

# MEDIAFLOWS CONFERENCE 2019

## EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2019: POPULISM&EUROSCEPTICISM



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### Abstracts

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# ABSTRACTS

## CITIZEN MOBILIZATION

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### **Campaigning for Strasbourg (CamforS) – a Cross-National Comparison of Campaign Mobilization in Social Media**

The rise of new political actors like En Marche in France or Alternative für Deutschland in Germany and new campaigning strategies like micro-targeting (Endres & Kelly, 2017) are reasons why social media are broadly discussed in the media, in politics, and in science. The presentation focusses on how traditional and new political actors use Facebook to inform, interact with, and mobilize voters during the European Election Campaign 2019. Based on the theoretical approaches on campaigning in the “fourth age of political communication” (Blumler, 2016; Magin, Podschuweit, Haßler, & Russmann, 2017), the study compares Facebook campaigns of political parties from ten countries: Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and UK. The presentation seeks to answer the questions how populists in the countries under observation use Facebook to directly address the public and whether populist communication strategies differ between countries. To answer the research questions, a quantitative content analysis was conducted. A standardized coding scheme for manual analysis was used, focusing on, e.g., populism, issue ownership, and appeals to interaction and/or mobilization. From April 25th to May 26th, all Facebook posts of all parties in the respective countries with a chance to gain parliamentary seats were collected using Facepager (Jünger & Keyling, 2017). Altogether the raw data set contains 18,895 Facebook posts. First exploratory results show large differences in campaigning strategies. Overall, populist parties get the most reactions (e.g. shares) in most countries. A very special case is Salvini’s Lega, which used Facebook hyperactively as a kind of real-time protocol, publishing 3,485 posts during the four weeks before the Election (On average, more than 4 posts were published every hour). Further, the results show that Facebook visuals (pictures and videos) dominate the EU Election campaign on Facebook. Further results will be presented and discussed in the presentation.

Keywords: Populism, European Election, Campaigning, Facebook, Content Analysis

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### **European Elections 2019: An Analysis of Young Citizens' Perceptions of European Political Posters**

Political advertising is considered a powerful tool in any election campaign as it has the power not only to attract new voters and help them acquire valuable information on candidates and political issues (Kaid, 2002) but also enhance issue knowledge among voters (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996). Political parties and election candidates use posters to promote their ideas and political programmes and to present themselves to the electorate in the hope of securing their support at the ballot box. Previous studies consider election posters an indication of notable electoral strength (Dumitrescu, 2011) that have maintained their strong position in the electoral advertising of parties and candidates around the world (Holtz-Bach & Johansson, 2017) even in the digital era with the prevalence of multi-platform political advertising techniques. This study examines the EU election campaign and the political posters used across two European electoral cycles (2014 and 2019) in Romania and young citizens' understating and interpretation of the European issues and candidates represented in these posters. We focus our analysis on two main questions: How is Europe and the EU represented in the political posters used in both European campaigns? and What is the role of electoral posters in informing young people correctly about the EU and in increasing/decreasing young people's levels of Euro-skepticism? This is a mixed-methods study employing a content analysis of the electoral posters (to identify ideas, stories and narrative and visual trends used in political posters during both European elections campaigns (2014 and 2019) and a questionnaire that explores young citizens awareness of EU and EU-related issues as well as their anti-EU feelings. The present study extends the research on political advertising by not only focusing on the textual analysis of the electoral posters but also examining Romanian young people's perceptions of the political posters used during the European election campaign. Preliminary results show an increased level of skepticism towards the EU and EU elections amongst young voters as a result of being exposed to anti-EU political advertising during each EU election campaign.

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## **#DeniedMyVote: Online and offline citizen mobilization in the European Union Parliamentary elections in 2019**

In the European Parliament elections of May 2019, thousands of EU citizens in the UK and British citizens abroad were unable to vote, reportedly due to administrative errors. This resulted in numerous claims of voter suppression being made on social media, in the sensitive context of Brexit. Contemporary large-scale networks of contentious action may have collective and connective logics of action (Bennett & Segerberg 2012). In this study we focus on #DeniedMyVote, a case of online mobilization emerging from offline experience: during the elections, academic and citizens' rights campaigner Professor Tanja Bueltmann proposed the #DeniedMyVote Twitter hashtag to document what she refers to as a 'mass disenfranchisement'. The hashtag quickly went viral, eventually resulting in a petition, crowdfunding and legal actions. The opening of political opportunity structures is essential in the development of social movements (Tarrow 2011). Yet, when opportunities are closed off in the national level, as in the case of Brexit, this may cause the movement to shift the attention closer to the grassroots (Zepeda-Millán & Wallace 2018). In this context, we are interested in how social media engagement translates into different forms of action in online and offline environments. To study this, we use 180,000 tweets containing the #DeniedMyVote hashtag, collected during 23-31 May, as well as other digital media content related to the case. Our approach is twofold: based on the text content of the material, we identify major topics put forward in the online conversation; based on metadata, we study the spatial distribution of the tweets and topics, and the networks resulting from them. In this way, we aim to uncover a wide picture of the content and the coordinates of citizen mobilization in the context of the European Parliament elections.

Keywords: Citizen mobilization, social media, big data, Brexit, European Union, elections

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## **REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IS UNDER THREAT IN EUROPE: IS LIBERALISM TO BLAME?**

The objective of our cross-curricular paper is to find out whether liberalism is causing a crisis of representative democracy in Europe. We first evaluate whether representative democracy is in crisis in Europe. To do that, we operationalize the “crisis of representative democracy” concept. The main variables we put forth to do that are: The rise of political parties that have undemocratic policies in their manifestos, measuring the percentage of seats the party has gained from the second-to-last election to the last one in both their national parliament and the European Parliament; the self-reported level of trust in democratic institutions; and the voter turnout of the every general and European election. Once we analyze up to what degree representative democracy is in crisis in Europe, the authors proceed to follow a similar process with the concept of “liberalism”. The variables we ponder are economic freedom, freedom of speech, rule of law, religious tolerance and property rights. We clean and unify all the data used from different sources to employ a harmonized set of variables. The data has been obtained from numerous different secondhand sources. Then, we control for all the possible variables that could alter the results of crisis of democracy and try to find if there is a relation between said crisis and liberalism. We add a qualitative layer to all the research conducted by merging an extensive philosophical literature review to both the concept of liberalism and representative democracy to help us explain both concepts better and find new variables to study. We conclude presenting the findings and positing a possible justification for them based on historical facts and logical reasoning.

Keywords: Liberalism, democracy, crisis, Europe

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### **Mobilising the young vote. Activism and political involvement in the Spanish #Estavezvoto campaign**

The European elections traditionally undertake low levels of participation, from 62% in the first election, in 1979, to 42,6% in 2014. And these results are even worse when we focus on young voters: only 27% of Spanish people aged 18-24 participated in the 2014 election. This fact prompted the European Parliament to launch the campaign #Thistimeimvoting (#Estavezvoto in Spain) aimed to prevent the high levels of abstention. Precisely in a moment where the European institutions face great challenges, not only because of the Brexit but also by the rise of populist and anti-European parties (Hernández-Carr, 2011; De Lange, 2012; Krasteva & Lazaridis, 2016). The results of the 26M European Election show a significant increase of young voters: 14 points in people aged 18-24 (42%) and 12 points in people aged 25-39 (47%) (European Parliament, 2019). In fact, the highest rise in terms of age (Eurobarometro, 2019). Taking this into account, the main aim of this paper is to analyse how the campaign influenced the young voters' mobilisation. Using a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured and in-depth interviews with volunteers, activists and institutional spokespersons, this research wants to deepen on the citizen mobilisation and political activism. Spain was one of the countries that reached one of the highest levels of participation, with 3.500 Spanish out of 24.000 total Europeans volunteers. Preliminary conclusions evidence greater support in large cities and among University students but also reveal the mobilisation potential to capitalise on improving the European project.

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### **The representation of women in the Spanish newspaper during the electoral campaign to the European Parliament in May 2019**

This article explores the media coverage of the elections to the European Parliament in May 2019 in several national newspapers published in Spain. The research is approached from a quantitative and qualitative analysis and addresses the role of women in the electoral information published during the European election campaign in the three most read written newspapers in Spain, which are El Mundo, El País and La Vanguardia. The analyzed samples contemplate the period between May 10th, the official date of beginning of the electoral campaign, until May 27th, the day after the elections were held. It is an investigation that connects with classical research in the field of Journalism, focused on the study of the role of information as a mechanism for the construction of social reality. To do this, first, a brief theoretical approach is proposed to study the conception of the media as generators of public opinion. Later, of this framework are analyzed in a concrete example, the case of the role of the women during the elections to the European Parliament. This analysis starts from the methodological tools of analysis of the agenda setting (Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw) and framing theory on the influence of the media in determining the issues the society thinks about, in addition to critical discourse analysis, as a tool for discourse analysis, and more specifically the political-social program, expressed by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, which proposes to investigate social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized, by the media discourse.

Keywords: Press, Journalism, Women, European Union, Social Reality, Political Communication, European Parliament, European Elections

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### **Discourses of the Radical Right Parties in Central and Eastern Europe**

The aim of the paper is to explore the main discursive frames presented by radical nationalist parties in four Central Eastern European countries: Poland (National Movement), Hungary (Jobbik), Czech Republic (The Workers' Party of Social Justice) and Slovakia (People's Party Our Slovakia). The parties have different electoral successes and hence, positions in the political scene, but all of them took the part (as themselves or in coalitions) in European Parliament elections. Moreover, all of them emerged as the political parties on the basis of social movements and extra-parliamentary radical (nationalist) right-wing organizations. As the radical nationalist milieus cooperate across the national boundaries and support each other (e.g. during the Independence Day March in Warsaw), it is pretty interesting to reconstruct their common discursive space and distinguish main discursive frames shared by the organizations as well as these which make them different. The analysis shows that they construct their discourses around such diagnostic frames as (1) corrupt and selfish political class, (2) enslaved state with unfair international position (dependent on the EU and the West), (3) unjust (for natives) system, (4) endangered (traditional, moral) values, (5) weak state defensive potential and (6) endangered native land and capital. Based on such narrative, the parties present themselves as anti-system, conscious defenders offering a chance for a necessary and real change. Generally, they also point out similar actors to blame (e.g. political class, EU, foreign corporations, migrants, liberals). Based on the analysis and other author's research the paper states that the common themes in the party programmes on the national and international level refer rather to cultural and political-driven agenda. It seems that they construct the image of 'the people' as cultural (based on traditional values and history) communities rather than economically defined class categories.

## ELECTIONS

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### **European elections and political talk show: a comparative study between the Spanish and Italian cases**

The format of the talk show on political issues has experienced growth in the Spanish television schedules that can not be avoided in the last few years, even taking up such coveted ranges as prime time. At the same time, they are generating discourse and opinion, and have become prominent agents in the dissemination of political messages to society. We are faced with a paradigmatic case of “infotainment” or, as has been recently tagged, “politainment”, which deserves more attention. This is undoubtedly a paradigmatic example of “pop politics”, as Mazzoleni has defined a few years ago, with defenders and detractors in this way of addressing political discourse in contemporary societies. In this communication we intend, first of all, to define the format and see if there is a same type of program in a neighboring country as Italy. These are two countries where the genre of the talk show has evolved in a very similar sense and that they have a culture of coincident television dramatization, which has been widely studied (Eco, Imbert, Requena). We want to know the similarities and differences between these two political and television traditions. On the other hand, the objective of the investigation is to analyze whether the 2019 European Elections have taken part of the time of these programs during the last month of pre-campaign and during the campaign. For this reason, based on an analysis of quantitative content, but also, with a qualitative approach to the analysis of the discourse of the most representative formats in both countries, we want to know if the European agenda, and the main themes of the campaign, have had a presence in this type of program and from what perspective they have been addressed, making clear a Europhile or Euro-Skeptic look.

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### **Russian media on EU Parliamentary Elections-2019**

Russian media on EU Parliamentary Elections-2019 In the conditions of using new channels of political communication and the emergence of new players in the international arena, the question of the perception of international politics actors and the content of information coming from the media about them, on the basis of which political images are formed in the public consciousness, is particularly acute. This is valid for the European Union, the legislative power in which belongs to the European Parliament, too. The research is focused on the EU parliamentary elections in 2019 coverage by Russian media during two months in 2019 (1 month before and 1 month after the elections). The source of data on conducted a quantitative analysis of publications through Russian media was the "Medialogia" database (includes almost all Russian media outlets and allows to search through those) and content-analysis of texts was conducted, in addition to "Medialogia" algorithms. Classical categories such as main topics, positive/negative mentions, genre features of materials, most mentioned persons and events etc, were applied. Analyzing also the context of other international issues presented at the same time in the media; trying to correlate the elements of the media image of the European Union abroad - from non-EU country perspective, especially, such as Russia, considering all the tensions between Russia and the EU is necessary to say that the coverage was neither negative nor biased. From the research results comes that the Russian media covered not only the elections to the European Parliament and their results, but also presented different points of view and assessments characteristic of both the Russian and European media environment, including discussion on europopulism and euroscepticism and its main icons.

Key words: EU elections-2019, Russian media, international news, EU media image abroad Maria

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### **Patterns of split-ticket voting in the 2019 European elections**

**Abstract:** In several countries, the elections for the European parliament in 2019 were coupled with elections organized at other policy levels or with instruments of direct democracy. Among others, three countries (Belgium, Greece, Spain) organized the EU elections simultaneously with the direct elections of regional (subnational) assemblies. This paper intends to quantitatively analyse patterns of split-ticket voting between these two types of elections for these three countries. Even if both types of elections could be considered as second-order, I still expect to observe differences in vote congruence and in turnout, i.e. the fact that voters express different voting behaviour depending on the type of election. But more interestingly, this paper will investigate multilevel dynamics for two different types of parties. First, multilevel incumbency will be tested as parties in the national government are expected to lose equally in both types of elections. This incumbency effect can be mediated by the participation in the regional government (while there are no real comparable European government). Second, the electoral result of right-wing and left-wing populist parties will be comparatively studied in the different regions of these three countries. This paper relies on a quantitative analysis of election results collected at the regional level and does not only include the type and ideology of political parties but also several socio-demographic variables. Analyses will be controlled by a series of political variables such as the specificities of the electoral and patterns of party competition.

**Keywords:** European elections, regional elections, split-ticket, voting behaviour, populist parties

**The European elections 2019 in Greek – Cypriot print media. The positions of the newspapers Alithia and Xaravgi in May 2019**

The role of the media during the European election is considered to be extremely important as it is the dominant form factor of news and public communication. In this context, both civil society and political actors are the two additional players in the triangle of shaping and influencing communication for social issues. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the agenda and the way in which the news of Greek Cypriot print media were framed. Specifically, this research examines the main topics identified in the printed media during the pre-election period of the European elections in Cyprus in May 2019. Also, this research focuses on how the issues of the news appeared. This research seeks to answer the above questions, thus enriching the research gap found in the existing literature. From a theoretical point of view, this thesis adopts the theories of the Agenda Setting and Framing, because as interrelated theories they can explain the research theme. In addition, for the purposes of the survey, a mixed methodological approach was applied, with the research adopting quantitative content analysis and framing. The research questions and the working hypotheses are the following:

1. What is the main topic of the printed media during the European election of Cyprus in 2019?
2. In which newsgroups are the main issues raised by the print media?

With regard to the working hypotheses on the first research question, it is expected that the main themes in the media are the Cyprus gas, the economy and health issues, due to their increased occurrence in previous researches (Pratt, Ha & Pratt, 2002; Sato, 2003; Hester & Gibson, 2003; Kiouisis, 2004; Tsur, Calacci & Lazer, 2015). However, it is expected that the Cyprus problem will also be an important place on the media agenda. For the second research question, although no such research has been carried out at the Cypriot level, so that secure assumptions can be made, it is expected that the economy will be primarily in the context of accountability, moral health issues and the Cyprus problem in conflict context. Our methodology was based on elements of content quality analysis and aims to analyse the content of the text message, discourse and form and involves five stages

1. The procedure of compiling the empirical evidence;
2. The isolation of items (units recorded);
3. The classification of units into categories;
4. The quantity conversion and measurement of items (codification);
5. Analysis and interpretation of data.

The findings showed that the Media Agenda during the pre-election period included a wide range of topics. The topics that had the highest frequency appearance in the media were the Cyprus Gas, economy, internal issues, election results, candidates' campaign analyses, the Cyprus problem and health issues.

Key Words: Cyprus, European elections 2019, print media, agenda setting, framing, news

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### **Representation of 2019 elections for European parliament in Croatian traditional media**

Thirty-nine years ago Karlheinz Reif and Herman Schmitt situated elections for European parliament in second-order political arena. As new member of European Union, Croatia participated only in two electoral cycles in 2013 and 2014 with low participation of voters ranging from 20-25%. Main aim of our research is to analyze media presentation of topics related to elections for European parliament in three main traditional newspapers in Croatia (Morning paper, Evening paper and 24 hours) and messages they tried to convey to potential voters. We have used quantitative analysis of the newspapers with article as a main unit of analysis, and have covered two weeks period before the election, including the day of election and the day after the election. Main questions we want to answer are: Were European election topics present in the media?; Which parties and candidates were disproportionately presented or omitted from media?; Which topics were used by politicians for their promotion and formation of narratives?; How much media space was used for domestic political questions and how much for the ones for European elections? Results of our research have shown that traditional media in Croatia is entrapped by two strongest political parties and while they lost significant number of voters, both right and left alternative parties did not manage to win almost any seats due to political system. All parties and candidates used European elections campaign as an overture for national elections in 2020 with little focus on European topics and policies. All parties and candidates were pro-European and conveyed mostly populist messages with main focus on improvement of living standard and stopping of Croatian immigration to richer European countries. Traditional media used mainly sensational approach for the electionrelated topics.

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## **European Parliament Elections 2019 in Spanish, British and Russian Daily Newspapers**

The objective of the study is to compare Media coverage of European Parliament Elections 2019 in digital versions of six newspapers edited in countries with different social and political backgrounds. In particular, two English diaries (The Guardian and The Times), two Spanish newspapers (El País and ABC) and two Russian diaries (Kommersant and Izvestia) has been chosen for the analysis according to the criteria on their similarities, as the most read and/or influent Media in their respective countries. This research includes news articles published in online versions of the diaries from May, 9 to May, 31 and cover electoral campaign and the announcement and discussion of the final results. The study is to be made in synchronic perspective with comparative view. In order to meet the objective of the study, we chose a combination of methodologies of quantitative content analysis (Klippendorf, 1990; Stavelin, 2012) and qualitative framing research (Entman, 1991, 1993, 2007; Linström & Marais, 2012). The results of the study could allow us to contrast the European Parliament Elections 2019 perceptions in digital versions of six newspapers published in three different countries which reflect their social and ideological diversity, and reveal specific features the Media decided to focus on while informing about the issue. The hypothetic research conclusions become even more interesting if we take a look to the political context of two of selected countries: United Kingdom is a country leaving Europe; Russia does not have good relationship with European countries at the moment. Due to these peculiarities, a more critical perception of the elections in British and Russian Press then in Spanish diaries.

Key Words: Politics; Framing; Press; Digital Media.

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## **Shame and Pride in Polish Right-Wing Media Coverage of the 2019 European Parliament Elections**

This paper proposes that shame is key to understanding the appeal of Poland's ruling populist right-wing Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) party. We suggest that there are two pillars of shame that underpin the support for the populist right in Poland: (1) the collective shame that originates from the perceived cultural inferiority of Poland in relation to the West/Europe and (2) the individual shame of failing to achieve material prosperity in the context of post-communist transformation of economy. These two types of shame are instrumentalized in the rhetoric of PiS revealing a particular strategy of emotional regulation that, on the one hand, seeks to transform negative self-focused emotions via repressed shame into anger and resentment towards out-groups and, on the other hand, promotes identification with stable ascriptive social identities, based on national culture, religion, and traditional gender roles (Salmela & von Scheve 2017, 2018). The paper examines how these emotions are employed in the mediatized electoral campaign of PiS preceding the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections. We analyzed selected articles from a popular Polish right-wing, pro-government media outlet wPolityce.pl. The success of the rhetoric of PiS may be explained by its capacity to regulate negative self-focused emotions, via the instrumentalization of inferiority and shame, and transform them into anger directed outwards, at the opposition elites, the European Union and the LGBT community. An important part of this strategy is lack of direct references to (especially individual) shame that contributes to the suppression of this emotion.

Keywords: right-wing populism, emotions, shame, European Parliament elections, Poland, Law and Justice

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### **Definition of electoral success and practical application in elections to the European Parliament**

This communication is an approximation to my PhD thesis, more extensive and still in progress. This communication presents the main methodological contribution of the thesis: a redefinition of electoral success, more complete than that which has been offered by literature so far. This has been limited to understand and use the concept of electoral success in two ways: first, some works account the variation of vote of each party or candidate. Second, there are academic works that are supported by surveys or work with population samples to define the concept of electoral success. The communication proposes a formula that allows estimating the degree of success (or failure) of each political party in each election whatever it may be. With slight modifications, this formula can be used by the Academy for future research on election results in different types of elections. The formula results in each case study a number between -1 and 1, with any number negative synonym of "electoral failure" and any positive number synonymous with "electoral success". It is possible to measure the degree of success or failure and establish comparisons between case studies and correlations with other variables. The communication also exposes the results of the implementation of said definition. It is the first results of the quantitative work of the PhD thesis on which it is based: "Factors that determine the electoral success in the European Parliament". Specifically, this communication applies the proposed definition of electoral success to an analysis of the contents of the newspapers El País and Le Monde during the electoral campaigns of the European Parliament in 2004, 2009 and 2014, in order to determine which were the determining factors in the communication of campaign of the parties that obtained representation in the European Parliament. Keywords: European Parliament elections, political communication, electoral success.

Keywords: European Parliament elections, political communication, electoral success

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**The 2019 European Elections in Romania. How Media cover the European Campaign Subjects about immigrants**

The purpose of this paper addresses the implications of the media in the European elections campaign in Romania. Thus, our empirical research aims at investigating the degree of the major European subjects of the Romanian media discourse in order to reveal the current situation regarding the public sphere in Romania today. In this context, media represent one of the main means of getting a closer insight to the EU in general, we can presume that the way in which media cover and frame the European subjects may influence the public sphere. So, we analyse European subjects, by focusing on the major themes and the media framing of these subjects during the 2019 EU Parliament elections. In order to analyze the visibility and the media framing of the EU topics in the European elections campaign, we conducted a quantitative research. This research is based on a content analysis of articles, published during the European election campaign, 27 April– 27 May 2019, on three of the main important online news portals in Romania. The research question that guided our approach were: How are the European subjects framed in the Romania media and which frames are mainly used to create this discourse?

Keywords: European elections, media, Romania, europeanization, public sphere

## SOCIAL NETWORKS

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### **Ad(d)s to the success. Investigating the patterns and effects of parties' advertisement activities on Facebook during the European Parliament elections campaign of 2019**

In the research of digital politics there is a longstanding debate of whether online campaign tools equalize or normalize political competition. As for Facebook campaign, it is clear that the question of social media advertisement is an important factor in this respect, but it has been a 'black box' for empirical investigation so far due to Facebook's privacy policy. However, before the European Parliament elections of 2019, the site has opened this black box, and in European context this is the first time that advertisements and campaign expenditures on Facebook can be empirically analyzed. This study investigates the advertisement activities of all parties that received at least 1% of the votes in their respective countries (N = 268) during the campaign. First, it will uncover the level of inequalities in social media advertisement expenditure between parties based on several dimensions such as size, ideology, age, country etc. using multivariate statistical analysis. Second, the research investigates to what extent advertisement matters when it comes to users' engagement with posts which is the primary criterion for success in social media campaign. It will compare engagement metrics of sponsored and 'pure' unsponsored contents and uncover the engagement effects of money on social media campaign. If money spent on Facebook largely determines the performance on Facebook, offline advantages are easily transformed into social media success. The study will advance the normalization vs. equalization debate by showing (a) the level of inequality in social media advertisement and (b) the role this inequality plays in social media performance.

keywords: advertisement, Facebook, normalization, equalization, social media engagement, parties, European Elections

### **When social media don't determine all: the topics and narratives of Latvian political parties on Facebook during the European Parliament elections campaign**

Over the last decade, the implementation of campaigns by political parties and their candidates on social media platforms is becoming an integral part of political communication. Political communication studies have long indicated that elections are becoming personalized, with more focus on party leaders or individual candidates (Mazzoleni, 2014, Lilleker, 2015, etc.). But studies on communication by political parties to understand the identity of parties and their potential in communication with voters remain relevant. The aim of the paper is to analyse the election materials of the Latvian political parties on the social network Facebook during European Parliament (EP) election campaign. Three codebooks for analysis have been developed, containing common and specific variables, designed to explore the verbal and visual dimensions, through a qualitative and quantitative mixed methodology. Data was collected within the project "Platform Europe", co-funded by the European Parliament. Paper doesn't represent an official position of the European Parliament. The highest intensity of EP election campaign in Latvia has been observed during the last two weeks. Fragmented political landscape of Latvia had its reflections on the election campaign, indicating quite diverse views on the role of European Union and EP, also without offering a unified vision of Latvia's place in the European integration process. It should be noted that parties did not show their affiliation to one of the political groups in the EP. The results show that personality and past performance of candidates in Latvia played great role in campaign, but no less important were the ethnolinguistic, ethnocultural and geopolitical sentiments and sympathies of voters, as well as their "Euroindifference" and lack of adequate Euro-skepticism. New successes in social networks are currently not a guarantee of victory for parties, but significantly minimize spending and make it possible to address new audiences that have not voted so far.

Keywords: European Parliament, election campaign, political communication, social media, political parties in Latvia

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**Thematic agenda on Twitter in the 2019 European Parliament elections: a comparative study between "Spitzenkandidaten" and national candidates**

**Abstract:** The representativeness of the European Parliament has usually been a subject of controversy, which is currently increased by Brexit and the development of several populist movements within the EU. In this context, the elections to the European Parliament in 2019 were the second occasion on which the "Spitzenkandidaten" system was applied. By this system the parties present potential candidates to preside the European Commission, with the aim of improving the citizen's legitimacy of the European project. Bearing this in mind, the objective of this research is to know the thematic agenda set by the "Spitzenkandidaten" on Twitter, trying to find differences with the issues raised by the traditional national leaders. To this end, the technique of quantitative content analysis is used, referring the issues addressed on Twitter by the six candidates to chair the Commission, as well as the thematic agenda exposed by a selection of national candidates. The sample includes politicians from the four most populated countries of the Union excluding the United Kingdom -Germany, France, Italy and Spain- and it also seeks maximum ideological plurality. The research does not focus exclusively on the electoral contest phase, but observes the communicative action of these leaders over three months. The results show a more thematic concentration agenda in the "Spitzenkandidaten" than in national candidates. In addition, Eurosceptic politicians carry out a differential communicative behavior in comparison with Europeanist leaders. Therefore, the European elections seem to move on two levels: the national, in which the candidates by countries face national issues, and the transnational, in which the "Spitzenkandidaten" address topics from a European approach, accompanied also by references to domestic policy.

**Keywords:** Political communication; EP elections; Spitzenkandidaten; Twitter; Agenda-setting.

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### **Overcoming the democratic deficit? A Comparative Study of the Everyday Facebook Practices of Danish and Spanish Members of the European Parliament**

The European Union (EU) is currently facing an extensive crisis after 51.9 percent of the British electorate in June 2016 voted for the United Kingdom's official exit from the EU. The Brexit crisis has underlined how difficult it is to maintain citizen support for the European political integration project. In addition, extreme right-wing euro-skeptical political parties who clearly question the legitimacy of EU institutions and claim for the return of sovereignty to national states have recently gained support in a variety of countries. In this context, this study aims to assess to what extent social media can serve (and are serving) as a first ground for a more vibrant and integrated European public sphere, helping to reduce the traditional structural distance between European representatives and constituents. To do so, this comparative study examines the everyday Facebook activities of all Danish and Spanish members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and the extent to which there is a real political conversation between citizens and representatives. Through a systematic content analysis, we observe the everyday Facebook practices of a significantly under-studied population (MEPs) during a non-campaign period, while most of recent research has overwhelmingly focused on campaign periods. The results show that both Danish and Spanish MEPs are generously present and active on Facebook, but that they are less popular than their national counterparts. They show that Danish MEPs use Facebook in a clearly more dialogue-oriented way than their Spanish colleagues. Their updates often lead to conversations between followers, and they frequently take part in these political discussions, while Spanish MEPs tend to limit their Facebook practices to content publication, avoiding citizen conversation.

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### **Europe and Euroscepticism on Twitter: analysis of Twitter accounts of spanish candidates for European Parliament during 2019 elections**

2019 European Elections in Spain represented a second round of the legislative elections of the previous month in which a far-right party, Vox, finally managed to gain seats in the Spanish Parliament. The elections for European Parliament coincided with the local and regional elections in Spain, which diminish the impact of the european political discourse. The research aims to investigate the political discourse of spanish leaders on Twitter from the main parties and the political coalitions participating at the elections: Socialist Party (PSOE), Popular Party (PP), Unidos Podemos, Ciudadanos, Vox, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), Animalist Party (Pacma) and JuntsxEuropa (the coalition led by the former president of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont). Our main research themes focused on: (H1) The european debate topics, Europe and European Union as a matter of public interest will have a minor impact in the discourse of the different candidates on Twitter; (H2) Euroscepticism remains marginal in Spain compared to other countries in our environment, and was only channelled through the campaign of the new extreme right-wing party, Vox. Our methodological approach combines three points of view: a) a quantitative analysis of the tweets published throughout the electoral campaign and their effective impact; b) a content analysis of the outcome to the questions we formulate in our two hypotheses; and finally c) an analysis of the political discourse that allows us to strengthen our understanding of the discursive strategies and thematic approach of the different candidates for the elections of the European Parliament.

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### **Using Social Media to motivate anti-migration sentiments. Political Implications in the United States**

The proliferation of nationalist and nativist movements all over the world have capitalized the wide impact of social media, especially in Twitter. In the case of the United States, candidate and then President Donald Trump initiated an active use of twitter to disseminate his views on migration and migrants. This paper analyzes the themes and the political implications of his tweets from Trump's electoral win to the end of the first 100 days of his presidency. The authors' assumptions are that Trump's rhetoric ignited a collective sentiment against migration and those who supported views to protect migration communities. The findings show that some topics were retweeted massively fueling the perceptions that Americans were mostly against migrants' communities and their protectors.

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### **Communicative strategies of the election advertising videos on Youtube of the 6 most voted parties in the 2019 European Elections in Spain**

The study analyzes the main characteristics of the electoral advertising videos uploaded to Youtube of the following political parties: PSOE, PP, Unidas Podemos, Ciudadanos, VOX, and ERC. These parties were the six most voted in the Spanish territory in the past European elections. The fragility of the European Union's reputation, together with Brexit and the emergence of extreme right formations and populisms, make the use of social networks, as the correct use of the Youtube platform become an essential part of any election campaign, especially in attracting new voters and digital population. The methodology used is the comparative study of quantitative data obtained on the Internet, as well as the analysis of the communication strategies of these videos. The objective of this research is: to classify the main topics addressed in these pieces; analyze the media techniques of persuasion; comparison the duration of the videos; determine the importance of the candidate or number one of the national list in audiovisual pieces; observation of the active participation of users on Youtube and the relationship between viewings and election results. In the present research, results in clear differences in the issues addressed, as well as communication strategies of both traditional parties and relatively new formations, with special relevance of such opposing formations as VOX and ERC or Unidas Podemos.

# EUROSCEPTICISM AND POPULISM

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## **Rising Fusion of Populism and Euroscepticism in Europe: The Case of Italy**

There has been rising fusion populism and Euroscepticism in European politics in recent years. There is a populist tradition in Italian political culture and charismatic leadership has been already crucial. Italy, who is one of the founding members of the EU and one of the most Europhile countries in the EU, has seen rise of simultaneous rise of populism and Euroscepticism in recent years, which is obvious especially after the last elections in March 2018. The populist and Eurosceptic parties, the League and the Five Star Movement (M5S) became coalition partners. In this paper, firstly the reasons of rise of populism and Euroscepticism in Italy especially after the financial crisis and refugee crisis is analysed. After explanation of the theoretical framework which is based on rising fusion of populism and Euroscepticism in European politics, it is argued that especially after the economic crisis there has been a fusion in rise of populism and Euroscepticism in Italy. However, rather than having the goal of leaving the EU especially the discourse of the League has been focusing on transforming Europe. On the basis of 20 semi-structured face to face, in-depth expert and elite interviews conducted by the author with a member of the parliament from the League, academics, experts from think tanks who are specialised on populism, Euroscepticism and Italian politics and a journalist from Rome, these two cases will be compared. Most of the interviews were conducted in Rome, some in Florence and Pisa between 17 September-7 December 2018. In addition to these, two skype interviews were conducted by the author, one was an expert interview with an interviewee who is an academic in Milan and the other one was conducted with an Italian MEP at the EP. The rising fusion of populism and Euroscepticism in Italy is analysed by focusing on two case studies which are the League and the M5S. These parties are compared and contrasted in terms of Euroscepticism and types of populism while taking into account their campaign period and results of the upcoming EP elections this year.

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### **Populist actors and Eurosceptics in the audiovisual debates before the 2019 elections to the European Parliament**

**Abstract.** The presence of populist policies, as well as the stances increasingly opposed between Europeists and Eurosceptics and the risk of European involutionism, have uncovered audiovisual discourses unknown until then. Narrative elements closely linked to populism, fragmentation of inconclusive discourse and dramatizations with a clear intention of confrontation require an indepth analysis of the role granted to the process of European democratization by the audiovisual media. This research addresses the audiovisual treatment of televised debates in public and private media, with the intention of identifying the treatment in audiovisual production received by the candidates and whether they have benefited from certain decisions, which were objectives in principle, from the technical team of production. By means of external codifiers, we have verified the intensity of each question, the result of which has been correlated with the dependent variables, question with split screen and question with lettering. The variables have been subjected to descriptive analysis, analysis of correlation of hypotheses and bivariate analysis by Pearson Correlation ( $R_{x-y}$ ). The results suggest that the different political leaders haven't had the same conditions or narrative treatment in the audiovisual production; therefore, they haven't faced the same challenges or face-threatening acts in the questions received during the debates.

**Keywords:** audiovisual communication; political communication; TV production, political discourse, populist discourse; euroscepticism

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### **Populist Elements in the Online Campaign for the EU Parliament Elections in Romania**

One of the defining elements of Romania's presence in international news media in the last years has been the subject: corruption. Political corruption was defined in various ways, from pinpointing its meaning to technicalities of good governance or legal definitions of bribery to the outright moral decay of the body politic. It is also a concept that has played a recurrent if underappreciated role throughout Western political discourses (Buchan & Hill, 2014). This association between Romania and corruption was underlined in the last two years due to the attempts of the Social Democrat Government from Bucharest to change the anti-corruption laws during the last three years. These legislative initiatives led to waves of protests that were depicted by international media. This is the reason why the corruption issue was highly discussed during the campaign for the election of the EU parliament. The main objectives of the present research are to see how the issue of the fight against corruption was integrated in the campaign for the EU elections in Romania and to explore the euroscepticism dimension of the campaign. Our research focused on how the Romanian main political parties (The Social Democrat Party PSD, The National Liberal Party PNL, The Democrat Union of the Hungarians in Romania, UDMR, The Popular Movement Party PMP, The Union Save Romania-Plus, USR-Plus and The Pro Romania Party, Pro Romania) communicated on Facebook during April the 24th and May the 24th 2019. We choose to analyze Facebook because of its relevance for the Romanian population (over 50% on January 2019) and its rage regarding the age and education of the users.

Keywords: populism, EU elections, Romania, corruption

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### **Leave or Remain? The Euroscepticism in the Communicative Strategy on Twitter of the European Populist Political Parties of Spain, Italy, France and United Kingdom**

Especially after the global economic crisis, Europe has suffered a crisis of values that has caused many of its citizens to question some of the defining elements of the European Union and even its permanence in it. An aspect that the populist parties have taken advantage of. A populist phenomenon that has growth during the last decades in many Western European democracies. In this context, the consolidation of the digital technologies plays a key role because of their possibilities to widespread easier the populist messages. This research examines how European populist political actors introduce in their communicative strategy on Twitter the Euroscepticism and how they frame it with the aim to know if there are significant differences regarding their ideology. The sample are composed by the messages shared by the main European political parties of Spain, Italy, France and United Kingdom during the campaign of the 2019 European Parliament election. Specifically, it has been analysed the Twitter accounts of Podemos, Vox, Movimento 5 Stelle, Lega Nord, Rassemblement National, France Insoumise, The Brexit Party and the UKIP. The main findings show that the discontent with the European Union is present to a greater or lesser extent in the communicative strategy of all the parties analyzed, although to a greater and more forceful degree in the Twitter timeline of the right-wing populists. The loss of sovereignty that represents belonging to the European Union, which requires Member States to comply with migratory, economic and social policies that benefit some States are the main critique. This work was supported by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of the Spanish Government under Grant CSO2017-88620-P.

Keywords: Populism; Political Communication; Euroscepticism; Social Media; Twitter; Europe

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**Misinformation in the elections to the European Parliament in 2019: The rise of the extreme right in the Valencian Community**

This study aims to analyze the information treatment that the media of the Valencian Community have given to the European elections and how the far right have managed to have representation in the European Parliament for the first time. Through a Panel of Experts composed of journalists, academics and workers from various public administrations, and content analysis of the three most important newspapers in the Valencian Community: Mediterráneo (Castellón), Levante (Valencia), Información (Alicante), all of them belonging to the Iberian Press group, we hope to have a broad view of the electoral behavior of citizens, taking into account the information blackout that has occurred on the European elections, overlaid by the local-national-Catalonia themes.

Keywords: European Parliament, EU elections, Valencian Community, far right, disinformation

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### **Interviewing a populist leader during the 2019 European elections campaign: Viktor Orbán, the media and the European (non)antagonism**

Viktor Orbán is one of the rare European populist leaders of middle-size countries occupying a central position in the European mediated public sphere. His decision to build-up a fence at the Hungarian southern border following the migrant crisis of 2015, plus a series of decisions taken at home and viewed as a threat to liberal democracy, made him visible in the media. Bad publicity is said to be good publicity for populist leaders. The success of the Orbán's party, the Fidesz, during the last EU election seems to confirm that. However, was there a cohesive, single and antagonist mass-mediated discourse of Orbán in preparation of these EU elections? Based on a critical discourse analysis of the journalist questions and the Orbán's answers during a series of interviews given at home and abroad during the 2019 European elections campaign, the investigations reveal that Orbán is delivering a multi-faceted antagonist discourse: 1) a "goulash populism" at home and which is based on the promotion of economic, political and cultural stability and singularity of Hungary in Europe and 2) a "para-diplomatic" populist discourse abroad, a discourse whose main characteristic is to portray special bonds with other populist leaders, but also an ambivalent relationship within the Mitteleuropa and especially with German-speaking countries. Both types of antagonist discourses can be considered "European" as Orbán structure oppositions between Europeans people, countries, political parties, elites, migrants and specific individuals such as George Soros and Jean-Claude Juncker. However, there is a difference between the mass-mediated message meant to seduce the Hungarian citizens and the one targeting primarily Europeans located in other states.

Keywords: Populism, European Election, Campaigning, Facebook, Content Analysis