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News Platformisation and the Dimensions of Europeanization: the Italian case during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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European Media Platforms: assessing positive and negative externalities for European Culture

- While media platforms can play a role in enhancing a European identity, the **European dimension has rarely dominated in media history.**
- Most digital media **platforms are owned by American companies,**
- However, they have European span – hence can we talk about European media platforms?
- Analysis of the platformisation of news in 10 countries

→ **Q1: Are media platforms making or breaking European identity?**



Digital Media Platforms

- Origins in citizens journalism
- From newsroom to algorithms (user engagement as incidental or intentional?)
- Dominance of a few players - progressively dependent on the tools, advertising revenue, and data and governance standards of Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft
 - the necessity of **keeping people on the website** as long as possible
 - the inevitable **interference of the platforms on content** production
 - **dual logic** of platforms: the seeming decentralization accompanied by their establishing as main hubs
 - **Misinformation** (political or scientific evaluation?)



Europeanity and Europeanisation

- Europeanization in a simple definition ‘from above’ - the impact of the EU on states and their institutions (Cachia 2021).
- But the phenomenon is way more complex
 - *Often one finds oneself either analysing the more culturalist-discursive components of E&E, or analysing the structural-material components of E&E, but hardly ever do theorization and analyses of E&E do both (Carpentier et al, 2023).*
- Europeanity - what it means to be European (“Europeanity”)
- Europeanisation (E&E) - what it means to become European (“Europeanisation”)
- E&E in Italy:
 - **Compliance and implementation** of EU laws and directives can be complex
 - **Political and administrative resistance** to implementing European policies.
 - **Lack of awareness and public engagement:** Europeanization can often appear as a distant and technocratic process for many Italian citizens → the Italian political system, characterized by party fragmentation and ever-changing coalitions, has witnessed the emergence of **euro-skeptic** political forces. Parties such as Lega Nord, Fratelli d’Italia and M5S have adopted critical positions towards the EU (Monteleone, 2021; Zappettini & Maccaferri 2021)
 - The EU is often criticized for its **bureaucracy** and decision-making complexity (Kassim, 2003)
 - Affected by Italy’s **economic and social challenges**, particularly after the Covid-19 crisis (Cachia, 2021).

Populism – from Brexit to Covid-19

- Populism in Europe – a cross cutting issue: Eurosceptic discourse, both right wing (exclusionary, loss of sovereignty, us vs them) or left wing (inclusionary, equality and solidarity) (Alonso-Munoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2020)

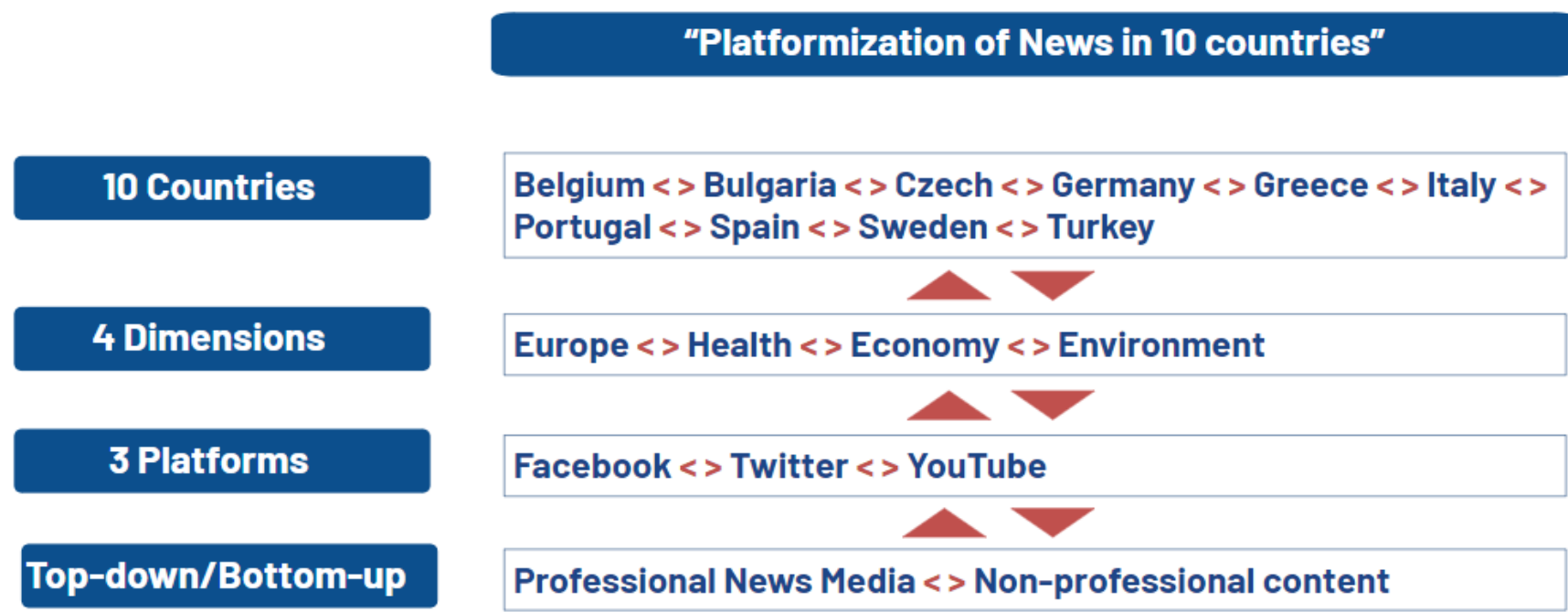
But

- Populism in Italy - COVID-19 outbreak defused the relevance of some populist issues among citizens, favouring a focus on institutions (Bertero & Seddone, 2021)

→ Q2: How did media platforms journalism impact on Europeanisation in Italy during the Covid-19 pandemic?



Framework for analysing the platformization of news in 10 countries (Moreno and Sepulveda 2022)



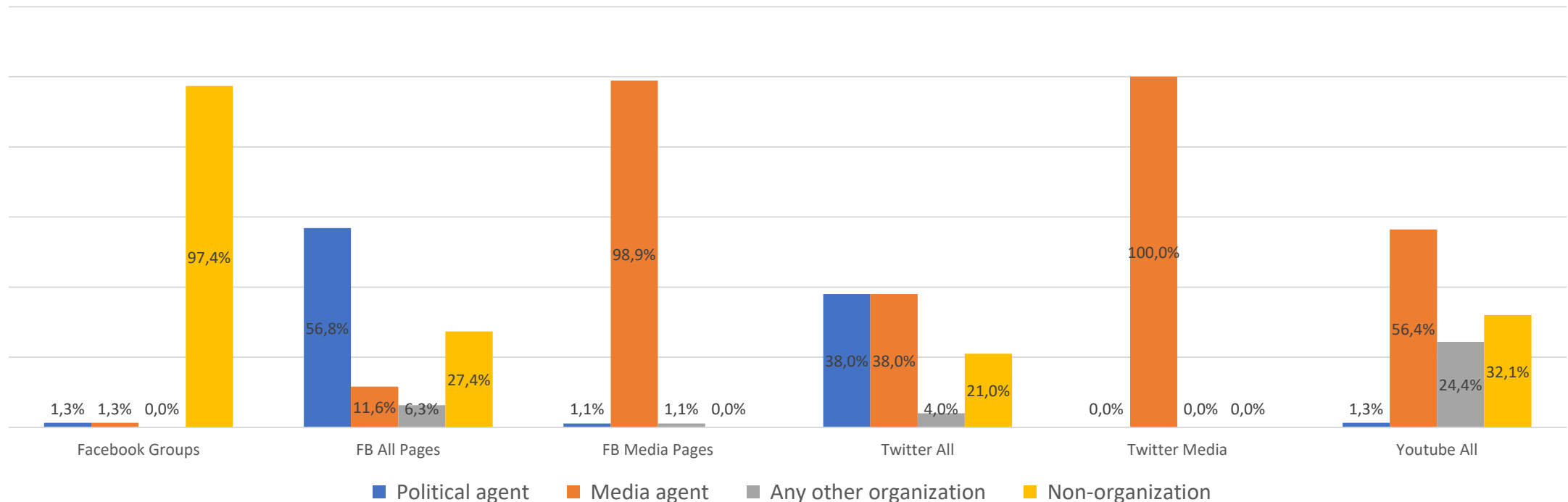
- Focus on Italian posts dataset
- Quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004)
- The Italian team (IULM) –
- 3 researchers, 2 coders
- **720 on-topic posts**
- Intercoder Reliability Test Percent of agreement was adequate 90,5%-100% (Krippendorff, 2004).

Goal » Allow comparisons between all variables to identify both national and transnational commonalities or differences in how news about this 4 issues are played out on social media platforms

Findings: what type of agents are the most prevalent?

- **professionally/institutionally produced content** is the most prominent, regardless of whether it originates from news media or political agents.
- **Non-institutional agents** are more prevalent on Facebook Groups - the non-professional channel par excellence in which 100% of contents are not institutional;

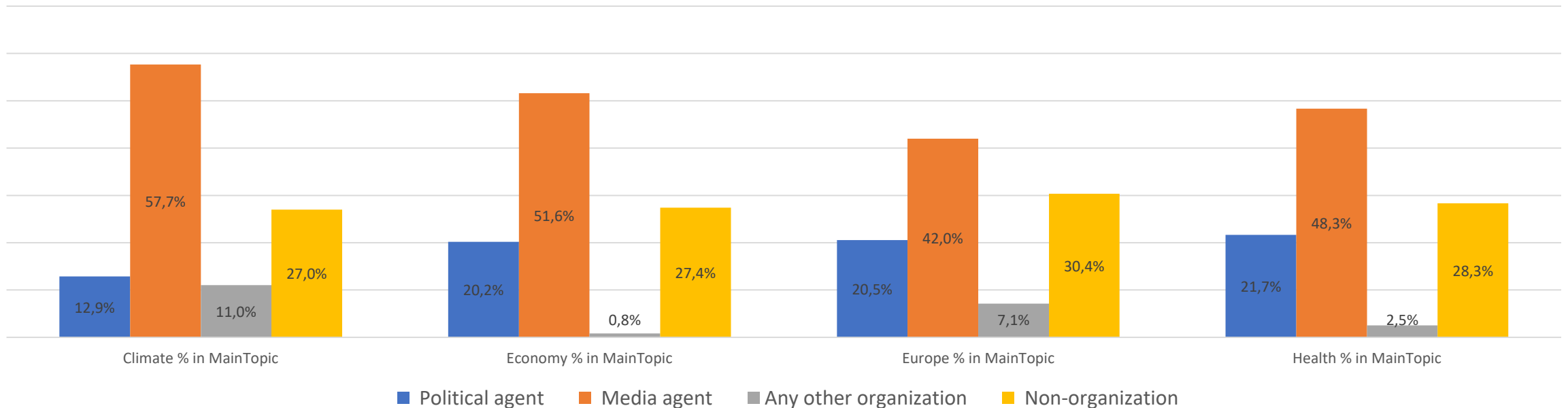
Posting agent by platform



What topics do different agents prefer?

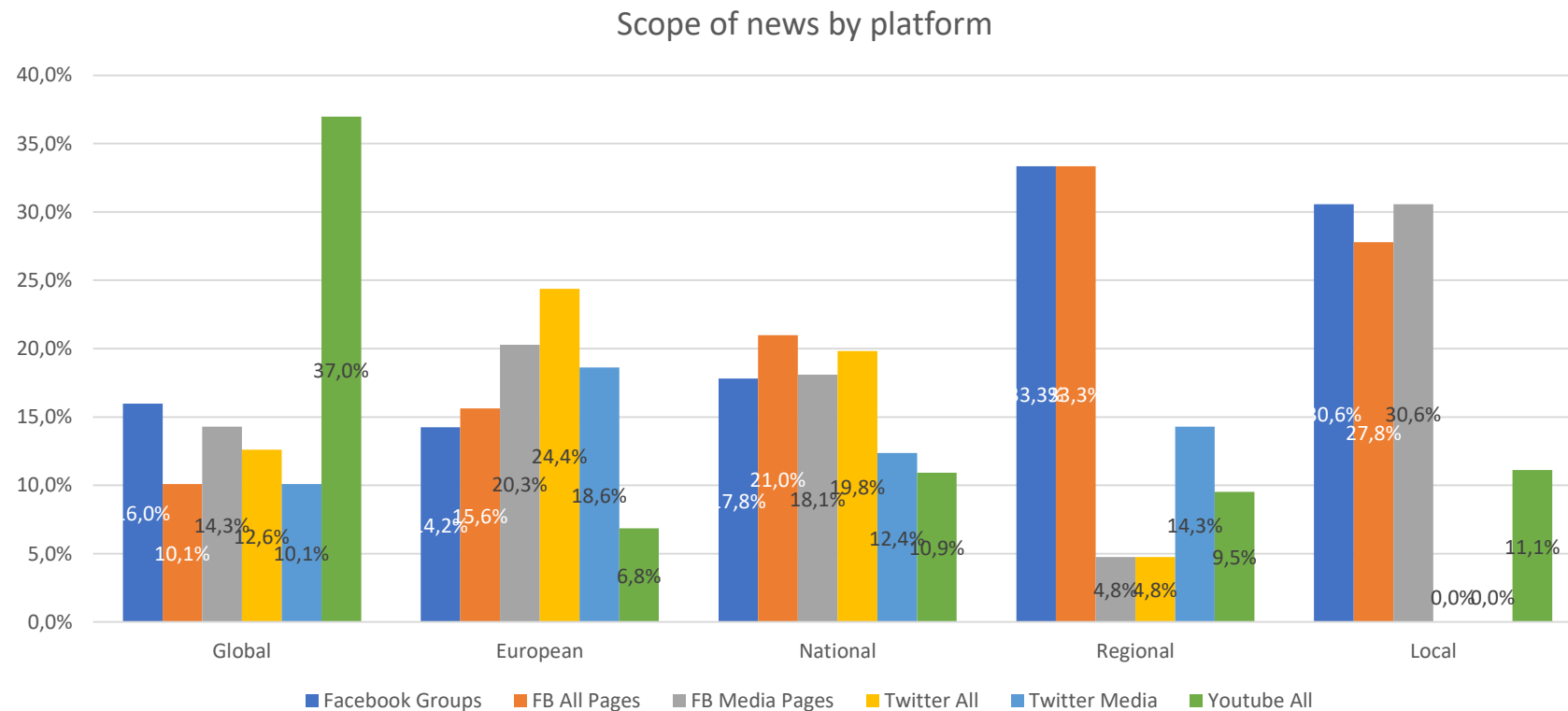
- Political agents focused mainly on issues relating to **Health (21,7%)**, in particular with regard to the issue of the green pass
- Non-professional social media contents (Non-organization agents), media agents (57.7%) and any other organisations (11%) focused their attention on **climate**
- Non organization focused the most on **Europe** (30,4%)

Posting agent by topic (2)



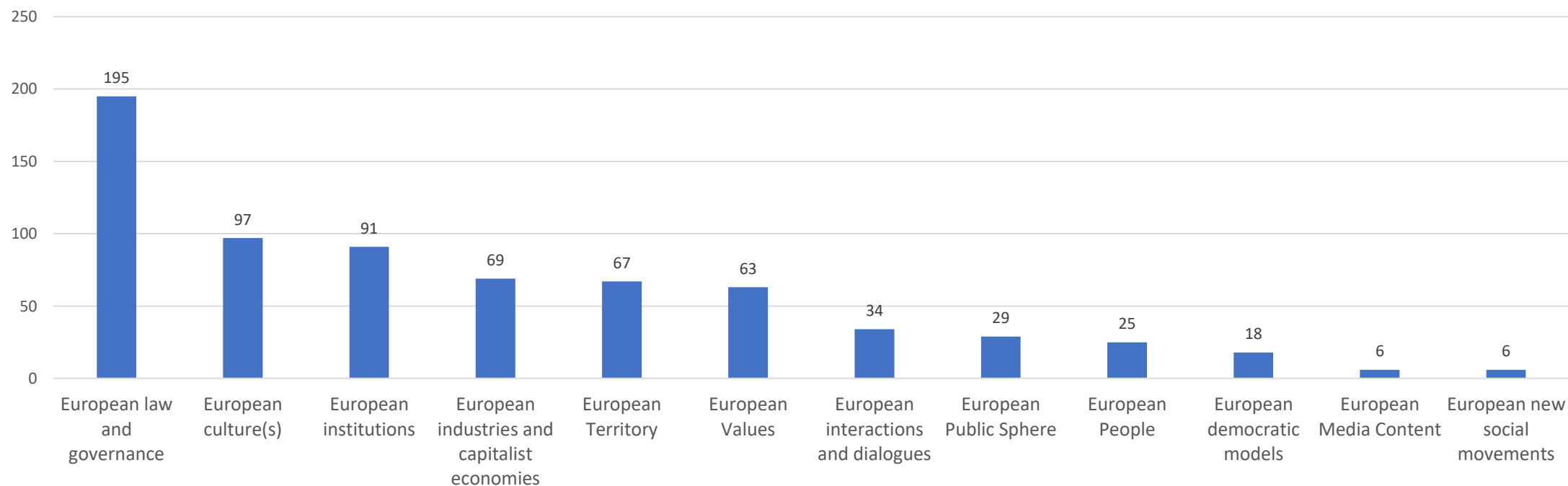
What kind of scope is preferred by which platforms?

- global news are mostly on Youtube
- European news are mostly on Twitter (all)
- national news are mostly on FB (all pages)
- regional and local news are mostly on Facebook (both groups and all pages)



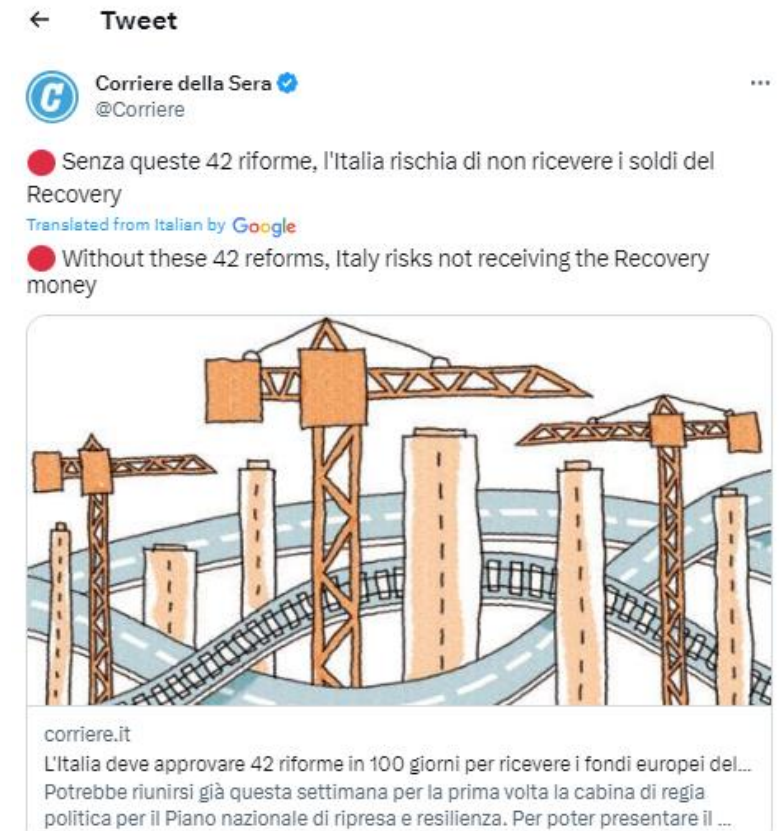
Dominating dimensions of Europeanisation (Quant)

Dimensions of Europeanity (cumulative counts)



Dominating dimensions of Europeanisation (Qual)

- European **Law and Governance** – subtopics: Economy and Health
→ posts about the [Recovery Fund](#) and the [Green Pass issue](#).
- European **Institutions** – subtopics: Climate and Economy
→ Posts about [laws and regulation](#) , [work \(green pass\)](#),
- European **Culture** – subtopics: Climate and Europe
→ Posts about [science and technological innovation](#) & [history](#) (Facebook page of Alessandro Barbero)
- Note: **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 European Media contents (only 6 posts).

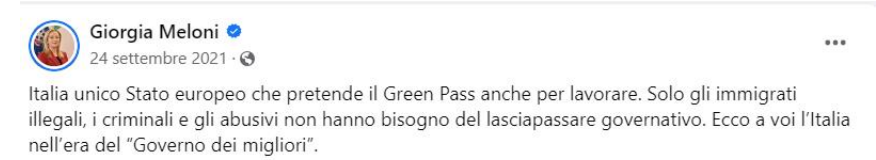


European Law and Governance – Recovery Fund



Europeanity and Europeanisation as leverage for populism in Italy -1

- Dimension: EU law and governance



Europeanity and Europeanisation as leverage for populism in Italy - 2

- Both horizontal and vertical dimensions of Europeanisation
 - Horizontal → compares Italy to Covid-19 measures in other EU countries in order to criticise the Italian government
 - Europeanisation being manipulated for national purposes
 - “we are the best in Europe” because we make the vaccine practically mandatory;
 - “we are the worst in Europe” because we are the only ones with the Green Pass for work
 - Vertical → fluid relationships towards EU issues, with tendency towards neutral sentiment

← **Tweet**


 **La7**
@La7tv

#inonda Obbligo vaccinale per gli over 50, il Ministro Brunetta: "Siamo i primi in Europa"

 la7.it

Obbligo vaccinale over 50, Brunetta: "Siamo i primi in Euro...
Il Ministro Brunetta ospite di In Onda

← **Tweet**

 **Cristina Correani**
@Moonlightshad1

"L'Italia è l'unico paese in Europa che per andare a lavorare è obbligatorio il green pass e non il salario minimo legale. Ma che davvero vogliamo dare tutta la colpa ai fascisti?"

#11ottobre



Conclusions

- The features of digital media platform journalism during the Covid-19 pandemic:
 - Professionally-produced content is more dominant
 - But user-generated content more prominent on Facebook
 - Global news on YouTube, European News on Twitter, National/Regional/Local news on Facebook
 - Key European issues are EU institutions, EU Laws and Regulation, EU Culture
 - Prominence of Europeanisation from above rather than Europeanisation from below
 - Dominated by populist rhetoric
 - Impact of digital media platform journalism on Europeanisation:
 - an opportunity for politicians to **showcase their positions in favour or against European policies**, using the **comparison between the restrictive measures imposed in Italy and those of other European countries** in order to gain popularity.
 - A switch from populism as simply endorsing Euroscepticism, to populism as **enacting fluid relationships towards European issues**, with a tendency towards largely neutral views of Europe
- a change in populist rhetoric (also seen in Bertero & Seddone, 2021)



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