with the situation is considered important for the structures of the MoD and the Armed Forces when using the means of communication.

- i) **Evaluation of effects** on communication activities at all levels of target audience involvement/sharing.
- j) **Alignment of communication** coordinated and supported by the highest authorities in order for the channels and messages to reflect and reinforce the objectives of the Government and the MoD.

## **5. KEY COMMUNICATION TOPICS AND KEY MESSAGES**

These are the main topics of primary importance for the Defence which the Strategic Communication should focus on.

### **5.1 Permanent transformation of the military instrument.**

The transformation of the military instrument and the creation of a financially stable defense system in time, should aim at strengthening the human factor in order to fully integrate into the NATO defense and security system.

Key messages:

- The MoD and the Armed Forces ensure the protection of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Albania through a wide range of elements, such as intelligence, ongoing information, defense policies, combat capabilities and command-control.
- The MoD and the Armed Forces are responsible institutions for capacity building, appropriate to the strategic circumstances.
- Defence has developed a process of evolution and adaptation, in accordance with the ever-changing strategic environment. A series of transformational reforms have been undertaken and the improvement continues in order to make it an effective and efficient organization that achieves its purpose and mission.
- As a percentage of GDP, Defence spending results in a steady increase in accordance with the ever-increasing demand for skills. This increase is attributed to national commitments for safety and the quality of citizens' lives, commitments within NATO for a budget of 2% of GDP until 2024, as well as keeping investment and modernization expenditures to the 20% extent of the Defence budget.

### **5.2 Collective defense and participation in international operations.**

New security threats require extending defense engagement beyond national borders to anticipate and prevent these threats where they arise. The involvement of military troops in international missions is very important, not only for the image of the country, but also for security, strategic and economic interests.

Key messages:

- The Albanian Armed Forces, with its military capacities and capabilities, in cooperation with allies and partners, contribute to building a more sustainable security environment.

- The Albanian Armed Forces engage in military operations and activities, which protect national interests, reduce the risk of strategic surprises and global trends, and contribute to peace strengthening.
- The Albanian Armed Forces prepare and participate in ground, naval and air military operations and missions, conduct peacekeeping operations within NATO, the EU and the UN, and provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the civilian population.
- The Albanian Armed Forces are respected by its allies and partners for their professionalism, work ethic, intellectual capacity, strength, courage and bravery.
- The personnel of the Albanian Armed Forces are professionals entrusted with the implementation of tasks with a high level of responsibility for the common good and advancement of national objectives.

### **5.3 Internal commitment and contributory defence.**

Natural, health or human threats endanger the life, security and stability of the country. The commitment during the health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the search and rescue operations during the earthquake of November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, but also the actions taken to protect the life and safety of citizens against numerous natural threats, are indicative of the crucial role of the Armed Forces and the National Agency for Civil Protection (AKMC), in cooperation with other agencies, in managing situations with national influence.

Deep reform of the civil defence system increases the efficiency of responding to civil emergencies, by reducing the risk of disasters.

Key messages:

- The community understands, appreciates and is proud of the contribution of the Defence in case of an emergency.
- The Armed Forces increase the efficiency of responding to civil emergencies, providing security and quality of life for the citizens.
- The Armed Forces have become part of the solution to security problems, providing the human resources and needed tools to manage multiple scenarios.
- The Armed Forces support civilian authorities in cases of natural or human emergencies.
- The Defence has mechanisms in place to coordinate efforts at the inter-institutional level, as well as to address disaster risk reduction issues.
- Protection through AKMC (NACP) exercises coordination, management, supervision and control authority in the field of disaster risk reduction and civil protection.

### **5.4 The military profession.**

The Defence possesses sufficient human capacity with a diverse expertise comprised of military and civilian personnel, as well as a military industry. Investing in the defense sector is in the direct interest of meeting the country's strategic objectives.

## Key messages:

- Human capital is the most valuable asset and the most important source of the Armed Forces. The health and well-being of military/civilian personnel is the greatest responsibility and the highest priority of the leaders of the MoD and the General Staff.
- The AAF provide an integrated approach to the recruitment, vocational and career training, as well as the management, education and training of its staff.
- The AAF, through the spirit of cooperation and professional advertising, recruit and train military personnel, at the same time offering equal opportunities regardless of gender, religion, origin and race.
- The military servicepeople and civilians of the AAF represent Albania with dignity in NATO structures and headquarters, military diplomacy, as well as international operations.

## **6. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES**

### **6.1. Creating conditions for the implementation of the military instrument transformation.**

- a) Parties involved in institutional communication need to work to ensure harmonized and coordinated action on the issue of transforming the military instrument.
- b) Further efforts should be made, including internal communication, to advertise awareness of the importance of transforming the military instrument.
- c) Public opinion and interested parties should be able to understand and appreciate that the need to have a capable, flexible, interactive and predictable military instrument is a fundamental condition for safeguarding national interests.

### **6.2. Decision-making support for engagement in military operations and joint defense advertising.**

- a) Explains to the relevant public the reasons for the involvement of the AAF in operations within the country and abroad. At the operational level, it is important to highlight the increase in capacity of the AAF to interact with those of other countries.
- b) Use every means of communication to inform the public that military engagement in crisis areas away from national borders is a prerequisite for maintaining the security and interests of the country.
- c) Raising public awareness that military operations have helped stimulate the country's military growth.
- d) The engagement of the AAF in a multinational context, especially in NATO operations, is not only increasingly necessary for economic reasons (saving resources), but also at the strategic level (sharing objectives).
- e) The link between our defense capability and the country's position in the world, its prosperity and its ability to improve the livelihoods of its citizens must be emphasized.



### **6.3. Evidence of internal Defence commitment and contribution.**

- a) Informs the public that the AAF plays its role in the internal system of the country, thanks to the management of natural or health emergencies, in coordination with AKMC (NACP).
- b) AAF and AKMC (NACP) arrange their work on planning, training and modernization in support of the civilian population, facing natural disasters.
- c) The public should be informed that the civil protection system is an integral part of the Defence. AKMC (NACP) and the AAF are the main coordination/response pillars, always acting with high efficiency.
- d) Search and rescue operations, both at sea and on land, are carried out exclusively by the structures of the AAF, allocated to this purpose and which directly guarantee the life and safety of citizens.
- e) Public opinion should be aware that the Defence is ubiquitous and available to the civilian population even in the most remote areas and in extremely difficult climatic conditions.

### **6.4. Advertising the military profession.**

Use any means of communication to inform the public, as follows:

- a) Knowledge and titles are acquired in the military education system, , which are recognized in the civilian life.
- b) The military education system pays more attention to the development of the ability to learn and acquire new knowledge in the field of security and defense.
- c) Possibility for further education and training in military schools and academies abroad.
- d) Implementation of policies that promote gender equality in military educational institutions, as well as support the integration of women in all activities of the AAF.
- e) Military personnel has a secure job and a predictable career.
- f) Possibility of personal contribution to peace support operations.

### **6.5. Increasing the level of information and transparency to the public on the activities of the MoD and the AAF.**

- a) Informing the general public aims to provide public support for the accomplishment of missions and tasks. The messages conveyed should be aimed at increasing the reputation of the Defence, the public trust and the increasingly positive perception of our people in uniform.
- b) Public opinion is clear that military operations and missions ensure the protection of the territorial integrity of our country, advance our national interests and assist the population in need.

- c) The public needs to be informed in such a way as to understand the challenges, risks and changes in the regional and international security environment.
- ç) The obligations of the MoD and the AAF as a NATO member must always be actively followed, but also the role, activities and benefits of being part of the Alliance.
- d) Our country supports allies and partners and is continuously committed and cooperative on security issues. Our military worthily represents our country in every engagement as part of the Alliance or regional or international initiatives and missions.
- e) The drafting and publication of the institutional activity, the legal regulatory framework or any other element related to the transparency of the Defence should be accomplished proactively and annually, as a national and international obligation.

## **7. AUDIENCE**

The audience of the MoD and the AAF is diverse, as well as include a complex range of issues and interests that are unique to them. Relevant structures should carefully identify and engage audiences related to specific circumstances, needs and motivations.

Communication in the MoD institution aims to reach at least four main audiences, in order to inform, influence, persuade and involve them.

### **7.1. Public opinion.**

It is the basic element of consensus with a wide influence in political elections.

By the implementation of the professional model and the success of international operations and missions, the Albanian Armed Forces are capable to positively adjust its communication in a timely manner regarding changes in national and international security scenarios.

The Albanian public should understand and appreciate the contributions of the AF in the field of protection of national security interests, as well as assistance to the population in cases of civil emergencies.

### **7.2. Political decision-makers.**

The Defence, in order to achieve its institutional goals, must be able to proclaim its priorities in the decision-making process of the institutions and bodies involved in ensuring the national defense of the Republic of Albania, both in terms of giving value to appropriate political-military needs and choices, as well as in terms of allocating the necessary financial resources. It is necessary to develop the appropriate capacity to "interact" with political decision-makers in an effective and fully aligned manner with the strategic objectives set by political leaders.

### **7.3. International partners and alliances.**

The AAF participate in various international operations and engagements, as part of the efforts of the UN, NATO and the EU or coalitions, for peace and security. Our military is valued by allies for its skills, character and professionalism.

However, even in the presence of an international factor potentially supporting our country, the opposite action of a small but influential number of other parties can easily change international support. Therefore, Defence institutions should be able to prepare and use information effectively for international audiences, which have the ability to support Albania politically, economically and in matters of security and defense.

#### **7.4.Internal community.**

The internal community consists of active personnel of the MoD, General Staff of the Armed Forces, as well as their subordinate structures. Also part of community is everyone who has served in the Albanian Armed Forces, as well as communities with direct connection to the Defence institution (such as families).

### **8. COMMUNICATION APPROACH**

"Security" and "Defence" are very sensitive topics for the society. Information on the Defence activity in performing institutional obligations is not only a duty but also a necessity to oppose the dissemination of faulty information and/or its use in malicious ways.

Pursuant to Strategic Communication, the new approach should be:

- international-
- inter-ministerial;
- among forces;
- multi-disciplinary;
- oriented by strategic institutional objectives;
- active and proactive;
- reactive in cases of activation and crisis;
- structured and coordinated.

### **9. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

An integral part of successful communication with our identified audience is choosing the right channel of communication. The aim is to inform, influence and inspire.

In order to coordinate, for as much as possible, the entirety of actions that contribute to Strategic Communication, is necessary to identify the disciplines which contribute to its accomplishment.

**a) Public awareness**

Public awareness, traditionally responsible for managing the relations with the media world, should be conducted compliant to the most updated methodologies. Although the activities of media monitoring and preparation for press releases and messages remain basic and inevitable, the complexity of today's world requires a substantial expansion of public information activities, as compared to what is traditionally understood.

In fact, it is necessary:

- The qualitative development of relations with the world of media, through news management techniques (creating news and events aiming to gain attention);
- The relationship with the media should be proactive and continually strengthened;
- Further spread of information through news, posts on social media (facebook, twitter, etc.), brochures, videos, photos, etc.;
- Work done to identify any news that harm (or perceived as harmful) the credibility of the Armed Forces and to address the problem promptly, transparently and professionally.

**b) Internal communication.**

The Defence also needs to internally communicate the cultural and organizational values which it is based on, as well as the objectives to be achieved.

Internal communication is mostly the responsibility of commanders at all levels and plays a strategic role as a human resource management tool, oriented towards inclusion and motivation. In order for the climate of the organization to be oriented towards greater cooperation and participation among its members, it is necessary for the communication channels to be activated not only in one direction (top-down) but also in the supporting channels (bottom-up). and horizontal.

The development of a structured system of internal communication, extended in an organic way to the bodies of military representation, consolidates in time a common and updated knowledge and it is the most appropriate means to effectively support the external communication. Everyone can be an "ambassador" of his/her institution, and the possible spread of messages from internal to those external is always expected.

**c) Institutional relations.**

These relations will be established and developed with:

- The President of the Republic, especially in his function as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces;

- The Parliament, in compliance with its constitutional responsibilities, providing support for political decisions based on effective and complete information;
- The Government, to support political-military priorities in the context of providing necessary resources for its activities;
- Judicial authorities;
- The main economic, technological, and industrial actors, especially those involved in goods and services supply for Defence, social actors, interest groups, local communities, associations, etc., that interact in different ways with the Defense and their activities

#### **ç) Public and Cultural Diplomacy.**

By these terms, we refer to a series of activities aiming at an identified foreign public. These actions can be carried out directly and clearly, during bilateral or multilateral meetings, institutional tours or exchanging visits, military attachés, and NATO representative organizations or structures, agencies, and centers, or through the organization of various activities in sports, training, seminars, etc.

#### **d) Operational communication**

Operational communication is the main tool at the disposal of AAF to interact during operations with stakeholders and the local population. The achievement of the mission objectives is facilitated through this, accomplishing also the economy of forces.

To achieve the best results, the operational communication plan must be closely integrated with the operation planning. Information operations (InfoOps), capable of modeling the perceptions and opinions of various actors involved in a conflict, are usually considered as supporting traditional, so-called "kinetic" operations, i.e. those involving the traditional use of military force.

However, considering the cultural complexity of many of the modern intervention scenarios, information operations can also become predominant over kinetic ones, turning the main effort of a certain actor into a particular context of crisis or conflict.

### **10. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

SCD is an internal document of the MoD and the AAF. The responsible authority to approve the directive is the Minister of Defence.

SCD connects all employees in the MoD and the Armed Forces and especially those who perform in public.

The Preserver of SCD is the General Directorate of Defence Policy, in the MoD, as well as the General Staff of the AAF. The people responsible for the implementation of SCD are the executives at all organizational levels of the MoD and the AAF, within their competencies.

Structures of the communication and public information must operate in an integrated manner, synergistically and with a common approach, at all levels. But, first and foremost, all organizational elements, at all levels, should be conscious of the fact that they are part of global communication and must act in full compliance with the purpose of the institution, in a coordination process.

General Directorate of Defence Policies in the Ministry of Defence, monitors the implementation of guidelines and tasks laid down in this directive, developing relevant detailed plans for the MoD, as well as monitors and implements the drafted plans of MoD's subordinate structures.

The General Staff of the Albanian Armed Forces, the Commands of the Forces, and the subordinate structures compile appropriate plans in the function of the mission and tasks, incorporating the messages of strategic communication.

The Cultural Center, Media and Defence Publications, and the Museum of the Armed Forces prepare relevant plans helping the Defence to reach audiences and influence public perceptions.

SCD is accomplished and implemented according to detailed plans of implementation and with special programs for a certain period of time, the longest one for two years.