

The European Social Media Gov.Board: How to Connect with the European Union on Social Media

Birgit Oberer¹ and Alptekin Erkollar²

¹ Kadir Has University Istanbul, Turkey

² Halic University Istanbul, Turkey
journal@etcop.com

Abstract

In this study, the incentives of the European Union for getting in touch with its citizens on social media were analyzed. The results of this study revealed that European institutions, countries, agencies, and policies and projects use social networking sites, microblogging services, photo and video sharing sites, or run their own blogs to get in touch with their stakeholders. In addition, the European Union runs an EU channel on YouTube and a web television channel, which offers the possibility to 'see and listen to what people think about an issue facing Europe'. In order to monitor the changes in the presence of social media in the European Union, member countries, state and local governments, and its authorities, the development of an EU-wide government social media leaderboard, the European Social Media Gov.Board has been proposed, a Gov.Board template introduced and the collaboration between Europe's regions emphasized.

Keywords: *blog, Europe 2020, European Union, social media, social media Gov.Board*

1. Introduction

Social media is a term used to describe the online technologies that are used to share opinions, experiences, and perspectives, which can take different forms, including text, images, audio, and video. Different technologies, such as blogs or message boards, are used in order to enable user interaction [1,2]. Social media focus on social interaction and use accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media has begun influencing businesses and knowledge sharing processes in many organizations, and its resources could enable businesses to conduct their core competences and processes differently. Everyone can add or edit information on social media, supported by digital tools enabling you to create, change, and publish dynamic content [3, 4, 5]. Social media have become a key factor for influencing customer preferences and behavior. They have been integrated into the daily practices of many users, supported by different websites, tools, and networks.

Apart from businesses, other organizations, such as governments and their authorities, or non-profit organizations can benefit from using social media in order to get in touch and communicate with their external customers, which are, in the case of governments, citizens, businesses, and other organizations. Social media focus on social interaction and use accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media has begun influencing businesses and knowledge sharing processes in many organizations [6].

Social media resources could allow businesses to conduct their core competences and processes differently [7]. Social Media have become a key factor for influencing customer

preferences and behavior, but for companies there is little guidance for incorporating social media in information and communication strategies using process routines and structures. Therefore, often there is a lack of acceptance of the importance of social media for a company's marketing and sales efforts [8, 9, 10].

Social Media provide opportunities and new capabilities for working with the public in collaboration or oversight. Governments are starting to take notice and incorporate social media into their daily actions. 'Governments may not be early adopters but the proliferation of social in national media has ramped up its importance for governments around the world. While this initial stance kept politicians on the defensive, enough time has passed that individual politicians and even entire governments are starting to use social media to connect with their communities in new, open ways' [11].

Social media are changing how local and state government elections are covered. Social media can connect citizens to the e-services of a government or its authorities. Legislatures or executive officers of governments can operate in a 24 hour stream of live discussions and updates [12]. Social media present novel risks and rewards for governments and create new online privacy challenges for governments and citizens [12, 13].

'Social media will continue to shape and support the way we communicate and collaborate, offering ever-new and speedy ways to participate in the evolving compendium of human knowledge online. Every organization should be adopting these tools and providing their employees support and guidance to use them productively and intelligently' [14].

2. European Union and Social Media

Many public organizations are already using social media as part of their communication channels to reach their target audience, citizens, and businesses. Social Media popularity tends to grow, with social networks and blogs being top destinations online, mobile social media Internet use is on the rise and social network apps usage is increasing [15]. According to Nielsen, who conducted (for the third quarter of 2011) a study on social networking in the US and worldwide, German Internet users spend more time on social networks and blogs than on any other online category of sites (such as 12.7 billion minutes in May 2011); in Italy, 31% of total online time is spent on visiting social networks and blogs; a quarter of all French online users (9.6 million) visit the No. 2 social networking site, Overblog; whereas, in Spain, Internet users spend most of their online time on the No. 1 social networking site, Facebook, which reached more than 229 billion page views in the UK. Across a snapshot of ten major markets, social networks and blogs reach over three quarters of the active Internet users [24]. Governments could benefit from this social media hype, integrate social media tools into the communication activities, and reach stakeholders with this new channel as well.

To support the introduction of social media in their organizations, governments should consider the following: Governments and their officers have to understand opponents, educate their staff and audience in how to use these media, conduct research on improving the implemented tool(s), run pilot projects, outline the benefits of the tools, and not hyping the benefits of social media in government use. On the whole, the change from a filtering communication towards an open area of social media could be critical and needs special

efforts by governments and their officers [16]. The European Union uses social media in EU communication. ‘Social media refer to online technologies and practices that are used to share opinions and information, promote discussion, and build relationships... More and more citizens are active on social networks.

The European Commission, therefore, uses these platforms to reach out and connect with citizens and stakeholders in addition to the communication that takes place via more traditional channels such as written press, broadcasters, and EU publications and websites’ [17]. The European Commission distinguishes the use of social media between the communication on political priorities, stakeholder and campaign communication, and the use of social media in staff’s own capacity. The focus of this article is placed on the two categories mentioned firstly and does not focus on the use of social media for staff internal purposes.

2.1. EU on Social Networking Sites

The European Union and its offices, located in different countries, are represented on social networking sites, such as Facebook.

Table 1. European Union Institutions on Facebook

Representative	Description	Likes July 2011	Likes August 2011	Change (absolute)	Change (%)
Council of the European Union	27 EU governments making decisions together	2765	2888	+ 123	+ 4,45%
European Commission	The European Commission is the civil service of the European Union	13215	13268	+ 53	+0,4%
European Parliament	The European Parliament is the only directly-elected EU body.	166578	166634	+ 56	+0,03%
President of the European Parliament		42852	42913	+ 61	+0,14%
European Economic and Social Committee	The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the EU’s independent foreign policy department	145	147	+ 2	+ 1,38%
European External Action Service	The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the EU’s independent foreign policy department	3210	3298	+ 88	+ 2,74%
Hungarian Presidency of the Council 2011	Between 1 January and 30 June 2011, Hungary holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time since joining the EU.	2342	2561	+ 219	+ 9,35%
EU careers	Career opportunities in EU institutions	51289	52874	+1585	+3,09%

* Facebook group

Table 2. European Union Representatives on Facebook Sorted by Country

Country	Representative	Likes**	Last update (days) ***
Austria	European Commission	109	-1
Denmark	European Commission	106	-6
Estonia	European Commission	882	-17
Finland	European Commission	282	-1
Germany	European Commission	1802	-1
Ireland	European Commission	2849	-1
Italy	European Commission	879	-7
Lithuania	European Commission	12480	-0
Poland	European Commission	3999	-2
Portugal	European Commission	4793	-2
Romania	European Commission	1633	-0
Slovakia	European Commission	425*	-2
Slovenia	European Commission	621	-6
Spain (Barcelona)	European Commission	1628	-14
Spain (Madrid)	European Commission	428	-9
Sweden	European Commission	798	-1
Czech Republic	European Commission	436	-13
United Kingdom	European Commission	951	-13
Kosovo	European Commission Liaison Office	3436	-0
Belarus	EU delegation	222	-7
Indonesia	EU delegation	2227	-1
Israel	EU delegation	1702	-3
Tajikistan	EU delegation	100	-137
Thailand	EU delegation	1668	-0
UN	EU delegation	572	-2
Tunisia	EU delegation	1219	-6
Ukraine	EU delegation	871	-1

* Facebook group ** as of 08/2011 ** D-day: 11.08.2011, -0: on D-Day, -1 (one day before), -2 (two days before)

The European Parliament has the most ‘likes’, with more than 166,000 people following this institution on Facebook. Considering the period July-August 2011, the ‘EU careers’ site on Facebook has the highest absolute increase of people following it (+1,585), and the ‘Hungarian Presidency of the Council 2011’ has the highest increase (in %) with +9.35%.

Table 3. European Policies and Projects on Facebook

Policy/project	description	Likes July 2011	Likes August 2011	Change (absolute)	Change (%)
112 - The European Emergency Number	In case of emergency you can call 112 everywhere in the EU, free of charge from fixed or mobile phones	4534	4674	140	+3,09%
Digital Agenda for Europe	The movement for digital action in Europe	543	593	50	+ 9,21%
Humanitarian Aid-	European humanitarian aid is	7865	7948	83	+1,06%

ECHO	channeled directly and impartially to the most affected populations, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.				
Social Europe	The EU Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG aims to explain how the EU's work on employment and social issues benefits people living in EU.	19876	21091	1215	+6,11%
Youth on the Move	By 2020 all young people in Europe must have the possibility to spend a part of their educational pathway in other Member States	7654	8698	1044	+13,64%

The European Commission in Lithuania has the most likes (12,480 likes) with an update activity of -0, which means there are frequent updates on the Facebook account of this institution. Other institutions with an update activity of -0 are the European Commission in Romania, Kosovo, Russia, and Thailand. The worst update activity was experienced by Tajikistan (-137), a medium update activity was seen with Estonia (-17), Spain-Barcelona (-14), Czech Republic and United Kingdom (-13 each), and Spain-Madrid (-9). The only institution, which founded a Facebook group, is the European Commission in Slovakia, with 425 members.

A European project with more than 21,000 likes on Facebook and an absolute increase on the people following it (+1,215) is 'Social Europe', which shows how the EU works on employment and how people living in the EU can benefit from social incentives. The highest increase (in %) in a page's following on Facebook was obtained by 'Youth on the Move' (+13.64%), which is an initiative offering possibilities for young adults to spend a part of their educational pathway in other member states of the European Union.

2.2. EU on Microblogging Services

Microblogging 'is a form of multimedia blogging that allows users to send brief text updates, or micromedia such as photos or audio clips, and publish them, either to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group that can be selected by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, digital audio, or the Web. A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that it has much less content, in both actual size and aggregate file size. Micro-blogging has become a trend nowadays and generally Internet users love this service. Microblogging services are used by bloggers to promote their blog and getting users to visit their blog' [18]. European Union institutions are active on Twitter.

The most tweets (5,873) were received by the European Commission in the Netherlands, followed by the European External Action Services (2,653 tweets). The European Parliament has about 7,500 followers, its president about 8,600, followed by EU careers (6,950 followers) and European External Action Services with 4,700 followers. The European Commission in the Netherlands, which has the most tweets, has less than 2,000 followers. The most active institutions on Twitter with a last update –0 (which means there was an update on D-Day) are European External Action Services, EU careers, EU delegations to Indonesia, the Philippines and the US, as well as the European Commissions in Austria, Ireland, Romania, the Netherlands, and the UK. Considering tweets, the most active institutions, regarding followers and activities on Twitter, seem to be European External Action Services, EU careers, and the European Commission in the Netherlands.

Table 4. European Union Institutions on Twitter

Representative	Tweets	Followers (August 2011)	listed	Last update (days) *
Hungarian Presidency of the Council 2011	36	1084	79	-123
European Parliament	1735	7457	722	-45
President of the European Parliament	1248	8594	638	-1
European Economic and Social Committee	73	301	25	-65
European External Action Services	2653	4699	440	-0
EU careers	593	6950	278	-0
EU delegation to Belarus	64	129	8	-8
EU delegation to Indonesia	430	245	13	-0
EU delegation to the Philippines	152	20	5	-0
EU delegation to the UN	82	1103	86	-1
EU delegation to the USA	745	1126	100	-0
European Commission in Austria	50	25	7	-0
European Commission in Ireland	957	3108	170	-0
European Commission in Poland	239	68	6	-2
European Commission in Romania	310	166	10	-0
European Commission in Spain (Madrid)	553	2337	217	-15
European Commission in Spain (Barcelona)	908	2630	209	-2
European Commission in Sweden	280	211	14	-20
European Commission in the Netherlands	5873	1989	155	-0
European Commission in the United Kingdom	430	1051	107	-0

** D-day: 11.08.2011, -0: on D-Day, -1 (one day before), -2 (two days before), ...

Table 5. European Union Institutions on Twitter and Facebook. A Comparison

Representative	Social Media stakeholders			Social Media activities		
	Followers Twitter	Likes Facebook	Dominant service	Updates Twitter	Updates Facebook	Dominant service
Hungarian Presidency of the Council 2011	1084	61	Twitter	-123	-1	Facebook

European Parliament	7457	166634	Facebook	-45	-1	Facebook
President of the European Parliament	8594	42913	Facebook	-1	-3	Twitter
European Economic and Social Committee	301	147	Twitter	-65	-0	Facebook
European External Action Services	4699	3298	Twitter	-0	-3	Twitter
EU careers	6950	52874	Facebook	-0	-0	-
EU delegation to Belarus	129	222	Facebook	-8	-7	Facebook
EU delegation to Indonesia	245	2227	Facebook	-0	-1	Twitter
EU delegation to the Philippines	20	-	Twitter	-0	-	-
EU delegation to the UN	1103	572	Twitter	-1	-2	Twitter
EU delegation to the USA	1126	-	Twitter	-0	-	-
European Commission in Austria	25	109	Facebook	-0	-1	Twitter
European Commission in Ireland	3108	2849	Twitter	-0	-1	Twitter
European Commission in Poland	68	3999	Facebook	-2	-2	-
European Commission in Romania	166	1633	Facebook	-0	-0	-
European Commission in Spain (Madrid)	2337	428	Twitter	-15	-9	Facebook
European Commission in Spain (Barcelona)	2630	1628	Twitter	-2	-14	Twitter
European Commission in Sweden	211	798	Facebook	-20	-1	Facebook
European Commission in the Netherlands	1989	-	Twitter	-0	-	-
European Commission in the United Kingdom	1051	951	Twitter	-0	-13	Twitter

From 20 institutions of the European Union, considering social media stakeholders, Twitter is the dominant service for 11 of them. Considering social media activities, for 8 of them Twitter dominates, 6 are more active on Facebook, and for 6 institutions Twitter and Facebook activities are almost equal in their frequency.

2.3. EU on YouTube

EUTube is an EU channel on YouTube, offering in English, German, and French the opportunity to ‘share the sights and sounds of Europe’, and currently has approx. 15,800 subscribers, with more than 3 million views for the English version of EUTube, approx. 200,000 for the German and 400,000 for the French version.

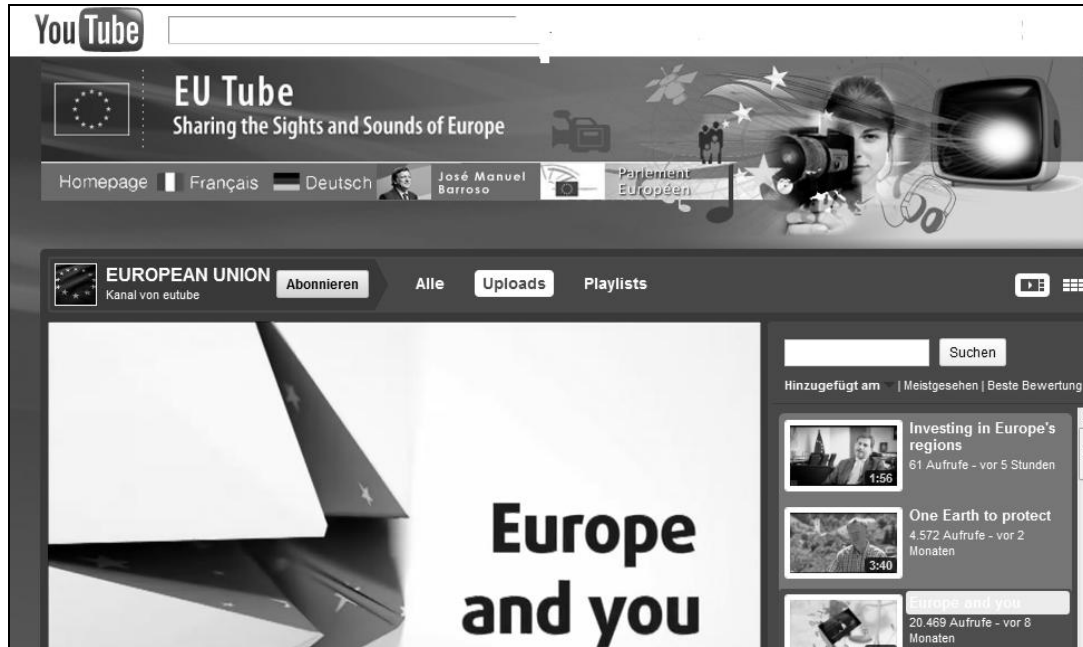


Figure 1. EUTube Portal (screenshot)

Table 6. European Union on YouTube

Institution/country	views	Available since	subscribers (August 2011)
European Economic and Social Committee	11941	2009	218
European Commission – Interpretation Department	26714	2007	463
European Parliament	125676	2007	1670
President of the European Commission	32551	2005	N/A
President of the European Council	16624	2009	382
EU Delegation to Indonesia	698	2011	3
EU Delegation to Japan	122	2011	2
EU Commission in Poland	3250	2009	20
EU Commission in Sweden	2051	2008	12
EU Commission in Lithuania	18635	2008	308
Policy/project/agency	views	Available since	subscribers (August 2011)
EU security and defence	45520	2008	754
European Neighborhood Policy Info Center	5801	2009	51
European Environment Agency	16676	2007	180
European Institute of Gender Equality	1165	2010	5

Table 7. European Union Institutions and Countries. Performance on Social Media

Institution/country	performance			
	YouTube subscribers	Facebook Likes	Twitter followers	Dominant service
European Commission – Interpretation Department	463	--	--	
European Economic and Social Committee	218	147	301	Twitter
European Parliament	1670	166634	7457	Facebook
President of the European Commission	N/A	--	--	--
President of the European Council	382	--	--	--
EU Delegation to Indonesia	3	245	2227	Twitter
EU Delegation to Japan	2	--	--	
EU Commission in Poland	20	68	3999	Twitter
EU Commission in Sweden	12	211	798	Twitter

The Interpretation Department of the European Commission, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council, and the EU Delegation to Japan are represented on YouTube but not listed on Facebook or Twitter. Considering institutions and countries listed on all the services, the European Parliament has the highest number of stakeholders (YouTube: 1,670, Facebook: 166,634, and Twitter: 7,457). For 84% of all institutions, being listed on all three services, Twitter is the dominant service.

2.3. EuroparTV

EuroparTV is a web TV channel, established by the European Parliament to ‘respond to the right of all citizens to know and understand what is happening in the institution they have elected. The channel is designed to contribute to the democratisation of the European Union and to the development of a European public space’ [19].

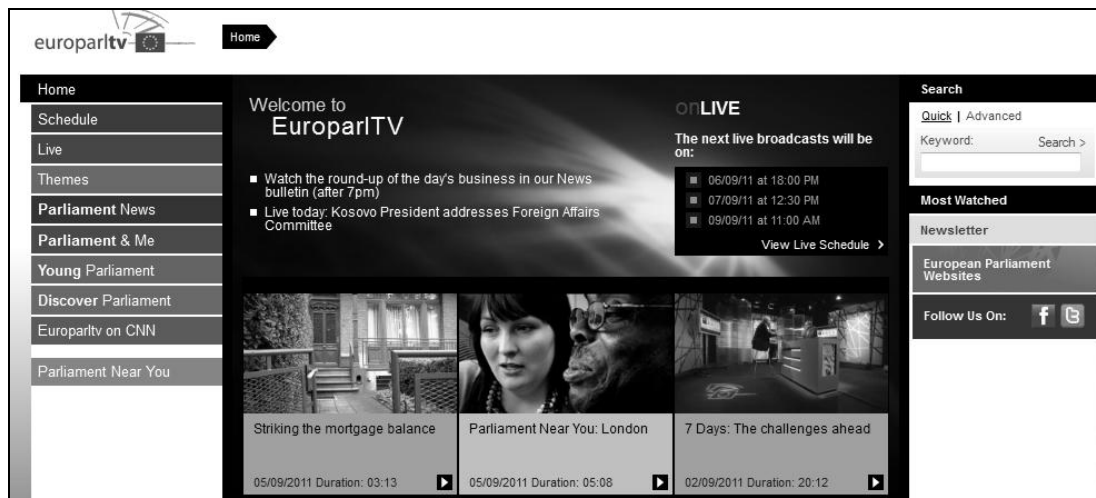


Figure 2. EuroparTV, <http://www.europartv.europa.eu>

The channel offers live broadcasts. These live programs are active online 5 minutes before the start. In a Live Archive already broadcasted programs are listed and available for watching them with Windows Media Player, sharing them on different portals or sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Blogger, Google Buzz, WordPress, or LinkedIn.

In the category 'Themes' videos on the following areas are available for watching: Financial, Economic, and Social Crisis (18 videos), Euro-Med (15 videos), Consumer Rights (15 videos), Women's Rights (15 videos), Nuclear Energy (15 videos), and Immigration (15 videos). Last updates for all categories -2 months from D-Day.

The category 'Parliament News' offers information on the sub-categories News (last update -0 days from D-Day, 1,470 videos available), Interviews (last update -5 days from D-Day, 256 videos available), Debates (last update -90 days from D-Day, 167 videos available) and Magazines (last update -1 day from D-Day, 399 videos available).

The category 'Parliament & me' offers a question and answer section, where people send their questions and then specialists answer them (46 videos available, last update -310 days from D-Day). The section 'viewpoint' offers 'an opportunity to see and listen to what people think about an issue facing Europe' [19]. Recent topics are Science & Europe and Human Rights in the European Union (42 videos available, with a last update -375 days from D-Day). The category 'Young Parliament' offers with its 'backstage' section a 'look behind the scenes of the European Parliament' [19] with 47 videos available and a last update -2 days from D-Day. In an 'A-Z' section, keywords of relevance for the European Union are listed and explained. The 'Eureka' section explains in 24 videos the history of the European Union and 'how Europe became what it is today' [19].

The 'Let's talk' section offers classroom debates on 'burning issues' (23 videos available, last update -276 days from D-Day). The category 'Discover Parliament' gives an overview on European history, political groups, and how a parliament works. 'Flashback wraps up important pieces of legislation and what they mean in practical terms' and 'starting point takes a look at recently adopted proposals that will come up on Parliament's agenda' [19].

On the whole, EuroparlTV offers information on topics related to the European Parliament, but in some categories, such as classroom debates or on recent topics facing Europe, EuroparlTV is quite inactive with the last updates and activities months or year(s) ago.

3. Government Social Media Leaderboard

To be able to monitor the performance of government agencies on social media, the development and implementation of an EU-wide government social media leaderboard should be introduced, following the US example. In the US, the 'GovLoop' portal, an online community connecting nearly all government innovators from federal, state, and local government, was created in 2008, with the mission to 'connect government to improve government'. GovLoop was developed for government communication, but is not run or funded by the US government. However, the portal offers different blogs on government issues, forums, and groups to learn and communicate.

One tool that GovLoop introduced is the Government Social Media Leaderboard. It is used to show single government agencies how their social media presence stacks up. US government agencies are listed and their performance is shown. Small, medium, large, or all government agencies can be grouped displayed and compared. In a drop down menu, different metrics can be selected, such as facebook fans (daily change and total), twitter followers (daily change and total), outgoing tweets, retweets. Daily, weekly, or monthly

views are also available. In addition, different peer groups can be selected, such as US House, US Senate, 2012 Presidential, Governors, Fed Agencies and States, with all leaderboards showing the best and worst performers by metric for a selected peer group [20].

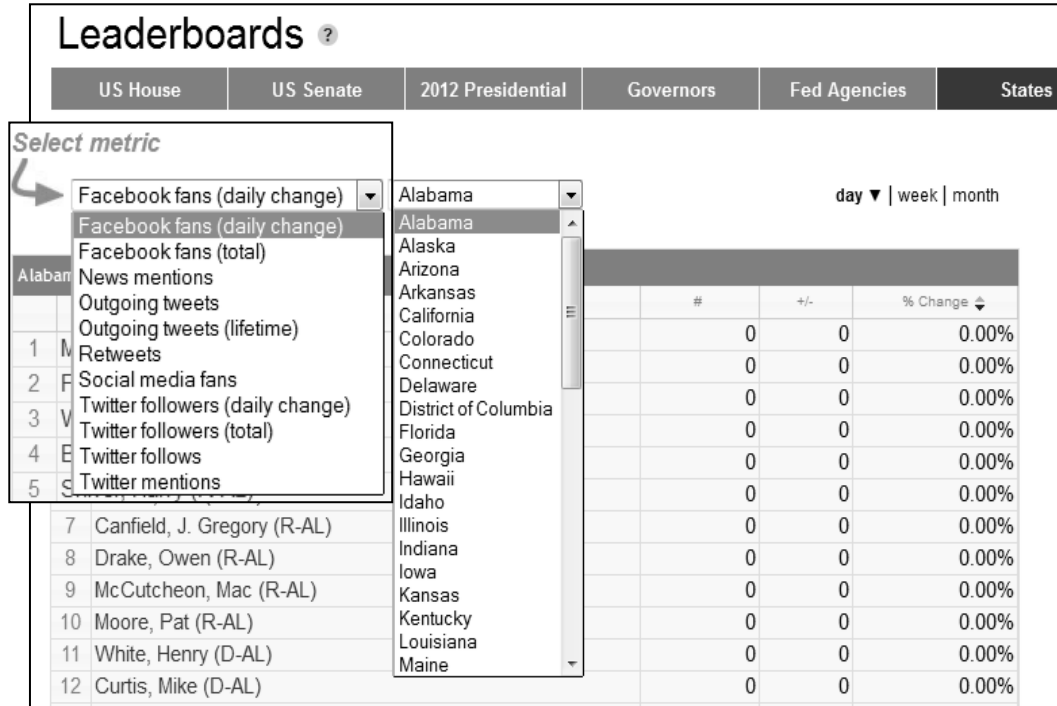


Figure 3. Government Social Media Leaderboard,
 (<http://www.govloop.com/page/government-social-media-leader>)

‘Metrics --- even basic ones like follower stats --- help improve performance in several ways: 1) they drive awareness; 2) they spur interest in deeper metrics, e.g. "If we can measure our fan count, what else can we measure?"; 3) they help focus the conversation around performance, e.g. "What are the REAL metrics we care about given our mission?"; and 4) they foster accountability.

Used properly, these metrics enable a communications pro or agency leader to get a nice picture of their own performance over time, as well as comparative view of how they stack up against peers. The Leaderboard view isn't the only way we publish this data, but it's a heckuva conversation starter [21].

Following the Government Social Media Leaderboard approach, a similar board should be developed and introduced for the European Union and its agencies, defining the peer groups and metrics to be installed. All queries could be done on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. For all peer groups or any combination, absolute changes and % changes should be calculated by the tool for the considered period.

Table 8. European Social Media Gov.Board, Peer Groups and Metrics

PEER GROUPS	METRICS		
	Facebook	Twitter	Youtube
INSTITUTIONS (all/@country)	LIKES	FOLLOWERS	SUBSCRIBERS
COUNTRIES	LAST UPDATE	TWEETS	
REPRESENTATIVES (all/@country)	HIGHEST/LOWEST ACTIVITY	HIGHEST/LOWEST ACTIVITY	
POLICIES		LAST UPDATE	
PROJECTS		LISTED	

Different from the Government Social Media Leaderboard, in the European Social Media Gov.Board it should not only consider simple metrics, such as followers or likes, because these are not sufficient indicators for an agency’s performance. In the European Social Media Gov.Board, metrics such as ‘last update’ are also included in order to get an impression of the agency’s degree of activity on a given social media. In section 1, the user can select from displaying institutions, countries, representatives in general, policies, or projects, and can select between a daily, weekly, or monthly view.

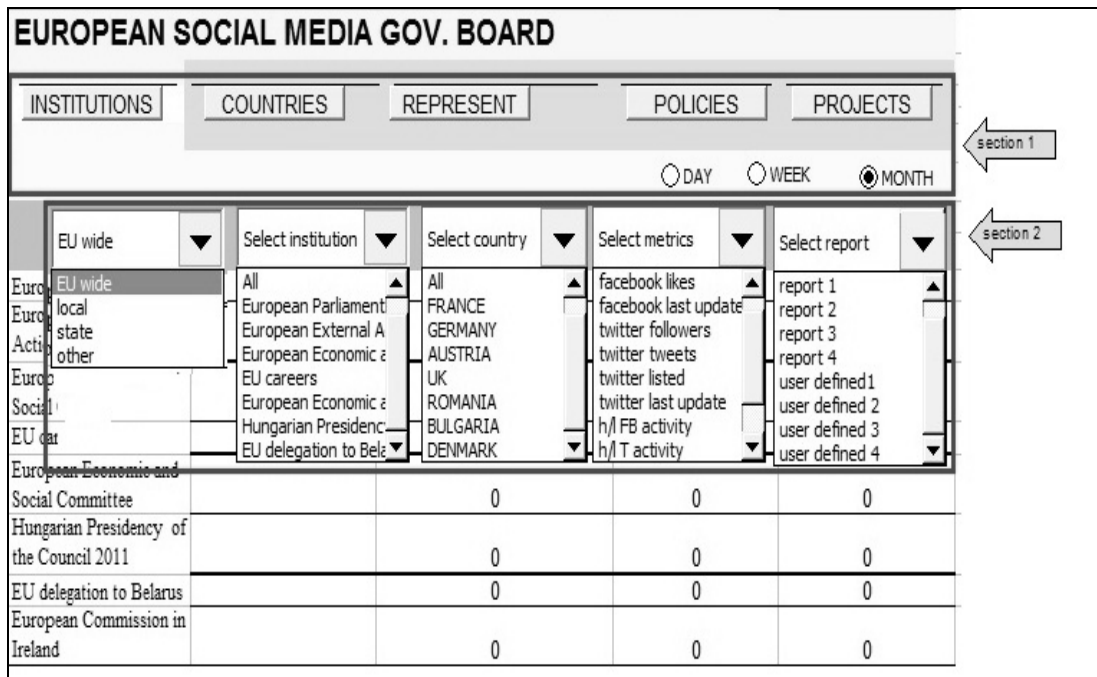


Figure 4. European Social Media Gov.Board (template)

In section 2, the user can select the type of institution (such as EU wide, local, or state), one, more, or all institutions, countries, and the metric that should be considered (such as Facebook likes ore Twitter followers, last update and/or update activity for a given social

media website. In addition, predefined reports can be selected in order to display the results of the analysis. To increase user friendliness, reports can be customized and adapted to the agency related requirements.

4. Collaboration between Europe's Regions

Apart from getting in touch with government's stakeholders, connecting Europe's regions is another main challenge for the European Union. The EU regional policy is delivered through a system of shared management: national and regional authorities are responsible for defining, implementing and monitoring of funding programs. Main communication objectives are to highlight the importance of the EU regional funding, to show how the EU regional policy can contribute to support the EU targets 2020 for 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' [22,23]. 'The Union has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas. Concrete actions at EU and national levels underpin the strategy' [23].

The audience for Europe 2020 and the EU regional policy are national and regional authorities, regional development agencies, non government organizations and social partners, journalists working for national, regional or EU media and academic and research communities [22].

In order to provide new opportunities for online communication and collaboration the European Commission launched the 'RegioNetwork 2020' in 2010. It is a platform for representatives of European regions and others who are interested in the European Union's regional policy, with features such as Creation of a profile on behalf of a region or individual, Creation of groups, discussion forums and wikis, Sharing of photos and videos, Sharing and rating good practice examples, opinion polls and web chats. Currently (as of January 2012), 64 groups, 68 good practices, 78 regions and 2111 individuals are registered. You can join groups for discussions, share experiences within the 'good practices' section, and search for regions in the 'regions' section. For regions in the 'profile' section the following information is open for access: regions characteristics, partnerships, regional representation in Brussels, regional authority, main information such as region population, region GDP per head, priority area of interest, groups and followers. In addition, user groups, followers, region's calendar and wall are available, including a functionality for registered users to contact the specific region. Only registered users are able to follow individuals, registered in the RegioNetwork 2020 [22].

Since the RegioNetwork 2020 was launched more than 2000 users from different EU countries registered. Currently, there are a lot of challenges, such as usability of the site and performance issues, Identifying and developing tools that people really need to collaborate online and changing habits and stimulating interaction, but a new version of the site should be launched in 2012, addressing these challenges [22].

RegioNetwork 2020

European Commission > Regional Policy > RegioNetwork 2020 >

Log in

Home News feed | Groups (64) Join a discussion | Good Practices (68) Share experiences | Regions Follow a region

Recent Activities Help

Following | Groups | Good practices | Regions | Individuals | All

GROUPS Directory Help

Group	Manager	Posts	Forums	Members	
Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 In October 2011, the Commission adopted legislative proposals for cohesion...		41	26	380	Request membership
OPEN DAYS 2012 OPEN DAYS, the European Week of Regions and Cities, is the annual flagship...		20	2	328	Join

Good Practices

Project Summary	Date	Author
EU Community of Practice on Inclusive Entrepreneurship (COPIE) The Community of Practice on Inclusive Entrepreneurship (COPIE) is a learning network of ESF... Business support Employment Social inclusion	13/01/2012	

REGIONS Directory

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T U V W Z

Figure 5. RegioNetwork 2020

5. Conclusions

Social media have an important scope for interaction and engagement with stakeholders on EU-related themes and activities. Within the European Union, social media are used for stakeholder and campaign communication, to inform citizens, share experiences, engage with stakeholders and promote policies, projects and EU's activities. Furthermore, social media are used to communicate official announcements, press releases, and statements.

Institutions of the European Union, as well as European policies and projects are actively presented on networking sites and microblogging sites. There are no trends visible for a dominant service for all European institutions presented on social media. From all the institutions of the European Union considered in this study, considering social media stakeholders, the microblogging service Twitter is the dominant service for 55% of the institutions. Considering social media activities, for 40% of them Twitter dominates, 30% are more active on the networking site Facebook and, for 30% of the institutions, Twitter and Facebook activities are almost equal in their frequency.

The EuroparlTV is a web channel to get in touch with citizens. Some categories, such as 'parliament news', should perform a higher update frequency. Currently, for some categories the last update was made more than one year before D-Day. On the whole, the European Union offers a comprehensive set of opportunities to its stakeholders to get in touch with the Union and its institutions or to get information on projects, policies, and incentives. This comprehensive set of opportunities, nevertheless, leads to a lack of knowledge regarding where to have a look in case citizens search for information on a special topic.

Guidelines on how to use social media should be published by the European Union in order to support stakeholders getting in touch with the Union and taking advantage of the opportunities offered to them. In addition, the developed template for a European Social Media Gov.Board could support agencies in the evaluation of their social media performance compared to others and to improve the agency's motivation for performance improvement.

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Authors



Alptekin Erkollar is professor for business informatics and business organization, head of department, ETCOP and visiting professor at several universities in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey and the US. Prof. Erkollar is author/ editor of several books, more than 200 refereed papers, editorial board member of international journals and editor of the international Enterprise and Business Management (EBM) series.



Birgit Oberer is member of the Faculty of Arts and Science at Kadir Has University. Currently, her academic interests are public management, social media and information technology. She actively takes part in a number of international networks and task forces on Management and IT and member of editorial reviewer boards for international journals.