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Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte

Communication Studies

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

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New Media and Society in Europe

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Abstract

This research deals with the information society and the introduction of the new online communication platforms in the political communication sphere, specifically in Europe. Jürgen Habermas introduced the term of the Public Sphere in 1974, which nowadays is changing due to the uprising of new ways of communication. The Public Sphere has changed and also the politicians' performance has been transformed. The particular situation of European Parliament makes it a perfect environment to study this change. This institution gathers different nationalities, parties and political generations among its Members. That is the starting point of the research: the relationship between the Members of the European Parliament and their presence in online communication platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, websites or blogs. According to this we open a research question in order to find out if it is possible to establish clusters connections among that presence on the online communication platforms and the European Parliament Members' nationality, party or age. In order to do so, this paper has counted with both, a quantitative and a qualitative analysis, which will help us to arrive to the main conclusions.

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Keywords

Political Communication; Internet Politics; European Parliament; Public Sphere; Clusters; Members of the European Parliament (MEPS); Online communication platforms.

Number of words:33,991



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Solemn declaration

I solemnly declare that I have written this master's thesis "The use of the online communication by the Members of the European Parliament" myself.

I am aware of the rules of plagiarism and have therefore ensured that these have been applied in this master's thesis.

Date

16/05/2013

Name + Signature

Alicia Gabán Barrio



PART I: INTRODUCTION

This study is intended to provide an insight into a new decade of Internet Politics. In 2008, after the United States Presidential Elections, something in politics changed. A new era on political communication was opened. At that time, the communication strategies started to include new forms of communication. Due to the revitalization of political communication, new ways of dialogues have been opened towards the society. The latter is what we define as communication 2.0 in the theoretical framework.

In the 2008 US elections' campaign, Barack Obama was one the first politicians who included internet communication channels in his political strategy. It was the first time that a politician contacted directly with his potential voters through Internet at a large scale.

Since that moment on, the case of Barack Obama and the new political communication strategies have been studied a lot. Many authors have published academic works in this regard. Also many politicians over the world have decided to follow these new political communication approaches. It is true that the Obama's political campaign began with one event: the electoral campaign. However, even when this event was a special one, the communication strategy continued further, after the electoral campaign finished. It doesn't matter how far away you are from the citizens, now is the time to talk to citizens directly. Above all we observe that the use of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has an impact on society all over the world.

The European Union political scene followed the political communication strategies developed by Barack Obama. Hence, since 2008, the EU politics have begun to use 2.0 political communications. That is why on the next electoral period, the Members of the European Parliament, who represent the European citizens at the EU level, became to be present on the net. The 2.0 political communications have become a fundamental tool for the European Parliament's Members political communication campaigns and their daily political life. Indeed this is the starting point of the present work. As a frame of the thesis we have the European Parliament and their Members as subjects to study.

Therefore in this context it is crucial to understand how ICT influences the political process. The European Institutions, and their Members, need to perform their democratic tasks in the present rapidly changing environment. In this paper there are some references on how the MEPs are working on these new forms of communication.



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In fact one of the main problems of the European politics is the difficulties to communicate to the citizens, as they live far away from Brussels where the decisions are being taken.

Hence, European politicians want to be present in these online communication platforms as a way to overcome these communication difficulties. Before the arrival of the new online communication tools many European citizens felt that politicians set in Brussels were far away from their daily life. Even more, nowadays the trust in the political class is constantly decreasing. For that reason the politicians have to address the citizens' needs of information and establish direct contact with them.

As a result the study starts from a basic question: "What are the Members of the European Parliament doing at the new public sphere?" which came out after a revision of this new technological situation and its consequences at a democratic level.

In deep, the European Parliament faced more problems as it is a diverse institution which gather politicians from different nationalities, political parties and European regions. In fact, it is the only directly elected supra-national parliament in the EU. There are different nationalities, different political groups as well as different ages. Therefore here it can be found a distinctive characteristic of the institution: its differences. Through the present research it will be studied the use of Internet platforms by different MEPs and if some natural clusters exist among them regarding the use of the online communication tools. The latter will allow us to assess the new political tendencies of Internet usage among MEPs.

Problem: starting point and hypothesis

The present study deals with the use of online communication tools by the members of the European Parliament and the organization of clusters related to age, ideology and nationality, in connection to digital communication processes in that institution.

The European Parliament chamber is the representative chamber of the European citizens and each of the Member States have a representative on it. In regards of that, the EP chamber includes 27 different nationalities, eight political groups with different ideologies; and it can also be divided by the age of the representatives. At the end what we found is a place within a mix of different characteristics.

However all of them are representing the EU citizens and to do so they are including new communication methods. One of the main problems of the EU institutions is the



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deficit of information towards citizens. That is why the new online communication tools represent a new useful tool to mind the information gap between politicians and citizens.

1.1. Purpose and scope

The present study has been carried out by a correlation analysis and by a content analysis. The purpose of this research is to check if it is possible to gather the MEPs into natural clusters according to the use they give to 2.0 political communication technologies. These clusters depend on the MEPs' presence on the online communication tools we choose to study in this case.

In order to obtain the natural clusters among the EP chamber we have chosen the most used online communication tools among the politicians in this institution: Facebook, Twitter, personal websites and blogs. The correlation analysis will be used to connect these tools to main differences among the MEPs. In the case of this research we have selected age, nationality and ideology of the members as variables of analysis. However, it is necessary to take into account that other online communication tools as LinkedIn, Youtube, Flickr could be assessed as well as other social variables among the MEPs such as gender, religion, marital status, mother tongue, etc.

The scope of the research includes the framework of the political communication and the new internet politics which have been developed since the arrival of new ways to conduct politics. This is also a link to the Habermesian theories of the public sphere as nowadays politicians are developing their political skills on a new virtual public sphere. Therefore to carry on the research it will be needed to look inside of Habermas theories and into the new perspectives on political communication. They are focused on the new virtual public sphere, important for this paper. Besides the internet politics theories, the research will focus in the most representative European Institution: the European Parliament (EP).

This institution is the framework of our study, so we would consider the different online communication policies that the EP Media division has developed. In fact the EP represents all the EU citizens and that is why its members want to open dialogues within citizens.

On the other side we have the European Commission (EC) and the Council of Europe. The EC is the legislative center of the EU. The Council of Europe is a closed institution which deals mostly with a high level of the European politicians. Therefore the EP is



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the institution which has the support and the trust of the citizens. Their members have been politicians on their own home countries and that's why they want to develop a special relation to the citizens.

1.2. Research question



What kind of natural clusters can be established among the MEPs?



According to the different online tools selected in this study, how many correlations can be found among the MEPs online communication usages?

1.3 Main objectives of the research

The objective of this research is to describe the nature of clusters among MEPs in connection to the use of 2.0 political communication tools. That is why the research is focused on the cluster analysis theory and correlation methodologies. Therefore we will present the different natural clusters that can be found among the presence of the MEPs in the online communication tools. To this end three variables have been selected: nationality, ideology and age. Hence, these variables will be compared to the four online communication platforms selected: Facebook, Twitter, websites and blogs¹.

1.4. Specific objectives of the research

1. To discuss the present value of the Public Sphere theory, introduced by Jürgen Habermas.
2. To know if the MEPs are developing political communication activities according to this new Public Sphere, where roles and actions are changing.
3. To evaluate the relationship between the MEPs presence in online communication platforms (Facebook, Twitter, blogs and websites, as those that are the most used in the Net).
4. To identify the MEPs presence at the different selected online communication platforms (to this end we will use MEPs personal profiles, the EP official website and some EP applications for Facebook and the MEPs' political group home websites).

¹ Please see Annex (0)



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5. To correlate the MEPs' socio-demographic characteristics with their presence at Internet and use of the online communication tools.
6. And last, but not least, to find out if it is possible to establish natural clusters among the MEPs and their online communication presence.

1.5. Thesis structure

The study is structured in four sections.

Part one introduces the first remarks of the research. The purpose and the scope of the research are established here. A description of the research questions which lead the investigation is included and the main goals which will guide the study are explained.

Part two deals with the theoretical framework. First, we present some theoretical perspectives that focus on the new public sphere, named as virtual sphere. In particular to build up this concept we use some academic definitions. Further, we introduced the definition of public sphere by Jürgen Habermas, who initiated the public sphere theories in 1974. We talk about the potential shifts and the impacts on the concept of public sphere changing towards the virtual sphere's concept in our present century. Secondly we present a new perspective on the 2.0 political communications: internet politics. It can be interesting to understand this framework as "the new" politicians are also involved in that new public sphere. In this regards, we introduce a discussion on the new online tools used by politicians and their political communication strategies. Further on the context of the European Parliament we analyze how the different European Groups have added these tools to their political work. To conclude, in a second moment we will explain how those new tools have been introduced at the European political sphere. Hence we open a question on how the information and communication at the EP is been used and the real impact on the MEPs online communication behaviors.

Part three introduces the empirical research of the study. It begins presenting the methodology, explaining both the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study. The methodology includes concepts from Wimmer and Dominick² and Jensen and Jankowski³. On this part we explain the research design which includes an explanation of the different stages followed to obtain the thesis results.

² Wimmer, R; Dominick J.R, (2010) Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 8th Edition, Wadsworth Thompson

³ Jensen K.B, Jankowski N.W (2002), A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research, Routledge



Part four includes the quantitative and qualitative analysis performed. The first part is named data analysis and is based in the SPSS⁴ analysis which helped to determinate how many groups exist among the MEPs in connection to the use of political online tools and who belongs to which group. Next we present the findings of the qualitative research. After that we can cross the findings from part one with the results from part two and obtain a clear picture of clusters situation.

Part five comprises the conclusions of the whole research and tries to answer the research question presented.

1.6. Theoretical model of the research

The present paper is based on the theories developed by Wimmer and Dominick at the “Mass Media research: An introduction”. At this work the research is defines “*an attempt to discover something (...) Research can be very informal, with only a few (or no) specific plans or steps, or it can be formal, where the researcher follows a highly defined and exacting procedures*”⁵. Further at Wimmer personal website he added “That’s all there is to it—an attempt to discover something. In addition, if you think about that definition, you will see why research is so important in the mass media”.⁶ The attempt of this research is to discover the behavior of the MEPs on the online communication platforms. In order to analyses this usages it will introduces four variables: geographical, ideological, age and gender.

Following the theories of Wimmer and Dominick, the two basic types of research approaches are quantitative research and qualitative research. They introduce a definition of both. “Historically, qualitative research has been defined as research using small samples (oftentimes not randomly selected) where the results are not generalized to the population from which the sample was drawn. Conversely, quantitative research has been defined as research using a large, randomly selected sample of people where the results are generalized to the population from which the sample was drawn. These are the definitions that most people accept, and there are many books and articles (and even college classes) on qualitative and quantitative research”.⁷

⁴ SPSS Statistics 17.0

⁵ Wimmer, R; Dominick J.R, (2010) Mass Media Research: An Introduction, page 2, 8th Edition, Wadsworth Thompson.

⁶ Wimmer, R.Ph.d, (n.d) An introduction to Mass Media Research
<<http://www.rogerwimmer.com/wrmediaresearch.htm>> [3 May 2013]

⁷Ibid.



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On the qualitative research we will use the interviews' method. On the quantitative we will employ a correlation approach whose purpose is to establish relations among two or more variables. In this case the four variables are: age, gender, geographic origins and ideological group. To that data we will apply correlation statistical techniques.

PART II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

We will talk now about theories related to the public sphere, the Information and Communication Technologies and their relationship with the political communication tools. A first approach to the study of these concepts leads us to the Public Sphere, where the politicians develop their activities. However the Public Sphere has change since the first appearance of this concept. In fact nowadays a new denomination can be incorporated adding the name "virtual" to Public Sphere. That is why the first stage of this theoretical framework is under the title "Public Sphere versus Virtual Sphere". This will lead us to understand the transformation of the Public Sphere's concept and the influence on the new political scene and society.

The first point will be dedicated to the original term: Public Sphere. It was introduced by Jürgen Habermas in 1974⁸. "He was the first to reflect about it. His analytical line of study begins at the Frankfort School (Germany) where he studies the mass phenomenon. He belongs to the Second Generation of the Frankfort School. Among this line of knowledge, Habermas for new perspective of concepts, focus on the bourgeois model and the Illustration project which indeed are the two keys fact that lead him."⁹ This is the starting point of our inquiry: the concept of public sphere.

The second point presents Castells' concept of Global Society¹⁰ and the relationship with the Public Sphere. In fact nowadays the politicians and the society in general live in a global public sphere and this can produce an influence on the usage and develop of all the online communication tools.

⁸ Habermas, J. (1991), *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society*, Cambridge

⁹ Capellán, G. (2008) *Opinión Pública: Historia y Presente*, Trotta, pp. 115. <Original language Spanish: La línea de análisis de este pensador proviene de la escuela de Frankfurt donde estudio el fenómeno de las masas. Pertenece a la segunda generación de la escuela de Frankfurt. Entre otras líneas de pensamiento, Habermas introdujo nuevas perspectivas en los conceptos centrados en el modelo burgués y de la ilustración, los cuales fueron las bases fundamentales que le guiarón>

¹⁰ Castells, M. March 2008, *The new Public Sphere: Global Society, Communication networks and Global governance*, ANNALS, AAPSS, nº616, [pp 78-93] pp 89-90



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The third final step to assess the context of our research will be the introduction of the new meaning of the Public Sphere: the virtual public sphere, which is now emerging due to the new online resources¹¹. The new definition of the public sphere which is described by several authors: Zizi Papacharissi, Sara Bentivenga, Nick Crossely will be introduced. In fact this new definition will be linked to the present research which is focused on the use of online communication tools, a use developed inside of the Virtual Public Sphere. One Virtual Sphere which adds new tools to develop the political discussion in the society.

In order to complete the theoretical framework another section focused on the Internet Politics. Hence this section is divided in three different parts.

The first stage in this trip, the starting point, will be a stop into the origins of the internet politics. To do so we will look at the political communication in the United States, since the beginning of the new conception of internet political tools started with Barack Obama, in the Presidential Election of 2008. We will establish a temporal line from American political communication that begins with Roosevelt until the point in which Obama arrives with a new kind of campaign.

In that point we will analyze the contemporary changes on the political sphere. Further, the mass communication and its connections to the citizens has been experimenting several changes according to the uprising of the new political communication tools. These tools give us a new approach to the way a political campaign develops nowadays. At present, new strategies are considered, as Bentivenga¹² described. For instance, politicians are using the new online communication tools to communicate with citizens. Due to these changes they can do the same work as before but now they do not need to move from their own cities or offices.

Next we will make a study of the political parties and the changes that the digital age has produced in them. In fact, depending on their tradition and ideology, political parties have faced digital age in different ways. Here the European political groups will be presented as an important key of the research. In fact the research question refers to the Members of the European Parliament and the possibility to establish natural clusters among them. Also, it is important to know if there are any distinctions among the MEPs depending on the use they give to technologies. In order to try to get an

¹¹ Vergara L.G, Habermas y la teoría de la acción comunicativa, Libros básicos en la Historia del campo iberoamericano de Estudios en comunicación, 2011, nº75

¹² Bentivenga, S. August 2009, Rethinking politics in the world of ICTS, European Journal of Communication, SAGE, 21:331, < <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/21/3/331>>



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answer we need to analyze the different changes produced in the Information and Communication Technologies on the political parties and the countries' sphere. Thanks to the theories developed by Sara Bentivenga, Andrew Chadwick, Stephen Coleman, Túnñez, Sixto and Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic, whose previous works has followed a same tone of thoughts, we can build up our present research.

Finally, the third point will focus on the European Union dimension and the use of the online tools to conduct politics. What is happening with the online communication tools at the European Union Politics? How the political parties have been integrating these tools in their strategies? Can the MEPs' online behavior depend on their country, their political party or European region from where they are from?

In this paragraph we will take into consideration a previous step to the comparative analysis, as the Members of the European Parliament come from their own country to Brussels but in their home countries the way to do politics could be completely different than in this city. Actually, we will divide the European Union into: Northern, Eastern, Western, Southern regions. In that sense we could see how, at the European Union, the ways to make politics have been developing and changing. In fact to this end we will use the book *Political Parties and the Internet. Net Again?*¹³ This work includes a good compilation of what has been happening in each country.

We cannot abandon the possibility to understand the traditional ways that politicians are making politics in their home regions, as this could give the key to a better understanding of what are doing their colleagues who work in Brussels and their different online behavior at the European Parliament. To this end we will use the book by Tim Bale, *European Politics*¹⁴. *A comparative Introduction*. Indeed, we will include Mousis¹⁵, as each he has produced a good guide to understand the European Union politics.

2.2. The Public Sphere and the Virtual Public Sphere

2.2.1. Habermas and the Public Sphere concept

Jürgen Habermas develops two of the most important communication theories even at present: the Communication Action Theory and the Public Sphere theory (1974)¹⁶.

¹³ Gibson R, Nixon P, Ward S, 2003, *Political Parties and Internet: Net Gain?* Routledge, London/New York.

¹⁴ Bale, T 2008, . *European Politics: A comparative Introduction*, Palgrave McMillan

¹⁵ N. Mousis, 2008-2009, *Guide to European policies*, Rixensart European Study Services,

¹⁶ Habermas, J., 1991, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



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Following those theories we will show the relationship between the present research and the Public Sphere.

Habermas at the Communication Action Theory focus on “analyzing the fundamental rationalities of an action theory which is able to be over of the subjectivism and individualism, both from the modern philosophy. With that theory he managed to create a new comprehensive theory of the society and communication from *systems* and live *world concepts*¹⁷” That theory explained that the contents of the world would be developed at the social world. Habermas differences between action and speech. The action is the first what human makes at the obvious world at our daily existence. And the speech becomes relevant when its share it's become a problem, just in the sphere of the scientific theories or at our daily common rules (...) ¹⁸” He introduces the relationship between humans instead of the ancient one base on subjects and objects. He uses the term of *I speak* instead of *I think*. The latter can be related to our research. In fact nowadays with the new online communication tools these two terms appear together as everyone express what they think. Further when they express what they think they can start an interactive discussion with other people who are reading this message. The main two elements on this theory are the action and the discourse. The first one, action, is our common experience. But the discourse is what we think in our interior and we share to create a debate about it. In that sense the discourse could be also related to our research as through the new online communications in the bottom of these discussions.

The Public Sphere is defined by the author at “*The structural transformation of the Public Sphere. Preliminary Demarcation of a Type of Bourgeois Public Sphere*” (1974)¹⁹, in a way that the so called Communicative Action Theory “is focused on the relationship between humans instead of the relationship between subjects and objects.

¹⁷ Vergara L.G, Abril 2011, Habermas y la teoría de la acción comunicativa, Libros básicos en la Historia del campo iberoamericano de Estudios en comunicación, Razón y Palabra, nº75, < http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/N75/ultimas/38_Garrido_M75.pdf > <Original language Spanish: Analizando las racionalidades fundamentales de la teoría de la acción comunicativa las cuales están disponibles más allá del subjetivismo y del individualismo, ambas provienen de la filosofía moderna. Incluso él fue capaz de crear una nueva teoría comprensible de la sociedad y de la comunicación desde los sistemas y de conceptos vivos de palabras>

¹⁸ Capellan G, 2008, Opinión Pública: Historia y Presente pp115 <Original language Spanish: Habermas distingue entre acción y discurso. La acción es lo que realizamos en el mundo obvio, en nuestra existencia cotidiana. Y el discurso lo compartimos intersubjetivamente se problematiza, bien sea en el ámbito de las teorías científicas, bien en nuestras normas cotidianas (...) >

¹⁹ Habermas, J., 1991, The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



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Among people communication relations are established to reduce uncertainty which allow a better comprehension of the actors”²⁰.

The epistemological side of the term of Public Sphere (Öffentlichkeit) “is formed in German from the older adjective “öffentlich” during the 18th century in analogy to “publicité” and “publicity”²¹ This concept is part of the public opinion and as Habermas identifies “appears as a specific domain – the public domain versus the private. Sometimes the public seems involved as the sector of the public opinion that happens to be opposed to the authorities”²² Then he located the *public sphere* (1974) as the beginning of the public opinion at the bourgeois society.

We can talk about a new sort of public opinion which can be related to our research. Therefore the new online communication tools begin to play an important role. Habermas says that the public opinion is focused on society. It would “be distinguishes three spheres at the society: intimate, private and public one. The first one is related to the family (...) where it is developed the human factor and takes place at the living room; the second one, private, it is based on the family enterprises and it is focused to the market and direct by the political and literate public; finally the literate and political public are focused on the private sphere, because it is the origin on the reasoning of the private people, but, on the other side, under the public opinion, they make as mediators in between the necessities of the society and the State”²³. The Habermasian definition of the public sphere is located at the bourgeois society, where we can find the political and literary public. They are in that sphere and take the role of mediators between society and the Government.

So they can acquire the role of the public opinion creators. On the new openness of public sphere definition we can also find these mediators, but there is one main difference as politicians are also involved in the process and they want to create public opinion by their own without mediators. Overall we will consider the politicians into the new public sphere.

²⁰ Capellán, G. Opinión Pública: Historia y Presente, Trotta, 2008 pp115 <Original language Spanish: En la teoría de la acción comunicativa en lugar de centrar la experiencia del ser en la relación entre sujeto y un objeto, la centra en la relación de los seres humanos, porque entre ellos se establece una relación comunicativa que permite la mejor comprensión de los actores>

²¹ Habermas, J., 1991, The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Pp 2-3

²² Ibid pp2.

²³ Capellán, G. 2008, Opinión Pública: Historia y Presente, Trotta, pp112 <Original Language Spanish: De cara a esta reconstrucción distingue tres esferas: la íntima, la privada y la pública. La íntima está constituida por la familia (...). La privada está constituida por la empresa familiar vertida hacia el mercado y por el público literario y político. La última, público literario y político radica de un lado del ámbito privado, pues se originan en el razonamiento de personas privadas, pero, por otro lado, bajo la modalidad de opinión pública, hacen de mediadores entre las necesidades de la sociedad y del Estado>



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Simultaneously, Westling (2007) said that “a good starting point to define a positive arena of the political communication is Jürgen Habermas’ concept of the public sphere”. Following it, that definition of the Public Sphere will be a theoretical foundation in our project. We can ask which the main characteristics of the public sphere are and even more, in which sphere are the politicians moving to develop their campaigns. In that sense this analysis can be connected to the Habermasian line of thoughts.

In the same text of Westling, the author includes a presentation of Habermas’ original idea. “(Habermas) envisioned a place where community members could collectively form public opinion in an environment removed from the government or economy²⁴” Due to that definition of the public sphere and its relation to the concept of community we can establish a first link with today’s situation. This leads the present research to develop a new idea, that internet could represent a new space where the public could exchange their opinion and they will do it freely without any government restriction. We need to work further in the concept as “Habermas does not explain how politicians and organizations should fit into the mix. For a community, if we really want to encourage political communication, it has to be more inclusive²⁵”.

Raúl Trejo Delabre (2011) adds another significant vision to the concept of Public Sphere. As we had explained above “the Public Sphere is part of a structure and represents the Government²⁶”. However, Trejo thinks that “super complex societies it will be a super complex network between the different stakeholders involve it. This net will be divided into different areas as international, national, regional, communal and subcultural²⁷”. So in that tone of ideas we can see how each of these areas has their own sphere of influence.

2.2.2. Castells and the network society: The Global Public Sphere

Castells has reflected in detail about the concept of the public sphere too. However in his own vision that concept can change the new global society. In regards to that, Castells published an academic article titled *The New Public Sphere: Global Society*,

²⁴ Westling M, 2007, Expanding the public sphere: The impact of Facebook on political communication, University of Wisconsin – Madison, pp2

< http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook_and_political_communication.pdf >

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Trejo, R, 2009, Internet como expresión y extensión del espacio público, Revista Matriz, Universidad de Sao Paulo nº2, < <http://lared.wordpress.com/2010/09/15/internet-como-expresion-y-extension-del-espacio-publico/> > [3 May 2013] <Original language Spanish: La esfera pública es parte de una estructura y representa al gobierno.>

²⁷ Ibíd. <Original language Spanish: unas estructuras complejas de la sociedad que serán parte de un entramado entre los diferentes partes interesadas. Esta red se dividirá en diferentes áreas la internacional, la nacional, la regional, la comunal y la subcultura>



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*Communication Networks and Global Governance (2008)*²⁸. Castells defines the Habermasian term of the Public Sphere as a new term link to a new sphere, one global. He explained like this “The contemporary global public sphere is largely dependent on the global/local communication media system”²⁹

According to this author the network society³⁰ can be defined as “a society whose structure is made around networks activated by microelectronics-based, digitally processed information and communication technologies”. Further he is certain that this new example of digital network / network society “has the potential capacity to be global”³¹. However Castells has recognized that even when this term seems to include everyone as is a global term “does not mean that people everywhere are included in these networks”³².

Castells (2008) relates the Public Sphere to the globalization³³. This new globalization is moving into a new place, the digital era. It is formed by mass media, wireless communication networks and internet. Indeed the Public Sphere defined by Castells is still including the civil society and the state, as Habermas included. In that sense, for this study, Castells ideas are very useful. In fact the case study is shaped by the presence of 27 European Member States which are different among them. It can be said that the State in this study is represented by the European Parliament, as the major institution which gathers Members from the 27 MS. Their members are chosen by the civil society and they represent this civil society in the latter mentioned institution. Thanks to this new sort of society “(it) could stimulating communication based on public sphere and can engage with demands and project of the global civil society”³⁴. In regards of this we have to recover the concept of the European Parliament as the institution which due to this new public sphere would be more in touch with the civil society.

Castells introduced the global society concept, in connection to a global Public Sphere. Furthermore, Castells’ point of view addresses the new society as a global one and due to this the Public Sphere will be also global or international³⁵. Therefore, using Castells’ vision we assert that the European Union is not composed by one single

²⁸ Castells, M. March 2008, The new Public Sphere: Global Society, Communication networks and Global governance, ANNALS, AAPSS, n°616, [pp 78-93]

²⁹ Ibid. Pp89

³⁰ Castells, M. 2004, The network society: a cross-cultural perspective, Edward Elgar Pub., pp3

³¹ Ibid.

³² Castells, M. March 2008, The new Public Sphere: Global Society, Communication networks and Global governance, ANNALS, AAPSS, n°616, [pp 78-93]

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.



culture, so we need to talk about a global perspective in the European society. Moreover when we talk about the European culture, each of the 27 Member States has developed their own culture. Hence we can say that using their own culture they have been creating their own public sphere which will be integrated into the European Public Sphere. However, as Castells has explained, not everyone will be included in that network society, neither in that Public Sphere. Talking about the digital sphere at the European Union, a digital divide still persists. This means that some countries are more developed in regards of ICTs and others less. So the circumstances to access to the new public sphere can be different depending on the European Member State that you are studying.

Now we can find pluralistic voices, because society has a chance to create an alternative Public Sphere in which people could decide how to communicate with the state. For instance, citizens can use the Net as the new public sphere and even more. Those tools will be the new tools of that public sphere which Castells and also Sara Bentivenga refer to.

2.2.3. Virtual Sphere: a new concept of Public Sphere

According to the researcher Sara Bentivenga (2006) the new Public Sphere “In fact, the Public Sphere, represents the space in which all citizens can interact and express their opinions and convictions, the all the citizens must have the right access³⁶” In that tone of ideas we can link this consideration with a new sort of public sphere, which it is named as “virtual”. Therefore, the virtual scope here is opening the opportunity to access and interact without any limitation, except the access to the computers. Once you have the access you obtain the main tool to be integrated into this sphere. If we think about politicians’ decision of being in the digital or virtual sphere they are seeing this new option as a door to get to citizens and as a place to discuss directly with them.

Coming back to the habermasianian definition, the public sphere is defined as “a domain of social life in which public opinion is expressed by means of rational public discourse and debate. The ultimate goal of the public sphere is public accord and decision-making, although these goals may not necessarily routinely be achieved³⁷”. Indeed the public sphere, according to Habermas, it is a place between the society and the state, where the people organize themselves.

³⁶ Bentivenga, S. August 2009, Rethinking politics in the world of ICTS, European Journal of Communication, SAGE, 21:331, < <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/21/3/331> > pp337

³⁷ Papacharissi, Z., 2009, The virtual sphere 2.0 at “Handbook of the Internet politics”, Routledge, International Handbook, pp 234



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For instance, Beck, as it is included in Bentivenga (2011)³⁸ defines this as second modernity. This author even pointed that a plurality of public spheres can exist, with a dynamic and spatially complex in nature. Also this modernity can be raised. Dahlgren (2005) suggests three constitutive dimensions: structure, representation and interaction. The most important for this research is the interaction in which we explained that at the new concept of the public sphere the new ICTs give the possibility to exchange opinions and at the political life this could contribute to a direct dialogue between society and the politicians³⁹. In short, ICTs give a new dimension to that public sphere which will be beyond of the definition given by Habermas.

The *virtual public sphere 2.0* as is defined by Papacharissi (2009) "As individuals become more comfortable with the online media, newer appropriations of the internet suggests interesting trends that pull us farther away from the Public Sphere ideal to a direction that is meaningful, but not what we may have expected.⁴⁰" Further she explained that the new public sphere can be divided in the different phases. Unidirectional Communication was the first one in which the users only received information and have access to information, but they could not interact. That last one was indicated by scholars, as Papacharissi said, as one of the most important roles of the online communication tools between society and political, also they added to the latter the reciprocity of communication and the commercialization of online spaces⁴¹.

Now we can open a critical debate on the new Public Sphere and the inclusion of the virtual in regards of *access to information* at that new public sphere. We should ask if a person has that access all the time and if it is true that we have open participation and more information than before. That on the virtual sphere 1.0 was not possible as at that level, at the end, the society has not an active role as the net was only made by the experts and webmasters instead of being people behind the production of those contents. The other two aspects we should consider are reciprocity which means that at web 1.0 the non-borders theories of the net were at the beginning and, secondly, the commercialization, which is related to multi shopping online.

We observe a transformation from the Web 2.0 or the virtual sphere 2.0 to the 3.0. At the virtual sphere 2.0 the communication goes in two directions and this gives the possibility to the users to interact with the other side of the net. In that sense some

³⁸ Bentivenga, S. August 2009, Rethinking politics in the world of ICTS, European Journal of Communication, SAGE, 21:331, < <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/21/3/331> > pp336

³⁹ Ibid. Pp337

⁴⁰ Papacharissi, Z., 2009, The virtual sphere 2.0, Handbook of the Internet politics, Routledge International Handbook, pp 236

⁴¹ Ibid.



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authors have stated that new chances of communication at the public sphere can be open. Papacharissi, for instance, talks about the benefits of the narcissism, as the blogs could be seen as a way of expression of self-values, but this also could give the possibility to listen a “plurality of voices and expand the public agenda⁴².” It is important to remark that these authors give a principal role to blogging. However at the moment, in the virtual sphere 3.0, blogs have passed to a second place and we give more importance to other ways of self-expressions as micro-blogging or social networking platforms.

Another important point introduced by Bohman (2004) is the public sphere as a dialogue at the internet. A new communication type is born, Bohman (2004) says. “The public sphere that has a democratic significance must be a forum, which is a social space in which speakers may express their views to others and who in turn respond to them and raise their own opinions and concern⁴³”. In fact what he is stating what in this research is being analyzing, new online communication tools which use new platforms are those social forums. Due to this new forums the essential actors of the democratic process, politicians and citizens, can discuss directly among them. Indeed Bohman proposes that “any public sphere is one that corrects for the limits face to face interaction: communication must address an infinite audience. In this sense, any social exclusion undermines the existence of the Public Sphere⁴⁴”

A final point that needs to be mentioned in this part dedicated to the Virtual Public Sphere is the European Public Sphere (EPS). Following the Habermasian model of the EPS, “the transnational EPS host simultaneous regional, national, European debates in an osmotic model. The debates at the European level legitimate the European Union policies⁴⁵”. Therefore what we observe is a Public Sphere conformed by the differences of the European Union Member States which are mixing each other and creating a new framework of discussion. In fact it is interesting that in the Habermasian Model it is mentioned a “transnational EPS” as this can be linked to the present research. In fact this study it is reaching to find out if it is possible to establish national, political or by age clusters at the European Parliament. Indeed this study considers this institution as the main place to study the differences among the Member States politicians.

⁴² *Ibíd.* pp238

⁴³ Bohman, J. (2004), *Expanding dialogue: The Internet, the public sphere and prospects for transnational democracy*. *The Sociological Review*, pp131–155.

⁴⁴ *Ibíd.*.

⁴⁵ Pana, A, *Models of the European Public Sphere*, Beneficiary of the project “Doctoral scholarships supporting research: Competitiveness, quality, and cooperation in the European Higher Education Area”, co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund, Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, <http://eucommunication.eu/documents/pana.pdf>



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The European Parliament can be the frame of this new EPS but also can be the place to assess the use of new online communication platforms as places where the social debate can be develop and extended. Further on the description of the Habermasian model on the EPS it is said that “the EPS works as a game between institutions (responsible for decision – making and consulting the citizens) and the citizens (whose opinion forming process is facilitated by media) ⁴⁶”

Although we can affirm that in the case of the EPS the “forming process is facilitated by media” truly the European citizens are the ones who are shaping this process while the media are more and more left behind. Even more media and citizens are using the same online communication platforms so these EPS are shaped by information from the politicians, citizens and media, all of them on the same level. In fact the author Andra-Dina Pan corroborated this when she said “I consider that the EPS become democratic if there is a balance of the participation of the European Member States”⁴⁷ Indeed we can find this type of participation in the European Parliament where some of their Members use the online communication platforms to communicate to citizens what is happening at the institution.

On the other side there are some authors that consider that the EPS does not exist. In fact they placed the question “What do these results tell us about the (non-) existence of a European public sphere? Conventional wisdom holds that there is no European public sphere, because there is no “community of communication” ⁴⁸ on the European level based on a common language, genuinely European media and a common European perspective (Kielmansegg, 1996; Grimm, 1995; overview in Kantner, 2002, 91-100)⁴⁹”.

But today it is clearer the existence of a common EPS even when these authors suggest that there is not a common language or a common European perspective in it. If we look into the new online communication platforms we can find different topics and languages that always address Europe although we may find different topics. Moreover from the European Union some pan-European communication platforms have been launched in order to provide news about the 27 Members States. These platforms are the Euronews and Press Europe. Both of them are funded by the European Union and they try to disseminate the same information along all the European Union countries.

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp2

⁴⁷ Ibid..pp5

⁴⁸ Risse, T. (2003). An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators. Paper for the Annual Meeting of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), Nashville TN, March 27-30, 2003, <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~atasp/texte/030322_europe_public.pdf >

⁴⁹ Ibid.. Pp4



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In addition of that other aspect that justifies the existence of this EPS is the recognition made by the European Parliament. In 2010 the MEPs launched a report supporting the relevance of an EPS for communicating issues. The resolution on “Journalism and new media- creating a public sphere in Europe (2010/2015 (INI))⁵⁰” was adopted by the European Parliament on the 7th of September 2010. The main goal of this initiative was to supervise ways to make citizens more active participants in the European debates⁵¹. Therefore from the European Parliament there is a fundamental interest to build and improve the EPS. From this resolution in 2010 up to today this interest has been growing little by little. One of the tools that is mentioned among authors is the role of social media in this process, including the online communication platforms. The reporter MEP Morten Løkkegaard said on this debate “Social media has proven an excellent way to do this by giving the public chance to have a look at what goes on behind the walls. This is the easiest way for citizens to talk and debate directly with decision-makers”⁵²

Going back to the point raise previously it is important to take into account in this EPS the right to access. In fact in Europe there is a permanent and persistent digital divide. This can be the main problem of the new Information Society in which many people is connected and discussing relevant issues while others are left behind because they do not have the same media available or skills to access. So we can answer to those who doubt of the existence of an EPS, that it is real and it is here. But keeping in mind as Castells has recognized that even when this term seems to include everyone as is a global term “does not mean that people everywhere are included in these networks⁵³”.

2.3 Use of online tools for political communication

2.3.1. Political Communication: from the classical political communication to Obama 2008

Political communication has been changing a lot since the beginning of the mass media ages. If we think about a political campaign using internet tools it is necessary to move to the United States to check what things applied at the European level. Therefore in the next section we will present a political communication overview using

⁵⁰ European Parliament, 2010, Journalism and new media- creating a public sphere in Europe, 2010/2015(INI) < <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&reference=A7-0223/2010> [12 May 2013]

⁵¹ European Parliament, MEPS support a “European Public Sphere” for communicating issues, 2010, <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20100902STO81053/html/MEPs-support-a-European-public-sphere-for-communicating-issues>> [3 May 2013]

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Castells, M. March 2008, The new Public Sphere: Global Society, Communication networks and Global governance, ANNALS, AAPSS, n°616, [pp 78-93]



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as starting point the United States' history. We will observe the changes occurred since the years of the static campaigns and wagon train speeches. Those changes have been mainly produced after the introduction of new tools in the political strategies.

Perloff⁵⁴ at the chapter Presidential Campaigns introduces the history of the American politics campaigns. First we have the newspapers, then the radio and finally the television. Even with all those changes the most important one arrive with the uprising of the Internet. Due to all these events, the online tools have become a relevant instrument for political communication strategies. Nowadays, politics is not only about speeches or good presence. Now is the time to be in all the places: real and virtual ones. Present generation has demonstrated that a new kind of politics has begun in which citizens often claim for more interactive messages. However for politicians 2.0 communication platforms could be useful tools but also a new place for performing manipulative strategies. Their entire speeches launched through Internet will be read by a global community, as Castells has explained.

As it has been said the starting point of this section is the United States' history. It can be pointed out that the political communication in that country has been used as a model on different countries, including the European Union's members. This can be the reason why most of the authors when introduce the political communication first talk about the United States campaigns and then they move to other different topics. One of the authors we have used to build this temporal line is R. Perloff⁵⁵ and his compilation about the American History particularly because of his emphasis on the Presidential Campaigns. However to go one step forward we also use the studies of Jay G. Blumer and Dennis Kavanagh (1999) and their academic paper *The third Age of the Political Communication: Influences and features*⁵⁶ that introduces the new online political communication as a reality.

Starting with the American Presidential campaign, in the words of Perloff, "these events became important since the moment that their participants, the politicians, realize that political parties can have a major role in them. In fact, it was in 1820 when politicians realized that they need campaigns to be present and through public speeches to get next to their voters⁵⁷". The importance of these campaigns grows continuously,

⁵⁴ Perloff, R. 1998, *Political Communication: Politics, Press and Public in America*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp 263-285

⁵⁵ Ibid. pp 263-285

⁵⁶ Blummer JG, Kavanagh, 1999, *The third Age of the Political Communication: Influences and features*, Journal: *Political Communication*, Vol 16, nº3, pp 209-30.

⁵⁷ Perloff, R. *Political Communication: Politics, Press and Public in America*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998 pp 263-285



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together with the electoral speeches and newspapers coverage; even political advisers begin to get relevance. The most important period, as Perloff names it, is the *Electronic Campaign* which develops after the arrival of new tools that help politicians and their team to develop a new sort of presidential campaign. Those tools were the radio and the news conferences. One example of these new changes is portrayed by the role of Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was the first candidate to deliver a Democrat convention speech and to take the train to convey their message to more potential voters. Twenty years after this tendency he will be followed by Truman. Since the moment that the radio and the newsreels become important: the days of passive campaigning were over⁵⁸.

After the Second World War we can divide the political communication system into three successive ages, according to the authors Blumer and Kavanagh⁵⁹. These stages can be identified on most democracies of that time. They identify different political ages as we can be read below:

- First Age: Could be considered as the “golden age of parties”. We observe a domination of the confidence in political parties and they used to have an easy access to the mass media⁶⁰.
- Second Age: when the television arrived and became a dominant mass media among the political communication strategies. This started to be a new factor and politicians as Eisenhower began to practice commercial politics instead of the party propaganda. Besides this is the starting point of a new political “communication show”: the political debates. Since that moment on the political marketing played an important role in each of the American Presidential campaigns. One of the well-known examples of the effect of the mass media is the television debate in the electoral Presidential elections in 1960, when Richard Nixon and J.F. Kennedy had their first debate in front of the cameras. In that era “they accordingly adopted an array of tactics to get into news, shape the media agenda and project a preplanned line in press conferences, briefings, interviews, broadcast discussions⁶¹”

⁵⁸ Ibid. pp 263-285

⁵⁹ Blummer JG, Kavanag, 1999, The third Age of the Political Communication: Influences and features, Journal: Political Communication, Vol 16, n°3, pp 211-224.

⁶⁰ Janda K, Coleman, T 1998, Effects of party organization on performance during “the golden age” of parties, Political Studies 46, pp611- 632, pp 612

⁶¹ Blummer JG, Kavanag, 1999, The third Age of the Political Communication: Influences and features, Journal: Political Communication, Vol 16, n°3, pp212



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- Third Age: However our present moment opens new ways to communicate that have not been experienced before. In this regards again the case of Nixon vs. Kennedy proves that politicians and their parties have to adapt to the new times. ICTs have arrived to revolution the way to make politics so all these actors involved in the field cannot hide from them. “Beyond mass media, political news, information and ideas can be circulated via the computer⁶².”

Currently political communication technology is above all “more complex that its predecessors, molded more by conflicting cross currents than by a dominant tendency⁶³” These words were written in 1999, now at our present moment this complexity is even bigger because technologies are under the public eyes more and more and they need to face additional obstacles which sometimes are out of all control.

At the beginning of the political campaigns the only way to “It used to be that the only way campaigns could be effect obtain a feedback from the public was to use an opinion poll⁶⁴”. However Howard Dean Presidential Campaign (2004) changes completely these political strategies. His major innovation was the use of Internet as a new tool which provided additional methods of gauging the interest and opinion of the public as well as engaging members in the political process⁶⁵” To the present research the example of Howard Dean campaign is a good one as he was “the first presidential candidate who use blogging, Meetups, and other innovative technology tools as part as of his campaign strategy⁶⁶” At the political communication level this new tendency open a new door to innovate in political campaigns. In fact when Obama launched his on line presidential campaign in 2008 he introduced new strategies which were followed by the global political community.

Most of the theorists pointed out Obama as the one who changed political communication. He introduced the online communication tools at all levels. He began using Youtube, MySpace, his own website, the old system of mailing, texting, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

⁶² Ibid.. Pp213

⁶³ Ibid.. Pp213

⁶⁴ Westling M, 2007, Expanding the public sphere: The impact of Facebook on political communication, University of Wisconsin – Madison, pp2

< http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook_and_political_communication.pdf>

⁶⁵ Ibid..

⁶⁶ Rice, A. 2004, Campaigns online: The profound impact of the internet, blogs, and E-technologies in Presidential political campaign, Center for the study of American Government, Johns Hopkins University, pp2



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The Presidential US elections of 2008 changed the political communication processes. Due to the political strategy developed by Obama's team nothing was the same since that year.

In order to understand the presence of the "new online communication tools" it is necessary to go back to the past, until the moment when the World Wide Web (www) was created. Only then we will understand the relevance on the new political campaigns.

In 1989 Tim Burners-Lee created this new platform at the European Laboratory of Physics Particles: the World Wide Web. The "best known and most influential Internet based technology is the World Wide Web (WWW) which was created by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in 1990⁶⁷" It can be said that due to that it was opened a new kind of communication platform which made possible to combine hypertext and communication protocol. Since then the internet can be defined as "a global techno-social system that is based on global, decentralized technological structure consisting of networked computer networks that store objectified human knowledge⁶⁸"

At the same time when this new upgrading of the communication platform was produced, the political communications began to anticipate new possibilities. In this new era emails became the first political tool until the arrival of new bidirectional communication tools. This new platforms have as a main characteristic the possibility of collaboration and the capacity to respond to the constant changes. These two main features make the politicians to adjust their minds and to begin to be there where citizens can be found.

Under the objective to get close to citizens, politicians begin to use blogging as one of the first tools to communicate with them. Coleman (2005) explains that "a blog (short web 'log') is a web page that serves a publicly accessible personal journal (or log) for an individual.⁶⁹" The blogs were launched in 1997 but "they gained popularity in the field of political communication in the campaign for primaries before the United States elections in 2004⁷⁰" In fact at this Presidential Elections as it has been mentioned before was Howard Dean who started to use political communication tools for a electoral campaign. Indeed this was the first real political tool by which politicians could express what they want and their readers could answer. What is more important as pointed by Coleman (2005) blogging "provide a channel for authentic expression that is

⁶⁷ Fuchs, C, 2008, Internet and Society: social theory in the information age, Routledge, pp 121

⁶⁸ Ibid..

⁶⁹ Coleman, S. 2005, Blogs and the new politics of listening, the political quarterly publishing, Ltd, pp274

⁷⁰ Vesnic-Alujevic. L.2011, communicating with voters by blogs? Campaign for the 2009 European Parliament Elections, Discourse and Communication, SAGE pp416



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free from the repressive control of the traditional media⁷¹.. Other perspective is given by Wright (2009) to whom “the general lack of visible interaction is the precondition for influencing the blogosphere and public opinion⁷²”. From Coleman and Wright we can extract different points of view useful for our theoretical perspectives.

On the one hand, as Coleman said, “blogs could become valuable sites of democratic interaction⁷³”

Now one of the main problems of the online communication enunciated by Tuñez, M. and Sixto, J. (2011)⁷⁴., lays on the fact that if politicians do not answer to their potential readers this could be even worse than not being there. Hence the most relevant feature of these new platforms is the feedback that provides a bidirectional communication.

The relevance of communication platforms increases every day, not only in the case of blogging. Nowadays these new tools are making feedback processes more relevant. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007) social networking sites can be define “as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”⁷⁵. According to that definition a social network sites can refer to Facebook or Twitter.

Facebook is a social network platform which was launched by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. However its popularity increased rapidly and became one of the most important social networks in our times. According to Mike Westling (2007) Facebook “has the potential to expand the Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the public sphere by allowing the public to engage in political action both in conjunction with and independently of political campaign”⁷⁶.

Twitter introduced new features, acquiring the category of microblogging. Guitierrez-Ruby mention the book of James Geary “The world in one sentences” where is

⁷¹Coleman, S. 2005, Blogs and the new politics of listening, the political quarterly publishing, Ltd, pp276.

⁷² Vesnic-Alujevic. L.2011, communicating with voters by blogs? Campaign for the 2009 European Parliament Elections, Discourse and Communication, SAGE pp416 pp417.

⁷³Ibid, pp277

⁷⁴ Tuñez; Sixto, 2011, Redes sociales, política y Compromiso 2.0: La comunicación de los diputados españoles en Facebook, Revista Latinoamérica de Comunicación Social nº66,[pp1-25] < <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=81921340015>> [4 May 2013] <Original language Spanish: Si los políticos no proveen respuestas a sus seguidores esto podría llegar a ser peor que no estar en estas redes.>

⁷⁵ Boyd M. A, Ellison, B.N. 2007, Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13 (1), article 11 < <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>>

⁷⁶ Westling M, 2007, Expanding the public sphere: The impact of Facebook on political communication, University of Wisconsin – Madison, pp2 < http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook_and_political_communication.pdf>



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introduces the five main characteristics of Twitter “1. Must be short, 2. Must be definitive, 3. Must be personal, 4. Must contain some twist, 4. Must be philosophical⁷⁷”

Senak (2010) argues that “If a person is using twitter can manage to attract 2,000 ‘followers,’ the next generation of followers —or those who follow that group of 2,000 — can actually number in the millions. That means that if a message is sent out on Twitter to the 2,000 followers and the sender asks that the recipients re-tweet⁷⁸”

The third age of the political communication is the last stage in this storyline, although now is developing faster than the previous era. Blumer and Kavanagh (1999) define the three eras of the political communication explaining that old fashion techniques remain while nowadays new online communication has been incorporated. From this point on we will talk about these online communication tools in order to understand those included in the empirical research.

2.3.2. The Political Parties: A new Digital Age

The two previous sections have introduced the readers into the context of the political communication and the new tools available. We used two perspectives: one beginning in the past and the second arriving from the present era. However a third question came out, what are the political parties doing with these new communication tools? Which is the influence of the digital age in their communication strategies?

In order to answer these questions at first we should look into the minor parties because they were the first in the use of the online communication tools. One of the main reasons which can explain this tendency is the lack of resources to pay commercials in the traditional media (newspapers, radio or television). The new platforms represent a chance for the minor parties to be more present in the media. In this regard, the alternative platform, Internet, gives the chance to let citizens know the parties’ political programs or ideas. In that sense we can confirm that the society is attending to a new way to make political communication. This new environment has democratized the political world while it gives the same possibilities to access media and to spread their ideas, at least theoretically. They even have the chance to develop more attractive new political campaigns due to the internet resources.

⁷⁷ Guitierrez-Rubi, A, n.d., Del Storytelling al microblogging, 4. Comunicación Política 2.0, Cuadernos de comunicación, Evoca, pp 17-24, pp18 <Original language Spanish: James Geary, El mundo en una frase nos da las cinco leyes de los aforismos. 1. Debe ser breve, 2. Debe ser definitivo, 3. Debe ser personal, 4. Debe contener algún giro, 5. Debe ser filosófico>

⁷⁸ Senak, J, 2010, Twoncongress: The power of twitter in the Congress, www.eyeonfda.com [4 May 2013] pp3



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Depla and Tops (1995) make a distinction between the roles of the parties and their use of new communication. The modern party use new forms of political participation and the professional electoral association, where political parties are organized around a single political leader and the principal mission is to strengthen the leader's personality.⁷⁹ In that sense it is interesting as on one side it presents the modern party, which should be a model that the majority of the parties should use as due to "this new discussions forums will open the relationship between citizens and politicians to be bidirectional"⁸⁰. On the other side it defines the professional electoral association, which is one model that many parties are using. The use of the new online tools just in certain moments, as when an electoral campaign is running, and they organized everything in this sites around one single leader instead to open new paths for actions.

All the parties at the beginning of the use of Internet with political purposes had the chance to use it. Even with that the ones who use this in a massive way were the minor ones, because they could fight with other media different from the traditional ones, and pay less. For instance, also because they find another incentive to do that "their traditional bastions of support tend to be the very people with access to the technology".⁸¹ Even with that after the arrival of the ICTs politicians and their parties look for new ways to reinvigorate their fundamental basis of action. Also ICTs can be seen as a "democratic linkage" as it is explained by Lawson (1988) "who identifies four different forms of linkage of relevance to political parties: *participatory*, where the party facilitates direct citizen involvement in government activities; *electoral or representative*, where the party can be controlled by the citizenry, exchange votes for favors and or services; *clientistic linkage*, where the party is channel or exchange of votes for favors and or services; and finally, *directive linkage*, where party is an agent on behalf of the government to control citizens' behavior, via coercive and educational methods"⁸²

According to these analyses we can perceive a different use of the ICTs as a linkage, because if the parties use the participatory way as normal means to act with that ICTs will be fine as it is a way to include citizens in their political issues and give a chance to be interactive.

In fact it can be used the leading title of Sara Bentivenga article's *Rethinking policies in the world of ICTS* "Rethinking ICTs in relation to politics therefore means first rethinking

⁷⁹Gibson R, Nixon P, Ward S, 2003, Political Parties and Internet: Net Gain? Routledge, pp43

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid., pp24

⁸² Ibid., pp 41



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politics, and recognizing that a form of deterritorialization is taking place, eliminating the old boundaries and enabling the emergence of new actors and new forms of politics”⁸³. In the past massive power were the one who got the access to the public, but now with ICTs everyone can have access to everything. So, this is a new step in which they rethink politics. Even as we explained before, the Public Sphere (1974) announced by Habermas has been transformed into a virtual sphere. It is absolutely clear that we have arrived to a new concept to make and think politics.

Indeed it is interesting to have a look to the perspectives presented by Ward, Gibson and Nixon⁸⁴ even when they are quite old, as that volume was written in 2003, it is important to notice how the possible political future has been described here, and now we should look to that thoughts and compared them with what really happens.

Further we can find the analyses of two schools “the impact of the ICTs on the party competition and party system has already been contested. Broadly two schools of thought have emerged. One predicts a potential opening up of party systems, increasing competition and, in particular, a leveling (or equalizing) of the communication playing fields. Whereas the other suggests the impact of internet is likely to be limited if not negligible, and may even strengthen the major party player over time.”⁸⁵ Reading the latter in 2012 it can be probed that the second school was wrong as Internet currently has no limits, even when some governments are trying to put obstacles in this regards. When we talked about political communication the Net has given the chance to do whatever they want and communicate with every citizen. Maybe this could be consider as a limitation in the access to Internet, as now there is still some kind of digital divide existing between country regions or between world spheres. So, we can say that the school which predicts the potential opening up for party system was right, as now party system is opened to everyone and more parties can have access to the general elections if they got supporters through Internet which can be transformed into actual offline supports.

Bentivenga (2006) announced the arrival of the “ICTs to have a significant role on the political sphere the advent and diffusion of the ICTs have a certainly taken a significant role. ICTs have not only penetrated the economic, legal, and cultural realm but have

⁸³Bentivenga, S. August 2009, Rethinking politics in the world of ICTS, European Journal of Communication, SAGE, 21:331, < <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/21/3/331>> p333

⁸⁴ Gibson R, Nixon P, Ward S, Political Parties and Internet: Net Gain? Routledge, 2003

⁸⁵ Ibid. pp22



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naturally also involved the political sphere⁸⁶. But this is not only about citizens who can be aware of the information from parties, it is also due to the new participation perspective which has experienced a new reviving, and this is thanks to the new online tools. When we observe the net and the political implications it has we can perceive that the politicians are each day more and more active at the social networks. They begun creating their own personal website, then the blogging, and with the arrival of the new social networks as Facebook and Twitter they also use social media. So far, politicians discovered a new way to be aware of what the citizens talk about and want. So, the information has changed from the personal website where it used to be a windows shop to the social networking where people can interact.

Following other lines of authors, there are two past schools, announced by Bentivenga: one positive about the future of internet and one more pessimistic: "The cyber-optimistic, focused their attention on the inevitability democratic features connected to broader dissemination of information and the multiplication of opportunities for interaction and participation (...) The cyber-pessimistic, however, have highlighted the resistance to change on the part of the political system and the lack of citizens willing to transform themselves into "good citizens" thus leaving the democratic process unchanged⁸⁷".

Bentivenga pointed out that even when the arrival of the ICTs is a reality, political parties have simply transferred what they do in their physical life into the net. We can say that at the first years of the ICTs arrival that was like this because there was a big amount of ignorance regarding that, and maybe the massive parties are still suffering from that. However it can be argued that now there are other possible tools that give the chance to make different things, as for instance Facebook, Youtube or Twitter. Indeed is not only about the way they are used to gain votes, it is important the way they are used in their everyday political life.

According to how the politicians use that online tools in their everyday life, would be interesting to ask, which are the roles of that online tools at the politics? This could be a leading question, as we talk about how the ICTS has change the way but which roles are take.

⁸⁶ Bentivenga, S. August 2009, Rethinking politics in the world of ICTS, European Journal of Communication, SAGE, 21:331, < <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/21/3/331> > p334

⁸⁷ Ibid. p335



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In the section the Virtual Public Sphere we have discussed the virtual sphere 1.0 and the following one, the 2.0; we remarked the differences between one and another. Here we introduce how the web's transformation has also affected the political parties.

The web has change from the web 1.0 to the web 3.0, in fact "according to the three aspects of information a web dominated by cognition is termed Web 1.0, a web dominated by communication web 2.0 and a web dominated by cooperation web 3.0⁸⁸" So, at that time politicians used to use the website as a window where they normally just informed to their online audience what they did it or maybe just upload some speeches, but it that sense without interaction with users.

At the second step the web 2.0, introduced at 2004, which is the one that is ruling the Net. Hence web changes completely as now user cannot only read also can produce their contents and they are the ones who make the web how we know. In fact this is dominated by the second aspect of the information web "with the rise of new heavily frequented platforms such as MySpace, Youtube, Facebook, Wikipedia, Friendster etc., communication and cooperation have become more important features of the web⁸⁹" As a first example is the blog. People can interact and participate and there is a process where web collaboration is leading in the net. Politicians again change their use of the Internet as they realized that this will be a useful tool to interact with their audience and citizens. Through their personal sites they could exchange information. This was produced along US election 2008 when Barack Obama used the net to create new models of campaign to get in touch with citizens. Even at 2.0 now it is not only important to be present in those personal sites, it is taken an important role the social networking as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr, etc. All of them are platforms where politicians can interact and know what people are talking about or thinking to prepare their speeches.

Finally, nowadays the model is changing to the web 3.0 where some people are trying to find a net with a semantic meaning and where each site is personalized by people. Now the most important thing is seeking the omnipresence. The smartphones are giving the possibility to inform of everything what is happening around you in any minute. This also opens a new door to the politicians, as they can do the same and be present in our lives the whole time. That's why an implementation of the use of Twitter between politicians is taking place, as a way to get in touch directly with the voters.

⁸⁸ Fuchs, C, 2008, *Internet and Society: social theory in the information age*, Routledge, pp 126

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* pp125



2.3.3. The EU information deficit: the online communication tools as a solution

On the previous two sections we explained the political communication first through a temporal line and secondly on how the new digital age has had an impact on the political parties. To continue with the theoretical framework we introduce a section focused on the European Parliament and the European Union information deficit, one of the main problems nowadays. Further this will help to understand why the new online communication tools can assist to end with this gap between the institutions and the citizens.

The current research framework is the European Parliament institution and its Members. It has been selected as it is the only EU Institution which is directly elected by the EU citizens. That grants to the EP a special category among the EU institution. The relationship established by the EP and the citizens will be different. Further communication strategies have to focus into citizens and their problems.

However as it is said at the study *MEPs: 2025 Preparing the future work environment for Members of the European Parliament* “A general lack of interest in society with regard to what the European parliament does has been demonstrated by low voter participation in parliamentary elections. Some questions therefore remain with regard to the extent to which the EP can modify, and enhance, its representation function in such a new democratic order⁹⁰”. For instance, the data supplied by the Euro barometer about the EP elections of 2009 showed in 1979-2009 turnout in the European elections decreased by almost 19% over 30 years, from 61,99% in 1979 to 43% in 2009⁹¹. This data revealed that there is a general decreasing of the citizens’ interest towards the EP as an institution but also towards its members. These politicians came from each of the 27 Member States, so it is a general tendency among the whole territory of the European Union.

Nicholas Mousis explains that nowadays at the EU level we have an increasing “information deficit”. That could be the main reason why the citizens are becoming more distanced from the EP, which it is the first direct institution with a supra-national power and which represents them directly. Mousis states that “the information deficit means that they are ill informed about the reasons, the goals and the achievements of European policies, laws and measures. Ignorance brings disregard for the obscure

⁹⁰ DG for internal policies, Policy Department D: Budgetary Affairs, 2012, *MEP 2025: Preparing the future work environment for Members of the European Parliament* pp24

⁹¹ European Commission, 2009, Special Eurobarometer 303: The 2009 European Elections, TNS opinion and Social,



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phenomenon⁹²” Even further he suggested that is not a problem at one institution “The information deficit is partly due to the European institutions, notably the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, which do not join their forces to build a common communication policy⁹³”. In Mousis opinion the problem lays on the inexistence of a common communication policy among the three main institutions.

The EP chamber gathers politicians from different nationalities that have to address not only to problems from their own countries, but also with citizens and problems from 27 Member States. Hence the problem of the “information deficit” can be understood easily. But it is also necessary to take into consideration the change of mind of the citizens who are more connected and who can get information from everywhere. This change on both sides of the communication chain is explained by the fact that “politics have become ever more multi-dimensional: local, regional, national, transnational, supranational and international⁹⁴”(…)” In parallel, the individual citizen is growing considerably more critical of politicians and has tendency to withdraw into a personal sphere that is typified by privacy and individuality⁹⁵.” However here we can find the chance to solve the problem. In fact the EP has launched several strategies to encourage their Members to activate a lively debate to citizens. For instance they opened profiles on the different social network platforms as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn, Foursquare and Youtube. That as an Institution but also on all these online communication tools they opened a space for their Members with a Facebook chat; they create a new platform, NewsHub, where citizens can find MEPs on Twitter and topics which they are talking about. Therefore the connection to the citizens is presented as one of their main goal and the way of making politics has also change “Democracy and democratic society are changing. Whereas politicians used to be mandated for a specific period of time to take decisions on behalf of citizens who delegated authority to them, this is less evident in 21st century⁹⁶”. In that new century the EP has to take the advantages that the new technologies can provide it. Therefore the “information deficit” due to this incorporation of the new technologies in their daily work can be the answer to solve the problem of communication.

⁹² N. Mousis, 2008-2009, Guide to European policies, Rixensart European Study Services, page 117

⁹³ Ibid..

⁹⁴ DG for internal policies, Policy Department D: Budgetary Affairs, 2012, MEP 2025: Preparing the future work environment for Members of the European Parliament pp23

⁹⁵ Ibid..

⁹⁶ Ibid..



2.4. Conclusion

The Habermasian concept of the Public Sphere is reformulated by several authors in order to adapt it to the new context. The latter is the one in which we based the present research. Habermas introduces the concept of Public Sphere in relation to the bourgeois society in which the public opinion was developed outside of the lines of the Government or the Economic forums.

The Public Sphere represents a new space to communicate. However as it was introduced at the theoretical framework a new concept is uprising in the present age, the virtual sphere. Nowadays some authors have pointed out that the new public sphere includes the virtual spaces where the politicians open their discussions. Furthermore, as Castells says, “the global public sphere is built around the media communication system and Internet networks, particularly in the social spaces of the Web 2.0, as exemplified by YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and the growing of the blogosphere (...)”⁹⁷

In that sense the present study is located on the European Union underlining the idea that there is a new European Public Sphere integrated by a new kind of politicians who came from different nationalities. We believe that in order to develop discussions and to increase the public opinion’s levels new forums are needed. That is the reason why we consider as high relevant the idea of the virtual Public Sphere as Internet will be the place where all these politicians can gather their opinions. Maybe we will arrive to a Supranational Public Sphere as the European Union opens the possibility to gather different nationalities. Further this Supranational Public Sphere will be found on the chamber which represents the interest of the European citizens, the European Parliament. One kind of representation of this new public sphere can be found on the several initiatives of the European Parliament as an institution to open new channels of communication between the citizens and their Members. One example of this new kind of Public Sphere could be the Facebook chat which MEPs in the European Parliament use several times a month, in regards of different topics which are discussed in the Chamber. Thanks to this the political discussion on the chamber is moved to the citizens in order to listen to their voices. So we can say that the European Parliament is promoting this new Supranational Public Sphere which is not any longer static as Habermas suggested referring to the saloon’s culture. Now the public sphere moves to the virtual places as Bentivenga or Papacharissi suggest on their studies. But also

^{97 97} Castells, M. March 2008, The new Public Sphere: Global Society, Communication networks and Global governance, ANNALS, AAPSS, n°616, [pp 78-93]



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these ideas are linked to the Global Society which Castells pointed out as the new frame of the Public Sphere, all represented by the European Public Sphere which will be Supranational.

In addition to that the real main actors in this new Public Sphere are the politicians and the citizens. As we explained in 2.3 when talking about Internet Politics, the introduction of new technologies has transformed the old politician into a new kind of politician with more skills and more new channels to use in order to communicate messages. The new politician that develops the activity in the European Public Sphere is not any longer just part of Member States, now this politician can be gathering in different groups. These groups will be set further by the politicians' European Political Group, their Gender, etc, as these divisions can be more global than local.

Moreover the new online communication tools play an important role in this new reconfiguration of the political world and the public sphere. The new categories of the politicians could depend on their presence of the online communication tools. In fact here the research is focused in looking for clusters among the Members of the European Parliament depending on this new global division that can show different tendencies on their presence at the online communication tools. Even the political parties are going to incorporate these new tendencies through the digital age platforms.

In conclusion it can be said that a new Public Sphere has arrived, virtual and supranational. And the best example to study this is the European Parliament as a chamber which gathers different political tendencies, genders, nationalities, ages... It will be a laboratory to analyze if a new Public Sphere exists and if its configuration goes beyond the classical divisions.

PART III: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1. Methodology

The online communication tools are opening new ways of communication. In that sense the politicians are becoming closer in order to communicate to the citizens their messages. In the European Union context the politicians have a difficult task, as the citizens are far away from the political decision hearts. Further the institution which represents the European Citizens is the EP that is why the MEPs are trying to be familiar and more present on the online communication platforms.



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On the previous section we have introduced an approach to the concept of the Public Sphere developed by Habermas and the new approach on the Virtual Public Sphere. This has settled the context in which the MEPs are developing their political activity and how this has been changing. In fact the political communication which is developed in the Public Sphere has been changing along the last decades until the arrival of the new communication strategies.

One of the best examples of the success of the on web-politics is given by the political campaign of the US President Barack Obama (2008). According to the paper of S. Braghioli⁹⁸ “many observers, the wide use of Internet-based networks and interactive participatory tools within the framework of the electoral campaign has significantly contributed to determine the success of the democratic candidate” In fact to focus the political campaign on new forms of communication mobilized a new target of people. This example showed how important can be the new political communication strategies based on the social networks.

On the European Parliament these tools has been implementing everyday adding new online communication platforms in order to spread the work of the MEPs. S.Braghioli said that “in Europe the phenomenon of Internet-based political communication appear less sophisticated and more primitive in its expression; however there are indicators which confirm a rapid growth both at national and European level”⁹⁹. Indeed the presence of the EP as institution on the new social networks has been increased. Further the Media team of the EP has developed tools as “NewsHub” which allow to the citizens to know what the MEPs are twitting. On the side of the MEPs their presence on these platforms has been encouraged by the EP communication policies. Nevertheless most of the MEPs engaged to the online communication platforms on the previous EP general elections, 2009. Therefore in this thesis it has seen this online communication platforms as a place where the European Politicians, and in particularly the MEPs have to be.

In this section “The empirical research” it will introduced the Cluster Analysis which is based on the Network Social Theory. In regards of this it will introduce a perspective of how the MEPs are using the online communication tools and if it is possible to establish national, regional, political party, country and age clusters among that use. Further it will present a data analysis of how the MEPs are distributed among their use of

⁹⁸ Braghioli, n.d.S. MEPS 2.0? Europarliamentarians' Communication Strategies in the internet era: General developments and individual specificities,

⁹⁹ Ibid..



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Facebook, Twitter, websites and blog depending on their region, nationality, political party and age.

Another important point it will focus on the opinion of the MEPs about the use of these online communication tools and how it can be different depending on the variables. The goal of the empirical research is to show the use of the online communication tools of the MEPs depending on their political party, region, country and age.

Chapter 4 expands on the methodology of the empirical research. The subject of this paper is based on political communication on Internet. The research is based on Dominick and Wimmer theories on quantitative and qualitative research. Besides on the quantitative research it will be use the correlational research. In chapter 4 it also described the different steps using a quantitative and qualitative analysis. On the quantitative basis it has been used firstly direct observation and secondly it is used the SPSS analysis. On the other side, the qualitative it has developed a questionnaire in order to evaluate the personal answers of the sample.

Chapter 5 is focused on the Data Analysis. First proceeding to the data collection of the sample and secondly gathering and analyzing. In order to analyze it has been used different variables and factors. In order to determine how many natural groups exist among the MEPs depending on their use of online communication tools it will be use the SPSS hierarchical analysis. Thanks to these two it could be easy to present a critically evaluation of the data. The chapter highlights the importance of the different factors of analysis: country level factors, socio-demographic and political affiliation level. As well as the presence of the MEPs on the online communication tools which we are analyzing. Furthermore it will be presented a gather of these findings in order to evaluate critically the presence or not of the MEPs.

Chapter 6 reports on the Cluster Analysis Theory according to the findings obtain at the SPSS hierarchical analysis it will be gather the MEPs according to their natural groups. It will be combine the different variables selected. These are: nationality, age, gender and political ideology.

3.2. Approach

The present research is based on two basic types of research approaches, defined by Wimmer and Dominick One is the quantitative research and the other is the qualitative. According to these authors the quantitative research is defined as “authors “the qualitative research involves several methods of data collection, such as focus group, field observation, in depth interviews and cases studies. In all of these methods, the



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questioning approach is varied. In other words although the researcher enters the project with a specific set of questions, follow-up questions are developed as needed. (...) In addition qualitative techniques can increase a researcher's depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.¹⁰⁰ On the other side the quantitative method is described as "involves several methods of data collection, such as telephone surveys, mail surveys and internet surveys. In these methods the questioning is static or standardized – all the respondents asked the same questions"¹⁰¹ However which make the distinction about these two methods as Wimmer and Domick said "quantitative research requires that the variables under consideration be measured"¹⁰². Indeed in our study it will be follow both theories and it will present the quantitative research within measure quantities. It is important to stress one last point that it will be useful for our research, also introduces by Wimmer and Domick "the information collected from qualitative methods is often used to prepare more elaborate quantitative analysis"¹⁰³ Therefore this study will follow this idea.

Klaus. B. Jensen and Nicholas W. Jankowski¹⁰⁴, at "A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research" (2002) define the two approaches as: "qualitative analysis focuses on the occurrence of its analytical objects in a particular context, as opposed to the recurrence of formally similar elements in different contexts. (...) This implies either an internal approach to understanding culture, interpreting and perhaps immersing one-self in its concrete expressions, or an external approach that seeks to establish a detached stance outside of culture. Similarly, media contents and other cultural forms may be seen to give rise to a relatively unique, indivisible experience through exegesis or, alternatively, to a set of stimuli which can be manipulated through experiment, thus producing variable effects that can be measured"¹⁰⁵. On the other side the quantitative method is defined as "where quantitative analysis would focus on the concrete, delimited products of the media's meaning production, qualitative approaches examine meaning production as a process which is contextualized and inextricably integrated with wider social and cultural

¹⁰⁰Wimmer, R; Dominick J.R, (2010) Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 8th Edition, Wadsworth Thompson, pp49

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pp50

¹⁰² Ibid. pp50

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp49

¹⁰⁴ Jensen K.B, Jankowski N.W, A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research, Routledge, 2002.

¹⁰⁵ Jensen K.B, Jankowski N.W, 2002, A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research, Routledge, pp4



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practices. The following columns sum up the two perspectives normally associated with qualitative and quantitative methodology¹⁰⁶,”

In short both approaches can be defined as: Qualitative: meaning, internal, occurrence, experience, exegesis, process. Quantitative: information, external, recurrence, experiment, measurement, product.

The correlational quantitative research it will be a third approach includes at the methodology, its expresses the relationship between two variables or more. There are several types of correlations coefficients, Pearson's and Spearman's develop the most commonly uses ones. There are several types of correlations coefficients, Pearson's and Spearman's develop the most commonly uses ones. On one hand it is find the Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation “The Spearman's rank-order correlation is the nonparametric version of the Pearson product-moment correlation. Spearman's correlation coefficient, (also signified by r_s) measures the strength of association between two ranked variables”¹⁰⁷. On the other hand Pearson's theory “is a measure of the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an interval scale”¹⁰⁸. Therefore this one user numeric variables on an interval scale; the distribution of values must be normal or close to normal. Therefore in that case the approach introduces by Pearson it will be the one use as is the one that can be introduced through the quantitative programme SPSS. Therefore in that case the approach introduces by Pearson it will be the one use. That correlation it will be established in between the variables introduces at the study: ideology, age, gender and geographic.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp4

¹⁰⁷ Spearman's Rank Order Correlation < <https://statistics.laerd.com/statistical-guides/spearmans-rank-order-correlation-statistical-guide.php>> [3 May 2013]

¹⁰⁸ Pearson's Product Moment Correlation using SPSS< <https://statistics.laerd.com/spss-tutorials/pearsons-product-moment-correlation-using-spss-statistics.php>> [3 May 2013]

3.3. Research design¹⁰⁹

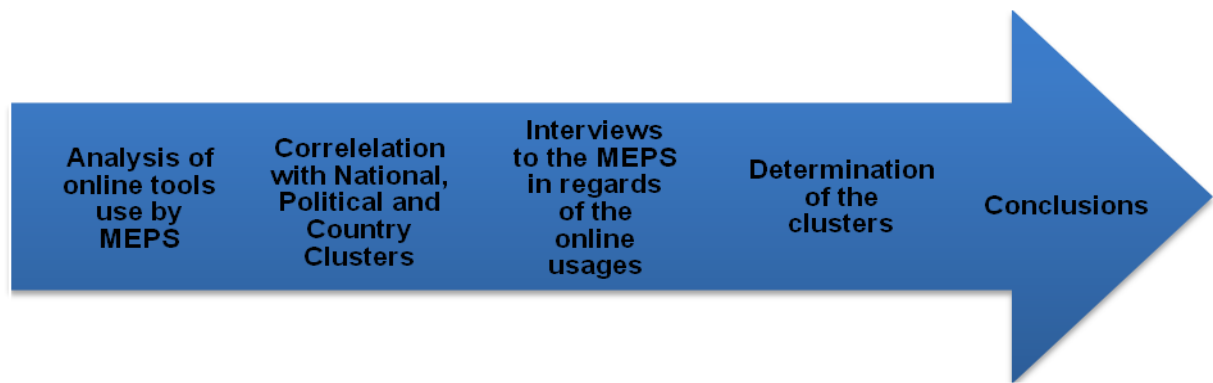


Table 1: Research design

In order to reach the research goals it has pursue the following phases.

First step: content analysis

On that level it will introduced profile analysis on the online communication presence of the MEPs. In order to proceed to that analysis it has beginning checking the European Parliament websites and the MEPs profile. It supposed that each of those profiles has to contain a direct link to the personal account of the MEPs on the social networks. However it found a problem. In some of the profiles of the MEPs on that Institutional websites it was not this information. Hence it had to look for another online source to approach of the presence of the MEPs on the net. In order to look for on the EP Facebook profile. On this it can be found a new application call “Find your MEPs on Facebook”. This application was more completely than the other official EP websites. Indeed it that searches it has obtained the real presence of the research sample (749 MEPs).

The online communication tools selected to this research are Facebook, Twitter, websites and blogs. It has been selected these four online communication platforms because are the ones which offer a direct communication towards citizens. The four of them allow the politicians to open discussions or in the case of websites and blogs to

¹⁰⁹ Source: Owns’ elaboration.

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express their opinion. It is important to take into account other social communication platforms. The MEPs are using normally more than the online communication platforms selected in this study. They are presence on other networks as linkdein, flirckr, youtube, mySpace, FourSquare even the e-mail newsletters. However there are a main difference with those last one and the ones analyze than the research: the communication towards citizens that offers the one analysis. On the other side the rest of communication platforms with more professional profile. ¹¹⁰

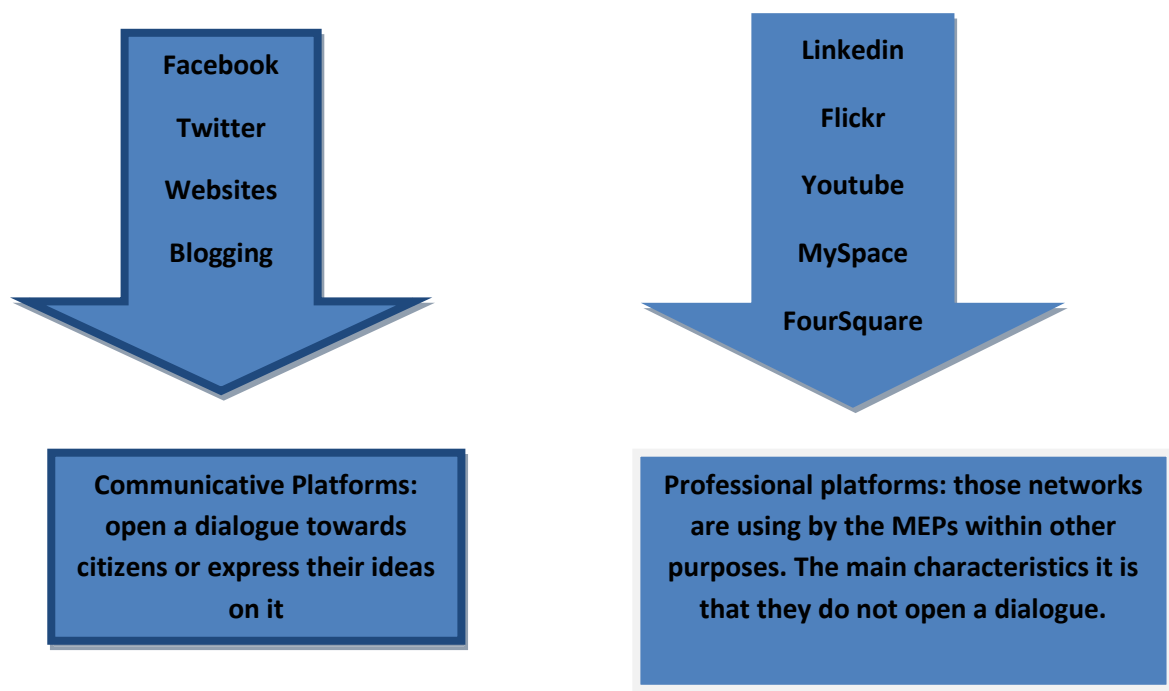


Table 2: Online communication platforms selection

Another reason to choose only those it is because is the most use among the MEPs. Fleishman and Hillard (FH) ¹¹¹have done in 2010 and 2011 a European Parliament Digital Trends study. FH has showed how MEPs use Internet to communicate and conduct research in their legislative work¹¹². The FH findings show that “the most notable developments since 2009 have been the rise of social networks (mainly Facebook) and the decline in blogging. This is likely due to a number of reasons: the time-intensive nature of blogging is worthwhile in an election year, but less so now; platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide immediately accessible audiences while

¹¹⁰ Source: Owns elaboration

¹¹¹Fleishman-Hillard EU is one of the Brussels' leading public affairs and communication consultancies

¹¹²European Parliament Digital Survey, Fleishman-Hillard, 2011



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blogs have to be marketed". FH Digital survey the make a precise question to the MEPs¹¹³, "How are MEP using digital tools to reach out to voters?"¹¹⁴ And this team obtains an answer which is in equivalent of our data recollection as most the 69% use social networks, that includes Facebook and in decrease of blogging while personal websites are still a useful communication platform among MEPs.

The structure and the findings on the FH Digital Survey it will be located on the same side of the present research. The methodology of the Survey it is similar that on the qualitative section it will be use. As on the qualitative analysis it is established multiple choice questions. But the goal of FH Digital Survey it is not the same than this present research. The investigation file and the goals are different so the creation of the multiple choice. On this research the questions will relate to their usages relate to the establishment of the clusters. In order to do so it has been used a frequency analysis, due to that it has obtained the presence of the MEPs on the online communication tools. Further it has been used a tool the SPSS hierarchical analysis to obtain a first content analysis guide of the online communication tools analyses.

Second step: Clustering

On this level of the empirical research the SPP hierarchical analysis has gave a correlations of the data introduced on it. According to the Cluster Analysis a told of discovery revealing associations and structure in data which, though not previously evident, are sensible and useful when discovered¹¹⁵. Thanks it this is attempting to determine how many natural groups exist and who belongs to each group. So the SPSS hierarchical analysis calculated every possibility between everyone forming their own group (as many clusters as there are cases) and everyone belonging to the same group (...)¹¹⁶.

In that case it has established a correlation between the national, political party, region and age depending on their presence on Facebook, Twitter, websites or blogging. Once all this information was included it has established different MEPs groups depending on their presence or not on those tools.

¹¹³ 120 MEPs responded, so that represents 16% of EP in the 7th legislature.

¹¹⁴ Fleishman-Hillard, 2011, European Parliament Digital Survey, Fleishman-Hillard < <http://www.epdigitaltrends.eu/> > [3 May 2013]

¹¹⁵ Burns, R, Burns R, 2009, Business research methods and statistics using SPSS, Chapter 23, Cluster Analysis, SAGE publications, pp 553

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp 558



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Finally, the clusters determination in that final part it will be introduced a cluster analysis. This analysis according to the cluster analysis research it is composed by different step following Datum report on Cluster Analysis¹¹⁷:

a) Problem definition: In which it have to be choose the variables which are the basis of the problem. In that case our problem is focused on the MEPs and if it is possible establish that natural groups depending on their online communication use and their age, nationality, gender and ideology.

b) Selection of similarity measures: "it is needed a measure to evaluate the differences and similarities among the objects¹¹⁸". In that case our object is the MEPs and their differences and similarities are established depending on their political group, nationality, gender and age. First the similarities it is a measure that gather the objects within similar characteristics.

c) Data standardization: it can be used different techniques for the cluster analysis: hierarchical cluster analysis and non-hierarchical method. On the first kind of cluster analysis it will obtained a three diagram. It is a simple method to correlate the different variables which composed a cluster. This is use to analyze the distance in between the objects when forming the cluster. In fact for that, as at our research, it will used a dendrogram SPSS, which calculate the distances between data points in terms of specified variables. On the other side, the non-hierarchical clusters the most common method is the K-means. In that one clustering is used when you already have hypothesis concerning the number of clusters in your cases or variables¹¹⁹..

Third step: qualitative approach

The third step of the empirical research is based on the qualitative research. It has sent some questionnaires to the chief of the European Political Groups. It total a number of eight as the number of European Political Parties. However it has also take into account a bigger sample, obtain using the analytical programme STATS. That phase as Dominick and Wimmer says "historically, qualitative research has been defined as

¹¹⁷ Datum, Cluster Analysis <http://www.datum.com.pe/Datum_english/cluster.pdf> <Original Language Spanish: Pasos del Análisis de conglomerados: a) Formación del problema, b) selección de una medida de similitud, c) estandarización de datos>

¹¹⁸ Ibid., <Original language Spanish: se necesita una medida para evaluar las diferencias y similitudes entre objetos>

¹¹⁹ Ibid., < Original language Spanish: Los dos tipos de procedimientos de agrupación son los jerárquicos y los no jerárquicos. El conglomerado jerárquico se caracteriza por el desarrollo de una jerarquía o estructura de árbol (dendograma). (...) Los métodos jerárquicos pueden ser por Aglomeración o por división. (...) Entre los métodos de conglomerados no jerárquicos más usados se conocen como Agrupación K>



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research using small samples (oftentimes not randomly selected) where the results are not generalized to the population from which the sample was drawn¹²⁰.

Questions for the MEPs interviews

This section of the study tries to obtain a better understanding on the presence of the MEPs on the new online communication platforms. It will be prepared a questioner with open questions for the seven chiefs of the European political groups. Further it will be send a questioner with close questions to a random sample (select from our whole sample, the 749 MEPs)

Open questions for the chiefs of the European Political groups

The first question seeks to know the evaluation of the ICTs for the political communication

Q1: Today, how important are the ICTs' for the EU political communication?

The second question looks for check the digital skills comprehension of the MEPs chiefs.

Q2: Which is the digital skills level of the members of your political group?

Q2.1. In regards of the digital skills level do you believe are there any differences among them, depending on their gender, age or home country?

The third question it will focus on use of the ICTs, if they use as a political or personal tool.

Q3: Today Social Networks are changing the political communication. I would like to know if this change in your political group is related to a more political use or maybe in a more personal way.

The fourth question seeks to understand the relevance of the EP on the presence of the MEPs on the online communication tools.

Q4: Since your arrival to the European Parliament which changes have you observed in your political group in regards of the development of the ICTs?

¹²⁰ Wimmer, R.Ph.d, (n.d) An introduction to Mass Media Research
<<http://www.rogerwimmer.com/wrmediaresearch.htm>> [3 May 2013]



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Close questions for a sample¹²¹

The first question is focused on the ICTs related to the political communication.

Q1: I would like that you evaluate the relevance of the ICTs on the European Union political communication. Please select from 1 to 5 (considering 1 as a minimum relevance and 5 as a maximum).

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

The question two it will be focused on the MEPs digital skills.

Q2: Please select those digital tools that you normally use:

- ☐ Search engine (as Google, Yahoo, Bing,...)
- ☐ @ Use of email
- ☐ RSS
- ☐ Use of Social Networks (as Facebook, Twitter...)

Others as

- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Personal websites

- ☐ Use of all the tools listed above on your Smartphone (indicate if you do not use smartphone)

The third question it will be focus on consult the use of those tools if it is a political or a personal use.

Tool	Personal	Political
Facebook		
Twitter		
Personal Websites		
Blog		

¹²¹ This questionnaire was not realized due of a question of time.



3.4 Research tools

The main purpose of that research is to establish cluster among the member of the European Parliament. It will be established four different clusters by their age, nationality, ideology and gender. To this it will use the Cluster Analysis which is defined as “an exploratory data analysis tool for organizing observed data (e.g. people, things, events, brands, companies) into meaningful taxonomies, groups or clusters, based on combinations of IV’s, which maximized the similarity of cases within each cluster while maximizing the dissimilarity between groups that are initially unknown¹²²”. However the interpretation of the data obtains has to be made by the researcher as this tool describes, in terms of data collected, the class to which members belong. In that case it will be find to which group the MEPs belongs to.

However to proceed to the Cluster Analysis it is needed a technique which will be the SPSS (Statistical Package of the Social Sciences). This it is name as conducting cluster analysis. This it will use to cross the data and to determine how many natural groups exist and who belongs to each group. The role of the SPSS is to calculate every possibility between everyone forming their own group (as many clusters as there are cases). In that case it will be cross nationality, ideology, gender and age to the use of the online communication tools: Facebook, Twitter, blogging and websites.

Another research tool which it will be includes is the content analysis. This is define by Wimmer and Dominick¹²³. Here it is includes the definition of Kerlinger’s (2000) “content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables¹²⁴”. According to this definition it can be find the justification to use in this research the content analysis. The purpose of the research is measure variables, one related to the online communication presence of the MEPs. In regards of the three characteristics, Kerlinger says that the “systematic evaluation simply means that one and only one set of guidelines is used for evaluation throughout the study. Alternating procedures in an analysis is a sure way to cofound the results. ¹²⁵” In that case it has explained in the previous point the guidelines of the evaluation. Secondly Kerlinger says that the content analysis should be objective “that is the researcher’s personal idiosyncrasies

¹²² Burns, R, Burns R, 2009, Business research methods and statistics using SPSS, Chapter 23, Cluster Analysis, SAGE publications, pp 553

¹²³ Wimmer, R; Dominick J.R, Mass Media Research: An Introduction, Thomson, 2010

¹²⁴Wimmer, R; Dominick J.R, (2010) Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 8th Edition, Wadsworth Thompson , pp150

¹²⁵ Ibid pp151



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and biases should not enter into the findings¹²⁶” However he adds “perfect objectivity, however, is seldom achieved in a content analysis”. Finally, the content analysis is quantitative, this will help “the researchers in the quest for precision¹²⁷.” In the case of the present research the “precision” is given by the use of the SPSS as it provides the statistical tools to obtain the data and aid in interpretation of the results.

The other part of the research section it will be focus on a qualitative research. In that case it has been used the theories of Punch (2005). In that regards Punch (2005) says “interviews is one of the main data collection tools in qualitative research¹²⁸” In the case of this research it will be used as tools two of the three different types of interviews: structured and unstructured interviews. The structured interview is defined as “the respondent is asked a series of pre-established questions, with present response categories¹²⁹”. In that respect this type of interview has been sent to the sample selected by the STATS programme. However for the heading of the European political groups it has been selected unstructured interview “traditional type of unstructured interviews is the non-standardized, open-ended, in-depth interviews, sometimes called ethnographic interviews. It’s used as a way of understanding the complex behavior of people without imposing any a priori categorization which might limit the field of inquiry¹³⁰”

- **Selection of sample**

The selection of the data has focus on two criteria. First to choose which MEPs can be employed to the research and secondly which online tools will be included.

In order to obtain the research data it has analyzed the official websites of the European Parliament www.europarl.europa.eu .In this websites it had find a searching tool where you can find each Member and their profile. Through this tool we obtain, in the majority of the case a websites, where it was found their Facebook, Twitter or blog site. Also it is included their e-mail address and the one of their assistant. However this tools it was not enough for our research. So, we used a second tool. The European Parliament profile in Facebook has a new searching device which you can search every MEPs profile and find in which online communication tools are using.

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸ Punchk, 2005, Introduction to social research, quantitative and qualitative approaches, SAGE publications, pp168

¹²⁹ Ibid, pp 169

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp169

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European Parliament / MEPs

Search Full list Incoming / Outgoing Assistants Observers Directory Search on "MEPs"

MEP →

Damien ABAD
Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
Member
France
Nouveau Centre
Born on 5 April 1980, Nîmes

Members
Committee on International Trade
Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council

Substitute
Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection
Delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees
Delegation to the Eurostat Parliamentary Assembly

Accredited assistants
DE VOS Barbara
LAMOTTE Alessandra
MINARE Axel

MEPs contact information →

MEP Assistants →

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Tool 1. Profile of the Members of the European Parliament at the European Parliament website

EP Facebook Profile →

EP tool to look for MEPs →

MEPs profile where you can find the information →

MEP personal profile
It can be finding
Country
Political Group
Presence at Online Tools

Tool 2. The European Parliament Facebook profile "MEPs tool on Facebook"

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¹³¹ Source: Owns elaboration / European Parliament's webiste



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In regards to the first, it has been followed one main criterion to sort out the huge number of the MEPs. Nevertheless it has decided to beginning from the biggest figure toward a reduction of it. In that sense firstly it had develop a chart with the 748 Members of the European Parliament¹³³. In that chart it has decided to divide the Parliament among the categories which can be useful for our study. We have sorted the data beginning by alphabetical order. Then it has included their nationality, their political group. This could be categorized as the personal information which can be useful for the analytical clusters.

The second selection criteria have been focused on the online communication platforms. In that process it has been constructed this complete chart in order to see graphically the presence of each MEPs in the selected variables.

Name	Country	Political Party	Facebook	Twitter	Web	Blog
Damien Abad	France	EPP	-	-	X	-
János Áder	Hungary	EPP	-	-	-	_134

Example of the whole frame

Cluster Random Sampling

3.2.6. Data analysis Procedure

First step: data set

The present study is based on a data analysis. Towards the direct observation of the MEPs profile on the EP official homepage and the EP Facebook application “Find your MEP on Facebook”. The data obtain has been collected on June of 2012 when the total amount of the sample was 749 MEPs. The primary aim of this collection was to observe if the MEPs are presence or not on the online communication selected. The set of this presence is extremely important to the basis of that research. In fact this was a challenge as it found some problems while was checking that information. On the EP homepage some of the profiles of the MEPs were not update, so that took to look for a second source. In order to obtain this information it was used the EP Facebook application “Find your MEP on Facebook”. Here it is also included a profile of the MEPs and a link to the online communication platforms where they are presents.

¹³² Source: Owns elaboration / European Parliament Facebook profile.

¹³³ At the time of the researching process. However now has increased until 754 Members.



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

The primary goal has been to establish the presence or not of the sample on the online communication tools selected. Take into account the present study is focus on “observational side of the analysis”. The priority it has been given to their presence on Facebook, Twitter, websites and blogs. This it was based on the quantitative side of the analysis. On this process the attention has been focused on those online communication platforms and have been systematically excluded the rest as LinkedIn, Flickr, MySpace, FourSquare, Youtube Channel or Party websites.

Second Step: the selection of the variables

The dependent variables which will structure the data analysis are if they are presence or not on (a) Facebook, (b) Twitter, (c) websites and (d) blog. Secondly the independent variables of this analysis are (a) nationality (b) political party (c) region and (d) age. These variables it have been introduced at the SPSS analytical programme in order to obtain the different correlations among this.

According to these two variables it has established two path presentation. On the one side the sample has been divided by independent variables. These give a perspective which will be linked to the cluster analysis. Due to this variables it can be seen how many MEPs came from which country, their political affiliation, the European region which their country belong and the group of age. On this perspective it will be see the first differentiations among the MEPs. On the other side, the dependent variables are the online communication platforms. Those it will annex to the research the key point of the presence of the MEPs on that platforms. Nevertheless this analysis also shows those who are not presence. Overall the dependent and independent variables will be used together in other to establish different groups among the sample.

Third Step: the factors to take into account

Four sets of factors have been included on the research. A first one is referred to the country-level factors: in these it can be mentioned the nationality of the MEPs, 27 Member States composed the European Union and so on the EP chamber. On the same level of factor it is included the regional perspective. Hence the 27 Member States can be gathering into European regions which are: Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern. These regions are different but also it can be find similarities among their MEPs A second level of factors is the socio-demographic features, which included the age of the MEPs into four groups 18-30; 31-45; 46-65; over 66 years old. Finally the political-level factors as the EP chamber is composed by eight political groups. And



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among them it can be established different political families (Social Democrats, Christians, Greens, Liberals, Left).

PART IV QUANTITATIVE: CLUSTERING

4.1. Introduction

In this section we will introduce the quantitative analysis in order to establish clusters related to the use of the online communication tools among the MEPs. The quantitative analysis is part of the content analysis method which is structuring this paper. As Dominick and Wiemmer¹³⁵ explain “the goal of content analysis is an accurate representation of a body of message”. They also say that “quantification is important in filling that objective because it aids researchers in the quest for precision¹³⁶”. In order to reach that precision we used the SPSS statistical program to establish the possible clusters.

A cluster is defined as a “group of relatively homogeneous cases or observations¹³⁷” In this case the clusters could be formed by the presence of the MEPs in the online communication tools selected. The main goal is to reach an answer to the research question “According to the different online tools selected in this study, how many correlations can be found among the MEPs online communication usages?”

In order to go closer to this question we used SPSS program to cross data, clustering and analyzing the tendencies on the online communication presence. There are three different groups: nationality (represented by the MEPs country to which they belong), political adscription (represented by the MEPs European political group) and the age (depending on the age group given to which MEPs belong).

In regards of the online communication tools selected in order to study the presence or not of the MEPs on them, we will cross the data with socioeconomic variables. Also, we will study if it could be possible to obtain natural clusters depending on MEPs nationality, political party and age.

¹³⁵ Wimmer, R; Dominick J.R, 2010, Mass Media Research: An Introduction, Waddworth Cenagage Learning, pp150

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Burns, R, Burns R, 2009, Business research methods and statistics using SPSS, Chapter 23, Cluster Analysis, SAGE publications, pp 553

4.2. Clustering: Nationality

At the European Parliament there is a political representation from all 27 Member States. That is why we will analyze here these members depending on their country they belong to and their presence on the online communication tools.

Each Member of the European Parliament (MEPs) has a seat following a general rule: the plenary is shared proportionately to the population of each Member State. In regards to EP composition the Article 14 TFEU¹³⁸ establishes that “since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, the European Parliament has had 754 seats. This exceeds the maximum of 751 Members laid down in the TEU (Article 14(2)), but must be accepted for the 2009-14 legislative period, as the MEPs elected in June cannot lose their seats. However, the maximum number of Members will be adhered on the next elections, on 2014. These are allocated to the Member States although the internal rules established that each Member States with highly populated will have more seats at the EP chamber. As a general rule, the minimum number of seats per Member State is six, and the maximum 96. On the present political year there is an exception, with Germany as owns 99 MEPs, until next EP elections. The Lisbon Treaty established an exception following the German case “MEPs elected in June 2009 cannot lose their seats because of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty¹³⁹”

Below we represent the official number of seats of each Member States according to the Lisbon Treaty (2009)¹⁴⁰

Member States	Official Seats	Official Seats – 7 th Parliamentary Term (06.2012)
Germany (DE)	99	99
France (FR)	78	70
Italy (IT)	78	73
United Kingdom (UK)	78	72

¹³⁸European Union, 2008, The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Lisbon Treaty.

¹³⁹European Union, 2009, Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, Article 14 TEU “13 Composition and election”.

¹⁴⁰ Date of the collection of the data 06.2012



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Spain (ES)	54	54
Poland(PL)	54	51
Romania (RO)	35	33
The Netherlands (NL)	27	26
Belgium (BE)	24	22
Czech Republic (CZ)	24	22
Greece (EL)	24	22
Hungary (HU)	24	21
Portugal(PT)	24	22
Sweden (SE)	19	20
Bulgaria (BG)	18	18
Austria (AT)	14	19
Denmark (DK)	14	13
Slovakia (SK)	14	13
Finland (FI)	14	13
Ireland (IE)	13	12
Lithuania (LT)	13	12
Latvia (LV)	9	9
Slovenia (SL)	7	8
Estonia (EE)	6	6
Cyprus (CY)	6	6
Luxembourg (LU)	6	6
Malta (MT)	5	6

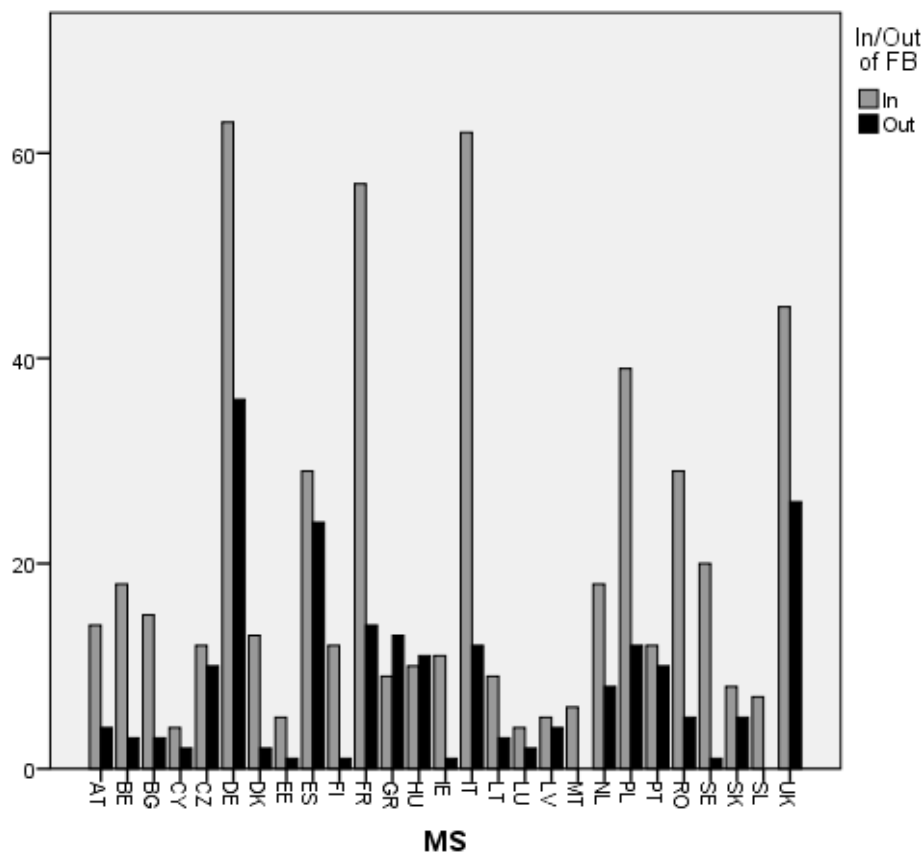
Total 27 MS	754	748
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Table 3: Members of the European Parliament seats by country

A. Presence on Facebook of the MEPs depending on the country they belong

The first crossing of data in this study is based on the Facebook presence of the MEPs depending on their countries of origin. The graph below shows the results after using SPSS statistics software to assess the MEPs' presence on Facebook. The chart includes the relative percentage of their presence.

Nationality: Presence in Facebook – Absolute tendencies



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Relative % of MS: AT 77.7%; BE 85.7%; BG 83.3%; CY 66.6%; CZ 54.5%; DE 63.6%; DK 86.6%; EE 83.3%; ES 54.7%; FI 92.3%; FR 80.2%; GR 40.9%; HU 47.6%; IE 91.6%; IT 83.7%; LT 75%; LU 66.6%; LV 55.5%; MT 100%; NL 69.2%; PL 76.4%; PT 54.5%; RO 85.2%; SE 95.2%; SL 100%; SK 61.5%; UK 63.3% - Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

Table 4: Presence in Facebook of the MEPs depending on their nationality.

¹⁴¹ Source: SPSS elaboration



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According to the data obtained in this cluster, Facebook and the MEPs country of origin respond to different categories among the 27 Member States.

First category includes those MEPs who are fully present on Facebook. Those MEPs are Malta and Slovenia, both of them within a 100% of presence. It is important to take into account that both Member States are from the Southern group of countries. However in both cases the number of political representatives is small, Malta within six and Slovenia seven, but even with this low representation all their MEPs have opened a profile in Facebook.

A second category includes the following countries which are Sweden (95.2%), Finland 92.3%) and Ireland (91.66%). The three of them has a higher percentage of presence than the rest of the countries. In that case one important fact to notice is that Sweden and Finland are from the Northern countries where the usage of technology is higher than in the rest of Europe Ireland, on the contrary, is from the Southern group of countries, but the MEPs from this country decided to use these social networks more.

Then the rest of countries with a positive presence in Facebook, reaching almost a 50% of representation, are from the Northern and Western parts of Europe as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and United Kingdom. In this group there are some countries that are important to take into account as normally their usage of Internet or access to broadband is lower than the rest of Europe but they are part of this third group. For instance that is the case of Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Estonia and Italy. The most interesting case is the Italian MEPs because they are completely different from their Mediterranean fellows. But also Bulgaria and Romania where the access to broadband is lower than in the rest of Europe have this situation. Nevertheless, according to the figures found on this research, their presence on Facebook is slightly higher.

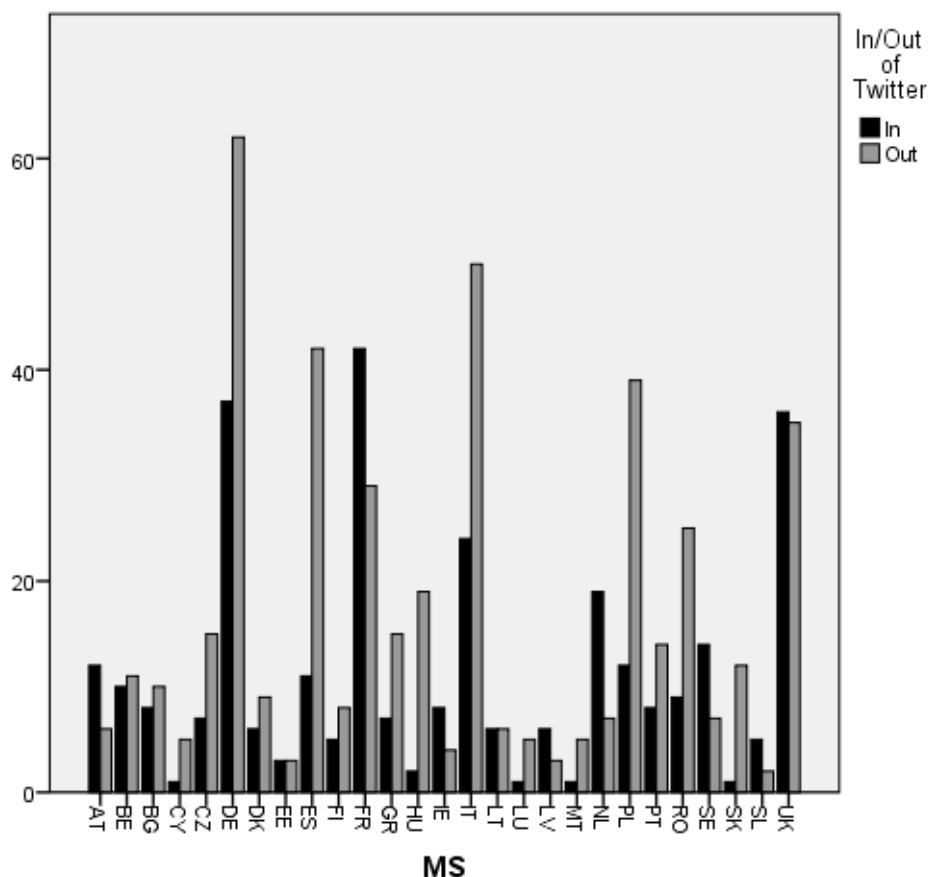
On the other side we have the negative cases, or the ones which are under the 50% of presence in Facebook. In this situation we find that Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Spain and Portugal are the countries with lower rates by their presence of their MEPs in Facebook.

B. Presence by Member State on Twitter

In Twitter we observed clearly low rates of presence in comparison to the ones of Facebook. Politicians are less present in Twitter, no matter where they came from.

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Nationality: Presence in Twitter – Absolute tendencies



Relative % of MS: AT 66.6%; BE 47.6%; BG 44.4%; CY 16.6%; CZ 31.8%; DE 37.3%; DK 40%; EE 50%; ES 20.7%; FI 38.4%; GR 31.8%; HU 9.5%; IE 66.6%; IT 32.43%; LT 50%; LV 66.6%; LU 16.6%; MT 16.6%; NL 73%; PL 23.5%; PT 36.3%; RO 26.4%; SE 66.6%; SI 71.4%; SK 7.6%; UK 50.7% - Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

Table 5: Presence in Twitter of the MEPs depending on their nationality

In the previous case, Facebook's presence of MEPs per Member State includes most of the higher rates, with quotas that reach a 50% of cases and more. However here the higher presence in Twitter is represented by The Netherlands' (73%) and Slovenia's (71.4%) MEPs. Those figures show that most of the MEPs are not familiar with this

¹⁴² Source: SPSS elaboration



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new type of communication, more open and direct than for instance than Facebook. It is important to notice that again MEPs from Slovenia, even when it is a Southern country; have a high percentage of presence in this platform. Here we also include one of the Western countries: The Netherlands, one of the most technological countries in the Parliament. Following these figures, the MEPs with a higher presence according to their country of origin are from Sweden, Ireland, Latvia, and Austria. All of them are part of a group of countries with a medium rate of 60% of presence. Here we found different cases as Sweden is from the Northern regions, Ireland from the Southern regions but as it has been seen in Facebook with a higher percentage than the rest of the Southern MEPs.

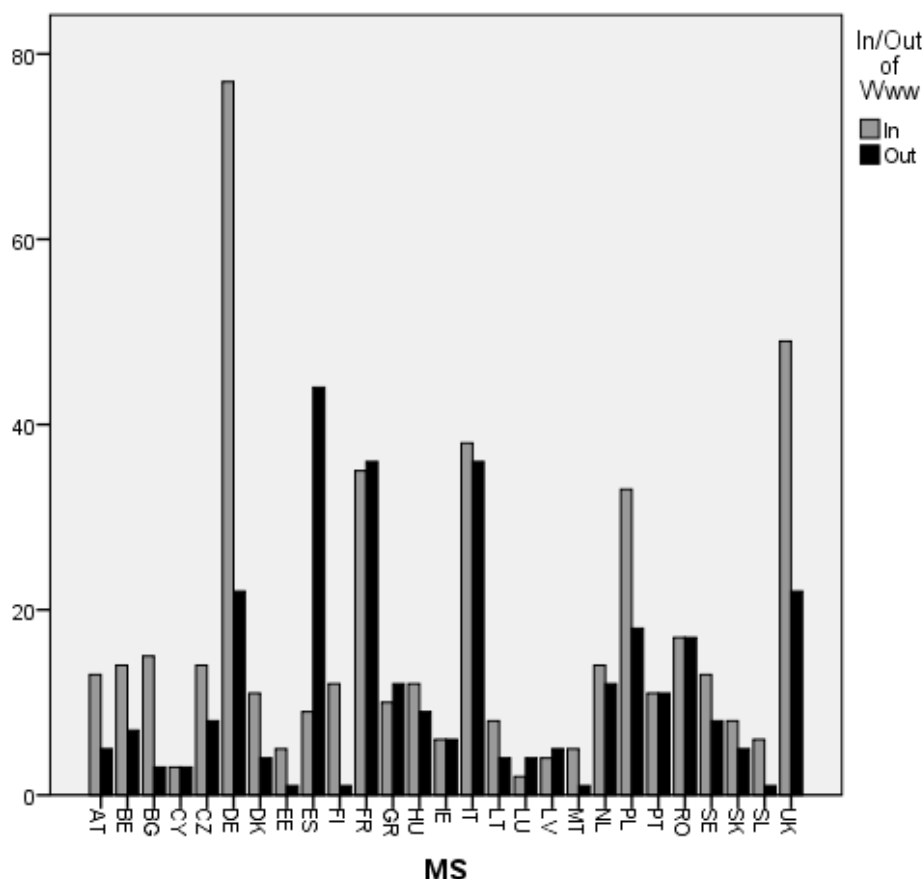
However what it is more relevant in this case is the low presence of some countries. The lowest presence in Twitter is represented by the Slovakian MEPs with a 7.6% and Hungarian MEPs with a 9.5% of members in Twitter. The latter followed by Cyprus, Malta and Luxembourg, with a rate of 16%. Most of the countries have a presence rate between 30% and 50% in Twitter.

C. Presence in Blogs depending on MEPs' countries of origin.

In this case the tendency increased in comparison with Twitter MEPs users. It is again in the same levels of usage if compared with Facebook's presence rates.

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Nationality: Presence in Websites – Absolute tendencies



Relative % of MS: AT 72.2%; BE 66.6%; BG 83.3%; CY 50%; CZ 63.6%; DE 77.7%; DK 73.3%; EE 83.3%; ES 16.9%; FI 92.3%; FR 49.2%; GR 45.4%; HU 57.1%; IE 50%; IT 51.3%; LT 66.6%; LV 44%; LU 33.3%; MT 83.3%; NL 53.8%; PL 64.7%; PT 50%; RO 50%; SE 61.9%; SL 71.4%; SK 61.5%; UK 69.8% - Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

Table 6: Presence in Website depending in their nationality

The majority of MEPs per Member State who are using the websites are the Finish with a 92.3% of them using this platform. The latter are followed by Maltase, Slovenian, Estonian and Bulgarian members with a medium presence of 83% in websites. In this regard we can observe that countries as Malta, Slovenia, Estonia and Bulgaria are on a higher position than countries in which the access to broadband is higher, for

¹⁴³ Source: SPSS elaboration



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

instance in the case of Germany, Denmark or even Sweden. MEPs' presence from this last country we mentioned is around 61.9%.

Apparently there is a tendency which remains the same in this websites' analysis concerning the countries with a lower presence in the online communication tools studied in this research. We can mention countries as Portugal, Romania and Greece as those with almost no relevant presence in the 2.0 communication platforms, which is relevant because maybe they are the ones who need the most an active participation to talk about their reality and improve their image in the media.

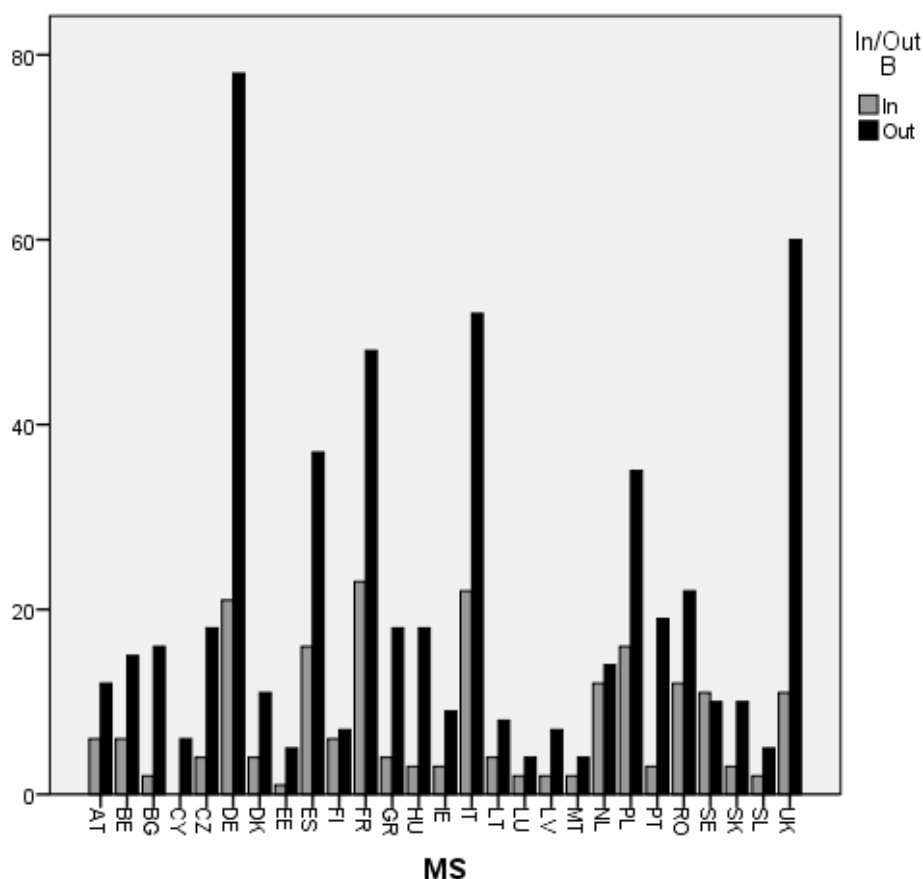
However the lowest representation in this online communication tool is portrayed by Spanish MEPs with only a 16.9% of presence, another case to think about considering the particular situation of the country and the importance of perform strong communication actions to save its credibility, severely damaged to the eyes of European institutions and citizens.

D. Presence in Blogs depending on MEPs' countries of origin.

The group of the MEPs bloggers is the lowest one among the four online communication tools considered here for the study. In fact as we observed in the analysis made by political groups and age, blogging is the less interesting activity for MEPs. It can be considered as one tool that needs extra efforts in its daily use, because demands personal post and texts, which many of the MEPs has not time to publish as some of them argued when we interviewed them.

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Nationality: Presence in Blogging – Absolute tendencies



Relative % of MS: AT 33.3%; BE 28%; BG 11%; CY 0%; CZ 63.18.1%; DE 21.2%; DK 26.6%; EE 16.6%; ES 30%; FI 46.1%; FR 32.2%; GR 18%; HU 14.2%; IE 14.2%; IT 29.7%; LT 33.3%; LV 22.2%; LU 33.3% MT 33.3%; NL 46.1%; PL 31.3%; PT 13.6%; RO 35.2%; SE 53.3%; SL 23%; SK 28-5%; UK 15.4% - Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

Table 7: Presence on Blogs depending in MEPs nationality

¹⁴⁴ Source: SPSS elaboration



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

According to the data we present here the country with a higher percentage of MEPs bloggers is Sweden with a half percentage of their MEPs using this tool, followed by Finland and The Netherlands with a 46%. Another group with a significant usage is represented by the countries with 30-46% of blogging practices where we found France, Austria, Spain, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and Romania. Here MEPs from Spain have a higher tendency to use blogging than in the case of websites, according to our research. The next group whose MEPs presence is lower than a 30% of the cases includes Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Latvia, and Slovenia. In this group the most relevant finding is that countries such as Denmark or Germany considered as technologically advanced share a lower presence in blogging practices when compared to other less technologically advanced nations. A country with none MEPs in blogs is Cyprus, again a remarkable case of misuse of communication technologies in another nation with serious problems of credibility to the eyes of European institutions and citizens.

Estonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece and Portugal are under the 20% of blogs' usage. Here we observed that MEPs from countries with a higher presence on certain online communication tools as Estonia and Bulgaria in Twitter are on the group of the lowest blogging uses, which is relevant because it seems that the platforms are not being used together with a common strategy and synergy. Moreover, clustering of 2.0 platforms is not working in these cases; because politicians seem to ignore to use a tool when focus is in another. Finally, and only as an example of the latter, in the case of the MEPs from United Kingdom they only use blogging in a 15.4% of cases which it is a really low percentage if it is compared with their presence in Facebook, Twitter and Websites where they have a 50-60% of representation.

4.3. Political Adscription

The European Parliament is divided into eight European political groups. The Members come from their own political parties in their home countries and depending on their political affiliation, if they win the elections to this institution, they can have a seat in the European Parliament with their corresponding political group.

According to the number of seats the biggest political group is the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the second force is the Socialist and Democrats' group, the third is the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, the fourth is the Green Party, fifth we have the European Freedom and Democracy group, in the sixth position we find the

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European Union Left, and after them we have the European Conservatives and Reformist. Finally, in the last position we have the group for the Non Attachment representative, those MEPs which are in none of the political tendencies above mentioned and in none of the European political groups established, so they are independents.

In this section we will compare the presence of these groups in the four online communication tools selected for the study in order to see if we can establish clusters according to the MEPs political adscription.

A. Presence by Political Group on Facebook

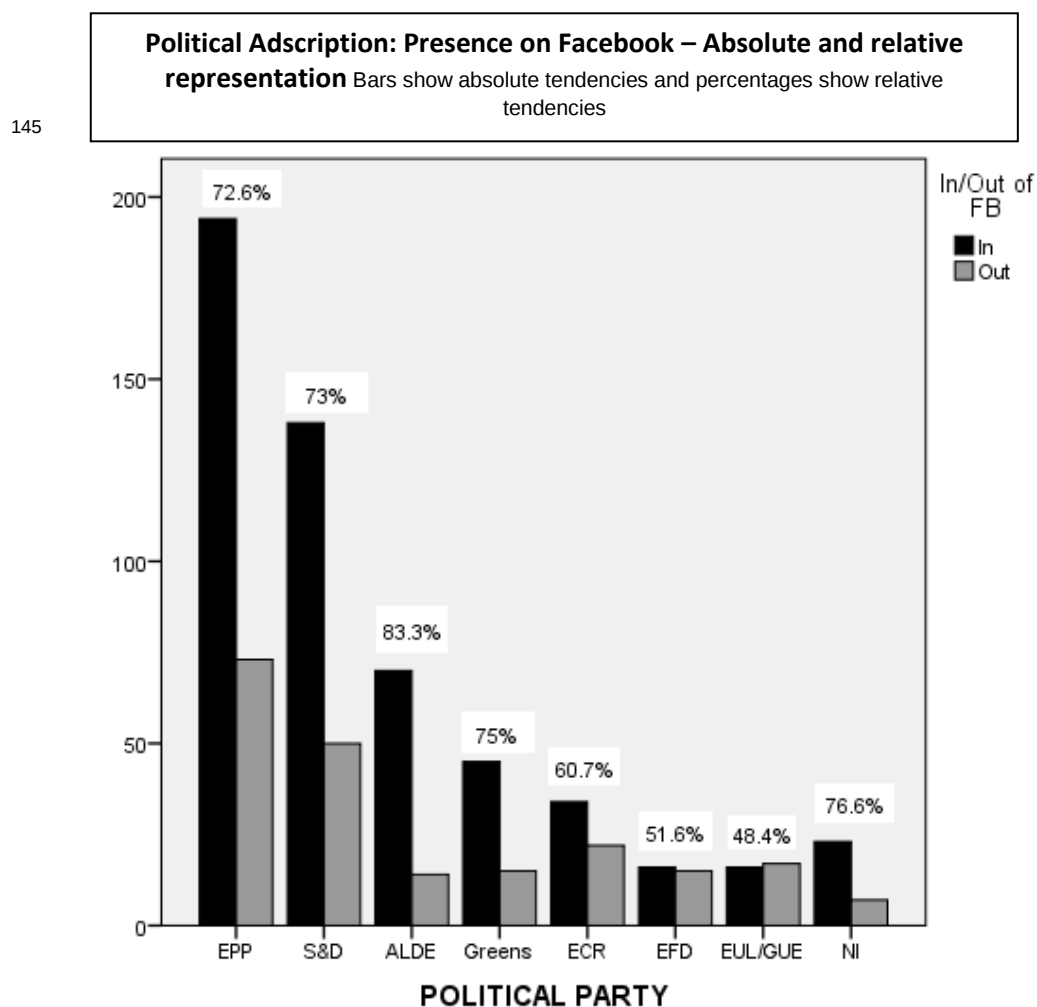


Table 8: Presence by Political Group in Facebook

¹⁴⁵ Source: SPSS elaboration



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

In Facebook the MEPs who are more present according to their political affiliation are the Liberals, the ALDE group (83.3%). This is the third political force of the European Parliament but their MEPs are very active as we observe in the rest of the online communication tools. They have a strong participation in all these tools we study here in this research. Following the ALDE, the MEPs from the Green group are really involved too in the use of Facebook with a 75% of their Members using this tool. These figures can be compared with the usage performed by the two major political groups EPP, with a 72% of cases and the Socialists with 73%. Even when they are the Members more voted in the elections, they don't have a clear presence in Facebook.

On the other side we have the rest of political groups with a leading position of the ECR group covering the 60% of their members in Facebook, then we find the EFD with 51% of their members present and finally the European Left party with a presence of their members of the 48%. It is important to compare these minor groups with the Non-attachment's group, which is the one with a minor representation in the chamber, but their members are more present in Facebook than these previously mentioned three groups, with a 76.6% rate. Even their presence in this platform is higher than the participation of the biggest groups.

B. MEPs' presence in Twitter by Political Group.

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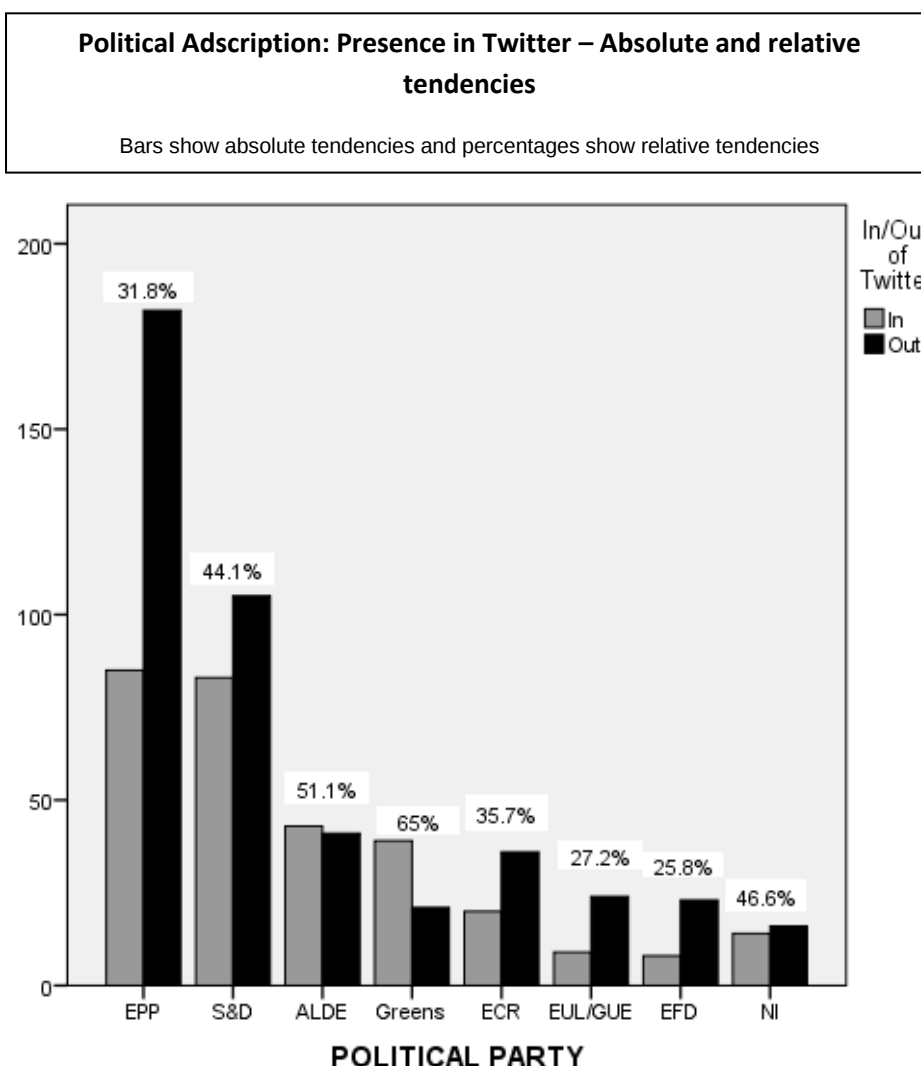


Table 9: Presence by Political Group in Twitter

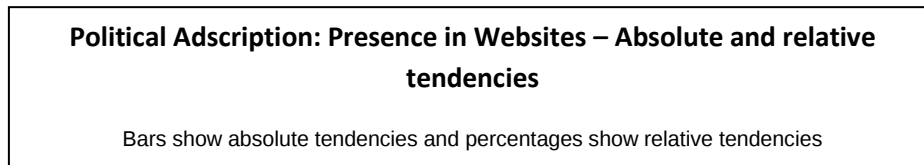
Twitter is an online communication tool that MEPs use less compared to the use they give to Facebook and Websites. In that case the Members of the Green party are the ones who have opened more profiles in Twitter with a 65% of their Members in this situation, followed by the ALDE group with a 51.1% of their Members active in this tool. Once again it can be observed that the major political groups, EPP and S&D, are less present in this platform than the rest of the political groups. It is important to remark that the Non- attachment group has a higher presence on Twitter than consolidate groups as S&D or EPP, and also in comparison with the rest of political groups. The EPP is present in a 31.8% of the cases and the S&D with a 44% rate. The rest of the

¹⁴⁶ Source: SPSS elaboration

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groups also have fewer Members in Twitter as the ECR, European Left, or the EFD but roughly 30% of their members are present in the platform.

C. MEPs' presence in Websites by Political Group.



147

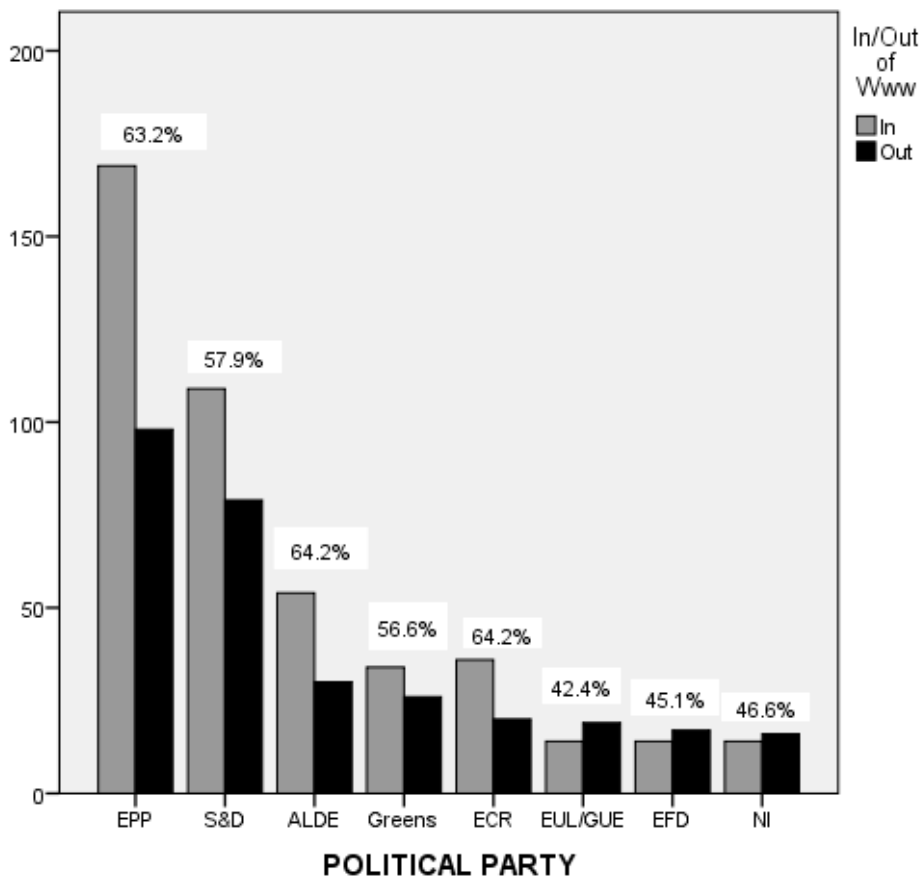


Table 10: Presence by Political Group in Website

In the case of the websites presence by members, the representatives of the ALDE group and the ECR group have a personal websites on a 64% of the cases while with the lowest rate we find the European Left with only 46.6% of the cases having a web active. However the members of the major political groups in this case are more present than in the rest of platforms. EPP members are present in a 63% of the cases and the Socialists in a 57%. Meanwhile the Non- attachment group which in the rest of

¹⁴⁷ Source: SPSS elaboration

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the online communication tools studied has the highest presence, in this platform is represented by a 46% of their Member with a personal website.

D. MEPs' presence in Blogs by Political Group.

Political Adscription: Presence in Blogs – Absolute and relative tendencies

Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

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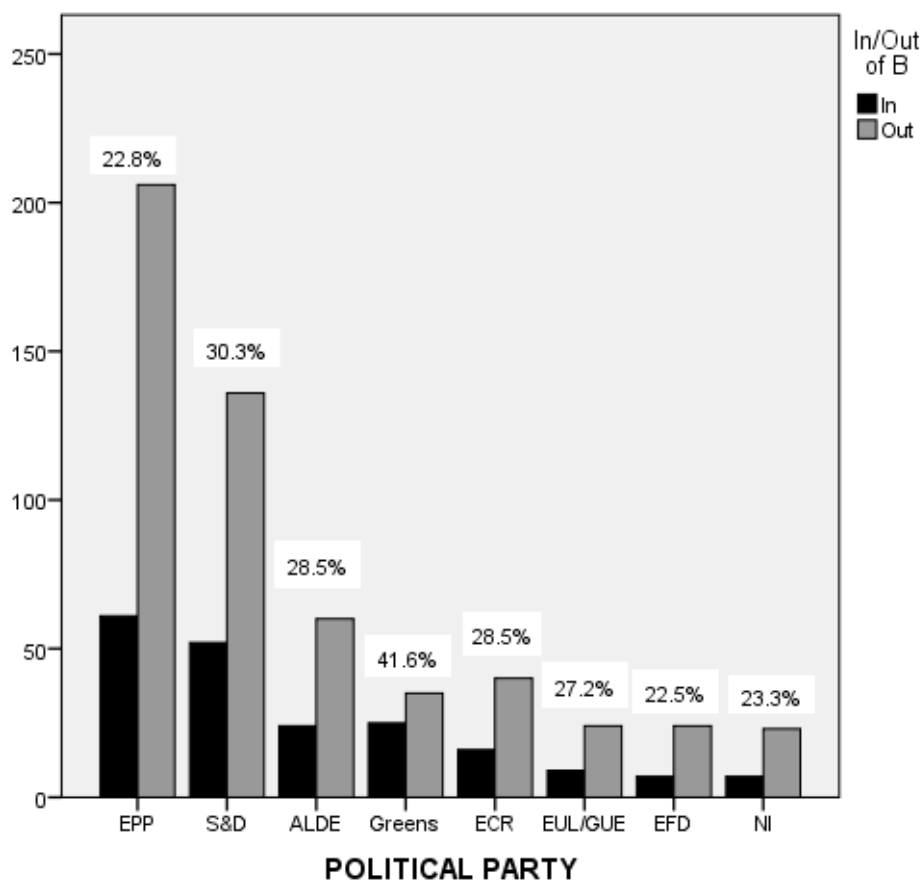


Table 11: Presence by Political Group in Bloggs

In the bloggers' case what we first observed is that absence of use is higher in all the political groups when compared with the other tools. The MEPs prefer other online communication tools rather than blogs, that's for sure. In this case the most active members in blogging practices are the Green MEPs, followed by Socialists with a 30% of use, and then we find the ALDE members and the ECR representatives, with a

¹⁴⁸ Source: SPSS elaboration



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28.5% of the cases using blogs. In fact the major political group of the parliament, EPP, has the lowest presence in blogs with a 22.8% of cases.

4.4 Cluster by Age

In this case we establish age groups to talk about MEPs' use of communication technologies depending on their generation. The youngest members of the European Chamber are being established from 18 years old until 30 years old. This is the smallest group per age in the chamber with only 10 MEPs who are in between these ages. A second group of MEPs includes those over 30 years old until 43 years old, a total of 121 representatives. A third group is between 44 years old and 56 years old. In this group there are 278 MEPs. After them we established a group among 57 years old until 68 years old there are 280 MEPs. This is the largest group per age among the other five ones. And the last age group includes those who are over 68 years old who are only 46 of the members in the Chamber. According to this division we will be comparing the use of communication technologies through members' generations in the parliament.

A. Presence in Facebook by MEPs age

The presence of MEPs in Facebook is marked by their age. We observe that the presence in this platform decrease in connection to the age of the person. The first group of MEPs with the highest presence in Facebook is the youngest one with an active use of this online communication tool. However we find an exception in this general decreasing connected to the age as in the case of those politicians over 68 years old the users are a 67.3% of the total, a more elevated rate than in the case of the 57-68 years old group with a less active presence of a 58.9%.

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Age: Presence in Facebook – Absolute and relative tendencies

Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

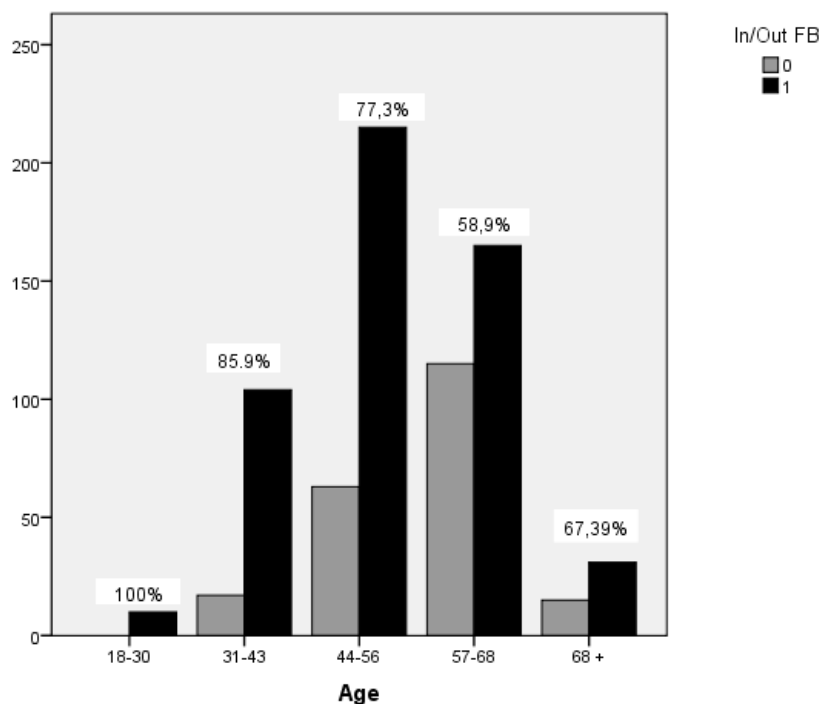


Table 12: Presence by Age in Facebook

¹⁴⁹ Source: SPSS elaboration

B. Presence in Twitter by MEPs' age.

The presence of the MEPs by their age in Twitter follows the same pattern as Facebook usage's tendencies. This means that since MEPs are getting older their presence diminishes. In this case the youngest members of the chamber are not fully into Twitter, as this group is represented by a 60% of the total of them. Next, the 31-43 years old group has a presence of 54.5% of the whole members. Then, the group of 44-56 years old MEPs has a 43.5% rate of participation. After that, the group formed by 57-68 years old politicians has a 32.8% of its members in Twitter. Finally, the oldest politicians, over 68 years old, have a presence in 21.7% of the cases.

The important think we would like to remark here as it is shown in the graph is the difference between those who are in and out the platform, which is bigger in the case of older people and less significant in the case of the youngest. In the case of the youngest group, for instance, the difference is no relevant but in the other three middle age group the difference among those in and out the platform is much bigger. Furthermore, in the case of politicians over 68 years old the difference is even bigger as there are only a 21.7% of MEPs who are really using Twitter.

150

Age: Presence in Twitter – Absolute and relative tendencies

Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

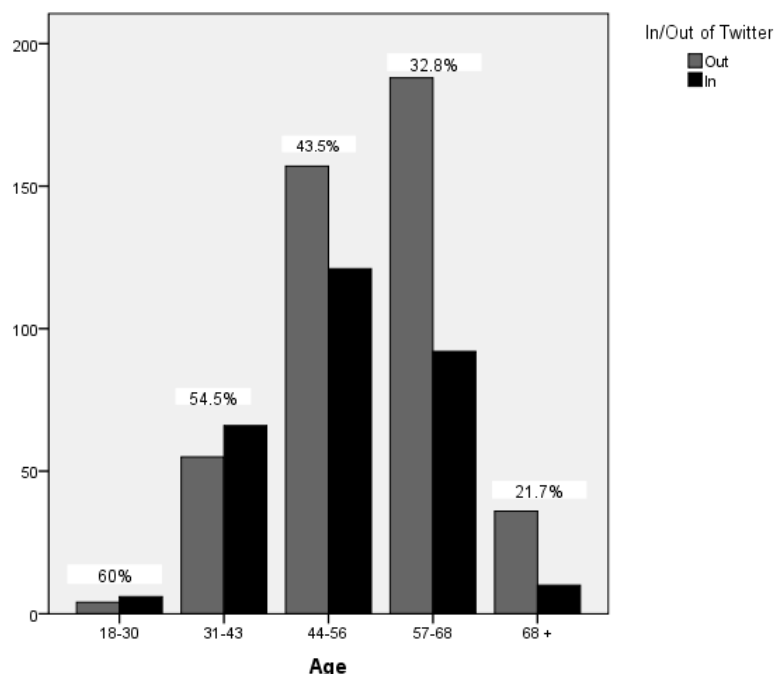


Table 13: Presence by Age in Twitter

¹⁵⁰ Source: SPSS elaboration

C. Presence in Websites by MEPs' age

The case of the websites is different from the other two platforms already explained: Facebook and Twitter. Websites have a higher presence of the younger middle age group (44-56 years old) and of the oldest middle age group (57-68 years old), but the lowest presence is represented here by the youngest members. The groups in between 31-43 years old and the other including members from 44-56 years old have an average of 60% of presence. Then the 57-68 middle age members have a 58.5% of presence, followed by the oldest members in the Chamber, the MEPs over 68 years old, with a 52.1%. However this figure in comparison with the youngest is higher. The youngest in this case is only represented by the 40%, so the websites in the case of the youngest MEPs are not their main online communication tool.

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Age: Presence in Websites – Absolute and relative tendencies

Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

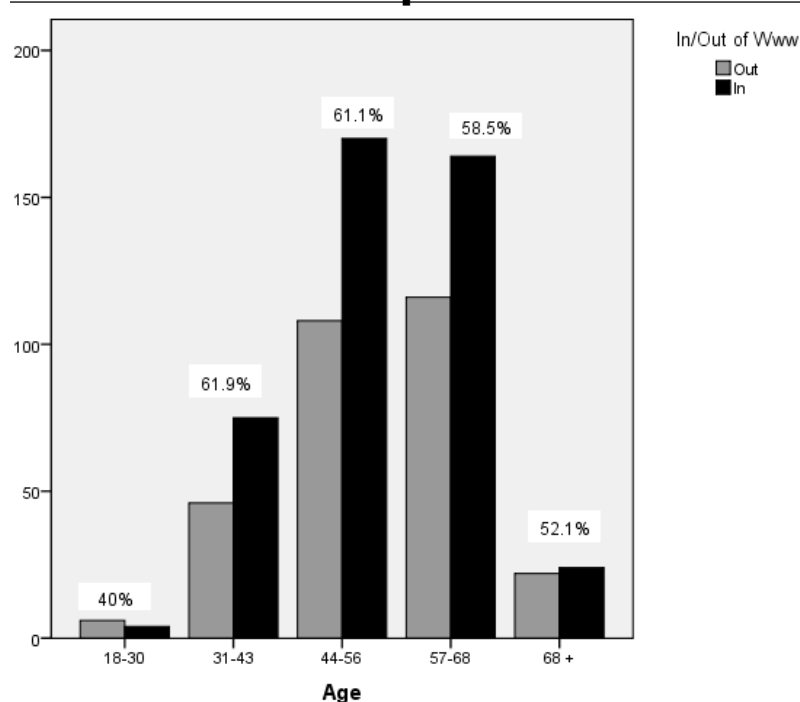


Table 14: Presence by Age in Website

¹⁵¹ Source: SPSS elaboration

D. Presence on blogging by MEPs age

In the case of bloggers we observe the same tendency than in the case of websites. Here once again the younger middle age groups, from 31 to 43 years old, and the other, between 44-56 years old, are the two groups which have a higher percentage of MEPs using blogs. The first group has a 33.8% of their members and the second has a 30.5% of them in blogging activities. After them we have the oldest group, over 68 years old, with a 21.7% of presence. Next group is the older middle age with a 20% of the MEPs presence on blogging. The last group is the youngest one, 18-31 years old, with a presence in only 10% of the cases.

Age: Presence in Blogging – Absolute and relative tendencies

Bars show absolute tendencies and percentages show relative tendencies

152

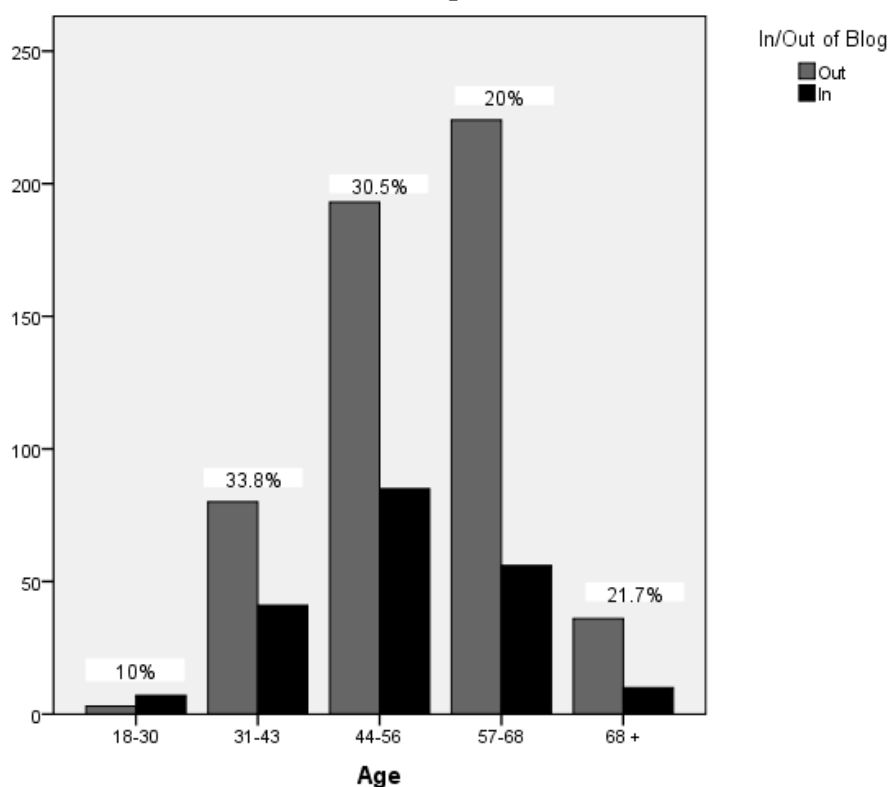
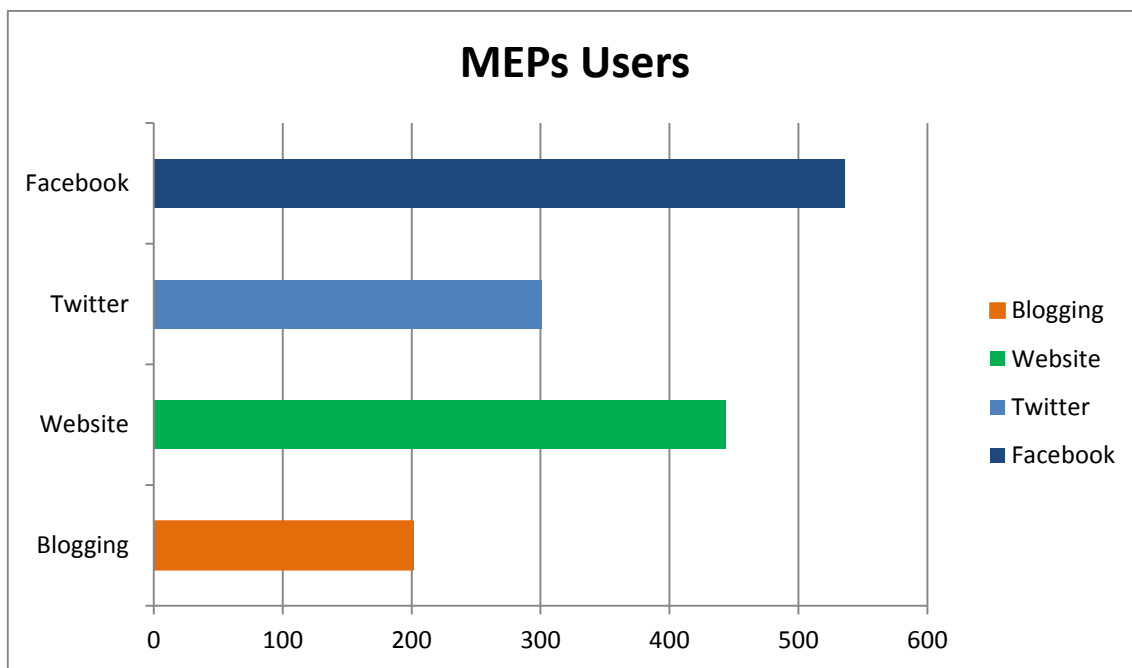


Table 15: Presence by Age in Blog

¹⁵² Source: SPSS elaboration

4.5. Quantitative Conclusions

According to the different clusters established in this research by their ideology, nationality and age we can now discuss some ideas. Depending on the figures obtained through this analysis we can visualize the presence of the MEPs on the online communication tools which are analyzed here. Facebook is the largest online communication tool in terms of MEPs in it, 536 out of 749 of the EP Chamber. Following the latter we have personal websites with 444 MEPs present in this tool. Twitter is the third with 301 MEPs in it, and finally blogs, with the fewer presence having just 201 members from the whole chamber.



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Table 16: MEPs representation at the online communication platforms

In regards of that it can be said that the preferred online communication tool by the MEPs, according to the quantitative data is Facebook, followed by Websites, Twitter and Blogging. This pattern of behavior could be understood as Facebook nowadays it is an easy online communication tool which most of the people prefer rather than the others. The second one in level of presence is constituted by websites. Indeed this is the most complete online communication tool because is a platform which can integrate many information. Other reason for the high presence in websites can be due to the long years that politicians have been using them.

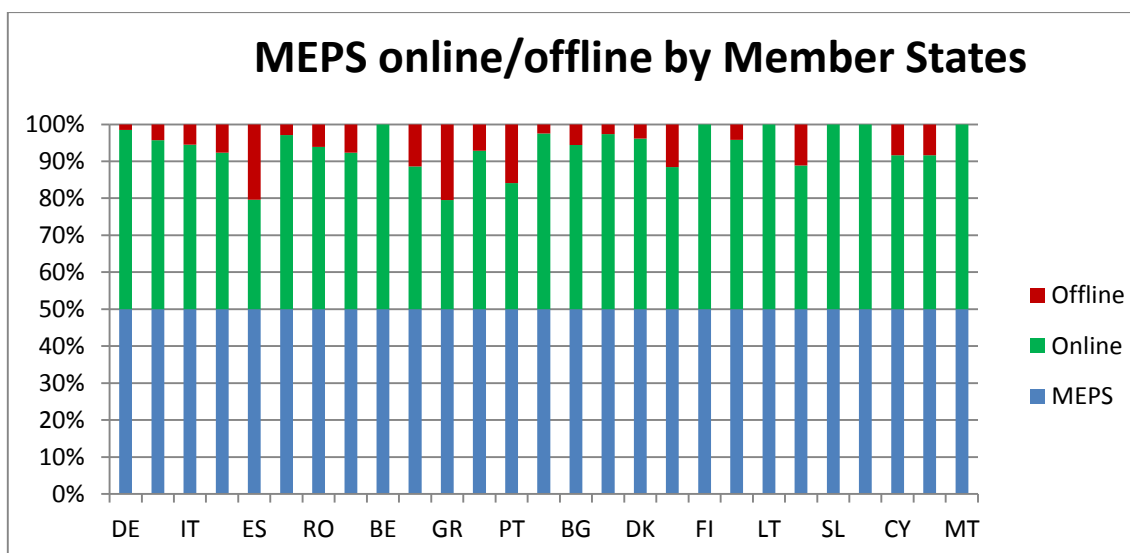
¹⁵³ Source: Owns elaboration

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

The websites were one of the first online communication tools since the period of the Web 1.0, but it is still a tool used by younger people the same as the oldest members of the parliament use it. The other two tools but with a lower presence are Twitter and Blogs. There are some reasons for this situation. First of all Twitter is a very important tool but not an easy one. This requires acquiring certain knowledge of their usage and the dynamic of the tweets, and also needs a high presence and lively tweets. So, this means more time of use than in the case of Facebook or Websites. But also another reason for the low presence in these cases can be that Twitter is a new tool as it was launched on 2008, relatively young in comparison with the others. On the other side blogging also requires more time regarding updates and more personal involvement than Facebook or Websites, which can include more general information with a more institutional perspective. Therefore Blogging consumes more time than the others tools. Further Blogging was launched as one of the first platform on the Web 1.0, when the communication was mainly linear. And as only readers can interact by the “comments” option, most of the politicians prefer not to have this space opened.

Nationality Perspective

According to the countries of origin, we can introduce here a different approach depending on how many of the total Members are online or offline. As it is considered along this study the visual presentation can help us to understand better the results. That is the main reason why here we present this bars chart.



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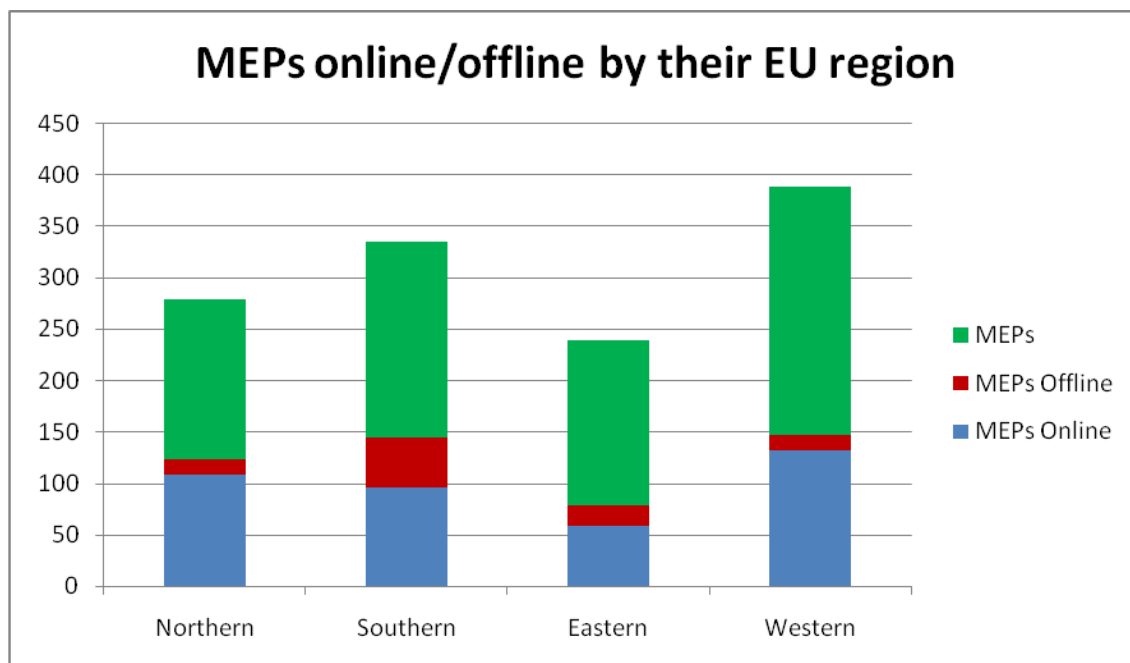
Table 17: MEPs online / offline by their nationality

¹⁵⁴ Source: Owns elaboration

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

In this graph we observe the countries with a high number of MEPs online such as Belgium, Malta, Slovenia, Lithuania, Finland and Germany. Further, other Northern countries as Sweden has also a lot of online members. However the lowest presence is represented by Southern countries as Spain, Greece and Portugal. It is relevant to take into account that some countries as Malta or Lithuania with a small population (so with less representation at the plenary) and that became full members in 2004, are in the highest positions. This can be explained because they are more active although their lowest representation. One of the reasons that could explain this is that these countries have advanced quicker than others that have been members for a longer period, as Spain or Greece. Thanks to that we can extract the first conclusion that will be confirmed in the clusters section. The countries with a lower representation are part from the Southern region, but countries which have specific characteristics which make them different from most of Southern countries have a higher presence even if they are in the South.

On the regional perspective we present now another graph to talk about the data obtained from the MEPs charts of online tools' uses. According to the regional data, we can compare the regions that are more active versus the regions less active.



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Table 18: MEPs online / offline depending on the European Union region

¹⁵⁵ Source: Owns elaboraion



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According to this national distribution of the MEPs online behavior we obtained similar results. Indeed the Southern and Eastern regions are the ones with less use of online communication platforms. The number of MEPs according to the regional division of MEPs is placed as follows.

Regions	Number of MEPs
Northern	155
Southern	191
Eastern	161
Western	242 ¹⁵⁶

Table 18.1.: MEPs online depending on the European Union region

Even when the Southern Region has a high number of MEPs we observed that in the general graph of MEPs being online by regions they are not too active in the 2.0 communication platforms if compared with the Northern and the Western MEPs who are online and use those communication platforms more actively. On the other hand the Eastern MEPs are the less active group of the EP Chamber because they have the least presence in the online communication platforms among all.

Therefore we have cleared up a first idea, according to the data analysis; the MEPs who come from Southern and Eastern regions are less active in the online communication platforms that have been analyzed. In the next section, when talking about clusters we will present some reason that can help to understand this tendency.

Clusters: Nationality perspectives

Northern Region

The European Northern Region, according to the United Nations classification in the “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings¹⁵⁷” (2011) includes Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden and United Kingdom.

According to the Information society statistics at regional level, “the Northern countries are the ones with the highest levels in broadband access to Internet connections and

¹⁵⁶ Source: Owns elaboraion

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, 2011, Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings <
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>>



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broadband access in households, always following the report of 2010¹⁵⁸. For instance Sweden has 83% of households' broadband connections, and also in this study regions from Denmark and United Kingdom are included with the highest standards.

Following this classification it is relevant to understand why the MEPs from Sweden has a highly presence. Sweden is one of the richest European countries, with a per capita GDP a fifth above the EU average (120%) Thanks to this economic status Sweden has developed a significant welfare state which allows a technological development higher than in other European regions. One of the historical factors that explained this situation is their old democracy. Sweden was one of the countries which kept its neutrality along the two World Wars, so this made possible to take advantages of the benefits of the wars without a direct implication on them.

For instance during the I World War the Swedish industries provided steel, ball bearings, wood pulp and matches to the states at war. The same happened along II World War when they kept away of the war. One of the most distinguished symbols of Sweden is the social welfare state, created after the I World War and developed by a very competitive international trading sector. Although privately owned, this sector seems to benefit from the stable economic environment, industrial harmony and active labor market policies facilitated by the state¹⁵⁹.

The present study obtained similar results as the ones conducted by Eurostat on the Information Society. Currently, among the countries from the Northern region, the nations with a high presence of their MEP in online communication platforms are Sweden, Lithuania and Latvia. In fact Sweden's MEPs are the ones who are highly present in online communication platforms analyzed in this research. The study focused on the new online communication platform and MEPs from Sweden have a high presence in them. One of the reasons that explained this is the access to broadband in the households. The Internet services have expanded since the late 1990s. As it has been seen, 83% of the Swedish households have access to broadband¹⁶⁰ The MEPs who came from the Scandinavian countries have in general a higher tradition in the use and the access of Internet so they use online platforms more profusely.

¹⁵⁸ European Commission, 2012, Information society statistics at regional level, Eurostats, <
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_at_regional_level> [3 May 2013]

¹⁵⁹ Bale, T, 2008, European politics comparative introduction, Palgrave-Macmillan, pp 354-55

¹⁶⁰ Welbull L, Jönson AM, Wadbrin I, 2011, Media landscape: Sweden, European Journalism Center <
http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/sweden/> [3 May 2013]



Western region

The European Western Region, according to the United Nations classification in the “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings¹⁶¹” (2011) includes Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands. This is the second region which includes the MEPs who are using more the online communication platforms analyzed through this study. The countries with a high ratio of usage are France, Germany and The Netherlands. As mentioned in the Northern region we can find economic reasons to explain this presence.

The Information society statistics at regional level¹⁶² include two countries from this group with more than 80% of households with broadband connections: Germany and Netherlands.

In the case of Germany since the reunification of the country in 1989, Western Germany has not only extended its welfare state to the East, but also spends billions of Euros in its economic development. Their total GDP per capita as percentage of EU-27 average is on 114%. So it is lower than Sweden. In the development of the online usage, according to the European Journalism Center media landscape profile “in 2009, reported that about 67.1% of German population was using online services, and 70% of them used the broadband lines¹⁶³.” The Netherlands¹⁶⁴ maintains a welfare status quite significant. It is considered one of the strongest economies in Europe, resulting in a GDP per capita over the EU-27 average: 132%. The country is that strong because of its roads transportation levels, petro-chemicals industries, consumer electronics and banking. In regards to the online connection it can be said that in 2008 The Netherlands “had the highest percentage of Internet access in the European Union. 87.5%. More than 75% of these users have a broadband connection for high speed Internet, based on ADSL or cable”¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶¹ United Nations, 2011, Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings < <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm> >

¹⁶² European Commission, 2012, Information society statistics at regional level, Eurostats, < http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_at_regional_level > [3 May 2013]

¹⁶³ Kleinstaub HJ, Thomas B, 2011, Media landscape: Germany, European Journalism Center < http://www.ejc.net/media_landscapes/article/germany/ > [3 May 2013]

¹⁶⁴ Bakker P, Vasterman P, 2010, Media landscape: The Netherlands, European Journalism Center < http://www.ejc.net/media_landscapes/article/the_netherlands/ > [3 May 2013]

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.



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France, on the other hand, is one of the more powerful economies of the European Union and a major exporter, especially of agricultural goods. Indeed as the other two countries, the welfare system very important. The GDP per capita is over EU-27 average (2006): 113%. In regards to the new digital patterns, in June, 2009, according to the European Journalism Center, “there were 18.6 million broadband connections in France. This is equal to 62% of households with Internet access. However the higher rates of users are formed by the younger people, as the oldest generation is quite far away from this kind of new technologies¹⁶⁶”.

Northern and Western regions: Higher behavior online

Northern and Western regions have been analyzed first as they are the two with a high number of MEPs presence in the online communication platforms studied. In fact it can be said that among the whole list of the countries: Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and France are the ones which have a high number of MEPs. Their presence is higher than in the case of the countries from the other two regions which we are going to analyze now. In these countries descriptions we found some common points regarding historical, political, economic facts that confirms the idea that advanced countries have higher usage levels of the online resources:

- Historical reasons: all of these countries obtained beneficial benefits from the two World Wars but also during the post war, not as the Southern nations (with dictatorial regimens on most of the countries such as Portugal or Spain) or the Eastern nations (with most of the countries under the Soviet Union's influence).
- Economic reasons: all of these countries had a social welfare status higher than in the rest, and solidly established after long decades. For instance in Sweden or France.
- Political reasons: all of these countries had a political system long established on liberal democracies, which have been established before than in the countries from the other regions
- Economic reasons: the richest countries in the European Union can be found in these two regions. Furthermore, the GDP per capita as percentage of the EU-27 average includes the higher rates.

¹⁶⁶ Pasquier M, Lamizet B 2010, Media landscape: France, European Journalism Center < http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/france/ > [3 May 2013]



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- Technological reasons: The percentage of the access to broadband and households connections per house is higher than in the other two European regions.

These findings are key points to understand the behavior of some of the MEPs from these countries with a higher and more active presence in the online platforms. There are some factors that make them more kindly towards the usage of online communication technologies.

Eastern Region

The European Eastern Region, according to the United Nations classification in the “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings¹⁶⁷” (2011) includes Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Following the Information society statistics at regional level the Eastern countries as Bulgaria or Romania reported a much wider range in connectivity rates. While in the Northern and Western countries the connectivity is much equal along the entire countries in those Eastern nations the connectivity is higher in the capitals, while in the rest of the country the rates are really low. This showed that the general access to online communication tools is lower than in the Northern cases. Further, the Eastern countries have a rate of 55% or fewer individuals who are regular users of the Internet. On the broadband access statistics also Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria are below the EU standards¹⁶⁸..

Even when in the Eastern Region it is observed low rates on the usage of online communication platforms, Romania is one of the fastest growing economies in European Union since 2008. This country increased its general wealth distribution after the II Second World War. When Romania became part of the Soviet Union, the government imposed a communist regime. After 1989, the Iron Wall falls and the Romanian revolution changes the economic system to capitalism. Nevertheless was one of the last countries that entered into the European Union in 2007.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, 2011, Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings < <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm> >

¹⁶⁸ European Commission, 2012, Information society statistics at regional level, Eurostats, < http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_at_regional_level > [3 May 2013]



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From 2000 onward the GDP in the country has increased as is one of the greatest countries exporting cars, software, electronics equipment's, etc. In regards to the online development of the society¹⁶⁹ the Internet population has increase continuously. According to Eurostat data Romanians above 16 years old are active users (36% of the total). In addition Telecommunication market has steadily increased over the last six years.

Southern region

The European Southern Region, according to the United Nations classification in the "Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings¹⁷⁰." (2011) includes Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Cyprus.

Based on the Information society statistics at regional level, as it has been already observed in Eastern countries, there is an unbalanced range in connectivity rates between regions in the Southern part of Europe. Further, these Southern countries have 27 regions with 45% or fewer regular Internet users. Among these low rates we find two countries more developed than the rest: Italy and Spain. Even when the actual economic crisis is impacting their economies some historical reasons have made them more prosperous countries¹⁷¹..

- Eastern and Southern regions: Low behavior online

Eastern and Southern regions can be gathered in order to proceed an analyzed. In fact previously it had done the same within Northern and Western regions. Nevertheless if at the other two regions it seen a great usage of online communication platforms, high rates on the access to broadband, higher percentage of Internet users and finally access to Internet per households was higher too. On the other side it finds Easter and Southern countries in which the analyzed it is complete different. It can be explained as the historical, economic and political factors are completely different ones. Further those factors, as it has been observed in the other two regions, make the countries to develop online communication tendencies which make the citizens more involve in it. Even though some countries are higher develop than others, as Romania, Italy and

¹⁶⁹ European Center of Journalims

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, 2011, Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub regions, and selected economic and other groupings <
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>>

¹⁷¹ European Commission, 2012, Information society statistics at regional level, Eurostats, <
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_at_regional_level> [3 May 2013]



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Spain. It can be said that contrast with other countries of their same region, for instance Romania among Hungary or the Czech Republic. It is the same case of Italy and Spain in comparison to Malta, Greece or even Portugal. As a whole if in those countries the technologies are not use by the most of the population that make that it will have an impact on the MEPs behavior too. It can be said that the politicians reflected the tendency of their country. If in Greece the population is not using online communication national MEPs are not going to use those tools as they cannot communicate towards their citizens.

In general the factors that have made those regions under the general average of the European Union usage, it can be listed:

- Historical reason, the Eastern countries lived under the Soviet Union system until 1989 (when the Iron Wall falls) so this make countries not develop as other Northern countries. The Southern countries have been traditionally sub-developed of the European Union. After the two World War those countries lived a postwar period within political and economic problems. Politically, under dictatorship regimes, so the freedom of speech and the dialogue was forbidden. After the seventies those countries begin a reconversion into a modernity process. For instance the enter in the European Union (not Italy which is foundation member of the Union)
- If on the Northern and Western regions it was observed a high standard of living and a stable social welfare system in the Eastern and Southern those are still under developing. In fact that social system has been developing after the adhesion to the European Union. It can be said that the point which change the standards of living for those countries will be the center on the European Union. Due to the European funds the depressive areas of those countries can be developing faster, for instance the agricultural regions. Even with that restructuration those countries has been slower on the develop of information technology communication (ICTs)
- In regards of the political system, if in the Northern and the Western regions were social and democratic models, here it found countries with a history of authoritarianism governments. In the Eastern region under the Soviet Federation and on the Southern under different dictatorships, even Italy and Greece in which those finish early. These circumstances have made the

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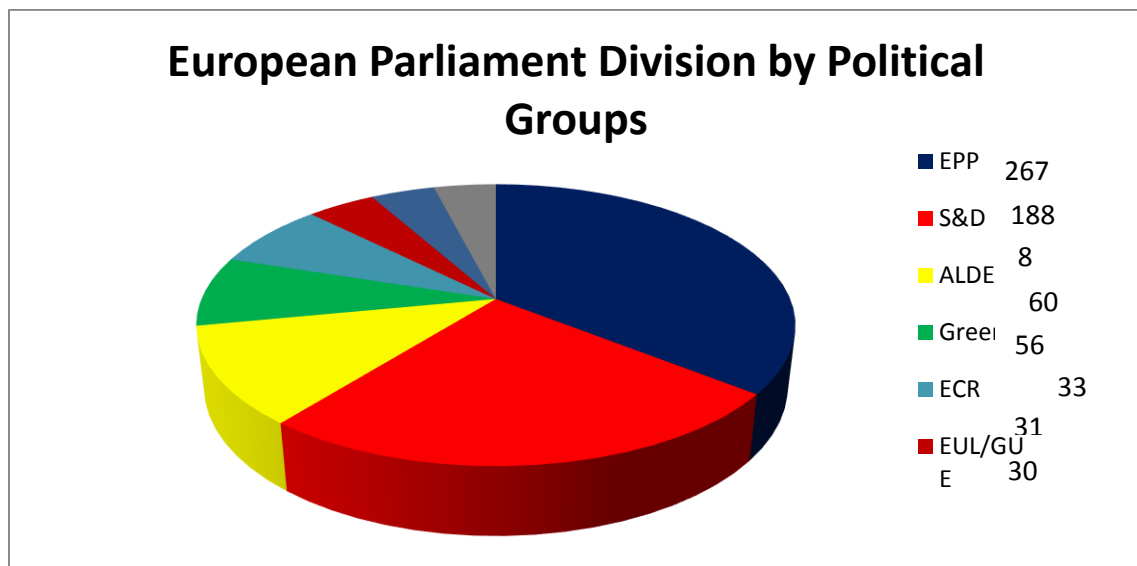
political class and the political education quite different from the Northern or the Western where, in general, the democratic systems have a longer trajectory.

- According to the percentage on access to Internet and the broadband, here it is find the lower rates, but it still developing.

These global key points can added a slightly reasons on why the MEPs who came from those regions are less active that their fellows from the North or the West.

Political Perspective

Besides in this research it has been included a clustering referring to the political groups. As it has been said on the European Parliament Chamber there are eight political groups. Below it can be observe a graph with the division of the chamber.

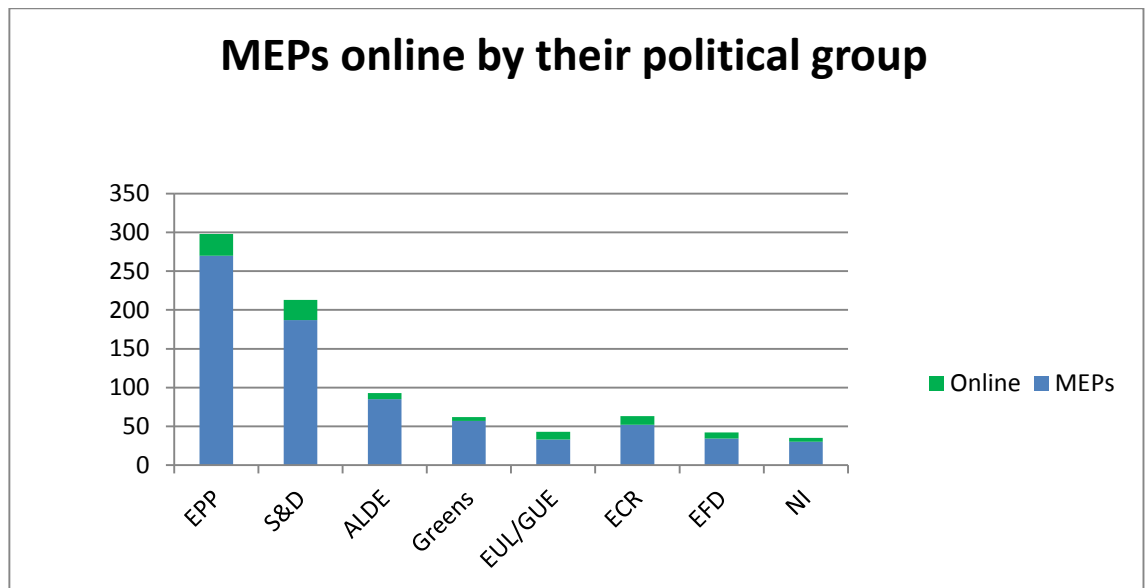


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Table 19: European Parliament Political division

If it takes into account their presence on the online communication tools depending on their political adscription it can be observed this graphs.

¹⁷² Source: own elaboration / Data: European Parliament



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Table 20: MEPs online depending on their political party

Above all of this according to the Member States and the Regional analysis it can be said:

- The countries within a high presence of MEPs, according to the numbers of MEPs represented, are Belgium, Germany, Finland, Slovenia, Malta and Sweden. Most of them part of the Northern and Western regions, with two exceptions Slovenia and Malta which are part of the Southern region. On the other hand the countries with a lowest representation of MEPs are Spain, Greece and Portugal. The three of them from the Southern region.
- In regards to the political perspective, it is observed that the left wing parties have higher MEPs online than the right wing parties.
- Balle (2008) presented this division into European political families

Party Family	Federation	Political Group
Left	European Left Party	European United Left/Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL)
Greens	European Federation of Green Parties	European Greens/ European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)
Soc. Democrat	Party of European Socialists	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

¹⁷³ Source: own elaboration



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Liberal	European Liberal Democrats	Alliance of the Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)
Cons/Christian Dem.	European People's Party	European People's Party (EPP)
Independents Parties	-	European Reformists and Conservatives (ECR) Europe Freedom and Democracy (EFD) ¹⁷⁴

Table 21: Transnational Party federations (Balle, 2008)

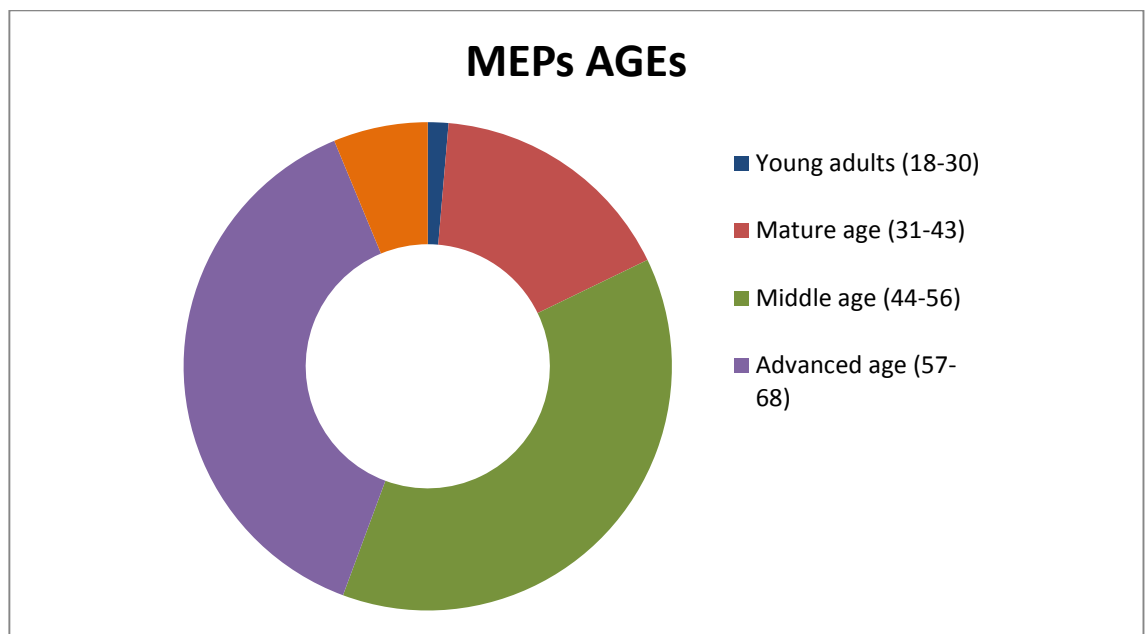
- Nevertheless at this division in between families three factions are out. But Balle suggests that can be included on the Independents parties (the ECR and the EFD) and finally the non-attached members (NI).
- Take into account the charts presents on the Annex (NUMBER) it can be observed the different political parties. So on their MEPs are implicated in the online communication tools. If it analyze by Political Families it could be obtain different results: first from a perspectives of the region and secondly a general impression of those results.
- The Northern region the Socialists' tradition is higher than in the rest of the region. In fact countries as Sweden or Finland are representatives of that tendency of more open to the left than to Conservatives political positions. In the same way the Western region it included countries that mostly are more open also to open political system options. However if have to take into account that this is a general perception as countries as Ireland or Austria have more conservatives political systems. On the Eastern and the Southern regions the political tendency it is more conservatives and even this has a clear representation on the EP chamber.

Age perspective

In regards of the age perspective of the MEPs it has acquired some interesting figures that here it will be explained. One of the first remark that is need to say is that the Chamber of the EP is an old one. That is because most of their representative are part of the group of middle age (44-56 years old) and advanced age (56-68), so that give a perspective of an old institution. However below it will be present an overview of their

¹⁷⁴ Bale, T, 2008, European politics comparative introduction, Palgrave-Macmillan, pp163

presence on the online communication tools. Firstly it can be showed a representation of the MEPs depending on their age at the EP.



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Table 22: MEPs online depending on their age

According to this figures it is observed that the less presence group is the Young Adults which are only represents with a 10 MEPs and on the whole EP chamber this is only a 1.3% of the whole. Following the youngest of the EP the elderly MEPs counted with a presence of 46 MEPs which represents 6.4% of the total. The third group in number of MEPs is the Mature age one which have a representation of 121 MEPs and this represents 16% of the chamber Finally the two major groups are the ones composed by MEPs with a Middle and Advanced age. The first group is composed by 278 MEPs and the second one with 280 MEPs, which indeed is the most numerous group. It is important to remark that four of the MEPs are not showing their age on their EP Profile, so these ones are excluded of the results.

The age of the MEPs is a factor to take into account when is analyzing their presence on the online communication tools. Indeed in the present study it has found some patterns of presence or not presence depending on it. On the previous section when it has been clustering depending on their presence and their age it has been found that the young adults even when the minor group are the ones with higher presence than the rest of the age group. Further it has observed that depending on the age their

¹⁷⁵ Source: own elaboration



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presence was reducing in a proportional way. That means that the elderly MEPs are the fewer presence if it is compare with the youngest. But it can be observed that the middle age and the advanced age groups are the most numerous their presence is low than in the case of the youngest.

PART V: QUALITATIVE - INTERVIEWS

5.1. Introduction

The European Parliament is composed by 748 Members and by eight political groups from 27 Member States. Each of the MEPs came from different countries, has different age and of course different political ideas. However how this can influence on their presence of the social network? According to the quantitative research it can observe some differences tendencies among them and establish some clusters. Nevertheless to complete the picture of these clusters it is need the personal opinion of the Members of the European Parliament.

In order to gather these opinions it has decided to interview different persons in charge of the political communication of the groups. Further it has included the opinion the Chairmen of the European Freedom and Democracy Group, Enrico Francesco Speroni. Further the insight of one of the members of the European Directorate of Communication, Barbar Quilez.

However it is needed to say that to structure a perfect picture it will be needed to obtain the direct answers of the presidents or co-presidents of the political groups but in this present research it could not be possible to obtain those.

Section 5.1. Relevance of the ICTS for European Union communication strategies.

For all of the respondents this is very important. Lada Jurica (EPP) defines as “indispensable. If you are not present on social media you are missing out on important conversations that possibly shape voter preferences. In addition, social media are a way to directly connect to the voters in addition to traditional channels”. Even when all of them seem these tools as fundamental part of their work Gianfranco Battissini (EUL/NGL) it seems to be difficult to make MEPs understand the power of the new tools, but for him this tools is now even more important than the “prehistorically” press



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release. This can be reflecting on the answer of the Socialist Chairmen on a Facebook chat organized by European Parliament. He recognized the relevance of the social media in order to be in contact to citizens but also he emphasized “nevertheless, also the personal contact should not be forgotten. In many election victories of Social democrats like, recently also in Malta but also in the Netherlands, they have much to do with the personal contact”. The other two parties consult in this regards European Freedom and Democracy Group and the Greens Free Alliance express the relevance of the use of ICTs as part of the communication strategies.

Section 5.2. Differences among digital usages depending on gender, age, home country

In this regards there is one clear factor that the respondents highlight the gender of the MEPs is not a factor to take into account. However all of them remark the differences in between the political group. For instance Richard More, Greens and Free Alliance, express “our members’ use and competence with IT and new media technologies naturally greatly between the 58 members. The majority of our members have their own dedicated web-pages, a majority has their own Twitter account and a number also have Facebook page”. However he remarked that in his opinion there is no common trend that makes differences in between the Greens MEPs. The same opinion has Gianfranco Battissini, EUL/NGL, even with a political group with 34 members 10 of them are on Twitter and he remarked that there are MEPs from Italy or Portugal presences on this social channel. Even in regards of the age he used as an example the French MEP Jean Luc Melanchon, 60 years old and he is in of the most active on Twitter.

On the other side Co-President of the EFD group consider that exist difference in between their group. Further Lada Jurica, EPP, remark that in the EPP “there are from early adopters who are very technologically savy to mainstream users, to beginners” She remarked that even when there is no difference depending on their gender, age or country “ the choice of platform is many times dictated by the digital landscape in home country (e.g. Twitter in the Netherlands).

Even when all of the political references remark that the age or the country is not a major factor which can influence on their presence, the perspective of Barbara Quilez, from the Directorate General of EP Communication is difference. “I would be back to the age; they (Greeks) are not the youngest. I think the line is made by ages. There are other youngest MEPs, the youngest, I think is finish, she is feeling on social networks really comfortable and other older MEPs are not feeling so comfortable”. But also she



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added “It’s true that talking about Twitter is very different from one country from another. There are countries in which there is not really popular, not much use. Another countries, as UK more people try to be there.”

Section 5.3. Usages of the ICTS more by personal or political decision

The majority of respondents answered that it is use as more a personal initiative than encourage by political reasons. Gianfranco Battissini EUL/NGL used as example the European Parliaments plenary when some of the MEPs decide to tweet and spread information at the same time. Besides the EFD Co-President’s Francesco Enrico Speroni think that this used is motivated by personal decision than a political reason.

However in the case of Lada Jurica, EPP, consider that “both, we have greatly developed our corporate communication, but we also believe that without direct and personal involvement of MEPs themselves, our reach will be limited”. Gianfranco Battissini added that in some cases the MEPs are not realizing the importance of the new technologies and are the press officers who have to encourage the MEPs to engage the new social media channels. Even he remarked the extremely importance of the work of the DG COMM of the European Parliament.

Section 5.4. Change of the European Parliament since the arrival of the new technologies.

The European Parliament as an institution it was the first one to engage the social media channels and the starting point it was the 2009 Elections. Barbara Quilez, explained “I must said that we were the first institution which do it and the experience is really positive. The reason why we start to do it was the elections”. However before this extreme change Gianfranco Battissini remarked that when he arrived to the European Parliament, twenty years ago “The only technology available it was an orange fax, green telephone. Then it was produced the arrival of a kind of Internet and the mail system” And he emphasized that at the beginning MEPs are mostly against these new changes.

But in general this change is observed by all the respondents. Most of them remarked the increase of the “greater use of new media, online communication, multimedia, social media etc” Richard More said. Also Lada Jurica noticed that in her answer “Everybody walks around with their Smartphone, tweets, EBooks, mails...” Even the European Parliament encourage these changes, for instance with the new social tool call NewsHub which Barbara Quilez defined as “where we will gather all the information which is publish about European Union also about MEPs”. Even more the participation on the Facebook debate organized by the European Parliament DG COMM division is



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encouraged the debate. Mr Joseph Daul chairmen of the European People's Party say "these are new tools that enable us to communicate directly with citizens. This is very positive. As we see today, it is something we use on a daily basis".

5.2. Qualitative conclusions

According to the findings presented in this section it can be highlighted some remarks. First, it is important to understand that the findings are mostly personal opinions. Most of the respondent said that they answered by their own and not by the political group for which they are working for. So in that sense these results need to be taken into consideration in that frame. Even when the social media technologies are trying to gather citizens and build bridge towards citizens the Chairman or Chairwoman did not answer by themselves to questionnaire, even when it was tweeted a request and sent by email.

Secondly it is significant to notice that a second part of the qualitative analysis did not take place. It was focus on a random questionnaire which should be launch to the whole MEPs. However due to short time to proceeded with this one, it was decided to focus only on the main relevance people of each political group. Therefore the qualitative results presented in this section gather the main political groups but not all the opinion of the MEPs selected for this study.

Taking into account these two first points it will be present conclusions remarks to the qualitative section.

The different interviews made it showed that in general there is a positive perception towards the new social media technologies. This can be perceived among the different political tendencies of the European Parliament but also one of the DG COMM responsible noticed it. This can be link to the idea proposed on the theoretical framework of this paper, that political communication is moving to another scene, which is denominated as "Internet politics" as Andrew Chadwick remarked in his volume "The handbook of interne politics". In addition of this it can be link to another theory proposed that a new Public Sphere, one virtual is growing and the MEPs are communicating there. However even when these theories are showing a real and a big change some of the press officers interviewed also said that a lot of MEPs prefer to contact face to face to the citizens as they do not want to lose the personal contact. That can refer of the perception of the virtual sphere that it has presented on the theoretical framework. In fact it can be say that most of the MEPs do not want to lose the personal contact with citizens. That demonstrated that still the Virtual Sphere is a



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concept in process. The press officer of the main political groups showed that in their answers when they remarked that not all the group are using the online communication platforms or when some of them answered that some MEPs are not using the online communication tools. It is important to highlight that this is a general perception and some skepticism can be noticed among the interviews.

Another idea referred at the theoretical framework it was that the politicians in some cases are using the online communication tools a mirror to spread their political ideas. To the question if they are using under political reasons or personal reasons most of the respondents answered that both. In fact their online communication profiles are link to the fact that they are politicians. However they belong to the European Parliament which represents the citizens that is the main reason why they are presents on it, to be in touch with citizens. Besides the European Parliament as an institution has change since the beginning encourage a change in the DG COMM but also promoting more use by their Members. In fact is not only the European Parliament but also the political groups working on it. Therefore there is a political interest to be on the online communication tools and this is leading a change, the one towards what it is presented as Virtual Public Sphere. But as we said on the precedent paragraph the idea of the Virtual Sphere is still developing as most of the Members are not fully represented on the new online communication platforms.

However on the both ideas presented here it can conclude the same: the European Parliament is made by a large number of politicians and in the end most of them still prefers the personal contact with citizens. And secondly, these members are using the online communication tools personally and politically. In the end these two ideas are part of the concept of the Virtual Sphere which came to take the place of the Public Sphere described by Jünger Habermas. It can be said that today the society it is living a process of transition from the Public Sphere towards a Virtual Sphere. Nowadays this process still ongoing as the presence of the MEPs on the online communication platforms shows.

The previous ideas are two ideas externals of the research question which lead this thesis. If it is focused the attention to the study research questions it will be answering the questions about the natural clusters at the European Parliament. On the qualitative research it has asked to the press officers about the differences of nationality, age and political group among the MEPs.



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First according to the political groups and the answered of the respondents who represented that political group it can be said that the answers were similar. That means that the political groups using the online communication platforms do not presence highly differences. That can be explained as now, as it has said before, is still a process on experiment on the online communication platforms. So if it also taken into accounts the answered of these represents it cannot notice a big difference.

Secondly, in regards of the MEPs nationality the press officers said that they do not seem this as main factor of difference. Each of the MEPs came from different national scenarios and in the end is their personal decision if they used or not the online communication platform. It was interesting that one of the press officers – European People's Party – said that when the MEPs choose the online communication platform to be in this case the country can have an impact. That can be explained as not all the European countries are using the same online communication platforms. So, the decision it can be lead in order to communicate to their national followers they will select the online communication platform most use in their home country. For instance, the EPP press officers suggested that the MEPs from the Netherlands are using more Twitter as in that country the citizens are highly presence on it. Therefore even when the press officers said that there is no main difference among their nationalities, it can be said that when the MEPs have to choose the online communication platform their nationality is a factor which lead their decision.

The third part of the research question it was focused on the age of the MEPs. The age is not seem as a fundamental factor that can determinate the presence or not of the MEPs on the online communication platforms. This if it is take into account the answers of the respondents. However even when the respondents suggested this in the final conclusions it will showed that according to the quantitative results there is a formal patron among the age of the MEPs.

Above all it can be said that the perception that the respondents have of what the MEPS of their political group are doing is still not complete. As it has said twice in these conclusions of the qualitative part, the Virtual Sphere is still in progress. That's mean that even the "professional" in charge of the online communication strategies are still developing their strategies or even more they do not really see the differences among the platforms or the interests that move the MEPs to be in each of the online communication platforms. This idea it observed among the answers of the press officers of the political groups. It could be said that the member of the DG COMM of the European Parliament is better inform as their work is to monitories and keep an eye on



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this tendencies. But the press officers of the different political groups are still using the old systems of communication as their basic word. And even they do not know how to encourage their MEPs to increase their presence on the online communication platforms.

PART VI: FINDINGS: THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, AN OPEN DOOR TO ONLINE COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND TO NATURAL CLUSTERING.

The present research studied the new political communication which uses the current online communication tools in order to communicate with the citizens. Even when this “Internet politics”, as Andrew Chadwick describes it, was started in the United States, it has had a clear influence in the European Union politics. The very existence of a new Public Sphere which is named as Virtual Public Sphere is a reality nowadays. We can also talk about a new perspective on this concept called European Public Sphere which is a new space where European citizens can debate as an open forum for the European Politics.

This study shows how new online communication tools are used in the European Parliament, the institution which represents citizens from all the member nations. However some questions lead this work in order to answer if in the European Parliament we have different clusters depending on the MEPs nationality, political party or age. In fact as it is going to be explained we have found some clusters which demonstrated that these sociological characteristics have a real impact on the online communication presence of the MEPs.

In addition to this the title of this Master Thesis “The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament” which introduces this study, has showed that there is a clear influence performed by their nationality, political adscription and age. Further the two research questions go deeply on the structure and behavior of the MEPs in these online communication platforms. We have established as research questions: first, what kind of natural clusters can be established among the MEPs?, and secondly, “according to the different online tools selected in this study, how many correlations can be found among the MEPs online communication usages?”

In order to get an idea of this presence of the MEPs in the online communication platforms we conceive the Public Sphere as the place where the MEPs are developing



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their work. The Public Sphere is defined by Habermas as a public domain where different opinions can be discussed without any interference of the government or economic powers.

In this study we decided to introduce also the idea of the Virtual Public Sphere as today is the one which rules this new space. It has been seen that the virtual world can be consider as this space where discussed without an interference of the power. However when it turns into politics the politicians is included in this debate. Indeed they are includes with an horizontal approach. This horizontal approach here presented can make the political communication different from the older versions of the classical political communication. That is why it is important to see the concept introduces by Habermas in 1974 as a new one with new characteristics which help to develop a new discussions. Besides the two main of ideas of Habermasian theory *I think* and *I speak* appears together in this new forum. Further the mediators that used to be in the middle of the Public Sphere are leading the discussion are absorbed by the society that now exchange the roles of actors. In fact as it has said the classical communication from the top of the society to the society changes, in favor to a society in which the discussion normally will start at the citizens and then it will arrive to the politicians. A new social forum represents by the online communication platforms where citizens can express their voices and talk directly to the politicians. This new behavior is new trend that previously it could not be possible even to imagine.

However in this research it has pointed out one problem in this new society and new Public Sphere, the "right to access". It is important to stress that in this new society not everyone can have access to the online communication platforms. Those reduce the debate in between the politicians towards those citizens that have access. This problem on this new society it is raised by Castells which observed a new global society interconnect with a potential capacity to be global but also with the potential capacity to exclude some of the people who are not includes on the networks. In that case it is observed according to this research that even some MEPs which are not includes on the online communication platforms will be leave aside on the new Public Sphere. Therefore it can point out two actors that can have problems in this new society and in these new discussions: those citizens who do not have access to Internet but also those politicians who use the traditional ways of communication. Also it is important to stress as Castells said that the European culture is formed by 27 Member States. That is means that the European discussion will have 27 different or even more identities if it is counted the different regions inside of each country. In fact



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this has been observed in accordance of the findings of this research; different patterns depending on the country of origin of the MEPs or even a different political culture make MEPs to be more presence on the online communication platforms. Even when the qualitative data obtained it is not absolute in line with this theory. But as it is not representing the whole framework of the European Parliament as it does the quantitative it can be given more value to the quantitative data.

According to the particular situation of the European Parliament the lack of information it was one of the main problems of their Members and the Parliament as an Institution. But also this lack of information is mark by a lack of interest of the citizens in European politics. That can be explaining as a consequence of the discussion is located in Brussels, far away from the citizens' home country. Besides of the level of the discussion makes quite difficult to follow this discussions. However according to the findings of this research the new online communication platforms can make the debate closely to the citizens and easily to understand. On the qualitative research on most of the answers of the press officers of the European Political groups expressed their interest on an open debate towards citizens. But not only them also the European Parliament as an Institution since the last elections, 2009, they have increasing their presence on online communication platforms to locate the European debates into citizens' environments. Therefore it can be say that the MEPs are increasing their political communication activities in this new Public Sphere where the roles and actions are changing.

In order to study the Public Sphere and the presence on it of the MEPs the online communication platforms Facebook, Twitter, Websites and Blogging has showed some online tendencies. In fact it can be said the new European Public Sphere is being helped by these new online communication platforms. The EPS will be transnational and it will be open to the different nationalities of the 27 Member States. Even the MEPs are supporting this idea of the EPS and it is consider as one of their priorities. However this idea presented at the Strasbourg Plenary Session of the 7th September 2010 today is not fully success. In fact this research showed some non presence of their MEPs even when they are trying to be presents, they will and the acts are quite far. Even as a research I had several problems in order to communicate to them and that can be express as part of this EPS with some deficits. Besides in this new EPS it is remarkable that the ones who are leading are the youngest MEPs, those who came from Northern countries, in particularly from the Netherlands, Sweden or Finland, and if they are Members of the minor parties as the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for



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Europe (ALDE) or from the Greens/European Free Alliance. The Habermasian model of the EPS was describing “as regional, national and European debates in an osmotic model” so here it is presenting one example of this osmotic model in which these three characteristics are more influence by the society and are more open on the EPS.

According to the data obtained on this research it is observed that the MEPs are more presents on Facebook and Websites than on Twitter and Blogs. That can be explained for a question of easy engagement on these online communication platforms. In fact Facebook it is one of the most use online communication tool, and give the possibility to express to the politicians in an easy way than the rest of the tools. But also it is a question of their target audience. Nowadays Facebook is most use for a young audience. This can give the chance to the MEPs to communicate to a younger audience that considers the politics something far away from their interest.

The second case websites is the classical platform to communicate towards the citizens. But also give the chance to contain more information than the rest of the tools. This in relation of their target audience can be link to a broader one. Many journalists use the websites in order to obtain information from the politicians. That is why in most of the MEPs websites it can be find press release, and it is more link to the political party which they belong. The third position is Twitter which is used also by stakeholders, policy makers but also by journalists. In this case Twitter is a relative new online communication platform (2008), if it is compare with the websites. Twitter opens a new debate and it is interactive. That can produce that many MEPs do not want to participate in an open discussion where everyone can read and see what you are Twittering. As the data confirms they feel like that as is not such popular as Facebook it is. The last online communication platform use for less MEPs it is blogging. This many times it is combining with the Websites, but the problem is the time that requires to updates. Nowadays the blogging is decreasing in favor of the Twitter as the new factor as micro-blogging.

Above all in this research it has observed certain tendencies on the frame of the European Parliament. This it will come to give an answer to first research question: What kind of natural clusters can be established among the MEPs? It was decided to pre-establish the cluster which were focused on the nationality, political party and their age. Some findings have leaded us to categorize the MEPs in different groups.

According to their **nationality** it has been obtained that the MEPs from the Northern and the Western countries are the ones with a higher presence on the online



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communication platforms. Among the countries of this group it can be stressed the presence of the Sweden, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands. Among the different categories establish and in relation with their presence on Facebook, Twitter, blog and websites these MEPs from these countries always were in the first positions of the SPSS crossing data. On the other side the Eastern and the Southern countries normally are located on the lower positions among other countries Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy or Malta. However some case are needed to highlight as the Spanish MEPs and their presence on Blogging that is higher while on the Websites their presence is the lowest one. Also some countries from the Eastern region as Bulgaria are highly presents on the websites. It has find some reasons to explain this particular tendency among the MEPs different political systems, different social welfare. However it is important to stress that in the qualitative research show that the press officers do not perceive the nationality as a factor of difference among the MEPs of their European Political groups. But the EPP Head of Communication Lada Jurica explained that maybe it can be link their country which the platform that they are using, which can be consider interesting. Besides Barbara Quilez, form DG COMM of the European Parliament, said that more than the nationality could be question of age, as for instance the Greeks MEPs are older than the Swedish ones.

In regards of the MEPs **political party** it has been found some interesting findings. First most of the presence by MEPs by their political adscription is leading by the ALDE political party and the Greens/Free Alliance. That it is interesting as these parties are not the most vote on the European Elections, so they are not the major number at the European Parliament chamber. On the other side the EPP and the S&D which are the most voted even when they are highly represented these representation is not equal at the online communication platforms here analyzed. The only case quite different is the Non-attachment political coalition which is the higher on Twitter. In the case of the online communication platforms more use by the MEPs depending on their political group again it is observed the same division as before, first the use of Facebook is massive, secondly websites, thirdly Twitter and finally blogging. These according to the quantitative data, if it is observed the answers of the different policies officers this pattern change. On the questionnaire sent to the MEPs press officers it was a different timing answers, if it can measure their engagement towards citizens. One of the most active it was Lada Jurica (EPP – Head of Communication) who answered by Twitter to this research request and then by email. In the case of the rest of the parties their answers were slower and even the S&D did not answer to the questionnaire. In the case of the Greens/Free Alliance Michael More it was afraid to answer in name of their



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party as he wanted to remark that their answers reflect only his personal perception. Therefore it can be said, as the press officers that the use of the online communication platforms in the end is lead by a personal decision more than by a political decision. As a result of that it can be said that the minorities parties are using in a broadly way the online communication platforms that this research has studied. It can be said that to be smaller and recently parties the use of the online communication platforms led them to arrive to more citizens and move the European politics to the new Public Sphere. From the ALDE group none of their press officers answers the questionnaire, so it can be a symptom that even when they are presents still they need to go one step further. In fact this demonstrated that the idea of the school which supported an “opening up for party systems” also call as cyber-optimistic were right. This school forecasted the idea that in the future the political parties will be more open to use the online communication platforms because, in fact, the ICTs produce democracy and help to understand the democracy information”. Another idea link to this theory is the structure of the parties in this age it is more link to the cadre parties which are taking advance of the new forms of the political communication and the professional electoral associations. Two theories in regards of the political parties have been corroborated within the data obtained thanks to the quantitative research, the school of the cyber-optimistic but also the model of cadre parties.

Finally the third part study it was the **age** of the MEPs in relation to their presence on the online communication platforms. In regards of the age, something that it is clear through the quantitative research is that the most presence group per age are the youngest of the European Parliament. Those which age are in between the 18 and 30 years old. However these group of age is the minor one at the chamber, they are 10 MEPs on this group. Another finding that it has been repeating along these conclusions is that the most use online communication platform is Facebook and here once again it is observed a highest presence. Even the youngest MEPs are fully represented in this online communication platform. But also they are most presence on the Twitter online communication platform. As it has said before these tools are the ones used recently. Facebook it is easy to use, but Twitter require a deeply knowledge on what and how to communicate. In fact in these findings it is observer that the second group per age 31-43 is more presence on Websites, which can be related to their generation. The rest of groups per age are presents but not in a highly terms. Again it is observed that when it was asked to the press officers about the age as a factor of influence on MEPs presence on the online communication platforms they did not see this correlation. But if you observed in comparison with the quantitative data, it can be said that the age in the



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end it is a factor that determinate their presence or not. Barbara Quilez, DG COMM, explained that more than the age can be question of the age and the nationality. As the Greeks MEPs are the older ones and the Swedish are the youngest. However these ideas have not contemplated on this Master Thesis, which has focused only on the different possible clusters that can exist on the European Parliament.

Therefore to the second research question **“According to the different online tools selected in this study, how many correlations can be found among the MEPs online communication usages?”**

In order to answer this question it can be said that,

- It is observed a higher presence of the MEPs from the Northern and Western countries. Therefore it is exists a cluster related to the nationality. Even when it is not contemplated by the press officers who work with them.
- Secondly, according to the political adscription it can be establish another cluster which gathers the ALDE European Political Group and the Greens/Free Alliance. The first party, it is the third one represented at the European Parliament and the Greens are also another political group represents in a minority manner.
- The thirdly finding, indicate that the age highly present on the online communication platforms are the 18-31 years old, following by the 31-43 years old. That means that the age counts when it is related to be presence on the online communication tools.
- One finally remark which has found is that on the political communication it is selected in a broadly way the Facebook as a major online communication platform to be present. That is inclusive not depending on country, political adscription or age. Following the Websites, then Twitter and finally the blogging.

In conclusion this research shows new patterns and tendencies at the European politics. Once that is influenced by the new online communication platforms and which are helping to create a new European Public Sphere. Nevertheless this research shows that is still a work in progress inside the citizens house (the European Parliament) in which the MEPs are working and adapting. It is significant that the main hypothesis that was drafted at the behind of this research the data research has demonstrated. One it is the presence of more Northern MEPs on the online



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communication platforms and the other more presence of the lefties and liberals MEPs. The cluster of the age it is more normal than the youngest generation of MEPs are more presences on the online communication platforms as it's a generational question. To sum up it can be said that it has found fourth correlations among the presence the MEPs at the online communication platforms.

Epilogue

This Master Thesis was started by January of 2012 and finished by the end of April 2013. It is important to stress that the data presented in this research has suffered several modifications because of recently changes on the European Parliament. Furthermore the engagement of MEPs to the online communication platforms is changing every day. It is important to take into consideration this remark as many of the information presented here can be updated now due to the changes in the chamber or due to political decision to engage more with certain online communication platforms.

Besides we can observe some disparities among the quantitative and qualitative research. In fact the quantitative analysis has being performed by using the data processor SPSS and without the intervention of any person except for the author, but the qualitative information was difficult to obtain because we needed the collaboration of interviewees. The first objective here was to get the answers of the principle Chairmen or Chairwomen of the European Political groups in order to have a clear picture of the European Parliament political groups' positions about communication technologies. But due to their unavailability to answer these questions we choose to send them to their press officers who kindly answer us the questionnaire we sent by email.

The second part of the qualitative research as we explained in the Methodology section was organized by a random sampling questionnaire to the different MEPs of the Chamber but due to a matter of time it could not be completed. This can be part of a further research that continues our analysis. Indeed this research could also include an update of the data here presented and focus in other aspects. For instance one of these aspects that should be investigated further is the use of these online communication platforms by politicians and the way technologies transform political discourse. Our study has opened a debate on the online communication platforms in the European Parliament and what effects they are having in real politics. Our desire is



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that these ideas can be used as a starting point for further research, in order to complete some academic works on this topic, maybe related to the European Public Sphere and the role of citizens in it.



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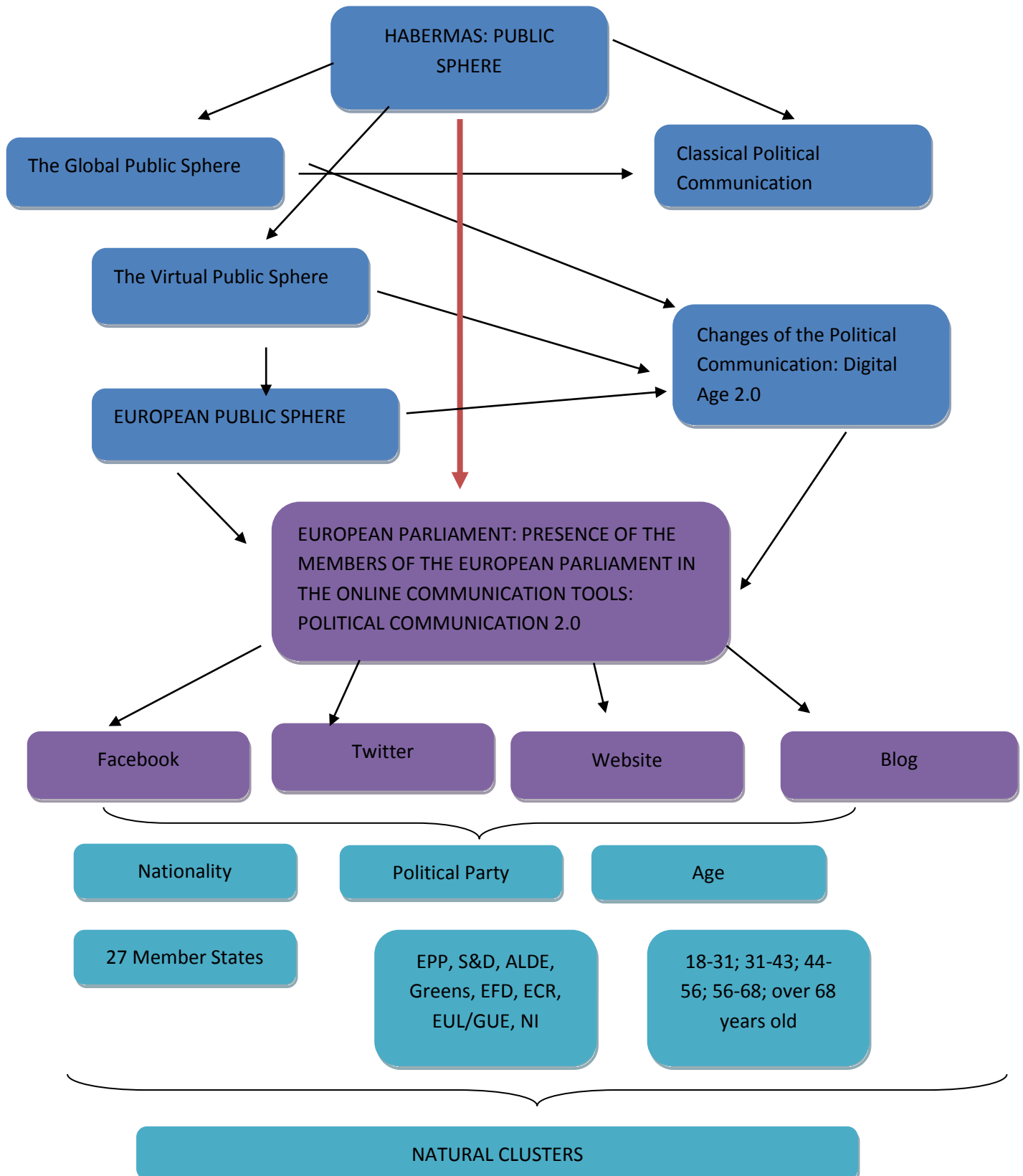
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ANEXX

Annex (0) Picture of the research





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Annex (I) Quantitative Research (Empirical)

Full list of MEPs used for this research divide by countries

AT (Austria)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Martin Ehrenhauser	AT	NI	1	1	1	1	31-43
Karin Kadenbach	AT	S&D	0	1	1	0	44-56
Othmar Karas	AT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Elisabeth Köstinger	AT	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Jörg Leichtfried	AT	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Eva Lichtenberger	AT	Greens	1	1	1	0	44-56
Ulrike Lunacek	AT	Greens	1	1	1	0	44-56
Hans-Peter Martin	AT	NI	1	0	0	1	44-56
Andreas Molzer	AT	NI	1	1	1	1	44-56
Franz Obermayr	AT	NI	1	0	0	0	56-68
Hubert Pirker	AT	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Evelyn Regner	AT	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Paul RüBIG	AT	EPP	1	1	0	1	56-68
Richard Seeber	AT	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Ewald Stadler	AT	NI	1	0	1	0	44-56
Hannes Swoboda	AT	S&D	1	1	1	1	56-68
Josef Weidenholzer	AT	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Angelika Werthman	AT	NI	0	1	1	0	44-56

BE (Belgium)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Ivo Belet	BE	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Frieda Brepoels	BE	Greens	0	0	1	1	56-68
Philip Claey	BE	NI	1	0	0	1	44-56
Frederic Daerden	BE	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43
Philippe De Backer	BE	ALDE	1	0	0	1	31-43
Jean-Luc Dehaene	BE	EPP	0	1	1	0	68 +
Veronique de Keyser	BE	S&D	1	0	1	1	56-68
Anne Delvaux	BE	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Isabel Durant	BE	Greens	1	1	1	0	56-68
Saïd El Kadraoui	BE	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43
Derk Jan Eppink	BE	ECR	1	0	0	1	44-56
Mathieu Grosch	BE	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Philippe Lamberts	BE	Greens	1	1	0	0	44-56
Louis Michel	BE	ALDE	1	0	0	0	56-68
Frederique Ries	BE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Bart Staes	BE	Greens	1	1	1	1	44-56
Mac Tarabella	BE	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Marianne Thyssen	BE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Kathleen Van Brempt	BE	S&D	1	0	1	0	31-43
Frank Vanhecke	BE	EFD	1	0	0	0	44-56
Guy Verhofstadt	BE	ALDE	1	1	0	0	56-68

BG (Bulgaria)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Slavi Binev	BG	NI	1	1	1	0	44-56
Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova	BG	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Stanimir Ilchev	BG	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Iliana Malinova Iotova	BG	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Iliana Ivanova	BG	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Ivalio Kalfin	BG	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Metin Kazak	BG	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Evgeni Kirilov	BG	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Andrey Kovatchev	BG	EPP	1	1	1	1	44-56
Svetoslav H. Malinov	BG	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Mariya Nedelcheva	BG	EPP	1	0	1	0	
Nazehda Neynsky	BG	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Vladko Todorov Panayotov	BG	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Antonyia Parvanova	BG	ALDE	1	1	1	1	44-56
Dimitar Stoyanov	BG	NI	1	0	1	0	18-30
Emil Stoyanov	BG	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Vladimir Urutchev	BG	EPP	1	0	0	0	56-68
Kristian Vigenin	BG	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43

CY (Cyprus)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Takis Hadjigeorgiou	CY	EUL/GUE	1	0	0	0	44-56
Ionnis Kasoulides	CY	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Kyriakos Mavronikolas	CY	S&D	0	0	0	0	
Antigoni Papadopoulou	CY	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Eleni Theocharous	CY	EPP	1	0	0	0	56-68
Kyriacos Triantaphyllides	CY	EUL/GUE	0	0	1	0	56-68

CZ (Czech Republic)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Jan Brezina	CZ	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Zuzana Brozobohatá	CZ	S&D	0	0	1	0	44-56
Milan Cabrnoch	CZ	ECR	1	1	1	1	44-56
Andrea Ceskova	CZ	ECR	0	0	0	0	31-43
Robert Dusek	CZ	S&D	1	0	0	0	44-56
Hynek Fajmon	CZ	ECR	1	1	1	0	44-56
Richard Falbr	CZ	S&D	1	1	1	0	68 +
Jiri Havel	CZ	S&D	1	0	0	0	
Jaromir Kohlíček	CZ	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Edvard Kozusník	CZ	ECR	1	1	1	1	31-43
Jiri Mastálka	CZ	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	44-56
Miroslav Ouzký	CZ	ECR	1	0	1	0	44-56
Pavel Poc	CZ	S&D	0	1	0	0	44-56
Miloslav Ransdorf	CZ	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Vladimír Remek	CZ	EUL/GUE	0	0	1	0	56-68
Zuzana Roithová	CZ	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Libor Rouček	CZ	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Olga Sehnalová	CZ	S&D	0	1	1	0	44-56
Ivo Strejček	CZ	ECR	1	0	1	0	44-56
Evžen Tosenovský	CZ	ECR	0	0	0	1	44-56
Oldřich Vlasák	CZ	ECR	1	0	1	0	56-68
Jan Zahradil	CZ	ECR	1	1	1	1	44-56

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DE (Germany) (I)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Jan Philipp Albrecht	DE	Greens	1	1	0	1	18-30
Alexander Alvaro	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Bukhard Balz	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Lothar Bisky	DE	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	1	68 +
Reimer Böge	DE	EPP	0	1	1	0	56-68
Franziska K.Brantner	DE	Greens	1	1	1	0	31-43
Elmar Brok	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Udo Bullmann	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Reinhard Bütikofer	DE	Greens	0	0	1	0	56-68
Daniel Caspary	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Jorgo Chatzimarkakis	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Birgit Collin- Langen	DE	EPP	0	0	0	1	44-56
Michael Cramer	DE	Greens	0	0	1	0	56-68
Jürgen Creutzmann	DE	ALDE	1	0	1	1	56-68
Albert Dess	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Christian Ehler	DE	EPP	0	0	0	1	44-56
Cornelia Ernst	DE	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	1	44-56
Ismail Ertug	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	31-43
Markus Ferber	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Knut Fleckenstein	DE	S&D	1	1	0	0	56-68
Karl-Heinz Florenz	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Michael Gahler	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Evelyn Gebhardt	DE	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Jens Geier	DE	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Sven Giegold	DE	Greens	1	1	0	1	31-43
Norbet Glante	DE	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Ingerborg Gräßle	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Mathias Groote	DE	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43
Gerald Häfner	DE	Greens	1	1	0	0	44-56
Thomas Händel	DE	EUL/GUE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Rebeca Harms	DE	Greens	0	0	1	0	44-56
Jutta Haug	DE	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Martin Häusling	DE	Greens	0	1	0	1	44-56
Nadja Hirsch	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Monika Hohlmeier	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Peter Jahr	DE	EPP	0	0	0	1	44-56
Elisabeth Jeggle	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Petra Kammerevert	DE	S&D	0	0	1	0	44-56
Martin Kastler	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Franziska Keller	DE	Greens	1	1	1	1	31-43
Christa Klass	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Wolf Klinz	DE	ALDE	0	0	0	1	68 +
Jürgen Klote	DE	EUL/GUE	1	1	1	1	56-68
Dieter-Lebrecht Koch	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Silvana Koch-Mehrin	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Holger Krahmer	DE	ALDE	1	1	0	1	31-43
Constanze Angela Krehl	DE	S&D	1	0	0	1	44-56
Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Werner Kuhn	DE	EPP	1	1	0	0	56-68
Alexander Graf Lambsdorff	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Bernd Lange	DE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Werner Langen	DE	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Klaus-Heiner Lehne	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
JO Leinen	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Pieter Liese	DE	EPP	1	1	0	1	44-56

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

DE (Germany) (II)

Barbara Lochbihler	DE	Greens	1	0	1	0	44-56
Sabine Losing	DE	EUL/GUE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Thomas Mann	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Hans-Peter Mayer	DE	EPP	0	1	1	0	56-68
Gesine Meissner	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	56-68
Norbet Neuser	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Annemie Neyts-Uytterbroek	DE	EPP	1	0	1	1	56-68
Angelika Niebler	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Doris Pack	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	68 +
Markus Pieper	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Bernd Posselt	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Hans-Gert Pöttering	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Bernhard Rapkay	DE	S&D	1	0	0	1	56-68
Britta Reimers	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Herbert Reul	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Ulrike Rodust	DE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Dagmar Roth-Behrendt	DE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Heide Rühle	DE	Greens	0	0	1	0	68 +
Horst Schenllahardt	DE	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Birgit Scnieber-Jastram	DE	EPP	0	1	1	0	56-68
Helmut Scholz	DE	EUL/GUE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Elisabeth Schroedter	DE	Greens	1	0	1	0	44-56
Martin Schulz	DE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Werner Schulz	DE	Greens	0	0	0	1	56-68
Andreas Schwab	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Peter Simon	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Birgit Sippel	DE	S&D	1	0	1	1	44-56
Renate Sommer	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Jutta Steinruck	DE	S&D	1	1	1	1	44-56
Alexandra Thein	DE	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Michael Theurer	DE	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Helga Trüpel	DE	Greens	1	0	1	1	44-56
Thomas Ulmer	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Sabine Verheyen-	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Axel Voos	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Manfred Weber	DE	EPP	1	1	0	1	31-43
Barbara Weiler	DE	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Anja Weisgerber	DE	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Kerstin Westphal	DE	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Rainer Wieland	DE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Sabine Wils	DE	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	44-56
Hermann Winkler	DE	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Joachim Zeller	DE	EPP	0	1	0	0	56-68
Grabiele Zimmer	DE	EUL/GUE	0	0	1	0	44-56

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

DK (Denmark)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Margrete Auken	DK	Greens	1	1	1	0	56-68
Bendt Bendtsen	DK	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Ole Christensen	DK	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Anne E. Jensen	DK	ALDE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Dan Jorgensen	DK	S&D	1	0	1	1	31-43
Morten Lokkegaard	DK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Morten Messerschmidt	DK	EFD	1	0	1	0	31-43
Jens Rohde	DK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Anna Rosback	DK	ECR	0	0	0	0	
Christel Schaldemose	DK	S&D	1	0	1	1	44-56
Soren Bo Sondergaard	DK	EUL/GUE	1	0	1	1	56-68
Britta Thomsen	DK	S&D	1	0	0	0	56-68
Emili turunen	DK	Greens	1	1	0	0	18-30

EE (Estonia)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Tunne Kelam	EE	EPP	1	0	1	0	68 +
Kristiina Ojuland	EE	ALDE	1	1	0	1	44-56
Siiri Ovir	EE	ALDE	0	0	1	0	56-68
Ivari Padar	EE	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Vilja Savisarr-Toomast	EE	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Indrek Tarand	EE	Greens	1	1	1	0	44-56

ES (Spain)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Josefa Andrés Barea	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Pablo Arias Echevarría	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	31-43
Ines Ayala Sender	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Pilar Ayuso	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	68 +
Maria Badia I Cutchet	ES	S&D	1	0	1	1	56-68
Izaskun Bilbao	ES	ALDE	1	0	0	1	44-56
Pilar del Castillo	ES	EPP	1	1	1	1	56-68
Alejandro Cercas	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Mauxiliadora Correa	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	31-43
Ricardo Cortés Lastra	ES	S&D	1	1	0	0	31-43
Agustín Díaz de Mera	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Rosa Estaràs Ferragut	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	
Santiago Fisas Ayxela	ES	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Carmen Fraga	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Vicent M. Garcés Ramón	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Dolores García-Hierro Caraballo	ES	S&D	1	0	0	0	44-56
Iratxe García Perez	ES	S&D	1	0	0	0	31-43
Eider Gardiazabal Rubial	ES	S&D	1	0	0	0	31-43
Salvador Garriga Polledo	ES	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Luis de Grands Pascual	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Enrique Guerrero Salom	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Cristina Guitierrez- Cortines	ES	EPP	1	0	0	0	68 +
Sergio Guitierrez Prieto	ES	S&D	1	0	0	1	18-30
Esther Herranz García	ES	EPP	1	0	0	1	31-43
María Irigoyen Pérez	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68

ES (Spain) (II)

C.J Iturgaiz Angulo	ES	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio	ES	S&D	1	0	1	1	44-56
Verónica Lope Fontagné	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
JF Lopez Aguilar	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Antonio López-Istúriz White	ES	EPP	0	1	0	0	31-43
MA Martínez Martínez	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	68 +
Antonio Masip Hidalgo	ES	S&D	1	0	0	1	56-68
Gabriel Mato Adrover	ES	EPP	1	0	1	1	44-56
Jaime Mayor Oreja	ES	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Emilio Menéndez del Valle	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Willy Meyer	ES	EUL/GUE	1	0	1	0	56-68
FJ Millán Mon	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Ana Miranda	ES	Greens	0	0	0	0	44-56
María Muñoz de Urquiza	ES	EUL/GUE	1	1	0	1	44-56
JA Naranjo Escobar	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Raimon Obiols	ES	S&D	1	1	0	1	68 +
Eva Ortiz Vilella	ES	EPP	1	1	0	0	31-43
Andres Perello	ES	S&D	1	0	0	1	44-56
Teresa Riera	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Carmen Romero	ES	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Raúl Romeva i Rueda	ES	Greens	1	1	1	1	31-43
José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra	ES	EPP	0	0	0	0	44-56
Antolín Sánchez Presedo	ES	S&D	0	1	0	0	56-68
Salvador Sedo i Alabart	ES	EPP	1	1	0	0	31-43
Francisco Sosa Wagner	ES	NI	1	0	0	1	56-68
Ramon Temosa I Balcells	ES	ALDE	1	1	0	0	44-56
Alejo Vidal-Quadras	ES	EPP	1	1	1	1	56-68
Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García	ES	S&D	1	0	0	0	68 +
Pablo Zalba Bidegain	ES	EPP	1	1	0	1	31-43

FI (Finland)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Tarja Cronberg	FI	Greens	1	0	1	0	68 +
Sari Essayah	FI	EPP	1	1	1	1	44-56
Carl Haglund	FI	ALDE	1	0	0	0	
Satu Hassi	FI	Greens	1	1	1	1	56-68
Liisa Jaakonsaari	FI	S&D	1	1	1	1	56-68
Anneli Jäätteenmäki	FI	ALDE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Eija-Riitta Korhola	FI	EPP	1	1	1	1	44-56
Riikka Manner	FI	ALDE	1	0	1	1	31-43
Sirpa Pietikäinen	FI	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Mitro Repo	FI	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Petri Sarvamaa	FI	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Hannu Takkula	FI	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Sampo Terho	FI	EFD	1	0	1	1	31-43

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FR (France)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Damien Abad	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	
François Alfonsi	FR	Greens	0	0	0	0	56-68
Sophie Auconie	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Jean-Pierre Audy	FR	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Sandrine Bélier	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	31-43
Malika Benarab-Attou	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	44-56
Pervenche Beres	FR	S&D	0	1	0	1	44-56
Jean Paul Bisset	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	56-68
Jean-Jacob Bicep	FR	Greens	0	0	0	0	44-56
Phillipe Boulland	FR	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
José Bové	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	56-68
Alain Cadec	FR	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
François Castex	FR	S&D	0	1	1	0	44-56
Jean-Marie Cavada	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	68 +
Yves Cochet	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	56-68
Daniel Cohn-Benedit	FR	Greens	1	1	1	0	56-68
Arnaud Danjean	FR	EPP	0	0	1	0	31-43
Michael Dantin	FR	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Rachida Dati	FR	EPP	1	1	0	1	44-56
Joseph Daul	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Marielle de Sarnez	FR	ALDE	1	1	0	0	56-68
Karima Delli	FR	Greens	1	1	1	0	31-43
Harlem Desir	FR	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Christine de Veyrac	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Helene Flautre	FR	Greens	1	0	1	0	44-56
Gaston Franco	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Marielle Gallo	FR	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Jean-Paul Gauzes	FR	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Bruno Gollnisch	FR	NI	1	1	1	0	56-68
Sylvie Goullard	FR	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Estelle Grelrier	FR	S&D	1	1	0	1	
Catherine Greze	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	44-56
Nathalie Griesbeck	FR	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Francoise Grossete	FR	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Sylvie Guillaume	FR	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Jacky Henin	FR	EUL/GUE	1	0	0	0	44-56
Liem Hoang Ngoc	FR	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Brice Hortefeux	FR	EPP	1	1	0	0	44-56
Yannick Jadot	FR	Greens	1	1	1	0	44-56
Eva Joly	FR	Greens	1	1	0	1	68 +
Philippe Juvin	FR	EPP	1	1	0	1	44-56
Nicole Kil-Nielsen	FR	Greens	1	1	1	0	56-68
Alain Lamassoure	FR	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Agnes Le Brun	FR	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Costance Le Grip	FR	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Patrick Le Hyaric	FR	EUL/GUE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Corinne Lepage	FR	ALDE	1	1	0	1	56-68
Jean-Marie Le Pen	FR	NI	1	0	0	0	68 +
Marine Le Pen	FR	NI	1	1	0	0	44-56
Veronique Mathieu	FR	EUL/GUE	0	0	1	0	56-68
Jean-Luc Melencho	FR	EUL/GUE	1	1	0	1	56-68
Elisabeth Morin-Chartier	FR	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Younous Omarjee	FR	EUL/GUE	1	1	1	1	31-43

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

FR (France) (II)

Gilles Pargneaux	FR	S&D	1	1	0	1	56-68
Maurice Ponga	FR	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Franck Proust	FR	EPP	1	1	0	1	44-56
Dominique Riquet	FR	EPP	1	0	0	0	56-68
Michele Rivasi	FR	Greens	1	1	1	0	56-68
Jean Roatta	FR	EPP	0	0	0	0	68 +
Robert Rochefort	FR	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Tokia Saifi	FR	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Marie-Therese Sanchez-Schmid	FR	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Michele Striffler	FR	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Patrice Tirolien	FR	S&D	1	1	0	0	56-68
Catherine Trautmann	FR	S&D	1	0	0	1	56-68
Marie-Christine Vergiat	FR	EUL/GUE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Bernadette Vergnau	FR	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Philippe de Villiers	FR	EFD	1	0	0	0	56-68
Dominique Vlasto	FR	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Henri Weber	FR	S&D	0	1	1	0	56-68
Karim Zeribi	FR	Greens	0	0	0	0	44-56

HL (Greece)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Charalampos Angourakis	HL	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Kriton Arsenis	HL	S&D	1	1	1	1	31-43
Nikolaos Chountis	HL	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Nikos Chrysogelos	HL	Greens	1	0	1	0	44-56
Spyros Danellis	HL	S&D	0	0	0	1	56-68
Dimitrios Droutsas	HL	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Marieta Giannakou	HL	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Mari Eleni Koppa	HL	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Gergios Koumoutsakos	HL	EPP	0	0	0	0	44-56
Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou	HL	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Chrysoula Paliadeli	HL	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Gergios Papanikolaou	HL	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Georgios Papastamkos	HL	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Anni Podimata	HL	S&D	1	0	0	1	44-56
Konstantinos Poupakis	HL	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Sylvana Rapti	HL	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Nikolaos Salavrakos	HL	EFD	0	0	0	0	56-68
Theodoros Skylakakis	HL	ALDE	1	1	1	1	44-56
Georgios Stavrakakis	HL	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Gergios Toussas	HL	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Ionnais A. Tsoukalas	HL	EPP	1	1	1	0	68 +
Nikki Tzavela	HL	EFD	0	0	0	0	56-68

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

HU (Hungary)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Zoltán Bagó	HU	EPP	1	0	0	1	31-43
Lajos Bokros	HU	ECR	1	0	0	0	56-68
Tamás Deutsch	HU	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Kinga Gal	HU	EPP	0	0	1	0	31-43
Ildiko Gall-Pelcz	HU	EPP	0	0	0	0	44-56
Bela Glattfelder	HU	EPP	0	0	0	0	44-56
Kinga Göncz	HU	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Zita Gurmai	HU	S&D	1	1	1	1	44-56
Andras Gyürk	HU	EPP	0	0	0	0	31-43
Agnes Hankiss	HU	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Edit Herczog	HU	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Livia Jaroka	HU	EPP	0	0	1	0	31-43
Adam Kosa	HU	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Bela Kovacs	HU	NI	0	0	0	0	44-56
Krisztina Morvai	HU	NI	1	0	0	1	44-56
Csaba Ory	HU	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Gyorgy Schopflin	HU	EPP	0	0	0	0	68 +
Laszlo Surjan	HU	EPP	1	0	1	0	68 +
Jozsef Szajer	HU	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Csanad Szegedi	HU	NI	1	0	1	0	18-30
Csaba S. Tabajdi	HU	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68

IE (Ireland)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Liam Aylward	IE	ALDE	1	1	0	0	56-68
Nessa Childers	IE	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Emer Costello	IE	S&D	1	1	0	0	44-56
Brian Crowley	IE	ALDE	1	0	1	0	44-56
Pat the Cope Gallagher	IE	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Marian Harkin	IE	ALDE	1	1	0	0	56-68
Jim Higgins	IE	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Sean Kelly	IE	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Mairead McGuinness	IE	EPP	1	1	1	1	44-56
Gay Mitchell	IE	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Paul Murphy	IE	EUL/GUE	1	1	1	1	18-30
Phil Prendergast	IE	S&D	1	0	0	0	44-56

IT (Italy)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Gabriele Albertini	IT	EPP	1	0	0	1	56-68
Sonia Alfano	IT	ALDE	1	1	0	1	31-43
Madgi Cristiano Allam	IT	EFD	1	1	1	0	56-68
Roberta Angelilli	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Antonello Antinoro	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Alfredo Antoniozzi	IT	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Pino Arlacchi	IT	S&D	1	0	0	1	46-65
Raffaele Baldassarre	IT	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Francesca Balzani	IT	S&D	1	0	0	1	44-56
Paolo Bartolozzi	IT	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Sergio Berlato	IT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Luigi Berlinguer	IT	S&D	1	0	0	0	68 +
Maria Bizzoto	IT	EFD	1	1	1	0	31-43
Vito Bonisignore	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	68 +
Mario Borghesio	IT	EFD	0	0	0	0	56-68
Rita Borsellino	IT	S&D	1	0	0	1	56-68
David Campbell Bannerman	IT	ECR	1	0	1	0	44-56
Antonio Cancian	IT	EPP	1	0	0	1	56-68
Salvatore Caronna	IT	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Carlo Casini	IT	EPP	1	0	1	1	68 +
Sergio Gaetano Cofferati	IT	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Lara Comi	IT	EPP	1	1	0	1	18-30
Silvia Costa	IT	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Andrea Cozzolino	IT	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Rosario Crocetta	IT	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Francesco De Angelis	IT	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

IT (Italy) (II)

Luigi C. De Mita	IT	EPP	0	0	0	0	68 +
Leonardo Dmenici	IT	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Herbet Dorfmann	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Carlo Fidanza	IT	EPP	1	1	0	0	31-43
Lorenzo Fontana	IT	EFD	1	1	0	1	31-43
Elisabetta Gardini	IT	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Guisepe Gargani	IT	EPP	1	0	0	0	56-68
Roberto Gualtieri	IT	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Salvatore Iacolino	IT	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Vicenzo Iovine	IT	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Giovanni La Via	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Clemente Mastella	IT	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Barbara Matera	IT	EPP	1	0	0	0	31-43
Mario Mauro	IT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Erminia Mazzoni	IT	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Guido Milana	IT	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Claudio Morganti	IT	EFD	1	0	0	0	31-43
Tiziano Motti	IT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Cristiana Muscardini	IT	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Alfredo Pallone	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Pieter Antonio Panzeri	IT	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Aldo Patriciello	IT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Mario Pirillo	IT	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Gianni Pittella	IT	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Vittorio Prodi	IT	S&D	1	0	1	0	68 +
Fiorello Provera	IT	EFD	1	0	0	0	56-68
Niccolo Rinaldi	IT	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Crezcenzio Rivellini	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Licia Ronzulli	IT	EPP	1	0	0	1	31-43
Oreste Rossi	IT	EFD	1	0	1	0	44-56
Potito Salatto	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	68 +
Matteo Salvini	IT	EFD	1	0	0	0	31-43
Amalia Sartori	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
David-Maria Sassoli	IT	S&D	1	1	1	1	44-56
Giancarlo Scotta	IT	EFD	0	0	1	1	56-68
Marco Scurria	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Debora Serracchiani	IT	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43
Sergio Paolo F. Silvestris	IT	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Francesco Enrico Speroni	IT	EFD	0	0	0	0	56-68
Gianluca Susta	IT	S&D	0	0	0	1	44-56
Salvatore Tatarella	IT	EPP	1	1	1	1	56-68
Patrizia Toia	IT	S&D	0	1	1	0	56-68
Gino Trematerra	IT	EPP	0	0	0	0	68 +
Gionmmaria Ugghias	IT	ALDE	1	1	0	1	44-56
Gianni Vattimo	IT	ALDE	1	0	1	1	68 +
Iva Zanichchi	IT	EPP	1	0	0	0	68 +
Andrea Zanoni	IT	ALDE	1	0	0	1	44-56

LT (Lithuania)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Laima Liucija Andrikiénė	LT	EPP	1	1	1	1	44-56
Zigmantas Balcytis	LT	S&D	1	1	0	1	56-68
Vilja Blinkeviciute	LT	S&D	0	0	1	0	44-56
Leonidas Donskis	LT	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Juozas Imbrasas	LT	EFD	1	0	1	0	68 +
Vytautas Landsbergis	LT	EPP	1	1	1	0	68 +
Radvilė Morkunaite-Mikulienė	LT	EPP	1	0	0	1	18-30
Rolandas Paksas	LT	EFD	0	0	1	0	44-56
Justas Vincas Paleckis	LT	S&D	1	0	1	1	68 +
Algirdas Saudargas	LT	EPP	0	1	0	0	56-68
Valdemar Tomasevski	LT	ECR	1	0	1	0	44-56
Viktor Uspaskich	LT	ALDE	1	1	0	0	44-56



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LU (Luxembourg)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Georges Bach	LU	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Frank Engel	LU	EPP	1	0	0	0	31-43
Robert Goebbels	LU	S&D	1	0	0	1	56-68
Charles Goerens	LU	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Astrid Lulling	LU	EPP	1	0	0	1	68 +
Claude Turmes	LU	Greens	1	1	1	0	44-56

LV (Latvia)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Ivars Godmanis	LV	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Sandra Kalniete	LV	EPP	1	1	0	1	56-68
Krisjanis Karins	LV	EPP	1	1	1	0	
Alexander Mirsky	LV	S&D	1	0	0	0	44-56
Alfred Rubiks	LV	EUL/GUE	0	1	0	0	56-68
Karlis Sadurskis	LV	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Inese Vaidere	LV	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Tatjana Zdanoka	LV	Greens	1	1	1	0	56-68
Roberts Zile	LV	ECR	0	1	1	1	44-56

MT (Malta)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Jonh Attard- Montalto	MT	S&D	1	0	0	1	46-65
Simon Busuttil	MT	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
David Casa	MT	EPP	1	0	1	1	31-43
Joseph Cuschieri	MT	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Louis Grech	MT	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Edward Scicluna	MT	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68

NL (The Netherlands)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTE	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Johannes Cornelis van Baalen	NL	ALDE	0	0	0	1	44-56
Baastian Belder	NL	EFD	0	1	1	0	56-68
Thijs Berman	NL	S&D	1	1	0	1	44-56
Emine Bozurt	NL	S&D	1	1	1	1	44-56
Wim van de Camp	NL	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Marije Cornelissen	NL	Greens	1	1	0	1	31-43
Peter van Dalen	NL	ECR	1	1	1	1	44-56
Bas Eickhout	NL	Greens	1	1	0	1	31-43
Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy	NL	ALDE	1	1	0	1	44-56
Lucas Hartong	NL	NI	0	1	0	0	44-56
Sopie in 't Veld	NL	ALDE	1	1	1	1	44-56
Cornelis de Jong	NL	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Esther de Lange	NL	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Kartika Tamara Liotard	NL	Greens	0	0	0	0	31-43
Barry Madlener	NL	NI	1	0	1	0	
Toine Manders	NL	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Judith A. Merkies	NL	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Jan Mulder	NL	ALDE	1	0	0	0	68 +
Lambert van Nistelrooij	NL	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Ria Oomen-Ruijten	NL	EPP	0	1	1	1	56-68
Judith Sargentini	NL	Greens	1	1	1	1	31-43
Marietje Schaake	NL	ALDE	1	1	1	1	31-43
Laurence J.A.J. Stassen	NL	NI	0	0	0	0	31-43
Daniel Van der Stoep	NL	NI	1	1	1	0	31-43
Corien Worthmann-Kool	NL	EPP	1	1	0	1	44-56
Auke Zijlstra	NL	NI	0	0	0	0	44-56

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

Poland (PL)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Adam Bielan	PL	ECR	0	1	1	0	31-43
Piotr Borys	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Arkadiusz T. Bratkowski	PL	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Jerzy Buzek	PL	EPP	1	1	1	0	68 +
Tadeusz Cymanski	PL	ECR	1	0	0	1	56-68
Ryszard Czarnecki	PL	ECR	0	0	1	1	44-56
Lidia J. Geringer de Oedenberg	PL	S&D	1	1	1	1	44-56
Adam Gierek	PL	S&D	0	0	1	0	68 +
Marke Josef Grobarczyk	PL	ECR	1	0	1	0	44-56
Andrzej Grzyb	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Malgorzata Handzlik	PL	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Jolanta E. Hibner	PL	EPP	1	0	0	0	56-68
Danuta Maria Hübner	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Danuta Jaztowiecka	PL	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Sidonia E. Jedrzejewska	PL	EPP	1	1	0	1	31-43
Filip Kaczmarek	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Jaroslav Kalinowski	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Michał Tomasz Kaminski	PL	ECR	1	0	1	0	31-43
Lena Kolarska-Bobinska	PL	EPP	1	0	1	1	56-68
Paweł Robert Kowal	PL	ECR	1	1	1	0	31-43
Jan Kozłowski	PL	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Jacek Olgierd Kurski	PL	EFD	0	0	0	1	44-56
Ryszard Antoni Legutko	PL	ECR	0	0	1	0	56-68
Bogusław Liberadzki	PL	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Krzysztof Lisek	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Elżbieta K. Lukacijewska	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Bogdan K. Marcinkiewicz	PL	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Marek Henryk Migalski	PL	ECR	1	0	1	1	31-43
Śławomir W. Nitrás	PL	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Jan Olbrycht	PL	EPP	1	0	0	1	56-68
W. Michał Olejniczak	PL	S&D	1	1	0	1	31-43
Mirosław Piotrowski	PL	ECR	0	0	0	0	44-56
Tomasz Piotr Poreba	PL	ECR	1	0	0	1	31-43
Jacek Protasiewicz	PL	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Jacek Saryusz-Wolski	PL	EPP	1	0	0	1	56-68
Joanna Senyszyn	PL	S&D	1	1	0	1	56-68
Czesław A. Siekierski	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Marek Siwiec	PL	S&D	1	1	1	1	56-68
Joanna K. Skrydlewska	PL	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
Bogusław Sonik	PL	EPP	1	1	1	1	56-68
Konrad Szymanski	PL	ECR	1	0	1	0	31-43
Roza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein	PL	EPP	1	0	0	1	56-68
Rafał Trzaskowski	PL	EPP	1	0	0	0	31-43
Jarosław Leszek Walesa	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Jacek Włosowicz	PL	EFD	0	0	1	0	44-56
Janusz Wojciechowski	PL	ECR	0	0	0	0	56-68
Paweł Zalewski	PL	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Artur Zasada	PL	EPP	1	0	1	0	31-43
Janusz Władysław Zemke	PL	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Zbigniew Ziobro	PL	EFD	0	0	1	0	31-43
Tadeusz Zwiefka	PL	EPP	1	0	0	1	56-68

Portugal (PT)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Luis Paulo Alves	PT	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Regina Bastos	PT	EPP	0	0	0	1	44-56
Luis M. Capoulas Santos	PT	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Maria de Graça Carvalho	PT	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Carlos Coelho	PT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Antonio Fernando Correia de Campos	PT	S&D	0	0	0	0	68 +
Mario David	PT	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Edite Estrella	PT	S&D	1	1	1	0	
Diogo Feio	PT	EPP	1	1	1	0	31-43
José Manuel Fernandes	PT	EPP	0	0	1	0	44-56
Elisa Ferreira	PT	S&D	1	1	0	0	56-68
João Ferreira	PT	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	31-43
Ana Gomes	PT	S&D	1	1	1	1	56-68
Marisa Matias	PT	EUL/GUE	1	0	0	0	31-43
Nuno Melo	PT	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Vital Moreira	PT	S&D	0	0	0	0	56-68
Maria do Céu Patrão Neves	PT	EPP	0	0	0	0	56-68
Paul Rangel	PT	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Alda Sousa	PT	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Rui Tavares	PT	Greens	1	1	0	1	31-43
Nuno Teixeira	PT	EPP	0	0	1	0	31-43
Ines Cristina Zuber	PT	EUL/GUE	0	0	0	0	31-43

Romania (RO)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Elena Oana Antonescu	RO	EPP	1	0	0	1	31-43
Elena Basescu	RO	EPP	0	0	0	0	31-43
George Becali	RO	NI	1	1	1	0	44-56
Sebastian Valentin Bodu	RO	EPP	1	1	0	1	31-43
Victor Bostinaru	RO	S&D	1	0	0	0	56-68
Cristian S. Busoi	RO	ALDE	1	1	1	0	31-43
Minidora Cliveti	RO	S&D	1	0	0	0	56-68
Corina Cretu	RO	S&D	1	0	1	1	44-56
George Sabin Cutas	RO	S&D	0	1	0	0	44-56
Vasilica Viorica Dancila	RO	S&D	1	0	0	0	44-56
Ioan Enciu	RO	S&D	1	0	0	0	56-68
Catalin Sorin Ivan	RO	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43
Petru C. Luhan	RO	EPP	1	0	1	1	31-43
Monica Luisa Macovei	RO	EPP	1	0	1	1	44-56
Ramona N. Manescu	RO	ALDE	1	0	1	1	31-43
M-J Marinescu	RO	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Iosif Matula	RO	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Norica Nicolai	RO	ALDE	1	0	0	0	44-56
Rares-Lucian Niculescu	RO	EPP	1	0	1	1	31-43
Ioan Mircea Pascu	RO	S&D	1	1	1	1	
Cristian Dan Preda	RO	EPP	1	0	1	1	44-56
Daciana Octavia Sarbu	RO	S&D	1	0	1	0	31-43
Adrian Severin	RO	NI	0	0	0	0	56-68
Csaba Sogor	RO	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Theodor Dumitru Stolojan	RO	EPP	1	0	0	0	68 +
Claudiu Ciprian Tanasescu	RO	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Silvia-Adriana Ticau	RO	S&D	1	0	0	0	31-43
Laszlo Tokes	RO	EPP	1	0	0	0	56-68
Traian Ungureanu	RO	EPP	1	0	0	1	44-56
Corneliu Vadim Tudor	RO	NI	1	1	0	1	56-68
Ivo Vajgl	RO	ALDE	1	0	1	0	68 +
Adina-Iona Valean	RO	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Renate Weber	RO	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Iuliu Winkler	RO	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

Sweden (SE)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Amelia Anderstdott	SE	Greens	1	1	0	1	18-30
Anna M. Corazza Bildt	SE	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Christian Engström	SE	Greens	1	1	0	1	44-56
Nigel Farage	SE	ECR	1	1	0	0	44-56
Göran Farm	SE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Christofer Fjellner	SE	EPP	1	1	1	1	31-43
Mikael Gustafsson	SE	EUL/GUE	1	1	0	1	44-56
Anna Hedh	SE	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Gunnar Hörmak	SE	EPP	1	1	0	1	56-68
Anna Ibrisagic	SE	EPP	1	0	1	0	44-56
Kent Johansson	SE	ALDE	0	0	0	0	56-68
Isabella Lövin	SE	Greens	1	0	1	1	44-56
Olle Ludvigsson	SE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Jen Nilsson	SE	S&D	1	0	0	0	56-68
Marit Paulsen	SE	ALDE	1	0	1	1	68+
Carl Schlyter	SE	Greens	1	1	0	1	44-56
Olle Schimdt	SE	ALDE	1	1	1	1	56-68
Alf Svensson	SE	EPP	1	0	1	0	68+
Marita Ulvskog	SE	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Asa Westlund	SE	S&D	1	1	1	1	31-43
Cecilia Wikström	SE	ALDE	1	0	1	1	44-56

Slovakia (SK)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Edit Bauer	SK	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Monika Flasikova Benova	SK	S&D	1	0	1	1	44-56
Sergej Kozlik	SK	ALDE	0	0	1	0	56-68
Eduard Kukan	SK	EPP	0	0	0	0	68+
Vladimir Manka	SK	S&D	1	0	1	0	44-56
Alajos Meszaros	SK	EPP	0	0	1	0	56-68
Miroslav Mikolasik	SK	EPP	1	0	1	1	56-68
Katarina Nevedalova	SK	S&D	1	1	1	1	18-30
Jaroslav Paska	SK	EFDD	0	0	0	0	56-68
Monika Smolkova	SK	S&D	0	0	0	0	44-56
Peter Stastny	SK	EPP	1	0	0	0	44-56
Anna Zaborska	SK	EPP	1	0	1	0	56-68
Boris Zala	SK	S&D	1	0	0	0	56-68

Slovenia (SL)

NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Tanja Fajon	SL	S&D	1	1	1	1	31-43
Romana Jordan Cizelj	SL	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56
Jelko Kacin	SL	ALDE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Mojca Kleva	SL	S&D	1	0	0	0	31-43
Zofija Mazej Kukovic	SL	EPP	1	1	1	1	56-68
Alojz Peterle	SL	EPP	1	1	1	0	56-68
Milan Zver	SL	EPP	1	1	1	0	44-56

United Kingdom (UK)

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

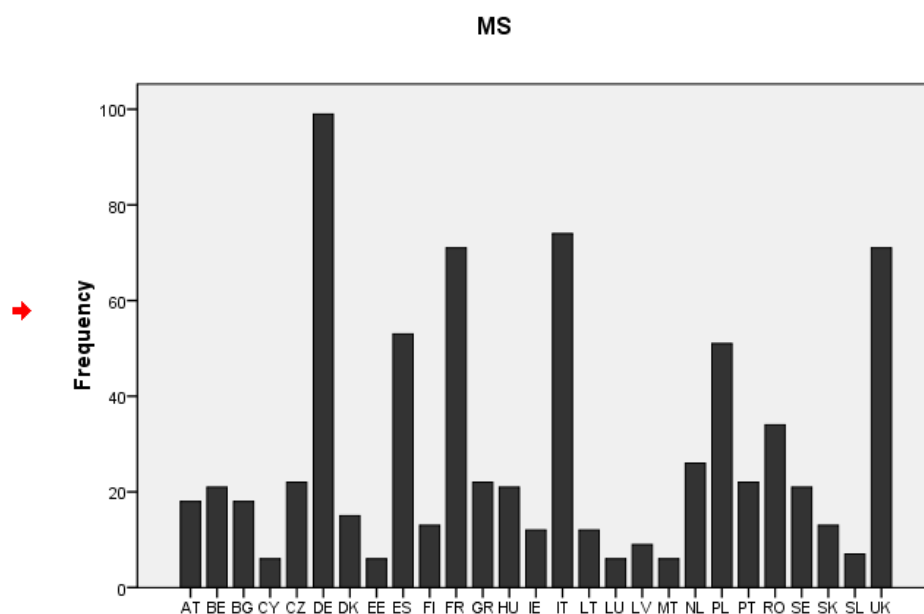
NAME, SURNAME	MS	POLITICAL PARTY	FB	TWITTER	WEBSITE	BLOG	Age
Johan Stuart Agnew	UK	EFD	0	0	0	0	56-68
Marta Andreasen	UK	EFD	1	1	0	1	56-68
Richard Ashworth	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	over 65
Robert Atkins	UK	ECR	0	0	1	0	56-68
Gerard Batten	UK	EFD	0	0	1	1	56-68
Catherine Bearder	UK	ALDE	1	0	1	0	56-68
Jean-Luc Bennaïm	UK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	56-68
Phil Bennion	UK	ALDE	0	0	1	0	56-68
Geoffrey Bloom	UK	EFD	1	1	0	0	56-68
Sharon Bowles	UK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	56-68
Philip Bradourn	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	56-68
Andrew H.W. Brons	UK	NI	1	1	0	0	56-68
Jonh Bufton	UK	EFD	0	0	0	0	44-56
Martin Callanan	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	44-56
Michael Cashman	UK	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Giles Chichester	UK	ECR	0	0	1	1	56-68
Derek Roland Clark	UK	EFD	1	1	1	0	68 +
Trevor Colman	UK	NI	1	0	0	0	68 +
William Darmouth	UK	EFD	0	0	0	0	56-68
Chris Davies	UK	ALDE	1	0	0	1	56-68
Nirj Deva	UK	ECR	1	0	1	0	56-68
Diane Dodds	UK	NI	1	1	1	0	44-56
Andrew Duff	UK	ALDE	1	0	1	0	56-68
James Elles	UK	ECR	0	0	1	1	56-68
Jill Evans	UK	Greens	0	1	1	0	44-56
Vicky Ford	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	44-56
Julie Girling	UK	ECR	1	1	1	0	44-56
Nick Griffin	UK	NI	1	1	1	0	44-56
Fiona Hall	UK	ALDE	0	0	1	0	56-68
Daniel Hannan	UK	ECR	1	1	0	1	31-43
Malcolm Harbour	UK	ECR	0	0	1	0	56-68
Roger Helmer	UK	ECR	1	1	1	1	56-68
Mary Honeyball	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Richard Howitt	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Ian Hudghton	UK	Greens	0	0	1	0	56-68
Stephen Hughes	UK	S&D	1	0	1	0	56-68
Syed Kamall	UK	ECR	1	1	1	0	44-56
Sajjad Karim	UK	ECR	1	1	1	0	31-43
Timothy Kirkhope	UK	ECR	0	0	1	0	56-68
Jean Lambert	UK	Greens	1	0	1	0	56-68
B. Sarah Ludford	UK	ECR	0	1	1	0	56-68
George Lyon	UK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Linda McAvan	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Arlene McCarthy	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Emma McClarkin	UK	ECR	1	1	1	1	31-43
Anthea McIntyre	UK	ECR	1	0	0	0	56-68
Edward McMillan-Scott	UK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	56-68
David Martin	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	56-68
Claude Moraes	UK	S&D	1	0	0	0	
Mike Nattrass	UK	NI	0	0	0	0	56-68
Bill Newton Dunn	UK	ALDE	1	1	1	1	68 +
James Nicholson	UK	ECR	1	1	0	0	56-68
Paul Nuttall	UK	EFD	1	1	1	1	31-43
Brian Simpson	UK	S&D	0	0	1	0	56-68
Nicole Sinclair	UK	NI	1	1	1	0	44-56
Peter Skinner	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Alyn Smith	UK	Greens	1	1	0	0	31-43
Struan Stevenson	UK	ECR	1	1	1	0	56-68
Catherine Stihler	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	31-43
Robert Sturdy	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	56-68
Kay Swinburne	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	44-56
Charles Tannock	UK	ECR	1	0	1	0	44-56
Keith Taylor	UK	Greens	0	0	1	0	56-68
Rebecca Taylor	UK	ALDE	0	0	0	0	31-43
Geoffrey Van Orden	UK	ECR	0	0	0	0	56-68
Derek Vaughan	UK	S&D	1	1	1	0	44-56
Sir Graham Watson	UK	ALDE	1	1	1	0	44-56
Glenis Willmott	UK	S&D	1	1	1	1	56-68
Marina Yannakoudakis	UK	ECR	1	1	1	0	44-56

Results obtain by the SPSS

In order to complete the quantitative part of this study we use the Statistics Data software, SPSS.

a) Descriptive Statistics

- Frequencies variables = Member States.

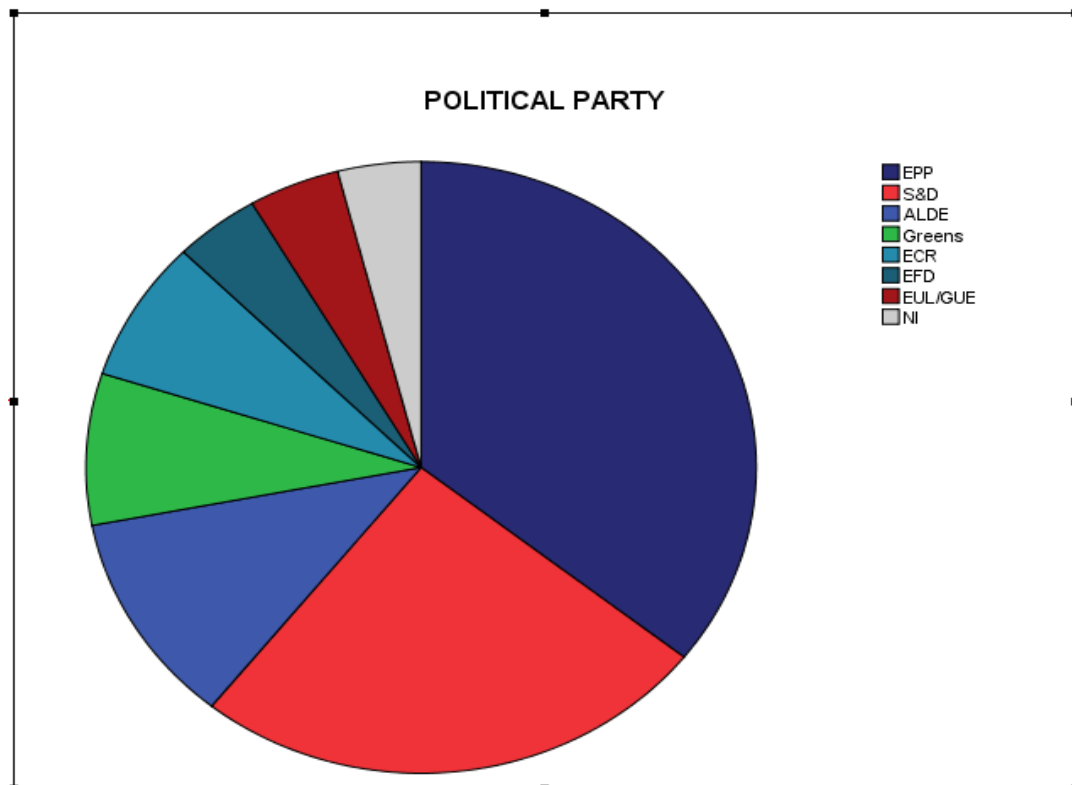


- Frequencies variables = Political Parties

POLITICAL PARTY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ALDE	84	11,2	11,2	11,2
	ECR	56	7,5	7,5	18,7
	EFD	31	4,1	4,1	22,8
	EPP	267	35,6	35,6	58,5
	EUL/GUE	33	4,4	4,4	62,9
	Greens	60	8,0	8,0	70,9
	NI	30	4,0	4,0	74,9
	S&D	188	25,1	25,1	100,0
	Total	749	100,0	100,0	

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

European political parties representation at the European Parliament.



- Frequencies variables = Age

MEPs age, there are some groups of MEPs who do not reflect their ages on their personal page, that is why there are 14 unknown. (It is represented here as 0, as otherwise the SPSS does not recognize and takes it as a lost variable).

Age				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	14	1,9	1,9
	18-30	10	1,3	3,2
	31-43	121	16,2	19,4
	44-56	278	37,1	56,5
	56-68	280	37,4	93,9
	68 +	46	6,1	100,0
	Total	749	100,0	100,0

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

Following it finds a representation of the MEPs age, according to the SPSS results.

- Frequencies variables = Age

MEPs age, there are a group of MEPs who do not reflect their ages on their personal page, that is why there are 14 unknown. (It is reflects here as 0, as otherwise the SPSS does not recognized and let as a lost variable.

→ Frequencies

[DataSet5]

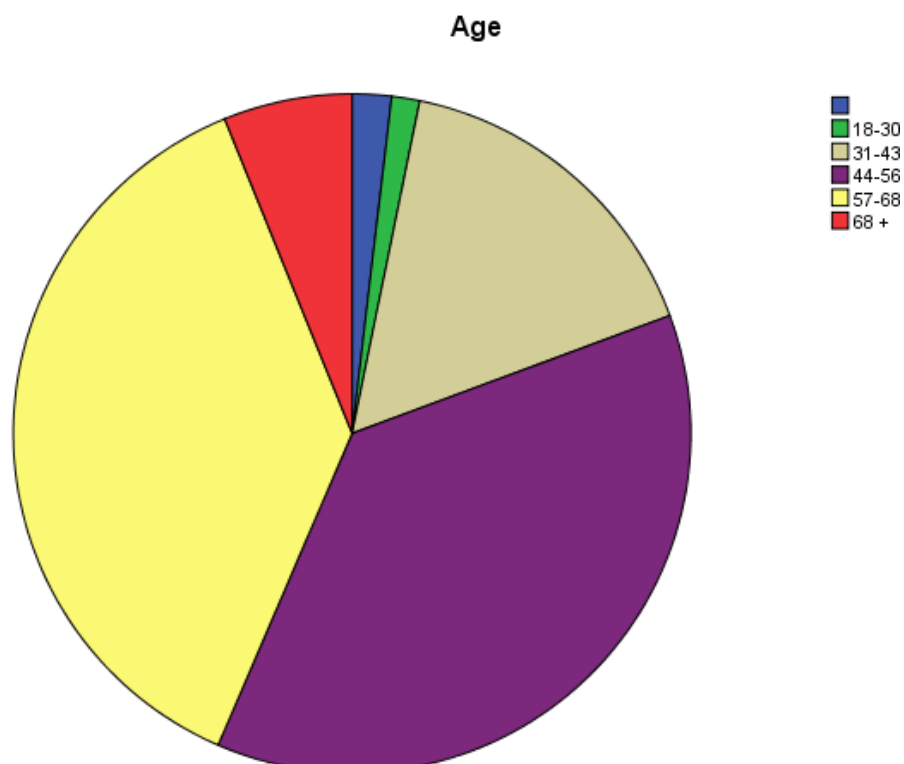
Statistics

Age		
N	Valid	749
	Missing	0

Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14	1,9	1,9	1,9
18-30	10	1,3	1,3	3,2
31-43	121	16,2	16,2	19,4
44-56	278	37,1	37,1	56,5
57-68	280	37,4	37,4	93,9
68 +	46	6,1	6,1	100,0
Total	749	100,0	100,0	

Next, we show a representation of the MEPs age, according to the SPSS results.



b) Descriptive Statistics: Cross Tabs – Chi Square Results

*Crosstabs: Member States * Facebook, Twitter, Website and Blogs.*

➔ Crosstabs

[DataSet1]

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
MS * FB	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%
MS * TWITTER	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%
MS * WEBSITE	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%
MS * BLOG	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%

MS * FB

We can observe the 27 Members States of the European Union and the presence of their representative in Facebook.

Crosstab

Count		FB		Total
		0	1	
MS	AT	4	14	18
	BE	3	18	21
	BG	3	15	18
	CY	2	4	6
	CZ	10	12	22
	DE	36	63	99
	DK	2	13	15
	EE	1	5	6
	ES	24	29	53
	FI	1	12	13
	FR	14	57	71
	GR	13	9	22
	HU	11	10	21
	IE	1	11	12
	IT	12	62	74
	LT	3	9	12
	LU	2	4	6
	LV	4	5	9
	MT	0	6	6
	NL	8	18	26
PL	12	39	51	
PT	10	12	22	
RO	5	29	34	
SE	1	20	21	
SK	5	8	13	
SL	0	7	7	
UK	26	45	71	
Total		213	536	749

The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	70,816 ^a	26	,000
Likelihood Ratio	76,459	26	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 15 cells (27,8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,71.

MS* Twitter

We can observe the 27 Members States of the European Union and the presence of their representative in Twitter.

Crosstab				
Count		TWITTER		Total
		0	1	
MS	AT	6	12	18
	BE	11	10	21
	BG	10	8	18
	CY	5	1	6
	CZ	15	7	22
	DE	62	37	99
	DK	9	6	15
	EE	3	3	6
	ES	42	11	53
	FI	8	5	13
	FR	29	42	71
	GR	15	7	22
	HU	19	2	21
	IE	4	8	12
	IT	50	24	74
	LT	6	6	12
	LU	5	1	6
	LV	3	6	9
	MT	5	1	6
	NL	7	19	26
PL	39	12	51	
PT	14	8	22	
RO	25	9	34	
SE	7	14	21	
SK	12	1	13	
SL	2	5	7	
UK	35	36	71	
Total		448	301	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	85,831 ^a	26	,000
Likelihood Ratio	89,980	26	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 13 cells (24,1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,41.



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

MS* Website

We can observe the 27 Members States of the European Union and the presence of their representative in Websites.

Crosstab

Count		WEBSITE		Total
		0	1	
MS	AT	5	13	18
	BE	7	14	21
	BG	3	15	18
	CY	3	3	6
	CZ	8	14	22
	DE	22	77	99
	DK	4	11	15
	EE	1	5	6
	ES	44	9	53
	FI	1	12	13
	FR	36	35	71
	GR	12	10	22
	HU	9	12	21
	IE	6	6	12
	IT	36	38	74
	LT	4	8	12
	LU	4	2	6
	LV	5	4	9
	MT	1	5	6
	NL	12	14	26
	PL	18	33	51
	PT	11	11	22
	RO	17	17	34
	SE	8	13	21
	SK	5	8	13
	SL	1	6	7
	UK	22	49	71
Total		305	444	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	87,393 ^a	26	,000
Likelihood Ratio	92,094	26	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 13 cells (24,1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,44.

MS* Blog

We can observe the 27 Members States of the European Union and the presence of their representative in Blogs.

Crosstab

Count		BLOG		Total
		0	1	
MS	AT	12	6	18
	BE	15	6	21
	BG	16	2	18
	CY	6	0	6
	CZ	18	4	22
	DE	78	21	99
	DK	11	4	15
	EE	5	1	6
	ES	37	16	53
	FI	7	6	13
	FR	48	23	71
	GR	18	4	22
	HU	18	3	21
	IE	9	3	12
	IT	52	22	74
	LT	8	4	12
	LU	4	2	6
	LV	7	2	9
	MT	4	2	6
	NL	14	12	26
	PL	35	16	51
	PT	19	3	22
	RO	22	12	34
	SE	10	11	21
	SK	10	3	13
	SL	5	2	7
	UK	60	11	71
Total		548	201	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35,406 ^a	26	,103
Likelihood Ratio	36,923	26	,076
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 17 cells (31,5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,61.

Crosstabs : Political Party * Facebook, Twitter, Website and Blog

➔ Crosstabs

[DataSet1]

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
POLITICAL PARTY * FB	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%
POLITICAL PARTY * TWITTER	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%
POLITICAL PARTY * WEBSITE	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%
POLITICAL PARTY * BLOG	749	100,0%	0	,0%	749	100,0%

Political Party * Facebook

In this crosstab we can observe the European Political Parties and the presence of their members in Facebook.

Crosstab

Count		FB		Total
		0	1	
POLITICAL PARTY	ALDE	14	70	84
	ECR	22	34	56
	EFD	15	16	31
	EPP	73	194	267
	EUL/GUE	17	16	33
	Greens	15	45	60
	NI	7	23	30
	S&D	50	138	188
Total		213	536	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24,859 ^a	7	,001
Likelihood Ratio	23,864	7	,001
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 0 cells (,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8,53.



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

Political Party*Twitter

In this crosstab we can observe the European Political Parties and the presence of their members in Twitter.

Crosstab

Count		TWITTER		Total
		0	1	
POLITICAL PARTY	ALDE	41	43	84
	ECR	36	20	56
	EFD	23	8	31
	EPP	182	85	267
	EUL/GUE	24	9	33
	Greens	21	39	60
	NI	16	14	30
	S&D	105	83	188
Total		448	301	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34,522 ^a	7	,000
Likelihood Ratio	34,548	7	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12,06.

Political Party*Twitter

In this crosstab we can observe the European Political Parties and the presence of their members in Twitter.

Crosstab

Count		TWITTER		Total
		0	1	
POLITICAL PARTY	ALDE	41	43	84
	ECR	36	20	56
	EFD	23	8	31
	EPP	182	85	267
	EUL/GUE	24	9	33
	Greens	21	39	60
	NI	16	14	30
	S&D	105	83	188
Total		448	301	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34,522 ^a	7	,000
Likelihood Ratio	34,548	7	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12,06.

Political Party * Website

In this crosstab we can observe the European Political Parties and the presence of their members in Websites.

Crosstab

Count		WEBSITE		Total
		0	1	
POLITICAL PARTY	ALDE	30	54	84
	ECR	20	36	56
	EFD	17	14	31
	EPP	98	169	267
	EUL/GUE	19	14	33
	Greens	26	34	60
	NI	16	14	30
	S&D	79	109	188
Total		305	444	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11,960 ^a	7	,102
Likelihood Ratio	11,815	7	,107
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12,22.

Political Party * Blog

In this crosstab we can observe the European Political Parties and the presence of their members in Blogs.

POLITICAL PARTY * BLOG

Crosstab				
Count				
		BLOG		Total
		0	1	
POLITICAL PARTY	ALDE	60	24	84
	ECR	40	16	56
	EFD	24	7	31
	EPP	206	61	267
	EUL/GUE	24	9	33
	Greens	35	25	60
	NI	23	7	30
	S&D	136	52	188
Total		548	201	749

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9,642 ^a	7	,210
Likelihood Ratio	9,149	7	,242
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 0 cells (,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8,05.

Crosstab: Age*Facebook, Twitter, Website and Blog

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age * FB	749	99,7%	2	,3%	751	100,0%
Age * TWITTER	749	99,7%	2	,3%	751	100,0%
Age * WEBSITE	749	99,7%	2	,3%	751	100,0%
Age * BLOG	749	99,7%	2	,3%	751	100,0%

Age * Facebook

It that crosstab it can observe the MEPs age and the presence of their members in Facebook according to that.

Crosstab

Count			
		FB	
		0	1
Age			Total
	18-30	0	10
	31-43	17	104
	44-56	63	215
	57-68	115	165
	68 +	15	31
Total		213	536

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43,531 ^a	5	,000
Likelihood Ratio	46,782	5	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 2 cells (16,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,84.

Age * Twitter

It that crosstab it can observe the MEPs age and the presence of their members in Twitter according to that.

Crosstab

Count			
		TWITTER	
		0	1
Age			Total
	18-30	4	6
	31-43	55	66
	44-56	157	121
	57-68	188	92
	68 +	36	10
Total		448	301

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26,113 ^a	5	,000
Likelihood Ratio	26,518	5	,000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 1 cells (8,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4,02.

Age* Website

In this crosstab we can observe the MEPs age and their presence in websites according to that.

Crosstab			
Count			
	WEBSITE		Total
	0	1	
Age	7	7	14
18-30	6	4	10
31-43	46	75	121
44-56	108	170	278
57-68	116	164	280
68 +	22	24	46
Total	305	444	749

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,829 ^a	5	,574
Likelihood Ratio	3,776	5	,582
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 1 cells (8,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4,07.

Age* Blog

In this crosstab we can observe the MEPs age and their presence in blogs according to that.

Crosstab			
Count			
	BLOG		Total
	0	1	
Age	12	2	14
18-30	3	7	10
31-43	80	41	121
44-56	193	85	278
57-68	224	56	280
68 +	36	10	46
Total	548	201	749

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22,927 ^a	5	,000
Likelihood Ratio	21,917	5	,001
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 2 cells (16,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,68.



Annex (II) Qualitative Research

The following questions were sent to the Chairmen / Chairwomen to the seven European political groups. However due to their agendas only it has obtained one from one of the former chairmen of the European Freedom and Democracy Group, Mr Speroni. On the other political groups the survey has been answered by their social media expert or press officer, two of them were done by email and one by phone.

Transcripts are from the original without modifications.

Survey on MEPs online communication

Q1: Today, how important are the ICTs' for the EU political communication?

Q2: Which are the digital skills levels of the members of your political group?

Q2.1. In regards of the digital skills level, in your opinion, are there any differences among them, depending on their gender, age or home country?

Q3: According to the findings of this research, the most active group per age on social media is the youngest (18-30). In your opinion the age can be a factor which influence in your presence on the online communication.

Q4: Today Social Networks are changing the political communication. In particular this change, in the EUL/NGL group is related to a more political level (more encourage by the Political Party) or maybe in a more personal way (because MEPs are going further).

Q5: Since your arrival to the European Parliament which changes have you observed in your political group in regards of the development of the ICTs?

Following it is introduced the profile and the answers of the respondents.

Name: Francesco Enrico Speroni

Position: Co-President of the European Freedom and Democracy Group in the European Parliament.

Political Group: European Freedom and Democracy Group

Answer by email: francescoenrico.speroni@europarl.europa.eu 12.02.2013.

Q1. Very important

Q2. I do not know

Q2.1. Yes

Q3. Yes

Q4. The second one (personal)

Q5. I did not check that issue.



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Name: Lada Jurica

Position: Head of Internet & New Media, EPP Group

Political Group: European People's Party

Answer by email: lada.jurica@europarl.europa.eu 18.03.2013.

Q1. Indispensable. If you are not present on social media you are missing out on important conversations that possibly shape voter preferences. In addition, social media are a way to directly connect to the voters in addition to traditional channels.

Q2. We have everything from early adopters who are very technologically savvy, to mainstream users, to beginners. But digital skills are constantly growing and evolving because we have made a conscious decision to invest in Members presence online.

Q2.1. No, although the choice of platform is many times dictated by the digital landscape in home country (e.g. twitter in Netherlands)

Q3. Although we do greatly value the fact that we can reach out to a younger audience through social media, they are not the only group we wish to speak to.

Q4. Both. We have greatly developed our corporate comms, but we also believe that without direct and personal involvement of MEPs themselves, our reach will be limited.

Q5. Everybody walks around with their smartphone, tweets, FBooks, mails ... Our comms are more user oriented, so we don't push our message, we make sure people receive the info they WANT to receive. ICT very important in that.

Name: Richar More O'Ferrall

Position: Press and Media Officer

Political Group: Greens / European Free Alliance

Answer by email: richard.moreoferrall@europarl.europa.eu 25.03.2013

Q1. If you are referring to social media and the internet, very important

Q2. And Q2.1. Our members' use and competence with IT and new media technologies naturally varies greatly between the 58 members. The large majority of our members have their own dedicated web-pages, a majority has their own twitter account (all listed here: <https://twitter.com/GreensEP/greenmeps/members>) and a number also have facebook pages. There is not necessarily any trend as to the different levels of engagement: gender is certainly not a factor! age is also not so relevant. However, you would have to research this by asking each member and comparing.

Q3. The examples of our members show age is not really that important. However, you would have to research this by asking each member and comparing.

Q4. Impossible for me to answer.

Q5. Greater use of new media, online communication, multimedia, social media etc.

Name: Gianfranco Battistini

Position: Press Officer



The use of online communication tools by the Members of the European Parliament

Political Group: European United Left / Nordic Green Left

Answer by phone: 0032 (0) 2 284 67 85 25.03.2013.

Q1. Q2 Really important, is another way to communicate. The collaboration in between European Parliament DG COMM and political groups it's fundamental. Each week there is an e-mail with the hashtags of the week to follow them on twitter. The classical press release now is prehistoric as in my opinion now a days the journalists and press agencies do not read it. They are following news on the new social channels. In the case of the GUE/NGL there are only 10 MEPs out of 34 on twitter, I am trying to push them to engage social networks as they do not realize of the power to communicate within.

Q2.1. The gender is not a factor and age either. There are MEPs with 28 age years old who are not on social channels while others with 60 years old yes. One example is MEP Melanchon who is really active. Country either, as there are some Portuguese who are really active or Italian too.

Q3. As I referred in the previous question, not in the case of GUE/NGL. We are on twitter or facebook oblige by the circumstances.

Q4. Really personal, for instance on the Plenary sessions on Strasbourg there are some MEPs from our political group who are tweeting by themselves.

Q5. I arrived to the European Parliament 20 years ago. In my office was an orange fax, green telephone anything else. Then it arrived kind of internet and mails. But even at the beginning the MEPs were against of these new advantages but then they understand the change. Now is happening the same. European Parliament is the key institution, sometimes is good and sometimes is bad but it is highly trying to make people understand our work here. Even though I think it should be more platforms to talk to people and there they could find information as is not easy to follow European Union Institutions work.

Name: Joseph Daul / Hannes Swoboda

Position: European People's Party Chairman / Socialistas and Democratic Progressive Alliance.

Answered by: European Parliament Facebook page "chat with MEPS". 26.03.2013

Question: Mr Daul and Mr Swoboda I would like to ask you how important can be the new social media channels (twitter, facebook...) in order to communicate towards citizens? And in your opinion this should be the main tool to communicate to citizens using a more understandable language?

Joseph Daul: These are new tools that enable us to communicate directly with citizens. This is very positive. As we see today, it is something we use on a daily basis.

Hannes Swoboda: The social media play an important role in contacting the citizens across Europe directly. Nevertheless, also the personal contact should not be forgotten. In many election victories of Social democrats like recently in Malta but also in the Netherlands, they have much to do with this personal contact. One of the ways how the S&D Group is coming into close contact with the citizens, including social media, is the Relaunching Europe initiative. You can find more at relaunchingeurope.eu.



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Name: Barbara Quilez

Position: European Parliament Website (ES) Responsible and coordinator of the 22nd twitter accounts of the EP.

Answered by: meeting on their office. 31.03.2012.

Q1. How the EP social media division has influenced at the MEPs to use the new social networking? Maybe not as a direct factor but yes as indirect one. For instance ex EP President Buzek had a lot of presence at Twitter and Facebook and now Mr. Schultz is increasing his presence.

Yes I think so, because the institutions try to be on the social networks. I think even before many MEPs thought about going on the social arena. I could say that the Institution was there before and encourage the MEPs to be there. We have also a several trainee sessions for MEPs and their assistants to teach them, how to keep going, as you see on twitter and on Facebook. Another interesting thing is that current social media manager of the President, Schultz, was our Italian social manager here before. So, yeah we are interlinking.

Q2. Could be a difference behavior depending on their political tendency? As some literature says that Green parties has been using before social networking as with this they could get to more people (Which factor of the social structure as age, sex or their personal education background, could affect to MEPs' new technologies usages?).

I am following mainly the Spanish MEPs. In the beginning the more active MEP was Raúl Romeva I Rueda, but I think more than link to their political tendency is link to their age. Raúl Romeva used to be one of the youngest, but now at the EPP there are also young MEPs and for example Pablo Zalba is really active on twitter. Because FB started to use more easily, many MEPs are not dealing with their Facebook profile is maybe their teams who are dealing. On the other hand, on twitter the ones that I know who are there, they are doing personally. I would say that is more a question of the age than their political tendency. I am more focus on the Spanish MEPs, but its true that talking about twitter is very different from one country from another. There are countries in which there is not really popular, not much use. Another countries, as UK more people try to be there. But is growing.

Q3. In the same tone, did you notice some difference depending of the country or region those MEPs came from? At their social networking presence. Even in the Communication DG you can notice that difference of people who arrive, if they came from Northern countries or southern countries. For instance Greece.

I would be back to the age, they (Greeks) are not the youngest. I think the line is made by ages. There are other youngest MEPs, the youngest, I think is finish, she is feeling on social networks really comfortable and other older MEPs are not feeling so comfortable.

Q4. I noticed that you don't use blogging, it is true that you have a special section which it includes news, but there is a decreasing tendency of blogging (at EP) but also between politicians.

We have a blog but it is only a blog for the web unit, not of the EP. You have to understand that who is the EP? The only opinion which matters is the MEPs one and



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we cannot open a blog in 22 languages, with 700 people. But the website unit has a blog in which talk mainly about our work.

Q5.What is wrong with blogging?

Not that much, so many MEPs have a blog but not many. This is a personal point of view, the problem could be is take more job to have a blog active and running. If you have a blog you need to be regular, with your followers and in the end the MEPs are writing articles on newspapers, web pages, so I don't they feel the necessity to have a blog.

Q6.How is the usage of these new social tools? The MEPs and EP are using as a real way to interact with citizens or is only a window where can be spread political news or in the case of the EP just to give information?

I don't think so, from the point of view of the Parliament we use to open a direct line with citizens. On facebook we have a live debate, but we cannot give opinions. Once more we are not the EP, we have to encourage the debate, but if they want to tell us something they can use Facebook, or with Twitter is even more serious, they write direct to us. For us one of the most important advantages, they give us to talk directly to the citizens. In the case of the MEPs, the ones that I follow are quite a lot, they interact with citizens, they answer, and they like when people write back to them. I think use as a conversation tool. I am sure someone who use as advertising tool but less and less if someone avoid answering you by twitter.

Q7.Even, do you know if there is a personal adviser to MEPs which let know them how to manage their digital identity?

I don't think they have adviser such like that, but MEPs have a team of people working for them and many of them is in charge of communication. I imagine that if they are not really expert on twitter they have somebody to ask or who can deal with their profile, or when they don't have time.

Q8.In which sense could have influenced MEPs that EP social media division begins to have a presence at Internet since 2009? Could be a factor of influence to them to be enrolling at social network?

For us were definitely the elections, to use the social media tools and network. It was a new opportunity to get in touch and communicate to the people. I must said that we were the first institution which do it and the experience is really positive. The reason why we start to do it was the elections. As I told you before, since the institution is there they try to be there. Social network has grown a lot. I don't know if indepently of the institution they would have the effort by them. But the media divisions are not following their particularly as you see we are trying to keep what they do where they are, but more for informative reasons and also try to be in touch with them. Second we will publish a new tool, absolutely new, which will be call NewsHub where we will gather all the information which is publish about European Union also about MEPs. It will be first in English, but they are working in there.

Q9.In which sense we are attending to a new European Public Sphere? Is internet the new base of the Public Sphere? And in which sense this could influence to the political communication?

It is true, that Internet has gave us and citizens a new opportunity to connect or interact and citizens can inform us about their initiatives. It was called More Europe launched for one from Madrid, they could let us know really easily. Another seminar by Spanish universities. So this its true that this create a public sphere here, that was much difficult to create before because you needed to be at the same place, now it is possible to create contacts even when you never see them, we are a proof of that.



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I like to say, relations are not a piram anymore now are horizontal. So, you don't need to know someone from the top of the parliament to get in touch to the important people. Its enough if you connect directly if you connect with the one who you want to connect. So I think is the news of the 2.0.

Q10.And in which sense this could influence to the political communication?

It is already have, people can talk directly to politicians, to their institutions. Show when they are not happy with something, or add something. Have positive and negative feedbacks. I am sure this will be change more, but has already change they way that we thought sixty years before.

Here at the media division, you coordinate the 22 twitter accounts of the Parliament, the editors are from different countries?

Is not depending of their nationality. We have one person per language, 23 official languages, but we are only working on 22 (as not in Gaelic) so we have 22 editors one per language, some of them are stagiers, but their nationality is changing. Now there is a Spanish stagiers. Few coordinators, few more technical people, who coordinate and make infographics. But we don't have more people in English because they are a huge language.

Q11.Coming back to the thesis topic maybe as I was researching by their country or regional tendency, with twitter like their presence...

Of course there are some nationality perspectives but is why we have one person per country because those people know better their national context. Spain is quite a complicate country when you see from the outside. I came from there and I try to update from news, and what is going on there and my colleagues are doing the same with their countries. We have a common line but each of us should know.



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