



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT THINK TANK – TOPICAL DIGEST

November 2019

Organised jointly by the EU institutions in Brussels, EuroPCom, the European Public Communication Conference, is the annual meeting place for communications experts from public authorities across Europe as well as private communications agencies, NGOs and the academic world. With this year's event taking place on 7-8 November 2019, the conference comes at a key moment in the EU calendar following the elections to the new European Parliament in May 2019 and in the midst of the process of appointing the new college of Commissioners. Drawing on the experiences of recent months, discussions at this year's conference will focus on three main clusters – the European elections, citizen engagement, and tools and trends for communicating Europe – providing a unique platform for communication experts to share ideas on how best to raise awareness of EU policies and improve public communication. This Topical Digest contains a selection of research papers from the European Parliament on public communication and related topics.

[Better communication for cohesion policy](#)

Briefing by Agnieszka Widuto, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2019

Cohesion policy is a major EU investment tool aimed at reducing regional disparities and achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion. It delivers a wide range of results in areas such as new infrastructure, training, job creation, support for small businesses and environmental protection. Communication is key when it comes to making the public aware of existing funding opportunities and letting them know what cohesion policy investments have already achieved. It can also affect public perceptions of the EU and raise awareness of the positive impact of EU support on people's everyday lives.

[European Parliament: Facts and figures](#)

Briefing by Giulio Sabbati, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2019

This briefing provides key facts and figures about the European Parliament, both for the 2019 to 2024 parliamentary term now starting – and for the eight previous terms since direct elections were introduced in June 1979. It includes a wide variety of graphics, covering many different aspects of parliamentary life, such as political group breakdown, electoral turnout, national voting systems, and gender balance, to name but a few.

[Online disinformation and the EU's response](#)

'At a glance' note by Naja Bentzen, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2019

While awareness of disinformation being used as a tool to undermine democracies took root in the context of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine, the phenomenon gained notoriety as a global challenge during the UK referendum on EU membership and the United States presidential election campaign in 2016. The European Union and the European Parliament are stepping up efforts to tackle online disinformation.

[Polarisation and the news media in Europe](#)

Study by the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2019

Across Europe there is as yet little evidence to support the idea that increased exposure to news featuring like-minded or opposing views leads to the widespread polarisation of attitudes. Some research has however found that both can strengthen the attitudes of a minority of people who already hold strong views. This study undertakes a literature review in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between news media and polarisation, in particular outside western and northern Europe, and, more specifically, with regard to new, more partisan digital-born news sources.

[Foreign influence operations in the EU](#)

Briefing by Naja Bentzen, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2018

Attempting to influence political decision-making beyond one's own political sphere is not a new phenomenon – it is an integral part of the history of geopolitics. Whereas hard power relies on military and economic force, the soft power of a state involves public diplomacy and dialogue on values, cultures and ideas, which should normally correspond with its behaviour abroad. Democratic states whose values match the prevailing global norms – pluralism, fundamental rights and freedoms, the rule of law as a principle within states and in international relations – and that exert their influence by contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts, traditionally appear more attractive, thus having more soft power leverage, although to what extent is unclear. However, influence can also serve the purposes of interference and destabilisation.

[Prospects for e-democracy in Europe](#)

Study by the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2018

Digital tools could be used to forge stronger connections between European citizens and the EU decision-making process and thus to help reduce the EU's democratic deficit. This report investigates what lessons can be drawn from local, national and European experiences of the use of digital tools for the functioning of EU decision-making procedures and institutions.

Further reading:

[Computational propaganda techniques](#)

'At a glance' note by Naja Bentzen, European Parliamentary Research Service, October 2018

[Polarisation and the use of technology in political campaigns and communication](#)

Study by the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2019

[Automated tackling of disinformation – Major challenges ahead](#)

Study by the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2019

[Regulating disinformation with artificial intelligence](#)

Study by the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2019

[Disinformation and propaganda – impact on the functioning of the rule of law in the EU and its Member States](#)

Study by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, February 2019

[What if social media were open and connected?](#)

'At a glance' note by the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2018

[EU policies – Delivering for citizens: Youth empowerment](#)

Briefing by Denise Chircop, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2019

[Gender equality in the media and digital sectors](#)

Infographic by Giulio Sabbati, Martina Prpic and Rosamund Shreeves, EPRS, March 2018

[EU policies – Delivering for citizens: Regional policy](#)

Briefing by Christiaan van Lierop and Vasileios Margaras, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2019



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