

Winston Churchill said that “courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

We @ Semiotics, we like to work for courageous people! Bart Staes, a member of European Parliament since 1999 and known in Belgium for his hard parliamentary work, asked us to support him on a very specific issue: genetically modified organisms. Bart is currently writing a book in which he wants to give a well-balanced view on the topic; listening to pros and cons, giving his own strong opinion and sharing his plans on a political level. Bringing the discussion to the heart of society. We sat down and listened, we read the first version of his book and were very impressed. No need to say that we are proud to assist our friend and his team on this matter.

Some time ago we drove to Rotterdam, visiting the Erasmus MC, department of Virology. 120 people work there in research and diagnostics; it is one of the most renowned and well-established research labs in the world. AIDS, exotic infections, herpes, hepatitis, hMPV, measles and rubella, RSV and influenza are among the research topics. They either join or play a leading role in international research projects. These are the people who discovered that the SARS corona virus was at the basis of the SARS disease, thus enabling mankind to take the first steps towards a solution. These are the people who were the first to detect the H5N1 influenza virus in humans. Their scientific findings are the basis of new intervention strategies and therapies. Today they find themselves in the middle of the societal debate: “Should so called “dangerous discoveries” be published or not?” They found out that it only takes a handful of mutations for the H5N1 virus to become transmissible from mammal to mammal, an important condition to become a pandemic virus. All of a sudden science becomes even more tangible... And let's not forget to mention the researchers' constant ambition to discover new viruses! We will advise them in standing up and speaking – not only in scientific journals. We will advise them on how to bring their work and findings to the heart of society. Together we will advocate “knowledge transfer” and give science a face. No need to say that we are very excited to start the work... You will hear from it in the near future.

Our work for the European Scientific Working group on Influenza is as pioneering as ever. I just like to mention one idea we are working on: we will put our “top scientists” on stage. In May, in Brussels, we will start organizing inspiring lectures to bring science closer to the public.... Of course you will be invited. We think it will be fun and inspirational... Talking about courage.

At the start of Semiotics we resolved to guide people and organizations in bringing out their messages. We are thrilled that people ask us for advice. We are thrilled that our concept works.... We do realize that we need very specific skills in our consortium to make it work and to “deliver”. We are hence welcoming Maxime De Nittis, official Microsoft partner, spending hours looking @ that <% beautiful code % >. NET, PHP, Cloud, vps, overall hosting & server infrastructure puzzles are his main breakfast! He is currently developing a worldwide “facebook like” tool for ESWI. And we are also welcoming Hans Housen, our “copywriters mind”, specialized in 'translating' complex messages and ideas in a language that different target audiences understand. Hans and I are currently working on a book about “communication in a changing world”... Our Semiotics “rules of thumb” will have a place there. The need to stand up and speak :-)

Of course, we want to wish you a very “Dazlious 2012”; a courageous one... Regardless whether you stand up and speak or sit down and listen.

Oh! And as they say in “Two ladies”, the “Cabaret” movie by Bob Fosse: “ I sleep in the middle of the bed, I am left and I am right but there is room on the bottom if you drop in some night.” Always welcome!

Chris Vanlangendonck