



Deliverable 2.2

Platformisation of News in 10 Countries



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004488

The information and views in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Document information

Grant Agreement #:	101004488
Project Title:	EUROPEAN MEDIA PLATFORMS: ASSESSING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES FOR EUROPEAN CULTURE
Project Acronym:	EUMEPLAT
Project Start Date:	01/03/2021
Related work package:	WP2 Fake news: platformisation of Journalism
Related task(s):	T2.2: Platformisation of News in 10 Countries
Lead Organisation:	P9 – ISCTE-IUL
Author(s):	Gustavo Cardoso Cláudia Álvares José Moreno Rita Sepúlveda Miguel Crespo Caterina Foà Mehmet Ali Uzelgun Sofia Ferro Santos
Status	Final
Submission date:	14/02/2023
Dissemination Level:	Public

Table of contents

PART I

Platformisation of News in ten countries

1. Introduction	6
2. Methodology	8
3. Results	11
3.1. About the format of the posts	12
3.2. About the agents who posted	14
3.2.1. Publications from all users	14
3.2.2. Publications from media users	22
3.2.3. Comparative reach, engagement and engagement rate	24
3.3. About the subject of the posts	25
3.3.1. Subject of the posts on all users samples	26
3.3.2. Subject of the posts on news media samples	27
3.4. About the dimensions of Europeanisation	29
3.4.1. Dimensions of Europeanisation on Facebook Public Groups	31
4. Discussion	33
4.1. The format of social media publications	34
4.2. The agents of social media publications	35
4.3. The subject of social media publications	36
4.4. The dimensions of Europeanisation	36
5. Conclusion	38
6. References	40

PART II

National Reports

1. Bulgaria
2. Belgium
3. Czech Republic
4. Germany
5. Greece
6. Italy
7. Portugal
8. Spain
9. Sweden
10. Turkey

ANNEXES

I - Codebook

II - Inter Coder Reliability

PART I

Platformisation of News in ten countries

1. Introduction

The global aim of the EUMEPLAT project is to analyse whether the role of media platforms in fostering or dismantling European identity and assess the positive and negative externalities stemming from the platformisation of media. This means that the project is guided by the confluence or divergence between two main concepts: europeanisation and platformisation.

Within the EUMEPLAT project, the role of Work Package 2 is to investigate the platformisation of journalism in Europe and the surging of 'fake news'. Task 2.2. of this Work Package - to which this report responds - deals specifically with "The platformisation of News in Ten Countries", aiming to assess how news about Europe and about the issues that more concern european citizens are produced and circulated on social media platforms. The research questions are two: 1) Which are the most relevant issues debated in social media platforms in Europe and how are european citizens debating about them?; 2) Which debate is taking place at the intersection of top-level professional and bottom-level non-professional communication on social media?

To collect data to respond to these questions and assess the platformisation of news in Europe, we developed a methodological framework to extract and analyse relevant data from social media platforms in ten countries (Cardoso et al., 2021). The fundamental features of that methodological framework are described in the next section, including the steps taken to select a sample of social media posts and videos and the criteria to analyse the content of those social media posts and videos. This means those social media posts and videos - some published by news media outlets, others by common citizens or political agents - are this research's unit of analysis and the media objects we will be dissecting in this report.

The option for this kind of research stems from the fact that, increasingly, citizens receive their information when using media platforms, significantly including social media platforms (Newman et al., 2021). To know how Europe is approached on social media platforms we collected data from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the countries that constitute the sample using the same tools and methodological framework to allow comparability. We aim to identify what types of content are most relevant on those platforms, which actors are more prominent, which subjects are predominantly addressed in those posts and how Europe and Europeanity or Europeanisation are viewed on those publications with higher engagement online. The goal of this report is to be able to compare results in different countries to understand which are the most relevant issues being debated on social media about Europe and european citizens and what is the role of news media in relation to overall user of those platforms (including political agents) in spreading information about Europe and european issues.

This report is divided into two parts. In the first part, we analyse the results for the 10 countries overall. In this part we will not address results in each country but rather look at the data for all of them and compare the results. In the second part, we collect the reports authored by the teams in each country about the context and the results in their own country. The first part of the report starts with a brief explanation of the methodology that was employed to collect and analyse the data, with an emphasis on the criteria used to code that data as well as the measures taken to assure its reliability.

In the section dedicated to the analysis of the results, we first look at the overall distribution of the posts collected by country/language, dimension of analysis and social media platform.

Following that overall look, we dive into the post format most used in our sample, both overall and filtered by dimension and platform.

Then we analyse the results relative to the agents who posted the media objects of the sample to determine which kind of actors are more relevant and how news media posts compare with the other actors. Following that, we focus on the subject matter (or subject matters) included in those social media posts and videos, to determine, not only which issues are primarily addressed, but also who addresses them. We conclude this section by analysing what dimensions of Europeanisation are included in those posts. This analysis follows on the drawing of a semantic map of Europeanisation (Carpentier et al., 2022) and uses a set of operational definitions to determine to which dimension of Europeanisation a post pertains (more on that in the next section, about methodology).

In the following section we'll discuss the results in the overall context of the platformisation of news and of the appropriation of that platformisation of news by media and non-media agents to advance their interests and goals. We will also discuss how results frame the question of how Europe and european issues are presented and debated on leading social media platforms in Europe. In this section, we expect to be able to answer the two research questions and shed some clarity on how European issues are being debated on social media platforms and how news media and non- media content interact on those platforms.

We will conclude by identifying new lines of research that are opened by our analysis or that remain insufficiently studied. We also consider that this report does not exhaust the analysis of the data that was gathered nor the field of research overall and more research on this topic will be needed to deepen our comprehension of how social media platforms influence the debate of relevant issues in Europe and how they affect the process of Europeanisation.

In the second part of this report, the reader will find the national reports produced by each team of EUMEPLAT partners analysing and contextualising the results for their country. These reports are of utmost importance as the specific context in each country significantly impacts its results and is particularly relevant for the understanding of the specific nature of social media contents. This part is organised by country, in an alphabetic order.

In the annexes, the reader is also encouraged to view the codebook used to categorise the social media posts and videos as well as the measures of inter coder reliability in applying it.

2. Methodology

To address the research questions for task 2.2 of Eumplat - "Platformisation of News in 10 Countries" - we devised a methodological framework to be implemented similarly in all the partner countries (Cardoso et al., 2021). The fact that the same methodology was implemented in all the countries that are part of the EUMEPLAT project is precisely what allows for an overall analysis as well as a comparison between countries to identify similarities or dissimilarities in the way social media is used to debate Europe and European issues as well as the agents that lead that discussion and the role that media agents play on it.

The first step in establishing the methodological framework was the selection of the dimensions of analysis. One was mandatory in view of the goals of the EUMEPLAT Project: Europe. The other dimensions were selected based on the response of European citizens to the Eurobarometer 2020 (Eurobarometer, 2020), regarding what were their main concerns. Stemming from that, a consensus was reached on the economy (including economic situation, unemployment and rising prices/inflation/cost of living), health and climate as the main concerns for Europeans going forward. However, considering that we wanted to focus on Europe and European issues, we restricted data collected about those dimensions with that which also was related to Europe (Cardoso et al., 2021). Which means that, to be included in our sample of social media content to be an object of analysis, a post or video should be about Europe or simultaneously about Europe and Health, Europe and Climate or Europe and Economy.

Another important initial decision was related to what social media platforms to choose and include in the research. To assess that, we consulted secondary data about the usage of the main social media platforms (Kemp, 2021) in all of the 10 countries partnering with the project. Although there were (and are) some differences, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were consistently on the list of most used social media platforms in each country, especially when the circulation of news was considered (Newman et al., 2021).

The next step in constructing the methodological framework was the composition of the queries for the extraction of content from the three selected social media platforms. An initial exploratory research was made to understand which search terms and social media keywords were most frequently used to address issues about Europe, Health, Climate and the Economy. From that, an extensive list of keywords was proposed for the partners to adapt to their local languages and contexts, while preserving some space in queries for nationally specific keywords (Cardoso et al., 2021). At this point it is worth reminding that the query for Europe was implemented as is, while the queries for Climate, Health and Economy were crossed with some keywords related to Europe.

Because the EUMEPLAT project had the goal of focusing on news media, following the "Platformisation of News" mandate, we also proposed the composition of mainstream news media lists for each country, including the most important news media agents in the country with a relevant presence on those social media platforms. In this selection of news media, we also relied on the expertise and context knowledge of the EUMEPLAT partners. Those media lists were what allowed us to compare the presence of news media agents on social media platforms with that of the general users of those platforms (or the users of Facebook Groups).

At this point, our methodological framework had devised four dimensions of analysis - Europe, Health, Climate and Economy - with six types of datasets for each dimension and for each country/language (10 countries, 11 languages):

- posts published by all users on their Facebook pages;
- posts published by selected news media agents on their Facebook pages;
- posts published by group members on public Facebook groups;
- tweets published by all users of Twitter;
- tweets published by selected news media agents on Twitter
- videos published by all users on YouTube

This means that we find in this data different types of posts: a) posts and tweets published by a selected list of media agents on Facebook and Twitter; b) Posts, tweets and videos published by any user of Facebook pages, Twitter and YouTube; c) Posts published by any user/member of public Facebook groups.

The goal was to collect all Facebook posts, Twitter tweets and YouTube videos for a period of three months - September, October and November 2021 - corresponding to those 4 queries, one for each dimension, for each country/language and for each month (Cardoso et al., 2021).

The next very important question for the methodological framework to respond to was: Which publications (posts, tweets and videos) should be coded and categorised from the ones collected in the timeframe defined? To address this issue, we took into consideration the metrics that, on each social media platform, could be a better indicator of attention paid by the users of a platform to a specific instance of content: a post, a tweet or a video. Although different platforms use different metrics for that, which is a challenge when using digital methods to research digital media platforms (Rogers, 2017), there are in each case metrics that are a better indicator. Following that rationale we ordered all posts in each of the extractions by “Total Interactions” on Facebook, “Reach” on Twitter and “Relevance” on YouTube. On Facebook, “Total Interactions” include all users’ interactions with the content: all Reactions (Like, Love, Care, Haha, Wow, Sad and Angry), comments and shares. On Twitter, “Reach” is the number of people estimated to have seen a given post. Finally, on YouTube, “Relevance” corresponds to the videos that are suggested to a user in response to a given query, in this case the four queries composed for the four dimensions of analysis. Each of these metrics was chosen as the better indicator of relevance available in each of the three social media platforms.

Consequently, all the posts extracted in each platform, for each dataset and in each month in each country were ordered by those metrics, which means, they were ordered by relevance/most engaging. And the 10 most relevant on-topic posts, tweets or videos per month for each dimension and for each country were selected to be included in our sample to be coded and categorised. As we will see in the next section, overall, we included a total of 6233 in the sample.

Two aspects are important to notice at this point: the use of those metrics is intended to qualify the ensemble of posts that were analysed - our sample - as the most relevant in each dataset regarding the discussion of each of the dimensions, precisely because those were the posts that most users in each of the three social media platforms paid most attention to (in the cases of Facebook and Twitter) or would be deemed as more relevant by the sorting algorithm (in the case of YouTube). The other important thing to take into consideration is that our sample should not be seen as representative but solely the sample of the posts that were more significant in debating the issues as expressed by the queries that were used to collect those posts (Cardoso et al., 2021)

Following the implementation of this framework, a detailed codebook (reproduced in the annex I) was prepared to code and categorise each of the 10 most relevant publications in each platform for any dimension according to 55 variables. Those variables were grouped in four sections:

- the adequacy of the post (on-topic)
- the format of the post;
- the agent who posted;
- the subject matter of the post, including the scope;
- the dimensions of europeanisation.

Q1 On or off topic (On topic=1; Off Topic =0)	Q5. Dimensions of europeanization (multiple choice)
Q2. Format (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5A European people ('Europeans') (NO=0; YES=1)
Q2.a Text (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5B European (media) content (NO=0; YES=1)
Q2.b Link (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5C European territory (NO=0; YES=1)
Q2.c Image (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5D European values (YES=1; NO=0)
Q2.d Video (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5E European (media) industries & economies (NO=0; YES=1)
Q3. Who's the agent who posted it? (single answer)	Q5F European interactions & dialogues (NO=0; YES=1)
Q3.a Political agent (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5G European Culture(s) (NO=0; YES=1)
Q3.b Media agent (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5H European democratic model(s) (NO=0; YES=1)
Q3c. Any other organization (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5I European institutions (NO=0; YES=1)
Q3d. Non-organization (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5J European law & governance (NO=0; YES=1)
Q4. subject matter (multiple choice)	Q5K European New Social Movements (NO=0; YES=1)
Q4a. Political agent (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5L European public sphere (NO=0; YES=1)
Q4b. Newsmedia (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5M Scientific (NO=0; YES=1)
Q4c. Any other organization (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5N Political (NO=0; YES=1)
Q4d Non institutional agents (NO=0; YES=1)	Q5O Economic (NO=0; YES=1)
Q4.e Other? (NO=0; YES=1)	
Q4.f Identify the scope (NO=0; YES=1)	

To assess the europeanisation dimensions, we took into account a semantic map drawn along three axes: discursive versus material; essentialist versus relativist; and socio-spatial versus politico-spatial (Carpentier et al., 2022). From these three axis, 19 dimensions of Europeanisation were established, for which operational definitions were created to inscribe in the codebook (see annex I)

Each social media content in our sample of 6233 posts, tweets and videos was coded according to the codebook and after training for the partners in its implementation. The goal was to assure consistency in the analysis so as to allow significant comparisons between countries. This report will draw mostly from those comparisons precisely.

To ensure the reliability of coding, two independent coders have coded 20% of the sample in each country's dataset. InterCoder Reliability (ICR) (Lombard et al. 2002) was calculated and Krippendorff's Alpha statistical measure was applied to the results (Krippendorff, 2011). As a result of that training and of those statistical measures, all countries achieved a coefficient above 0,66 and most of them above 0,90. The complete Krippendorff's Alpha results for each country are also displayed in annex II.

3. Results

The total sample of posts, tweets and videos to be analysed was composed of 6233 on-topic publications. These publications were distributed by the four dimensions of analysis as follows (**Table 1**): Europe (n=1577; 25,3%), Economy (n=1558; 25%), Climate (n=1552; 24,9%) and Health (n=1546; 24,8%).

Dimension	n=	%
Health	1546	24,80%
Economy	1558	25,00%
Climate	1552	24,90%
Europe	1577	25,30%

Table 1: Distribution of posts according to dimension.

Focusing on the number of on topic posts analysed according to the time period of analysis, 1700 posts correspond to September (month 1), 2211 posts are from October (month 2) and 2322 posts were published in November (month 3).

The total sample of posts (n=6233) is the sum of 689 posts from Belgium (in flemish), 680 from Belgium (in french), 590 from Bulgaria, 655 from the Czech Republic, 347 from Germany, 461 from Spain, 552 from Greece, 674 from Italy, 667 from Portugal, 369 from Turkey and 549 from Sweden¹. On **Table 2** we can see the distribution of the number of posts by country and dimension.

Country	Dimension								Total
	Europe		Economy		Climate		Health		
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	
Belgium (french)	155	9,8	177	11,4	168	10,8	180	11,6	680
Belgium (flemish)	158	10	179	11,5	172	11,1	180	11,6	689
Bulgaria	152	9,6	158	10,1	134	8,6	146	9,4	590
Czech Republic	161	10,2	158	10,1	166	10,7	170	11	655
Germany	90	5,7	84	5,4	92	5,9	81	5,2	347
Greece	129	8,2	146	9,4	149	9,6	128	8,3	552
Italy	169	10,7	169	10,8	158	10,2	178	11,5	674
Portugal	179	11,4	161	10,3	177	11,4	150	9,7	667
Spain	110	7	120	7,7	120	7,7	111	7,2	461
Sweden	164	10,4	105	6,7	131	8,4	149	9,6	549

¹ Germany, Spain and Turkey contributed with two months October and November for the analysis.

Turkey	110	7	101	6,5	85	5,5	73	4,7	369
TOTAL	1577	100	1558	100	1552	100	1546	100	6233

Table 2: Frequency of posts according to country and dimension.

Regarding the distribution of posts according to the platform, there were 3091 on topic posts from Facebook, 2197 posts from Twitter and 945 posts from Youtube . We must take into consideration that the sample is composed of three datasets, per dimension and per month, from Facebook (Facebook all users, Facebook groups, Facebook media), two datasets from Twitter (Twitter all users and Twitter media) and one from YouTube (YouTube all users).

Platform / posts	n	%
Facebook	3091	49,59%
Twitter	2197	35,25%
YouTube	945	15,16%

Table 3: Distribution of posts by platform

As reported by our partners, YouTube was the platform where identifying on-topic posts was more difficult. That is probably caused by the way the platform is designed, based on a recommendation logic rather than a search logic. Instead of presenting videos directly containing keywords established on the search query, what the YouTube algorithm does is present videos recommended for any query search (Rieder et al., 2018).

3.1. About the format of the posts

Text as the common format

As shown on **table 3** text is the most common format on the posts with which users engage the most, regardless of the platform. Text is followed by link, image and video, in that order.

Format (all posts that include the format)	n=	%
Text	6082	97,6
Link	3937	63,2
Image	3441	55,2
Video	1343	21,1

Table 3: Posts that include this format.

Text, image and link as the common format combination

However, we also wanted to analyse the combination of different formats in the same post, to assess which is the combination most frequent in our sample of posts. On **table 4** we can see those combinations and its frequency. Posts that contain text, image and link are largely the most common composition of the posts among those with which, in our sample, users

interact the most. It may be relevant to mention that the preview of a link in a publication often shows an image, which was considered a different format than the link, therefore the combination “Text+image+link” were mostly posts with text, a link and an image of the preview from the link.

Format (combined)	n=	%
Text + image + link	2314	44,75%
Text + image	1039	20,09%
Text + link	1080	20,89%
Text + video	654	12,65%
Text + image + video	52	1,01%
Text + image + link + video	13	0,25%
Image + link	8	0,15%
Image + video	5	0,10%
Image + link + video	0	0,00%
Link + video	6	0,12%

Table 4: Posts that combine different formats.

When we focus on the platform (**Table 5**), text is the most common format on the Twitter tweets and Facebook posts that were analysed. Although platforms enable other formats of posts, text remains the preferred form of publication within our sample of most engaging posts. The second predominant format on Facebook is image, which usually accompanies text, and on Twitter is the link. On our YouTube sample, and resulting from the nature of the platform itself, video is the most common format, followed by text.

Format	Facebook		Twitter		YouTube	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
Text	3038	98,29%	2195	99,91%	849	89,84%
Image	2372	76,74%	1028	46,79%	41	4,34%
Link	1825	59,04%	1677	76,33%	435	46,03%
Video	296	9,58%	102	4,64%	920	97,35%

Table 5: Format of posts in each platform.

The presence of links on Facebook and Twitter publications is also manifest. These refer to links to content that is external to the platform, namely to media sources or other social media platforms such as YouTube, for example.

It should be noted that, although video has been greatly adopted by users and platforms, its presence is not significant in the posts analysed in our sample, which are those that

garnered greater engagement on Facebook and Twitter. This may have an impact on users' preferences for the content they consume.

3.2. About the agents who posted

When categorising the agents who posted the posts, tweets and videos included in our sample, it was possible to select one from the following coding options: Political agent, News media, Any other organisation or Non-organization. “Any other organisation” is any form of organisation that is not a political or media agent and “non-organization” is an agent with social media presence, but without any other institutional presence, for instance a common citizen. The definition of these and other categories are detailed in the codebook, in the annex I.

As can be observed on **Table 6**, overall, the most frequent agents that posted the content included in our sample were media agents (n=3315; 52,8%), followed by non-organizations, political agents and any other form of organisation.

Agent who posted	n=	%
Media agent	3315	52,8
Non-organization	1526	24,3
Political agent	979	15,6
Any other organization	461	7,4

Table 6: Frequency of agents who posted.

However, we must take into consideration that this indicator includes all the datasets in the sample and two of them are specific on Media Agents (Facebook Media and Twitter Media), which would be overrepresented. The addition of datasets including only media users is intended to allow a fine-grained analysis of the presence of media on social media platforms. The inclusion of datasets including all users - media or otherwise - allows for the comparison on different social media agents, including media.

In face of that, and to avoid bias the analysis towards the presence of media agents publications, we will separate this analysis in two parts: first we will compare all users (media and non media agents) with all users on the three platforms (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube); then we will compare media users with media users on the two platforms for which we have filtered datasets (Facebook and Twitter).

3.2.1. Publications from all users

When we look at the posts that were published in the three platforms, but only from all users (all users of Facebook pages, all users of Twitter accounts and all users of YouTube channels), that is, casting aside the selected media pages and accounts, we end up with n=3081, as we can see in Table 7, below.

Agent / Platform	FB (all users)		TW (all users)		YT (all users)		Total
	n=	%=	n=	%=	n=	%=	n=

Media agent	312	26,62%	476	40,58%	464	63,04%	1252
Political agent	567	48,38%	339	28,90%	57	7,74%	963
Any other organization	86	7,34%	95	8,10%	204	27,72%	385
Non-organization	207	17,66%	263	22,42%	11	1,49%	481

Table 7: Frequency of agents who posted in the sample “all users”

We can see significant differences between the platforms. Most of the agents regarding Facebook are political agents (n=567), whereas on Twitter most are media agents (n=476). On the all-users YouTube sample, media agents are also dominant (n=464), but “Any other organisation” (n=204) also stands out as the second largest group in the sample (differently from the other platforms).

If we focus deeper into the media agents who posted the content (**Figure 1**), we notice that broadcast, more specifically television, was the most common on the all-users sample, followed by print media, especially newspapers, followed closely by internet only news media (print media=359; Internet news media=355). But we should also notice that the broadcast media presence on this sample (for all countries) comes mostly from YouTube, whereas the print media presence flows mostly from Twitter. Media agents on our all-users Facebook sample are less (n=307) and distributed more evenly by the three categories (broadcast, print and internet only media). The fact there are less media agents on the Facebook sample, indicates that other types of agents may be more relevant on that platform sample.

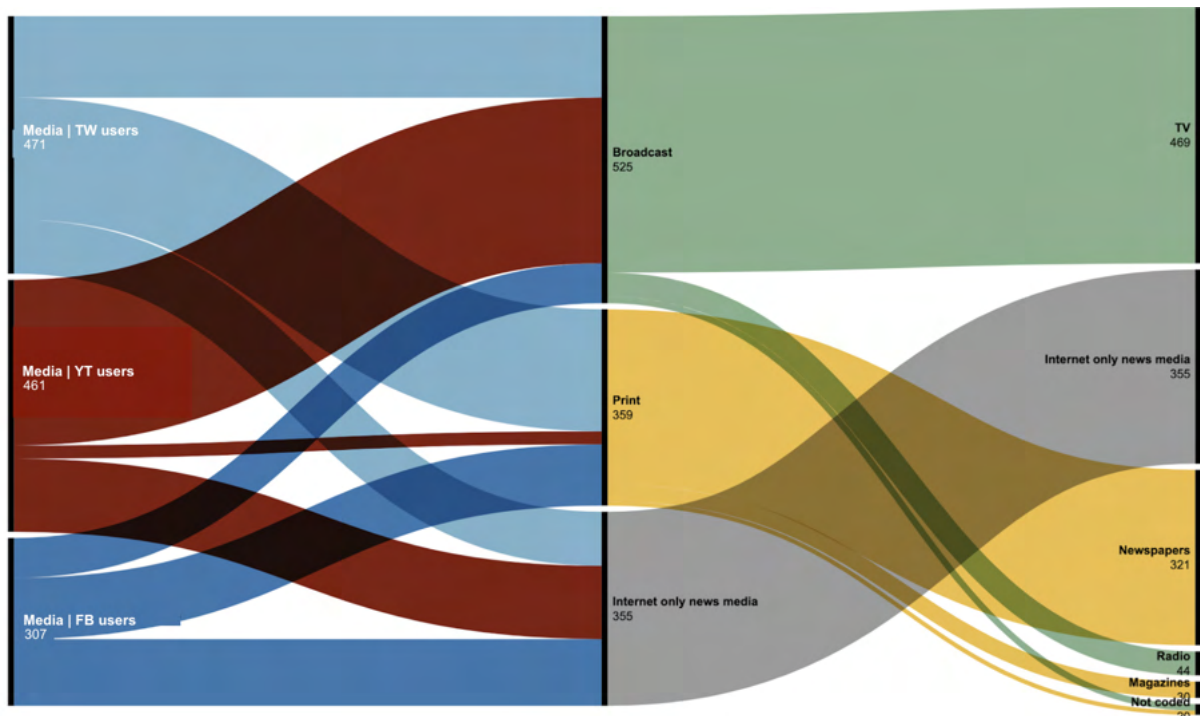


Figure 1: Media agents on the all-users sample on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

When we look at political agents on our overall all-users sample (**Figure 2, below**), politicians stand out clearly from political parties and EU groups as the political agent with

which users prefer to interact. And this is manifest regardless of the platform. Political parties are a distant second source of attention for users of all three platforms and EU Groups an even more distant third.

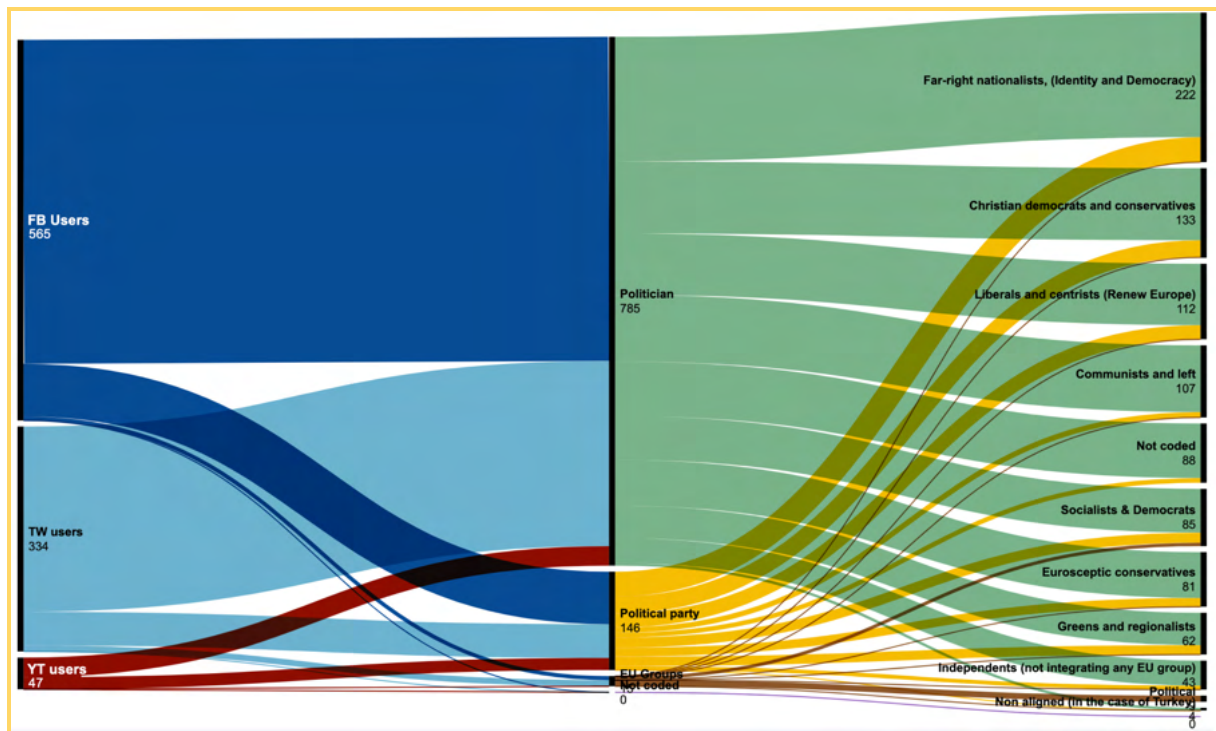


Figure 2: Political agents on the all-users sample on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

The analysis also showed that, although politicians have a significant presence, both on Facebook and on Twitter, as agents of the most relevant content in our sample, the specific political actors tend to be different on each platform. Figures 3 and 4 show the heterogeneity of those political agents on both platforms, according to the frequency of their presence on the top relevant posts in each platform. As we can see, Tomio Okamura, a Czech far right politician (see Czech national report for detail), is dominant on Facebook, followed by Theo Francken, Alice Widel and Alexis Tsipras. However, on Twitter, the most prominent actors are different, with emphasis on the official account of the Greek prime-minister and Alena Schilerová, vice-prime minister of the Czech government. Such results point to the domestication of specific platforms by certain types of political agents depending on the country and the attention given by their audiences.

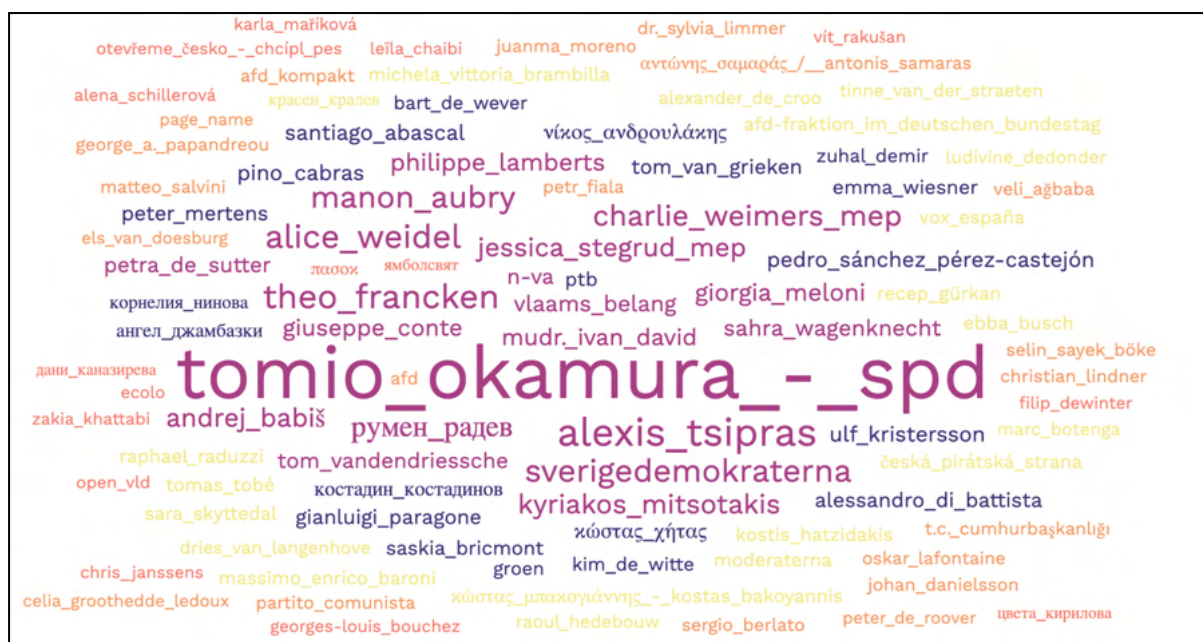


Figure 3: Political agents on Facebook. The size of the names is a function of their frequency as authors of the most relevant posts.



Figure 4: Political agents on Twitter. The size of the names is a function of their frequency as authors of the most relevant tweets.

On the one hand, this analysis, complemented by **Figure 5** (below), reveals that the content with which the users of the three platforms interacted the most was that which was published by far right nationalist politicians (23.5% of the sample).



Figure 5: Far-right nationalists on Facebook, The size of the names is a function of their frequency as authors of the most relevant publications.

The separate analysis of each platform - both looking at the prevalence of politicians and which politicians are those - also shows that the prevalence of far-right nationalist politicians is most notorious on Facebook (see **Table 8**, below).

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Total
Political Position	n=	n=	n=	n=
Christian democrats and conservatives	56	70	9	135
Socialists & Democrats	42	37	6	85
Liberals and centrists (Renew Europe)	48	63	2	113
Eurosceptic conservatives	48	32	3	83
Greens and regionalists	35	26	2	63
Communists and left	73	22	12	107
Far-right nationalists, (Identity and Democracy)	186	29	7	222
Independents (not integrating any EU group)	27	16	3	46
Non aligned (in the case of Turkey)	4	0	0	4
Not coded	46	39	3	88

Table 8: Distribution of political groups over the three platforms.

Next to Media agents and Political agents, the third most common agent in our sample of most relevant posts was non-organizations. In terms of definition, a non-organization is an individual or group that has no institutional existence outside social media (see Codebook in the annex I). Parsing through the several types of non-organization, we notice that Common Citizen was the most frequent non-organizational agent, independently of the platform. Online influencers, TV Hosts, presenters and commentators followed on that ranking (**Figure 6**).

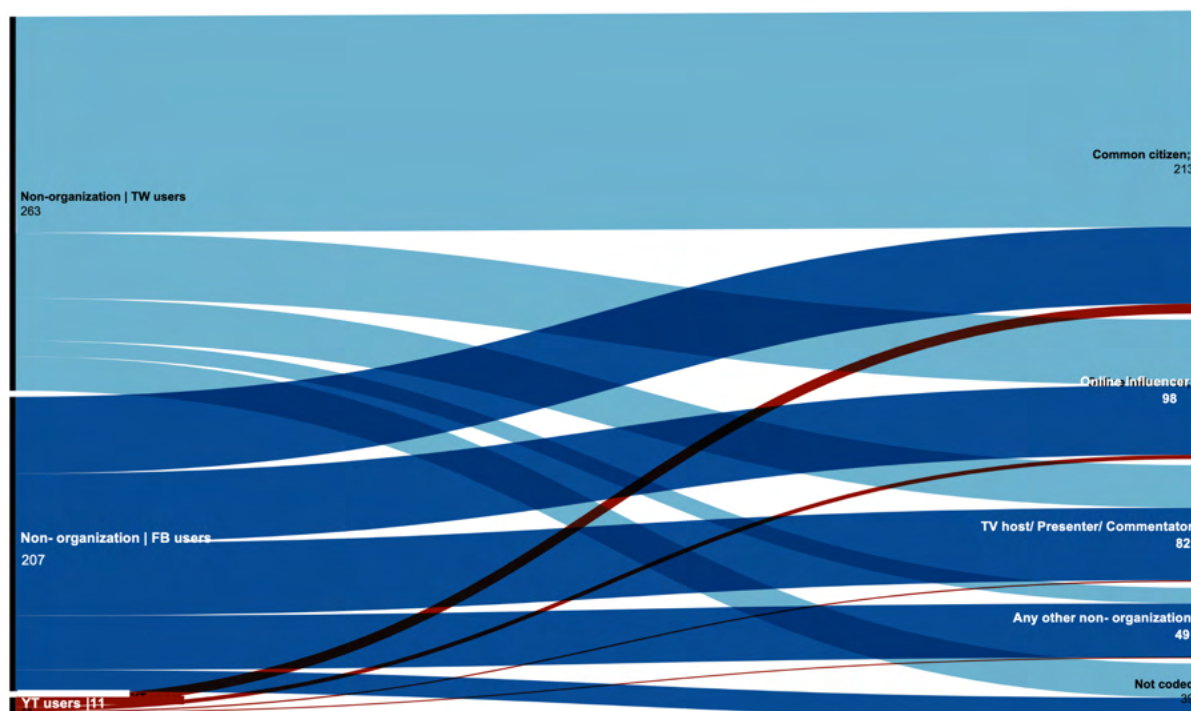


Figure 6: Kind of non-organization agents distribution.

However, when looking at the platforms separately, we can see that the dominance of Common Citizens as main non-organizational agents is more prominent on Twitter than it is on Facebook. We should recall that our methodology tracks Facebook pages - which are mostly organisational - and Twitter handles - which tend to be mostly personal. That may contribute to these results.

We can also notice that Any Other Non-Organization is a more significant agent in our sample on Facebook than it is on Twitter. This also reflects on the specific agents that were prevalent on Facebook in comparison with Twitter. Although some of them stand out in each country (Camilo Lourenço on Facebook in Portugal and @fmeeus1 on Twitter in Belgium), they are rarely the same on each platform, reiterating an analysis and pattern result that we had already seen for politicians.



Figure 7: Non-organizational agents on Facebook. The size of the names is a function of their frequency as authors of the most relevant posts.



Figure 8: Non-organizational agents on Twitter. The size of the names is a function of their frequency as authors of the most relevant tweets.

The analysis of the agents who posted the content in our data samples is complete with “Any Other Organization” agents, organisations that are not political or media agents but have an institutional presence outside social media. This would include public entities like governments and governmental or institutions, as well as private companies, foundations, NGO’s, etc.

Results show (**Figure 9**) that this category is more frequent on YouTube than in any other of the platforms. Regarding the type of any other organisations, the most common agents were public institutions or companies, defined as funded wholly or primarily by the state, region or local authorities, for example governmental institutions, independently of their broad, rather

than private companies. This is manifest in Twitter and also observable on Facebook. However, on YouTube, it is private institutions and companies that compose the largest number of agents in our sample.

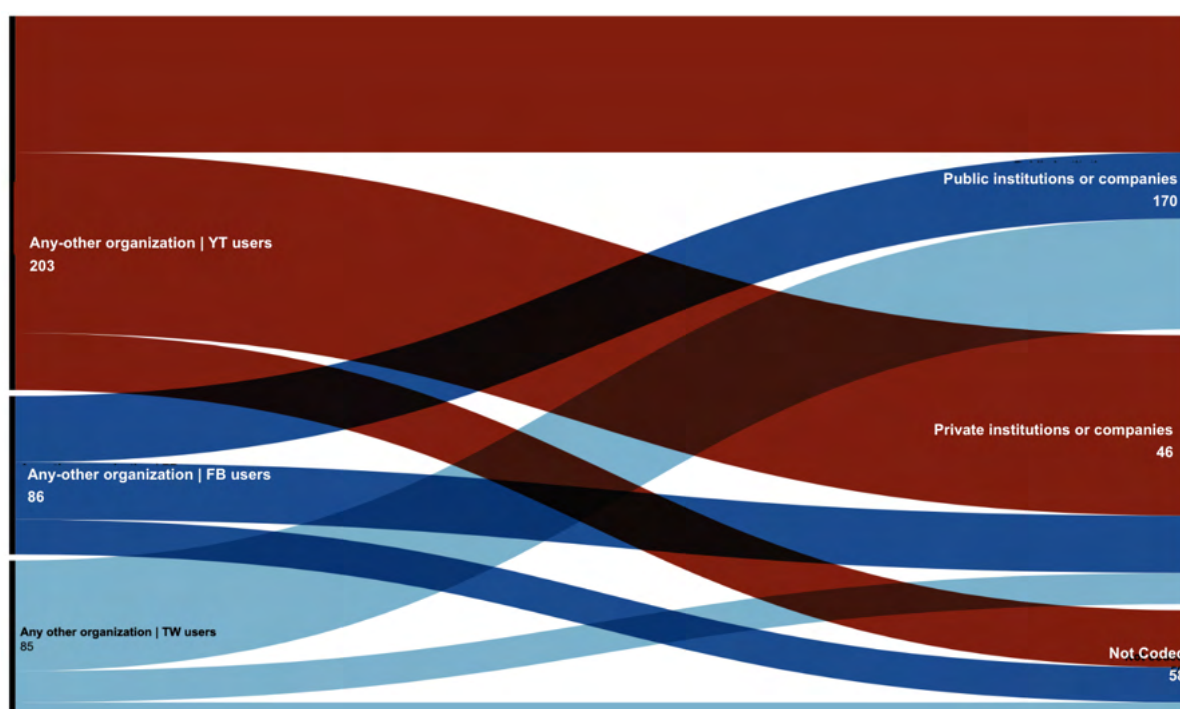


Figure 9: Distribution of any-other organization agents according to platform.

When cross-analyzing the agents of the posts included in our sample with the dimensions of analysis, we conclude that the posts about Health and Climate are more commonly approached by media agents whereas the Economy and European issues are more commonly addressed by political agents (**Table 9**).

		Agent			
	Platform / Dataset	Political agent	Media agent	Any other organization	Non organization
Health	FB all users	97	113	31	53
	TW all users	48	148	26	70
	YT all users	7	137	36	18
Climate	FB all users	137	72	38	50
	TW all users	56	151	37	51
	YT all users	5	128	80	71
Economy	FB all users	178	61	2	53
	TW all users	92	124	18	71
	YT all users	22	86	37	54
Europe	FB all users	155	66	14	50
	TW all users	143	53	14	71

	YT all users	23	113	51	33
--	--------------	----	-----	----	----

Table 9: Frequency of agents posting, according to Dimension and Platform dataset.

3.2.2. Publications from media users

Like we stated in section 2, besides wanting to investigate the way general users address european issues on social media platforms, we also wanted to analyse how mainstream news media do it. In total, the news media sample (n=2076) is composed by the results of the datasets Facebook Media (n=1054) and Twitter Media (n=1022). The most common kind of news media included in our sample of posts published by the media on social media platforms was print media (**Figure 10**). We should note that this classification of the media agents focused on its origin/foundation and not on the method of distribution of the content itself, precisely because we're not considering the content published on the news media main distribution channel - or even in its website - but solely on social media platforms. Print media agents were dominant on this sample of most relevant content in all three platforms: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In print media, publications from newspapers are largely dominant, with magazines reduced to a small part of the sample.

Broadcast media, also highly based on television more than radio, come second as the most common type of media agent. We include in this category the television channels available through traditional broadcast networks (aerial, satellite, cable or similar) but with a presence on social media.

Finally, Internet only news media was the third most important agent, although very close to broadcast media. We consider internet only news media to be news outlets that have its origin on the internet, with no print or broadcast foundation.

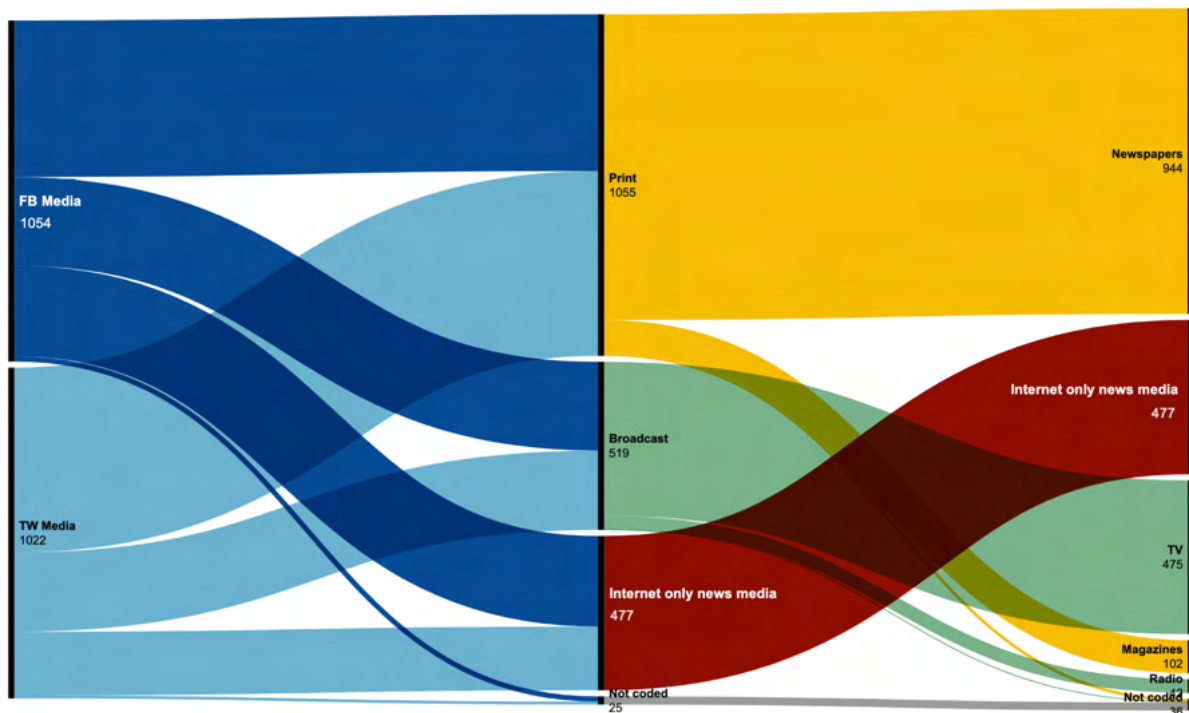


Figure 10: Distribution of media on Facebook and Twitter media datasets.

3.2.3. Reach, Engagement and Engagement Rate

Having available different datasets - some from all users and some from a selected list news media users - sampled with the same methodology, one can compare several fundamental metrics regarding the reach, engagement and engagement rate in each of those datasets. Of course, these fundamental social media metrics may vary slightly from platform to platform (as explained further), but, in any of the platforms, an engagement rate can be calculated to express the number of users that in some way engaged with the content relative to those that could have engaged with it (Beng & Ming, 2020). Any engagement with a given content means that the user paid attention to that content. For the purpose of this analytical exercise, we calculated the engagement rate for each of the different datasets (all users or media users) in each of the three platforms. On Facebook, we crossed all interactions in each sample (Facebook considers “interactions” all the shares plus all the comments plus all the reactions) with the total facebook followers in each sample. Recall that, either on all users or media, our samples include the publications that were most relevant in the time period analysed and corresponding to the query (Cardoso et al, 2021)). On Twitter, we crossed the total reach of the posts (number of users that have seen the corresponding content) with the engagement (comprising likes, shares and replies). On YouTube, we crossed the total views of the videos included in the sample with the engagement (including comments, likes and dislikes).

As we can see in the Table 10, below, Facebook media pages included in our news media sample have much more followers than the all users Facebook pages (1247 million versus 663 million) but generate significantly less interactions (2,2 million versus 9,5 million).

Media pages included in our news media sample of posts have an average engagement rate of 0,18% whereas all users' pages register an average engagement rate of 1,43% (meaning 1,43% of all followers interacted with the content). Facebook public groups registered an average engagement rate of 1,46%.

On Twitter, our all users sample reached more users than our news media sample, but, again, with an even bigger number of engagements, resulting in higher engagement rate for all users accounts on Twitter (0,15% - meaning that 0,15% of all users that saw a given content interacted with it) than for news media accounts (0,09%). On YouTube we don't have a selected media sample, but all the videos generated a total of almost 58 thousand views, which generated over 1,5 thousand interactions, resulting in an engagement rate of 2,70%.

	Followers	Interactions	Engagement rate
Facebook media pages	1,247,237,805	2,290,305	0.18
Facebook all users pages	663,057,919	9,469,567	1.43
Facebook public groups	48,182,735	702,262	1.46
	Reach	Engagement	Engagement rate
Twitter media accounts	120,025,189	103,460	0.09
Twitter all users accounts	274,286,367	400,960	0.15
	Views	Engagement	Engagement rate
YouTube all users channels	57,900,970	1,563,053	2.70

Table 10: Analytical exercise comparing reach/followers/views with engagement in each of the 6 datasets. Values reach/followers/views and interactions/engagement are total for each dataset.

3.3. About the subject of the posts

Besides analysing which were the agents who posted the social media publications included in our samples, we also aimed to analyse what was the subject of those publications, including what those posts were about and who or what they were directed at. By “subject” we mean the person or thing discussed in the publication. By our codebook a given social media publication may be - cumulatively - concerning, related to or directed at: Political agents; Newsmedia; Any other organization; Non-institutional agents; and/or Other. For a more detailed description of what categories are included in the “subject”, please refer to the codebook, in the annex I.

Another thing to bear in mind regarding the subject of the publications is that the architecture, design and the affordances of the platforms influence what is published. On Facebook and Twitter the size of the text that can be included in a publication is quite different. On Facebook, the character limit for publications is 63,206 while on Twitter it is only 280. This grants the users the possibility of approaching several subjects in one single publication and suggests a reflection on the domestication of the platforms by the users, expressed in the subjects they wish to address and the depth with which they choose to address it. The Figure 13, below, illustrates with an example the difference in the quantity of text that is allowed in a Facebook post or in a Twitter tweet.

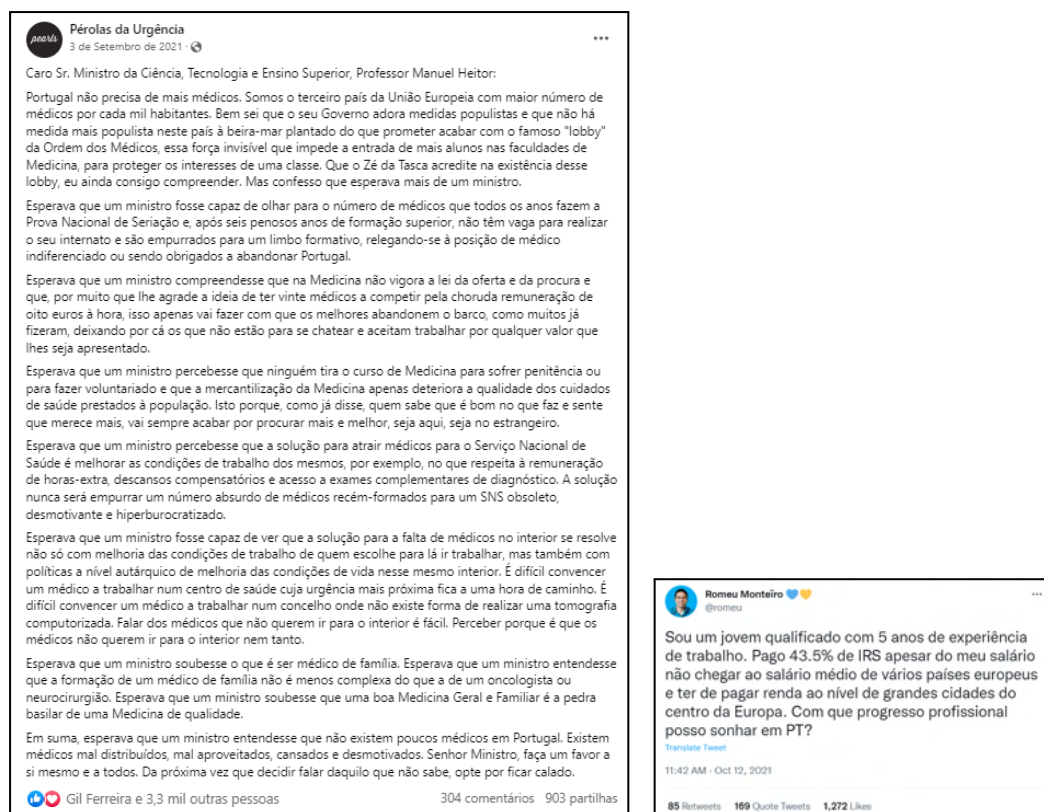


Figure 13: Comparison between a Facebook post and a Twitter tweet

Likewise with the agents, the subject of the publications will also be analysed separately for the all users samples and for the selected news media samples.

3.3.1. Subject of the posts on all users samples

In what concerns the all users samples, we can see the results regarding the subject of the publications in **table 11** below. As we can see, "Any other organization" is the most frequent subject to which all users refer to in their publications, present in 34% of the publications. Interestingly, although this category constitutes the less common agent in our all users sample (see above), it constitutes the most frequent subject on that same sample. As a subject, "any other organisation" includes both public organisations, like the government or governmental bodies, for instance, as well as private organisations, like companies, for example.

Political agents, Non-institutional agents and Other are the second most frequent subjects on this all users sample of publications. News media, on the contrary, is seldomly a subject on the publications by all users of social media platforms.

Subject	Frequency	
	n=	%=
Political agent	1364	22,38%
Newsmedia	559	9,17%
Any other organization	2043	33,52%

Non institutional agents	1142	18,74%
Other	987	16,19%

Table 11: Frequency of the subjects on the media users' samples.

When analysing the subject according to the platform, we see that “Any other organization” is the most common subject in all three platforms. However, data also reveals that Political agent stands out as the second major subject on Facebook. It is also the second major subject on Twitter, but less so than on Facebook. On YouTube, differently, the second second subject most mentioned by all users is Non-institutional agents. Again, news media are the less frequent subject on the publications by general users of the platforms.

	Subject				
	Political agent	Newsmedia	Any other organization	Non institutional agents	Other
Platform /Dataset	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
FB all users	629	223	747	453	381
TW all users	447	180	704	268	360
YT all users	288	156	592	421	246

Table 12: Frequency of the subjects on the media users' samples according to the platform.

The analysis of the subject according to the dimension revealed that no differences were registered, with any other organization being the most common subject in any of the 4 dimensions queried: Europe, Economy, Climate and Health.

3.3.2. Subject of the posts on news media datasets

Non-institutional agents, particularly common citizens (which is the most frequent sub-category of Non-institutional agents), seem to be a more relevant subject on Facebook than on Twitter (see **table 13**).

Platform / Dataset	Subject				
	Political agent	Newsmedia	Any other organization	Non institutional agents	Other
FB Media	392	121	670	342	328
TW Media	321	158	668	142	339
Total	713	279	1338	484	667

Table 13: Most frequent subjects on news media publications according to platform.

The analysis of the subject according to the dimension (**Table 14**), shows no significant differences, with any other organization as the most common subject in any of the 4

dimensions: Health, Climate, Economy and Europe. However, we can notice that on Health and Europe, especially on Facebook, news media publications tend to refer to political agents more than on the other dimensions. The same can be registered for Non-Institutional agents (mostly common citizens): they are a subject for the news media more often on Health and Economy than on Climate and Economy. News media are seldomly the subject of the publication, even when news media are the publishing agents.

	Platform / Dataset	Subject				
		Political agent	Newsmedia	Any other organization	Non institutional agents	Other
Health	FB Media	110	35	173	123	94
	TW Media	72	39	157	54	87
Climate	FB Media	83	30	160	59	81
	TW Media	78	34	168	52	83
Economy	FB Media	97	25	171	66	87
	TW Media	96	25	166	47	85
Europe	FB Media	110	30	166	94	80
	TW Media	72	33	170	66	91

Table 14: Most frequent subjects on news media publications according to the dimension and the platform.

Publications by the news media outlets regarding the 4 dimensions (and queries) are most commonly European and national in scope (**Table 15**). In fact this is similar to most of the publications, whether by the media or by all users. Remember that our sample is composed of publications that refer to Europe in some way, or to Europe and Health, Economy or Climate. Therefore, it would be expected that Europe would be the dominant scope of those publications. National scope is second and all the others are significantly less present in the content of the publications that compose our sample.

	Platform /Dataset	
	FB Media	TW Media
Scope	n=	n=
Scope Global	196	183
Scope European	805	864
Scope National	564	428
Scope Regional	77	40
Scope Local	70	24

Table 15: Most frequent subjects on news media publications according to the spatial scope

3.4. About the dimensions of Europeanisation

The most common dimensions of Europeanisation (**Table 16**) that could be found in the analysed publications were in reference to the European institutions, 16,12% of all the publications included in our sample of most relevant publications corresponding to the queries. We consider that a post belongs to this category when it contains a reference to an European institution of any kind, like the European Commission, European Parliament or the European Central Bank, among others (see the content of each category of Europeanisation in the Codebook, in the annex I to this document) as explained earlier, the dimensions of Europeanisation stem from the semantic map drawn by Carpentier and colleagues (2021). The second most common Europeanisation dimension was the Political dimension (12,06%). Such publications contain references to any political issue that is or will be affected by agreements or negotiations between social or political entities from different European countries. The third and fourth most common dimensions were the Economic (11,79%) and European law & governance (11,26%). The Economic dimension refers to cooperation, negotiation or joint agreement by two or more European countries or institutions to improve, reform or develop the economy and European law & governance references any European law, decision, directive or legislative project, even if only in discussion or preparation. All the other Europeanisation dimensions receive significantly less mentions (less than 7%)

Conversely, publications pertaining to the European new social movements and the European (media) content dimensions were almost absent from the overall sample of posts (1,41% and 2,32%, respectively). Overall, this result means that 84% to 99% of the publications, although with some linguistic reference to Europe (as for the queries) do not pertain to the Europeanisation dimensions listed. Which means that references to Europe are presente, but not in the approach specified in the dimensions of Europeanisation drawn from the semantic map.

Europeanisation dimension	All datasets	
	n	%
European institutions	1774	16,12%
Political	1328	12,06%
Economic	1298	11,79%
European law & governance	1239	11,26%
Scientific	766	6,96%
European (media) industries & capitalist economies	764	6,94%
European territory	738	6,70%
European people ('Europeans')	544	4,94%
European public sphere	477	4,33%
European democratic model(s)	455	4,13%
European values	437	3,97%

European interactions & dialogues	399	3,62%
European Culture(s)	379	3,44%
European (media) content	255	2,32%
European New Social Movements	155	1,41%

Table 16: Frequency of publications pertaining to each dimension of Europeanisation in all the data

When we cross the analysis of the Europeanisation dimensions with the different platforms and datasets, the results show slight differences on the percentage of the categories but not of the ranking of which are the most and less referenced categories, as seen in **tables 17 and 18**.

Europeanisation dimension	News media datasets					
	Facebook		Twitter		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
European institutions	318	14,23%	354	18,26%	672	16,11%
Economic	234	10,47%	263	13,56%	497	11,91%
European law & governance	242	10,83%	224	11,55%	466	11,17%
Politics	252	11,28%	208	10,73%	460	11,03%
Scientific	204	9,13%	160	8,25%	364	8,72%
European territory	206	9,22%	119	6,14%	325	7,79%
European (media) industries & capitalist economies	147	6,58%	153	7,89%	300	7,19%
European people ('Europeans')	153	6,85%	88	4,54%	241	5,78%
European democratic model(s)	93	4,16%	74	3,82%	167	4,00%
European public sphere	87	3,89%	73	3,76%	160	3,84%
European interactions & dialogues	80	3,58%	62	3,20%	142	3,40%
European Culture(s)	74	3,31%	65	3,35%	139	3,33%
European values	66	2,95%	45	2,32%	111	2,66%
European (media) content	38	1,70%	37	1,91%	75	1,80%
European New Social Movements	40	1,79%	14	0,72%	54	1,29%

Table 17: Frequency of publications pertaining to each dimension of Europeanisation on news media datasets, according to the platform

Europeanisation category	All users datasets							
	Facebook		Twitter		YouTube		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
European institutions	416	15,25%	402	17,34%	284	15,88%	1102	16,12%

Politics	410	15,03%	260	11,21%	198	11,07%	868	12,70%
Economic	261	9,57%	300	12,94%	240	13,42%	801	11,72%
European law & governance	309	11,33%	256	11,04%	208	11,63%	773	11,31%
European (media) industries & capitalist economies	172	6,30%	178	7,68%	114	6,38%	464	6,79%
European territory	187	6,85%	157	6,77%	69	3,86%	413	6,04%
Scientific	123	4,51%	149	6,43%	130	7,27%	402	5,88%
European values	160	5,87%	90	3,88%	76	4,25%	326	4,77%
European public sphere	126	4,62%	104	4,48%	87	4,87%	317	4,64%
European people ('Europeans')	114	4,18%	126	5,43%	63	3,52%	303	4,43%
European democratic model(s)	145	5,32%	74	3,19%	69	3,86%	288	4,21%
European interactions & dialogues	93	3,41%	86	3,71%	78	4,36%	257	3,76%
European Culture(s)	101	3,70%	64	2,76%	75	4,19%	240	3,51%
European (media) content	61	2,24%	55	2,37%	64	3,58%	180	2,63%
European New Social Movements	50	1,83%	18	0,78%	33	1,85%	101	1,48%

Table 18: Frequency of publications pertaining to each dimension of Europeanisation on all users datasets, according to the platform

3.4.1. Dimensions of Europeanisation on Facebook Public Groups

If we look at the dimensions of Europeanisation solely from the prism of the Facebook public groups, we find some similarities and some dissimilarities with the other datasets (**table 19**). Publications on Facebook groups seem to care less about the institutions and law & governance of Europe and more with the scientific dimension and the European public sphere. Such results can stress the subject of such posts as the ones to which the users engaged with as also an appropriation of a specific digital space - Facebook groups - to approach certain aspects.

On the least mentioned dimensions, there is also the European (media) content, but this time accompanied by the European peoples' ('Europeans') dimension.

Europeanisation dimensions	Facebook groups	
	n	%
Economic	240	15,56%
Politics	200	12,97%
Scientific	186	12,06%
European public sphere	155	10,05%
European New Social Movements	115	7,46%
European institutions	94	6,10%

European law & governance	94	6,10%
European democratic model(s)	81	5,25%
European Culture(s)	73	4,73%
European interactions & dialogues	70	4,54%
European (media) industries & capitalist economies	65	4,22%
European values	58	3,76%
European territory	57	3,70%
European (media) content	31	2,01%
European people ('Europeans')	23	1,49%

Table 19: Frequency of publications pertaining to each dimension of Europeanisation on Facebook public groups

4. Discussion

The goal of this research was to assess the platformisation of news in 10 countries against the backdrop of the issues of Europe and Europeanisation. Specifically, two research questions guided the methodology employed and the data collected: 1) Which are the most relevant issues debated in social media platforms in Europe and how are European citizens debating about them?; 2) Which debate is taking place at the intersection of top-level professional and bottom-level non-professional communication on social media?

The Europe & Europeanisation approach was incorporated into the research queries implemented as well as into the designing of the codebook to analyse that data. Therefore, we must not look at these results as expressing what citizens from 10 countries debated on social media platforms overall, but rather what publications about Europe and Europe plus Economy, Climate and Health were more relevant or had more engagement. It's not all the content from social media that composes our sample of publications, but only the content that corresponds to the queries used to capture those 4 dimensions.

Plus, the publications included in our sample and analysed above are not all publications containing references to those 4 dimensions - Europe and Europe plus Economy, Climate and Health. They are just the publications that in the research period - between 1 September and 30 November 2021 - were the most relevant addressing those issues. And relevance means whatever each of the 3 researched platforms presents as the most adequate metric for the attention of the users: total interactions on Facebook; reach on Twitter; and relevance to the search query on YouTube. That is indicative of the publications that compose our sample. They are not all the publications about the above issues nor a random selection of publications; they are the most relevant/engaging publications (see the methodology section).

Set aside those two caveats, we can begin to discuss the results above to see if and to what extent they respond to the research questions and address the issues of Europeanisation and platformisation.

The publications analysed above were all considered on-topic relative to each of the dimensions of analysis. But that issue may hide another fact of some significance: transversely to all countries and dimensions - some more, some less - there were a larger number of publications considered off-topic. That means those publications did in fact contain at least one of the keywords researched but were not relevant to the above mentioned dimensions. To put in plainly, people posting on social media frequently used words about Europe (and about Economy, Climate and Health) in publications that were really not about Europe (or Economy, Climate or Health). For instance the word "Euro" can be used in a publication about Europe or an European issue, which would be on topic, but also in publications that just meant the currency "euro" or the soccer European sports competition "euro", which would be considered off topic. In particular, this happened with frequency in the context of sports competitions with international reach. This was not the object of this research, but would certainly deserve specific research.

In the following discussion of the results we will follow the same path as above: format of the publications; agents who published; subject and scope of the publications; and the dimensions of Europeanisation.

4.1. The format of social media publications

Regarding the format of the publications, two observations deserve emphasis. First, the fact that the format combination with which users engaged the most is, by far, that of text+image+link reinforces the notion that social media platforms are first and foremost a source of web traffic for external websites (Newman et al., 2021). This is particularly notorious on the news media samples but is effective overall. Non media users are less reliant on links on social media platforms (and therefore display a larger percentage of publications without link) but still use that format combination more than others. The prominence of social media platforms as web traffic sources is cross-sectional, but particularly relevant for the media.

Second, video is usually presented as a dominant format on social media platforms (Cha et al, 2007). Our sample seems not to confirm that assertion and, both on Facebook and Twitter, video is less relevant than links. In part that should be due to the fact that our sample is quantitatively skewed towards news media, in response to the goal of analysing the platformisation of news. Further explorations of the data collected for this research or additional investigations could address that.

4.2. The agent of social media publications

In what concerns the agents who posted, several issues raise interesting discussion points. Taking into consideration that our sample is composed of the publications that, on each dimension and on each platform, are more relevant, the fact that media agents are more common on Twitter and YouTube, and political agents are more common on Facebook establishes a clear distinction between Facebook and the other two platforms. Although Twitter is usually presented as the most “politicised” social media platform - and is so in many countries - in fact it was on Facebook that popular politicians reach most relevance in our samples.

This could be related to the fact that Twitter tends to be, in most countries, a sort of political and media “bubble”, with a lot of political and media agents (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). But what our data suggests is that Facebook is a general purpose platform, where popular content of all sorts is distributed, also including political content, naturally. In line with this observation, there’s the fact that populist politicians (mostly from far-right parties in Europe) tend to be more relevant on Facebook than on Twitter or YouTube. And also the observation that Facebook tends to generate more interactions than Twitter. On Twitter, institutional actors, like presidents, prime-ministers and party leaders are most frequently the dominating actors. In a way, we could say that the most popular platform is also the most populist platform.

Another interesting observation resulting from the data is that politicians are clearly a more relevant agent on social media than political parties. This feeds the research trend that identifies personalisation as a significant part of the social media landscape: individual personalised voices - politicians - tend to be more relevant than collective non-personalized voices - political parties (Zanker et al., 2019).

Still regarding the agents who posted the most relevant publication in our samples, the third most common agent was non-organizations, mostly composed of common citizens, more than online influencers, TV hosts, presenters or commentators. Although online influencers are usually presented as a category of social media users driving much of the conversations

on social media platforms (Khamis, 2017), our samples do not seem to confirm that, at least in the specific 4 dimensions that compose them. It's true that common citizens are a more relevant agent in the Facebook pages samples than on the Twitter samples, but that is related to the specific features of the platforms: Facebook pages are mostly operated organisationally whereas Twitter handles are often personal. On our Facebook groups samples, on the contrary, the agents are overwhelmingly common citizens.

This also leads to a reflection on the issue of the way the affordances and contingencies of the platforms influence the appropriation and domestication (Silverstone, 2005; Bucher & Helmond, 2018) that users make of them. Facebook groups are, par excellence, the terrain for the common citizen, Twitter handles are mostly personal and Facebook pages are the social media alternative for users that wish to organise to take a political stand and drive the conversation in a certain direction. Which feeds into the previous assertion of Facebook as the most politicised of the three platforms in our research.

One other interesting conclusion is that different agents prefer to address different issues on social media. Publications about Health and Climate are more frequently addressed by media whereas publications about Europe or Economy are more frequent with political agents. In spite of the politicisation of issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, concurrent with our data collection, political agents were not dominant on Health issues and seemed to be more focused on the political content relating to economic and European issues. To some extent this was not a focus on economic and European issues per se, but more prominently a focus on the internal political struggle that could be derived from those issues. Which also gives us a light on the use political agents do of the discussion of issues on social media platforms as a way to serve localised political struggles (Fuchs, 2021; Highfield, 2017). In a way, reflecting on a concept already discussed, we could say that is the way these social media platforms are appropriated and domesticated by political agents (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Silverstone, 2005).

The reflection above about the most relevant political agents on Twitter being different than the most relevant agents on Facebook (always according to our sample) can be replicated for the media: the main news media that stand out on Twitter are not (with only a couple of exceptions) the same that stand out on Facebook. What this could mean (to be confirmed with more specific research) is that there is difficulty in achieving high relevance on both platforms, Facebook and Twitter. Of course we can only speculate as to what extent that extends to other social media platforms besides two mentioned. More research is necessary to shed light on that. In fact, this assertion that relevant agents are frequently different on Facebook and Twitter extends even besides the media or the political agents. Whatever the type or organisation or non-organisation we look at in our sample, the relevant agents tend to be different on Facebook and Twitter.

Another on-going discussion that our research seems to consolidate is that the news media content is the raw material upon which discussions on social media develop (Newman et al., 2021). From our data, it is prominent the role that traditional media play in social media platforms, not only as agents of those publications, but also as sources of information that other diverse agents use to feed their social media activity.

Finally - in what refers to the agents - we would also like to reflect on the differential engagement metrics of each kind of agent. As we saw in the data above, news media tend to have a very large following, both on Facebook and Twitter (and even YouTube), due to its high visibility and name recognition. However, even with fewer followers, other non-media users of the platforms exhibit higher engagement metrics, resulting in a better engagement rate (Beng, 2020). This means not only that news media are less effective in capturing the

attention of the users of the social media platforms but also - and perhaps most importantly - that other “alternative” agents - populist politicians, for instance - are more effective in doing so. Of course, we already know that the fight for users’ attention on social media platforms tends to favour the content that is more emotional, polarising and “catchy” (Schreiner et al, 2021), but our data seems to confirm that and cross it with the political populist trend on social media (at least as measured by our specific dimensions of analysis).

4.3. The subject of social media publications

The codification of the most relevant publications in our samples in all 10 countries also enables some discussion about the subject or the subjects that compose those publications. As a reminder, by subject we mean to whom or what is the content of the publication concerning, related to or directed at. As clarified before, there are significant differences between Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in this regard. Facebook allows a greater length of text and allows different types of media (audio, video, text, image), Twitter has a text limit of 280 characters and YouTube is mostly restricted to video (with some accompanying text). Those differences naturally influence the content of the social media publications, especially in what concerns its subject.

Social media platforms are usually presented as online spaces for the critique of the powers that be (Dahlgren, 2013; Shirky, 2011) and for the popular expression of resentment towards the establishment (Cramer, 2016; Engels, 2021; Koncewicz, 2017). Our analysis of the data seems to second that. Most of the publications in our sample take organisations other than political agents and media as their preferred subject. And that reads, most of the times, as government, governmental bodies and public authorities in general, that is, in line with the vein of criticising the powers that be. This is true for all datasets - media and non-media - as well as for all the platforms. But, on the other hand, there are also significant differences. The fact that political agents are more prone to being subjects on Facebook than on Twitter - both by media and non-media agents - reinforces the status of this particular platform as the the most close to being the platform of choice for the operationalisation of the aforementioned “politics of resentment”. The fact is that our data confirms Facebook as the most “popular” platform but also, seemingly, the most “populist”.

The way the news media address the subjects comprising our four dimensions - Europe and Europe plus Economy, Europe plus Climate and Europe plus Health - also displays differences. Although organisations other than political or media agents are the most frequent subject of news media, just like with all other users, common citizens are a more prominent subject on Facebook than on Twitter, again presenting this platform as the one covering most popular subjects.

4.4. The dimensions of Europeanisation

As the reader may recall, the dimensions of Europeanisation were drawn from a semantic map developed specifically for this EUMEPLAT project (Carpentier et al., 2022). The operationalization of that semantic map was a significant challenge, but one corresponding to the challenging goals of this project (the specific criteria used to categorise the Europeanisation dimensions are on the codebook. See annex I).

Considering that all publications included in this analysis are in some way related to Europe (due to all queries including European keywords and all analysed publications being on-topic), there are relatively few mentions of the dimensions of Europeanisation. And that is the first fact worth discussing. Europe is mentioned on social media in these 10 countries, but not regarding Europeanisation as interpreted (Carpentier et al., 2022). This does not mean that europeanisation is not important; it means that it does not seem to be an issue for the most relevant content published on social media platforms, either by the news media or the general users of those platforms.

Still, the normative side of Europe (Whitman, 2011) seems to be dominant: European institutions and European Law & Governance are the most frequent dimensions of Europeanisation referenced in the publications. Even when the Political and Economic dimensions of Europe stand out, that is, most of the times, in conjunction with financial help or negotiations for financial help, especially in the southern countries (something that is also visible on the national reports).

This analysis is even reinforced when we take into consideration the very limited reference to dimensions such as European new social movements, European values or European culture(s). The reflection we can make is that, according to the content of the publications included in our sample, Europe is not so much a social entity but rather a legislative and economic relief entity.

On the other hand, also, a significant part of the publications on European institutions, Law & Governance, Politics and Economy are materialised as leveraging European issues to foster national or local debates and political struggles. Very seldomly are European issues debates as really European in their own right. The most significant pattern seems to be to use European issues of any sort to use as an argument for local or national politics.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this research was to investigate the platformisation of news in 10 countries against the backdrop of Europe and Europeanisation. Therefore, we collected data from three social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter and YouTube - about four dimensions: Europe and Europe plus Economy, Europe plus Climate and Europe plus Health. From all the posts collected, we analysed in detail the 10 most relevant posts in each country, dimension and platform, that is, the publications that captured or may have captured the attention of most users during the three months of this social media snapshot.

Still, that means we used only a small part of all the data - social media publications - that we could have used. And, as a conclusion, that is the first reflection we would like to draw: the amount of content published on social media platforms every month, every day and every hour is very big. Platformisation of news means, prior to all, platformisation of communication and information as a whole. Social media platforms host all sorts of content, both news and non-news content. When we research the platformisation of news we are only researching a small subset of all the communication and information flows that are operating upon these technological platforms.

Nevertheless, regarding the four dimensions of analysis we researched - all connected to Europe - the news media are still a pivotal player in the “platformized” information ecosystem (Van Dijck et al., 2018), both as an important agent of a significant part of the most relevant publications on those platforms and as a source or feed for the publications of many other non-media agents, but not as their subject/topic. This conclusion is not new but it has been clearly confirmed in our data.

Within that framework, there are many differences between countries but also a great deal of similarities. Those similarities deserve to be highlighted as a conclusion to this report. First and foremost, we detected a significant difference between Facebook and Twitter, both on the popularity of the content on each platform and on the actors that populate those platforms (bear in mind, relative to our sample of the most relevant publications). On the one hand, Facebook seems to be a more popular platform - where all sorts of agents and content can be found - whereas Twitter seems to be more like a bubble populated mostly by media and political agents and where those agents are the most relevant. Of course, this is not new (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021), but our data also seems to confirm it.

On the other hand, that most popular platform - Facebook - seems to be the most effective channel for populist politicians (and, in this sample, far-right populist politicians) to reach their audiences on the dimensions in study, as measured by the interactions and interaction rates of those agents in our samples. That is observable in most of the countries analysed and is manifest in our global sample. Those politicians seem to have been savvier in finding the right audiences on social media and finding the right way to connect with them.

Another interesting conclusion - that relates with the previous one - is that news media content on social media platforms seems to be less interesting for users than that of other miscellaneous users. When we compute the engagement rate of news media Facebook Pages and Twitter handles with those of other general users we see news media capture less interactions - therefore less attention - from their often larger follower base. Of course, as we said before, news media still serve as an important source for what others publish on social media, but they seem to have difficulty competing with those others in terms of engagement with the audience. In a way, the platformisation of news seems to put the news media in a position where they have to compete for the attention of audiences on those

platforms, which are driven by distribution algorithms that favour polarising, emotional and sometimes inaccurate content (Cho et al., 2020; Diakopoulos, 2019). This issue certainly deserves more research in the future.

Like we wrote in the beginning of this section, the data we collected is just a small sample of all the data that is out there and can be used to draw a larger portrait of the social media landscape and the role that news - platformised news - plays on it. Although some research has been made on that topic, the truth is that there is still more to be developed. We hope this research will serve as a stimulus for further future research on that important topic.

On the other hand, also as stated before, we analysed and coded just a small part of all the social media publications we collected. Other researchers - especially within the EUMEPLAT project - could explore that data in different and enriching ways. We also hope that happens.

Finally, we conducted this research in a somewhat novel methodology, looking primordially at the social media publications that are more relevant in the overall social media discussion of topics (Cardoso et al., 2022). The results reinforce our conviction that this methodology is fruitful for research projects that want to focus on a significant sample of those overall social media discussions. Likewise, we hope other researchers - in different research contexts - may implement and further develop that methodology.

REFERENCES

- Beng, T. W., & Ming, L. T. (2020). A Critical Review on Engagement Rate and Pattern on Social Media Sites.
- Bucher T and Helmond A (2018) The Affordances of Social Media Platforms. In: Burgess J, Poell T, and Marwick A (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, London: SAGE Publications, pp. 233-253.
- Carpentier, N., Cannizzaro, S., Doudaki, V., Hroch, M., Miconi, A., Papathanassopoulos, S. (2022). Europeanisation: operational definition. Retrieved from <https://www.eumeplat.eu/results/deliverables/>.
- Cardoso, G., Álvares, C., Moreno, J., Sepúlveda, R., Crespo, M., Foà, C. (2021). A Framework and Methodological Protocol for analyzing the platformisation of news. Retrieved from <https://www.eumeplat.eu/results/deliverables/>.
- Cha, M., Kwak, H., Rodriguez, P., Ahn, Y. Y., & Moon, S. (2007, October). I tube, you tube, everybody tubes: analyzing the world's largest user generated content video system. In *Proceedings of the 7th ACM SIGCOMM conference on Internet measurement* (pp. 1-14).
- Cho, J., Ahmed, S., Hilbert, M., Liu, B., & Luu, J. (2020). Do search algorithms endanger democracy? An experimental investigation of algorithm effects on political polarization. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 64(2), 150-172.
- Cramer, K. J. (2016). *The politics of resentment: Rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker*. University of Chicago Press.
- Dahlgren, P. (2013). *The political web: Media, participation and alternative democracy*. Springer.
- Diakopoulos, N. (2019). *Automating the news*. In *Automating the News*. Harvard University Press.
- Engels, J. (2021). *The politics of resentment*. In *The Politics of Resentment*. Penn State University Press.
- Eurobarometer (Eurobarometer (2020). *Standard Eurobarometer 93 - Summer*. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2262>
- Fuchs, C. (2021). *Social media: A critical introduction*. Sage.
- Highfield, T. (2017). *Social media and everyday politics*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi, S., Robertson, C. T., & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). *Reuters Institute digital news report 2021*. Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism.
- Kemp, S. (2021) *Digital 2021 - Global Overview Report*. Retrieved 20 September 2021, from <https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021>.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity studies*, 8(2), 191-208.
- Koncewicz, Tomasz Tadeusz: *Understanding the Politics of Resentment*, VerfBlog, 2017/9/28, <https://verfassungsblog.de/understanding-the-politics-of-resentment/>, DOI: 10.17176/20170929-135630. [accessed 18/01/2023]
- Krippendorff, K. (2011). Computing Krippendorff's Alpha-Reliability. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/43.

- Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human communication research*, 28(4), 587-604.
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi, S., Robertson, C. T., & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
- Rieder, B., Matamoros-Fernández, A., & Coromina, Ò. (2018). From ranking algorithms to 'ranking cultures': Investigating the modulation of visibility in YouTube search results. *Convergence*, 24(1), 50–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517736982>
- Rogers, R. (2017). Foundations of Digital Methods: Query Design. In: Mirko Tobias Schäfer, Karin van Es (Hg.): *The Datafied Society: Studying Culture through Data*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2017, S. 75–94. DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/12536>.
- Shirky, C. (2011). The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign affairs*, 28-41.
- Silverstone, R. (2005). 12 Domesticating domestication. *Reflections on the life of. Domestication of media and technology*, 229.
- Schreiner, M., Fischer, T., & Riedl, R. (2021). Impact of content characteristics and emotion on behavioral engagement in social media: literature review and research agenda. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 21(2), 329-345.
- Vaccari, C., & Valeriani, A. (2021). *Outside the bubble: Social media and political participation in western democracies*. Oxford University Press.
- Van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & De Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society: Public values in a connective world*. Oxford University Press.
- Zanker, M., Rook, L., & Jannach, D. (2019). Measuring the impact of online personalisation: Past, present and future. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 131, 160-168.
- Whitman, R. (Ed.). (2011). *Normative power Europe: Empirical and theoretical perspectives*. Springer.

PART II

Country reports

Femke De Sutter
Daniël Biltreyst
Sofie Van Bauwel

WP2 National Report: Belgium

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract	1
The Belgian media landscape: duopoly and trust	2
Europe on social media	3
Climate	5
Health	10
Economy	12
Bibliography	13

Abstract

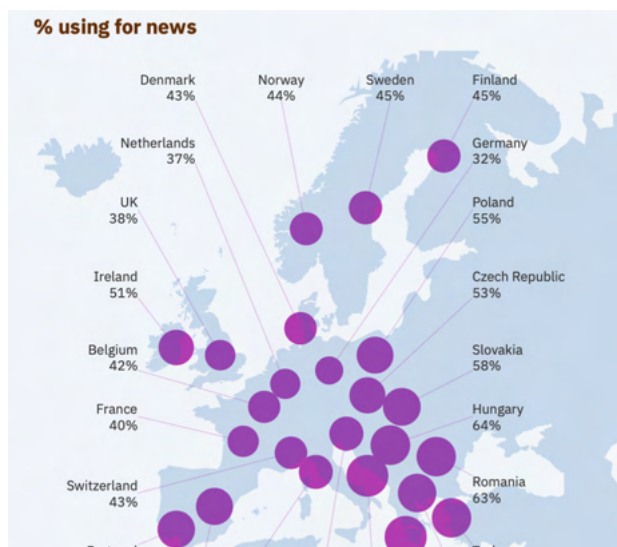
This report discusses the posts made in Belgium on Facebook and Twitter over a period of three months in 2021 within the dimensions of economy, Europe, health, and climate. The report starts with a sketch of the Belgian media landscape before delving deeper into the dimensions of Europeanisation. For the European and climate dimensions, a distinction was made between Flanders and Wallonia, because of the strong differences between the two in Facebook and Twitter posts. The health and economy dimensions are then discussed further. Within these dimensions, the results of Flanders and Wallonia are taken together, because of the similarities. The main result of the data is that within the Europe dimension, Flanders pays particular attention to migration. In Wallonia, there is much less focus on migration, but climate plays a more important role. This can be explained by the major damage from the July 2021 floods in Wallonia. In Flanders, the popularity of migration can be explained by the share of right-wing to far-right politicians and their parties that invest a lot of money in migration. Migrants are also often portrayed negatively by them. Within the dimension, the big difference between Flanders and Wallonia lies in the messages in the Facebook groups. In Flanders, the wolf is the main topic. In Wallonia, more attention is paid to the floods. These floods have had a very serious impact on a large part of the population in Wallonia. Within the health dimension, the main focus is on Covid-19. Reports cover the vaccination campaign, medicines for Covid-19 and the European corona map. Finally, within the economy dimension, the messages focus on the Belgian budget, pensions and high gas and electricity prices. The discussion on high gas and electricity prices is mainly found in the month of November. This is related to the upcoming winter.

The Belgian media landscape: duopoly and trust

The Belgian media landscape consists of three separate media markets, namely, French-speaking Wallonia, Flemish-speaking Flanders, and the German-Speaking Ostkantone. According to the Digital Report (Kemp, 2021), 76 percent of the Belgian population uses social media. The most widely used social media platform is Facebook as 81.1 percent of social media users in Belgium use Facebook. Twitter is a less popular platform. It is used by 26.9 percent of all social media users.

Belgium has several public and commercial media. Within the newspaper market, there has been a media concentration in recent decades, due to the large number of takeovers. As much as 80 to 100 per cent of the market is controlled by just five media groups. That number has fallen in recent years to five groups: VRT, DPG Media, Mediahuis, Roularta and Telenet (De Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, n.d.). In Flanders, there are two major players, namely *DPG Media* and *Mediahuis*. *DPG Media* not only owns the most popular Belgian newspaper, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, but the multimedia concern also controls the commercial broadcaster *VTM*. *Mediahuis* owns newspapers like the quality-newspaper *De Standaard* and the popular *Het Nieuwsblad*. *Mediahuis* also controls regional television stations like TVA and TV Oost. As in Flanders, there is also a duopoly in Wallonia with two major players: *Rosset* and *IPM*. In German-speaking Belgium there is only one German-language daily newspaper namely *Grenz-Echo*. They also have a public broadcaster namely *Belgischer Rundfunk* (BRF).

A big difference between Flanders and Wallonia is the trust in news. In general, research on public trust in news shows that trust is higher in Flanders than in Wallonia. According to Reuters' Digital News Report (Picone, 2022), 57% of the Flemish media consumers trust the news, whereas only 43% of the Walloons trust the news. Both Flemings and Walloons have the highest confidence in their respective public service broadcasters *VRT* and *RTBF*. The trust of the Belgian population in news is also strongly dependent on age. The older the population, the more trust they have in the news.



Social media play an important role in news consumption in Belgium. According to the Digital News Report (2021), 42 percent of the Belgian population uses social media networks for news. Within the news

Image 1: Percentage using social media for news consumption in Belgium.

consumption on social media, the platforms Facebook (39 percent), YouTube (19 percent) and Twitter (6 percent) are the most popular. This includes both news posted by a media agent (newspapers, magazines, public and commercial broadcasters), and news on social media not posted by a media agent.

Europe on social media

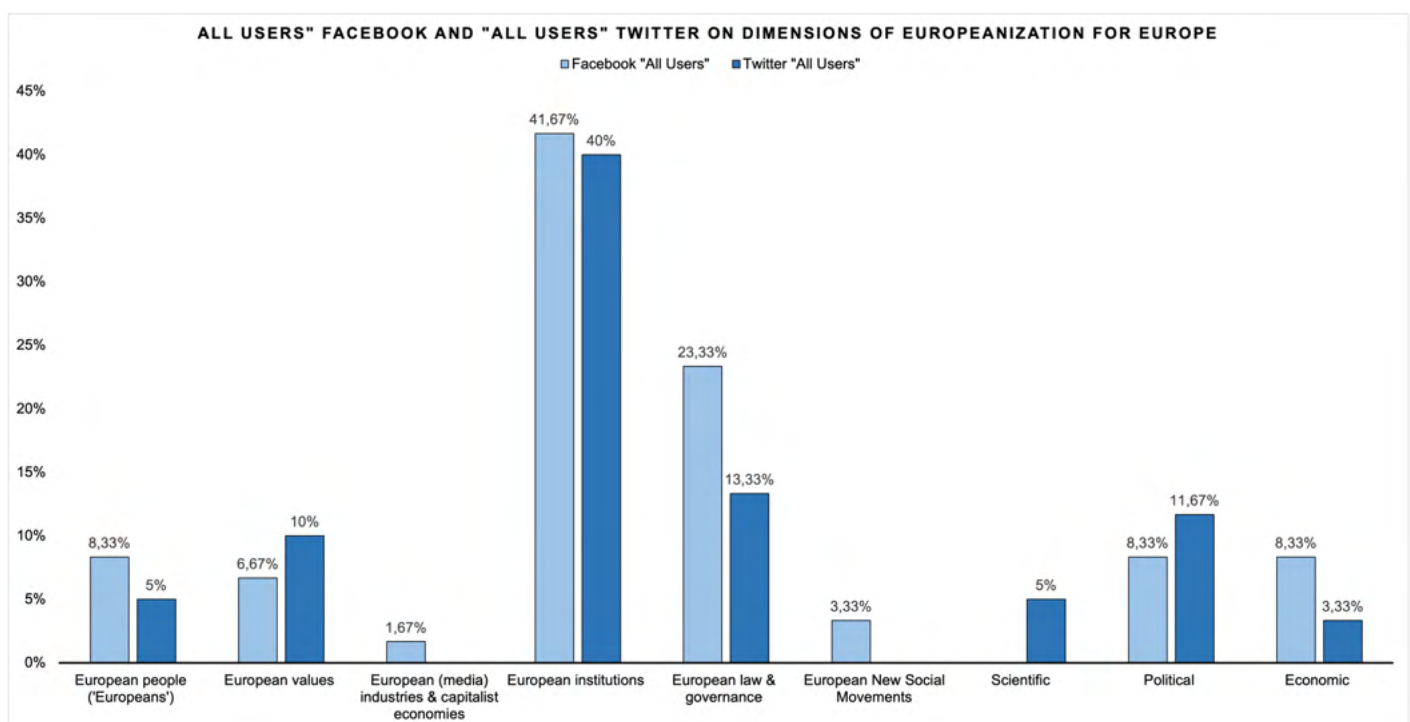
The analysed posts show that news related to Europe is mainly about decisions made by the European Commission. These include decisions related to migration, Covid-19, and the economic recovery plan. Looking deeper into the actors who post, we note that politicians post more frequently on themes around Europe on Twitter and Facebook. Followed by media agents, most frequently newspapers and broadcasters. The political agents that post most frequently about Europe are the Flemish-nationalist party N-VA, its leader Bart De Wever, and some other politicians (Tom Vandendriessche, Theo Francken, Petra De Sutter, and Dries Van Langenhove). The politicians who post about Europe are almost all members of the Flemish right-wing party N-VA (Bart De Wever, Theo Francken) or the far-right party, Vlaams-Belang (Tom Vandendriessche, Dries Van Langenhove). Only Petra De Sutter is a member of Groen (the Green Party).



Image 2: Word cloud of the most popular posts by politicians for the Europe dimension (based on absolute numbers)

Belgium does not have a national party system, which makes it possible to look at Wallonia and Flanders as two separate cases (Coffé, 2008). Within Belgium, there is a difference between Flanders and Wallonia. The politicians who post the most on social media in Flanders are right-wing to extreme right-wing politicians. However, this is not the case in Wallonia. Here as well, politicians and parties are popular, but their ideological tendency is quite different. The left-wing social democratic party *Parti Socialiste* (PS) is particularly popular. For instance, a large poll by Het Laatste Nieuws, VTM Nieuws, RTL-TVI and Le Soir shows that 25 per cent of Walloon voters would vote for the PS (Verstraete & Belga, 2022). Their popularity in society also explains why many people consult their social media channels for information. Compared to Flanders, nationalist parties receive much less attention in Wallonia. De Jonge (2021, p.604) argues that the strength of this French-speaking party (PS) can be attributed to the fact that traditional social contrasts are still more pronounced in the French-speaking south of Belgium. De Jonge (2021) explains the PS's popularity partly by the harsher socio-economic conditions in Wallonia, so that socio-economic issues are more relevant to Walloon voters than themes around migration as in Flanders.

¹When examining the dimensions of Europeanisation, we notice that 41.67 percent of the



Facebook "all users" posts refer to a European Institution. For Twitter "all users" 40 percent refers to European Institutions. In both cases, there was a reference to the European Commission or the European Parliament. The posts from September mostly refer to the Covid-19 pandemic. In October and November, the posts focus much more on Poland, which

¹ To keep it visually clear, only the dimensions of Europeanisation mentioned in the posts are included in the figures.

had ruled that national law takes precedence over European law. Not much later, the European Commission asked the European Court of Justice for financial penalties, since placing national law above European law goes against everything the European Union stands for (European Commission, 2021). The European Court of Justice had imposed a fine of one million euros per day on Poland for violating European law and values (European Commission, 2021).

Climate

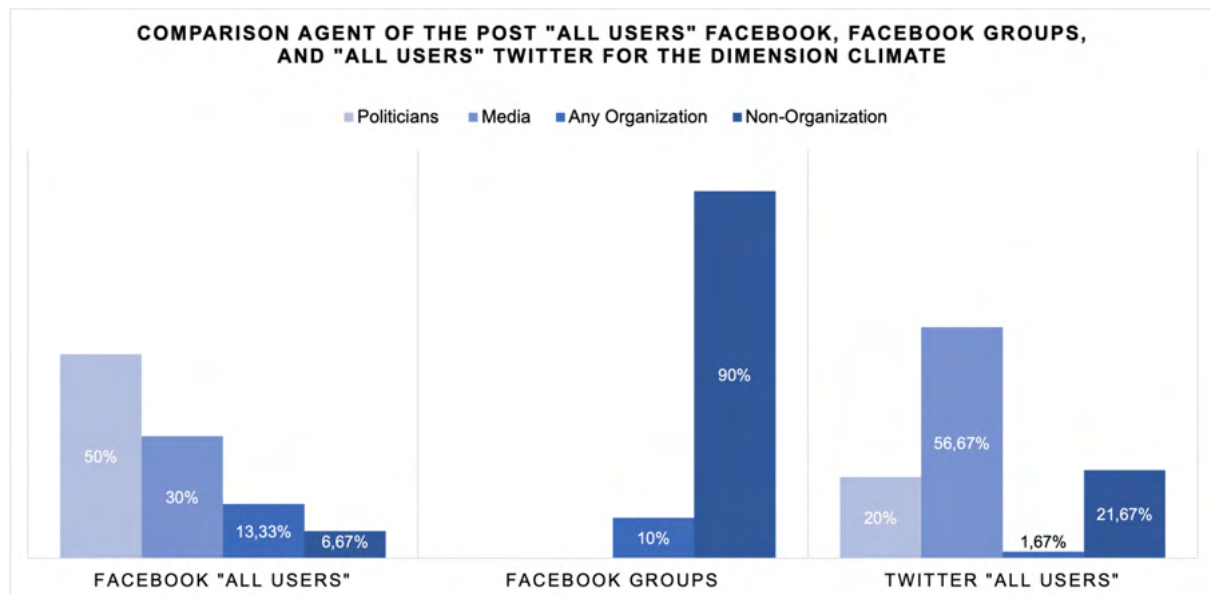


Figure 2: Actor of the posts for Climate on Facebook "all users" and Twitter "all users"

Before zooming in on the European dimensions within climate, it is important to consider the agents that posted on Facebook and Twitter. Both social networks have a different target audience. Twitter is a platform mainly used by professionals looking for news (Roginsky, 2020), whereas Facebook is used by a less specifically defined audience. It is striking that half of the posts over the three months on Facebook were made by politicians. In Flanders, the posts were mainly posted by members of the N-VA, Theo Francken (N=4; 13.33%) and Zuhair Demir (N=2; 6.67%). In Wallonia, the posts were mainly posted by Manon Aubry (N=6; 20%) and Philippe Lamberts (N=5; 16.67%). Manon Aubry's posts are mostly related to things she is doing or about to do as a politician (Cf. re-elected as co-chair of The Left in the European Parliament or the climate march in Glasgow). This while Philippe Lamberts' posts are only about decisions made by the European Parliament on climate.



Image 3: Word cloud of the most popular posts by politicians for the Climate dimension (based on absolute numbers)

The popularity of Theo Francken and Zuhal Demir can be explained by the large budget their party, N-VA, spends on Facebook advertising (AdLens, 2022). Interestingly, the most popular politician for the climate dimension is Manon Aubry. This French politician is co-chair of The Left group in the European Parliament. She is best known in France as an environmentalist. Following Manon Aubry is Philippe Lamberts, a Belgian politician from Ecolo, who also sits in the European Parliament. Philippe Lamberts is co-chair of the Green Group in the European Parliament. So, in Wallonia, more posts in the climate dimension refer to politicians in the European Parliament. The fact that there are so many posts by Manon Aubry also shows how strongly Wallonia follows politics and politicians in France.

	FLANDERS			WALLONIA		
	Name Group	Total Interactions	Topic	Name Group	Total Interactions	Topic
SEPTEMBER 2021	Welkom Wolf	337		Ensemble Solidaires	1.268	
	Welkom Wolf	200		Notre Jardin Extraordinaire – RTBF	857	
	Behoud terugdraaiende meter digitaal of niet!	198		SOLIDARITE INONDATIONS LIEGE ET ENVIRONS	513	
OCTOBER 2021	Welkom Wolf	458		Photos animalières sauvages de Belgique	606	
	Front Tegen LEZ	377		BELGISCHE METEO CLUB BELGE	513	
	Front Tegen LEZ	330		SOLIDARITE INONDATIONS LIEGE ET ENVIRONS	454	
NOVEMBER 2021	Steun de Vlaamse boeren	395		Non au Totalitarisme Vert !	589	

	Steun de Vlaamse boeren	320		Non au Totalitarisme Vert !	284	
	Velt vzw	246		Notre Jardin Extraordinaire – RTBF	124	

Table 1: Top three of most popular Facebook groups per month for the Climate dimension.

Another difference within the posts are the groups. In the month of September, we notice how the posts with the most interaction come from social activist groups *Welcome Wolf* and *Behoud terugdraaiende meter digital of niet!* The first group is in solidarity with the wolves that are back in Flanders. In Flanders, the wolf problem is more prominent than in Wallonia. This can be explained by the large number of animal casualties' wolves have already caused in Flemish farms (Cf. horses and sheep bitten to death). In Wallonia, on the other hand, the wolf plays a lesser role. Much more attention is paid to the floods of July 2021. This can also be seen in the posts which received the most interaction in September. These posts came from the groups *Ensemble Solidaires*, *Notre Jardin Extraordinaire – RTBF*, and *Solidarite inondations liege et environs*. These groups and posts mainly ask attention for the victims of the floods. The floods took place on 14 July 2021 in the Walloon provinces of Liège, Namur, and Luxembourg. Rivers overflowed their banks. As a result, water flowed through Walloon streets. A total of 39 people lost their lives, 100 000 casualties directly or indirectly and 48 000 damaged buildings (Merckx, 2022). They call on people to collect materials or to go and help in one of the affected municipalities in Wallonia.

In the month of October, there is particular attention in Flanders for the Low Emission Zones in Antwerp, Brussels, and Ghent. In these low-emission zones, certain cars are not allowed because they do not meet the EURO emission standards. *Front tegen LEZ* calls for people to stop driving into the cities. In addition, they also criticize the traffic policy in Belgium. In Wallonia, October is still dedicated to the floods of July. Many houses are still under construction and people are still looking for help.

November's posts in the Facebook groups are strongly linked to the decisions concerning nitrogen policy in Belgium. In both Flanders and Wallonia, there are calls to protest against the policy. Farmers must reduce their nitrogen emissions, but this would mean a financial challenge to many farmers, according to the posts in both the Flemish and Walloon Facebook groups.

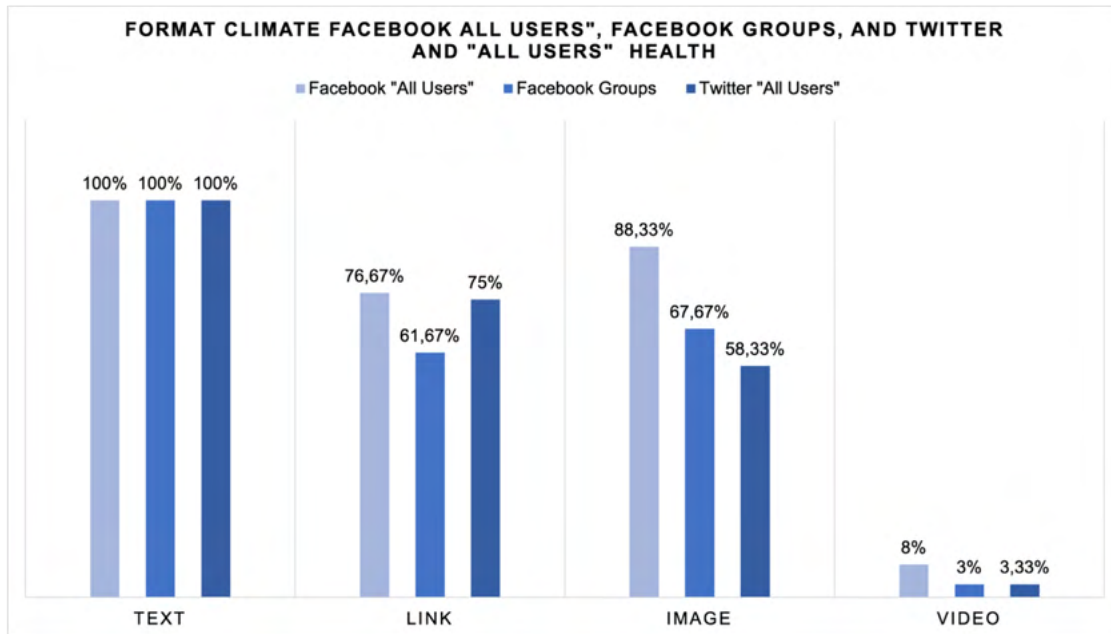
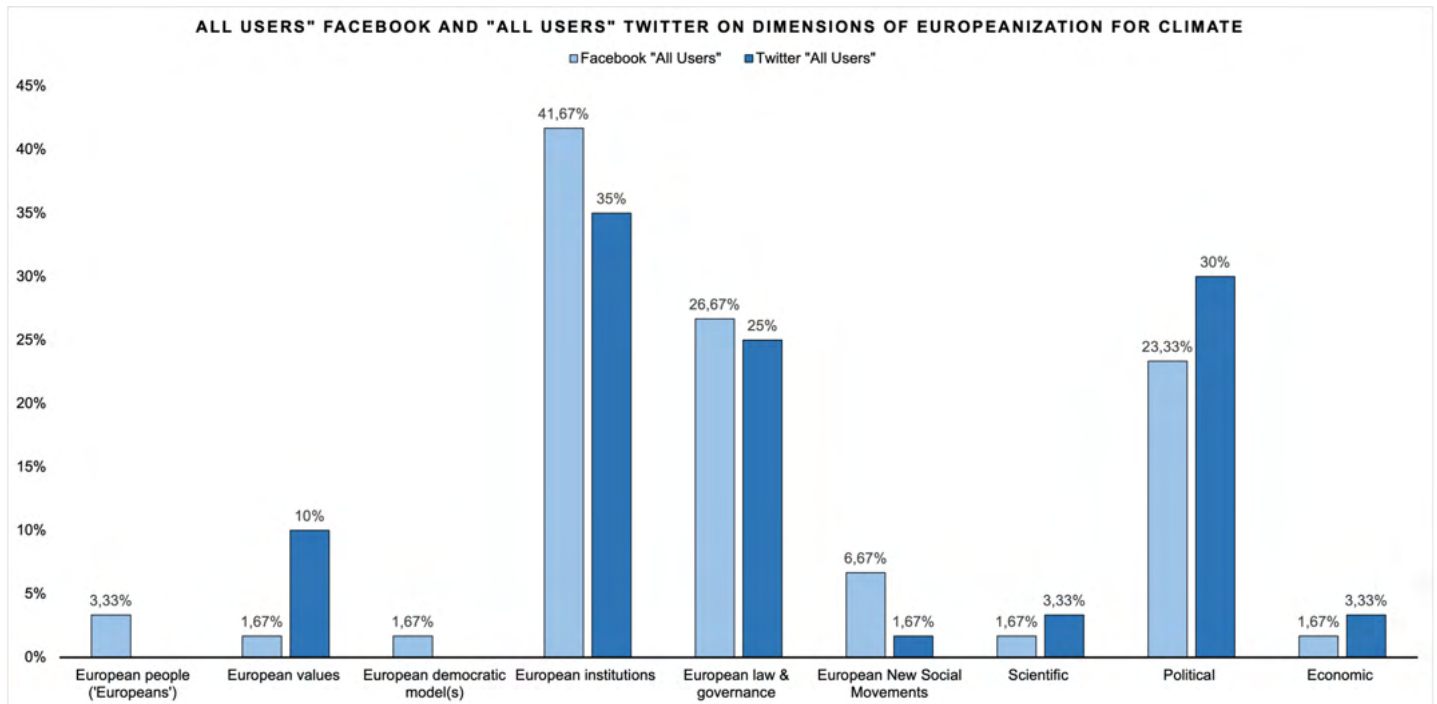


Figure 3: Format Climate Facebook "all users", Facebook groups, and Twitter "all users"

All posts over the three reference months consisted of text. In Facebook "All Users", 76.67 percent of posts consisted of a link, whereas 88.33 percent of posts had an image in the post. In 8 percent of the posts, there was also a video. In the Facebook groups, 61.67 percent of the posts consisted of a link, 67.67 of an images, and in only 3 percent of the cases was there a video present. We note that in Twitter, 75 percent of the posts contained a link. In only 58.33 percent of the posts, an image was also present. In 3.33 percent of the posts, a video was present.

Within the climate dimension, the European institutions, Political and European Law & In the In the Facebook and Twitter posts, the European dimension, European Law, and Governance are referred to the most. The new legislation concerning a universal charger for electrical appliances and how this reduces waste are discussed. The reference to political decisions taken by European institutions such as the European Commission or the Council of Europe mainly occurred in the Facebook posts of all users and the Twitter posts of all users. This can be explained in part by the fact that the posts here were made mainly by politicians and media agents. In the of the Facebook groups, there were references to European institutions and legislation. This was especially the case in the posts of the Facebook group *Welcome Wolf*. As their posts often refer to article 12 of EU Habitats Directive. This article states that the "deliberate capture or killing of specimens of those species living in the wild", in this case the wolf, is prohibited (European Commission, n.d.).



Health

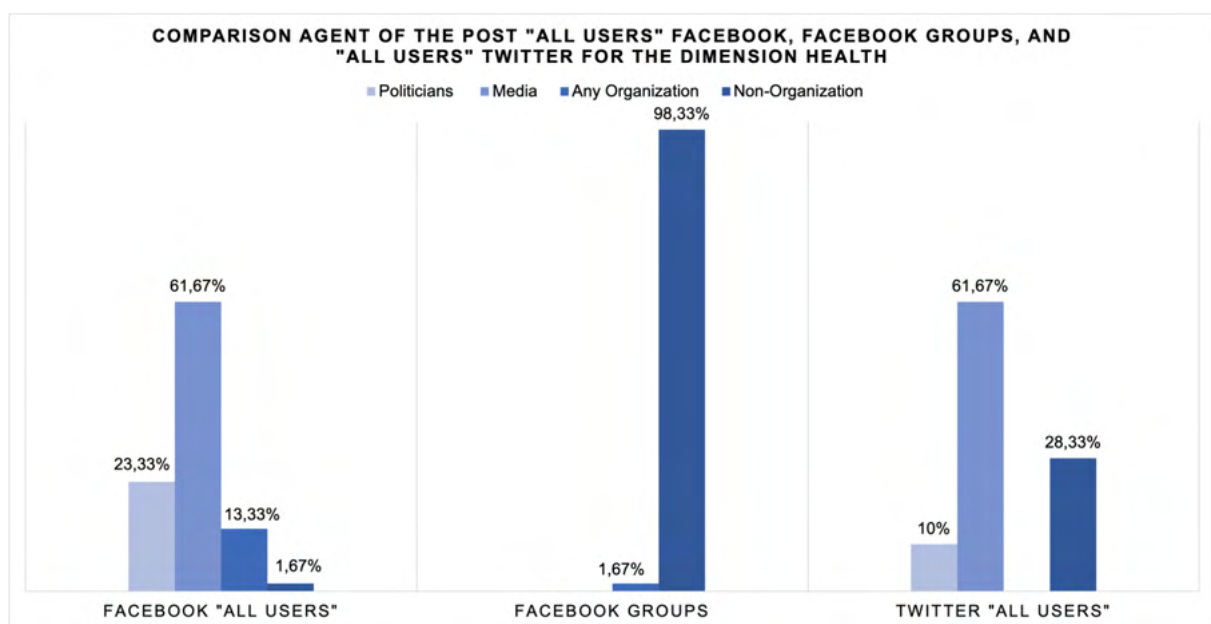
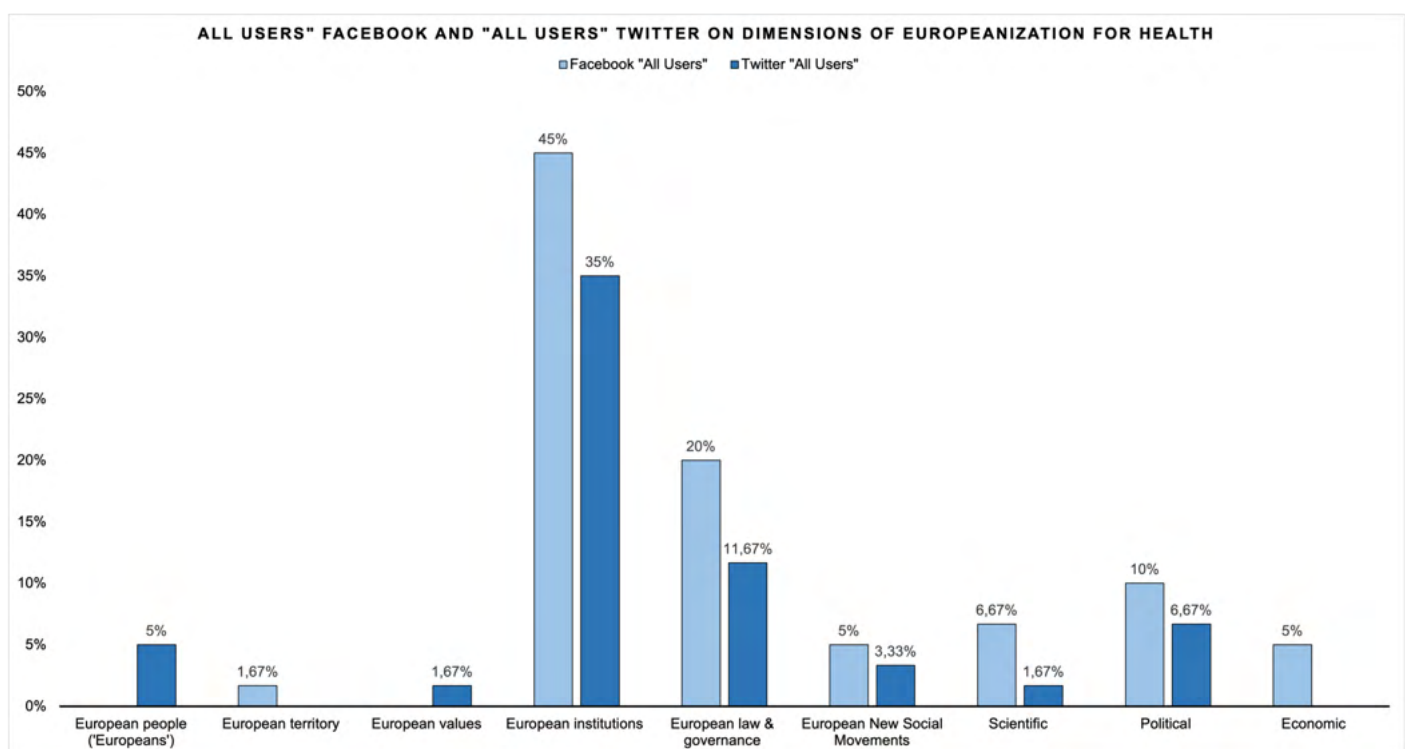


Figure 5: Actor of the posts for Health on Facebook "all users" and Twitter "all users"

The posts on both Facebook and Twitter were mostly made by media agents, what is related to the Covid pandemic. To a lesser extent, posts were made by virologists and politicians. People mainly consulted newspapers such as *Het Laatste Nieuws* (HLN), *Het Nieuwsblad*, *Le Soir* and *La Libre Belgique* to get their information about the Covid pandemic and the decisions taken by the federal government and Europe. Besides newspapers, people also viewed the posts of the public broadcasters *VRT* and *RTBF*. Public broadcasters are seen by the public as the most reliable for news (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, n.d.).

The public's reliance on media increases during crisis situations, this also explains why people are turning to newspapers and television to get their information about the Covid pandemic. It is indeed crucial for public health that people get information quickly and easily about the new measures (De Coninck, d'Haenens, & Matthijs, 2020). Most of the posts concerning Covid-19 dealt with the approval of vaccines by the European Medicines Agency or the European corona map. The local guidelines were also discussed, especially the specific guidelines around the Covid safety ticket and the Covid guidelines in Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels. Especially Brussels was often the subject of posts, which can be explained by the high number of infections in the capital and the stricter measures that were taken for Brussels during September and October.

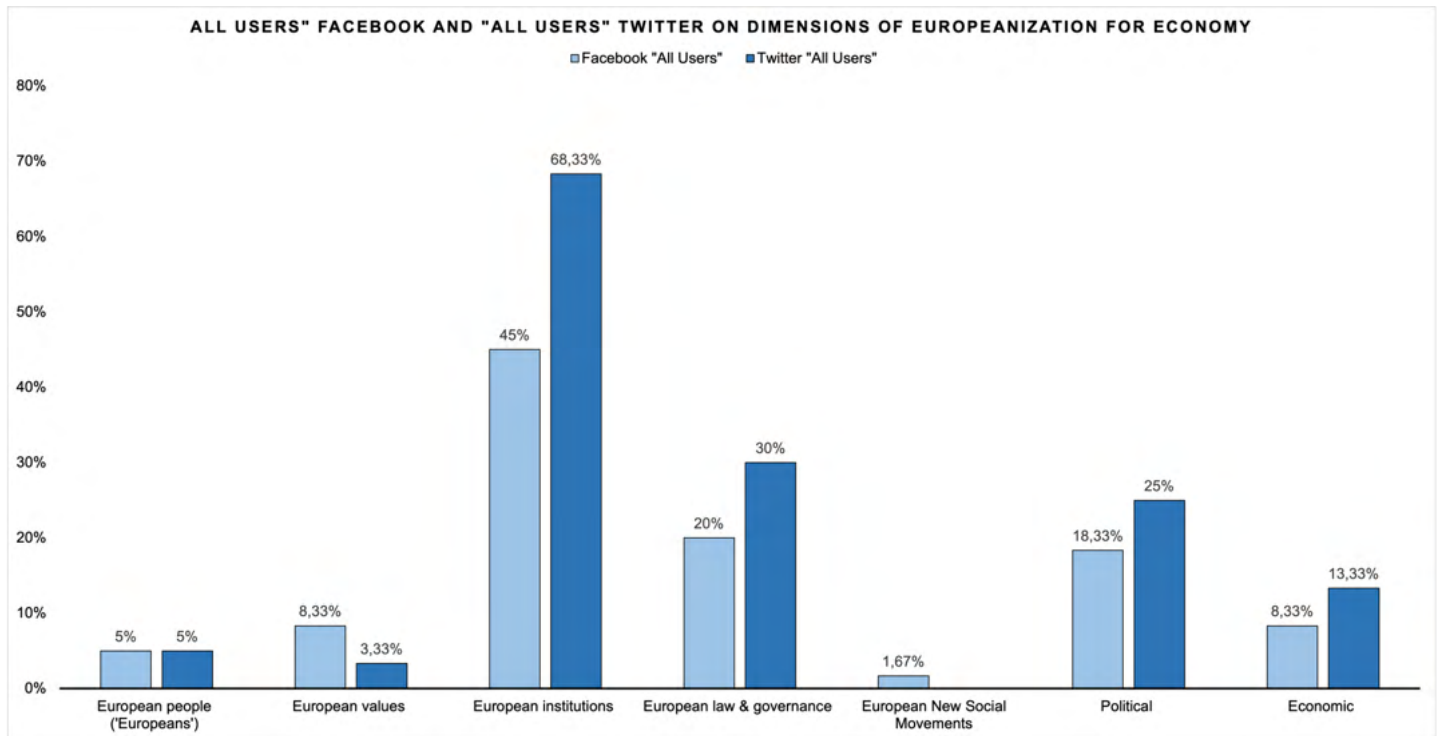
Departing from the health dimension, it is striking that within the posts, there is a very strong



reference to the European dimension 'European Institutions' and 'European Law & Governance'. This can be explained by the large number of posts that discuss vaccination and the approval of vaccines by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). During the three months that were analysed (September, October, and November), a lot of decisions were made at European level. For example, Pfizer's covid vaccine for children as young as five years old was approved. It is also striking how little diversity there is in newspaper coverage on the Covid-19 pandemic. Newspapers who fall under the same group (Mediahuis, DPG Media, Rossel and IPM) posted similar articles. In many cases, only the image accompanying the message was different, but the title was as good as identical. This was the case both in Flanders, and Wallonia.

Economy

In the posts within the economy dimension there are mainly references to European



institutions and especially on Twitter "all users" are frequently referred to the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank (ECB). The reason for this is the growing criticism by politicians of the federal government and the Belgian budget. Belgium is often referred to as the country with the worst budget in the European Union. Politicians such as Theo Francken refer to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which states that if Belgium does not tackle the budget, it will have the worst structural budget in the whole European Union by 2025. In addition, many posts refer to the Covid-19 relance plan of the European Commission and how much money Belgium receives from it.

Bibliography

- AdLens. (2022, August 26). *Rapport des publicités politiques sur Facebook de janvier à juillet 2022*. Medium. Retrieved 19 September 2022, from <https://adlens-be.medium.com/rapport-des-publicit%C3%A9s-politiques-sur-facebook-de-janvier-%C3%A0-juillet-2022-58499c1b498a>
- Biard, B. (2021). Challenging the cordon sanitaire in Belgium: A diachronic analysis. In M. Reuchamps & D. Caluwaerts (Eds.), *Belgian Exceptionalism: Belgian Politics between Realism and Surrealism* (pp.79-92). Routledge.
- Coffé, H. (2008). Social Democratic Parties as Buffers Against the Extreme Right: The Case of Belgium. *Contemporary Politics* 14(2), 179–195.
- De Coninck, D., d'Haenens, L., & Matthijs, K. (2020). Forgotten key players in public health: news media as agents of information and persuasion during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Public health*, 183, 65–66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2020.05.011>
- De Jonge, L. (2021). The Curious Case of Belgium: Why is There no Right-Wing Populism in Wallonia? *Government and Opposition*, 56, 598–614.
- De Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media. (n.d.). *Mediaconcentratie in Vlaanderen 2021*. Vlaamse Regulator Voor De Media. Retrieved 19 September 2022, from <https://www.vlaamseregulatormedia.be/nl/over-vrm/rapporten/2021/rapport-mediaconcentratie>
- European Commission (2021, December 22). *Rule of Law: Commission launches infringement procedure against Poland for violations of EU law by its Constitutional Tribunal*. European Commission. Retrieved on 11 September 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_7070
- Kemp, S. (2021, February 11). *Digital in Belgium: All the Statistics You Need in 2021*. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. Retrieved on 12 September 2022, from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-belgium>
- Merckx, V. (2022, July 12). *Hoe vermijden we dat dit nog eens gebeurt? Dit is er veranderd één jaar na de overstromingen in Wallonië*. vrtnws.be. Retrieved 19 September 2022, from <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/07/07/hoe-vermijden-we-dat-dit-nog-eens-gebeurt-dit-is-er-veranderd-e/>
- European Commission. (n.d.). Retrieved 19 September 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/2/module_2_20.htm
- Picone, I. (2022). *Belgium*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved on 12 September 2022, from <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/belgium>

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (n.d.). Retrieved on 12 September 2022, from <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/interactive>

Roginsky, S. (2020). Who are professional politicians talking to? The making of Members of the European Parliament's audiences on Twitter and Facebook. *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, 9(2), 105–126. https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms_00018_1

Verstraete, K. & Belga. (2022, June 17). Liberalen krijgen klappen in nieuwe peiling. *De Tijd*. Retrieved 19 September 2022, from <https://www.tijd.be/politiek-economie/belgie/algemeen/liberalen-krijgen-klappen-in-nieuwe-peiling/10396681.html>

Evelina Christova
Dessislava Boshnakova

Data coding:

Boryana Gigova
Dessislava Boshnakova
Dessislava Dankova
Evelina Christova
Justine Toms
Stoyko Petkov

WP2 Country Report: Bulgaria

Contents:

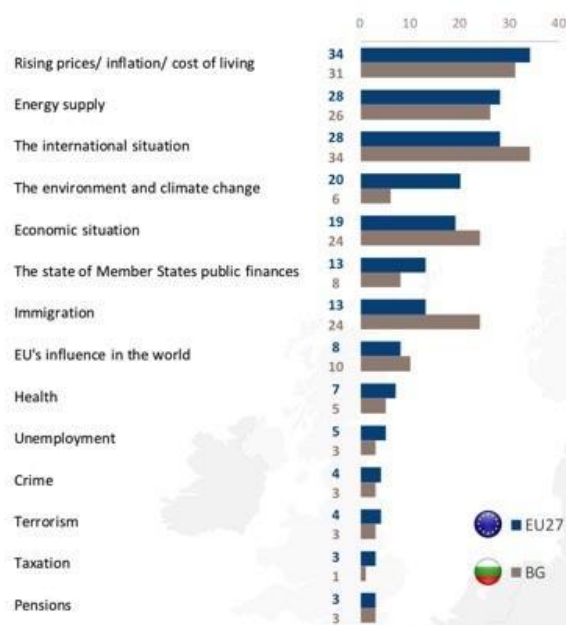
Perceptions about Europe and Europeanisation	2
Media Use in Bulgaria	4
The research	8
Facebook	8
9) and on average if tweets used hashtags that means only one hashtag per tweet.	18
YouTube	18
Scope of news	21
Dimensions of Europeanisation	22
Concluding Remarks	25
References:	25

Perceptions about Europe and Europeanisation

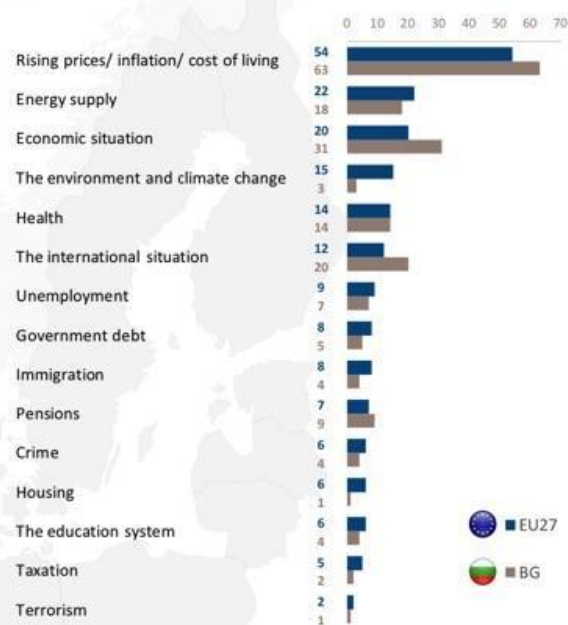
Bulgarians trust in the EU (49%) more than the National Government (34%) and the National Parliament (34%), according to Eurobarometer (European Commission, Sept. 2022). Even though the trust in the EU is slowly going down (57% in 2017, Eurobarometer) it holds a firm tendency, based on positive expectations towards EU, its support for democracy, establishment of firm democratic principles in the country and trust that European Union accounts as a factor for the success of social cohesion, solidarity and integration of its members (Kostova, D. 2016). This contributes to the fact that the Bulgarian citizens are critical and requiring to national elites but their support to further European integration is stable. The public opinion in Bulgaria remains quite optimistic about the importance of the country's EU membership throughout the time (Dimitrova, A. 2012). Bulgaria's accession to the European Union (EU) was largely supported both by the Bulgarian political elite and Bulgarian citizens (OSI, 2006). The country's EU membership was associated by most of Bulgarians with "two major European projects" - the Bulgaria's entry into the Schengen area and the country's entry into the Eurozone (Lessenski, 2011). However, both projects had failed but the levels of trust in the EU remain relatively high.

Inflation and the cost of living used to be the major issue for almost a half of the respondents at September 2022, followed by the international situation, economic situation, energy supply, and the immigration.

QA5. What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) (%)

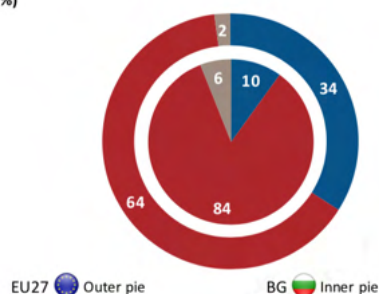


QA3. What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) (%)



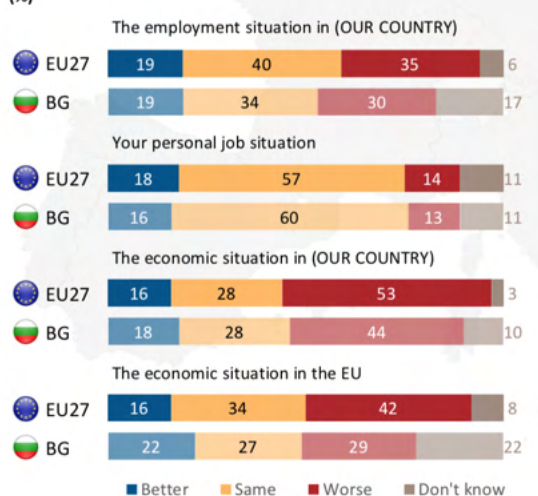
Bulgarians seem to have hard economic times and it is clearly demonstrated with 84% feeling national economy is “bad”. Bulgarians are more pessimistic (44%) about the country economy than about the overall European economic situation (29%). The majority of the respondents did not expect their economic and job situation to change much in the following year.

QA1.2. How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?
The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy (%)



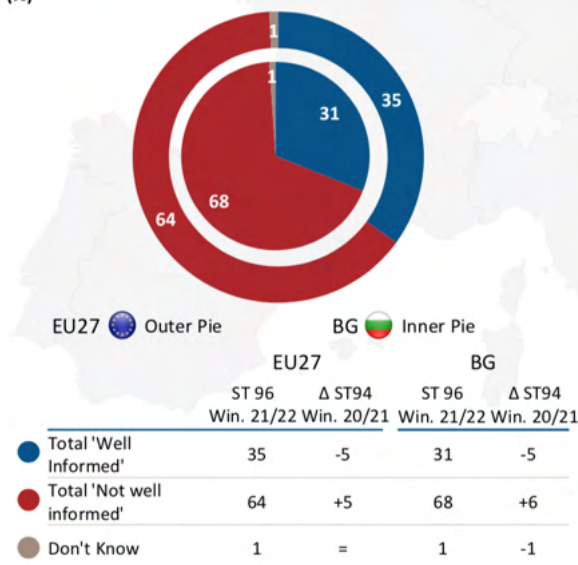
	EU27		BG	
	ST97 Sum. 22	Δ ST96 Win. 21/22	ST97 Sum. 22	Δ ST96 Win. 21/22
Total 'Good'	34	-5	10	=
Total 'Bad'	64	+5	84	-1
Don't know	2	=	6	+1

QA2. What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to...? (%)

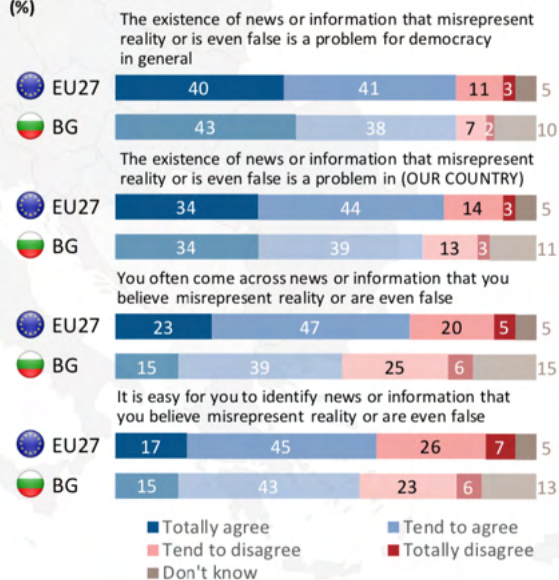


When it comes to European matters (Eurobarometer winter 2021-2022) , Bulgarians think they are not very well informed (68%), a bit higher than the European average (64%). Even though 34% (totally agree) + 39% (tend to agree) of citizens agree that news misrepresents reality, 15% (totally agree) + 43% (tend to agree) believe they can identify misinformation and false news.

QD2. And overall, to what extent do you think that you are well informed or not about European matters?
(%)

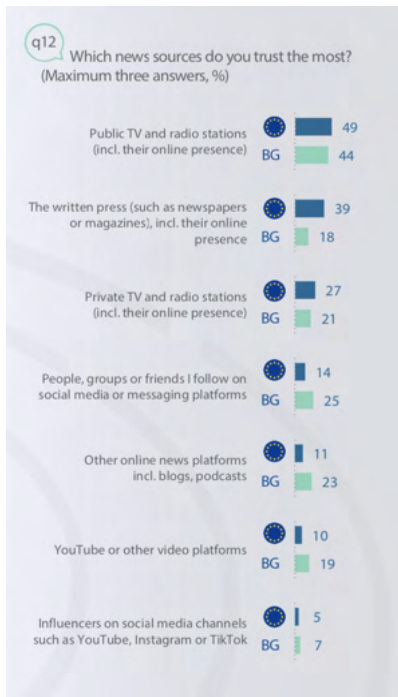


QD8 Do you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree with each of the following statements.
(%)

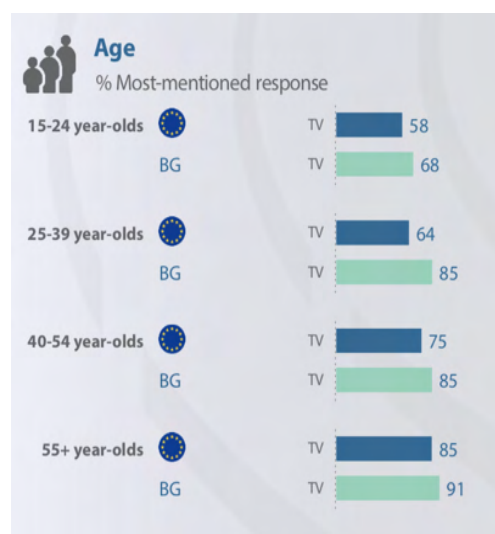
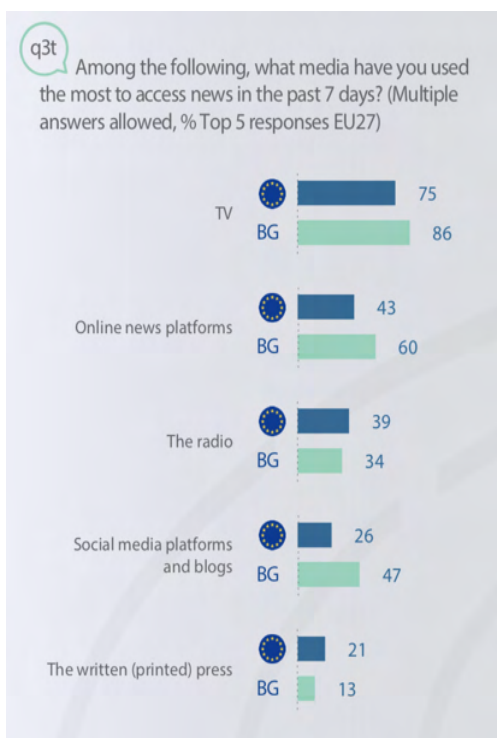


Media Use in Bulgaria

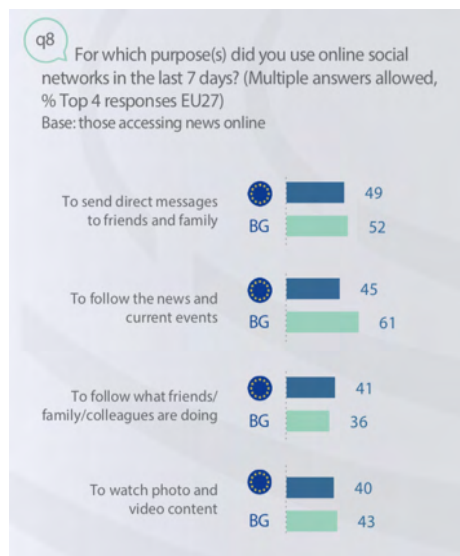
Bulgarians trust most TV (44%), followed by People, Groups or Friends, followed on social media or messaging platforms (25%) and Other news online platforms incl. blogs, podcasts (23%) (Media and News Survey 2022).



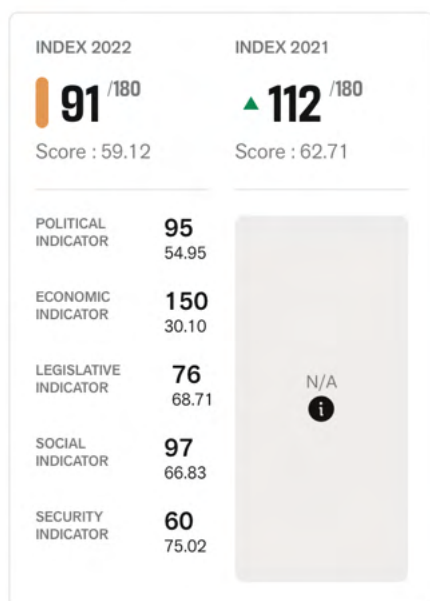
Bulgarians tend to use TV more (86%) than average number for EU (75%) with the extremely high percentage of people above 55 years of age (91%) and even high percentage of young viewers (68%). The written press could be called a disappearing media with only 13% usage.



Most Bulgarians use online social networks to follow the news (61%), followed by sending direct messages to friends and family (52%).



According to Reporters Without Borders (Index 2022) media freedom in Bulgaria is fragile and unstable. The few independent voices in Bulgaria work under constant pressure. Television and Internet media are the main sources of information with print media progressively losing influence. The political affiliation of the members of the Council for Electronic Media negatively affects the editorial independence of the public media, while the independence of private media is threatened by their owners' interests in regulated sectors. Radio Free Europe (RFE) reopened its bureau in Sofia in 2019.



The media are almost entirely dependent on income from advertising, in which the state plays an important role. Distribution of national and EU funds to the media by the government is completely non-transparent, which allows the trading of public funding for favourable coverage.



Bulgarians predominantly use Facebook with more than 98,52% of the users and 1,48% for all other social media (Statcounter, August 2022).

The research

Facebook

Facebook posts from all users with the most interactions were from news media sites, sports media sites and two of them – from politicians. The most popular post was by a famous rap singer, who recently entered the parliament and the post itself was about politics – announcing his decision to enter political life and become a candidate for the parliament. The post itself does not contain neither picture or a link – which is a rare exception for a popular post and is the only one of the type in the top 10 ranking.



Seven of the most popular posts contained a link, there was one photo, one text status and a Live video. Seven of them were on a topic related to EU and a total of eight – about politics.

Клинична хомеопатия Тракия

Public group · 14.9K members

About Discussion Topics People Events Media

Penko Todorov

November 7, 2021 ·

Заради тях сме живи : Тримата смели мъже от Чернобил, които се жертваха за Европа и света !!!
Трима мъже, които спасиха света от катастрофа, която би променила хода на историята
Техните имена са инж.Алексей Ананенко,инж. Борис Баранов и инж. Валери Безпалов 🙏🙏
Без преувеличение – тези хора спасиха целия свят!
10 дни след аварията в Чернобил, инженерите разбират, че всички сме поставени пред нова, много по-голяма и фатална заплаха – експлозия на ядрени изпарения.
Охладителната система на реактора се е повредила и се оказва, че сега под горящото ядро се е формирал огромен воден басейн. Без възможност да се охлажда, е било въпрос на време (и то на кратко време), докато това радиоактивно ядро да се превърне в лава, която да стопи всички бариери под себе си и да достигне до басейна с вода. Ако това се случи, се получава експлозия, изстрелваща огромно количество радиация право към небето, разпростирайки я над Европа, Азия

Радка Божкова
September 16, 2021 ·

БРАТЯ МОИ

Вие, единствени мои по кръв, по съдба, по език...
Как да ви дойда на помощ със своя тъй немоощен вик...
Как да ви дам чаша вяра... Шепя смелост... Коматче кураж...
Аз – един малък поет... Един жалък съименик ваш.
Мощна песен... И знаме развято... Срещу пушки с открити гърди
И ура! И отстъпва врагът... И било ли е... С нас ли? Преди!
А пък ние сме същите... Същите... Българи! Славен народ!
Но мълчим... Но очакваме... Нещо... Един илюзорен джакпот.
Просим... Пуска Европа в паниката... Стрижна сума... Във точния час.
Идва Оня... Прибира ни парсата... И на дъното – нещо за нас.
Уж протести... О кей... Еднодневки... Да си викат на она площад.
Парламенти... Моменти... И менти...Той се хили във своя палат.
А до него палат до палата... И във тях мръсник до мръсник.
Ах , къде си ти песничка стара: „Кон до коня и щик до щик.“
Вие, единствени мои, по кръв, по език, по съдба...
Знам, че изглежда безсмислена всякаква вече борба.
Но все пак... Но един ден... Когато...Знам, че той ще бъде без мен...
Ще се вдигнат...Страхотни... Децата... Наследили нашия ген.
И пребродили чужди посоки... Ще се върнат пак у дома.
Да целунат коравата...Черната... Родната своя земя.
Недялко Йорданов

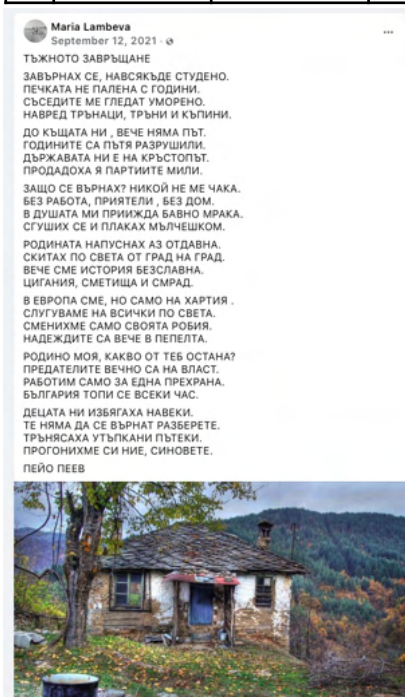


Table 1: Top 10 most popular posts from Facebook All Users

N	Page name	Agent	Type of post	Topic	Total interactions	Topic	Date	Followers at Posting (numbers of followers at post date)
1	Ицо Хазарта	AUTHOR	Status	Europe, Religion, European Values	43773	EUROPE	2021-10-12	231982
2	Sportal.bg	NEWS_SITE	Link	Europe, Religion, European Values	40197	EUROPE	2021-09-05	491769
3	Новини от България и света	NEWS_SITE	Link	Economy, NHS, Elections	33387	Europe	2021-11-20	213501
4	Костадин Костадинов	POLITICIAN	Live Video Complete	Health, Pandemic crisis, measures	27819	EUROPE	2021-10-16	179091
5	Traffic News	MEDIA_NEW S_COMPANY	Link	Europe, Greek - French Alliance	26393	Europe	2021-11-20	159197
6	Dsport.bg	NEWS_SITE	Link	Health, Pandemic crisis, measures	24098	EUROPE	2021-09-05	56806
7	Новини по всяко време от България и света	NEWS_SITE	Link	Europe, #EUMED9	20766	Europe	2021-11-02	76848
8	Gong.bg	ACTIVITY_GENERAL	Link	Economy, Defence, Greek - French Weapon Agreement	20530	EUROPE	2021-09-05	203940
9	Без Лого	NEWS_SITE	Photo	Economy, benefits	18327	HEALTH	2021-11-20	32529

Table 1: Top 10 most popular posts from Facebook All Users

				& allowances				
10	Българска свободна телевизия	TV_CHANNE L	Link	Economy, Defence, Greek - French Weapon Agreement	17477	HEALTH	2021-11-22	122840



The top 10 posts from Facebook groups were also about or connected to Europe (9 of them) and politics (5 of them) with one post about climate and four posts about poetry. It was interesting to see that one poetry group has four

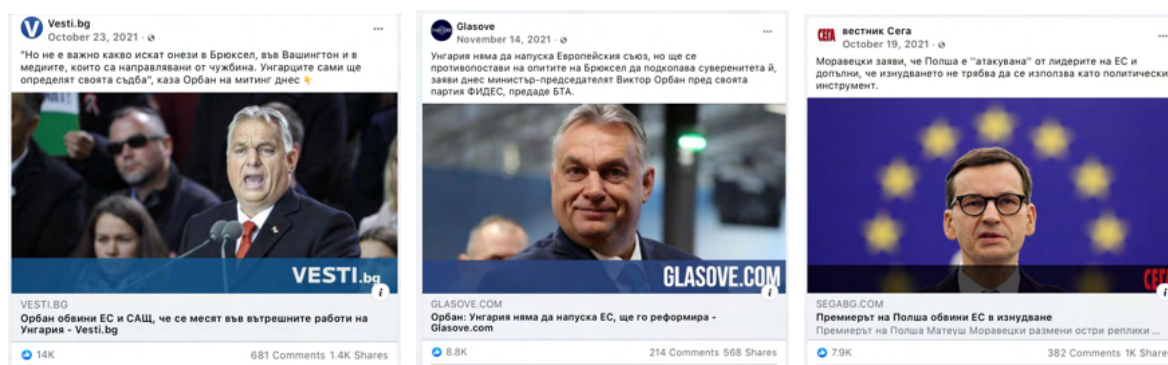
Table 2: Top 10 most popular posts from Facebook Groups

N	Group name	Type of post	Group Topics	Total interactions	Topic	Date	Likes at Posting (numbers of group likes at post date)
1	Клинична хомеопатия Тракия	Photo	Greek quotes, sayings	153882	CLIMATE	2021-11-07	N/A
2	Стихове и	Photo	Political Group	11943	EUROPE	2021-09-16	236313
3	Стихове и	Photo	Citizens of Athens	9882	EUROPE	2021-09-12	233749
4	Стихове и	Photo	Citizens of Athens	5272	EUROPE	2021-09-29	246479

Table 2: Top 10 most popular posts from Facebook Groups

N	Group name	Type of post	Group Topics	Total interactions	Topic	Date	Likes at Posting (numbers of group likes at post date)
5	Генерал РАДЕВ-ПРЕЗИДЕНТ на БЪЛГАРИЯ	Link	<i>Herbs</i>	5039	EUROPE	2021-10-15	90113
6	Стихове и	Photo	<i>Unvaxxed, Against Vaccination</i>	4932	EUROPE	2021-09-20	240172
7	Генерал РАДЕВ-ПРЕЗИДЕНТ на БЪЛГАРИЯ	Status	<i>Unvaxxed, Against Vaccination</i>	4371	EUROPE	2021-10-06	90097
8	Генерал РАДЕВ-ПРЕЗИДЕНТ на БЪЛГАРИЯ	Link	<i>Humorous political group</i>	4025	EUROPE	2021-10-16	90119
9	Привърженици на Ген. Президент Румен Радев	Status	<i>Unvaxxed, Against Vaccination</i>	3502	EUROPE	2021-11-20	31880
10	Кирил Петков за Министър-Председател на Република България	Status	<i>Political Group</i>	3394	EUROPE	2021-09-06	106499

of the most popular posts including positions 2, 3 and 4. Also four of the posts were coming from two groups supporting the current President of Bulgaria and one – from a group supporting the current at the time Prime minister.



Posts coming from Facebook media pages had different topics, yet again nine of them were about Europe. Four of them, including the first two most popular are about Hungarian Prime Minister and his words about EU “messing in the internal Hungarian affairs”. There are two

more posts about the Polish Prime Minister saying that “EU is blackmailing Poland”. The media posts (relatively negative towards EU) turned out to be different in their most popular posts than the groups and all of the post (mostly about internal political issues and about EU if mentioned).

Table 3: Top 10 most popular posts from Facebook Media

N	Page name	Type of Media	Type of post	Post Topic	Number of followers	Total interactions
1	Vesti.bg	Online news site	Link	<i>Hungary, EU, USA</i>	174913	16418
2	Glasove	Online news site	Link	<i>Hungary, EU</i>	30949	9633
3	вестник Сега	Online news site	Link	<i>Poland, EU, Problems</i>	74601	9432
4	Dnes.bg	Online news site	Link	<i>Hungary, EU</i>	131755	7840
5	Vesti.bg	Online news site	Link	<i>EU, Putin, crises</i>	174855	6832
6	Actualno.com	Online news site	Link	<i>Hungary, EU, Energy, crises</i>	214188	6709
7	Свободна Европа	Online news site	Link	<i>Poland, EU, Problems</i>	214625	5964
8	Свободна Европа	Online news site	Link	<i>Australia, animals</i>	217334	5256
9	Novini.bg	Online news site	Link	<i>Economic, crises, prices, EU</i>	1175103	5113
10	Novini.bg	Online news site	Link	<i>Vaccination, EU, Bulgaria</i>	1172817	4949

When comparing Facebook media pages of the sample to all users and groups, we can see that mainstream media have less followers, less total interactions shares and less positive interactions than all users and groups. Only the “Angry” and “Haha” interactions are close or more than all users and groups, having in mind that “Haha” is used both as positive and negative reaction.

Twitter

Twitter is not popular in Bulgaria and is mostly used by a limited number of people that are active in politics, often coming from the online business, they are considered active citizens and live mainly in the capital Sofia. Even though the number of people in Bulgaria using Twitter is not high, they are usually very active as users. The other active groups on Twitter are institutions - The President and European Commission in Bulgaria - and Media .

Table 4: Comparison between 10 posts with most interactions on Facebook (all users, groups, media)

	Facebook All Users (119)		Facebook Groups (120)		Facebook Media (120)	
	Avg	Total	Avg	Total	Avg	Total
Followers/ Members	242175 (117)	28334472	68637 (102)	7000941	381486	45778271
Total Interactions	7202	857079	3946	473565	1925	231002
Likes	5203	619137	1840	220783	1174	140878
Comments	517	61542	315	37822	264	31620
Shares	1020	121393	1269	152256	126	15132
Love	68	8030	342	41036	16	1947
Wow	34	4058	33	4006	14	1618
Haha	162	19318	29	3461	195	23348
Sad	61	7242	49	5855	15	1821
Angry	126	15028	12	1468	119	14220
Care	11	1331	57	6878	4	418

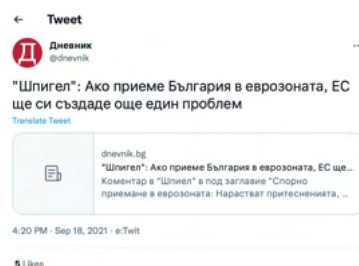
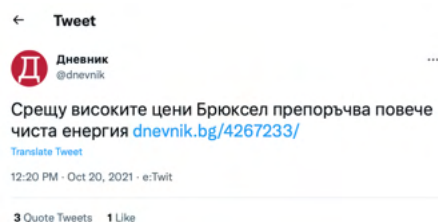


The top three most popular tweets in “all users” category came from the Bulgarian President. Four of the posts in the group come from a media group that is very active in the platform and its target are active European oriented people.

Table 5: Twitter posts with the most reach (from all users)

N	Author (twitter account author of the post)	Account Type (according to Twitter categorization)	Impressions (estimated views of the tweet)	Twitter Followers (followers of the account)	Twitter Reply Count (replies to the tweet)	Twitter Retweets (retweets of the tweet)	Twitter Verified (Verified Twitter account)	Reach (estimated number of people who may have seen the tweet)
1	PresidentOfBg	individual	48939	9141	16	12	FALSE	32456
2	PresidentOfBg	individual	12991	9294	18	4	FALSE	31951
3	PresidentOfBg	individual	27838	9279	16	6	FALSE	30915
4	ApostolDyankov	individual	3587	2251	20	2	FALSE	30639
5	idvassilev	individual	9837	1285	17	7	FALSE	27381
6	dnevnik	individual	149298	145083	3	1	FALSE	24810
7	dnevnik	individual	144282	144282	4	0	FALSE	24663
8	CapitalBg	individual	144117	144117	4	0	FALSE	24654
9	dnevnik	individual	144113	144113	4	0	FALSE	24653
10	vonegat	individual	12591	4149	13	9	FALSE	24295

All of the tweets with most viewers come from the same media group. Even though that the reach is estimated to be about 21000 – 24000 people all posts have a very limited number of retweets (0 to 3), replies (1 to 4) and even likes – the most popular tweet has 1 like.



Media tend to tweet about negative or bad news, with many people viewing the posts, but resisting to like them.

Table 6: Twitter posts with the most reach (from media)								
N	Author (twitter account author of the post)	Account Type (according to Twitter categorization)	Impressions (estimated views of the tweet)	Twitter Followers (followers of the account)	Twitter Reply Count (replies to the tweet)	Twitter Retweets (retweets of the tweet)	Twitter Verified (Verified Twitter account)	Reach (estimated number of people who may have seen the tweet)
1	dnevnik	individual	149298	145083	3	1	FALSE	24810
2	dnevnik	individual	144282	144282	4	0	FALSE	24663
3	CapitalBg	individual	144117	144117	4	0	FALSE	24654
4	dnevnik	individual	144113	144113	4	0	FALSE	24653
5	dnevnik	individual	150468	145601	2	2	FALSE	23711
6	dnevnik	individual	144440	144440	3	0	FALSE	23272
7	CapitalBg	individual	143970	143970	3	0	FALSE	23245
8	dnevnik	individual	145306	144712	2	3	FALSE	23116
9	dnevnik	individual	150831	146092	1	1	FALSE	22126
10	dnevnik	individual	146958	144022	1	2	FALSE	21985

Similarly to Facebook, twitter accounts of mainstream media have the most followers, more than 5 million. However, they underperform in terms of average engagement (0.006%) and average reach (11.5%). Accounts from all users on the other hand, have less followers (3.3 million), but they perform better on average engagement (0.15%) and reach (137.3%).

Table 7: Comparison between 10 posts with most interactions on Twitter (all users, media)

	Twitter All Users		Twitter Media	
	Avg	Total	Avg	Total
Followers	58719	7046323	126111	7188321
Reach	14903	1788399	18841	1073916
Replies	3	356	1	55
Retweets	2	229	0,5	28
Hashtags	0,4	51	0	0
Mentions	0,1	13	0	0

On table 8 we can see that some of the most used grips in Twitter - hashtags and mentions, are not so popular in the Bulgarian Twitter sphere. A very few tweets use mentions (9) and on average if tweets used hashtags that means only one hashtag per tweet.

Table 8 Hashtags & Mentions in Tweets

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Hashtag/s used in a tweet	16	5	7	1	-	29
Mention/s used in a tweet	8				1	9

YouTube

YouTube is the third most visited website in Bulgaria. According to StatCounter the percentage of YouTube comparing to other social platform in Bulgaria vary between 0,32% (July 2022) and 0,61% (August 2022) during the one year period (Statcounter, August 2022). Yet, surprisingly, in the top 10 videos with the most views there are three videos by the Ministry of education and tree by mainstream media. Seven of the videos are somehow connected to Covid-19:

The most viewed video on YouTube is called "Do not touch the children" and is an interview with an infectious disease paediatrician, who became popular for his bold positions against Covid-19 vaccination. The main topic of the interview is about the vaccines but the interview is more than two hours long and concerns many topics. The post is from a magazine called "Spisanie 8".

The second most viewed video is just 7 minutes and shows exactly how the children will be tested for Covid-19 at schools. It is by the official page of the Ministry of education.

The third is posted by an online channel about the "Green certificate" for people who had passed Covid-19 or have been vaccinated.

Fourth comes a video of a 8 years old boy showing how the tests will be performed at school. It is also by the official page of the Ministry of education.

The sixth most viewed video is another video that shows exactly how the children will be tested for Covid-19 at schools. It is by the official page of the Ministry of education.

Table 10 Average per YouTube video

Video Category Label (according to YouTube categorization)	Number of videos	Average Duration (Sec)	Average Views	Average Likes	Average Comments
Travel & Events	2	1388	5311	67	9
Science & Technology	3	889	52	3	0
People & Blogs	24	653	441	16	3
Nonprofits & Activism	7	902	64	5	0
Education	8	461	15871	308	36
News & Politics	66	558	883	8	1
Entertainment	5	1495	1542	11	11

The seventh is again a video that shows exactly how the children will be tested for Covid-19 at schools.

The eight post is about the "Green certificate". The Ninth post is about the economic crises. And the last video is about people queuing for free Covid-19 tests.

Table 9: Youtube videos with the most views							
N	Channel Title	Video Id (individual Id of the video - to search)	Video Category Label (according to YouTube)	Duration (Sec)	View Count	Like Count	Comment Count
1	Списание Осем	OaWSyqDxgkA	Education	245	54504	2026	207
2	Министерство на образованието и науката	kyLMgfinwUQ	Education	477	52348	193	46
3	БЪЛГАРСКА СВОБОДНА ТЕЛЕВИЗИЯ	yAcGN1OjhVs	News & Politics	101	27472	N/A	N/A
4	Министерство на образованието и науката	3Ckv_FXX_wg	Education	304	10731	57	12
5	WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS WORLD	3IijBlukOAA	Travel & Events	261	10472	131	18
6	Министерство на образованието и науката	0bA_UCTrRic	Education	227	8015	50	4
7	Actualno.com	gRSAuztMx5k	News & Politics	890	7455	22	2
8	bTV Media Group	HyYsSneSkSo	Entertainment	1590	3846	25	38

9	Bulgaria ON AIR	2Ilho_bDGRM	News & Politics	517	3673	67	13
10	Bulgaria ON AIR	U1dXrbWstv4	News & Politics	123	3278	56	6

The longest video is 3255 sec - (DEuv2aA9dhg) and it is about the latest scientific data about climate change.

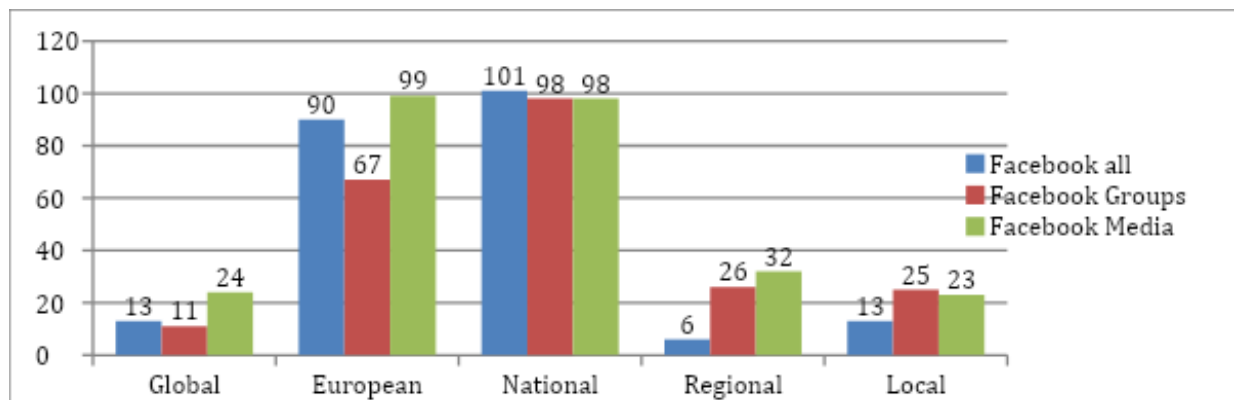
The shortest video is 31 sec (L_PX1f6jm5w) and it announce the event European Poetry in the Metro.

The video with most views - 54504, with the most likes - 2026 and with the most comments - 207 (OaWSyqDxgkA) is against vaccination.

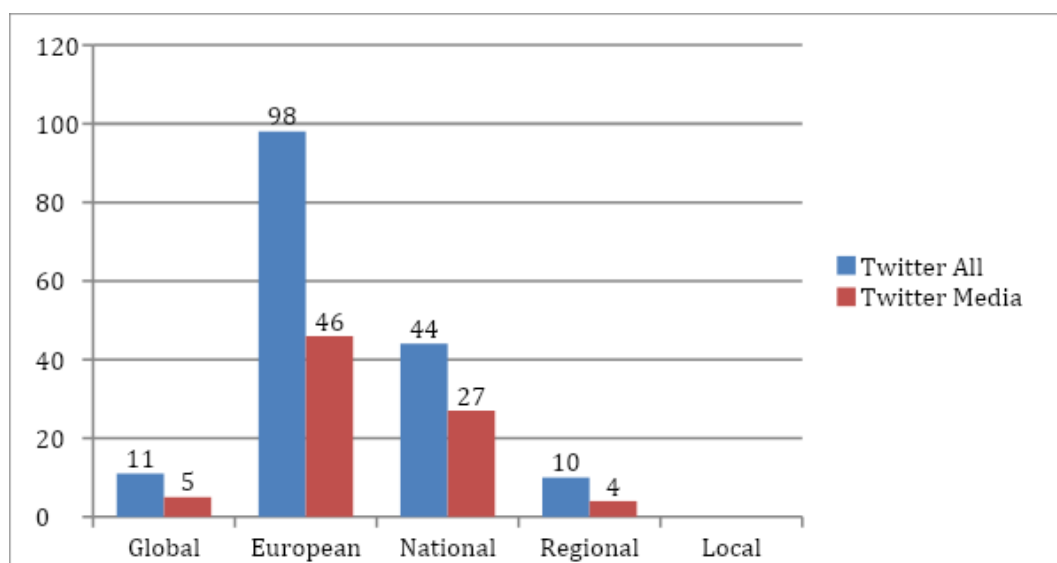
If we look at the channels by category and activities of users, we can conclude that News & Politics is the category with the highest number of videos (66) and with the longest average duration per video (1495 sec). The highest number of average views, likes and comments is in the Education category, which is due to the fact that in this category is the video, which is on the top by those metrics.

Scope of news

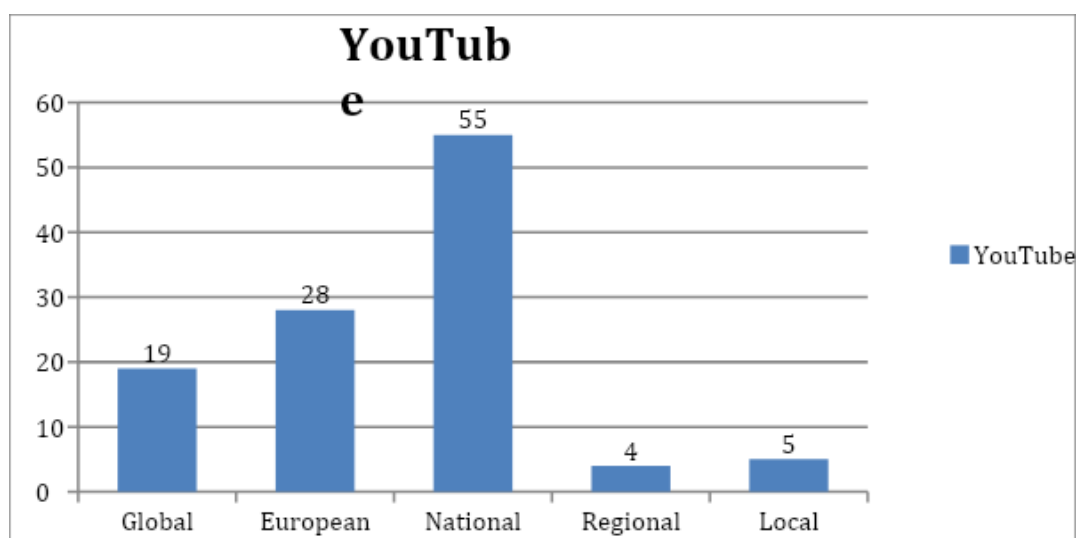
Facebook posts in Bulgaria had mostly a national scope, except for posts coming from Facebook media prevailing with 1% in favour to European scope. National and European are almost equal and are both dominating.



Twitter has strongly prevailing European scope (98%) more than twice then national (44). Media in Twitter are also posting about Europe but with 46%.



YouTube has a predominant national scope with 55% with 28% European and 19% global scope.



Dimensions of Europeanisation

Referrals to EU dimensions are high in posts coming from Facebook with the impressive number of 294 Political dimensions coming mainly from All users. Posts from the media refer mostly to European territory, European people and Political Dimensions. Posts from all users refer mostly to political and economic matters, as long as European institutions. Posts, coming from groups are also about political and economic matters and European territory.

Table 11: Dimensions of Europeanization on Facebook

	Media	All users	Groups	ALL
European people	79	32	25	136
European media content	5	12	0	17
European territory	94	36	49	179
European values	21	27	25	73
European media industries	43	45	27	115
European interactions	32	30	19	81
European Culture	4	10	17	31
European democratic model	21	16	8	45
European Institutions	62	51	28	141
European Governance & Law	45	41	19	105
European Social Movements	12	13	0	25
European public sphere	33	44	27	104
Scientific	29	4	10	43
Political	69	155	70	294
Economic	60	60	52	172

In Twitter most posts are about European Institutions, economic matters and European people. Posts from the media have more referrals to EU institutions and governance (4 in total) but not to other EU dimensions. Posts from all users have also few referrals to European people (1) and European values (1).

Table 12: Dimensions of Europeanization on Twitter

	Media (59 posts)	All users (120)	ALL
European people	15	43	58
European media content	1	2	3
European territory	18	34	52
European values	3	19	22

European media industries	16	33	49
European interactions	4	8	12
European Culture	0	5	5
European democratic model	2	9	11
European Institutions	26	49	75
European Governance & Law	15	25	40
European Social Movements	0	0	0
European public sphere	1	7	8
Scientific	0	2	2
Political	13	24	37
Economic	15	49	64

In YouTube there are less referrals to EU dimensions. Yet European institutions again are among most mentioned together with economic matters.

Table 13: Dimensions of Europeanization on YouTube

	All Media
European people	8
European media content	1
European territory	3
European values	0
European media industries	18
European interactions	6
European Culture	1
European democratic model	2
European Institutions	21
European Governance & Law	12
European Social Movements	0
European public sphere	3
Scientific	6
Political	10
Economic	24

Concluding Remarks

Bulgarian social media users are definitely showing constant and deep interest into politics (with special interest in international and European politics) and economy. Both topics are in the focus in all social media, with Covid-19 being also of a strong interest. Regardless the format, the interest stays focused in all possible media. Politics and international politics dominate as topics in the most viewed posts in all media and from all users. This could possibly connected to the fact that many of the posts come from people in politics, people in groups about politics and mainstream media that are traditionally very much oriented towards politics in their content. We regret to say that European culture and European values does not find its place in the posts for the period. Covid-19 was definitely topic of interest for the YouTube users even though it was more than widely covered in the traditional mass media in the country for the period.

We can say that visual communication is important for Bulgarian social media users, since the most common format of the posts on Facebook in Bulgaria is a text with image, followed by text, image and link.

References:

- European Commission, 2022. *Standard Eurobarometer 96*. Eurobarometer Surveys. [online] European Commission. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>
- European Commission, 2022. *Standard Eurobarometer 97*. Eurobarometer Surveys. [online] European Commission. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys>
- European Commission, 2022. *Media and News Survey 2022*. Eurobarometer Surveys. [online] European Commission. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys3>

- Kostova, D. (2016). Report on Bulgaria: Elites' Europeanises and their Trust in Institutions. Historical Social Research, 41(4), 239-253. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.41.2016.4.239-253>
- Lessenski, Marin (2011). A Schengen Wannable: Public Opinion and Bulgaria's Membership Bid for Schengen. European Policies Initiative (EPI), Policy brief 34, September (2011)
- Open Society Institute (OSI), "Impact Analysis of the Possible Scenarios of Bulgaria's Membership in the EU Envisaged in the Accession Treaty", Group for European Prognoses and Studies, March (Sofia: OSI, 2006): 7.
- Reporters Without Borders (Index 2022), <https://rsf.org/en/index>
- Statcounter, Global Status, Bulgaria, August 2022, <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/bulgaria,%20Social%20Media%20Stats%20Bulgaria>
- Statista, <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/bulgaria>

Platformization of News in Ten Countries

Country report: Czech Republic

Vaia Doudaki, Miloš Hroch, Nico Carpentier

15/09/2022

Introduction – Methodology

This EUMEPLAT WP2 study focused on how information and ideas ‘about Europe and Europeans’ main concerns is published and debated on the main social media platforms’ (Cardoso et al., 2021, p. 5), in the Czech Republic, analysing content published by both professional news producers and non-professional actors. Hence, this report presents the main findings of the research: 1. conducted in the Czech Republic; 2a. across three main social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and 2b. six social media group types (all users of Facebook; Facebook groups; media organisations’ Facebook accounts; all users of Twitter; media organisations’ Twitter accounts; all users of YouTube), representing professional and non-professional social media content; 3. over a three-month period (September-November 2021); 4. analysing posts collected within four key thematic dimensions pertaining to Europe (Europe, climate + Europe, economy + Europe, health + Europe); 5. using a methodology developed for the purposes of the EUMEPLAT project by Cardoso et al. (2021); 6. applying the methods of quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).

A team of five researchers worked for this EUMEPLAT subproject in the Czech Republic. Two researchers acted as main coders, following extensive training. These two researchers coded independently 336 posts¹ (46% of the targeted number of analysed posts) with the purpose of measuring the inter-coder agreement levels. Krippendorff’s alpha range for the project’s 55 variables was 0.738 – 1.000, which are considered of adequate reliability (Krippendorff, 2004). The two researchers coded then the 663 identified posts, that were on-topic within one or more of the four thematic dimensions, across the six social media group types and the three-month period, for the set of defined variables, which focused on: the formats (text, image, video, links) used in the posts, the identity/capacity of the posting agents, the content of the posts, the dimensions of Europeanity they address, their geographical scope and the sentiment they communicate as it concerns Europe. The purpose was to content-analyse up to 720 on-topic posts, across the six social media group types, selected on the basis of relevance². YouTube, in the Czech case, had a high number of off-topic posts (not falling within the thematic dimension for which they were examined), which resulted to the final number of 663 on-topic posts.

The Czech Media Landscape

According to the World Press Freedom Index 2022 (RSF, 2022), three principal trends characterise the Czech media landscape: the high concentration of privately owned large media groups (in the hands of the Czech businessmen and main economic actors); the rise of new independent media; and, the still strong presence of the public service broadcaster that is also

¹ For the purposes of this study, the YouTube video publications are also regarded posts.

² For the methods of post extraction and relevance measurement, see Cardoso et al., 2021.

subject to increasing political pressure. At the same time, the public broadcaster, Czech Radio and Czech Television, continues to be the most trusted media in the country. Among the news media with high trust are also the online news media Aktuálně.cz, Deník N, Seznam Zprávy, iRozhlas.cz and Hospodářské noviny (The Endowment Fund for Independent Journalism, 2022).

During 2021, online news media continued to grow in the Czech Republic, and one of the possible explanations is the increased internet traffic since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Reuters 2022 Digital News Report revealed that news consumption through online channels is the most popular in countries like the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. Data shows that online platforms gradually stabilise their dominant role in news media consumption trends. Still, only 3% of the online users are willing to pay for the content on digital news media platforms (Czech Statistical Office, 2021). The Czech Statistical Office report published in November 2021 shows that there were 4,938 million social media users older than 16 years in the Czech Republic at that time. The number is equivalent to 56,3 % of the Czech population in the respective demographic group. Snapchat was the first most used and most popular social media platform in the Czech Republic, with Facebook and Instagram occupying the second and third place respectively (AMI Digital, 2021). The most active people on Facebook were users between the ages of 30 and 44. According to the 'Digital 2022 Czechia report' (Kemp, 2022), there were 4,85 million Facebook users, 8,05 million YouTube users, and 786.3 thousand Twitter users in the Czech Republic, in early 2022.

The context of the research period

The research period (September-November 2021) was dominated by the parliamentary elections held in the Czech Republic on 8-9 October 2021. Populist rhetorics and increased polarisation, centred around the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, migration, corruption, and the economy monopolised the public discourse, also on social media. Prime minister Andrej Babiš's populist party ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens), focussed on the 'migration crisis' and used the opportunity of the COVID-19 pandemic to showcase his working ethics and relationship with ordinary people (Císař & Kubát, 2021). The extreme right-wing populist party, SPD (Freedom and Direct Democracy) led by Tomio Okamura, accelerated its anti-EU rhetorics, raising 'Czechxit' as one of the main items of the political party's campaign agenda. Babiš was exposed on October 3 by the publication of the Pandora Papers, released by the international consortium of investigative journalists. The documents revealed that the Czech prime minister used offshore companies' complicated and serpentine structure to buy a £13m mansion in the south of France (Goodley et al., 2021). Babiš got under pressure to explain the purchase only four days before the elections. These revelations only added to the list of investigations of conflict of interest and misuse of EU funds the Czech oligarch is facing. Among others, the 2021 European Commission audit report stated that 'as Prime Minister, Babiš exercised influence on the allocation of EU

subsidies to Agrofert, an agro-chemical conglomerate that he founded himself', which had been, at the time of investigation, still receiving subsidies from EU funds (European Commission, 2021). As it concerns the election results, the ANO party was defeated, by a narrow margin, by the centre-right SPOLU coalition who formed a coalition government with the Pirate Party. Two of ANO's coalition partners – the Social Democrats and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia – failed to reach the 5 % threshold required to enter the parliament. SPD did not see its position improved since the election of 2017, receiving less than 10% of the votes (McEnchroe, 2021).

Research findings

Format use

Text is by far the most popular format. Almost all posts in the four dimensions –climate, economy, Europe and health³– use text to communicate (99%-100%). Images are still used regularly, in more than one-fourth of the cases (25%-30%), across the four dimensions. The majority of the posts and videos include links to external content (50%-64%). The use of video varies mildly, being overall less frequent (15%), with the dimension of climate communicating through video more often (21%), while the frequency in the other dimensions is lower (8%-16%). Overall, and with the exception of video, the analysed posts tend to use text, images and links steadily across thematic dimensions.

	Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Total
Text (n)	176	163	160	161	660
% of Total	26.5%	24.6%	24.1%	24.3%	99.5%
% within Dimension	99.4%	100%	99.4%	99.4%	99.5%
Image (n)	53	43	43	41	180
% of Total	8%	6.5%	6.5%	6.2%	27.1%
% within Dimension	29.9%	26.4%	26.7%	25.3%	27.1%
Link (n)	111	105	81	101	398
% of Total	16.7%	15.8%	12.2%	15.2%	60%
% within Dimension	62.7%	64.4%	50.3%	62.3%	60%
Video (n)	37	13	20	26	96
% of Total	5.6%	2%	3%	3.9%	14.5%
% within Dimension	20.9%	8%	12.4%	16%	14.5%
Total (N)	177	163	161	162	663
% of Total	26.7%	24.6%	24.3%	24.4%	100%

Table 1: Formats * Dimensions

When the use of formats is examined across platforms (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), again, text is used in almost all cases (97%-100%). The use of links across platforms is also stable (45%-78%), being used more frequently on Twitter. The use of images varies, as it is used frequently on Facebook (42%), infrequently on Twitter (12%), and not at all on YouTube.

³ The dimensions of climate, economy and health have all a relevance to Europe. Data was extracted separately for each dimension; hence, the dimension 'Europe' is not an aggregation of the other three dimensions but an independent dimension.

Reversely, video is used in all cases on YouTube, but in only few cases on Facebook (6%) and very rarely on Twitter (1%). While thematic dimension does not seem to impact on the use of formats, the logics of the platform does. Text and hyperlinks seem to be used as main formats of communicating in the social media under study. Still, visual formats –image and video– are only relevant for specific platforms.

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Total
Text (n)	360	231	69	660
% of Total	54.3%	34.8%	10.4%	99.5%
% within Platform	99.7%	100%	97.2%	99.5%
Image (n)	152	28	0	180
% of Total	22.9%	4.2%	0%	27.1%
% within Platform	42.1%	12.1%	0%	27.1%
Link (n)	186	180	32	398
% of Total	28.1%	27.1%	4.8%	60%
% within Platform	51.5%	77.9%	45.1%	60%
Video (n)	22	3	71	96
% of Total	3.3%	0.5%	10.7%	14.5%
% within Platform	6.1%	1.3%	100%	14.5%
Total (N)	361	231	71	663
% of Total	54.4%	34.8%	10.7%	100%

Table 2: Formats * Platforms

When the use of formats is further examined across platform types, again, text is used invariably in almost all cases (97%-100%). However, there are variations as it concerns the use of the other formats. Images are used very frequently by the general population of Facebook users (75%), regularly by Facebook groups (34%), but less frequently by the media Facebook accounts and posts (18%). Similarly, while the general population of Twitter users uses images with a mild frequency (18%), the Twitter accounts managed by media organisations, use images much less (6%). As mentioned earlier, images are never used by YouTube whereas video is obviously used in all cases. At the same time, video is used infrequently by the general population of Facebook users (11%), and rarely by the other Facebook and Twitter platform groups (2%-6%). The use of links also varies considerably, with heavy use by media accounts of Facebook and Twitter (93%-99%), regular use by Facebook groups, the general population of Twitter and YouTube (45%-59%), but infrequently by the Facebook general population (13%). The examination of format use across platform types indicates that the platform affordances, the developed culture of use for each platform, and the purpose of communication (professional or non-professional), all impact on the use of formats for communicating in the social media under study.

	Facebook All users	Facebook Groups	Facebook Media	Twitter All users	Twitter Media	YouTube	Total
Text (n)	120	121	119	121	110	69	660
% of Total	18.1%	18.3%	17.9%	18.3%	16.6%	10.4%	99.5%
% within Platform type	100%	100%	99.2%	100%	100%	97.2%	99.5%

Link (n)	16	59	111	71	109	32	398
% of Total	2.4%	8.9%	16.7%	10.7%	16.4%	4.8%	60%
% within Platform type	13.3%	48.8%	92.5%	58.7%	99.1%	45.1%	60%
Image (n)	90	41	21	22	6	0	180
% of Total	13.6%	6.2%	3.2%	3.3%	0.9%	0%	27.1%
% within Platform type	75%	33.9%	17.5%	18.2%	5.5%	0%	27.1%
Video (n)	13	2	7	3	0	71	96
% of Total	2%	0.3%	1.1%	0.5%	0%	10.7%	14.5%
% within Platform type	10.8%	1.7%	5.8%	2.5%	0%	100%	14.5%
Total (N)	120	121	120	121	110	71	663
% of Total	18.1%	18.3%	18.1%	18.3%	16.6%	10.7%	100%

Table 3: Formats * Platform types

Publishing agents – Who posts?

Both professional and non-professional social media content is popular and shared in social media platforms in the Czech Republic, regarding European issues. Still, professionally/institutionally produced content, whether it originates from news media or political agents, is the type of content that is prominent. This can be explained by the role that news media still play in the Czech Republic in mediating the public sphere, especially as it concerns European matters, and the specificities of the pre-election period in the country, that gave enhanced visibility to politicians in social media, in the battle for the electorate's vote.

Media organisations are the agents that post most frequently about European issues across the four dimensions (40%-54%), producing almost half of the posts. These posts come mostly from online newspapers, print newspapers and radio, such as the Czech Television's news media platform ČT24, other online-only news media such as Seznam Zprávy, Aktuálně.cz and Echo24.cz, websites affiliated to printed dailies, such as iDNES.cz (Mladá Fronta Dnes) and Hn.cz (Hospodářské noviny), and the weekly magazine Respekt.

Non-institutional agents post also with some regularity about European issues. Almost one-fourth of all the analysed posts, across the four dimensions (19%-26%), originate from non-institutional agents, the great majority of which are published by individual citizens (21%) who may be experts, such as economist and TV presenter Lukáš Kovanda, or senior citizens concerned with the state of public affairs and are active in Facebook groups.

Political agents, and in most cases individual politicians, and not political parties, post regularly about issues that concern Europe and the economy (22%-30%), and somewhat less regularly about health or the climate in Europe (15%-18%), being the producers of approximately one-fifth of all the posts. In the majority of cases, these politicians are ideologically affiliated to the nationalist far-right, and Tomio Okamura' SPD. Centre-right's ANO's politicians feature with a regular frequency, and politicians affiliated to the centre-left Pirate Party and centre-right SPOLU coalition appear occasionally.

Other types of institutions and organisations, public and private, have also a mild presence in social media posting about European issues, communicating more frequently about climate and health (10%-16%), and rarely about economy and Europe (1%-3%).

	Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Total
Media agent (n)	85	88	65	80	318
% of Total	12.8%	13.3%	9.8%	12.1%	48%
% within Dimension	48%	54%	40.4%	49.4%	48%
Non-institutional agent (n)	43	37	42	31	153
% of Total	6.5%	5.6%	6.3%	4.7%	23.1%
% within Dimension	24.3%	22.7%	26.1%	19.1%	23.1%
Political agent (n)	31	36	49	25	141
% of Total	4.7%	5.4%	7.4%	3.8%	21.3%
% within Dimension	17.5%	22.1%	30.4%	15.4%	21.3%
Organization (other) (n)	18	2	5	26	51
% of Total	2.7%	0.3%	0.8%	3.9%	7.7%
% within Dimension	10.2%	1.2%	3.1%	16%	7.7%
Publishing agent Total (N)	177	163	161	162	663
% of Total	26.7%	24.6%	24.3%	24.4%	100%

Table 4: Publishing agents * Dimensions

As it concerns the platforms that the publishing agents use, overall Facebook is the platform that is used the most (54%), followed by Twitter (35%), and much less YouTube (11%) (which was also attested by the small number of on-topic posts that were identified throughout the research period). Media organisations are the heaviest users of Twitter, as the big majority of tweets on European issues identified during the research period, originate from media agents (74%). Media organizations post also regularly on Facebook (37%) and on YouTube (21%). Print and online-only media's favourite platform is Twitter, and Radio's is Facebook. No on-topic TV-originated posts were analysed. Non-institutional agents, primarily individual citizens, post mostly on Facebook (33%), and secondly on YouTube (18%), about European issues, while they seem to prefer Twitter much less (9%). Political agents, when addressing European issues, use mostly Facebook (29%), occasionally Twitter (15%), and infrequently YouTube (6%). The situation is different with the other types of institutions and organisations, when communicating on social media about European issues, as they tend to prefer YouTube (55%), especially private organisations/companies, while they hardly use Facebook and Twitter (2%).

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Total
Media agent (n)	132	171	15	318
% of Total	19.9%	25.8%	2.3%	48%
% within Platform	36.6%	74%	21.1%	48%
Non-institutional agent (n)	119	21	13	153
% of Total	17.9%	3.2%	2%	23.1%
% within Platform	33%	9.1%	18.3%	23.1%
Political agent (n)	103	34	4	141
% of Total	15.5%	5.1%	0.6%	21.3%
% within Political agent	73%	24.1%	2.8%	100%
Organization (other) (n)	7	5	39	51
% of Total	1.1%	0.8%	5.9%	7.7%
% within Platform	1.9%	2.2%	54.9%	7.7%
Publishing agent Total (N)	361	231	71	663

% of Total	54.4%	34.8%	10.7%	100%
------------	-------	-------	-------	------

Table 5: Publishing agents * Platforms

Issues and topics - What is posted?

The big majority of the posts (83%) focus on institutions and organisations, public and private. The topics that they address include the operations of local, regional national and European institutions, the Czech government, or third-country governments. These posts also regularly address private companies and their operations. The posts refer with high frequency also to non-institutional agents (64%), and especially citizens. As citizens are coded individuals or societal/professional groups with no institutional affiliation such as doctors, nurses, students, truck drivers, pensioners. The dimension that attracts most of the interest is health (82%). Also, Europe is of high interest (70%), while climate and economy are of less, still consistent relevance (55% and 52% respectively). Almost half of the posts (48%) relate thematically to political agents, more often to individual politicians than to political parties. The dimensions that attract most attention when referring to political agents are Europe (58%) and economy (56%), while climate (50%) and especially health (27%) appear less frequently. References to news media, as part of the posts' subject(s) are not very frequent (9%). The media references are somehow more frequent when the posts concern Europe and health (16%-11%), but only occasional in the dimensions of climate and economy (6% and 3% respectively).

The great majority of the posts (97%), across the four dimensions, deal with a broad variety of topics, which are not captured by the other categories, and can be a broad subject such as migration, education, or a more specific subject, such as municipal taxes. Topics that feature regularly are: the Green Deal flora and fauna, animal rights, renewable energy, environmental protection, recycling, ecology; energy supplies, energy shortage, energy/gas/electricity prices, energy crisis, nuclear power, energy policies, emission levels/permits; economy and markets, industries, taxes, GDP, EU subsidies, debt; agriculture, food production and prices; traveling, mobility, transport, cars; elections, exit from the EU, democracy, human rights, physical/mental health, education, poverty; references to third countries.

	Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Total
Organization (other) (n)	153	140	135	123	551
% of Total	23.1%	21.1%	20.4%	18.6%	83.1%
% within Dimension	86.4%	85.9%	83.9%	75.9%	83.1%
Non-institutional agent (n)	95	84	112	133	424
% of Total	14.3%	12.7%	16.9%	20.1%	64%
% within Dimension	53.7%	51.5%	69.6%	82.1%	64%
Political agent (n)	88	91	94	43	316
% of Total	13.3%	13.7%	14.2%	6.5%	47.7%
% within Dimension	49.7%	55.8%	58.4%	26.5%	47.7%
News Media (n)	10	4	25	18	57
% of Total	1.5%	0.6%	3.8%	2.7%	8.6%
% within Dimension	5.6%	2.5%	15.5%	11.1%	8.6%

Other (n)	177	158	151	160	646
% of Total	26.7%	23.8%	22.8%	24.1%	97.4%
% within Dimension	100%	96.9%	93.8%	98.8%	97.4%
Subject Total (N)	177	163	161	162	663
% of Total	26.7%	24.6%	24.3%	24.4%	100%

Table 6: Issues & topics * Dimensions

When it comes to the platforms that are used in relation to the topics and issues that are communicated through the posts, public and private organisations and institutions are a recurrent topic across platforms (83%), following the general distribution of posts per platform (Facebook 47%; Twitter 27%; YouTube 9%). When non-institutional agents are among the posts' topics (64%), they appear more frequently on Facebook, less frequently on Twitter and with a weak frequency on YouTube, in terms of post numbers (37%, 18% and 10% of the posts respectively). Still, when examined in terms of frequency within each platform's identified posts, they appear in the great majority of YouTube posts (90%), and in the majority of Facebook (67%) and Twitter (51%) posts. Political agents appearing as a topic in almost half of the posts (48%), feature on Facebook regularly (31%), irregularly on Twitter (14%) and rarely on YouTube (2%). When their frequency is examined within each platform, it appears somewhat more balanced (in 57%, 41% and 22% of the published posts respectively). News media, as a topic (in 9% of the total number of posts), feature infrequently on Facebook (6%) and hardly ever on Twitter and YouTube (2% and 1% respectively). The broad thematic category 'Other' includes posts across the three social media platforms (in 97% of the analysed posts), following the general distribution of posts per platform (i.e., Facebook 54% of the published posts; Twitter 33%; YouTube 10%).

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Total
Organization (other) (n)	310	180	61	551
% of Total	46.8%	27.1%	9.2%	83.1%
% within Platform	85.9%	77.9%	85.9%	83.1%
Non-institutional agent (n)	243	117	64	424
% of Total	36.7%	17.6%	9.7%	64%
% within Platform	67.3%	50.6%	90.1%	64%
Political agent (n)	205	95	16	316
% of Total	30.9%	14.3%	2.4%	47.7%
% within Platform	56.8%	41.1%	22.5%	47.7%
News Media (n)	40	11	6	57
% of Total	6%	1.7%	0.9%	8.6%
% within Platform	11.1%	4.8%	8.5%	8.6%
Other (n)	356	221	69	646
% of Total	53.7%	33.3%	10.4%	97.4%
% within Platform	98.6%	95.7%	97.2%	97.4%
Subject Total (N)	361	231	71	663
% of Total	54.4%	34.8%	10.7%	100%

Table 7: Issues & topics * Platforms

Published by whom?

Examining the correlation of topics and publishing agents, it is noted that when the posts concern public and private organisations, institutions and companies, they are posted most frequently by media agents (38%), regularly by non-institutional and political agents (20%-19%) and infrequently by organisations (7%). When the posts address thematically non-institutional agents, such as citizens, they are posted more regularly by media (26%), with some frequency by political agents and non-institutional agents (16% and 15% respectively) and irregularly by public and private organisations (7%). As it regards the posts whose subject concerns political agents, they are published in most cases by media (37%) and political agents (34%), with some regularity by non-institutional agents (27%), while very rarely by other organisations (2%). In the broad category of 'Other', almost half of the posts are published by media agents (47%), one-fourth (23%) by non-institutional agents, one-fifth (21%) by political agents, and a minority (7%) by other organisations and institutions.

Issue/Topic	Media agent	Non-institutional agent	Political agent	Other organisation	Total
Organization (other) (n)	253	130	124	44	551
% of Total	38.2%	19.6%	18.7%	6.6%	83.1%
% within Publishing agent	79.6%	85%	87.9%	86.3%	83.1%
Non-institutional agent (n)	173	100	107	44	424
% of Total	26.1%	15.1%	16.1%	6.6%	64%
% within Publishing agent	54.4%	65.4%	75.9%	86.3%	64%
Political agent (n)	117	84	108	7	316
% of Total	37%	26.6%	34.2%	2.2%	47.7%
% within Publishing agent	17.6%	12.7%	16.3%	1.1%	47.7%
Other (n)	309	150	138	49	646
% of Total	46.6%	22.6%	20.8%	7.4%	97.4%
% within Publishing agent	97.2%	98%	97.9%	96.1%	97.4%
Issue/Topic Total (N)	318	153	141	51	663
% of Total	48%	23.1%	21.3%	7.7%	100%

Table 8: Issues & topics * Publishing agents

Aspects of Europeanity

This section examines more closely aspects of Europeanity, in the analysed posts. Therefore, some of the issues addressed in the posts might have been captured in the previous variables. Still, while in the previous variables and categories these issues and topics might be of national, European or global scope, here it is examined whether they have a clear European orientation or character. It shall be mentioned that in their big majority (77%), the analysed posts do not communicate an either positive or negative sentiment towards Europe. Still, more than one-fifth of the posts (22%) bear an explicitly negative undertone as it concerns Europe, while only rarely (1%) a clearly positive sentiment towards Europe, is expressed.

The majority of the posts (69%) have some neutral, in terms of tone, reference to the European institutions, such as the European Commission and the European Parliament, appearing more frequently in the climate-related posts (21%), less frequently-still regularly, in the economy (18%) and Europe-related (17%) posts, and less frequently in the health-related posts (14%). The Eurosceptic discourse, when expressed, focuses on how the EU and its institutions do not promote, but rather harm the interests of the Czech nation state.

More than half (51%) of the posts refer to European Law and governance, with more frequent references present in the climate-related posts (21%), and less regularly in the other three dimensions (16%-7%). This aspect includes references to Europe's/EU's regulatory framework, directives, legislation, or legal decisions, often critiqued by the far-right as restricting the country's freedom and sovereignty. It also involves references to the Czech Republic and Prime Minister Babiš being under investigation by the European Commission for conflict of interest and misuse of EU subsidies allocated to Agrofert, the conglomerate founded by Babiš himself.

European industries and capitalist economies appear also in almost half of the posts (46%), in climate and economy related posts (17%), and infrequently in Europe and health related posts (6%). These posts bear references to diverse kinds of financial/business/industrial activity, in different sectors, in Europe, in most cases bearing a neutral tone. Negative-sentiment posts published by Eurosceptics and the far-right, when present, stress how much the independence of the national industries is limited or harmed by the European directives and related legislation. Also, the populist centre-right critiques at times the EU policies for not supporting the Czech industries.

Posts referring to European democratic models, values, and the European territory feature with a mild frequency (10%-11%), addressing primarily the dimension of Europe. The posts regarding the state of European democracy, or democracies within Europe, are mostly neutral. Very few positive ones published by citizens and pro-European left-wing politicians, see the EU (and joining the EU) as a democratic project that has brought peace and prosperity. On the other hand, Eurosceptic voices see the democratic freedoms of the Czech nation state being restrained by the EU structures. References to European values relate to the ideals and ideas of freedom, tolerance, solidarity, equality and non-discrimination, in Europe or as part of the European civilization. These references are mostly neutral, and in very few cases positive, made by citizens or by left-wing politicians. Also, the appeal to these values is sometimes made by far-right voices, to accuse Europe of being hypocritical. The posts that address issues pertaining to the European territory have a clear focus on Europe as a geographical area/space, with frequent references to its borders, and the right or the need to protect them, addressed by right-wing, nationalist and Eurosceptic voices. References to the European people, or interactions and dialogues of European people/people in Europe, appear irregularly (4%). Other aspects, such as the

European public sphere, culture, media and new social movements in Europe, feature only sporadically (4%).

Close to one-third of the posts (29%) address a political aspect at the European level, involving political agreements or negotiations between political entities from different European countries, regarding political, economic or other issues. Again, the majority of the posts are neutral, but there are also far-right voices who frame this political activity as damaging for the interests and wellbeing of the Czech people, together with very few positive voices. An issue that attracted high interest, and polarization, during the research period, was the EU's Green Deal policy, which was attacked by the right, as destructive, while was supported by the centre-left and people concerned for the environment, active in social media.

Close to one-fourth of the posts (23%) address an economic aspect of European relevance, concerning the state of the economy or the economic policies in (parts of) Europe/EU. Occasionally they involve also unemployment, poverty, economic fraud and corruption, which are mentioned by Eurosceptic and far-right voices, to attack the EU economic policies as destructive. Also, other populist voices (ANO) connect the country's economic and national independence with the choice to maintain the Czech crown as the national currency, not joining the Eurozone. Finally, a lower number of posts (12%) refer to a scientific aspect of European relevance, involving scientific developments or achievements, such as anti-COVID-19 vaccines and other medication.

	Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Total
European institutions (n)	137	119	111	92	459
% of Total	20.7%	18%	16.8%	13.9%	69.3%
% within Dimension	77.4%	73%	68.9%	57.1%	69.3%
European Law (n)	138	105	45	48	336
% of Total	20.8%	15.8%	6.8%	7.2%	50.7%
% within Dimension	78%	64.4%	28%	29.6%	50.7%
European industries (n)	115	111	38	39	303
% of Total	17.3%	16.7%	5.7%	5.9%	45.7%
% within Dimension	65%	68.1%	23.6%	24.1%	45.7%
European democratic models (n)	17	11	33	11	72
% of Total	2.6%	1.7%	5%	1.7%	10.9%
% within Dimension	9.6%	6.7%	20.5%	6.8%	10.9%
European territory (n)	20	11	23	12	66
% of Total	3%	1.7%	3.5%	1.8%	10%
% within Dimension	11.3%	6.7%	14.3%	7.4%	10%
European values (n)	14	14	26	12	66
% of Total	2.1%	2.1%	3.9%	1.8%	10%
% within Dimension	7.9%	8.6%	16.1%	7.4%	10%
European interactions (n)	5	3	3	15	26
% of Total	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	2.3%	3.9%
% within Dimension	2.8%	1.8%	1.9%	9.3%	3.9%
European people (n)	7	8	5	5	25

% of Total	1.1%	1.2%	0.8%	0.8%	3.8%
% within Dimension	4%	4.9%	3.1%	3.1%	3.8%
Other* (n) [European public sphere, culture, media, new social movements]	9	4	3	8	24
% of Total	1.5%	0.6%	0.6%	1.2%	3.7%
% within Dimension	5.2%	2.4%	1.8%	4.8%	3.7%
Political aspect (n)	42	44	63	42	191
% of Total	6.3%	6.6%	9.5%	6.3%	28.8%
% within Dimension	23.7%	27%	39.1%	25.9%	28.8%
Economic aspect (n)	24	81	34	16	155
% of Total	3.6%	12.2%	5.1%	2.4%	23.4%
% within Dimension	13.6%	49.7%	21.1%	9.9%	23.4%
Scientific aspect (n)	24	2	5	46	77
% of Total	3.6%	0.3%	0.8%	6.9%	11.6%
% within Dimension	13.6%	1.2%	3.1%	28.4%	11.6%
Aspects Total (N)	177	163	161	162	663
% of Total	26.7%	24.6%	24.3%	24.4%	100%

Table 9: Aspects of Europeanity * Dimensions

Discussion and concluding remarks

The research aimed to investigate how news professionals communicate about European issues on the main social media platforms, in the Czech Republic, and how the public addresses these issues using the same platforms. The research findings concerning the use of the social media platforms the voices, issues and aspects of Europeanity expressed by professionals and non-professionals, in the Czech Republic, as they have been presented in the previous section, shall be considered in the light of the study's specificities and limitations.

Firstly, as it concerns the 'news professionals' dimension, the research focused on mainstream professional news media, selected on the basis of relevance, popularity and professional standards, not including alternative or non-professional media. Secondly, the three social media platforms selected, on the basis of their popularity at the European level, shall not be considered representative of the conditions and practices in all social media platforms, in the Czech Republic, and elsewhere in Europe. Thirdly, while the methods used to extract the posts per platform type/dimension/month were sophisticated (see Cardoso et al., 2021), they still produced very specific results. The purpose of the study was to analyse posts that were relevant and influential in the debates regarding the issues that were discussed each time. Thus, the most relevant content was extracted on the basis of interactions (on Facebook), estimated reach (on Twitter) and relevance (on YouTube), using a list of keywords pertinent to each of the four dimensions (Europe, climate, economy, health). These criteria of relevance led to the extraction of very specific content. Still, even when applying these criteria, a big part of the content on YouTube, when checked, proved to be off-topic, for the dimension(s) it was examined, and was not analysed.

Furthermore, the specificities of the research period need to be taken into consideration, in evaluating the findings, avoiding generalisations. As mentioned, the research period was dominated by the parliamentary elections, that led to the change of government in the Czech Republic. The high polarisation and the dominance of populist and extreme-right voices shall not be considered as the rule for all periods and platforms. Looking at the different platform types analysed, the dominance of Okamura's and his party's extreme right-wing rhetorics is overwhelming, on the general population of Facebook users, followed by Babiš's ANO, to a lesser degree. The analysed Facebook groups echo to a large extent the populist rhetorics and debates of these parties, with some presence of Pirates' and other anti-Babiš' positions. Twitter is dominated by media and independent experts and journalists. YouTube appears overall to be neutral and not highly relevant in these debates.

A note to be made is that a lot of the politicians' content on Facebook was repeated with minor or no modifications across different platforms and the three months of study, which points to a possible lack of diversity in the topics, aspects and ideas shared about European issues. A second point to be made is that Okamura's Facebook posts had a high number of interactions also in November, long after the elections, which were held in early October. This might be considered an indication of populist, extreme-right, Eurosceptic voices being popular on Facebook, in the Czech Republic, which needs further exploration. Still, one shall be careful in making claims of broader societal relevant and impact, without further research. High popularity on one social media platform does not translate automatically into agreement and acceptance of one's positions. As mentioned earlier, SPD did not improve its position in the parliament, in the 2021 election, but actually lost two seats (compared to the 2017 election).

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to Sandra Abdulhaková and Klára Odstrčilová for their valuable contribution to the research project.

References

- AMI Digital (2021). AMI Digital Index 2021. Prague: AMI Digital. Available at: <https://amidigital.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/adi2021-klienti-final.pdf>
- Cardoso, G., Álvares, C., Moreno, J., Sepúlveda, R., Crespo, M., & Foà, C. (2021). A Framework and Methodological Protocol for analyzing the platformization of news. Deliverable for the EUMEPLAT project.
- Czech Statistical Office [Český statistický úřad] (2021). Use of information and communication technologies in households and between people - 2021 [Využívání informačních a komunikačních technologií v domácnostech a mezi osobami – 2021]. Prague: ČSÚ.

- Císař O., & Kubát, M. (2021). Czech Republic: Running the State Like a Family Business. In G. Bobba & N. Hubé (eds.), *Populism and the Politicization of the COVID-19 Crisis in Europe*, pp. 101–114, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- European Commission (2021). Final report on the audit of the functioning of the management and control systems in place to avoid conflict of interest in Czechia. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/reports/2021/final-report-on-the-audit-of-the-functioning-of-the-management-and-control-systems-in-place-to-avoid-conflict-of-interest-in-czechia
- Goodley, S., Tait, R., & Alecci S. (2021, October 3). Revealed: Czech PM used offshore companies to buy £13m French mansion. *The Guardian*.
- Kemp, S. (2022). Digital 2022: Czechia report. *Data Reportal* (2022). Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report>
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McEnchroe, T. (2021, October 9). Czech elections: Anti-Babiš coalitions victorious, Social Democrats and Communists out of lower-house. *Radio Prague International*. Available at: <https://english.radio.cz/czech-elections-anti-babis-coalitions-victorious-social-democrats-and-communists-8730760>
- Reporters Without Borders (2022). World Press Freedom Index – 2022. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/rsf%E2%80%99s-2022-world-press-freedom-index-new-era-polarisation-0>
- Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2022). Digital news report 2022. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The Endowment Fund for Independent Journalism (2022). Media Rating – News media. Prague: The NFNZ. Available at: <https://www.nfnz.cz/rating-medii/zpravodajske/>

Media and radical political voices dominate the social media sphere

WP2 Country report Germany

Volker Grassmuck & Barbara Thomass

Abstract

Social media in Germany are dominated by media outlets, with non-organisational actors, mostly common citizens, in second place and politicians in third. Media also gathered the largest number of followers on Twitter, Facebook and Youtube. The impression that social media are primarily the place for non-professional voices to speak and debate has to be corrected for Germany. In this sense, reality is more conservative than the constant hyping of revolutions and disruptions would make us believe.

In contrast, among political actors, those with radical positions utilize social media the most, particularly on Facebook where radical right-wing voices post three times as often as those from Communists and left. Also the impact of the radical right on the digital social sphere seems to be disproportionately larger than in the parliamentary arena, particularly on Facebook where 5 of the top 20 posts by Interactions are by the AfD. Also the highest ranked video on Youtube by view count is from AfD TV, the third most viewed video in our sample is by the Austrian anti-Covid measures party MFG. [300w].

Introduction

The goal of the empirical data analysis exercise of WP2 is to better understand the “Platformisation of News” and to gauge the degree of “Europeanisation” of the national and the European digital public sphere (Cardoso et al. 2021: 5). More specifically we look at information and debate on social media platforms, concretely on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube (for an overview of the subject field of platforms see Belli et al. 2021).

While traditional mass media constitute gatekeepers controlling who can speak publicly and what is spoken about, social media allow everyone with Internet access to address a potentially global audience. How much of that potential is realised depends to a large degree on the algorithms controlling the news feed (in case of FB & TW) and the recommendations (in case of YT). What is the actual mix of agents – media, politicians, public intellectuals, common citizens – posting on Social Media? What are they talking about? What relative impact do their posts have? Is the overall effect a choir harmoniously singing the unceasing hymn of public opinion forming? Or is it a cacophony of isolated individuals behind their screen trying to scream as hard as possible in the hope to be heard? Do we see a counter-factually rational discourse about the most good for the biggest possible number in solidarity and fairness, or a cesspool of hatred, populism, self-righteousness, me-first, disinformation, propaganda and porn? What does the state of the social digital public sphere tell us about the state of democracy in Europe?

Methodology

Following extensive training, two researchers independently coded 144 posts (20% of the total of 720) of month 1 (September 2021) for 55 variables with the purpose of measuring the inter-coder reliability coefficient (ICRC). Alas, the test resulted in too many variables Krippendorff's Alpha not meeting the threshold of acceptability of 0.80. The month 1 data for Germany had therefore to be discarded.

After evaluating the month 1 process for the entire project, the Portuguese work package leaders made some adaptations, including removing three variables from the codebook and provided additional clarification and training for both German coders. For the second month (October 2021) the test yielded a Krippendorff's alpha range for the 55 variables of 0.796 – 1.000, which is considered of adequate reliability (Krippendorff, 2004).

The dataset under analysis therefore contains posts from October and November 2021, 451 all together. It consists of 10 posts in the 3 Facebook user areas All Users, Groups and Media and for the 4 Dimensions Climate, Economy, Health and Europe, or a Facebook total of 240, 10 posts in the 2 Twitter user areas All Users and Media and for the 4 Dimensions, or a Twitter total of 160, and Youtube posts for the 4 Dimensions which, because of a lack of on-topic posts in the extracted datasets, do not add up to 80 but only to 51.

The German Media Landscape

For an in-depth overview of the state of journalistic-editorial media and media pluralism in Germany see Horz-Ishak & Thomass (2021). To gauge how relevant social media platforms are for public opinion forming it is important to know which proportion of the population uses them, how often, only passively or also actively.

According to Kemp, there were 78.02 million Internet users in Germany in January 2022. That is 93.0 percent of the total population. 5.87 million people in Germany or 7.0 percent of the population remained offline. 72.60 million people or the equivalent to 86.5 percent of the total population used social media. Social media users in Germany increased by 6.6 million (+10.0 percent) between 2021 and 2022 (Kemp 2022).

According to Meta's advertising resources, **Facebook** had 25.75 million users in Germany in early 2022 or 35.0 percent of the "eligible" audience aged 13 and above (ibid.). Numbers published by **Twitter**'s advertising department indicate that the service had 7.75 million users in Germany in early 2022, equivalent to 10.5 percent of the population aged 13 and above (ibid.). Google's advertising resources indicate that **Youtube** had 72.60 million users in Germany in early 2022. That is equivalent to 86.5 percent of Germany's total population and 93.1 percent of Germany's total Internet user base (regardless of age) (ibid.).

In short, Youtube has by far the widest reach in Germany (93%) while Facebook is second (35%) and Twitter (10%) is the smallest and primarily inhabited by professional communicators from media, civil society and politics.

According to the Reuters Digital news report, online (86%) replaced TV (65) as main source of news for the first time in 2022 in Germany. Social media alone accounted for 32 percent of news (Hölig/Behre/Schulz 2022). Some studies find that media intermediaries play a central and increasing role for news consumption with nearly half of the German population consulting them on a daily basis, and three quarters of 14- bis 29-year olds doing so (Die Medienanstalten 2021).

Quite another matter is whether this social media news consumption actually makes users more politically knowledgeable. “A preregistered meta-analysis of 76 studies (N = 442,136) reveals no evidence of any political learning on social media in observational studies, and statistically significant but substantively small increases in knowledge in experiments. These small-to-nonexistent knowledge gains are observed across social media platforms, types of knowledge, countries, and periods. Our findings suggest that the contribution of social media toward a more politically informed citizenry is minimal.” (Amsalem & Zoizner 2022)

The context of the research period

In the sample period – October and November 2021 –, our thematic dimensions played out intensely and interconnectedly in various ways on the three social media platforms we observed. Even only four dimensions open an ample space of possibilities for interactions, including conflicts of objectives like fighting the climate crisis and ensuring that energy prices remain affordable, and problems that provide ammunition to bad and disillusioned actors for criticising the established institutions of government, media, science – and Europe.

Specific to **Germany** was that the sample period was shortly after the federal elections on 26 September 2021 that topped off the “super election year 2021” with six of the Länder voting as well. In it the AfD reached an exceptionally high engagement on Facebook (Righetti et al. 2022: 14f.). During that time, the new coalition of Social-Democrats, Greens and Liberals were negotiating their essentials and red lines while the outgoing government was still in charge of daily business. The coalition treaty and the new cabinet were widely debated. After 16 years as German Chancellor, Angela Merkel was given a farewell in the political arena in Berlin and Brussels, in the press and, sometimes much less friendly, in the social arena.

Research findings

Format use

All posts on all platforms and in all dimensions contain **text**. Even on the video platform Youtube each item has at least a title identifying the content, but most of the time at least a few lines. Search is text-based, and this is, in fact, the way the research items have been extracted, based on key-words.

In more than two thirds of the cases the text includes **links** (68%), often to the poster's home-page or to platform-external sources. Twitter posts in our sample are most likely to contain a link (83%), followed by Facebook (62%), while only half of Youtube posts have links.

Also about two thirds of posts contain **images** (66%). Images are used more often on Facebook (81%) than on Twitter (65%) and not at all on Youtube.

Video is the format with the most limited use (17%). On Youtube, of course, every post is a video. Yet that most complex and difficult to produce format is found only in a small fraction of posts on Facebook (9%) and even less on Twitter (2.5%).

formats \ platforms	Facebook	Twitter	Youtube	Total
Text (n)	240	160	51	451
% of Total	53.21%	35.48%	11.31%	100.0%
% within Platform	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Link (n)	148	133	28	309
% of Total	32.82%	29.5%	6.21%	68.51%
% within Platform	61.67%	83.12%	54.9%	
Image (n)	195	104	0	299
% of Total	43.24%	23.06%	0	66.3%
% within Platform	81.25%	65.0%	0	
Video (n)	22	4	51	77
% of Total	4.88%	0.89%	11.31%	17.07%
% within Platform	9.17%	2.5%	100.0%	
Total (N)	240	160	51	451
% of Total	53.21%	35.48	11.31	100,00 %

Table 1: Formats * Platforms

Who posts? – Publishing agents by kind and political position

The largest share of posts in our sample came from media (54%). Non-institutional agents (21%), i.e. mostly common citizens, and political agents (20%), i.e. mostly politicians, were head-to-head.

Other organisations (5%) seem negligible. They contributed 22 of the 451 posts in our sample and included NGOs, a federal ministry, the party foundation of the Greens, a university, a lobbying

organisation (Digitaleurope, a “trade association representing digitally transforming industries in Europe”, <https://www.digitaleurope.org/about-us/>) and Europe Direct Strasbourg, a Youtube channel by the Centre d'Information sur les Institutions Européennes.

Media publishing agents

Among media posters, half were from print (50%), of which slightly more magazines (56%) than newspapers (44%). A little less than half of media posts were from broadcast media (44%), of which all from TV stations and not a single one from radio. Internet-only media contributed only six percent of media posts in the sample. Finally there was one post by a news agency (AFP) that did not fit into the given categories. It is worth noting that media will often carry the same news of the day, indicating a stronger influence on news selection by news agencies than is visible in our data.

	% within dimension	% within Media	Total
Print			123
% of Total			27.27%
% within Media		50.20%	
Newspapers			54
% of Total			11.97%
% within Media		22.04%	
% within Print	43.90%		
Magazines			69
% of Total			15.30%
% within Media		28.16%	
% within Print	56.10%		
Broadcast			108
% of Total			23.95%
% within Media		43.67%	
Radio			0
% of Total		0	
% within Media		0	
% within Broadcast	0		
Television			108
% of Total			23.95%
% within Media		43.67%	
% within Broadcast	100.0%		
Internet only			14
% of Total			3.10%
% within Media		5.71%	
[news agency]¹			1

¹ AFP (IX4RU8tFDno, in YT Europe 3).

% of Total	0.22%
% within Media	0.41%
media publishing agents Total (N)	245
% of Total	54.32%
all posts Total (N)	451
	100.0%

Table 2 media publishing agents

Comparing **Public Service Media** (PSM) and other broadcast media we find that out of 108 total posts by broadcasters, 91 are from PSM and 17 from commercial broadcasters. The posts from PSM are fairly evenly divided between the two main TV news programmes, Tagesschau and ZDF Heute, with occasional posts from Phoenix and DW. The most active commercial publisher is RTL (8 posts), followed by Euronews (4) and n-tv (3).

Among print media, Der Spiegel (41) is publishing most actively on social media, followed by Bild (23), Focus (16) and Welt (14). The others are: Zeit Online (6), Handelsblatt (5), FAZ (5), Tagesspiegel (2), SZ (2) and one post each by Stern, Roland Tichy, Merkur, Kreiszeitung, Heise, Guardian and Berliner Morgenpost.

The majority of media posts are from professional mass media and some party media (e.g. AfD Kompakt). Looking at the remainder in the media dataset and beyond, we find a number civil society initiatives, some individual journalists, citizens' media and alternative media with a decreasing degree of professionalism:

Non-organisation publishing agents

The second largest group of publishing agents in our sample are individuals. Among them, common citizens (78%) dominate, followed by professional commentators (17%) who include journalists and television presenters, university professors, public intellectuals like former postmodern philosopher and former professor for media science, now aphorist of populism Norbert Bolz and experts in fields like renewable energy, forestry, stock trading or crypto-currency. Among them are Max Otte, economist and member of the CDU until he ran as the AfD candidate in the election of the German Federal President in 2022, after he was expelled from the CDU, and the "non-organisation" Extinction Rebellion. Finally, there was not a single influencer in our sample – unless you would stretch the definition to include the entire Presenter / Commentator category of "opinion leaders".

Political publishing agents

The clear majority of political agents are individual politicians (85%) or their social media staff, rather than political parties (14%). There were foundations of political parties (coded as other organisation) and party-affiliated media (e.g. AfD Kompakt, coded under political agent / party). In our sample, we found posts by MEPs but none by factions in the EU parliament. (For the power structures among the different party families in the EP and that of Germany which provides the largest number of MEPs, see EU-Matrix 2022.)

Looking at the political position of political posters, there is a striking dominance by far-right nationalists party AfD (strengthened by the two parties founded from the Corona-denier “Querdenken” movement: in Germany Die Basis, in Austria the MFG). They published 51% of all posts by political actors and 10% of all the posts in our sample. Alice Weidel is the most prominent figure on the far right. So is Sahra Wagenknecht on the far left (Die Linke), which (at 17%) constitutes the second largest political faction in our sample. Social Democrats (11%), Christian Democrats (9%) and Greens (7%) post significantly less while Liberals (5%) seem least inclined to address the digital social sphere.

The relative positions of radical right and radical left cannot be seen as support for the “horseshoe theory” which suggests that positions at both ends of the political spectrum will eventually meet. Weidel and Wagenknecht do meet on their positions against Covid measures and sanctions against Russia, but not on most other issues, and not even those agreements are shared by others in the Linke (Die Da Oben 2022).

	Total
Far-right nationalists	46
% of Total	10.20%
% within Dimension	51.11%
Communists and left	15
% of Total	3.32%
% within Dimension	16.67%
Socialists & Democrats	10
% of Total	2.22%
% within Dimension	11.11%
Christian democrats and conservatives	8
% of Total	1.77%
% within Dimension	8.89%
Greens and regionalists	6
% of Total	1.33%
% within Dimension	6.67%
Liberals and centrists	5
% of Total	1.11%

% within Dimension	5.55%
Euroseptic conservatives	0
Independents	0
Non aligned	0
Political Poster Total (N)	90
% of Total	19.95%

Table 3 political position of political posters

Looking more closely, we can recognise elements of a right-wing echo chamber. Figure 1 shows a post on the Facebook page of AfD member magazine "AfD Kompakt" reposting a post by an AfD MEP which consists primarily of quotations for which the source is not given. The post is followed by three links to quality media Tagesschau and Handelsblatt and to Focus. The Focus link is to a guest article by Gabor Steingart, the publisher of "The Pioneer Briefing", former journalist for Der Spiegel, former editor in chief and then publisher of Handelsblatt before he was sacked in 2019. Infamous for his polarising steam hammer style of writing.

An important actor in this echo chamber used to be Kremlin propaganda channel RT, formerly Russia Today. It is infamous for reinforcing polarising messages and spreading FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) abroad. Metadata for posts by RT DE had been extracted for the entire sampling period but, since RT DE was banned from the platforms in March 2022 (Council of the EU 2022), the posts were no longer accessible at the time of coding. (For large coordinated networks on Facebook spreading anti-establishment narratives see Righetti et al. 2022: 16; Rau et al. 2022).



Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1:

<https://www.facebook.com/343461479366778/posts/1503227896723458> in FB Climate All 3

On what platforms? – Publishing agents * Platforms

Our data indicate that media posts dominate on all three platforms, the most pronounced on Twitter (68%) but just as clearly on Youtube (51%) and Facebook (46%). Place two on Facebook is held by non-institutional agents (30%), third by political agents (24%). These are reversed on Twitter where politicians (19%) are in second and common citizens (12%) in third place. Remarkably, on Youtube second place is occupied by other organisations (39%), while political and non-institutional agents are at a mere 6 percent.

	Facebook	Twitter	Youtube	Total
Media agent (n)	110	109	26	245
% of Total	24.39%	24.17%	5.76%	54.32%
% within Dimension	45.83%	68.12%	50.98%	
Non-institutional agent (n)	72	19	3	94
% of Total	15.96%	4.21%	0.66%	20.84%
% within Dimension	30.0%	11.87%	5.88%	
Political agent (n)	57	30	3	90
% of Total	12.64%	6.65%	0.66%	19.95%
% within Dimension	23.75%	18.75%	5.88%	
Other Organisation (n)	2	2	20	22
% of Total	0.44%	0.44%	4.43%	4.88%
% within Dimension	0.83%	1.25%	39.21%	
Publishing agent Total (N)	240	160	51	451
% of Total	53.21%	35.48%	11.31%	100.0%

Table 4: Publishing agents * Platforms

What are publishing agents talking about?

What are the Issues and topics that are most posted about on social media in Germany? How do the four dimensions (Europe, Health, Economy, Climate) play out? What are the main sub issues that are discussed within each dimension?

When reading the following numbers, it is important to remember that posting agent is exclusive, i.e. every post has one and only one publishing agent, whereas our other coding categories – format, subject matter and Europeaneity – are cumulative, i.e. a post can have text and link and image, and it can talk about several topics.

Publishing agents * Dimensions

Media agents, who publish half of all the most “relevant” posts on social media (54%), also dominate the debate on each of our four dimensions, most pronounced for Europe where sixty percent of posts within that dimension are from media, followed by Health (58%), Economy (52%),

and Climate (12%). Second place in our sample is taken by Non-institutional Agents: Climate (23%), Health (22%) and Europe (21%), with one exception: In the Economy Dimension, common citizens and opinion-leaders contribute only nine percent, while political agents are the second most active posters after media. Other organisations only significantly contribute to the Climate debate, with twelve percent of posts in that Dimension.

/ Dimensions					
Publishing agents	Climate	Economy	Health	Europe	Total
Media agent (n)	56	55	62	72	245
% of Total	12.42%	12.19%	13.75%	15.96%	54.32%
% within Dimension	46.67%	52.38%	58.49%	60.0%	
Non-institutional agent (n)	28	19	23	25	94
% of Total	6.20%	4.21%	5.10%	5.54%	20.84%
% within Dimension	23.33%	8.57%	21.70%	20.83%	
Political agent (n)	22	30	17	21	90
% of Total	4.88%	6.65%	3.77%	4.66%	19.95%
% within Dimension	18.33%	28.57%	16.04%	17.5%	
Other Organisation (n)	14	1	4	5	22
% of Total	3.10%	0.22%	0.89%	1.11%	4.88%
% within Dimension	11.67%	0.95%	3.77%	4.17%	
Publishing agent Total (N)	120	105	106	120	451
% of Total	26.61%	23.28%	23.50%	26.61%	100.0%

Table 5: Publishing agents * Dimensions

What is being talked about within the four dimensions? – Subject Matter * Dimensions

In all dimensions posts also refer to “other organisations”. The reason is likely that the national government, the European Commission or a ministry are in this category rather than being coded as political agents. Non-institutional agents are mostly referred to in the context of Health (83%) and Europe (63%), while Political Agents are addressed in posts on Economy (60%), Europe (57%) and Climate (55%), but less so on matters of Health (14%).

A big sub-set of Non-institutional Agents are “Common Citizens” who appear in our sample both as publishers (Q3d.1.3) and as subject matter being talked about (Q4d.3). Populists and politicians like to argue with the interests of “society”, of the non-organised citizens in general and particular subgroups like the working poor, car-drivers, home-owners etc.

Media which are by far the most active publishers on social media are themselves barely the subject of conversation. On Facebook they are mentioned in 14 percent of posts, on Youtube (2%) and Twitter (0.6%) nearly not at all. This confirms the observation that the media are their own blind spot. We need them to see the world, but they only become the topic of public debate when there is a manifest scandal.

/ Dimensions					
Subject Matter	Climate	Economy	Health	Europe	Total
Political agent (n)	66	63	15	68	212
% of Total	14.63%	13.97%	3.32%	15.08%	47.01%
% within Dimension	55.0%	60.0%	14.15%	56.67%	
News Media (n)	5	6	12	12	35
% of Total	1.11%	1.33%	2.66%	2.66%	7.76%
% within Dimension	4.17%	5.71%	11.32%	10.0%	
Other Organisation (n)	105	102	99	110	416
% of Total	23.28%	22.62%	21.95%	24.39%	92.24%
% within Dimension	87.5%	97.14%	93.40%	91.67%	
Non-institutional agent (n)	63	57	88	76	284
% of Total	13.97%	12.64%	19.51%	16.85%	62.97%
% within Dimension	52.5%	54.29%	83.02%	63.33%	
Other (n)	3	0	1	0	4
% of Total	0.66%	0.0%	0.22%	0.0%	0.89%
% within Dimension	2.5%	0.0%	0.94%	0.0%	
Subject Matter Total (N)	120	105	106	120	451
% of Total	26.61%	23.28%	23.50%	26.61%	100,00 %

Table 6: Subject Matter * Dimensions

By which Publishing agents? – Subject Matter * Publishing agents

Looking at the subject matter that the different Publishing Agents address, we see again that Other Organisations are referred to in nearly all posts by all agents. Political Agents secondly post about Political Agents and about Non-institutional Agents (both 70%). For Non-institutional publishers and those from Other Organisations Non-institutional Agents are the second most important subject matter (Other Organisations 86%, Non-institutional Agents 71%, Media 55%) while Political Agents come in third place (Other Organisations 50%, Non-institutional Agents 48%, Media 38%).

Subject Matter	Political agent	Media agent	Non-institutio nal agent	Other organisation	Total
Political agent (n)	63	93	45	11	212
% of Total	13.97%	20.62%	9.98%	2.44%	47.01%
% within Dimension	70.0%	37.96%	47.87%	50.0%	
News Media (n)	7	14	13	1	35
% of Total	1.55%	3.10%	2.88%	0.22%	7.76%
% within Dimension	7.78%	5.71%	13.83%	4.54%	
Other Organisation (n)	86	227	81	22	416
% of Total	19.07%	50.33%	17.96%	4.88%	92.24%
% within Dimension	95.55%	92.65%	86.17%	100.0%	

Non-institutional agent (n)	63	135	67	19	284
% of Total	13.97%	29.93%	14.85%	4.21%	62.97%
% within Dimension	70.0%	55.10%	71.28%	86.36%	
Other (n)	0	1	2	1	4
% of Total	0.0%	0.22%	0.44%	0.22%	0.89%
% within Dimension	0.0%	0.41%	2.13%	4.54%	
Subject Matter Total (N)	90	245	94	22	451
% of Total	19.95%	54.32%	14.19%	4.88%	100.0%

Table 7: Subject Matter * Publishing agents

Media Publishing Agent PSM / Non-PSM * Dimension

When we compare Public Service Media (PSM) and all other primarily commercial media, both print and broadcast, we find that PSM are strong on Health and Europe (both 35%), to a lesser degree on Economy (20%) and not so much on Climate (10%). Non-PSM media are strongest on Climate (31%) and overall more evenly balanced (Europe 26%, Economy 24%, Health 20%).

	PSM	Non-PSM	Total
Climate	9	47	56
% within Dimension	9.80%	30.72%	22.86%
Economy	18	37	55
% within Dimension	19.78%	24.18%	22.45%
Health	32	30	62
% within Dimension	35.16%	19.61%	25.31%
Europe	32	40	72
% within Dimension	35.16%	26.14%	29.39%
Total	91	154	245

Table 8: Media Publishing Agent PSM / Non-PSM * Dimension

Aspects of Europeaneity

On social media in Germany, Europe is perceived predominantly through its institutions. 57 percent of all posts in the entire sample refer to one or more European institution (ranging from 53% in the Dimension Economy to 59% in Europe). These include legislative, executive and judiciary, mostly refer to the Commission, but the EP, the Council, the ECB, the CJEU, EMA and other agencies are mentioned as well. The share is even a bit higher for the variable “European law & governance” (Q5J; 59%; ranging from 56% in Health to 62% in Europe), because it includes measures and programmes like the Green Deal in posts that do not mention the EC or other institution behind them.

Measures taken by EU institutions mostly refer to Political aspects (50%, ranging from 20% in Health to 67% in Climate) and secondly to Economic aspects (30%, ranging from 5% in Health to 59% in Economy). Scientific aspects (9%) appear most often in Health (24%) and in Climate (7%). European Values (20%) feature in the debate about Europe (42%) and Climate (17%) and surprisingly least in Health (9%). European Industries (11%) are strongest in Climate (27%) and Economy (12%). European Territory (9%) refers to geographic references in posts including the shrinkage of the European territory through Brexit and challenges at its borders. This aspect of Europeaneity is found most often in posts on Europe (24%) and on Economy (8%).

European Social Movements (7%) are mentioned most often in posts on Climate (15%) and on Health (6%). Mentions of European Interactions (6%) and of European People (5%) are marginal. Remarkably, also the European Democratic Model(s) barely appears in the debate (5%), mostly in that on Europe (13%) and mostly in reference to the Polish infringement of the rule of law as one of the core values of the European democratic model.

There is no indication whether posts containing references to Europeaneity report facts in a neutral way or express pro- or anti-Europe attitude.

/ Dimension					
Europeaneity	Climate	Economy	Health	Europe	Total
European institutions (n)	67	56	62	71	256
% of Total	14.85%	12.42%	13.75%	15.74%	56.76%
% within Dimension	55.83%	53.33%	58.49%	59.17%	
European Law (n)	74	60	59	75	268
% of Total	16.41%	13.30%	13.08%	16.63%	59.42%
% within Dimension	61.67%	57.14%	55.66%	62.50%	
European industries (n)	32	13	1	5	51
% of Total	7.09%	2.88%	0.22%	1.11%	11.31%
% within Dimension	26.67%	12.38%	0.94%	4.17%	
European values (n)	20	10	10	51	91
% of Total	4.43%	2.22%	2.22%	11.31%	20.18%
% within Dimension	16.67%	9.52%	9.43%	42.50%	
European Social Movements	18	4	6	4	32
% of Total	3.99%	0.89%	1.33%	0.89%	7.09%
% within Dimension	15.0%	3.81%	5.66%	3.33%	
European interactions (n)	14	3	3	9	29
% of Total	3.10%	0.66%	0.66%	1.99%	6.43%
% within Dimension	11.67%	2.86%	2.83%	7.50%	
European people (n)	8	5	5	4	22
% of Total	1.77%	1.11%	1.11%	0.89%	4.88%
% within Dimension	6.67%	4.76%	4.72%	3.33%	
European democratic models (n)	1	2	3	16	22
% of Total	0.22%	0.44%	0.66%	3.55%	4.88%

% within Dimension	0.83%	1.90%	2.83%	13.33%	
European territory (n)	2	8	3	29	42
% of Total	0.44%	1.77%	0.66%	6.43%	9.31%
% within Dimension	1.67%	7.62%	2.83%	24.17%	
Political aspect (n)	80	59	21	66	226
% of Total	17.74%	13.08%	4.66%	14.63%	50.11%
% within Dimension	66.67%	56.19%	19.81%	55.0%	
Economic aspect (n)	54	52	5	24	135
% of Total	11.97%	11.53%	1.11%	5.32%	29.93%
% within Dimension	45.0%	49.52%	4.72%	20.0%	
Scientific aspect (n)	8	0	26	6	40
% of Total	1.77%	0.0%	5.76%	1.33%	8.87%
% within Dimension	6.67%	0.0%	24.53%	5.0%	
Other* (n) [European public sphere, culture, media]	6	0	1	0	7
% of Total	1.33%	0.0%	0.22%	0.0%	1.55%
% within Dimension	5.0%	0.0%	0.94%	0.0%	
Dimension Total (N)	120	105	106	120	451
% of Total	26.61%	23.28%	23.50%	26.61%	100.0%

Table 9: Aspects of Europeaneity * Dimensions

Discussion and concluding remarks

Out of our data, a picture emerges of social media as the meeting ground of the people, who are informed by and in critical dialogue with journalistic-editorial media, and are being communicated to by individual politicians, more than in an institutional party-to-citizen way.

For the case of Germany, the conventional idea that social media are competitors of traditional mass media and even threaten their relevance must be corrected. Journalists from press, broadcasting and online-native formats are still very much the sensorium through which we perceive the world. The online public sphere consists of an open, often heated, sometimes hateful to the point of crossing the line to criminal debate about what things mean, but by and large of a general agreement about what things are, the factual information provided by professional media. While mass media publishers do embrace social media as significant outlets the platform environment remains problematic, particularly for PSM (Eichler 2022).

Whether the citizen-media and citizen-politician communication is two-way or one-way – essentially the traditional broadcast model in digital guise – was not within the scope of our research. It would require analysing comments and other additional interaction data.

Common citizens as publishers and even more so as commentators seem to be easily triggered into utterances of self-righteousness, aggressive verbal lapses, insults and hatred against politicians, other public figures and fellow citizens which none of them would dare voice in a

face-to-face situation. The greatest challenge for designing humane social media is to close the cognitive gap that makes people not feel that there is a fellow human being on the other side of the keyboard.

On social media, they are systematically triggered by tabloids like Bild who knew all along that enragement translates into engagement. They are very well prepared for the social media environment that rewards populism. From our study it remains unclear how much of dysfunctional communications is due to traditional populist media which find increased spreadability and findability and thereby a powerful resonance on the platforms and how much can genuinely be attributed to social media and their algorithmic preferences. The data give some indication that Youtube's recommendation algorithm is doing a better job at providing diversity and serendipity and avoiding filter bubbles.

Politically, the strong presence of radical right-wing actors on social media is striking. Voices who see the mainstream media as "liars press" and at the same time claim that they do not get enough airspace in them, find their communication channels in social media, particularly in Facebook.

References

- Amsalem, Eran and Alon Zoizner (2022): Do people learn about politics on social media? A meta-analysis of 76 studies, Eran Amsalem, Alon Zoizner, Journal of Communication, jqac034, <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac034>
- Belli, L.; Zingales, N. & Curzi, Y. (Eds.) (2021): Glossary of Platform Law and Policy Terms (online). FGV Direito Rio, <https://platformglossary.info/>
- Cardoso, G., Álvares, C., Moreno, J., Sepúlveda, R., Crespo, M., & Foà, C. (2021): A Framework and Methodological Protocol for analyzing the platformization of news. Deliverable for the EUMEPLAT project.
- Council of the EU (2022): EU imposes sanctions on state-owned outlets RT/Russia Today and Sputnik's broadcasting in the EU, Press release, 02.03.2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/02/eu-imposes-sanctions-on-state-owned-outlets-rt-russia-today-and-sputnik-s-broadcasting-in-the-eu/>
- Eichler, Henning (2022): Journalismus in sozialen Netzwerken. ARD und ZDF im Bann der Algorithmen? OBS-Arbeitsheft 110, Otto Brenner Stiftung, Frankfurt am Main, https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_data/stiftung/02_Wissenschaftsportal/03_Publikationen/AH110_OERM_Soziale_Netzwerke.pdf
- EU-Matrix (2022): MEP Influence Index 2022: Top 100 most politically influential MEPs, <https://eumatrix.eu/en/blog/meps-influence-index-2022-top-100-most-politically-influential-meps>
- Hölig, Sascha; Julia Behre, Wolfgang Schulz (2022): Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Digital news report 2022: Germany, 15 June 2022, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/germany>
- Horz-Ishak, Christine & Barbara Thomass (2021): Germany. Solid journalistic professionalism and strong public service media, in: The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How Leading News

- Media Survive Digital Transformation (Vol. 1) / [ed] Trappel, J. & Tomaz, T., Gothenburg: Nordicom, University of Gothenburg , 2021, p. 197-256,
<http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1557915&dswid=2149>
- Kemp, Simon (2022): Digital 2022: Germany. Data Reportal, 9 February 2022.
<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-germany?rq=Germany>
- Krippendorff, K. (2004): Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Die Medienanstalten (2021): Studie 2021-I Intermediäre und Meinungsbildung,
<https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/themen/forschung/intermediaere-und-meinungsbildung>
- Rau, Jan; Sandra Kero; Vincent Hofmann; Christina Dinar and Amélie Pia Heldt (2022): Rechtsextreme Online-Kommunikation in Krisenzeiten, Arbeitspapier des HBI, FGZ Resultate #62, 17. March 2022,
https://www.fgz-risc.de/fileadmin/user_upload/tv6eli5_ssoar-2022-Rau_et_al-Rechtsextreme_Online-Kommunikation_in_Krisenzeiten.pdf
- Righetti, Nicola; Giglietto, Fabio; Kakavand, Azade Esther; Kulichkina, Aytalina; Marino, Giada; Terenzi, Massimo (2022): Political Advertisement and Coordinated Behavior on Social Media in the Lead-Up to the 2021 German Federal Elections. Dusseldorf: Media Authority of North Rhine-Westphalia,
https://www.medienanstalt-nrw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/NeueWebsite_0120/Zum_Nachlesen/BTW22_Political_Advertisement.PDF

Stylianos Papathanassopoulos
Ioanna Archontaki
Iliana Giannouli
Achilleas Karadimitriou

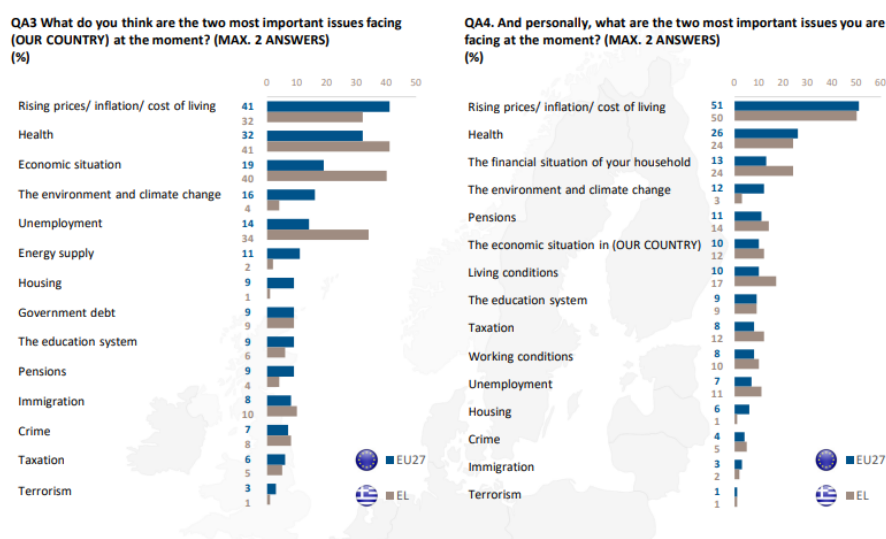
WP2 Country Report: Greece

Contents:

Perceptions about Europe and Europeanisation	2
Media Use in Greece	2
The research	3
Facebook	4
Twitter	7
YouTube	9
Scope of news	10
Dimensions of Europeanisation	10
Concluding Remarks	11
References:	12

Perceptions about Europe and Europeanisation

According to Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2022) Greek citizens, once supporters of the European Union and the Eurozone, tend not to trust in the EU (60% distrust in 2022). This developing trend was established after the events of the 2008 economic crisis. The Greek people have grown very sceptical towards the EU and European institutions, following the harsh austerity measures and provoking rhetoric. However, the European institutions are still more trusted (39%), compared to the national parliament (30%) and the Greek government (25%). Inflation and the cost of living used to be the major issue for almost a half of the respondents in 2021, followed by health, personal income, and the climate crisis.



Source: European Commission, 2022. Standard Eurobarometer 96. Eurobarometer Surveys. [online] European Commission. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>

Especially for the national economy, Greeks seem to be rather pessimistic (89%), way more than their European counterparts (59%). Most of the respondents did not expect their economic and job situation to change much in the following year. When it comes to European matters, Greeks think they are not well informed (71%), again higher than the European average (64%). Even though 88% of citizens agree that news misrepresents reality, the majority (68%) believe they can identify misinformation and false news.

Media Use in Greece

Fragmentation in the Greek digital news market remains high. According to the Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2022) Greeks use more digital news sources per week than the rest of the EU citizens. More than two-thirds (71%) of Greeks get their news online via social media, while TV news

consumption remains highly influential (60%), (see WP1). Moreover, according to the Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2022) sources vary significantly per age group. Younger people prefer getting their news from the web (74%) compared to 64% of people above 35 years old. Regarding traditional media, one in three respondents above the age of 35 gets the news from TV, while only 18% of the respondents below 35 years old answered the same.

Reflecting the recent reports about Press freedom in Greece (Reporters Sans Frontiers, 2022), trust in news has decreased by five percentage points to 27% in 2021. Greece scores the lowest in media trust in the EU along with Hungary and Slovakia, resembling the USA (26%). Similarly to the USA, the perception of news reliability seems to vary a lot depending on the political orientation of respondents. Increased polarisation can be seen in the chart below (2016 to 2022). In 2022, only 16% of the respondents with left political orientation said they trust the news. This percentage was considerably higher for respondents in the centre (30%) and in the right of the political spectrum (42%).

Despite trust in news coming from social media being only 22% (Newman et al., 2021), it is considered relatively high, especially when compared to Nordic countries and Western European ones. Additionally, almost one in two Greeks uses Facebook to get the news. This percentage is also high for YouTube users (33%), Facebook Messenger and Viber (23%) respectively, Instagram (15%) and Twitter with just 12%.

In 2017 Greece was the only EU country where respondents said they trusted more social media (28%) to news media (19%) for their information (Newman & Fletcher, 2017). Moreover, 43% of the respondents in Greece said they prefer social media because they provide a wider variety of views and sources.

The research

In the scope of this research, we analysed posts coming from both media and users' pages and public groups (n=700) on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The posts were collected according to four dimensions deemed to be the most important for EU citizens according to the 2022 Eurobarometer (Europe, economy, climate, and health) and coded in tandem to their relationship to the European Union. The period of analysis ranged from September 2021 to November 2021.


During this period regarding the economy the most prominent topics were the increasing gas prices in the EU, Greece having the highest electricity price in the EU and the annulment of the commercial agreement between EU and Australia. Regarding health, the most prominent topics were news on Covid mutations, the number of Covid cases per country, health policies and measures against Covid, as well as the EMA approved vaccines and comparisons among them. Regarding climate, news was reporting on the increasing prices of gas, petrol and electricity referring to the EU Green Deal as a contributing factor. There was also news reporting on waste management initiatives in regions of Greece. When examining Europe as a dimension the topics that dominated were the €3 billion defence agreement between Greece and France, Merkel's visit to Greece and the German elections.

With very few exceptions, posts coming from all platforms used a neutral tone while reporting on the EU.

Facebook

Facebook posts with the most interactions in *all users* category and in all four dimensions, were not coming from individuals, but from institutional actors. For example, the most popular post was a news piece from the Orthodox Church account on a Greek priest, Father Antonios, receiving an award in recognition for his work. The second post with most interactions was on the same news piece from a Greek radio station. The third and fourth most popular posts were from the opposition leader and ex - Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras.

Facebook Posts with the most interactions in *All Users* category (Sept. – Nov. 2021)

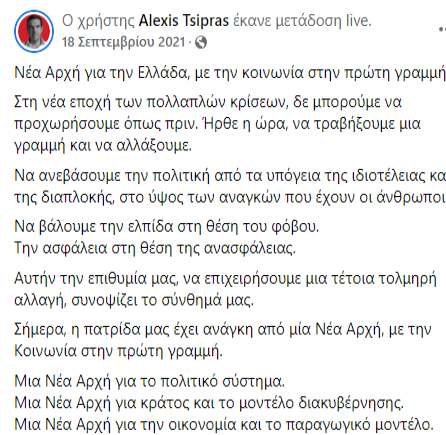


Εκκλησία online - ekklesiaonline.gr
8 Οκτωβρίου 2021 · 🌐

Η Ευρώπη υποκλήθηκε στον πάτερ Αντώνιο: Τιμήθηκε ως ο καλύτερος Ευρωπαίος Πολίτης

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑONLINE.GR
Η Ευρώπη υποκλήθηκε στον πάτερ Αντώνιο: Τιμήθηκε ως ο καλύτερος Ευρωπαίος Πολίτης - ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ...

👍 42 χιλ. 1,4 χιλ. σχόλια 1,7 χιλ. κοινοποιήσεις



Ο χρήστης Alexis Tsipras έκανε μετάδοση live.
18 Σεπτεμβρίου 2021 · 🌐

Νέα Αρχή για την Ελλάδα, με την κοινωνία στην πρώτη γραμμή

Στη νέα εποχή των πολλαπλών κρίσεων, δε μπορούμε να προχωρήσουμε όπως πριν. Ήρθε η ώρα, να τραβήξουμε μια γραμμή και να αλλάξουμε.

Να ανεβάσουμε την πολιτική από τα υπόγεια της ιδιοτέλειας και της διαπλοκής, στο ύψος των αναγκών που έχουν οι άνθρωποι.

Να βάλουμε την ελπίδα στη θέση του φόβου.

Την ασφάλεια στη θέση της ανασφάλειας.


Αυτήν την επιθυμία μας, να επιχειρήσουμε μια τέτοια τολμηρή αλλαγή, συνοψίζει το σύνθημά μας.

Σήμερα, η πατρίδα μας έχει ανάγκη από μία Νέα Αρχή, με την Κοινωνία στην πρώτη γραμμή.

Μια Νέα Αρχή για το πολιτικό σύστημα.

Μια Νέα Αρχή για κράτος και το μοντέλο διακυβέρνησης.

Μια Νέα Αρχή για την οικονομία και το παραγωγικό μοντέλο.



ΕΡΤ

ΣΥΡΙΖΑ

Μου αρέσει 🗨️ Σχόλιο 🔄 Κοινοποίηση

15 χιλ. · 2.5 νιλ. ανόκη

Table 1: Top 10 most popular posts from Facebook

All Users			Groups			Media		
Page name	Topics	Total interactions	Page name	Topics	Total interactions	Page name	Topic	Total interactions
Εκκλησία online - ekklesiaonline.gr	Europe, Religion, European Values	45,371	Σοφά Λόγια	Greek quotes, sayings	1,592	www.capital.gr	Economy; Greece as a hub for raw materials	2,536
Flashnews.gr	Europe, Religion, European Values	35,258	ΦΙΛΟΙ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗΣ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΟΥ ΜΗΤΣΟΤΑΚΗ & ΝΔ	Political Group	990	SKAI.gr	Economy; basic salary; Tsipras	1,689
Alexis Tsipras	Economy, NHS, Elections	16,737	ΚΑΘΕ ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ	Citizens of Athens	889	newsbeast	Health; Corona	1,567

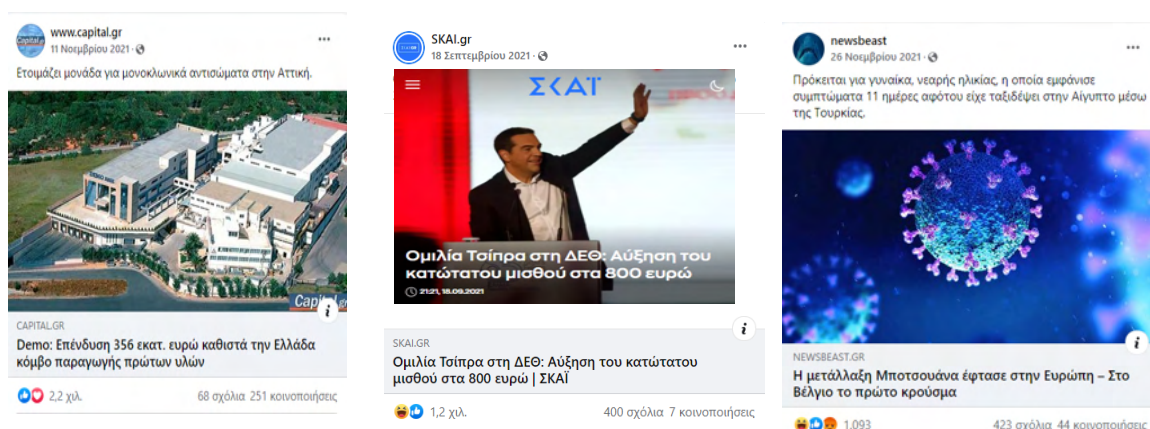
							mutant of Botswana	
Alexis Tsipras	Health, Pandemic crisis, measures	14,763	ΚΑΘΕ ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ	Citizens of Athens	889	newsbomb.gr	Europe; Merkel's visit to Greece	1,395
Kyriakos Mitsotakis	Europe, Greek - French Alliance	13,564	Βοτάνων Γνώση	Herbs	780	Athens Voice (official)	Europe; Push-backs, Papadimoulis	1,316
Alexis Tsipras	Health, Pandemic crisis, measures	12,540	ΠΛΗΡΩΣ ΑΝΕΜΒΟΛΙΑΣΤΟΣ	Unvaxxed, Against Vaccination	665	News 24/7	Economy; Tsipras	1,283
Kyriakos Mitsotakis	Europe, #EUMED9	10,692	ΠΛΗΡΩΣ ΑΝΕΜΒΟΛΙΑΣΤΟΣ	Unvaxxed, Against Vaccination	665	protothema.gr	Health; delta mutant	1,184
Alexis Tsipras	Economy, Defence, Greek - French Weapon Agreement	10,293	Ο Αρακάς και οι φίλοι του	Humorous political group	640	protothema.gr	Health; delta mutant	1,184
Kyriakos Mitsotakis	Economy, benefits & allowances	9,427	Μαγαζιά Χωρίς Μπολι	Unvaxxed, Against Vaccination	567	www.capital.gr	Health; delta mutant	1,161
Alexis Tsipras	Economy, Defence, Greek - French Weapon Agreement	8,853	Ε.ΤΟΥΛΟΥΠΑΚΗ ΟΜΑΔΑ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ -JUSTICE SUPPORTING TEAM	Political Group	563	News 24/7	Europe; German elections	1,057

When examining Facebook groups, we can see news and opinions coming from individuals gaining visibility and interactions. It is surprising that even though Facebook took measures to counter disinformation against Covid and vaccines, in the top 10 most popular posts coming from Facebook groups we find three posts from anti-vaxx groups. Again, regarding Facebook groups the most popular post had to do with the European recognition of the priest, Father Antonios, while the second is related to the unearthing movement of rivers in the city of Athens. The third most influential post was from a political group in favour of the New Democracy governing party condemning a Dutch journalist, Ingeborg Beugel, who asked the Prime Minister to say the truth about Greece pushing back immigrants and asylum seekers to Turkey.

Facebook Posts with the most interactions in *Groups* category (Sept. – Nov. 2021)



Facebook Posts with the most interactions in *Media* category (Sept. – Nov. 2021)



Posts coming from Facebook media pages had completely different topics. The most popular post was from the newspaper Capital, reporting on Demo's pharmaceutical company investment in Greece for producing monoclonal antibodies. The second most popular post was from Skai TV reporting on the opposition's leader Alexis Tsipras statement on increasing the basic salary to 800 euros and the third about the so - called Botswana mutation of Covid coming to Europe in November 2021. When comparing Facebook media pages of the sample to all users and groups, we can see that even though mainstream media have more than 3.5 million of followers their engagement rate is 0.4%, way lower than that of Facebook users' pages (4.76%) and Facebook groups (1.94%). This does not mean however, that people seek alternative news sources. This is evident, since most news items came from institutional actors. A significant exception are the anti-vaxxers groups, whose voices were excluded from the mainstream media.

Table 4: Comparison between 10 posts with most interactions on Facebook (all users, groups, media)

	Facebook All Users		Facebook Groups		Facebook Media	
	Avg	Total	Avg	Total	Avg	Total
Followers/ Members	372,433	3,724,326	42,300	422,992	356,370	3,563,710

Total Interactions	17,750	177,498	824	8,240	1,437	14,372
Comments	2,370	23,708	75	750	286	2,860
Shares	1,050	10,517	87	873	65	654
Avg engagement rate %		4.76		1.94		0.4

Twitter

The most popular tweets in “all users” category came from Greek politicians. This confirms the case that Twitter, at least in Greece, is more like a niche media for politicians, journalists, and political movements. In our sample, the most popular tweet came from the opposition leader Alexis Tsipras criticising the government for the management of the Covid crisis and the situation of the Greek NHS. The second most popular tweet was again from Alexis Tsipras official account, criticising the government on the inflation rate, stating that the petrol price and the electricity price were the highest in Europe. The third one came from the Socialist party ex - Prime Minister, Georgios Papandreou, saying that social media data from users should be at their self-disposal, suggesting the EU should invest in a social networking platform for its citizens.

Twitter Posts with the most interactions in *All Users* category (Sept. – Nov. 2021)

 Αλέξης Τσίπρας - Alexis Tsipras @atsipras 17000 νεκροί, ασθενείς σε ράντζα ή διασωληνωμένοι εκτός ΜΕΘ, γίναμε δυστυχώς πρώτοι σε θανάτους ανά εκατομμύριο σε όλη τη Δ.Ευρώπη. Για όλα αυτά η ευθύνη έχει ονοματεπώνυμο. Ανήκει σε αυτόν που απόψε έκανε το 11ο διάγγελμα για να πει ότι φταίνει όλα εκτός από τον ίδιο. #διάγγελμα 9:50 μ.μ. · 18 Νοε 2021 · Twitter Web App 531 Retweet 69 Tweet με παράθεση 2.794 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"	 Αλέξης Τσίπρας - Alexis Tsipras @atsipras Με τον μεγαλύτερο πληθωρισμό της 10ετίας. Με την υψηλότερη τιμή ηλ. ρεύματος στην Ευρώπη. Με το πετρέλαιο στα ύψη. Ζήτησα τη διενέργεια προ ημερησίας διατάξεως συζήτησης στη Βουλή για την ακρίβεια και την απουσία βούλησης της κυβέρνησης να προστατεύσει νοικοκυριά & επιχειρήσεις. 1:12 μ.μ. · 2 Νοε 2021 · Twitter Web App 326 Retweet 52 Tweet με παράθεση 1.799 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"	 George A. Papandreou @GPapandreou Εμείς θέλουμε το μοντέλο αυτοδιαχείρισης των δεδομένων. Γιατί να μην είμαστε όλοι μέτοχοι στο Facebook; Εφόσον εγώ δίνω τα δεδομένα μου, γιατί να μην έχω ένα κομμάτι κέρδους από την επεξεργασία τους; Γιατί να μην κάνει η Ευρώπη μία πλατφόρμα των πολιτών; #alpha_radio #pamemprosta 1:25 μ.μ. · 11 Νοε 2021 · Twitter for iPhone 61 Retweet 316 Tweet με παράθεση 284 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"
---	--	---

Posts with the most reach coming from mainstream media had different topics from those coming from all users. The most influential tweet came from Proto Thema weekly newspaper reporting on the Prime Minister’s discussion with Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, willing to invest in Greece. The second most popular tweet was from Skai TV reporting on Austria's

former Chancellor Sebastian Kurz 'statement that Greece keeps EU borders safer than 2015. The third one came also from Skai TV reporting on Adonis Georgiadis, Minister of Development and Investment, saying that according to the EU economic predictions, Greece will perform better in 2022.

Twitter Posts with the most interactions in *Media* category (Sept. – Nov. 2021)



Similarly to Facebook, twitter accounts of mainstream media have the most followers, more than 5 million. However, they underperform in terms of average engagement (0.006%)¹ and average reach (11.5%). Accounts from all users on the other hand, have less followers (3.3 million), but they perform better on average engagement (0.15%) and reach (137.3%).

Table 7: Comparison between 10 posts with most interactions on Twitter (all users, media)				
	Twitter All Users		Twitter Media	
	Avg	Total	Avg	Total
Followers	332,600	3,326,026	512,767	5,127,667
Reach	456,680	4,566,834	59,210	592,090
Replies	272	2,723	12	120
Retweets	227	2,275	20	201
Avg engagement rate %		0.15		0.006
Reach vs followers %		137.3		11.5

¹ Engagement is defined by Twitter as the total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet. Clicks anywhere on the Tweet, including retweets, replies, follows, likes, links, cards, hashtags, embedded media, username, profile photo, or Tweet expansion. Engagement rate: Number of engagements divided by impressions. Source: <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/using-the-tweet-activity-dashboard> For the purposes of this research the number of retweets and replies to the total reach were calculated to measure average engagement.

YouTube

YouTube is the second most visited website in Greece (Alexa,2020) and as already stated above, one in three users get their news from this platform. Unlike Facebook and Twitter, alternative media and news sources seem to thrive on this platform. Looking at the 10 videos with the most views in the sample, we find four videos coming from mainstream media (PBS Newshour, Euronews, Skai TV and Open TV) and 6 from alternative sources producing their own original content away from mainstream media's agenda.

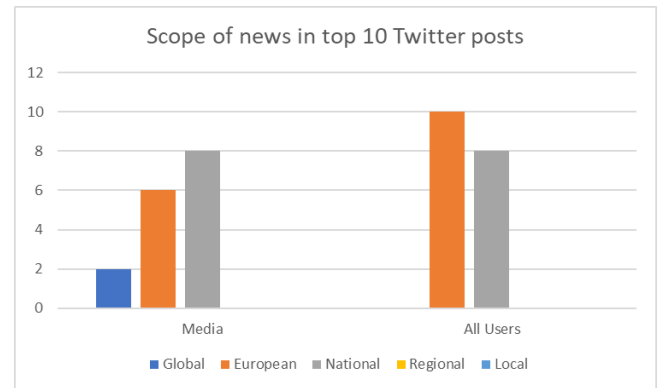
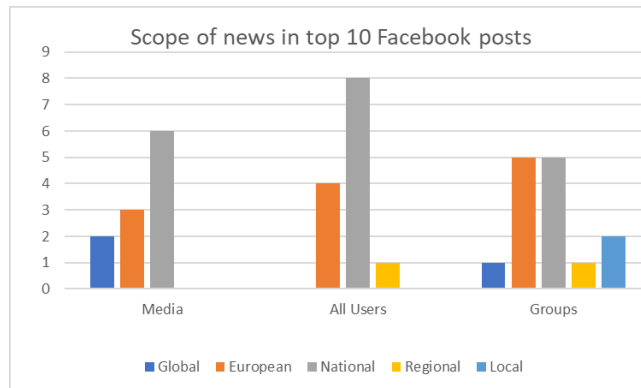
The most viewed video in the sample comes from Pentapostagma, a web portal with extreme far - right views, reporting on Greek coastal defence against Turkey. The second one comes from Open TV hosting the opposition leader, Alexis Tsipras and his views on economy and healthcare. The third most watched video comes from a geopolitical analyst criticising Erdogan's external policy and speculating on EU member - states stance against Turkey. In the top 10 however, we see four videos with information on pharmaceutical companies that have produced anti - covid vaccines and a news piece for Austria's policy to make vaccination mandatory. Another news piece from Skai TV hosted the statement of the Health Minister, saying that Greece would not proceed to a second lockdown and confirmed that health - related issues dominated the YouTube online public sphere in the period under examination. Similarly to the other two social networking platforms, Facebook and Twitter, videos coming from mainstream media score low in average engagement² (0.01%) and views to subscribers rate (0.7%). On the other hand, videos from alternative sources drive higher engagement (0.22%) and have higher views per subscribers (6.09%), indicating that their content is much more compelling for the audience compared to mainstream media.

Table 9: Comparison between 10 posts with most interactions on YouTube				
	Blogs & Alternative Media		Mainstream Media	
	Avg	Total	Avg	Total
Subscribers	109,210	1,092,136	625,000	6,250,000
Views	6,654	66,539	4,408	44,075
Likes	229	2,281	41	410
Comments	13	131	22	217
Avg engagement rate %		0.22		0.01
Views vs Subscribers %		6.09		0.7

² YouTube engagement metrics (views, likes, dislikes, and subscriptions) reflect how many times your YouTube video or channel has been interacted with. Source: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2991785?hl=en>. For the purpose of this research engagement rate was calculated based on the number of post engagements (likes, shares, and comments) divided by video views.

Scope of news

Facebook posts had mostly a national scope, except for posts coming from Facebook groups sharing the attention equally to European and national scope. In Facebook groups is where we find news with a local scope. On the contrary, twitter users, focused more on the European than the national.



Dimensions of Europeanisation

A controversial finding is that the Greek media don't refer to any of the dimensions of Europeanisation under study. However, posts coming from politicians (all users) refer to European values (2 out of 10), territory (2 out of 10), EU institutions (5 out of 10) and EU governance (3 out of 10). Referrals to EU dimensions are also high in posts coming from Facebook groups. Posts from the media refer mostly to political matters (6 out of 10), economic (5 out of 10) and scientific (4 out of 10). Posts from all users (politicians) refer solely to political and economic matters, while half of the posts coming from groups were political.

In Twitter, posts from the media have more referrals to EU institutions and governance (4 in total) but not to other EU dimensions. Posts from all users have also few referrals to European people (1) and European values (1).

In YouTube there are only a couple of referrals to EU institutions. We can conclude that the most popular posts in all platforms may mention Europe or the EU in general, but referrals to specific EU dimensions as indicated were virtually none - existent.

Concluding Remarks

Social media, like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have managed to become part of the networked and hybrid public sphere, giving birth to hopes of democratization of news flow, by taking advantage of civic participation and engagement. The results of our analysis may shed some new light on exploring the validity or the limits of this democratic possibility; On the one hand, there is a strong evidence of social's media function as agenda setters, fostering the introduction of news topics that are different or neglected by the legacy media. Both on twitter and Facebook users' pages as well as on Facebook group pages the topics of most popular posts across these platforms were completely different than those found on the respective media accounts. In addition, accounts of media pages, although having a better performance in terms of follower's numbers, underperform as far as it concerns followers' engagement rate. However, before we accept the "utopian rhetoric that surrounds new media technologies" (Papacharissi, 2002, p.9) of democratization of news flow and the facilitation of alternative voices to be heard, we should pay attention at the sources of the post.

Most news items on twitter and Facebook, that derived from users' pages came from institutional actors. YouTube, however, seems to have bigger potential of contributing to the democratization of public sphere, since alternative media and news sources seem to have taken the lead in this platform. In their analysis of agenda setting in the digital era, Sayre et al., (2010) identified the specific traits of YouTube which provide the ideal circumstances for discussion and deliberation to flourish, giving people the opportunity to operate independently of legacy media. As they conclude in their analysis "regardless of the motivation to use YouTube, it is symptomatic of a traditional media system that may be losing some of its agenda-setting ability to emerging social media" (p.26).

Lastly, regarding the role of social media platforms in fostering "Europeanization" in the form of cultivating the sense of belonging to Europe, our findings are inconsistent with previous research in the field, which suggest that social media have the potential to become crucial drivers of European identity (Bebić, Eraković, & Vučković, 2017; Mourao et al., 2015). Our research sample has revealed that references to different dimensions of "Europeanization" - as being identified and analysed under the scope of this study-, are quite few and in some platforms completely non-existent.

References:

- Bebić, D., Eraković, D., & Vučković, M. (2017). EUENS – The rise of a new identity driven by social media. *Media Studies*, 8(15), 23-38.
- European Commission, 2022. *Standard Eurobarometer 96*. Eurobarometer Surveys. [online] European Commission. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>
- Mourao, R., Yoo, J., Geise, S., Araiza, J., Brown, D., Chen, V., & Johnson, T. (2015). Online News, Social Media, and European Union Attitudes: A Multidimensional Analysis. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 3199-3222.
- Reporters Sans Frontiers (2022). Annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index. Paris: Reporters Without Borders. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/rsf%E2%80%99s-2022-world-press-freedom-index-new-era-polarisation>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C.T., Eddy, K., and Nielsen, R.K. (2022). Reuters Institute digital news report 2021. *Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism*. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi, S., Robertson, C. T., & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). Reuters Institute digital news report 2021. *Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism*. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D., & Nielsen, R. K. (2017). Reuters institute digital news report. *Reuters Institute*.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere. *New Media & Society*, 4, 9–27.
- Sayre, B., Bode, L., Shah, D., Wilcox, D. and Shah, C. (2010), Agenda Setting in a Digital Age: Tracking Attention to California Proposition 8 in Social Media, Online News and Conventional News. *Policy & Internet*, 2, 7-32.

WP2 National Report for Italy

Sara Cannizzaro, Andrea Miconi and Elisabetta Risi [IULM University]

Rationale of the study

This EUMEPLAT WP2 study focused on how information and ideas ‘about Europe and Europeans’ main concerns is published and debated on the main social media platforms’ (Cardoso et al., 2021), in Italy, analysing content published by both professional news producers and non-professional actors. In this research, we analysed posts coming from both media and users’ pages and public groups on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The posts were collected according to four dimensions deemed to be the most important for EU citizens according to the 2022 Eurobarometer (Europe, economy, climate, and health) and coded according to their relationship to the European Union.

Hence, this report presents the main findings of the research: 1. Conducted in Italy; 2a. across three main social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and 2b. six social media group types (all users of Facebook; Facebook groups; media organisations’ Facebook accounts; all users of Twitter; media organisations’ Twitter accounts; all users of YouTube), representing professional and non-professional social media content; 3. over a three-month period (September-November 2021); 4. analysing posts collected within four key thematic dimensions pertaining to Europe (Europe, climate + Europe, economy + Europe, health + Europe); 5. using a methodology (content analysis) developed for the purposes of the EUMEPLAT project by Cardoso et al. (2021); 6. applying the methods of quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).

A team of three researchers worked for this EUMEPLAT subproject in Italy. Two researchers acted as main coders, following extensive training. These two researchers coded independently 50 posts (21% of the targeted number of analysed posts of month1) with the purpose of measuring the inter-coder agreement levels. Percent of agreement was 90,5%-100%. Krippendorff’s alpha range for the project’s 55 variables was 0.792 – 1.000, which are considered of adequate reliability (Krippendorff, 2004).

The purpose was to content-analyse up to 720 on-topic posts, across the six social media group types, selected on the basis of relevance.

The two researchers coded the identified posts (over three months), that will be on-topic within one or more of the four thematic dimensions, across the six social media group types and the three-month period, for the set of defined variables, which focused on: the formats (text, image, video, links) used in the posts, the identity/capacity of the posting agents, the content of the posts, the dimensions of Europeanity they address, their geographical scope and the sentiment they communicate as it concerns Europe.

YouTube, in the Italian case, had a high number of off-topic posts (not falling within the thematic dimension for which they were examined), which resulted to a lower number of on-topic posts.

The Italian Media Landscape

In order to provide some context, we can recall that the Italian media system belongs to the Southern European or Mediterranean cluster, while also showing some peculiarities. When it comes to the classical Hallin and Mancini's scheme, in which the WP1 research tasks are grounded, Italy reveals some typical features: a late development of media markets, and in particular a moderate diffusion of the daily press; a high grade of parallelism between media outlets and political institutions; a low level of journalistic professionalism; and the strong intervention of the State, historically resulting in the public monopoly over radio and TV broadcasting, until the late 1970s (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Two additional features are rather specific to the Italian market. In the case of the press, it has to be mentioned the scarcity of “pure” publishers, with newspapers and magazines mostly controlled by major companies of different kinds (cfr. Mazzoleni, 1991). As to the broadcasting, the late and unfulfilled liberalization gave rise to a long-lasting duopoly, with a main private corporation – owned by former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi – sharing the market with the public service media. In all cases, both aspects – the *Mediterranean* features, and those specific to the country – concur in creating a highly politicized media landscape, with an extreme level of partisanship and polarization.

The diffusion of the Web in Italy is affected by the demographic composition of the country, with a 34.2% of people over 60¹, compared to a European average of 27.9%². Also, as a consequence of this, Italy is one of the less connected countries, with 83.7% of citizens accessing the Web: in the EU27, it is followed only by Greece [83%], Croatia [80%], Lithuania [82.2%], Romania [80.7%] and Bulgaria [71%], and – for what concerns our consortium – by Turkey [77.7%]³. Social media users account for 67.9% of the population, and in this case, Italy is only followed by Romania [62.6%] and Bulgaria [62.1%]⁴.

Let us consider finally the diffusion rate of the platforms we are considering for the WP2 analysis. Facebook is used by 57% of Italian population: and such statistics, for some reason, is rather very close to the European average. YouTube is used by 66.9% of Italian citizens: as a matter of fact, the platform is less popular only in Bulgaria [62.9%], Romania [64.3%] and Turkey [64.9%]. Though granular data are not available, in Italy Twitter is arguably used by an elite of opinion-makers, only accounting for 5% of the overall population. Beyond the reach of WP2 research strands, we can shortly mention the very peculiar geography of Instagram diffusion, with the platform being used by 46.5% of Italian population, and the country ranking number ten in the classification, which is topped by unexpected nations: Turkey [68.4%], Sweden [66.5%], Cyprus [64.5%], Ireland [54%], UK [53.8%], Portugal [53%], Netherlands [51.2%], Spain [51.1%], and Denmark [50%]⁵.

¹ Source ISTAT- Istituto Italiano di Statistica, year 2016.

² Source: EUROSTAT, year 2021.

³ Source: Elaboration on We Are Social, Data Reportal, and ITU data, year 2021. For the full dataset, see the Appendix to the WP1 Market Reports.

⁴ Source: Elaboration on We Are Social, Data Reportal, and ITU data, year 2021. For the full dataset, see the Appendix to the WP1 Market Reports.

⁵ Source: Elaboration on Data Reportal and We Are Social data, year 2021. For the full dataset, see the Appendix to the WP1 Market Reports.

In terms of gender differences, the Facebook population is perfectly split between male and females [50% each], while Twitter and YouTube are mostly used by men [respectively 66.3% and 51.3% of the total]. In order to frame the analysis of Italian social media discussion, it has to be noticed that Italians are not too used to get news through online newspapers and news services: the practice is common among 50% of people aged 16-24 and 58% of aged 55-74, over a European average of, respectively, 70% and 67%⁶.

The context of the research period in Italy

The research period (September-November 2021) was dominated by populist rhetoric centred around the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and economics concerns relating to the Recovery Fund. In September 2021, the decree-law relating to the so-called "Super Green Pass" was published in the Italian Official Gazette. This law extended the use of the green pass to all workers with the declared aim of encouraging higher take up of vaccinations across the population.

Politicians used the opportunity offered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of the Super Green Pass, to showcase their positions in favour or against European policies, using the comparison between the restrictive measures imposed in Italy and the more or less stringent ones of other European countries.

From an economic point of view (in addition to the issue of the impact of the green pass for workers), in Italy there was a debate on the Recovery Fund, the European program to guarantee adequate support to EU countries. The fund aims to ensure the necessary funds to support the recovery Member States, and more specifically on the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR), to be submitted to Brussels.

In terms of environmental sustainability, in Italy the tax relief called "Superbonus" was underway (and subject to political debate); it consisted of a 110% deduction (starting from 1 July 2020 and extended until 2022) of the expenses incurred for the implementation of specific interventions aimed at energy efficiency and the installation of photovoltaic systems.

Research findings

Format use

Text is by far the most popular format. Almost all posts in the four dimensions –climate, economy, Europe and health– use text to communicate (99%-100%). Except for a few tweets, the text is never used "alone", but always in combination with images or links.

⁶ Source: EUROSTAT Culture Statistics 2019, year 2018. For the full dataset, see the Appendix to the WP1 Market Reports.

			Formats ^a				Totale
			Q2.a Text	Q2.b Link	Q2.c Image	Q2.d Video	
Main topic	Climate	Conteggio	165	88	105	33	165
		% in MainTopic	100,0%	53,3%	63,6%	20,0%	
		% in \$Formats	31,1%	35,6%	32,2%	27,5%	
	Economy	Conteggio	123	59	77	27	126
		% in MainTopic	97,6%	46,8%	61,1%	21,4%	
		% in \$Formats	23,2%	23,9%	23,6%	22,5%	
	Europe	Conteggio	115	42	69	27	115
		% in MainTopic	100,0%	36,5%	60,0%	23,5%	
		% in \$Formats	21,7%	17,0%	21,2%	22,5%	
	Health	Conteggio	127	58	75	33	129
		% in MainTopic	98,4%	45,0%	58,1%	25,6%	
		% in \$Formats	24,0%	23,5%	23,0%	27,5%	

Table 1: Formats * Dimensions

As can be seen from the following table:

- the prevalence of videos is related to Youtube (to which a link is associated in 77% of cases)
- the other formats adapt to the so-called *affordances* allowed and favoured by digital platform⁷: text is mostly associated with an image (88.5% on Facebook and 60% on Twitter), with the exception of the "Twitter Media" channels, where the text is always associated with a link that often links to the news published on an online newspaper.

⁷ The term affordance stems from psychology (Gibson, 1979) and was repurposed by critical studies into the ideal users and norms that are designed into software; affordances relate not only to end-users and their activities but also to third-parties such as developers who extend the affordances offered by the platform, and advertisers who monetize platform activities (Bucher & Heldmond, 2018).

			Formats ^a				
			Q2.a Text	Q2.b Link	Q2.c Image	Q2.d Video	Totale
Channel	Facebook Group	Conteggio	78	7	73	1	78
		% in Channel	100,0%	9,0%	93,6%	1,3%	
		% in \$Formats	14,7%	2,8%	22,4%	0,8%	
	FB All Paged	Conteggio	94	10	68	23	96
		% in Channel	97,9%	10,4%	70,8%	24,0%	
		% in \$Formats	17,7%	4,0%	20,9%	19,2%	
	FB Media Pages	Conteggio	93	47	82	2	93
		% in Channel	100,0%	50,5%	88,2%	2,2%	
		% in \$Formats	17,5%	19,0%	25,2%	1,7%	
	Twitter All	Conteggio	100	45	58	6	100
		% in Channel	100,0%	45,0%	58,0%	6,0%	
		% in \$Formats	18,9%	18,2%	17,8%	5,0%	
	Twitter Media	Conteggio	80	77	45	0	80
		% in Channel	100,0%	96,3%	56,3%	0,0%	
		% in \$Formats	15,1%	31,2%	13,8%	0,0%	
	Youtube All	Conteggio	85	61	0	88	88
		% in Channel	96,6%	69,3%	0,0%	100,0%	
		% in \$Formats	16,0%	24,7%	0,0%	73,3%	
Totale		Conteggio	530	247	326	120	535

Table 2: Formats * Platforms types

Publishing agents – Who posts?

Both professional and non-professional social media content is popular and shared on social media platforms in Italy.

Still, professionally/institutionally produced content is the type of content that is prominent, regardless of whether it originates from news media or political agents.

As can be seen from the following table:

- non-institutional organizations (mainly categories of citizens) publish mainly in Facebook Groups (for 50.7%), which are the non-professional channel *par excellence* (in which 100% of contents are not institutional);
- political agents prefer to share content on Facebook Pages (57%) and Twitter accounts (40%) that are not managed by the media;
- on Youtube channels, the on-topic videos with respect to European themes are for the most part (56%) published by media agents;

This can be explained by the ability of the media and political agents (politicians in particular) to have agencies in charge of the so-called *content creation* and *content curation* activities (Dale, 2014) on social media.

			PublishingAgents ^a				
			Q3.a Political agent	Q3.b Media agent	Q3c. Any other organization	Q3d. Non-organization	Totale
Channel	Facebook Group	Conteggio	1	1	0	74	76
		% in Channel	1,3%	1,3%	0,0%	97,4%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	1,1%	0,4%	0,0%	50,7%	
	FB All Paged	Conteggio	54	11	6	26	95
		% in Channel	56,8%	11,6%	6,3%	27,4%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	56,8%	4,2%	20,0%	17,8%	
	FB Media Pages	Conteggio	1	91	1	0	92
		% in Channel	1,1%	98,9%	1,1%	0,0%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	1,1%	34,6%	3,3%	0,0%	
	Twitter All	Conteggio	38	38	4	21	100
		% in Channel	38,0%	38,0%	4,0%	21,0%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	40,0%	14,4%	13,3%	14,4%	
	Twitter Media	Conteggio	0	78	0	0	78
		% in Channel	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	0,0%	29,7%	0,0%	0,0%	
	Youtube All	Conteggio	1	44	19	25	78
		% in Channel	1,3%	56,4%	24,4%	32,1%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	1,1%	16,7%	63,3%	17,1%	
Totale		Conteggio	95	263	30	146	519

Table 3: Publishing agents * Platforms

Compared to the 4 dimensions we note that:

- Political agents (27,4%) focused mainly on issues relating to Health, in particular with regard to the issue of the green pass, in particular during September 2021;
- Non-professional social media contents (Non-organization agents) and media agents instead focused their attention on the climate (36%, in particular environmental sustainability and energy saving, especially in November)
- Economic issues and those on Europe are more present in the contents published by Media Agents, especially with posts / tweets of criticism of the Draghi government.

			PublishingAgents ^a				
			Q3.a Political agent	Q3.b Media agent	Q3c. Any other organization	Q3d. Non-organization	Totale
Main topic	Climate	Conteggio	21	94	18	44	163
		% in MainTopic	12,9%	57,7%	11,0%	27,0%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	22,1%	35,7%	60,0%	30,1%	
	Economy	Conteggio	25	64	1	34	124
		% in MainTopic	20,2%	51,6%	0,8%	27,4%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	26,3%	24,3%	3,3%	23,3%	
	Europe	Conteggio	23	47	8	34	112
		% in MainTopic	20,5%	42,0%	7,1%	30,4%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	24,2%	17,9%	26,7%	23,3%	
	Health	Conteggio	26	58	3	34	120
		% in MainTopic	21,7%	48,3%	2,5%	28,3%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	27,4%	22,1%	10,0%	23,3%	
Totale		Conteggio	95	263	30	146	519

Table 4: Publishing agents * Dimensions

Across the platforms and themes, it is interesting to note that:

- 91.2% of political agents are Politicians and - referring to the political position in EU parliament - they are 29.4% *Independents* and 26.4% *Far-right nationalists* (eg. Giorgia Meloni, Pino Cabras, MoVimento 5 stelle)
- 70% of the Media Agents are newspapers (Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, Il Fatto Quotidiano), while only 16% and 12% respectively are broadcast media or (only) Internet media agents.

Issues and topics - What is posted?

In regard with the subject matter of the news that have been analysed, we detected the following:

In general

- ‘Political agent’ was the most popular subject matter (36%-55%)
- also, the category of ‘Other’ constituted the second most popular type of subject matter, mainly because it was not covered by other variables. A key example of a topic being categorised under the ‘other’ category was that of the Green Pass, as it was the main issue in several news and Users Generated Contents.
- Subject matter referring to newsmedia (hence self-referential matter, where media were both the subject and object of the news) were only 31, hence constituted only 5% of the total subject matter.

			Main topic				
			Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Totale
WholsPosted ^a	Q4a. Political agent	Conteggio	58	56	60	54	228
		% in \$WholsPosted	25,4%	24,6%	26,3%	23,7%	
		% in MainTopic	36,3%	45,2%	55,6%	45,8%	
	Q4b. Newsmedia	Conteggio	10	7	7	7	31
		% in \$WholsPosted	32,3%	22,6%	22,6%	22,6%	
		% in MainTopic	6,3%	5,6%	6,5%	5,9%	
	Q4c. Any other organization	Conteggio	82	65	31	39	217
		% in \$WholsPosted	37,8%	30,0%	14,3%	18,0%	
		% in MainTopic	51,3%	52,4%	28,7%	33,1%	
	Q4d Non institutional agents	Conteggio	48	30	15	36	129
		% in \$WholsPosted	37,2%	23,3%	11,6%	27,9%	
		% in MainTopic	30,0%	24,2%	13,9%	30,5%	
	Q4.e Other	Conteggio	78	72	62	82	294
		% in \$WholsPosted	26,5%	24,5%	21,1%	27,9%	
		% in MainTopic	48,8%	58,1%	57,4%	69,5%	
Totale		Conteggio	160	124	108	118	510

Tab. 5 Issues & topics * Dimensions

In Italian social media, we found "Political agents" mainly on Twitter (23%), while "Other Organization" are on Facebook Pages. Non-institutional agents are mainly present on Facebook Group (50%) and Youtube (51,3%).

This can be explained by the specificity of the different social media: Facebook groups and Youtube channels are in fact more characterized by users generated contents of a less institutional nature.

			Channel						Totale
			Facebook Group	FB All Paged	FB Media Pages	Twitter All	Twitter Media	Youtube All	
WholsPosted ^a	Q4a. Political agent	Conteggio	32	49	32	52	34	29	228
		% in \$WholsPosted	14,0%	21,5%	14,0%	22,8%	14,9%	12,7%	
		% in Channel	47,8%	54,4%	36,4%	52,0%	43,6%	33,3%	
	Q4b. Newsmedia	Conteggio	12	2	5	8	1	3	31
		% in \$WholsPosted	38,7%	6,5%	16,1%	25,8%	3,2%	9,7%	
		% in Channel	17,9%	2,2%	5,7%	8,0%	1,3%	3,4%	
	Q4c. Any other organization	Conteggio	23	41	50	36	32	35	217
		% in \$WholsPosted	10,6%	18,9%	23,0%	16,6%	14,7%	16,1%	
		% in Channel	34,3%	45,6%	56,8%	36,0%	41,0%	40,2%	
	Q4d Non institutional agents	Conteggio	27	18	20	10	7	47	129
		% in \$WholsPosted	20,9%	14,0%	15,5%	7,8%	5,4%	36,4%	
		% in Channel	40,3%	20,0%	22,7%	10,0%	9,0%	54,0%	
	Q4.e Other	Conteggio	27	45	41	65	57	59	294
		% in \$WholsPosted	9,2%	15,3%	13,9%	22,1%	19,4%	20,1%	
		% in Channel	40,3%	50,0%	46,6%	65,0%	73,1%	67,8%	
Totale		Conteggio	67	90	88	100	78	87	510

Table 6: Issues & topics * Platforms

Published by whom?

Examining the correlation of topics and publishing agents, it is noted that when the posts/tweets concern political agents or public and private organisations, institutions and companies, they are posted most frequently by media agents (respectively 47,35 and 55,1%); on the other hand, when the contents concern “non institutional subjects”, they are published (for 39%) also by users not related to organizations (nor to political / other organization).

			PublishingAgents ^a				
			Q3.a Political agent	Q3.b Media agent	Q3c. Any other organization	Q3d. Non-organization	Totale
WholsPosted ^a	Q4a. Political agent	Conteggio	61	106	10	51	224
		% in \$WholsPosted	27,2%	47,3%	4,5%	22,8%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	65,6%	41,2%	34,5%	38,9%	
	Q4b. Newsmedia	Conteggio	6	11	1	11	29
		% in \$WholsPosted	20,7%	37,9%	3,4%	37,9%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	6,5%	4,3%	3,4%	8,4%	
	Q4c. Any other organization	Conteggio	46	118	18	43	214
		% in \$WholsPosted	21,5%	55,1%	8,4%	20,1%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	49,5%	45,9%	62,1%	32,8%	
	Q4d Non institutional agents	Conteggio	18	50	14	46	118
		% in \$WholsPosted	15,3%	42,4%	11,9%	39,0%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	19,4%	19,5%	48,3%	35,1%	
	Q4.e Other	Conteggio	40	159	14	77	281
		% in \$WholsPosted	14,2%	56,6%	5,0%	27,4%	
		% in \$PublishingAgents	43,0%	61,9%	48,3%	58,8%	
Totale		Conteggio	93	257	29	131	495

Table 7: Issues & topics * Publishing agents

Scope of news

Facebook posts had mostly a national scope, except for posts coming from Facebook groups sharing the attention equally between European and national scope.

Facebook groups has a higher proportion of news with a regional or local scope. On the contrary, twitter users focused more on European than the national scope. Tweets with regional or local scope, instead, were entirely non-existent.

We therefore noted the more journalistic character of Twitter, which tends to be based on contemporary factual news. On the other hand, Facebook is characterised by topics that are user-generated that are more centred on the personal life and opinions of citizens.

		Channel					Totale
		Facebook Group	FB All Paged	FB Media Pages	Twitter All	Twitter Media	
Scope Global	Conteggio	19	12	17	15	12	44
	% in \$Scope	16,0%	10,1%	14,3%	12,6%	10,1%	37,0%
	% in Channel	25,0%	12,6%	18,7%	15,2%	15,2%	50,0%
Scope European	Conteggio	52	57	74	89	68	25
	% in \$Scope	14,2%	15,6%	20,3%	24,4%	18,6%	6,8%
	% in Channel	68,4%	60,0%	81,3%	89,9%	86,1%	28,4%
Scope National	Conteggio	62	73	63	69	43	38
	% in \$Scope	17,8%	21,0%	18,1%	19,8%	12,4%	10,9%
	% in Channel	81,6%	76,8%	69,2%	69,7%	54,4%	43,2%
Scope Regional	Conteggio	7	7	1	1	3	2
	% in \$Scope	33,3%	33,3%	4,8%	4,8%	14,3%	9,5%
	% in Channel	9,2%	7,4%	1,1%	1,0%	3,8%	2,3%
Scope Local	Conteggio	11	10	11	0	0	4
	% in \$Scope	30,6%	27,8%	30,6%	0,0%	0,0%	11,1%
	% in Channel	14,5%	10,5%	12,1%	0,0%	0,0%	4,5%
Conteggio		76	95	91	99	79	88
							528

Aspects of Europeanity

This section examines more closely aspects of Europeanity as detected in the analysed posts. While in the previous variables and categories these issues and topics might be of national, European or global scope, here we examined whether they have a clearer European orientation or character.

The dimension of Europeanity that is most present (for about 60%) in online content in Italian is that relating to “European law and governance” and the convergence of national legal system. In particular, these are posts / tweets and videos related to the topics Economy (about the Recovery Fund) and Health (about the green pass issue).

Two other dimensions that we mainly found were:

- the "European institutions", which are mentioned above all in the online contents that fall under the topics Climate (37%) and Economy (27%)
- the “European Cultures”, especially in terms of history (Facebook page of Alessandro Barbero), science and technological innovation.

It is very interesting to note the dimensions of Europeanization that are absent and that, on a theoretical level, can end up in the so-called *spiral of silence* (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), not finding coverage in any of the online contents.

Hence, we noticed the almost total absence of the dimensions related to:

- the so-called "Europeanisation from below" (Della Porta, 2020), i.e. the role of European Social Movements (we only found 6 posts on Italian social media);
- and contents produced by “European media” organizations (only 6 posts).

			Main topic				
			Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Totale
Europeanity ^a	Q5A European people	Conteggio	8	7	5	5	25
		% in \$Europeanity	32,0%	28,0%	20,0%	20,0%	
		% in MainTopic	6,5%	7,3%	5,5%	5,1%	
	Q5B European (media) content	Conteggio	0	1	2	3	6
		% in \$Europeanity	0,0%	16,7%	33,3%	50,0%	
		% in MainTopic	0,0%	1,0%	2,2%	3,1%	
	Q5C European territory	Conteggio	37	11	6	13	67
		% in \$Europeanity	55,2%	16,4%	9,0%	19,4%	
		% in MainTopic	29,8%	11,5%	6,6%	13,3%	
	Q5D European values	Conteggio	16	14	18	15	63
		% in \$Europeanity	25,4%	22,2%	28,6%	23,8%	
		% in MainTopic	12,9%	14,6%	19,8%	15,3%	
	Q5E European (media) industries & capitalist economies	Conteggio	19	33	8	9	69
		% in \$Europeanity	27,5%	47,8%	11,6%	13,0%	
		% in MainTopic	15,3%	34,4%	8,8%	9,2%	
	Q5F European interactions & dialogues	Conteggio	8	11	11	4	34
		% in \$Europeanity	23,5%	32,4%	32,4%	11,8%	
		% in MainTopic	6,5%	11,5%	12,1%	4,1%	
	Q5G European Culture(s)	Conteggio	37	14	36	10	97
		% in \$Europeanity	38,1%	14,4%	37,1%	10,3%	
		% in MainTopic	29,8%	14,6%	39,6%	10,2%	
	Q5H European democratic model(s)	Conteggio	3	7	2	6	18
		% in \$Europeanity	16,7%	38,9%	11,1%	33,3%	
		% in MainTopic	2,4%	7,3%	2,2%	6,1%	
	Q5I European institutions	Conteggio	34	25	16	16	91
		% in \$Europeanity	37,4%	27,5%	17,6%	17,6%	
		% in MainTopic	27,4%	26,0%	17,6%	16,3%	
	Q5J European law & governance	Conteggio	35	48	46	66	195
		% in \$Europeanity	17,9%	24,6%	23,6%	33,8%	
		% in MainTopic	28,2%	50,0%	50,5%	67,3%	
	Q5K European New Social Movements	Conteggio	1	0	1	4	6
		% in \$Europeanity	16,7%	0,0%	16,7%	66,7%	
		% in MainTopic	0,8%	0,0%	1,1%	4,1%	
	Q5L European public sphere	Conteggio	16	11	0	2	29
		% in \$Europeanity	55,2%	37,9%	0,0%	6,9%	
		% in MainTopic	12,9%	11,5%	0,0%	2,0%	
Totale		Conteggio	124	96	91	98	409

Table 8: Indicators of Europeanity * Dimension

Close to 58% of the online contents address an economic aspect of European relevance, concerning the economic policy imposed by the Draghi government or the economic policies in (parts of) Europe/EU. Occasionally, they also involve unemployment, poverty, corruption, which are mentioned by Eurosceptic and far-right voices, in order to attack EU economic policies and portray them as destructive.

Close to 40% of the contents concerning the political aspect mainly related to the implementation of the green pass, but also to the motions of the Italian spokespersons in the European institutions.

Finally, a lower number of posts referred to the scientific aspect of Europeanity, involving scientific developments or achievements, such as anti-COVID-19 vaccines and other medication.

			Main topic				
			Climate	Economy	Europe	Health	Totale
EuropeanAspects ^a	Q5M Scientific	Conteggio	50	10	7	37	104
		% in \$EuropeanAspects	48,1%	9,6%	6,7%	35,6%	
		% in MainTopic	51,5%	11,9%	12,5%	50,7%	
	Q5N Political	Conteggio	47	35	17	38	137
		% in \$EuropeanAspects	34,3%	25,5%	12,4%	27,7%	
		% in MainTopic	48,5%	41,7%	30,4%	52,1%	
	Q5O Economic	Conteggio	35	57	40	21	153
		% in \$EuropeanAspects	22,9%	37,3%	26,1%	13,7%	
		% in MainTopic	36,1%	67,9%	71,4%	28,8%	
Totale		Conteggio	97	84	56	73	310

Table 9: Aspects of Europeanity * Dimension

Discussion and concluding remarks

The research aimed to investigate how news professionals communicate European issues on the main social media platforms in Italy, and how the public addresses these issues using the same platforms. The research findings concerning the use of the social media platforms show issues and aspects of Europeanity expressed by professionals and non-professionals, as they have been presented in the previous section- They shall be considered in the light of the study's specificities and limitations.

Firstly, while the methods used to extract the posts per platform type/dimension/month were sophisticated (see Cardoso et al., 2021), they still produced very specific results. The purpose of the study was to analyse posts that were relevant and influential in the debates regarding the issues that were discussed each time. Thus, the most relevant content was extracted on the basis of interactions (on Facebook), estimated reach (on Twitter) and relevance (on YouTube), using a list of keywords pertinent to each of the four dimensions (Europe, climate, economy, health). These criteria of relevance led to the extraction of very specific content. Still, even when applying these criteria, a big part of the content on YouTube, when checked, proved to be off-topic, for the dimension(s) it was examined, and was not analysed.

Secondly, the specificities of the research period need to be taken into consideration in evaluating the findings, in order to avoid generalisations. As mentioned, the research period was dominated by the management of the effects of the covid19 pandemic, especially on the economic level (Recovery Fund) and on the political level (in particular the issue of access to the workplace with the green pass).

References

- Bucher T and Helmond A (2018) The Affordances of Social Media Platforms. In: Burgess J, Poell T, and Marwick A (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, London: SAGE Publications, pp. 233-253.
- Cardoso, G., Álvares, C., Moreno, J., Sepúlveda, R., Crespo, M., & Foà, C. (2021). A Framework and Methodological Protocol for analyzing the platformization of news. Deliverable for the EUMEPLAT project.
- Dela Porta (2020), “European from Below: still time for another Europe?”, in *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 7(3), pp. 225-241
- Dale, S. (2014). Content curation: The future of relevance. *Business Information Review*, 31(4), 199–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266382114564267>
- Gibson J. J. (1979) *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1979.
- Hallin D.C., Mancini P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mazzoleni G. (1991) Media Moguls in Italy, in *Media Moguls*, edited by M. Palmer & J. Tunstall, London, Routledge, pp. 162-183
- Noelle-Neumann E. (1974) The Spiral of Silence A Theory of Public Opinion, in *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 24, Issue2, pp. 43-51

PLATFORMIZATION OF NEWS IN TEN COUNTRIES

PORTUGAL REPORT

**António Vasconcelos, Marta Carvalho,
Sofia Santos Matos, Rita Sepúlveda, José Moreno**

MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The relationship between citizens and the media in Portugal is shaped by a high level of trust in news, although slightly decreasing in most recent years. In fact, 61% of the Portuguese claim they trust news, a percentage much higher than the average of the 46 countries (42%) that are featured in the 2022 Reuters Digital News Report - DNR (Newman *et al.*, 2022). This level of trust is even higher when focusing on some particular media brands. According to the Portuguese Digital News Report (Cardoso *et al.*, 2022), about 78% of internet users in Portugal trust news coming from RTP (public broadcast media), SIC (private broadcast media) and Jornal de Notícias (private print media). However, despite these high levels of trust, it is important to understand that not all media is equally trusted. For example, while public TV and radio are highly trusted by the Portuguese (European Parliament, 2022), only about 27% of individuals trust news coming from social media platforms (DNR, 2021). According to the World Press Freedom Index 2022 (RSF), “freedom of the press is robust in Portugal. Journalists can report without restrictions, although some face threats from extremist groups”¹. In that sense, Portugal has the 7th highest level of press freedom of the 180 countries analyzed by the RSF. However, it should be pointed out that this level of freedom tends to not be completely convergent with some aspects of the public’s perception. According to data from the Portuguese DNR (2022), 36% of respondents disagree that media is completely independent from political and governmental influence.

In 2022, according to the DNR, the main source of news for the Portuguese is television (53,6%). In comparison, about 36,1% of respondents claim that the internet (including social media) is their main source of news. However, when considering people below 35 years of age, TV and the internet have a similar share. In fact, even looking generally at the population, it is noticeable that, when asked about the various sources of

¹ <https://rsf.org/en/index>

news consumed in the previous week - instead of the main source of news - 79% of respondents mentioned the internet, a slightly higher percentage than the 74% that mentioned TV. While TV remains the main source of news in Portugal, new media platforms are emerging and becoming increasingly more important in the Portuguese media diet. When it comes to the consumption of news on social media platforms, Facebook, Youtube and WhatsApp take the lead as the most used social media platforms by the Portuguese (DNR, 2022). The same is also true when it comes to general use. While the consumption of online news is increasing, it is also important to highlight that 70% of Portuguese internet users are worried about what is real or fake on the internet (Cardoso *et al.*, 2022).

In general, we can find in Portugal a media landscape shaped by an incredibly high level of trust in news, especially those coming from legacy media brands. While online news play an increasingly larger role in Portuguese media consumption, they are usually not as trusted by the people. However, younger individuals seem to progressively consume news in these online platforms more often bringing forth questions regarding the future of TV as the predominant medium in the Portuguese media diet.

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

During the data collection period (Sep – Nov 2021), Portugal was going through a moment of substantial political instability. Starting by September of 2021, most of the political discussion in Portugal was centered around the local elections that took place on the 26th of September, 2021 – elections that resulted in a change of the political party in power in the country's capital city, Lisbon.. Furthermore, there was a rise of candidates from the extreme right party, “CHEGA”. These candidates brought to the public discussion, mainly, populist themes, such as the prevalence of the gypsy community in Portugal, and criticism towards the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially measures about confinement.²

In October of 2021, the state's budget for 2022 started being negotiated in parliament. Since there was a minority government, the month of October was highlighted by negotiations involving the party in Government - Partido Socialista (PS) - and other parties on the left, as these parties had approved previous budgets redacted by this government and there was an expectation they could do it again. The divergence of opinions brought about by this budget was the subject of political commentary on different Portuguese media outlets and on social media. With the state's budget not being approved by the Parliament on October 27th, 2021 – and the consequent fall of the government – the main topic of concern became

² At the time, Portugal had a minority government led by “PS” – a center-left party.

the new legislative elections (January of 2022). At the same time, one of the main opposing parties – Partido Social Democrata, PSD (center-right) – was in the midst of internal elections, which resulted in even more uncertainty regarding the outcome of January's legislative elections. Due to the importance of these elections, they were highly covered in all media outlets and highly discussed on social media platforms.

Regarding the pandemic's situation, Portugal distinguished itself from other European countries, as it had already achieved an extremely high vaccination rate (close to 85% of the population) in the month of October. Unlike other countries, where concerns were rising over the new Ómicron variant and a new confinement, in Portugal the pandemic was considered as being somewhat under control.

PORTUGAL AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Portuguese tend to display a generally positive attitude towards the European Union (EU). In fact, according to data from the European Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2022), 78% of the Portuguese people inquired believe that it's beneficial for Portugal to be part of the EU. In that sense, the kind of eurosceptic rhetoric found in some EU countries does not seem to be significantly prevalent in Portugal. Besides, Portugal possesses a high level of trust in the EU (68%). By comparing Portugal's trust in the EU, with the average shown among member states (49%), we can infer that the Portuguese generally showcase a pro-european sentiment. Portugal also displays a higher level of trust towards the EU (68%) than it does towards its national government (45%) and parliament (41%) (European Commission, 2022).

In general, the Portuguese people tend to agree with the direction of European initiatives. We can conclude that by observing Portugal's - above average - satisfaction rate, regarding the EU covid approach (77%), as well as the EU's response towards Russia's invasion of Ukraine (78%) (European Commission, 2022). These percentages are especially important in comparison with the average satisfaction found among member states on both these issues (56% and 57%, respectively). Regarding the most important issues facing the EU in 2022, the Portuguese tend to highlight the international situation and the economic situation. It should be noted that the Portuguese are not substantially worried about energy supply in the EU and domestically, when compared with other countries probably because of the country's reduced dependency on Russian gas. Despite the trust that the Portuguese lay in the EU, and its policies, it's important to also consider that Portugal displayed an abstention rate of almost 70% in the last european elections (2019)³. This percentage is much higher

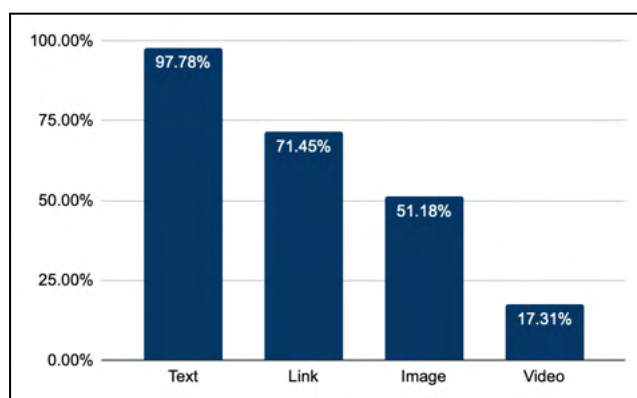
³ <https://www.eleicoes.mai.gov.pt/europeias2019/resultados-globais.html>

than the European average of about 50%. In that sense, while the Portuguese seem to value and trust the EU, they are perhaps less convinced that they can cause change through the European democratic process.

In general, Portugal is a country that seems interested in perpetuating the European project. While the 2008 crisis - and the consequent imposition of difficult economic sanctions by the EU on southern european countries - might have had an impact in some aspects of people's perception of the UE, trust in the institutions seems to have remained high or at least been rebuilt. In that sense, despite a high level of abstention in the last european elections, the Portuguese seem to be satisfied with the EU's actions, and want to continue to be involved in the european project.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

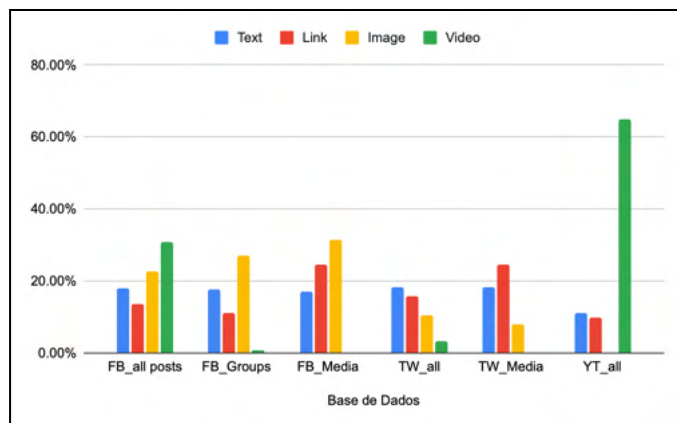
FORMAT



Graph 1 - Distribution of post format (multiple choice), in percentage, in all 676 posts

Considering the 676 posts in the sample analyzed, it is important to highlight that text is the most prevalent format within all dimensions (Europe, Economy, Climate and Health) and platforms, with the exception of Youtube, on which the video format is predominant. Links and images can be found in more than half of the posts but they are usually also accompanied by text. However, it's important to note that only 5,5% of posts contain just text. Between Facebook and Twitter, the only significant difference in format is that the latter has less prevalence of images. The image and link format derives mainly from news published by Portuguese media outlets on social media. These posts contain a link to the main website of the media in question, which consequently creates a preview image of the website, explaining

the frequent use of images and links in the same post. Due to technical problems, Twitter often does not showcase this preview image when sharing a link, resulting in a disparity between Twitter and Facebook in relation to the number of images. It is therefore important to note that the datasets analyzed that comprising only posts by the media contributed significantly to the high percentage of posts having both an image and link format. Regarding video format, it's important to highlight that it corresponds to only about 17% of posts, and it should be noted that about 64% of these posts were from the analysis of the platform Youtube. In that sense, we can conclude that the video format is not a favorite among consumers of the content of this sample outside Youtube. This is especially true on Twitter and Facebook groups, where this format appears in only 5 posts of the total 358 posts in those datasets. Furthermore, in media datasets, the video format was not found in any post.



Graph2 - Distribution of post format by datasets (multiple choice), in percentage of each dataset.

Among the four dimensions of analysis – Europe, Health, Economy and Climate – it is noticeable that there is some homogeneity in the formats used across platforms regardless of the topic. However, there are some differences that are important to address. The “climate” dimension features a smaller number of videos in comparison to the other dimensions of analysis. In the “economy” dimension, we find the smallest number of images, especially in the “All Users” dataset – that includes both media and non-media content. In contrast to all other dimensions, the “Europe ” dimension has a relatively small number of both images and links, which could indicate that there was less news published in this dimension, as in that kind of posts these formats are predominant. Additionally, this dimension is characterized by having more videos on Youtube than any other.

AGENT

In an overall analysis of the 676 posts in the Portuguese dataset we can conclude that around half of them (51,5%) were published by media agents, 34,5% by non-organizational agents, 8,9% by any other organizations and 5,2% by political agents. It is important to highlight that the high number of posts from media agents is influenced by the presence of two data sets (for each dimension of analysis) dedicated exclusively to this kind of agents. Excluding these 8 datasets, the media agents would be responsible for 24,8% of the remaining posts. Nonetheless, considering the 348 posts made by media agents, we can analyze that Newspapers media and Television media account for about 83% of all media posts. Regarding non-media content, it's noticeable that 70,3% of posts came from non-organizational agents, especially common citizens. In fact, out of 222 posts attributed to non-organizational agents, 154 (about 70%) were made by common citizens.

In the Facebook, Twitter and Youtube “All Users” datasets - that include both media and non-media accounts - for every dimension and month of analysis we can analyse which posts had an overall bigger impact on each platform. Considering Facebook, we can see that 57,5% of the posts came from non-organizational agents. However, it is not common citizen's that publish the highest percentage of those popular posts, but instead online influencers (50,7% of posts from non-organizational agents). The common citizen's impact - when looking generally at the data – derived especially from Facebook groups, where 109 out of 118 popular posts were made by this kind of agent. An important aspect about the online influencer's impact on the Portuguese Facebook dataset, is that all 35 posts were made by the same exact individual, which is 29,9% of all Facebook “All Users” dataset.

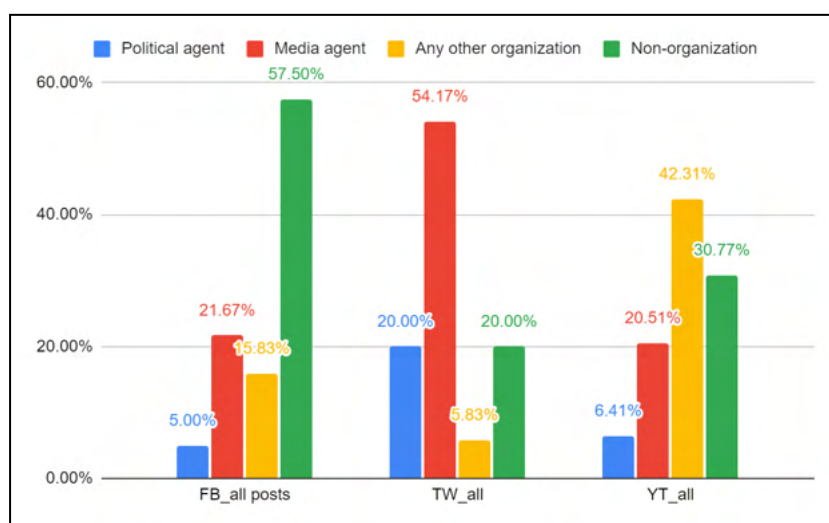


Figure 1 - Example of a post published by Camilo Lourenço

Camilo Lourenço is a former Portuguese journalist and commentator that has a substantial following on his Facebook page where he makes daily videos analyzing the political and economical state of the country. In Figure 1 we present an example of a post by

Camilo Lourenço. His posts tend to follow a similar structure featuring a 15–25-minute video, but also a description of all the topics approached in the video. We can find his posts within the Facebook dataset across all dimensions and months of analysis. Given this situation, it seems that online influencers are not as relevant on Portuguese Facebook as one might think by just analyzing the data, but there is one particular figure that has a very large imprint among Facebook users.

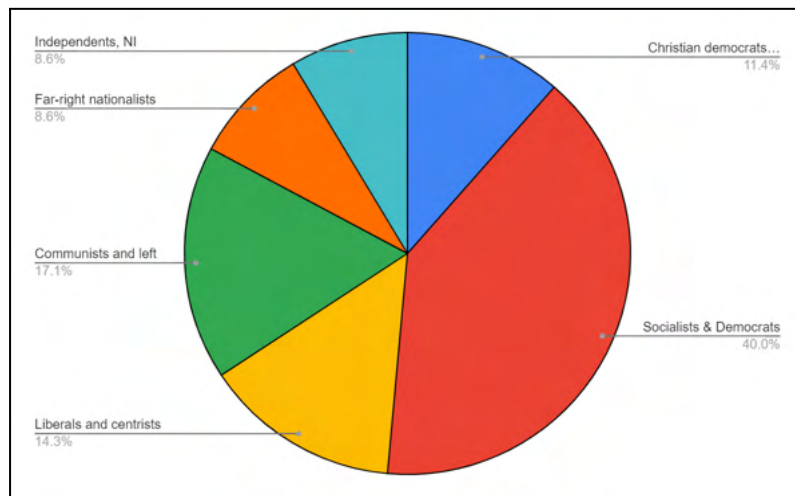
On Twitter’s “All Users” dataset, we find that the majority of posts were made by media agents (54,2%), but that political agents and non-organizational agents are reasonably well represented as well (20% each). In that sense, the type of media posts dominance that could be concluded by the analysis of all datasets can also be found when analyzing the datasets with posts only from Twitter. Regarding Youtube, we found that 42,3% of posts were made by “Any other organizations”. More specifically, out of 33 posts from the agent type ‘Any Other Organizations’, 7 were made by public institutions and 26 by private companies. It is noticeable that Youtube is the only platform in which organizations have a substantial presence as agents.



Graph 3 - Distribution of posts published, by agent who posted and by platform, in percentage to the total

It is interesting to highlight the low number of political agents found in the analysis. In fact, out of 676 posts, only 35 were made by political agents. More specifically, 7 came from the official accounts of political parties and 28 from the personal accounts of politicians. Among the 35 posts made by political agents, most of them (40%) were associated with the Portuguese Socialist Party (PS) followed by posts made by the far left (Portuguese Communist Party and Bloco de Esquerda) (17,1%), as well as liberals (14,3%). It is also important to mention that forces associated with the extreme right party, “CHEGA”, only generated 3 posts within the entire dataset. Overall, while political agents have some

relevance (especially on twitter), they publish the lowest number of posts found within the datasets.



Graph 4 - Distribution of posts published, by political affiliation of the political agent who posted, in percentage to the total

DIMENSIONS

Throughout the months of September, October and November, there was a context of uncertainty in Europe regarding the development of the pandemic, due to the appearance of a new, more contagious variant of COVID-19, Ómicron. For this reason, in the dimension “Health”, there is a predominance of posts related to confinements, masks and vaccination, in Portugal and in Europe. Additionally, there is also a substantial number of posts dedicated to the discussion of problems within the SNS (National Health Service) due to a lack of health professionals. In general, the topic of vaccination was especially popular, as Portugal distanced itself from other European countries, due to its extremely high vaccination rate.

In the dimension “Economy”, it’s noticeable that the main topics of discussion are related to the Portuguese political context, and the economic growth within the EU. At the time of data collection, Portugal was going through a moment of political instability, related to the difficult negotiations and eventual failure in parliament of the state’s budget for 2022. For this reason, the most relevant posts were national in scope, dealing with budgetary issues, political campaigns, and negotiations between political parties. However, there are also some publications more directly related to the EU, mostly comparing the Portuguese and European economic growth. Additionally, posts dealing with European relief funds for Portugal are also frequently found.

Regarding the dimension “Climate”, the most popular theme was the COP 26- UN Climate Change Conference 2021, held in November in Glasgow. In this conference,

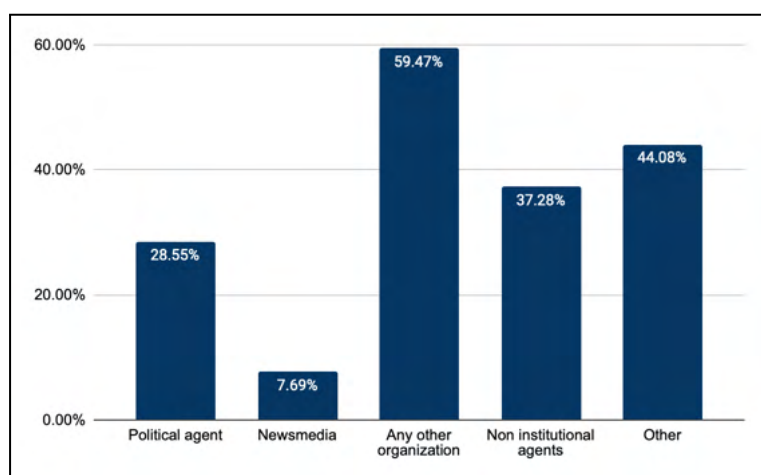
worldwide leaders – including European representatives – discussed various issues related to climate change, making this event especially relevant in this dimension of analysis.

SUBJECT

Across all dimensions of analysis and platforms, it's noticeable that more than half of posts (59,5%) address institutions and organizations, whether public or private. As previously mentioned, national political issues are highly prevalent as a theme in the collected data. In that sense, the most frequently mentioned “Institutions” are the Portuguese government, and Institutions associated with it, such as the National Health Service. European and World institutions, such as the UN, are also mentioned throughout the posts. Regarding private institutions/companies, they represent about 40% of all institutions addressed.

After “Organizations”, the most mentioned category among all 676 posts is the “other” category (about 44% of posts). In general, the prevalence of this subject is not unconventional since it encompasses all posts that do not mention any of the other categories.

Non institutional agents – especially common citizens – are also frequently mentioned, which might be related to the attribution of this category to both individuals and groups, such as citizens, workers, doctors, etc. Political agents are less frequently mentioned than previous categories, appearing in about 28,6% of posts. This leads us to conclude that the Portuguese are more interested in discussing institutions than individual politicians or political parties



Graph 5 - Distribution of posts published, by subject of the posts (multiple choice), in percentage of the total 676 posts

Considering the subject matter of the posts in the sample, it's noticeable that public institutions are the most mentioned, with a presence in about 49,7% of all 676 posts. This

subject is especially relevant in the dimension “Climate”, which derives from the frequent mention of the UN – organizer of the COP 26 – and the measures adopted by European institutions in relation to climate change. In the dimension “Europe”, private institutions/companies are more frequently mentioned than in any other dimension. Common citizens also stand out from the remaining categories, appearing in about 37% of all posts analyzed. This subject is especially relevant in both the dimensions “Health” and “Economy”. Regarding the dimension “Health”, this prevalence could be related to the European concern with non-vaccinated individuals, as well as the lack of health professionals in Portugal. Additionally, the discussion surrounding the quality of life of ordinary citizens and workers in relation to the 2022 state budget, could also explain the prevalence of the common citizen as a subject in the dimension “Economy”.

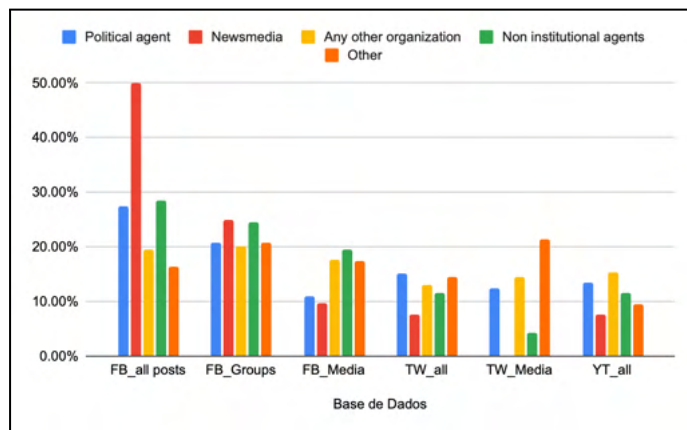
Although Political agents are not substantially mentioned when considering all 676 posts, the politicians were a topic in about 25% of posts. This subject stands out especially in the dimension “Economy”. As already explained, the months of data collection were highlighted by negotiations surrounding the state’s budget, and posteriorly by measures proposed by both politicians and political parties in relation to the following legislative elections. This context tends to explain the relevance of political subjects in that dimension.

<i>Subjects / Dimensions</i>	Political party	Politician	EU Groups	News Media	Public institution	Private institution	TV host/ Presenter/ Commentator	Online Influencer	Common citizen	Media	Other
Climate	10	36	3	9	107	42	1	2	26	11	119
Economy	26	66	1	15	75	39	5	1	77	2	60
Europe	19	47	9	15	96	53	1	0	60	1	64
Health	11	25	0	13	63	26	3	1	83	1	55
Total	66	174	13	52	341	160	10	4	246	15	298

Table 1 - Number of references to Subjects in all the posts, broken up by Dimensions. Most references to each subject are highlighted in yellow.

Taking into account each of the social media platforms under analysis, we can also draw some conclusions. As shown in graph 6, we find the highest percentage of subjects on Facebook. This could possibly be related to the unrestricted amount of space that users have to write a post on Facebook, so people refer to many different subjects in the same post. In comparison, Twitter, having a 280-character limit, conditions the number of subjects that users can approach in a singular post. Observing graph 6, it is also noticeable that political subjects are usually discussed on Facebook. In relation to news media, they are especially relevant as subjects within the Facebook “all users” dataset (representing about 50% of

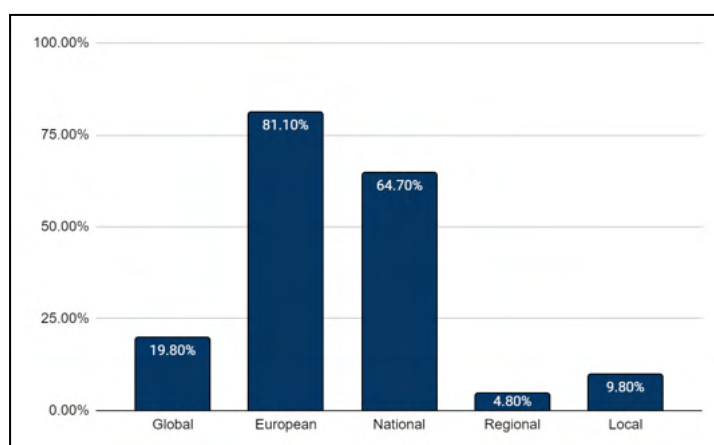
subjects), and inside Facebook groups (representing about 25% of subjects). Overall, it was common to find on Facebook posts that resorted to a populist rhetoric, trying to appeal to the average user addressing it directly. This style of communication could perhaps explain the prevalence of non-institutional subjects on the platform. Lastly, regarding Youtube, we conclude that political agents and organizations are the most frequent subjects.



Graph 6 - Distribution of subjects referenced in posts published, by type of subject and by platform, in percentage to the total of each dataset (multiple choice)

SCOPE

Considering the 676 posts analyzed we were able to identify the scope of 671. This means that in 99% of cases it was possible to understand whether the scope of a post was global, european, national, regional, or/and local. Out of the 671 posts, 19,8% were global in scope, 81,1% European, 64,7% national, 4,8% regional and 9,8% local. We can also report that more than half of the posts were both European and national in their scope at the same time, which makes sense as the databases were built based on posts that were relevant for Portugal and European topics, even in the dimensions other than “Europe”.



Graph 7 - Scope of all 676 posts, in percentage of the total (multiple choice)

While the scope of posts tends to be consistent across dimensions, platforms and media/non-media content, there are some differences that it's important to highlight.

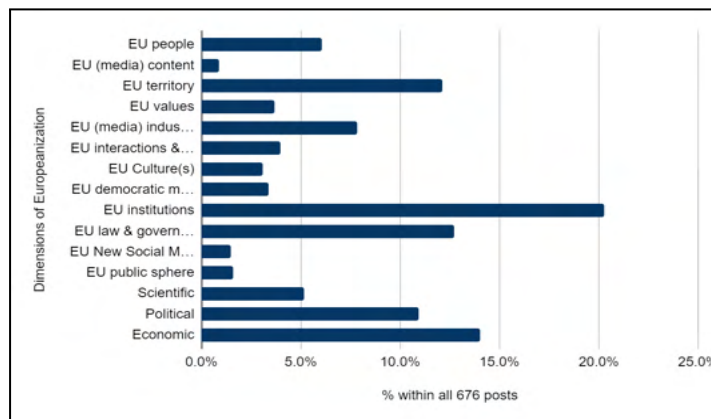
Looking at the different dimensions, we can report that the most significant differences can be found within the dimension "Climate", as it features the highest number of posts with a Global scope and the lowest number of posts with a National scope. This is likely because there was no climate specific issue happening in Portugal at the time. Additionally, COP 26 was a very important topic in that dimension – especially in the months of October and November. Other than this, the scope of posts was the same across dimensions.

Considering the different social media platforms, it is interesting to highlight that 35% of posts with a Global scope were in the Youtube datasets. This high percentage – especially for Youtube – is related to the abundance of content from Brazil that approached European issues, while drawing parallels with Brazil itself. While Facebook represents a higher percentage of posts with Global scope (43,1%), it is important to mention that we only analyzed 78 youtube posts in comparison to 358 from Facebook. It is also relevant to mention that the highest percentage of posts with Local scope (51,6%) was from Facebook groups. This is not surprising since common citizens (92,4% of agents in Facebook groups) are usually more prone to discuss topics related to what is happening locally. Lastly, contrasting media and non-media content, we can conclude that, while the number of posts with Global scope is similar, media agents post more about European issues, and non-media agents about national ones.

EUROPEANIZATION

Considering the 676 posts analyzed, we can conclude that european institutions (discussed in 20,3% of posts), economic matters (14,1% of posts), european law and governance (12,7% of posts), european territory (12,1% of posts) and political matters (10,9% of posts) are the most popular dimensions of europeanisation. These topics represent issues that are of some importance to the Portuguese people. For example, Portugal was discussing the allocation of European funds, which could translate into a bigger interest in European institutions and both economic and political matters. On the other hand, topics related to european (media) content, european new social movements and the european public sphere, are much less popular, representing (each) less than 2% of posts. In fact, only 27 posts (within the 676 analyzed) were related to these topics. The remaining dimensions of Europeanization are averagely discussed, their presence ranging from 3,1% to 7,8% of posts. Overall, it's important to highlight that no dimension represents even 25% of posts, which

could indicate that the Portuguese are not specially interested in any dimension of Europeanization in specific but discuss different dimensions

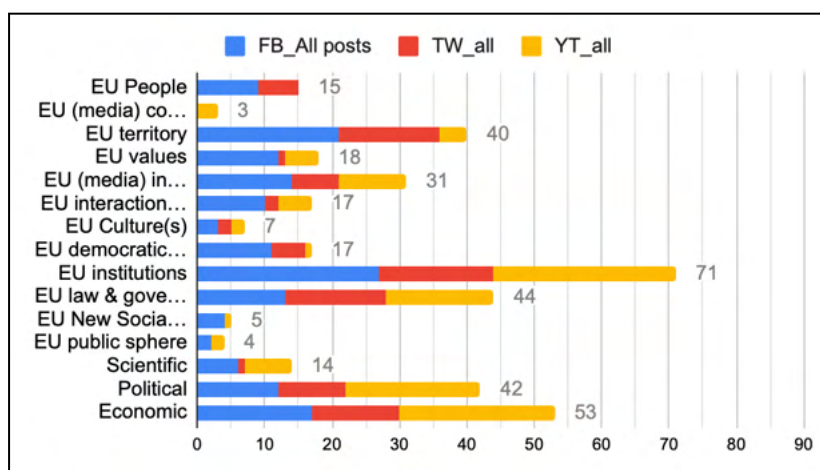


Graph 8 - References to the dimensions of Europeanization (multiple choice), in percentage of the total 676 posts analyzed

Europeanisation by platforms:

As we can observe on graph 9, there is a balanced distribution between all platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Youtube – regarding references to European dimensions. Facebook has more posts related to European territory and European institutions than other platforms. However, it is important to highlight that European institutions are among the most prevalent dimensions in all 3 platforms, which could indicate that European decision making is of higher concern to the Portuguese.

Youtube is especially relevant when it comes to the dimensions of Europeanization. In fact, we can find on Youtube references to every single dimension, except for “European People”. This could possibly be related to the prevalence of video format on Youtube, which allows agents to simultaneously approach a diverse range of topics and dimensions. On Twitter, we find lesser references to European dimensions, with the exception of the following: “European Territory”, “European Institutions” and “European Law & Governance”.



Graph 9 - References to the dimensions of europeanisation (multiple choice), in percentage of the total for each platform

Europeanisation by dimensions:

Taking a closer look at the most popular dimensions of Europeanization and their distribution within the four dimensions of analysis (Climate, Health, Economy, and Europe), we can better understand how Europeanization is being discussed on social media. Concerning European institutions, we can report they are more frequently mentioned in the dimension “Europe” (38,0%). When it comes to European law and governance, we find the highest number of posts within the dimension “Climate” (39,5%). Regarding economic matters, as expected we found that they are more prevalent in the dimension “Economy” (43,2%). In relation to European territory, we found half of posts within the dimension “Health” (50%). Lastly, regarding political matters, we found substantially more posts within the dimension “Climate”(62,2%).

REACH AND INTERACTION: COMPARISON BETWEEN MEDIA AND NON-MEDIA

In this section of the report, we analyze how the users interacted with the different posts analyzed, by showcasing various metrics related to engagement with the posts. To achieve this, we first compared three Facebook datasets (all users, groups, media), followed by two twitter datasets (all users and media).

Average and Total metrics on Facebook posts						
	All Users (n=120)		Groups (n=118)		Media (n=120)	
	Average	Total	Average	Total	Average	Total
Followers/Likes at Posting	591,047	70,334,640	42,319	4,866,757	1,342,604	161,112,478
Total Interactions	6,475	777,114	536	63,226	1,287	154,483
Comments	833	99,975	69	8,146	310	37,194
Shares	784	94,094	95	11,186	135	16,226
Average Engagement rate (%)	1.1%		1.3%		0.09%	

Table 2 - Average and total Facebook metrics for all posts, broken down by datasets (All Users, Groups and Media)

In table 2 we can find various metrics related to Facebook. It's important to highlight that Facebook groups have an n of 118 posts, instead of 120.

It is noticeable that media accounts in the Media Dataset have substantially more followers than "all users" and "groups" accounts in the correspondent datasets. In fact, the average media agent has about 1,3 million followers, in comparison to 591 thousand in "all users". The difference in Facebook groups is even more significant.

On average, posts found within the Facebook "all users" dataset have higher numbers of total interactions. Despite this, posts from Facebook groups have the highest engagement rate (ratio between total interactions and number of followers/likes). In that sense, proportionally, it is Facebook groups that have the most interactions. **We can thus conclude that communication inside Facebook groups involves less users but tends to be considerably more interactive.** In contrast, concerning media posts, it is noticeable they have an extremely low engagement rate. **This means that users are more inclined to follow media agents, but they don't interact (like, share, comment, etc) with them as much.**

Average and Total metrics on Twitter posts				
	All users (n=120)		Media (n=120)	
	Average	Total	Average	Total
Followers	448,245	53,789,379	743,856	89,262,708
Reach	86,131	10,335,722	45,227	5,427,227
Replies	38	4,508	4	514
Retweets	35	4,156	3	402
Average Engagement rate (%)	0.016%		0.001%	
Reach vs Followers (%)	19.2%		6.1%	

Table 3 - Average and total Twitter metrics for all posts, broken down by datasets (All Users, Groups and Media)

In table 3, we can find metrics related to twitter. Although we are analyzing both “all users” and media datasets, it’s important to consider that about 54% of posts from the “all users” dataset comes from media agents. Nonetheless, we can observe significant differences between the two. **It’s noticeable that twitter media has considerably more followers. However, posts from the “all users” dataset have on average 47% more reach (number of people who saw the tweet) than media posts.** This metric is also related to the number of total interactions. Posts from within the twitter “all users” dataset have considerably more retweets and replies, resulting in more people seeing the tweet. **In contrast, posts from media agents have a very low engagement rate.** In that sense, having many followers on twitter is not always a guarantee that the post will be seen by a large quantity of people

In general, it's visible that Facebook and Twitter are used differently by both producers and consumers of content. In that sense, posts found on Facebook tend to be more interactive than on twitter. However, this dynamic might actually make twitter more attractive for media agents, since their posts have low interactivity on both platforms. In contrast, agents such as online influencers and common citizens, may be more prone to using Facebook.

CONCLUSION

In this report we conducted an analysis of the Portuguese social media landscape, presenting results related to the format, agent, subject, scope and the europeanization of posts. These results were preceded by some considerations about Portuguese media as well as general perceptions about Europe, and were followed by an analysis of some important metrics such as the engagement and interactivity of posts. Additionally, we provided throughout the report a detailed view of the social-political context in Portugal during the period of analysis. The context is quite relevant, since the timespan of the analysis coincided with some relevant events in Portugal, such as local elections and the failure of the state budget for 2022, which resulted in the dissolution of parliament and the scheduling of legislative elections.

Regarding the format of posts, it was evident that text is usually the preferred way to communicate. However, links and images also have a significant presence, especially in media posts and in coordination - a link with an image preview. While video is not as popular (besides Youtube), some agents successfully make use of this format, especially on Facebook, as seen by the use of that format by the online personality Camilo Lourenço.

Considering the agents found within our dataset, it was noticeable that there were some differences across social media platforms. In that sense, we concluded that non-organizational agents – especially online influencers (mainly Camilo Lourenço) and common citizens – are very popular on Facebook; that media agents have a dominant presence on Twitter; and that organizations stand out on Youtube. Regarding political agents, we found that they were not substantially present in our dataset as agents. In fact, only 35 out of 676 posts were made by political agents. The reduced number of political agents was seen as surprising given the contours of the political situation happening in Portugal at the time.

Regarding the subjects found within the various posts, we concluded that organizations stand out as the main topic of discussion. In particular, public institutions, both national and international, were highly discussed during the time of the analysis. This could be related to the context, like the COP26, some concerns around the fragility of national institutions, but also as an awareness of the impact that European institutions have on the Portuguese economy, for instance due to the economic relief funds. By analyzing the subjects of the posts, we also gained a deeper understanding of how the Portuguese discuss politics on social media. The data indicates that users are more likely to mention institutions - such as the government – instead of specific politicians or political parties.

Considering the scope of the posts, we concluded that most dealt with European and national topics. In fact, it's important to highlight that more than half of the posts were both European and national in scope. In that sense, while European issues are seen as important, they are usually articulated with topics of national interest. Additionally, comparisons between Portugal and Europe were quite frequent, and contributed to the prevalence of national and European posts.

Lastly, concerning the various dimensions of Europeanization, we concluded that European institutions, economic matters and European law and governance are usually the most relevant dimensions. The prevalence of these dimensions seems to indicate that the Portuguese understand the impact that Europe has on the national paradigm. However, it's necessary to highlight that no particular dimension was present in more than 25% of posts. In that sense, while there seems to be some interest in discussing these dimensions, none of them seem to be prevalent in a substantial part of the discussion surrounding Europe on social media.

REFERENCES:

- Cardoso, G., Paisana, M., Pinto-Martinho, A. (2022). Digital News Report Portugal 2022. Lisboa: OberCom - Observatório da Comunicação. Available at: <https://obercom.pt/digital-news-report-2022-portugal/>
- European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 97 – Summer 2022 – Eurobarometer survey [internet]. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2693>
- European Parliament, Media & News Survey 2022. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi, S., Robertson, C. T., & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). Reuters Institute digital news report 2021. *Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism*. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Eddy, K., & Nielsen, R. K. (2022). Reuters Institute digital news report 2022. *Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism*. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022>
- Reporters Without Borders (2022). World Press Freedom Index – 2022. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/index>



Valentina Latronico
Jim Ingebretsen Carlson
Francisco Lupiañez-Villanueva

WP2 National Report: Spain

Table of Contents

<i>The Spanish media landscape</i>	2
<i>Media: the trust of Spanish citizens</i>	4
<i>The research</i>	5
Facebook	5
All users category	5
Groups category	7
Media category	9
Twitter	11
All users category	11
Media category	12
YouTube	13
All users category	13
<i>Discussion and conclusion</i>	14
<i>References</i>	16

The Spanish media landscape

The media structure in Spain is based on geographical boundaries: national, regional, and local. The national radio and television sector is regulated by the central government while the regional and local radio and television sectors are regulated by each of the 17 regions called "Autonomías" (Llorens, 2010).

Since the end of Franco's dictatorship in 1975, the development of the mass media in Spain can be divided into two phases: the normative/legal development phase from 1976 to 1989 and the managerial development phase from 1989 to 2000 (Arrese et al., 2009).

The first phase, from 1976 to 1989, allowed the transition from censorship to freedom of expression; therefore, from a system managed by the State to a system in which the media are increasingly managed by private entities. Furthermore, membership in the European Union has influenced the progression from a centralized media and communication policy to a decentralized policy. The second phase, on the other hand, from 1989 to 2000, is characterized by the creation of a hypersector of information through the formation of large media and multimedia groups which occurred simultaneously with the development and globalization of information technologies and the liberalization of the markets of telecommunication.

According to the conceptual framework of Hallin and Mancini (2004) reported below in [Table 1](#), Spain belongs to the Polarized Pluralist Model.

Table 1. The Three Models: Political System Characteristics (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

	Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain	North/Central Europe or Democratic Corporatist Model Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland	North Atlantic or Liberal Model Britain, United States, Canada, Ireland
Dimensions			
Newspaper industry	Low newspaper circulation; elite politically oriented press	High newspaper circulation; early development of mass-circulation press	Medium newspaper circulation; early development of mass-circulation commercial press
Political parallelism	High political parallelism; external	External pluralism especially in national	Neutral commercial press;

	pluralism, commentary-oriented journalism; parliamentary or government model of broadcast governance; politics-over-broadcasting systems	press; historically strong party press; shift toward neutral commercial press; politics-in-broadcasting system with substantial autonomy	information-oriented journalism; internal pluralism (but external pluralism in Britain); professional model of broadcast governance; formally autonomous system
Professionalization	Weaker professionalization; instrumentalization	Strong professionalization; institutionalized self-regulation	Strong professionalization; non-institutionalized self-regulation
Role of the State in Media System	Strong state intervention; press subsidies in France and Italy; periods of censorship; "savage deregulation"[40] (except France)	Strong state intervention but with protection for press freedom; press subsidies, particularly strong in Scandinavia; strong public-service broadcasting	Market dominated (except strong public broadcasting in Britain and Ireland)

Specifically, the dimensions refer to:

- The newspaper industry, i.e. the development of a mass press that influences the structure of the media markets (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).
- Political parallelism, i.e. the links between political actors and the media and the extent to which the media reflect political divisions. This characterizes media systems (Hardy, 2010).
- Professionalization, i.e. the continuum between independent journalism and instrumentalized journalism on the basis of the degree of autonomy, the development of norms, and the orientation to public service rather than to the interests of one individual (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).
- Role of the State in the media system, i.e. the power of the political system to shape the structure and the functioning of the media (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Media: the trust of Spanish citizens

According to Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2022), Spanish citizens have less confidence in the media than all other European citizens. However, they trust traditional media more than online media. In fact, radio is the most reliable means of communication for Spanish people, followed by the written press. In general, across the European states, there is greater distrust when it comes to online media and for the Spaniards in particular when it comes to social networks. Indeed, the number of Spanish citizens who distrust these media has grown compared to previous years.

Studies on the use of technological media show that in situations of crisis or emergency there is a tendency to resume the use of more traditional media such as radio, press, and television due to the high credibility of this type of media compared to online media (Hornmoen & Backholm, 2018; Diezhandino, 2007). In the last decade, in Europe and the United States, there has been an increase in the use of social media moreover the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has intensified online interaction and sharing both between people already acquainted and strangers (Brailovskaia et al., 2022). A key element analyzed by the Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2022) is the phenomenon of misinformation. Most European citizens claim to have come across fake news and in particular, 81% of Spanish citizens find news that they consider false or that distorts reality. This phenomenon has media, political and social repercussions. Indeed, European citizens believe that this is a problem for democracy.

Research carried out in the field of communication has identified a series of information practices that produce prejudices and distortions of reality during emergency situations. For example, during the health crisis due to the coronavirus, journalists, in generating news and reporting events, focused more on controversies and scandals, emphasizing the sensational and dramatic aspects (Cubero, 2019).

The research

Work Package 2 of the EUMEPLAT project aims to analyze the current situation of news platformization in the 10 countries represented in the consortium. For Spain, data collection was based on content posted by professional news producers and non-professional actors on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube social media platforms. Specifically, the social media contents analyzed are those published between October and November 2021 and were selected according to the four topics deemed most relevant by the Eurobarometer 2022: Europe, climate, economy, and health. The focus of the following content analysis will be on the most popular social media content for each of the six categories under investigation: all Facebook users, Facebook groups, Facebook accounts of media organizations, all Twitter users, Twitter accounts of media organizations, all YouTube users.

Facebook

All users category

The most popular Facebook post for the *Europe* dimension for the months of October and November 2021 was posted from the Verdad Oculta page in October 2021. The social media content of the post is a video about the blackout in Austria. In [Image 1](#) below you can see a screenshot of it and the title written by the user who posted the video.



Image 1.

For the *Climate* dimension, the Facebook post with the most interactions was posted in November 2021 from the personal account of Yolanda Díaz Pérez. She has been the Minister of Labor and Social Economy since January 2020 and the second Vice President of the Spanish Government since July 2021. The social media content is a video entitled "European forum" in which she herself talks about environmental issues and the Green Deal. In [Image 2](#) an explanatory screenshot of the Facebook post.



Image 2.

For the Economy dimension, the most popular Facebook post for the months of October and November 2021 was posted by the Russian influencer residing in Spain Liu Sivaya, in November 2021. The social media content is a video in which the influencer exposes her own opinion on the way Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is doing politics. Liu Sivaya, in fact, has become famous for her way of expressing opinions regarding current geopolitical situations. In [Image 3](#) a screenshot of the video and the explanation of the content written by Liu Sivaya.



Image 3.

The most popular Facebook post for the *Health* dimension was posted by the official news producer La Vanguardia in November 2021. The social media content, as you can see in [Image 4](#), is a direct link to an article on the newspaper's webpage reporting news of demonstrations and riots in Europe by the citizens against the restrictions due to Covid-19 and the vaccination passport.



Image 4.

Groups category

The most popular Facebook post for the *Europe* dimension was posted by a user in the Public Group “Madrid with Isabel Díaz Ayuso”. The social media content is a link to an article in the daily news La Razon which reports a fact that is happening between Isabel Díaz Ayuso and Pedro Sánchez in relation to European funds. Specifically, as reported in [Image 5](#), the article says that Isabel Díaz Ayuso will take the Spanish Prime Minister to court.



Image 5.

For the *Climate* dimension, the social media content with the most interactions on Facebook was posted on the public group “PEDRO SANCHEZ PRESIDENTE” in November 2021 by a user. The post is a text about COP26 held in Glasgow, UK. The social media content, [Image 6](#), enhances the PSOE in Spain in relation to the management of climate change.

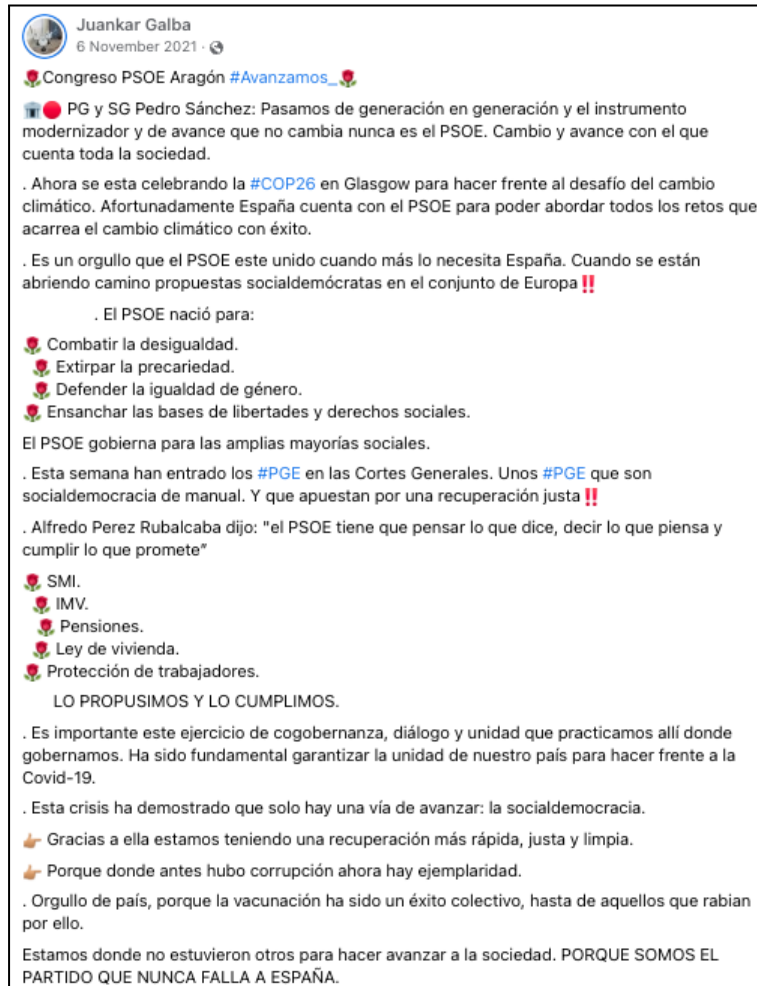


Image 6.

For the *Economy* dimension, the most popular Facebook post is the same post reported for the Europe dimension in [Image 5](#). In fact, that specific social media content covers both topics.

For the *Health* dimension, the Facebook post with the most interactions was published on the public group "Madrid with Isabel Díaz Ayuso", the same Facebook group in which the most popular post for the European theme was posted. However, the social media content in this case is a link to an article published on the webpage of the news producer La Razon that talks about the research center El Zendal in relation to Covid-19. In [Image 7](#) a screenshot of the post.



Image 7.

Media category

For the *Europe* dimension, the most popular social media content was posted by the official news producer La Vanguardia in October 2021. The post is a direct link to an article on the newspaper's official webpage reporting the news that the European Space Agency has published a satellite image of his Copernicus mission. In [Image 8](#) a screenshot of the post.



Image 8.

The most popular Facebook post for the *Climate* dimension is the same most popular for the Europe dimension in [Image 8](#), published in October 2021. In fact, the social media content

that links to the La Vanguardia article reports the geological emergency resulting from the eruption of the volcano on the island of La Palma, part of the Spanish Canary archipelago.

For the *Economy* dimension, in [Image 9](#) you can see the most popular social media content on Facebook. It was published in November 2021 on the page of El País. The official news producer posted a link to an article on its website that reports the Portuguese situation with respect to the new restrictions due to Covid-19, namely the closure of commercial activities, as well as the obligation to telework and the suspension of classroom lessons, right after Christmas.



Image 9.

The most popular social media content for the Health dimension is the same post that has had the most interactions in the ***all users category***, again for the Health dimension in [Image 4](#).

Twitter

All users category

The most popular tweet, [Image 10](#), related to the *Europe* dimension for the months of October and November 2021 was posted in November by the ABC account which is a professional news producer. The content is a text that shows the title of the article to which the image below refers if a user clicks on it. The argument is the European Union's perspective on the situation in Venezuela.

Image 10.



The tweet with the most interactions, [Image 11](#), for the *Climate* dimension was posted in November 2021 from the personal account of a Twitter user. The content is made up of text only and shows the user's personal perspective on the mayor of Barcelona and the mayor of Madrid referring to climate change.



Image 11.

The most popular tweet, [Image 12](#), for the *Economy* dimension was posted by a professional in the sector, the journalist Rubén Sánchez, in October 2021. The content is a text referring to the cultural bonus in Spain.



Image 12.

The tweet with the most interactions, [Image 13](#), for the *Health* dimension was posted from a personal account of a Twitter user in October 2021 and is a text. The content refers to the situation in Spain due to Covid-19 and compared to the rest of Europe.



Image 13.

Media category

The most popular tweet for the *Europe* dimension is the same post as ***all users category*** for the *Europe* dimension and you can see it in [Image 10](#).

The tweet with the most interaction, [Image 14](#), for the *Climate* dimension was posted by professional news producer El País in November 2021 and is a direct link to the official page of the newspaper. The link is accompanied by a brief explanation of the topic of the article, namely renewables in Europe and China.



Image 14.

The most popular tweet, [Image 15](#), for the *Economy* dimension was posted by the ABC newspaper, also mentioned above, in October 2021. The content is a link to the official website accompanied by a text reporting the title of the article which refers to the debt and the deficit of Spain in Europe.



Image 15.

The tweet with the most interactions, [Image 16](#), for the *Health* dimension was posted by professional news producer El País in November 2021. The content is a GIF accompanied by text about restrictions in Europe for unvaccinated people.



Image 16.

YouTube

All users category

The most popular YouTube video for the *European* dimension in October and November was posted in November 2021 by the Telefónica Empresas pymes España channel. The video talks about the digitalization of the country and about the European funds coming to facilitate this process. Furthermore, it refers to how Telefónica Empresas will help SMEs to achieve digitalization. To find out more, the title of the video is: Declaración de principios Telefónica Empresas. Llegan los Fondos Europeos.

The most popular YouTube video for the *Climate* dimension was posted in November 2021 by the DW Documental channel. The video talks about green hydrogen leaving open the question of whether this is the solution to climate change or whether it will prove to be a

billion euros error given that the technology behind this technique is still in progress. To find out more, the title of the video is: ¿Puede el gas ecológico salvar al mundo del calentamiento global? | DW Documental

The most popular YouTube video for the Economy dimension was posted by the Economía y Desarrollo channel in October 2022. The video talks about the financial situation in Colombia and questions whether the South American nation is close to reliving a real estate crisis like that of 1999. To find out more, the title of the video is: ¿Está cerca COLOMBIA de repetir una BURBUJA inmobiliaria como la del 1999?

The most popular YouTube video for the *Health* dimension was posted in November 2021 by the La Vanguardia channel. The video talks about the incidence of Covid-19 on the rise in Spain. In the description of the video, there is a direct link to the article since the channel is a daily news channel. To find out more, the title of the video is: Suben los casos de covid, y por primera vez no es grave | Josep Corbella.

Discussion and conclusion

From the content analysis of the posts with the most interactions on the social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube we can conclude that there are patterns depending on the platform and the agent.

Facebook and Twitter are two platforms that can be compared in terms of posted content and the emotional charge they present. Both social networks are used both by the accounts of official news producers and by the accounts of individual users registered on the platforms.

The pattern detected by the contents posted by the producers of official news, i.e. the media, is to use the social platforms, Facebook and Twitter in this specific case, to convey users to their official websites where they publish their articles. Generally, the post tries to attract the attention of users with captivating titles and images that deal with current issues.

The pattern detected by people publicly exposed as politicians or influencers, on the other hand, is to shake the opinion of their followers and all the other users through the expression of their opinion in a decisive way. This attitude drives users from being spectators to becoming actors by interacting on social media platforms. Such a pattern is the same that we can detect from the content analysis of posts published by Facebook and Twitter users who are not publicly exposed. The fil rouge that binds this type of social media content is the emotional charge, it is also having a precise opinion and taking a position in favor or against a given issue. This way of communicating attracts the attention of other users and makes viral the content.

There are studies supporting this conclusion that studied the trend of emotions on Facebook and Twitter (Kramer et al. 2014; Larsen et al. 2015; Li et al., 2016; Sailunaz et al., 2019). It is worth citing as an example the experiment by Kramer et al., (2014) which shows how emotional states can be transferred to others through emotional contagion. The emotional states of an individual lead another individual to experience the same emotions without the latter being aware of them. In an experiment with people using Facebook, researchers tested whether emotional contagion also occurs outside of direct user interaction by reducing the amount of emotionally charged content on the homepage. When positive expressions were reduced, people produced fewer positive posts and more negative posts; when the negative expressions were reduced, the opposite pattern occurred. These results indicate that the emotions expressed by others on Facebook affect our own emotions, constituting experimental evidence of a large-scale contagion through social networks. Another study supporting the thesis just described is that of Fowler & Christakis (2008), which lasted 20 years, from which we know that the most lasting moods can be transferred through networks.

From the content analysis of YouTube content, on the other hand, we can conclude that the most popular videos do not have an emotional charge. In general, the purpose of this platform is not the same as the two aforementioned social media platforms, and also sharing content on YouTube is much more time-consuming than social media of Facebook and Twitter. In the latter ones, just a written thought followed by a click on the "publish" button " is sufficient. However, YouTube remains a social media where subscribers can choose whether to remain spectators or become actors, and the content on this platform presents videos that can be categorized on the basis of the emotions they express like for the other platforms. This is also confirmed by scientific studies such as that of Chen et al. (2017).

References

Arrese, Á., Artero, J. P., & Herrero, M. (2009). The media in Spain: Three decades of transformation. In *The Handbook of Spanish Language Media* (pp. 17-33). Routledge.

Brailovskaia, J., Miragall, M., Margraf, J., Herrero, R., & Baños, R. M. (2022). The relationship between social media use, anxiety and burden caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) in Spain. *Current Psychology*, 41(10), 7441-7447.

Chen, Y. L., Chang, C. L., & Yeh, C. S. (2017). Emotion classification of YouTube videos. *Decision Support Systems*, 101, 40-50.

Cubero, M. M. (2019). Uso de las redes sociales en la cobertura periodística de crisis, desastres y emergencias en España= Use of social media in news media coverage of the crisis, disaster, and emergencies in Spain. *Revista española de comunicación en salud*, 43-54.

Diezhandino, M. P. (2007). Periodismo y poder.

European Commission, 2022. *Standard Eurobarometer 96*. Eurobarometer Surveys. [online] European Commission. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>

Fowler, J. H., & Christakis, N. A. (2008). Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network: longitudinal analysis over 20 years in the Framingham Heart Study. *Bmj*, 337.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics. Cambridge university press.

Hardy, J. (2010). Western media systems. Routledge.

Hornmoen, H., & Backholm, K. (Eds.). (2018). *Social media use in crisis and risk communication: Emergencies, concerns and awareness*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Kramer, A. D., Guillory, J. E., & Hancock, J. T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(24), 8788-8790.

Larsen, M. E., Boonstra, T. W., Batterham, P. J., O'Dea, B., Paris, C., & Christensen, H. (2015). We feel: mapping emotion on Twitter. *IEEE journal of biomedical and health informatics*, 19(4), 1246-1252.

Li, Q., Zhou, B., & Liu, Q. (2016, July). Can twitter posts predict stock behavior?: A study of stock market with twitter social emotion. In *2016 IEEE International Conference on Cloud Computing and Big Data Analysis (ICCCBDA)* (pp. 359-364). IEEE.

Llorens, C. (2010). Spain's media concentration policy: A patchwork crucial to the understanding of the Spanish media system. *International Journal of Communication*, 4, 844-864.

Nielsen, R. K., Fletcher, R., Newman, N., Brennen, J. S., & Howard, P. N. (2020). Navegando la 'infodemia': así consume y califica las noticias y la información sobre el coronavirus la gente en seis países. *Reuters Institute: Oxford, UK*.

Sailunaz, K., & Alhajj, R. (2019). Emotion and sentiment analysis from Twitter text. *Journal of Computational Science*, 36, 101003.

WP2 Country report: Sweden



Thomas Andersson

Qammar Abbas

WP2 National Report: Sweden

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Overview of the Swedish Media Landscape	3
Media history in Sweden	5
Social Media Use	5
Analysis of the Data	7
Standing of non-professional posting – Who posts and about what?	9
Examining individual and highly influential posts	10
Concluding observations	14
References	15

Abstract

The present report introduces the context for the Swedish media system and notably the observations made in systematic analysis of social media posts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The period covered spans three months in 2022 and the substantive areas reviewed are those of economy, Europe, health, and climate. The ingoing advance of ICT blended with commercial and organisational issues in upending much of Swedish media landscape. This does not mean, however, that public media would have lost its significant position as the most trusted source of news, applying to both newspapers and broadcasting.

The covered period was marked by intensive political upheaval on the national scene, coupled with turbulence stemming from the European and international levels. Coverage of health and social issues pertaining to the pandemic was less prevalent compared to many other countries, however, probably reflecting that Sweden had a less restrictive policy regime,

leaving it up to individuals to behave responsibly rather than enforcing lockdowns. Yet, Sweden was affected by the ensuing economic downturn. A hardening political landscape featured anti-immigrant sentiments and a dramatic tilt towards the far right. Politically charged social media content, including manipulative and outright fake news, clearly played its part. While Facebook featured a certain balance, with some individuals and organisations raising attention to substantive considerations, Twitter was swamped by outright slurs and aggression associated with the nationalistic party. By contrast, YouTube displayed little politically charged content.

Meanwhile, we observe that issues known to traditionally attract great attention in Swedish public discourse, such as social affairs, environment, health, and wellbeing, received relatively little attention in social media during this period. Economy and politics featured vehement attention, however, especially in posting generated by public sources. For the European and climate dimensions, the content of Facebook and Twitter posts displayed marked contrasts, with the former mostly positive and the latter negative. Twitter traffic places strong focus on migration, with much less so on Facebook. Climate plays a more important role in Facebook and to some extent YouTube. Facebook was varied, for as many posts in anti-immigrant groups there was the same amount in anti-nationalistic groups (almost). In general, however, when looking at posts from individuals posting in groups, it was about their discontent with the current leadership or current political topics/laws that were not to their liking. While attention to health issues followed less of a clear-cut pattern, the lack of direction observed in that area may be due to partly irrelevant data coverage in the data base underlying this study.

Introduction

Social media platforms have gradually appeared as a highly charged medium for influencing social and political discourse (Toots, 2019). Geographical and social mapping undertaken over the years, in the US, UK, and European countries, illustrates how populist movements apply big data analytics with skill and precision to thrive on social polarisation (Autor, 2016; Becker et al., 2017; Ginsburgh, 2020). Excluded individuals and communities are particularly prone to influence from “fake news”, while also more vulnerable to cybercrime and commercially motivated misuse of data and identity theft (ICO, 2018).¹

¹ Campaigns associated with a range of national elections, from the meddling in Ukrainian politics by Paul Manafort and the Habsburg Group 2006-2014, across Cambridge Analytica in the UK to promote Brexit, Russian-engineered and other troll farms intervening in the 2016 US Parliamentary election, exemplify systematic disinformation on social media to influence the destiny of numerous political regimes at national level. The social media accounts, primarily Facebook but also linking to other networks, of at least 126 million

The orientation and role and impact of such movements vary considerably, however, across countries and geographical regions, as well as between social media channels. The present study introduces and reports on the case of Sweden, drawing on three months of posts published on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Following an overview of the Swedish media landscape, including observations on its positioning withing the Nordic and wider European context, the report presents findings from a review of content separating between the three main social media platforms in Sweden, as well as six social media group types (all users of Facebook; Facebook groups; media organisations' Facebook accounts; all users of Twitter; media organisations' Twitter accounts; all users of YouTube), representing professional and non-professional social media content. The posts were collected according to four dimensions deemed to be the most important for EU citizens according to the 2022 Eurobarometer (Europe, economy, climate, and health) and coded according to their relationship to the EU. It should be underlined; however, substantive areas cannot be strictly separated. In practice, there is substantive overlapping, the implications of which will be illustrated by scrutiny and analysis of examples of some of the most impactful individual posts appearing during the studied period.

Overview of the Swedish Media Landscape

The Swedish media landscape forms part of the Nordic context, also spanning Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway. The region is typically viewed as located in the periphery, enduring a harsh climate, and having a relatively sparse population. While the earlier history of these countries was marked by poverty and frequent conflict, Sweden and the other Nordic countries developed strongly from the late 19th century onwards.

Sweden, along with the other Nordic countries, is typically associated with a “corporatist” media model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) featuring: high circulation of written press tightly linked to political parties and other mainstream social organisations, a notable degree of journalistic professionalism and self-regulation, strong government influence associated with financial dependency as well as influential public broadcasting (Andersson, 2022).

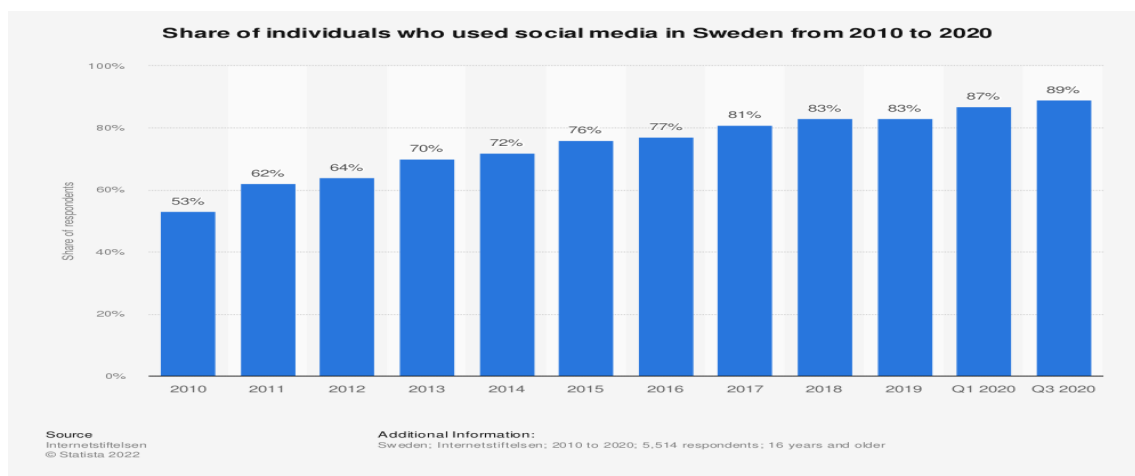
A relatively high reliance on public television for news and newspapers for public information in Sweden, means that political actors mainly communicate with the electorate through the news media. Since paid political advertising is banned in the mainstream media, political actors tend to depend on skilled news management as a prerequisite for success in communicating with the electorate.

Americans were shown to be compromised, with much of the activity that took place yet unknown, unmapped, or not put in the open. See, e.g., ICO (2018), Cadwalladr and Graham-Harrison (2018).

Relative other Europeans, Swedes retain more trust in traditional media compared to news transmitted via Internet platforms (EBU, 2020). At the same time, user-generated content has grown in importance, leading to a blend, so-called popular journalism (Hujanen, 2004). Editorial professionals find themselves competing with new kinds of raw material. While opening for new possibilities, journalistic norms meet with new challenges in this context, as will be returned to.

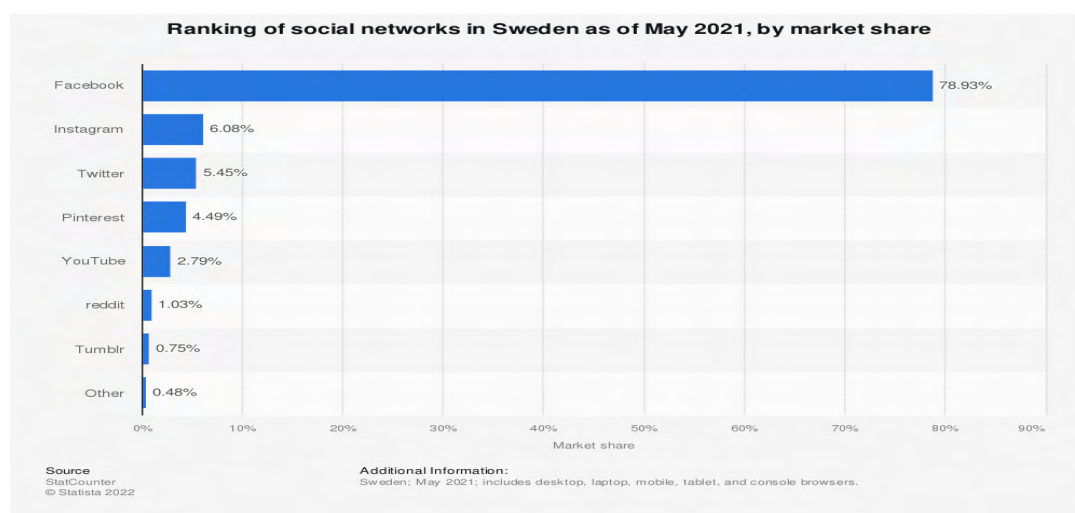
As can be seen from Figure 1, the share of individuals who use social media increased at a modest but stable rate over the past decade, reaching 89% by 2020. Facebook dominated strongly, as seen from Figure 2. The next most popular platform, Instagram, is used by 6% of the population, and YouTube by 2,8 %. The true importance of each social media network does not necessarily emanate from the share of the population using it, however.

Figure 1: Share of individuals using social media in Sweden, 2010 - 2020



Source: Eurostat (2021)

Figure 2: Ranking of Social Networks in Sweden as of May 2021, by market share



Source: Eurostat (2021)

Media history in Sweden

The Swedish media structure has been argued to reflect the institutional model as it has evolved since the early 20th century. Important features of relevance here include a strong presence of collective bargaining, marked by strong but indirect influence by the government, by Heckscher (1957) coined corporatism.² Hallmarks of this model have been the presence of “constructive” social relations and participatory governance (Kuhlne, 2016).

The Swedish media landscape, in line with the wider Nordic picture, features a generally strong position for public media. Leading into the 1970s, the standing of public media was backed up by regulation and public monopoly. The ban on advertising formed a key building block. This changed in the 1970s following the dramatic breakthrough brought about by Kinnevik AB, the media empire run by Jan Stenbäck, particularly TV3. The change became possible due to a combination of changing technical, commercial and organisational landscape. Swedish regulation prohibiting broadcasting proved possible to circumvent, for instance, by arranging with Swedish television transmitted out of London. After TV3 became the first commercial channel broadcasted in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, the legislation was softening, undercutting public monopoly and rapidly leading the media market to a more open playing field. The TV3 concept was applied not only in Sweden and the Nordics but also in a number of Central and Eastern European countries, where the legislation went the same way.

For the newspaper industry, Stenbäck similarly introduced Metro, distributed free of charge across Stockholm thanks to a collaborative agreement with the local railway company. The established “rules of the game” were thereby irretrievably changed. First-move advantages from innovation and altering the market conditions were proven possible. Meanwhile the stable political landscape of past years started to unravel. As party identification declined, so as did trust in the mainstream parties (Allern, 2007). Meanwhile, the perceptions of political influence in media started to change, turning dependency on funding from political parties into a liability (Nord and Grusell, 2021). This, coupled with the rise of social media, raised challenges for the morale and reputation of journalists and other media professionals. The European refugee crisis starting in 2015 brought further volatility (Kelly 2018).

Social Media Use

The arrival of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube brought about another wave of change. Some concern content, and where users turn to for obtaining various

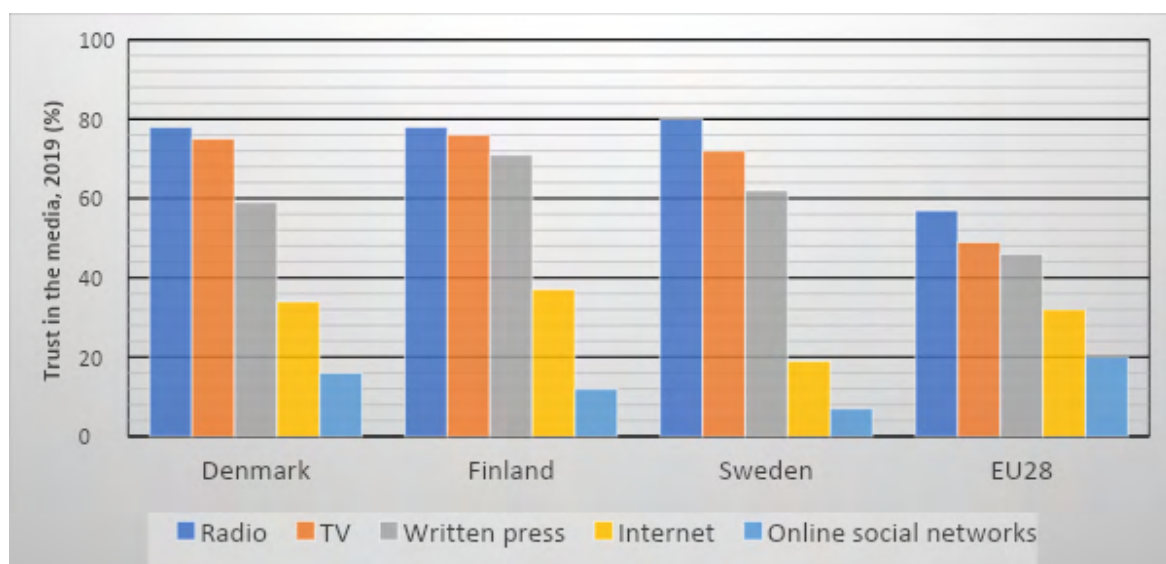
² The term originally arisen in Central Europe in the 19th century, depicting an alternative “political economy” which aspired to shape a middle-way between classical liberal economy and radical socialist transformation.

kinds of content.³ “News”, for instance, has evolved towards shorter messages, produced by anyone with a social media account. To some, credibility is associated with the number of followers, retweets, reshares, reposts, and so forth. As seen from Table, 1 the share of the population using social media, has grown in Sweden at a rate that is comparable to the other Nordic countries. Yet, Sweden combines the rise of new media markets with continued robust demand for traditional, public media. Radio and TV are consistently shown to remain the most trusted media channels in Sweden, whereas social media ranks at the bottom (EBU, 2020). Comparing trust levels for different media channels, Figure 3 indicates that Swedes report the most pronounced variation in trust levels, with public media at the top and social media at the bottom.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sweden	57	65	62	70	71	70	72	73
Denmark	64	66	65	74	75	79	81	85
Norway	68	71	73	76	83	82	86	88
Finland	51	56	58	62	66	67	67	75
Iceland	79	83			89	91	92	94

Table 1: Number of individuals participating in Social Networks, per 100 people (Eurostat, 2021)

Figure 3: share of the population that express trust in media



Source: EBU (2020)

³ <https://www.statista.com/markets/424/topic/540/social-media-user-generated-content/#overview>

The social media platforms have become powerful instruments for wide diffusion of all kinds of messages. Some originate from influential individuals, celebrities, political parties and public/private organisations/institutions to deliver their messages to the public. Others originate from anonymous sources, some taking extreme positions with messages whose content consist in outright fake news or distorted views of the world. At the same time, social media platforms have become part of daily life for people of all kinds.

Analysis of the Data

Agents/poster/user and the scope

In this section, we examine the posts that have been collected over three months, using an algorithm selecting posts across the main social media channels and substantive areas, covering three months. As the sample thus depended on the functionality of the algorithm, the analysis and conclusions are not based on aspirations to achieve statistical significance. For sample posts, across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, for climate, economy and health, Table 2 reviews the share generated by the main sender categories (politicians vs. professional media representatives) while Table 3 illustrates shares with a European vs. national scope.

As a complementary illustration, Matrices 1 and 2 note the prevalence of a markedly dominant standing of one sender category or the other, as well as a dominating scope for European vs. national across the media channels and subject categories.

A number of observations stand out from this analysis:

- i) Political sources account for a greater share of sample posts every month during the studied period compared to media;
- ii) On Facebook and Twitter, political agents dominate strongly as the main source;
- iii) On YouTube, media agents are more important, applying notably to Climate and Economy;
- iv) Posting in the health sector was dominated by media, especially on Twitter but also on YouTube;
- v) Political sources and media taken together dominate the sample posts on Facebook when it comes to climate and economy, appear more strongly prevalent in the health area on Twitter, whereas their respective contributions are more volatile on YouTube;

- vi) As for European vs national, the two appear roughly equally represented in the social media channels overall. Varying patterns appear across the media channels and substantive areas, however;

	Political agent			Media agent		
	month 1	month 2	month3	month 1	month 2	month3
Climate all post Facebook	60	90	70	10	10	10
Economy all post Facebook	60	90	100	60	10	0
Health all post Facebook	50	40	30	0	30	0
Climate all post Twitter	20	50	50	20	10	0
Economy all post Twitter	80	0	50	20	0	10
Health all post Twitter	20	60	10	40	10	10
Climate all post YouTube	0	0	20	20	0	80
Economy all post YouTube	0	30	No data	20	60	No data
Health all post YouTube	0	60	0	10	10	10

Table 2: Percentage of sample posts in each category that were posted by either political or media agents, over studied 3-month period

	European Scope			National Scope		
	month 1	month 2	month3	month 1	month 2	month3
Climate all post Facebook	70	90	40	60	10	40
Economy all post Facebook	60	40	0	40	60	100
Health all post Facebook	100	60	70	60	40	20
Climate all post Twitter	100	100	50	20	100	50
Economy all post Twitter	30	0	10	100	0	90
Health all post Twitter	90	100	70	50	75	20
Climate all post YouTube	80	0	20	60	40	40
Economy all post YouTube	20	10	No data	20	40	No data
Health all post YouTube	0	0	30	0	90	40

Table 3: Percentage of sample posts in each category that had European and National scope respectively (overlap is possible)

Matrix 1: Main sender shares, political/media agents (where above 50%)

Category'/Social media	Facebook		Twitter		YouTube	
	POL	MED	POL	MED	POL	MED
Climate	> 50		> 50			
Health				> 80		>70
Economy						

Matrix 2: Scope primarily European/non-European (where above 50 %)

Category'/Social media	Facebook		Twitter		YouTube	
	EUR	NAT	EUR	NAT	EUR	NAT
Climate			> 80	> 70		
Health			> 80			
Economy		> 70				

- i) On posts addressing the economy multiple sources appear, with no single source dominating the others in any of the substantive areas.
- ii) On both Facebook and Twitter, sample posts tend to have a European scope when it comes to climate and health, while the reverse applies to the economy, where national scope is more prevalent;
- iii) On YouTube, sample posts are dominated by national rather European scope;

More detailed observations for the respective categories follow below.

Standing of non-professional posting – Who posts and about what?

Beside professional posting, non-professional sources account for a substantive share of all posts across all social media channels. Their standing among the sample posts varies markedly, however. A dominating standing for citizen posts appear particularly on Facebook Groups, which may be characterised as a leading non-professional channel.

Compared with conventional news and professional sources, non-professional social media content is dominated by crisp, highly specific messages, which tend to concentrate on particular themes that either have great topicality or resonate with concerns or opinions likely shared by a large chunk of leadership, although not necessarily a majority.

Specific observations have been made in research on the representation of women in the reporting of news online, compared to traditional media. On average, the share of stories on news websites in Sweden reported by women has been found to be systematically higher compared to the share of traditional news reported by women. Some associate this with a trend towards political action being explained and reasoned by opinions and provoked by emotions rather than based on factual truths (Kassab 2016). This coincides with the identification of new journalistic challenges arising from more subjective and opinionated inputs. This has been widely observed to raise new challenges for journalistic norms, e.g., in regard to objectivity, impartiality, and accuracy, widely viewed as hallmarks of traditional Swedish media. On the other hand, new opportunities appear as well, e.g., for novel to cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary approaches, and for connecting with the public (Andersson, 2022).

It is worth noting that the main specific cross-border issues pulling in non-professional posting during the studied period, i.e., the pandemic in health and calls for action to address climate change, were the target of much aggressive and concerned social media traffic notably on Facebook and Twitter. Cross-border issues in the field of economy were also controversial, but still to a much higher degree addressed in communication that originated from experts or professional organisations.

In interpreting these patterns, it is important to consider links between different kinds of sources. Strongly nationalist (right-wing) posting, by leading politicians in the Swedish Democratic Party, are resonant with the disproportionately active civil movement at that end of the political spectrum. Outright misleading content, and fake news, have high prevalence, with Twitter as the main social media channel for this strand of communication.

Meanwhile, posts appearing in Facebook groups were strongly leaning towards a National Scope rather than a European one. On the dimension European vs. national, we further note that:

- Posts addressing the former dominate on Twitter in the areas of Climate and Health, with a strong non-professional pull:
- In regard to economy, non-professionals are strongly engaged too. The national theme dominates on Facebook while the coverage is more balance European vs. national on Twitter.

The European vs. national separation is of little relevance for posts on YouTube, applying across all substance areas across the platforms and themes.

Other observations on citizen posts and the prevalence of the European dimension:

- The majority of the top posts on social media forms platforms fall under either neutral or non-applicable categories when the European sentiment was analysed (Q.6). Both predominately European and predominately non-European segment in this category of posts were basically absent.
- The dominating posts shared in these groups emanated from citizens, rather than political or media sources.

Examining individual and highly influential posts

Analysis of aggregated categories of posts risk by-passing important aspects or misleading us in mapping what patterns are most important. While it is difficult to generalise or draw any definite conclusions on the basis of individual posts, we make selected observations on the most influential posts within some of the main media categories, of relevance to casting further light on how to evaluate some of the apparent patterns across social media channels and substantive areas observed above.

The most viewed/shared/post on Facebook emanated from a right-wing politician coming out aggressively against the threat of losing control to migrants, visit:



<https://www.facebook.com/100050269188783/posts/420676582951311>

The most viewed post on Twitter was a media posts, addressing the economy, highlighting a major stock exchange downturn associated with the pandemic, visit:

<https://twitter.com/Aftonbladet/status/1464273831586054148>



The tweet with highest impact in e climate (climate post) taking a strong stance that nuclear power is unsustainable. This post also has a strong European link, as it comes out forcefully countering the position of several other European countries in this respect, visit:

<https://twitter.com/ParHolmgren/status/1448315572597428231>



This Tweet with the highest impact in the areas of posts relating to Europe was actually a post that boasted about Sweden's standing in a particular area, namely that of advancing towards replacing fossil-fuel driven cars by electrical cars, authored by the Minister of Environment in the Swedish government at the time. This post is hardly characterised by a pro-Europe perspective but is



rather marked by nationalistic touch. On the other hand, it is markedly pro-climate policies, visit:

<https://twitter.com/bolund/status/1438903460624273414>

This Tweet has highest impact in the health-related tweets:

<https://twitter.com/Expressen/status/1464331964362727435>

representing a dramatic message about new virus variants.



Another post with a lot of traction claims that Swedes have the right to be alarmed as immigrants are taking two pensions, both in Sweden and in their home country, in this way cheating the system. The post spread widely as it was furthered by several Swedish FB groups during, all of which were radically right wing and devoted to anti-immigrant rhetoric. The subject area represents a blend of economy and Europeanisation, advancing incorrect information and playing on prejudice of citizens with low education with an adverse view of Swedish taxes and internationalization.

The above is of high relevance by supporting the right-wing



agenda in Sweden, purposefully devised so as to reach large numbers of voters who may have potential interest in interacting with the post.

In the end, a couple months later, the Swedish Democrats became the second largest party as the right-wing coalition won the election

That post has been featured in the following groups:

1. Vi som kräver en folkomröstning om fortsatt invandring till Sverige (*We who demand a referendum on continued immigration to Sweden*)
2. Stå Upp För Ett Tryggare Sverige (*Rise up for a safer Sweden*)
3. Stoppa Islamiseringen Av Sverige (*Stop the Islamization of Sweden*)
4. Vi som stödjer SD (MP ut ur riksdagen!) (*We who support SD (MP out of parliament!)*)

Out of the 50 posts with most traction under Economy Facebook Group posts, four were the same post by the same user, in four different groups. Gaining a lot of traction and spewing propaganda prior to the run up of the Swedish Election.



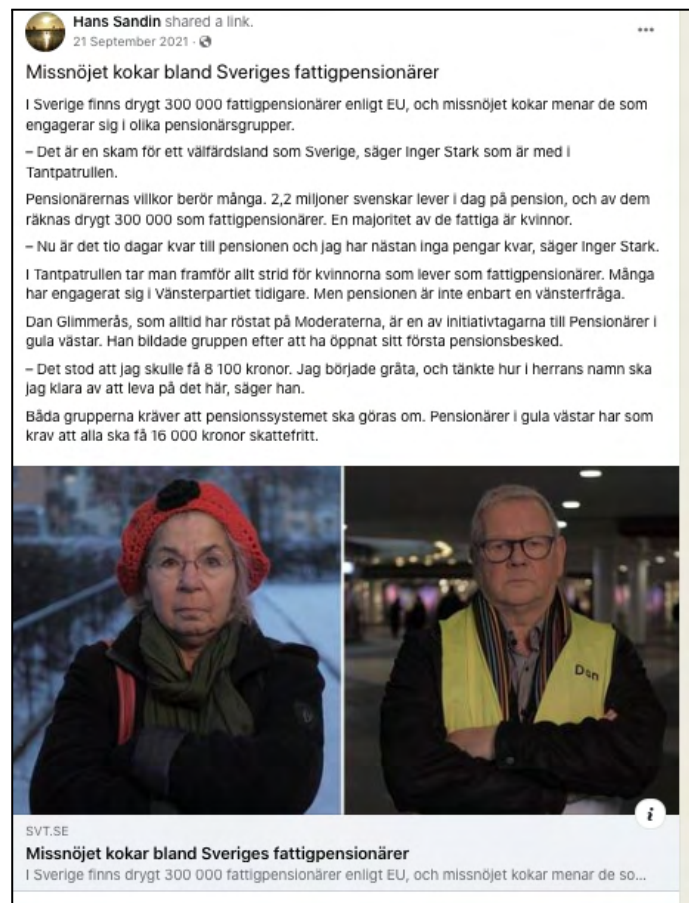
Under the umbrella, out of the posts coded, eight were anti-European, and 24 were neutral (the rest of the 50 were irrelevant and not coded). This shows a trend where, in FB Groups, the posts which get a lot of attention and that users are interacting with are in general neutral/anti-European leaning. No posts, in groups, are European positive, showing us which direction the conversation on the platform is headed. As mentioned earlier, in the following election the right, Eu critical, side won the majority.

Another trend we can see from the coding of this time period is an anger towards Swedish politicians when it comes to their environmental policies in contrast to current energy prices. Many of the posters are not environmentally

conscious but are frustrated with rising fuel and electricity costs. The group “Bränsleupproret” (*The Fuel Rebellion*) has had a lot of traction, and five of the 50 posts are in this group (two of the top ten).

A related significant theme in its own right, is the Swedish pension scheme, and particularly that such a large number of Swedish pensioners are considered poor. Seven out of 50 posts are in the group “Din Kommande Pension!” (*Your upcoming pension!*), and five of the posts are in the top ten. This is hugely surprising but shows us where much of the focus has been on Facebook in Sweden and highlights the kind of demographics using the platform.

Finally, a general consensus of the posts is that there is a large focus on the Swedish countryside, virtually none of the posts have to do with the major cities or are people from Sweden’s main urban areas.



Concluding observations

The research findings concerning the use of social media platforms demonstrate a strong connection to the topics that were relevant and influential in the general public debate at the time. This applies particularly to Twitter and Facebook, less so to YouTube. Using a list of keywords pertinent to each of the four dimensions (Europe, climate, economy, health) opened for multiple observations. Among them, political and media sources account for most sample posts on Facebook and Twitter during the studied period compared to media; Media sources were stronger in the health sector, and also more generally on YouTube. Non-professional sources were particularly prevalent on Twitter, and Facebook Groups.

Europeanisation may not appear of highest relevance in social media, when analysing the main orientation of posts across the various social media channels and subject areas. Examining in greater detail the individual most influential posts in different categories, however, opens for other interpretations. Beyond the aggregate numbers, topmost posts viewed/watched on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, demonstrate a complex interface cutting across geographical borders and blending diverse sets of issues. While the focus may not have been on Europeanisation, some of the most influential posts allude to internationalisation, Europeanisation, a loss of national sovereignty, etc., in ways that appear purposefully employed to undercut public confidence in policymaking, the need of addressing climate and environmental issues, sow further doubts about migrants, etc. On this basis, and also since the sample of posts examined in the present study was selected using a specific algorithm, with no aspiration to arrive at statistically significant results, further in-depth research should be undertaken to examine the role of various social media channels and content in politics and the social discourse.

The wider social and political context that marks the period under study needs to be taken into consideration. Sweden, the period studied in this report was marked by lead-up towards a general election. As we know now, the political right was to experience a major breakthrough, with the previous left-centre government overturned and replaced by a rightist government, dependent on the extreme Swedish-Democrats. The aftermath of the global pandemic still exerted an impact. We may assume that Europeanisation as well as climate change, received major attention in Swedish political and social discourse, along with issues of health and environment more broadly, than is normally their case. Their true significance may still be trapped in linkages to the coverage of other subjects.

References

- Allern, E. H., Aylott, N., and Christiansen, F. J. (2007). "Social Democrats and Trade Unions in Scandinavia: The Decline and Persistence of Institutional Relationships", *European Journal of Political Research* 46(5), pp. 616-28.
- Andersson, T (2022). "The Media Landscape in Sweden", in EUMEPLAT, Springer.
- Autor, D., Don. D., Hanson, G., and Majlesi, K. (2016). Importing Political Polarization? The Electoral Consequences of Rising Trade Exposure, NBER Working Paper 22637.
- EBU (2020). Market Insights, Trust in Media 2020, European Broadcasting Union's Media Intelligence Service (MIS)
file:///C:/Users/thoma/Downloads/EBU-MIS-Trust_in_Media_2020.pdf
- Eurostat (2021). "Individuals using the internet for participating in social networks"
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00127/default/table?lang=en>
- Hallin D.C., Mancini P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Heckscher, G. (1957). *The Study of Comparative Government and Politics*, Routledge Library Editions: Political Science, 10.
- Hujanen, T. (2004). "Content Production at the New Identity of Public Service Broadcasting: The Case of Digital Television." Paper presented at RIPE@2004, Aarhus, Denmark, June 3–5.
- Becker, S, Fetzer, T., and Novy, D. (2017). Who Voted for Brexit? CESifo Discussion Paper 1480.
- Ginsburgh, V., Perelman, S. and Pestieau, P. (2020). "Populism and Social Polarization in European Democracies", Working Papers ECARES 2020-27, ULB -- Universite Libre de Bruxelles.
- ICO (2018). Investigation into the use of data analytics in political campaigns, A report to Parliament on 6 November, Information Commissioner's Office, Cheshire.
- Kassab, H. (2016). *The power of emotion in politics, philosophy, and ideology*, Palgrave Mac Millan, New York.
- Kelly, B. (2018). Sweden Democrats: How a nationalist, anti-immigrant party took root in a liberal Nordic haven, Independent, accessed 08.06.2021: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sweden-democrats-election-results-nationalist-populist-party-anti-immigrant-refugees-a8515576.html>
- Kuhlne, S. (2016)-*Survival of the European Welfare State*, Routledge, New York and London.
- Nord, L. and Grusell, M. (2021). Media and Politics in Sweden, in: Skogerbo, E., Ibién, O, Kristensen, N. N., and Nord. L., *Power, Communication and Politics in the Nordic Countries*, Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, pp. 113-32.
- Nordicom (2021). Media Statistics <https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/statistics-facts/media-statistics>.
- Toots, M. (2019). "Why E-participation systems fail: The case of Estonia's Osale.ee", *Government Information Quarterly*. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.02.002>

EUMEPLAT: PLATFORMIZATION OF NEWS IN TEN COUNTRIES

WP2 Country Report Turkey

Lutz Peschke & Yasemin Gümüş Ağca

Abstract

This report presents the results of WP2 within the context of the EUMEPLAT project. Depending on the coding results of the Bilkent University team, it discusses the practices and tendencies adopted in the use of social media in Turkey. The report covers a scope of two months period, October 2021 and November 2021 and uses the most shared posts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In the first section, background information on news sharing and platformization in Turkey is provided along with a reference to the Europeanization process in order to lay the ground for further analysis. Also, background information on the recent media landscape in Turkey is provided. The discussion part addresses the four dimensions of Europeanization, Europe, Economy, Climate, and Health, and traces the implications of their usage. The second part presents the results around the format of the posts and agencies that share these posts. The last section of the report assesses different dimensions of the concept of Europe according to the degrees they are addressed and asks what type of European referents are addressed during the time scope of this research. It also asks whether we can talk about general tendencies and common aspects in terms of social media usage in Turkey.

Introduction

With a population of over 84 million, Turkey emerges as one of the most crowded countries in the South of Europe. The number of young people comprises 15.3% of the overall population which makes the country enjoy a unique dynamism in terms of employment, health system, education, and cultural investment while complicating the same issues since the distribution of information, news, and agencies is directly impacted by the same reasons (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2022). Yeşil discusses the media in New Turkey and identifies the system in Turkey as shaped by an authoritarian neoliberal state (Yeşil, 2016, 2). As such, the actors of the media system are forced to address the citizens “through a political economy lens” which results in the reception of Turkey’s “economic, social, and cultural terrains through the lens of the country’s media system” (ibid., 2). Significantly, Yeşil’s statement is in parallel with the findings of this research.

A look at Turkey’s history will point to a very specific chapter; the September 1980 military coup with its higher impacts on the internal and external politics of the country emerges as a shift in the history of media as well (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010). In the following years, the country had several detours between the military regime and the civilian regimes. Kaya and Çakmur

(2010) demand that in order to understand the nature of shifts in the Turkish media structures, it is necessary to trace the socioeconomic and political structures in Turkey. During the early 1990s, Turkey witnessed a quick shift into a “market-based and outward-oriented strategy” resulting in the adaptation of a massive communications network. This was later experienced through “an expansion of the media infrastructure and an increase in media outlets and products.”¹

However, these transformations were experienced in parallel with constant political intervention and the instrumentalization of the media outlets by the actors in the economy. As is seen in Turkey’s WP2 results, the practice of instrumentalization, especially for economic motivations, continues in the context of social media usage. One significant example emerged during the Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013. As of 2014, Twitter use in Turkey had risen to the biggest number serving as an “organizing tool for political and social purposes” (Kaya, 1994). However, this also caused the AKP government to centralize the Internet Service Providers between 2015 and 2016. With traditional media already remaining under the control of the government, social media usage, in this sense, emerged as an independent and more liberal media for the citizens in Turkey.

According to The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022, when the social media posts of this research are extracted, the pandemic situation had further damaged “the political and financial conditions for independent journalism in Turkey.” While the number of print newspapers tragically declined as a consequence of the pandemic, this resulted in the citizens’ quests for alternative media and news consumption largely took place through social media. While Twitter remained as a platform for shared information, news, and ideas, Youtube and Instagram provided “particularly useful for visual content and generating traffic for social and economic issues, such as women’s rights, which are largely ignored by the pro-government media during 2021 (Reuters Institute, 2021). This is interpreted as a concern for the spread of misinformation and provocation. In addition to Turkey’s internationally recognized fact-checking organizations such as teyit.org, the Presidential Directorate of Communications announced its preparations for a fact-checking platform which would serve under governmental regulations. Interestingly, the same Reuters report reveals that 73% of internet users viewed Youtube, for news, which is followed by Facebook with 54% usage. Twitter comes last in this list with 48% of the overall users. This scene provides both opportunities for a free media landscape while bringing in several challenges. Yeşil claims that these developments were experienced through “state-centric media discourses” created and distributed by “a seemingly pro-European Union AKP party”.

¹ Raşit Kaya, (1994) “A Fait Accompli: Transformation of Media Structures in Turkey,” *Metu Studies In Development*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 383–404.

Methodology

Three coders were involved in WP2 and they coded 24 datasets comprised of various Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube posts. The coders relied on the Codebook prepared by the WP2 team and they worked independently. The coding of 144 posts was selected randomly, yet they were chosen according to the suggested number to be devoted to each platform. Bilkent team also took the dimension titles of datasets such as All posts, Europe, Health, and Climate into consideration. Accordingly, a majority of the posts belong to Facebook, and later Twitter while a lesser number of YouTube posts are used to be double-coded. In this way, all chosen 144 posts make up 20% of the total posts in each month. Upon completion, Krippendorff's Alpha was applied to each month. With Month 2 and Month 3, 104 columns and 52 variables are filtered and for both months the results proved higher than 0.78-100 which is an adequate indication to interpret the results we reached through Krippendorff's test.

Recent Media Landscape in Turkey

News media in Turkey has received both attention and criticism in recent years. As one of the long-term effects of the military coup mentioned above, news reporting has undergone several changes in terms of ownership, press freedom and national reception. While Television still serves as the main source of news, Turkish citizens consult internet media for alternative news reporting. According to Reuters News Report, 61% of the social media users in Turkey use these platforms for news. In addition to the state-controlled TRT (Turkish Radio Television Channel), private channels such as atv, Ahaber, ShowTV, and KanalD disseminate TV news as private sector which is directly or indirectly connected to the AKP government. A majority of the news channels belong to Ciner, Doğuş, Demirören, Hayat Görsel, and Kanyon groups. Often these channels have to retain government contracts since they are vulnerable to tax fines, security problems and advertisement bans, especially after the 2020 Turkish law that ruled new regulations on the existing internet laws in terms of content removal. On the other hand, there are also independent channels such as FOX TV and Halk TV which, despite the high amounts of fines they are subjected to, continue broadcasting anti-government news and hosting critics who are not supported by the AKP government.

The case of CNN Türk, which started as an independent 24-hour news reporting channel and a showcase of the AKP government as an indication of their "promises for full membership in the European Union" demonstrates the extent of state pressure on news media. Right after 2013, when the Gezi Protests took place, CNN Türk started imposing self-censorship. Its sale to Demirören Group, a pro-government business in 2018, parallels the shift in the

governmental discourse toward issues such as press freedom and full membership in the EU.

It is also significant that the time period of this research coincides with the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey. As of September 15, 2021, Turkey reported its fourth wave as well as the fact that RTUK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) fined several journalists for reporting on the number of cases and death. Turkey is also preparing for its 2023 general elections which are regarded to be one of the key moments in the history of the country. In the midst of a severe economic crisis, the past five years have especially been challenging for news reporting and platformization. The coded posts of this research highlight these issues in general as they are shared through Facebook, Twitter, and Europe.

Coding Results

Who's the agent who posted it? (Q3)

Climate and Europe (All Posts)

Fig. 1 shows that nearly 60% of the Facebook and Twitter posts about Climate/Europe were written by political agents. Two third of the Facebook posts were posted by politicians from CHP (Republican People's Party) which is the biggest opposition party in the Turkish parliament. The party belongs to the political middle-left spectrum in Turkey. Its program is almost pro-European oriented. Only two of the 20 posts were posted by members of the Islamic-conservative AKP (Justice and Development Party) which is the biggest of the two parties which is the biggest governing party in Turkey at the moment. The Tweets posted by political agents with climate/Europe dimensions were equally posted by members of AKP and CHP (5 posts each). While only one media agents are among the top 20 (top 10 of month 2 and month 3) posted on Facebook, 6 tweets were posted by media agents. Half of them came from the national press agency Anadolu Ajansı. The other half consists of newspapers (2) and a broadcast channel (1).

Among the top 20 posts, no political agents were identified that used YouTube for content with climate/Europe dimensions during the period analysed. Only 13 channel posts with climate/Europe dimensions could be identified in the period analysed. YouTube channels were almost used by common citizens (6) and TV broadcast channels (5)

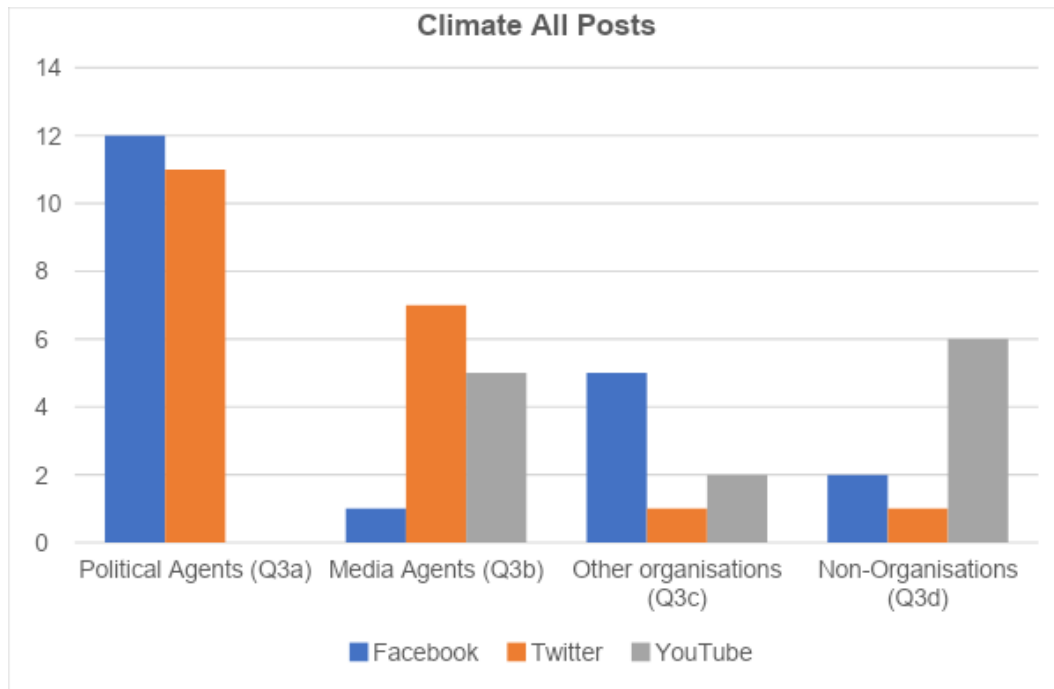


Figure 1: Posting agents of climate/Europe posts.

Economy and Europe

The top 20 posts on Facebook about the dimension of the economy/Europe are dominated by political agents and media. 7 over 20 posts were posted by politicians, and 5 of them are members of CHP. Most of the media posts (5) are from online TV channels. However, most of the top 20 tweets were posted by common citizen and online influencer (10 posts) and media (6). The YouTube channel was significantly used by TV broadcast channels (8) and Online TV channels (5).

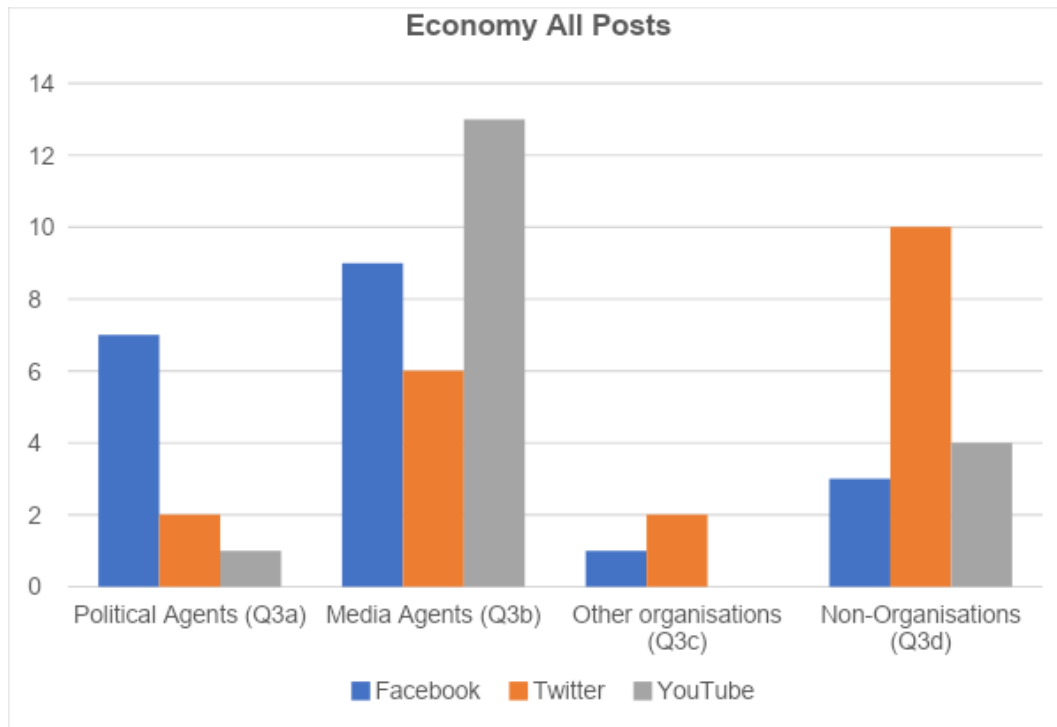


Figure 2: Posting agents of economy/Europe posts

Health and Europe

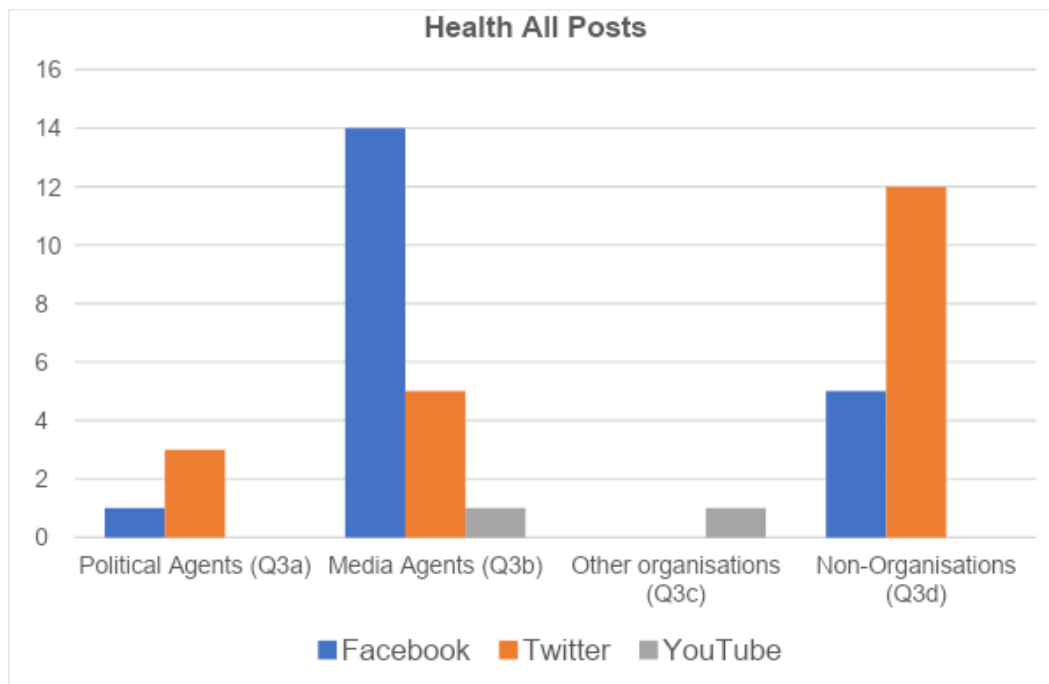


Figure 3: Posting agents of health/Europe posts

In the context of health/Europe, YouTube was not used significantly. Only two posts could be identified in the period analysed. Among the top 20 Facebook posts, most came from media agents (70%), especially from TV broadcast services and online TV channels (10).

However, most tweeds were sent by common citizens. Three tweeds were sent by political agents, all of them posted by the Turkish minister of health Fahrettin Koca (see Fig.3).

Europe

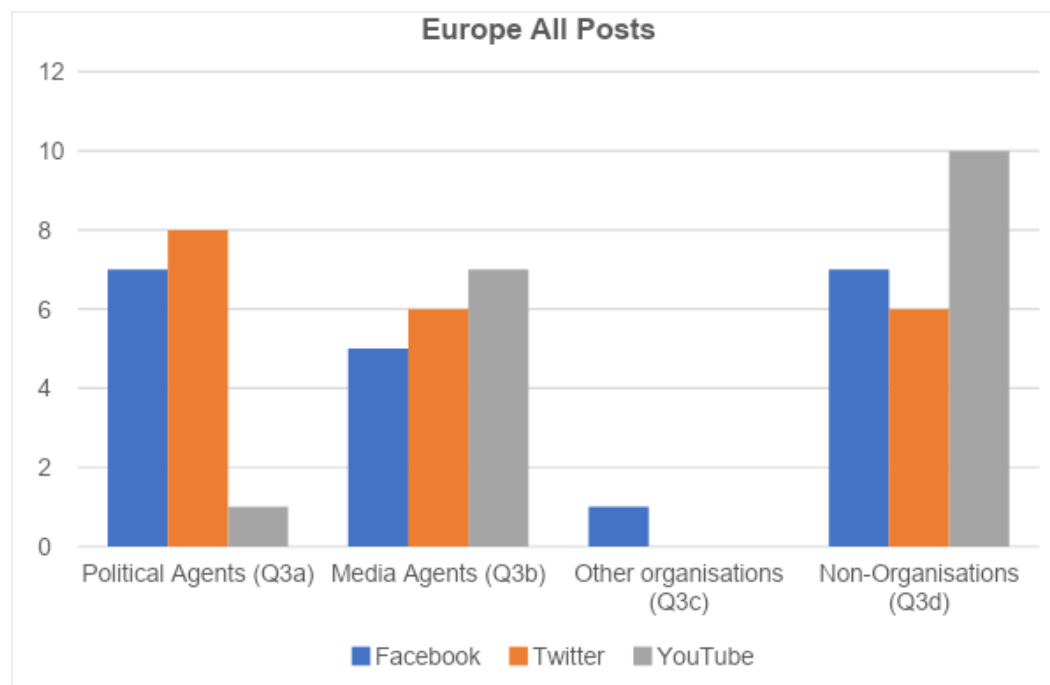


Figure 4: Posting agents of health/Europe posts

The top 20 Facebook posts about the dimension of Europe were nearly equally posted by political agents, media agents and common citizens (see Fig. 4). The posts from political agents came from the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (1), the presidential office (4) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (1). One post came from Mansur Yavaş, the Mayor of Ankara. The top 20 tweeds about Europe show a similar balance of posting political agents, media agents and common citizens. The tweeds of political agents consist of posts from governmental politicians and institutions: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (1), the Minister for Health Fahrettin Koca (2), the Minister of Interior (1) and Melih Gökçek (1). Two posts are from the president of CHP Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The top 20 YouTube posts are mainly from online TV channels (7) and common citizens (10).

Subject Matter – What are the posts about? (Q4)

Figures 5-8 show the topics which all agents talk about related to four different dimensions in the channels Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As expected all topics were mainly discussed on the European and national levels. Many posts were about Turkey in the context of

Europe, sometime critical about Europe in distinction to Turkey (example 1), and sometimes critical about Turkey in distinction to Europe (example 2). But several posts understand Turkey as part of Europe (example 3).

Example 1: Critical about Europe in distinction to Turkey

Dünya’da en fazla karbon salınımı yapan ülkeler Çin, ABD, Hindistan, Rusya, Japonya ve AB ülkeleri, yükümlülüklerdeki adaletsizliklere, gelişmiş ülkelerin çifte standarda dayalı uygulamalarına baktığımızda mevcut haliyle Paris İklim Anlaşması’nı kabul etmemiz mümkün değildir. (Twitter Climate All Posts, post 5, month 2, political agent)

(Translation of the authors: *While the countries that emit the most carbon in the world are China, USA, India, Russia, Japan and EU countries, when we look at the injustice in obligations and the practices of developed countries based on double standards, it is not possible for us to accept the Paris Climate Agreement in its current form.*)

Example 2: Critical about Turkey in distinction to Europe

Avrupa başta olmak üzere dünyanın birçok ülkesi otoyollarının üzerini güneş panelleriyle kaplıyor. Böylece tesis kurulumu çok ekonomik ve çevreci olarak sağlanıyor. Oysa Türkiye’nin güneş potansiyeli neredeyse AB’nin üç katı ancak Türkiye’de güneş enerjisi yatırımları engelleniyor (Twitter Climate All Posts, post 26, month 2, political agent)

(Translation of the authors: *Many countries in the world, especially in Europe, are covering their highways with solar panels. Thus, the installation of the facility is provided in a very economical and environmentally friendly manner. However, Turkey's solar potential is almost three times that of the EU, but solar energy investments in Turkey are prevented.*)

Example 3: Turkey as part of Europe

BUGÜN 110 MİLYON DOZU AŞTIK! Covid-19’a karşı uygulanan toplam aşı dozu sayısında Avrupa’da birinci, tüm dünyada 7. ülkeyiz! İlk 6 sırada, aşı üreticisi olan yüksek nüfuslu Çin ve ABD ile yine nüfusu yüksek ülkeler var. (Twitter Europe All Posts, post 5, month 2, political agent)

(Translation of the authors: *WE EXCEEDED 110 MILLION DOSES TODAY! We are the first country in Europe and the 7th country in the world in the total number of vaccine doses administered against Covid-19! In the top 6 ranks are China and the USA, which are vaccine producers, and countries with high populations.*)

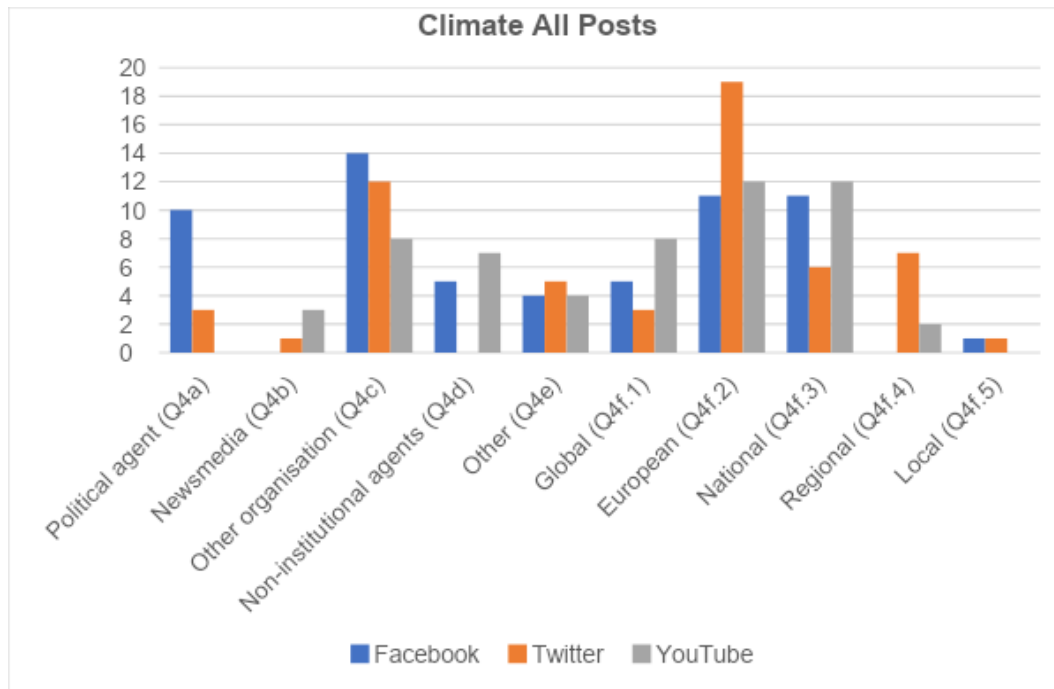


Figure 5: Subject matters in the dimension climate/Europe

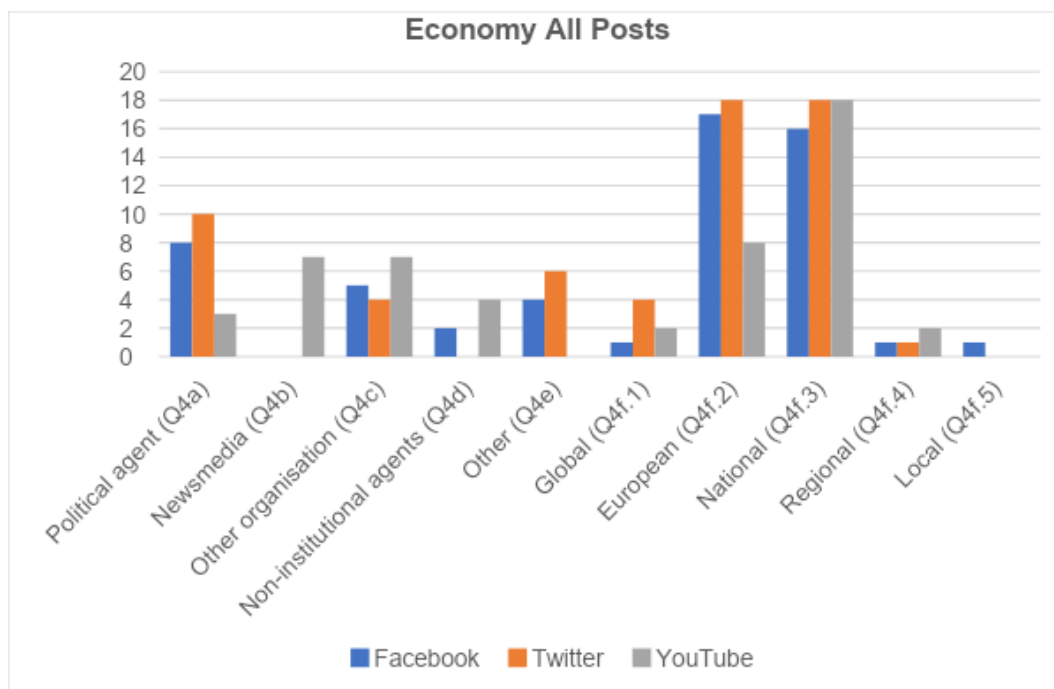


Figure 6: Subject matters in the dimension economy/Europe

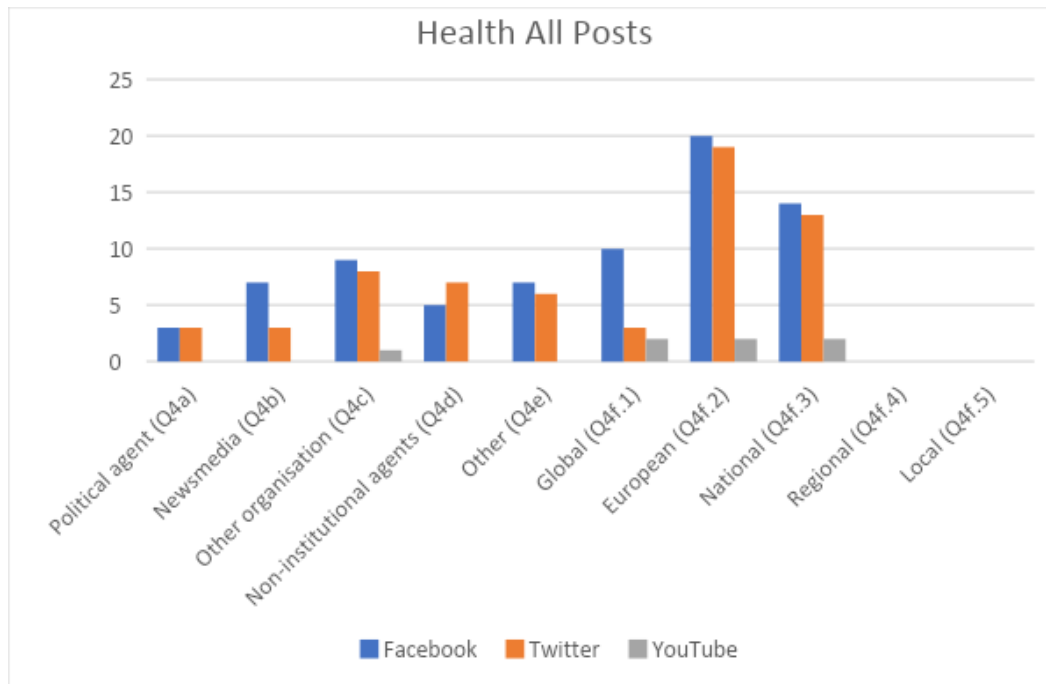


Figure 7: Subject matters in the dimension health/Europe

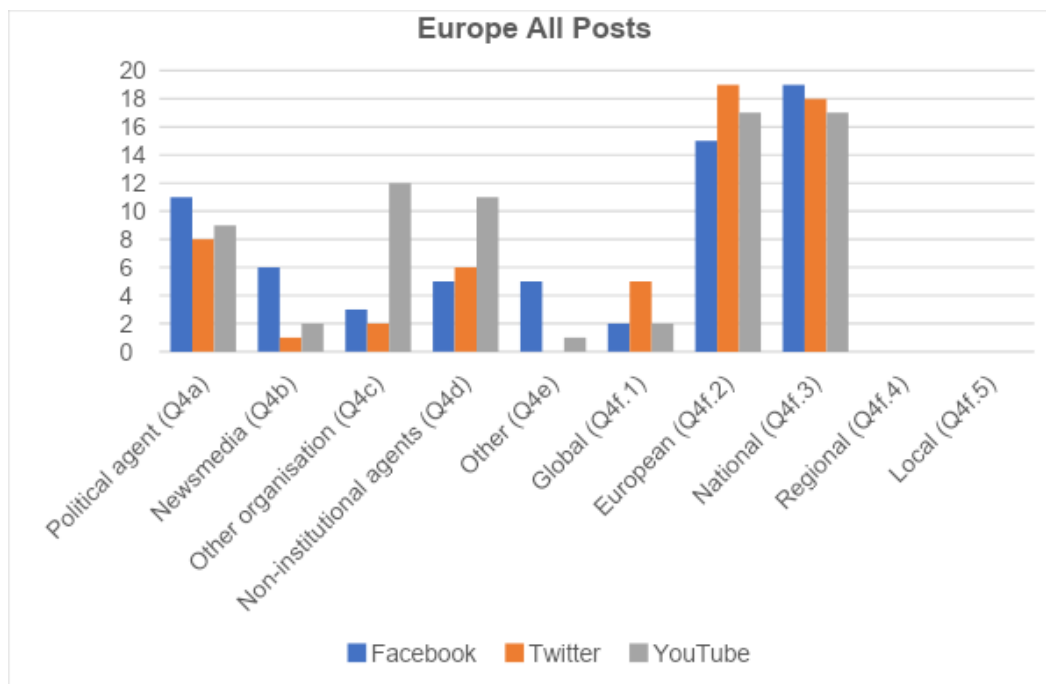


Figure 8: Subject matters in the dimension Europe

Table 1-4 shows the subject matters in the different dimensions what the different agents were talking about.

	Political agent	Media agent	Non-institutional agent	Other organisation	Total
Subject Matter					
Political agent (n)	10	1	2	1	14
% of Total	28.57%	6.25%	14.28%	7.69%	17.95%

News Media (n)	1	3	0	0	4
% of Total	2.86%	18.75%	0.00%	0.00%	5.13%
Other Organisation (n)	17	7	4	7	35
% of Total	48.57%	43.75%	28.57%	53.84%	44.87%
Non-institutional agent (n)	3	2	4	3	12
% of Total	8.57%	12.50%	28.57%	23.08%	15.38%
Other (n)	4	3	4	2	13
% of Total	11.42%	18.75%	28.57%	15.38%	15.38%
Subject Matter Total (N)	35	16	14	13	78
% of Total	44.87%	20.51%	17.95%	16.67%	100.0%

Table 1: Subject matters talked about by different agents in the dimension climate/Europe

	Political agent	Media agent	Non-institutional agent	Other organisation	Total
Subject Matter					
Political agent (n)	5	8	2	3	18
% of Total	62.25%	28.57%	18.19%	60.00%	34.61%
News Media (n)	0	7	0	0	7
% of Total	0.00%	0.25%	0.00%	0.00%	13.46%
Other Organisation (n)	1	6	5	2	14
% of Total	12.5%	21.43%	45.45%	40.00%	26.92%
Non-institutional agent (n)	0	3	3	0	6
% of Total	0.00%	10.71%	27.28%	0.00%	11.54%
Other (n)	2	4	1	0	7
% of Total	0.25%	14.28%	9.10%	0.00%	13.46%
Subject Matter Total (N)	8	28	11	5	52
% of Total	44.87%	20.51%	17.95%	16.67%	100.0%

Table 2: Subject matters talked about by different agents in the dimension economy/Europe

	Political agent	Media agent	Non-institutional agent	Other organisation	Total
Subject Matter					
Political agent (n)	2	2	2	0	6
% of Total	28.57%	16.67%	8.00%	0.00%	11.53%
News Media (n)	2	2	0	0	4
% of Total	28.57%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%
Other Organisation (n)	2	4	11	0	17
% of Total	28.57%	33.33%	44.00%	0.00%	32.69%
Non-institutional agent (n)	0	1	10	0	11
% of Total	0.00%	8.33%	40.00%	0.00%	21.15%
Other (n)	1	3	2	0	6
% of Total	14.28%	25.00%	8.00%	0.00%	11.54%
Subject Matter Total (N)	7	12	25	0	44
% of Total	15.91%	27.27%	56.82%	0.00%	100.0%

Table 3: Subject matters talked about by different agents in the dimension health/Europe

	Political agent	Media agent	Non-institutional agent	Other organisation	Total
Subject Matter					
Political agent (n)	10	11	7	0	6
% of Total	45.45%	44.00%	23.33%	0.00%	11.53%
News Media (n)	3	1	3	0	4
% of Total	13.63%	4.00%	10.00%	0.00%	7.69%
Other Organisation (n)	5	3	9	0	17

% of Total	22.72%	12.00%	30..%	0.00%	32.69%
Non-institutional agent (n)	3	10	10	0	11
% of Total	13.63%	40.00%	33.33%	0.00%	21.15%
Other (n)	1	0	1	1	6
% of Total	4.54%	0.00%	3.33%	100.00%	11.54%
Subject Matter Total (N)	22	25	30	1	78
% of Total	28.20%	32.05%	38.46%	1.28%	100.0%

Table 4: Subject matters talked about by different agents in the dimension Europe

Dimensions of Europeanization and Europeanity (Q5)

Q5A	European people ('Europeans')
Q5B	European (media) content
Q5C	European territory
Q5D	European values
Q5E	European (media) industries & capitalist economies
Q5F	European interactions & dialogues
Q5G	European Culture(s)
Q5H	European democratic model(s)
Q5I	European institutions
Q5J	European law & governance
Q5K	European New Social Movements
Q5L	European public sphere
Q5M	Scientific
Q5N	Political
Q5O	Economic

Figures 9-11 show the Europeanisation and Europeanity patterns in the top 20 posts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. They reveal that European new social movements (Q5K) do not play any roles in all posts. European Culture (Q5G) and European democratic models (Q5H) are not much represented either, only in several posts, mostly in the dimension of Europe. European people (Q5A), European (media) content (Q5B), European territory (Q5C) and European values (Q5D) play only minor roles in posts mainly with the dimension of Europe, health/Europe and climate/Europe.

The most posts in all dimensions and channels are significantly about European (media) industries & capitalist economies (Q5E), European interactions & dialogues (Q5F), European institutions (Q5I), Political (Q5N) and Economics (Q5O)

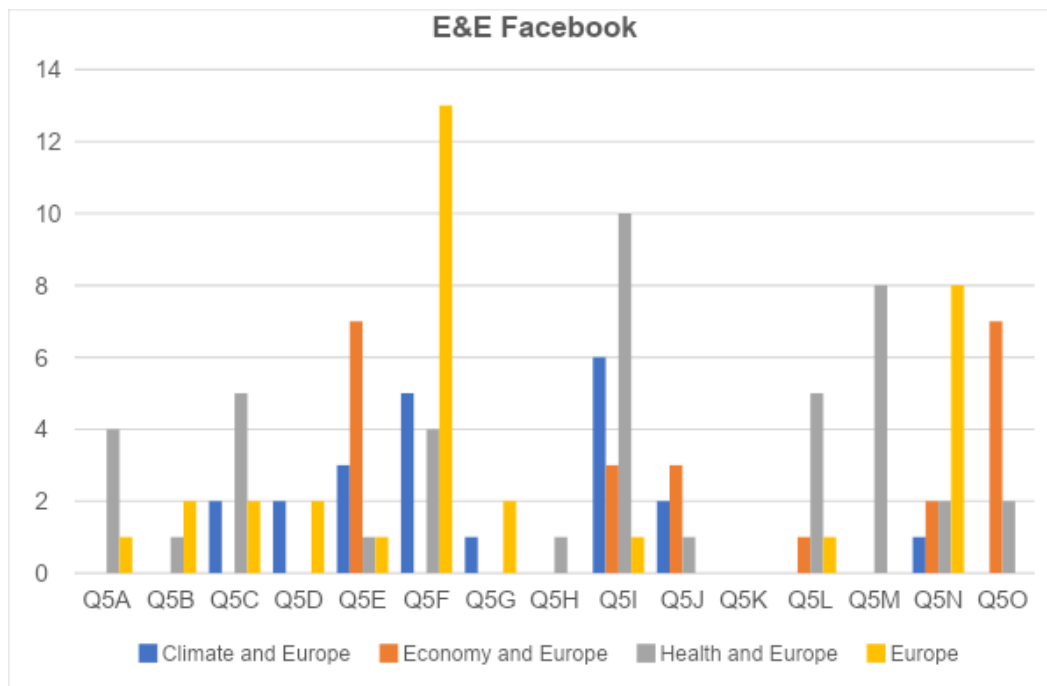


Figure 9: Aspects of Europeaneity and Europeanization in Facebook posts

Twitter

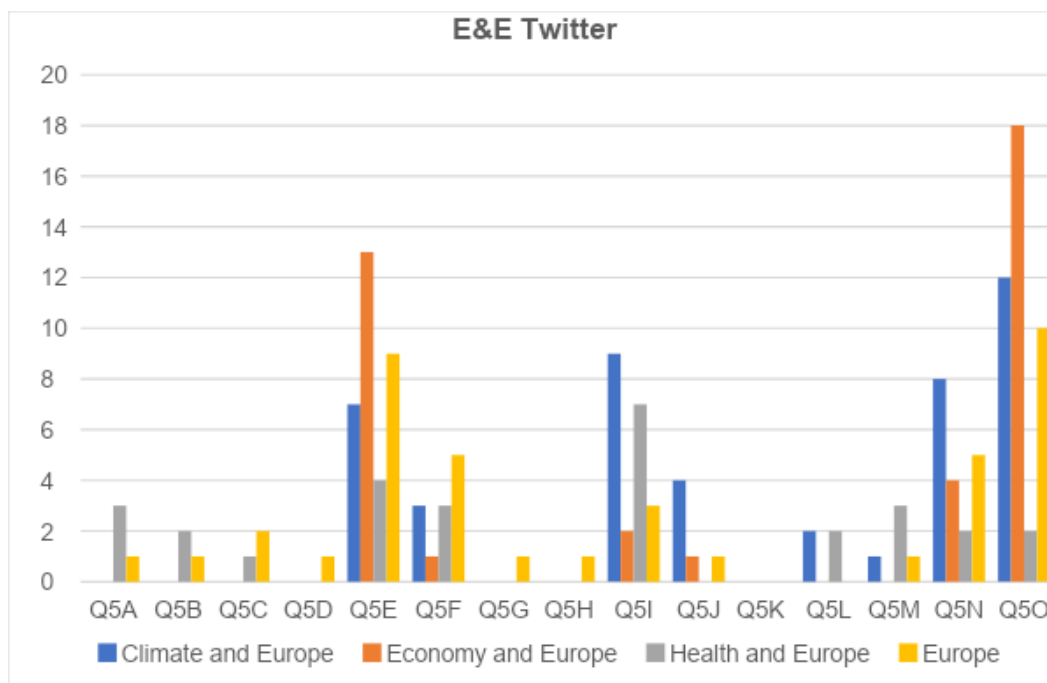


Figure 10: Aspects of Europeaneity and Europeanization in Twitter posts

YouTube

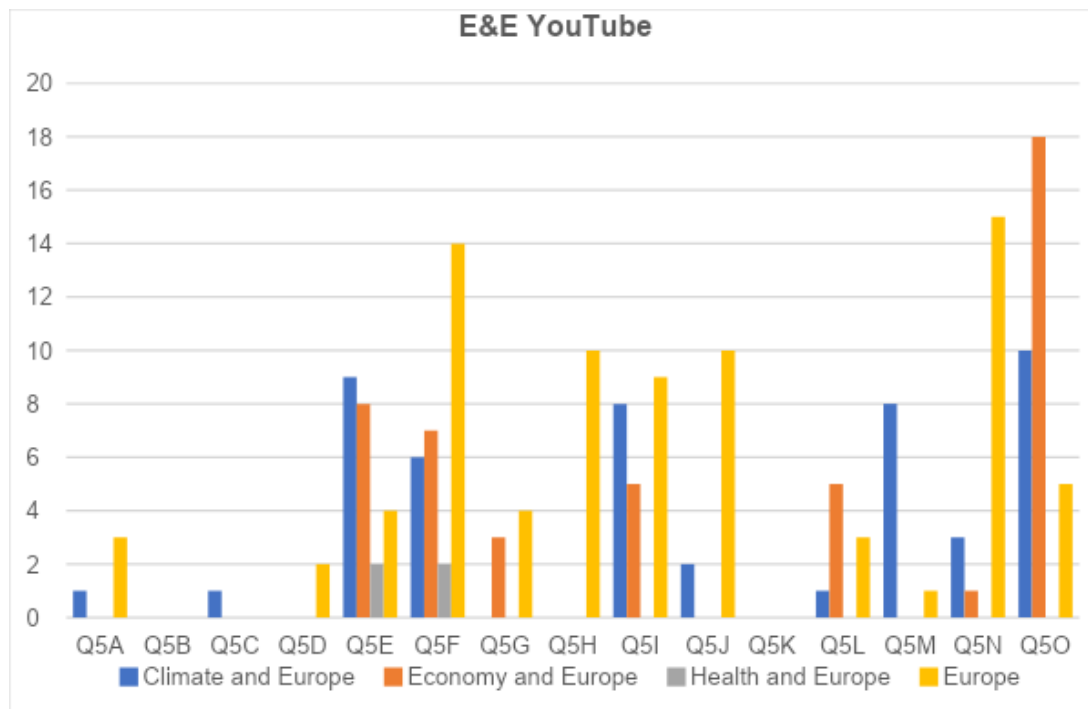


Figure 11: Aspects of Europeaneity and Europeanization in YouTube posts

References

- Kaya, K. (1994). A Fait Accompli: Transformation of Media Structures in Turkey. *Metu Studies in Development*, 21(3), 383–404.
- Kaya, R., & Çakmur, B. (2010) Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey, *Turkish Studies*, 11(4), 521-537, DOI: [10.1080/14683849.2010.540112](https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2010.540112)
- Reuters Institute (2021). *Digital News Report* <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/turkey>
- Reuters Institute (2022). *Digital News Report* https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf
- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (2022). *Dünya Nüfus Günü*. <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Dunya-Nufus-Gunu-2022-45552>
- Yeşil, B. (2016) *Media in New Turkey: The Origins of an Authoritarian Neoliberal State*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

ANNEX I

CODEBOOK Work Package 2

**Final version
March, 2022**

Instructions

Each variable that we are coding corresponds to an answer to a question.

If the question has only 1 possible answer (not cumulative | Single answer) we should introduce the correspondent code on the grid and pass to the next question. However when a question has more than 1 possible answer (cumulative | multiple choice) each choice is considered a new question with a YES(1) or NO(0) answer.

Unit of content to be coded

The unit of content to be coded is the post (on Facebook and Twitter) and the video (on YouTube). To code, you should determine who is the agent responsible for the post/video and what is the content and subject of the post/video. To code a Facebook or Twitter post consider the author of the post, the text of the post, the text (and other signs) of the image inside the post (if it contains an image), the text of the link, if it contains a link, and the content of the video, if it contains a video (inside the platform). If the post contains a link to an external URL, a retweet or an external video (such as YouTube or Vimeo), that link may be followed, if needed, to understand the content or the subject of the post, but external content should not be considered in coding.

The coding refers solely to the author, content or subject of the post/video and not to content that is external to the platform. To code a YouTube video, you should consider the title, description and tags of the video, as well as the content of the video itself. You do not need to visualise the video in its entirety; only the parts you need to understand the content and the subject of the video.

For qualitative reasons 20% of all posts should be coded by 2 coders independently.

IMPORTANT: No cells can be left blank. All the cells of the codebook must be filled, with 0 or 1 or any other number (in the case of multiple answer questions).

Q1: Is the post/tweet/video On Topic or Off Topic?

Note1: On topic/Off topic is **not cumulative | Single answer**

Is the post/tweet/video On Topic or Off Topic?	Code	Explanation
On topic	1	A post or video is "on topic" if its content or its subject is directly or indirectly related to the dimension we are analysing. "On topic" means the content or subject gives us any information on the dimensions we are analyzing (Europe, Economy, Climate or Health). If this is not clear, it will be "off topic". In detail: a post or video is "on topic" if its content or its subject is directly or indirectly related to the dimension we are analysing.
Off topic	0	A post or video is "off topic" if its content or its subject is not directly or indirectly related to the dimension , even if it contains

		words or expressions that in other contexts may relate to that dimension. Example: "euro" is on topic if it relates to the European currency (i.e. "Luckily, we have the euro!") but is off topic if it merely gives the price of a product (i.e. "The cafe cost me 5 euro").
--	--	---

IF Off topic >> stop coding >> Go to next post

NOTE: Do not delete Off Topic pots.

Q2: What is the format of the post?

Note: Options **can be cumulative** | **Multiple choice**

Format	Code	Explanation / Example
Text	No = 0 Yes = 1	Text written in the text area of the post
Link	No = 0 Yes = 1	One or more links to content external to the platform in the post. (E.g.: Facebook post with a link to a site other than Facebook)
Image	No = 0 Yes = 1	One or more photos, graphs, infographics, GIFs and/or memes are included in the post. (E.g.: the image of the cover of a print newspaper)
Video	No = 0 Yes = 1	Video embedded on the post, either on the platform or external (E.g. YouTube video on the post; Facebook video)

Q3:Who's the agent who posted?

Note: "Agent category" is **not cumulative** | **Single answer**

OPTION A

Q3.a - Was it a political agent who posted?

Agent (who posted it)	Code	Explanation / Example
Political agent	No = 0 (Go to Q3.b) Yes = 1 (Go to Q3a.1)	Political party, politician or EU parliament groups

IF YES

Q3a.1 What kind of political agent?

Kind of political agent	Code	Explanation / Example
Political party	1 (Go to Q3a.2)	A Political party, according to the national law

Politician	2 (Q3a.2)	A politician or former politician (that is not a regular TV host/presenter/Commentator), with or without any relation to a political party, or with or without any relation to European, national, regional or local governments or parliaments
EU parliament groups	3 (Q3a.2)	A EU political group or a spokesperson for a EU Group

IF 1, 2 or 3

Q3a.2 What is the position of that political agent according to the European Parliament's classification?

Note: Please check the position of the political agents according to:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/organisation-and-rules/organisation/political-groups>

What is the position of that political agent in the European parliament?	Code	Explanation / Example
Christian democrats and conservatives (Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats))	1	
Socialists & Democrats (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament)	2	
Liberals and centrists (Renew Europe Group)	3	
Eurosceptic conservatives, (European Conservatives and Reformists Group)	4	
Greens and regionalists, (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance)	5	
Communists and left (The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL)	6	
Far-right nationalists, (Identity and Democracy Group)	7	
Independents, NI (not integrating any EU group)	8	
Non aligned (in the case of Turkey non aligned should be considered)	9	

OPTION B**Q3.b** Was it a news media agent who posted?

Agent (who posted it)	Code	Explanation
News media	No = 0 (Go to Q3c) Yes = 1 (Go to Q3b.1)	Any news media agent, as an institution or as an independent news media producer. Includes legacy media (print, broadcast or online) or News blogs, News video channels or Live news streaming. Does not include non-journalistic content.

IF YES**Q3b.1** Was it a print media who posted?

It was a print media	Code	Explanation
Print Media	No = 0 (Go to Q3b.2) Yes = 1 (Q3b.1.1)	To classify you should focus on the origin/foundation of the media. (Ex: A post from the Facebook page of a print newspaper or magazine, like Stern or The Guardian)

IF YES**Q3b.1.1** What kind of print media?

Kind of Print Media	Code	Explanation
Newspapers	1 (Go to Q4)	A paper that is printed and distributed, usually daily or weekly, and that contains news, opinion columns, features, usually printed in low quality paper and with a large page size (broadsheet, berliner, tabloid).
Magazines	2 (Go to Q4)	A periodical publication which is printed in gloss-coated and matte paper, with a cover (as opposite to newspapers, which don't have a cover) and usually with page size close to A4.

Q3b.2 Was it a broadcast media who posted?

It was a broadcast media	Code	Explanation
Broadcast media	No = 0 (Go to Q3c) Yes = 1 (Go to Q3b.2.1)	Television channels or radio stations available through traditional broadcast networks (aerial, satellite, cable or similar). To classify you should focus on the origin of the media. A post from the Facebook page of a TV channel or TV show (Ex: RAI; Cadena Ser).

IF YES**Q3b.2.1** What kind of broadcast media?

Kind of Broadcast media	Code	Explanation
Radio	1 (Go to Q4)	Radio stations available through traditional broadcast networks (aerial, satellite, cable or similar).
Television	2 (Go to Q4)	Television channels available through traditional broadcast networks (aerial, satellite, cable or similar).

Q3b.3 Was it an Internet only news media who posted?

It was a Internet only media	Code	Explanation
Internet only news media	No = 0 (Go to Q3c) Yes = 1 (Q3b.3.1)	A news media with its origin on the internet (no print or broadcast foundation). To classify you should focus on the origin of the media. A post from the Facebook page of a online news media (Ex: Politico.eu; Mediapart)

OPTION C**Q3c.** Was it any other organization who posted it?

Agent (who posted it)	Code	Explanation
Any other organization	No = 0 (Go to Q3d) Yes = 1 (Go to Q3c.1)	Any other organization that is not a political agent or a media agent (as defined before) but has an institutional presence (headquarters, website, etc) outside social media. Private companies, NGOs, Unions, Public agencies, Professional bodies, Etc, should be considered "Any other organization". Any other organizations can be public or private.

OPTION D**Q3d.** Was it a Non-organization who posted it?

Agent (who posted it)	Code	Explanation
Non-organization	No = 0 (If you have answered NO on Q3a, b, c or d. You need to	Non-organization can be an individual or group that has no institutional existence outside social media . An individual is always a "non-organization", even if it is a known or famous individual, like a TV presenter or an influencer.

	check again) Yes = 1 (Go to Q3d.1)	But you should also consider a “non-organization” if the agent who posted is a page or an account with no real existence or website outside social media, even if it’s not “individual”. For example, a known NGO protecting immigrants, with a presence outside Facebook, is an “organization”. But a Facebook page created or administered by unknowns supporting immigrants is a “non-organization”, in the sense that it has no institutional existence outside Facebook. Example: Yellow Vests in France or Extinction Rebellion or Fridays for the Future.
--	---------------------------------------	--

IF YES

Q3d.1 What kind of any Non-organization posted it?

Non-organization	Code	Explanation
TV host/ Presenter/ Commentator	1 (Go to Q4)	You must take into consideration the role played by the agent TODAY. A former politician that is now a regular TV host/presenter/Commentator should be classified as TV host. But if it is an active politician who is also a commentator should be classified as a politician.
Online Influencer	2 (Go to Q4)	Someone who is known for its activity outside traditional media, using online channels to connect to the audience. Social media influencer is first and foremost a content generator: one who has the status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers - who are valuable to brands - by regularly producing content via social media (Lou and Youan, 2019 p.59). Social media influencer is a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audiences' attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media (Freberg et al., 2011 p. 90)
Common citizen	3 (Go to Q4)	We consider a common citizen any person which is not part of the previous categories (politician, TV personality, or online influencer). He/she may be an individual, unknown to the public, but may also be an individual who is known to the general public for any public activity (athletes, artists, etc.) independently of the audience. Any individual that is not known to the general public should always be considered a “common citizen”. Any individual that is known for his/her public activity but is not a regular commentator on the issues it is commenting on should also be considered a “common citizen”. If he/she is a regular commentator on such issues on TV, for example,

		he/she should be considered a “TV commentator”. Example: Ronaldo or Djokovic saying something about Covid.
Any other non-organization	4 (Go to Q4)	Any other non-organization which is not part of the previous categories. This is a “remnant” category that should only be applied when the agent who posted does not clearly fit in any of the previous categories.

Q4. What is the subject?

Note: Options can be cumulative | Multiple choice

Subject: by “subject” we mean the person or thing discussed.

OPTION A

Q4a. Is the subject **Concerning/related to/directed at** a political agent?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Political agent	No = 0 (Go to Q4b) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4a.1)	Political party, politician or EU parliament groups

IF YES

Q4a.1 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** a political agent like a political party?

Kind of political agent	Code	Explanation / Example
Political party	No=0 (Go to Q4a.2) Yes=1 (Go to Q4a.2)	A Political party, according to the national law

Q4a.2 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** a political agent like a politician?

Kind of political agent	Code	Explanation / Example
Politician	No=0 (Go to Q4a.3) Yes=1 (Go to Q4a.3)	A politician or former politician (that is not a regular TV host/presenter/Commentator), with or without any relation to a political party, or with or without any relation to European, national, regional or local governments or parliaments

Q4a.3 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** a political agent like a EU groups in the EU Parliament?

Kind of political agent	Code	Explanation / Example
EU groups in the EU Parliament	No=0 (Go to Q4b) Yes=1 (Go to Q4b)	A EU political group or a spokesperson for a EU Group

OPTION B

Q4b. Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** newsmedia?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Newsmedia	No = 0 (Go to Q4c) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4c)	A post where a news media (outlet) is part of the subject. We consider news media agent, any institution or independent news media producer. Includes legacy media (print, broadcast or online) or News blogs, News video channels or Live news streaming. Does not include sources of non-journalistic content.

OPTION C

Q4c. Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** any other organization?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Any other organization	No = 0 (Go to Q4d) Yes = 1 (Q4c.1)	A post where any other organization is part of the subject.

IF YES

Q4c.1 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** any other organization like Public institution or company?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Public institution or company	No = 0 (Go to Q4c.2) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4c.2)	A Public institution is funded wholly or primarily by the state, region or local authorities. Public institutions are for example governmental institutions, independently of their broad (local or national government, EU,...).

Q4c.2 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at** any other organization like Private institution or company?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Private institution or company	No = 0 (Go to Q4d)	A Private institution is funded wholly or primarily by a private entity or person.

	Yes = 1 (Go to Q4d)	
--	---------------------	--

OPTION D

Q4d. Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at any** Non-organizational agents?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Non-organizational agents	No = 0 (Go to Q4e) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4d.1)	A post where Non-organizational agents are part of the subject.

IF YES

Q4d.1 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at any** Non-organizational agents like TV host/ Presenter/Commentator?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
TV host/ Presenter/Commentator	No = 0 (Go to Q4d.2) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4d.2)	A post where A TV host/ Presenter/ Commentator is part of the subject.

Q4d.2 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at any** Non-organizational agents like Online Influencer?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Online Influencer	No = 0 (Go to Q4d.3) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4d.3)	Someone who is known for its activity outside traditional media, using online channels to connect to the audience. Social media influencer is first and foremost a content generator: one who has the status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers - who are valuable to brands - by regularly producing content via social media (Lou and Youan, 2019 p.59). Social media influencer is a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audiences' attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media (Freberg et al., 2011 p. 90)

Q4d.3 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at any** Non-institutional agents like Common citizen?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Common citizen	No = 0 (Go to Q4d.4) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4d.4)	We consider a common citizen any person which is not part of the previous categories (politician, TV personality, or online

		influencer). He/she is known to the general public for any public activity (athletes, artists, etc.) independently of the audience.
--	--	---

Q4d.4 Is the subject **concerning/related to/directed at any** Non-organizational agents?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Other non-organizational agents	No = 0 (Go to Q4e) Yes = 1 Go to Q4e)	This is a “remnant” category that should only be applied when the subject does not clearly fit in any of the previous categories. Remember that this section is multiple choice: one given post may be concerning/related to/directed at more than one subject. This particular option should be coded if the post contains reference to any other non-organization which is not part of the previous categories. Example: Yellow Vests in France or Extinction Rebellion or Fridays for the Future.

OPTION E

Q4e Is the “Subject” other?

Subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Other	No = 0 (Go to Q4f) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4f)	This is a “remnant” category that should only be applied when the subject does not clearly fit in any of the previous categories. Remember that this section is multiple choice: one given post may be concerning/related to/directed at more than one subject.

OPTION F

Q4f. Can we identify the scope of the subject? The scope is related with the spatial dimension of the posts (i.e if they refer to global, european, national, regional or local issues);

Note: **Options can be cumulative | Multiple choice**

Identity subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Scope of the subject	No = 0 (Go to Q5A) Yes = 1 (Go to Q4f.1)	Is the spatial scope of the subject identifiable. 0 if “no”; 1 if “yes”. The spatial scope refers to the spatial unit that is the subject (or one of the subjects) of the post. Remember that this category can be cumulative/multiple choice. Examples below.

Q4f.1 Is the scope of subject Global?

Scope subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Global	No = 0 (Go to Q4f.2) Yes = 1 (Go to Q5)	The subject of a post is global if it is concerning/related to/directed at a spatial unit above Europe. Example: a post about the relations EUA-Europe is both “global” and “european”. A post about relations Portugal-Spain is “european”. A post about the Paris Agreement is “global”.

Q4f.2 Is the scope of subject European?

Scope subject	Code	Explanation / Example
European	No = 0 (Go to Q4f.3) Yes = 1(Go to Q5)	The subject of a post is european if it is concerning/related to/directed at the european spatial unit. Example: a post about the European Parliament is “european”; a post about the application of european funds in Portugal is both “national” and “european” in scope.

Q4f.3 Is the scope of subject National?

Scope subject	Code	Explanation / Example
National	No = 0 (Go to Q4f.4) Yes = 1(Go to Q5)	The subject of a post is national if it is concerning/related to/directed at the national spatial unit. Example: a post about Italian economic development is national in scope; a post about Italian restriction measures colliding with European measures is both “national” and “European” in scope.

Q4f.4 Is the scope of subject Regional?

Scope subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Regional	No = 0 (Go to Q4f.5) Yes = 1(Go to Q5)	The subject of a post is Regional if it is concerning/related to/directed at the regional spatial unit. Example: a post about Bavaria is regional in scope; a post about Bavaria and Munich is both “regional” (Bavaria) and “local” (Munich) in scope. The definition of what constitutes regional or local scope may vary from country to country. References to cities should be coded as local

Q4f.5 Is the scope of subject Local?

Scope subject	Code	Explanation / Example
Local	No = 0 (Go to Q5)	The subject of a post is Local if it is

	Yes = 1(Go to Q5)	concerning/related to/directed at the local spatial unit. Example: a post about Lisbon is local in scope; a post about Lisbon and Portugal is both “local” (Lisbon) and “national” (Portugal) in scope. The definition of what constitutes regional or local scope may vary from country to country. References to cities should be coded as local
--	-------------------	---

Q5. What are the Dimensions of Europeanisation?

Dimensions of Europeanisation are based on the “A semantic map of Europeanity & Europeanisation” by Nico Carpentier & Miloš Hroch.

Note: **Options can be cumulative | Multiple choice**

Because options can be cumulative you need to check all of them with 0 or 1.

OPTION A

Q5A Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European people ('Europeans')?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European people ('Europeans')	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to the people of Europe as Europeans, regardless of their national or regional identities. Example: “Europeans are united against the war” or “there are significant differences between americans and europeans”

If YES or NO >> Go to option B

OPTION B

Q5b. Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European (media) content?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European (media) content	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to a media product that is in some way pan-european or financed/produced through european institutions (films, plays, music, etc.).Example: “The Money Heist (Netflix) was the best european production of 2021”

If YES or NO >> Go to option C

OPTION C

Q5C Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European territory?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European territory	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to the geography of Europe as Europe and not as national or regional territory or in complement to it. As, for example, in "Italy is part of Europe".

If YES or NO >> Go to option D

OPTION D

Q5d Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European values (linked to European civilisation & European modernity)?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European values (linked to European civilisation & European modernity)	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post is about peace, stability, human dignity, solidarity, diversity, Christian values, humanist values, freedom of thought, expression, information, freedom of movement. Non-discrimination and equality – in gender, ethnicity, age. Example: "I'm proud of living in Europe because it defends the rights of minorities".

If YES or NO >> Go to option E

OPTION E

Q5E Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European (media) industries & capitalist economies?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European (media) industries & capitalist economies	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to european (industrial or economic/financial) agreements, events or productions that are pan-european, involving at least two european countries. Exemplo: "A French-Portuguese partnership for the development of railroad"

If YES or NO >> Go to option F

OPTION F

Q5F Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European interactions & dialogues?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European interactions & dialogues	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post is about these material performances: travels and tourism in EU, physical participation to European events, students' exchanges, professional networks, ect,.. Example: The Erasmus program in Europe is a success".

If YES or NO >> Go to option G

OPTION G

Q5G Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European Culture(s)?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European Culture(s)	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition Cultural habits [i.e., foods, games] and artistic forms [with the exception of media contents, which is already covered]; history/ knowledge/science, literature, art, religion, academia, technology and innovation. Example: "Potatoes are the most used ingredient in european cuisine".

If YES or NO >> Go to option H

OPTION H

Q5H Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European democratic model(s)?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European democratic model(s)	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post is about the state of European democracy [or democracies within the EU]. Example: "Europe is going to vote for the EU parliament"

If YES or NO >> Go to Option I

OPTION I

Q5I Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European institutions?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European institutions	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to an European institution of any kind, like the European Commission, European Parliament or the European Central Bank, etc..Example: "Europe is going to vote for the EU parliament".

If YES or NO >> Go to Option J

OPTION J

Q5J Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European law & governance?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European law & governance	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to an european law, decision, directive or legislative project, even if only in discussion or preparation. Example: "The Digital Services Act is going to change the media landscape in Europe."

If YES or NO >> Go to Option K

OPTION K

Q5K Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European New Social Movements?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European New Social Movements	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to any manifestation of a grassroots movement or initiative spanning two or more European countries. Example: Yellow Vests or the humanitarian caravans from Europe to help Ukraine.

If YES or NO >> Go to Option L

OPTION L

Q5L Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern European public sphere?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
European public	No = 0	Operational definition

sphere	Yes = 1	When the post is about EU-relevant issues, raised by non-political actors. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship between citizens and institutions - Involvement in Decision-making - A non-political agent (i.e. the public) who tries to influence decision-making - Supra national vs National vs local identity Interconnectedness of media structures. Example: a petition online to discuss animal rights in Europe”
--------	---------	---

If YES Or NO >> Go to Option M

OPTION M

Q5M Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern Scientific developments or achievements?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
Scientific	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to any scientific development or achievement in the context of Europe or resulting from European programmes or financing. Examples: “A new vaccine to be distributed by Europe”; “a H2020 or Erasmus+ project outcomes, etc. ”

If YES or NO >> Go to Option N

OPTION N

Q5N Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern Political negotiations or agreements?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
Political	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to any political issue that is or will be affected by agreements or negotiations between social or political entities from different european countries. Example: A joint press conference between representatives from two countries to have a common position on a given international or common issue..

If YES or NO >> Go to Option O

OPTION O

Q50 Do the dimensions of Europeanisation concern Economic development, negotiations or agreements?

Dimensions of Europeanisation	Code	Explanation / Example
Economic	No = 0 Yes = 1	Operational definition When the post contains a reference to cooperation, negotiation or joint agreement by two or more European countries or institutions to improve, reform or develop the economy. Example: European funds to develop an economic sector.

END

ANNEX II

Inter Coder Reliability

ICR - Inter Coder Reliability		
	Krippendorff's Alpha	Percent Agreement
Belgium (Flemish)	0,9876	99,77
Belgium (French)	0,9446	99,77
Bulgaria	0,9380	98,41
Czech Republic	0,9292	98,96
Germany	0,8097	98,12
Spain	0,9919	99,81
Greece	0,7063	96,45
Italy	0,8779	97,86
Portugal	0,6813	95,54
Sweden	0,9271	97,81
Turkey	0,8382	97,29

Table: Average Krippendorff's Alpha results per country.

Get in touch

 info@eumeplat.eu

 www.eumeplat.eu



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004488

