

Crisis communication in the language of the financial centre

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The affairs that have marked the financial centre since the 1990s, traced in Parts E and H, have all had a communication dimension. A bank targeted by American proceedings, a trader convicted of corruption, an institution called into question over its relations with a politically exposed client must explain, within a few hours, what happened and what they are doing about it. This communication is addressed to audiences whose languages differ: the federal authorities and the German-speaking media in German, the Geneva media and public in French, investors, counterparties and the international press in English. A press release translated late, or with diverging nuances between the versions, aggravates the crisis.

Geneva institutions have learned, sometimes at their own expense, to prepare this communication. The large houses have trilingual heads of communication, messages prepared in the three languages for foreseeable scenarios and established relations with the French-speaking, German-speaking and international newsrooms. The smaller ones rely on external advisers. In every case, the credibility of the communication depends on its quality in the language of each audience. The Geneva financial centre therefore has an interest in its spokespeople expressing themselves in precise French before a French-speaking Swiss public that judges, through the ballot box, the conditions under which finance exists.

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