

# **Škoda Auto Vysoká Škola o.p.s.**

Course: B6208 Business Administration

Field of study/specialisation: 6208R087 Business Administration and Sales

## **Political Promotion of Heads of States across the European Union Bachelor Thesis**

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Škoda Auto Vysoká škola

## REGISTRATION FOR BACHELOR THESIS

Candidate: **Natália Korcoňová**  
Study programme: Business Administration  
Track: Marketing and Sales Management

Thesis title: **Political Promotion of Heads of States across European Union**

Aim: The main goal of this thesis is to evaluate the level, intensity and differences in communication of head of states across European Union.

The sub-objectives of this thesis include literary research with the focus on marketing communication, political marketing and public relations. The next sub-goal is deep context analysis of communication of heads of states of European Union, within personal direct channels and identification of differences in communication in regards of geography, gender or demography.

The output of this work will be a synthesis of styles of communication of the highest representatives of states of European Union.

Content areas:

1. Compiling literacy research on the topics of marketing communication, political marketing, and PR.
2. Conducting a deep context analysis and discourse analysis of heads of state of European Union. The focus will be on personal direct channels.
3. Creating a summary of differences and similarities in the communication of presidents of European Union from different geographical, demographical, and cultural backgrounds.
4. The output will be a synthesis of styles of communication of the highest representatives of states of European Union.

Length of thesis: 25 – 30 pages

Recommended literature:

1. PERLOFF, Richard M. *The Dynamics of Political Communication: Media and Politics in a Digital Age*. 711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017: Routledge, 2018. 500 p. ISBN 978-1-138-65164-7.
2. VENETI, Anastasia; JACKSON, Daniel; LILLEKER, Darren G. *Visual Political Communication*. Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 294 p. ISBN 978-3-030-18728-6.
3. ROWINSKI, Paul. *Post-Truth, Post-Press, Post-Europe Euroscepticism and the Crisis of Political Communication*. Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021. 257 p. ISBN 978-3-030-55570-2.
4. PŘIKRYLOVÁ, Jana; JADERNÁ, Eva; KINCL, Tomáš; VELINOV, Emil; ŠTRACH, Pavel. *Moderní marketingová komunikace*. Praha: Grada Publishing, a.s., 2019. 344 p. ISBN 978-80-271-0787-2.
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6. BELCH, George; BELCH, Michael. *Advertising and promotion: an integrated marketing communication perspective*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2021. 800 p. ISBN 978-1-260-57099-1.

Date of registration: December 2022

Date of submission: December 2023

L. S.

Electronic approval: 17. 5. 2023

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I declare that I have prepared this thesis on my own and listed all the sources used in the bibliography. I declare that, while preparing the thesis, I followed the internal regulation of ŠKODA AUTO VYSOKÁ ŠKOLA o.p.s. (hereinafter referred to as ŠAVŠ), directive Thesis guidelines.

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I would like to thank doc. Ing. Hana Volfová. for her professional supervision of my thesis, advice, and information. I would like to thank her for kind words, patience and valuable insight she offered.

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## **List of abbreviations and symbols**

IG Instagram

FB Facebook

## **Introduction**

The overarching objective of this thesis is to conduct a thorough examination of how heads of state within the European Union communicate, aiming to gauge the depth, nuances, and variations in their communication approaches.

To achieve this goal, the thesis is structured with multiple sub-objectives. It begins by preparing a review of literature, focusing on diverse areas such as marketing communication, political marketing, and social media communication. From there, the research progresses to conduct a detailed contextual analysis of the communication methods employed by heads of states within the EU. This analysis specifically investigates their utilization of personal direct channels while identifying and scrutinizing differences in communication patterns concerning geographical, gender-related, and demographic factors.

Ultimately, the output of this comprehensive study will offer a synthesized understanding of the multifaceted communication styles adopted by the highest-ranking representatives of member states within the European Union.

The reason for choosing the topic of political promotion of heads of states of European Union was the observation of inadequate communication of the government of Slovakia during the pandemic of Covid-19. This led into interest in the way the presidents of different states communicate on social media, if online communication and personal channels are used to communicate crucial and current topics, of the highest representatives of the states or if it is only used for personal promotion and increasing of public relations.

After analysation of the social media presence on three major platforms, that are Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and LinkedIn, this thesis offers suggestions how to increase the social media reach and presence of chosen presidential representatives.



# **1 Theoretical principles**

## **1.1 Marketing**

Marketing, according to Belch G. and Belch M. (2018, p. 7) “is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”. As stated in the book Advertising and Promotion (Belch G, Belch M, 2018), this is a revised version of the definition of marketing used by the American Marketing Association. This version of the definitions also includes the idea that marketing is not only a tool for exchange – goods for money, service, or other goods, it also includes, for example, the promotion of non-profit organisations, that do not participate in an exchange with their contributors. These organisations promote their cause, their work, or their future plans, so they attract and persuade people to contribute. Another example of a promotion that does not result in an exchange of any product is a political promotion. Political parties promote their work in order to secure voters for the next elections, which are always around the corner.

The inseparable part of marketing is a marketing mix, also referred to as 4Ps or in later literature, 7Ps is a concept theory introduced by Edmund J. McCarthy in 1960. The four Ps stand for:

- product,
- price,
- place,
- promotion.

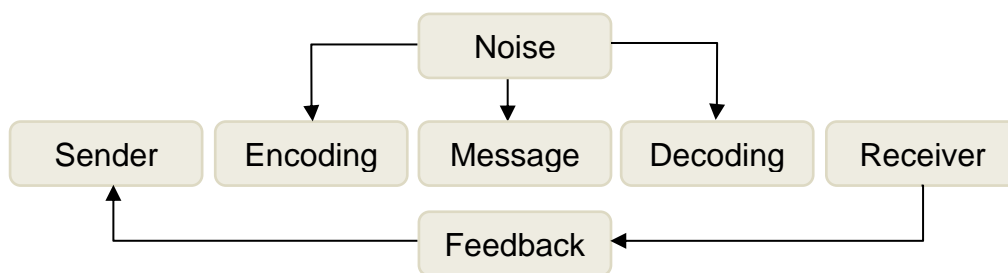
## **1.2 Marketing communication**

Marketing communication is a process between a company and its customers, potential customers, or other parties involved with the company’s interest. The main aim is to convey a message between the sender (company) and the receiver (customer). Figure 1 is an illustration of such a communication process, also containing steps called encoding and decoding. Encoding means putting the thought that the sender wants to convey in a way that the receiver will understand it clearly and ideally, there will be no communication noise or mix-ups. (Smith, Zook, 2020).

Encoding has three core functions:

- grab attention,
- cause or support action taking,
- express intention, opinion, existence or familiarity (Přikrylová et al., 2019).

On the other hand, decoding is a process where receiver is getting the message and understanding the meaning. Decoding can only be done successfully if encoding is done right. As was mentioned before, we have also communication noises in the process, which can be anything that can cause difficulties in receiving the message, like unclearly put thoughts, improper media to convey the message, and so on. The last part of the process is feedback, where the receiver is able to communicate their feeling and opinions about the communication towards the sender (Smith, Zook, 2020).



Smith, Zook (2020)

**Figure 1 The communication process model**

In the subchapter above, the marketing mix was mentioned briefly, but for the purpose of this thesis, the communication or promotional mix is more important. According to Přikrylová et al. (2019) communication mix is a subsystem of the marketing mix, or from another point of view it is a customer's perspective, compared to the marketing mix which is the company's perspective.

Promotional tools can be divided into three categories according to the form of communication:

- Personal,
- Non-personal,
- Mixed.

Personal selling is the only tool from promotional mix that falls into the category of personal form. The non-personal method includes advertising, sales promotion and sponsorship. As a mix of both is considered direct marketing, public relations and trade shows or exhibitions. The most common ones are described in details below:

**Personal form:**

- Personal Selling is a form of promotion usually done for expensive, custom, or complex products, which needs to be promoted with more focus, and personal contact makes it easier for the consumer to fully comprehend. The best example, stated in the Principles of Marketing (Albrecht et al., 2023) from the B2C market might be car dealerships. On the other hand, personal selling is more commonly used in the B2B market, where it is very common in the medicine industry or even other corporate purchasing activities, as these are more expensive and complex, and presentation with personal contact can be very helpful for both sides, the seller to more easily understand the needs of the customer and the customer to get a grip of what is offered.

**Non-personal form:**

- Advertising is by far the most common tool of promotional mix as well as the most invested in. According to Albrecht et al. (2023), more than 500 billion dollars were invested into advertising worldwide in the year 2020. Advertising can vary from billboards to annoying pop-up windows on websites. Ads contain thoroughly planned messages presented to the consumers in a fun, creative, and attention-grabbing way. Advertising is used in all spheres and markets to promote products, services, ideas, companies, places, or people.
- Sales Promotion is very popular on the other side of the chain compared to advertising. It is widely beloved by consumers, as it offers some kind of winning feeling when customers get the product or service they desire in a more economical way. The sales promotion can include offers such as 1+1, coupons or vouchers, sales expressed in percentages, or competitions based on buy to enter principle. Sales promotion is not a long-term strategy,

but very effective in terms of getting an immediate reaction from the customer (Albrecht et al., 2023)

**Mix form:**

- Direct Marketing is individualised form of marketing, offering companies to target a specific audience or even tailor a message for exact customer. The previous forms of direct marketing included mail or phone calls. Nowadays, technology and social media made it easier, as companies can reach out to their consumers through texts, emails, or messages on different platforms. As stated by Albrecht et al., (2023), direct marketing is the second largest tool of promotional mix in marketing for the year 2019.
- “Public Relations is a nonpaid, nonpersonal form of promotion. Because it is nonpaid, it has a high degree of credibility and is beneficial because a typically credible, non-biased third party is the messenger. While there are many tactics that marketers might use for public relations, some of the most commonly used include press releases, press conferences, events, and annual reports.” (Albrecht et al., 2023). The biggest difference between PR and other tools from the promotional mix is that rather than focusing on customers directly, PR puts an effort into working with communities, and with that, the company becomes more appealing to potential investors, government, or customers.

**1.2.1 Psychology and Marketing Communication**

To consider psychology when building a marketing communication strategy is a crucial step. The way the message is conveyed can drastically change the perception of the receiver. According to Kelman’s model, the message has to comply with the receiver first, then they can agree with the opinion of the sender and finally, the last stage is to identify with the message. For the message to be successfully received and identified by the receiver, the appeal of the message must be considered. The reason for the message to be appealing is that the receiver should feel a want to identify with it. There are multiple ways to ensure attractiveness, for example for the sender to be well known (psychological closeness), similar to the receiver, attractiveness (the ability to be liked easily).

Another aspect that needs to be considered is the credibility of the sender. The receiver should feel like the sender is qualified and pleasant. The solution for having a credible sender is either to build a trusting relationship with the receivers or to have a middle man to play a role of trustworthy sender. The credibility is closely connected with the power or authority of the sender. People are more likely to believe and identify with someone who radiates power and confidence rather than anxiety and nervousness. (Přikrylová et al., 2019)

### **1.2.2 Integrated marketing communication**

„Integrated marketing communication is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact” (Belch G., Belch M., 2018, p 9). The experts claim that for a marketing strategy to work, all factors must be accounted for. If the promotional mix is done correctly but something from the marketing mix does not add up to a certain standard, then the value and performance of the strategy will not work as efficiently as if all parts were planned in synergy. Marketers need to come up with a communication strategy towards customers that includes a well-targeted promotional mix, that is supported and also supports the price, package design, the product or service promoted, and also targets the promotion to the same place as they plan to sell it.

### **1.3 Social media**

Smith and Zook (2020, p 606) describe “10 steps to integrate social media into the business” with great success targeting all the important points to build a successful and engaging presence in social media. The first point or step to take, is listening. Listening in the form of searching for current topics with the potential of becoming the next global sensation packed with emotions, that could be engaged with the company’s brand. Steps two and three are slightly connected as they are talking about “creating a presence” and “joining the conversation”, because in order to be well known, especially in the world of social media, to create a presence means to engage in conversation, to bring new, valuable information to the imaginary table.

Although, the fourth step talks about choosing just the communities where the conversation has meaning for the company. Not to engage in every hot topic there is, but rather to identify and choose the relevant ones.

According to Smith and Zook (2020), steps five and six are about the preparation before launching a social media campaign, creating a content strategy, and writing down social media guidelines. Creating boundaries to what extent and in what way the company is engaging as well as strategizing what content to post rather than coming up with last-minute ideas. The step number 7 is more of a long-term goal, talking about growing an audience, fan base, or community. Creating a buzz around the company's social media presence. The eighth and ninth step is more focused on the organisational structure of the company. These points talk about teamwork across departments as well as creating a conversation within the company and collecting knowledge and ideas from the employees. The last but not least step is to "measure and report" the success of the content and engagement. The statistics will let the company or department know what works and which parts need to be improved.

On the other hand, Smith and Zook also opened the topic of social media mistakes which is equally important to consider when establishing an online presence as following the steps to success. To mention a few of the most resonating ones:

- over-flowing of information and followers,
- untrained and inexperienced staff taking care of the media,
- sharing without careful consideration,
- setting unrealistic expectations and goals (Smith and Zook, 2020).

Social media became a crucial tool for the political representatives in the sense of sharing their ideas and being closer to general public. Nowadays, social media are very popular in political communication as it is easier to convey the politicians' message (Rowinski, 2021).

#### **1.4 Political Communication**

"Political communication is a complex, communicative activity in which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, citizens, and citizen groups, exert a multitude of effects on individuals and society, as well as on outcomes that bear on

the public policy of a nation, state or community” (Perloff, 2018, p. 12). According to Perloff and other scholars that he is citing in his book, politics, and media are two different institutions, that overlap in order to communicate messages to the citizens of certain nations. The political communication consists of seven core features:

- **Complex Bridge Between Political and Media Institutions:** Most media, concerned with political communication are private owned institutions with focus on showing the truth, even if it means drowning some political party. On the other hand, the political campaigns organized by government, are more focused on election-winning strategies and administrating public programs. It can be clearly stated that the two institutes have different aims but political communication is making them overlap, which might be good as people can get a more open point of view of some political representatives. The effect of political communication can be detected on two levels: first micro level, where it mostly concerns an individual, and then the macro level, where media coverage of some political issue can lead to political activism (Perloff, 2018).
- **Symbols and language:** Perloff describes words as “weapons that maintain elite control” (2018, p. 14), which is a metaphor portraying the symbols and rhetoric used by presidents to either criticize certain situations or minimize the importance of an event, or on the other hand to encourage the spirit of the population of a certain country. The political representatives can use devious language in their speech or social media posts to shift people’s perspective or view on a certain topic. All of the public appearances of heads of states are accompanied by symbols, from how they formulate their speech, and what their body language intends to say, to what they decide to wear, or which accessories they decide to use to finalize their appearance. According to Perloff, “a symbol is a form of language in which one entity represents an idea or concept, conveying rich psychological and cultural meaning” (2018, p 15).
- **Mediation and Mediatization:** “Mediatization can be viewed as the process by which the media have come to play a central role in politics, influencing institutions, performing strategic functions for political elites, imparting information (and misinformation), socializing young citizens into civic society,

creating the public spectacle we call politics, and serving as the playing field in which politics occur” (Perloff, 2018, p. 16). Media has influenced the whole political game, as it is not about great ideas and persuasive speech ever since they were introduced, but about appearance and being pleasant to the eye. Even with the elections, the most important and talked about event, is the discussion broadcasted on one of the TV channels just before the moratorium. Which brings up another topic, and that is the rules around moratorium, no campaign at least 48 hours pre-election has begun to not make sense with media, as there is no mention of billboards or social media accounts in the law.

- **Media and Technology:** The point connected to media technology is also discussed in the previous two paragraphs, where it is mentioned that with the introduction of photojournalism in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century (Perloff, 2018), social media and other means of media, it became extremely important to focus on the looks of the candidates, as people suddenly could put a face to the name. Also, live televised discussions or press news broadcasted on social media platforms, puts politicians in great spotlight, where they have to be more cautious about making a mistake or formulating the sentence the wrong way as it cannot be altered later on.
- **Diverse, Multifaceted Media, Blurred Lines Media:** The term media used to describe conventional journalism, a newspaper with a wide range of articles focused on variety of topics. But nowadays, it covers a diverse portfolio of platforms, broadcasting systems, and roles. People these days tend to get news from several resources, the old-fashioned newspapers, TV or radio broadcasting, political websites or websites of different newspaper companies, social media, and so on. According to Perloff (2018) each of those platforms has its own objectives, goals, and design and each of them demands a specialist in their own field. Before, media could decide what to publish, in what form, or how to convey the message, these days, there are so many platforms that it is becoming very difficult to manage and control so more often than not happens that even information that was not supposed to be published find their way out.



- **Interplay Among Leaders, Media, Citizens:** Even though media and leaders, like politicians, would like to control the point of view of stories, the internet, and social media platforms made citizens the most powerful opinion-forming group. Citizens, defined as people “whose contact with politics comes only when they vote, band together in protest marches, and the litany of organized civic groups” (Perloff, 2018, p 22) can convey and twist or add to any message faster than any other media or leader out there.
- **Global phenomenon:** When, for example, it comes to presidential elections, it is standard to get the media involved, and the most broadcasted, followed, or promoted candidate is becoming more powerful and more likely to be elected. That is when social media and media in general become the most valuable in political promotion, as it can change the whole course of the election. This strategy has become globally popular and nowadays, most of the pre-election discussion and competition is done through media (Perloff, 2018).

### 1.5 Visual Political Communication and Digital World

Even though many may argue that in political promotion, verbal communication is the most important aspect, in the world of digital technology visual representation has become equally if not more important than verbal side. However, Veneti et al. (2019) claim that the conclusions from the empirical research are rather mixed and the results depend on how the research question is stated. Nevertheless, the importance of the digital world and visual communication in political promotion is undeniable, as “contrary to the age of the traditional mass media, especially television, when journalists would mainly choose which images of the politicians would be published, Instagram provides politicians with the ability to actively form their public image” (Veneti et al., 2019, p.9). This is important also because politicians can then choose what pictures and messages to publish, hence can work with the psychology of the viewers and their perception of them. For example, according to Veneti et al., if politicians are seen with a smile, they are considered to be more trustworthy, empathetic, sympathetic, persuasive, and happy, also in the long run. All these aspects then help them to create a successful campaign.

## **2 Analysis of chosen heads of states of European Union**

For the analysis five heads of states were chosen as a sample base regarding their gender, age and geographic location of the country they are presidents of. For gender, the focus was not to choose homogeneous sample, but to get approximately the same number of female candidates as male. In the end, there were 5 candidates chosen, which was dependent on the age criteria, the analysis consisted of three female candidates and 2 male candidates.

To successfully choose the right number of candidates with regard to the year they were born, the oldest and youngest representatives were identified, with the oldest being born in the year 1941 and the youngest being born in 1982, the focus was choosing one representative from each decade between these two.

When it comes to the geographic location, it was the last factor to weigh in and it was used as a decision-making aid, when there were more than one candidate fitting the groups above, the next step was to get one representative for each cardinal direction.

Based on these factors, the President of Ireland, Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Kosovo has been selected. Their social media has been studied and analysed for the period of 3 months and in order to understand their behaviour on social platform and analyse the source of the different approaches, it is essential to know more about background of each one of them. The introduction and personal background analysis as all further description will be based on the year of birth of the heads of states.

### **2.1 Introduction and personal background of heads of states**

#### **Michael D. Higgins**

The President of Ireland was born in 1941 and worked as a factory worker and a clerk before, he gained access to higher education as first in his family. For his studies, he chose the University College Galway, the University of Manchester and the Indiana University. His career started rather in the academic field, when he was working as a lecturer in political science and sociology in National University of Ireland and in United States. He became an advocate for accessing education

beyond the walls of established universities and travelled extensively in order to provide evening classes for interested citizens.

Mr Higgin's strong passion for justice and equality led him to become a public figure, directing his career to more political environment, when he became a public representative, from Councillor and Mayor to first Minister of Art in Ireland. As a representative and strongly passionate person in the topics of justice, human rights and promotion of peace and democracy, he was awarded the Sean MacBride Peace Prize from the International Peace Bureau in Helsinki, making him the first person to be recognized with this award. He was inaugurated as the ninth President of Ireland in 2011 and is currently serving his second run in this role.



Wikipedia Michael D. Higgins (2023)

***Figure 2 Photograph of Michael D. Higgins***

### **Katerina Sakellaropoulou**

Born in Thessaloniki in 1956 with a degree from the University of Athens Law School, the second president in the analysis is the Greek Head of State Katerina Sakellaropoulou. Her career started almost immediately in the law department, when she was appointed to the Council of State, in 1982 she became an Assistant Judge and at the beginning of the new millennial, Ms. Sakellaropoulou served as

councillor in the Third and Fifth Chamber of the Court in Greek. Between the years 1987 and 1988, during her sabbatical, she studied public law in France. In 2015 current head of Greece was appointed Vice-President serving in the Third Chamber and from 2018 to 2020 she held the position of the President of the Court, becoming the first woman to be in this position. Ms. Sakellaropoulou was invested in environmental law and also taught at the National School of Judiciary for a few years. At the beginning of the year 2022 she was elected and inaugurated into her position and is the first woman President of the Hellenic Republic.



Wikipedia Katerina N. Sakellaropoulou (2023)

***Figure 3 Photograph of Katerina N. Sakellaropoulou***

### **Petr Pavel**

Mr. Petr Pavel, retired army general was born in Czechoslovakia in the year 1961 into a military family, which most probably accounted to his decision to enlist right after his graduation. General Pavel studied the Jan Žižka Military gymnasium in Opava and then continued at the Military University of the Ground Forces in Vyškov. He served in the Czechoslovak People's Army, joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, he served in newly

established Czech Army and participated in many military operations, gaining a lot of recognition and respect. Between 2015 and 2018 he was selected as the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee.

After 44 years of service, Mr. Pavel decided to retire from military and was discharged with honours after his term expired. With no previous political experience, he announced his run for president in 2021, winning the election in 2023 with 58% of voters on his side. The win made him the second President with military experience but the first with zero political experience in Czech history.



Wikipedia Petr Pavel (2023)

***Figure 4 Photograph of Petr Pavel***

### **Zuzana Čaputova**

Born in capital city of Slovakia in 1973, the career life of Ms. Zuzana Čaputová, the Slovak President, was primarily focused on law. While studying and graduating on the Faculty of Law of Comenius University in Bratislava, Ms. Čaputová worked for the local self-governing authority in a town near Bratislava, called Pezinok. Working as an assistant in the legal department in her student years and later becoming the head of the municipal office. Throughout her career, she became very public oriented working on the issues of children suffering from physical or sexual abuse,

also cooperating with various civic associations, promoting justice in different areas, also being interested in environmental issues, she became the public figure at the forefront of campaign against permission for an additional landfill that would be harmful towards the environment, causing soil, air and water pollution. Ms. Zuzana Čaputová was, in the year 2016 awarded a prestigious prize, named Goldman Environmental Prize.

At the end of the year 2017 she started her political journey with the announcement of joining the Progressive Slovakia political party, later elected as the deputy leader of this party. A year later the run for presidency was announced and in March 2019, she won the election with the support of 58.41% voters. The inauguration took place on 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 and in the year 2023 she announced she will not be running in the next elections.



Zuzana Čaputová (2023)

***Figure 5 Photograph of Zuzana Čaputová***

## **Vjosa Osmani**

The last president chosen for this analysis is a young Ms. Vjosa Osmani, the President of Kosovo, born in 1982. She, as the other two female presidents mentioned before, studied law and became a political activist. Her previous work experience includes working as an advisor to a former President of Kosovo, speaker of the Assembly, the chair of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, vice-chair of the Committee on Constitutional Reforms in Kosovo and serving as acting president.

In 2019 Ms. Vjosa Osmani was elected as the second female president in the history of Kosovo, but the first one to serve in both, the position of acting president and the President of Kosovo. The President of Kosovo was engaged in anti-corruption activities and is interested in rebuilding the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia.



Wikipedia Vjosa Osmani (2023)

***Figure 6 Photograph of Vjosa Osmani***

## **2.2 Analysis of social media of presidents**

In order to conduct the analysis of the appearance of heads of states, there were several social media platforms chosen. Based on the most common usage of each platform, there were three most popular and the most well-known platforms chosen. As a first point of analysis, Instagram was used to determine their social media presence on platform commonly used by Millennials and Generation Z to present their personal life and momentous events. Instagram serves as platform for sharing pictures, short videos (called reels) or stories (posts that will disappear after 24 hours). Instagram stories of the five chosen representatives were monitored over the period of 2 months and the amount of them noted down. Posts were analysed based on their content, relevancy to current events and frequency of posting.

Next choice for the analysed platform is X (formerly known as Twitter), where people often discuss their political, social and cultural views on current happenings. It is microblogging media, allowing people to share short commentary, optionally users can add pictures, these are called posts (previously called tweets). Presence of the heads of states was also compared and contrasted based on content and relevancy, as well as their engagement on the platform.

Last but not least social media for analysis was LinkedIn which is a more professional platform used for job related activities, sharing work achievements or job seeking. The users are allowed to share verbal posts or add pictures, based on their preferences. The content, relevancy and engagement were again monitored.

At the end, the comparison of engagements on all three of these platforms was conducted. The analysis of each platform and comparison of them is further explained in the next sections.

### **2.2.1 Instagram engagement of heads of states**

As was mentioned above, Instagram is a platform used for sharing pictures and videos either from everyday life or some special occasions, like trips, vacations and events. Users can choose for their profile to be public or private. The difference is, that public profile can be accessed by anyone, the whole shared content is visible without any permission from the user's side. On the other hand the main benefit of having a public account is that users can choose the type of their account. There are three types to choose from:



- Personal
- Creator
- Business.

All five of the representatives of heads of states opted for the public settings for their accounts. Three of them even specified their account to Public Figure, which means they chose the business type of account. Only the accounts of the President of Slovakia and Greek are not specifically categorised.

The posts shared on the platform can be divided into two groups. First, short-term posts, are called stories that disappear after 24 hours. These posts can be also saved in a section called “highlights” that is shown at the top half of the users profile.

Analysis of this specific part of the profile was done on the basis of engagement, to figure out how active are the representatives on their Instagram on daily basis. The engagement was recorded since the end of August and every day, the number of stories posted by each representative was noted down.

The average per months and then total average of stories posted by each representative is shown at the Table 1.

<b>Head of State</b>	<b>Country / Birth year</b>	<b>September Average</b>	<b>October Average</b>	<b>Total Average</b>
Michael D. Higgins	Ireland / 1941	0.00	0.03	0.01
Katerina Sakellariopoulou	Greece / 1956	0.00	0.03	0.01
Petr Pavel	Czech Republic / 1961	1.13	1.47	1.53
Zuzana Čaputová	Slovakia / 1973	8.22	4.13	6.13
Vjosa Osmani	Kosovo / 1982	4.63	3.60	3.90

**Table 1 Engagement on Instagram stories**

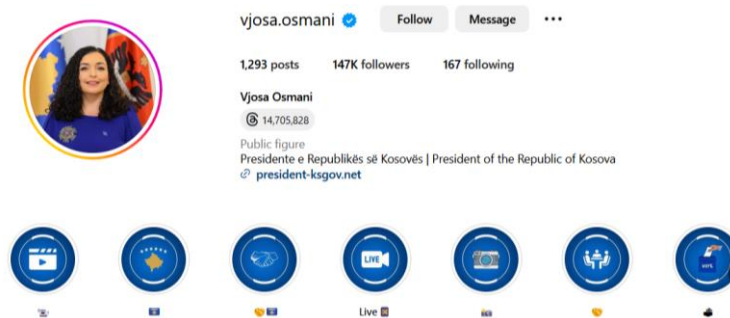
Table 1 shows that the President of Slovakia uses Instagram stories the most, posting 8.2 posts on average per day. The two oldest of the five representatives do

not use Instagram stories at all, their average being 0.01 for the last three months. The youngest of the representatives, the President of Kosovo, is posting on average half as much as the President of Slovakia and the President of the Czech Republic is only engaging is occasion, his average being 1.13 stories per day. All three of them also use highlights in order to save their stories and divide them into thematic areas, like the event that they are sharing from (see Figure 7), the countries they are posting from (see Figure 8) or jus the activity that’s being shared (see Figure 9). In the figure 7 and 8 there are pink and orange circle around the profile picture of the users, meaning they have posted a story or stories in the last 24 hours and it is still visible.



Instagram Zuzana Čaputová (2023)

**Figure 7 Screenshot of Zuzana Čaputová’s Instagram profile**



Instagram Vjosa Osmani (2023)

**Figure 8 Screenshot of Vjosa Osmani’s Instagram profile**



Instagram Petr Pavel (2023)

**Figure 9 Screenshot of Petr Pavel's Instagram profile**

When it comes to the posts of each head of state, the Instagram feed is quite similar, all of them post pictures from their professional experience, different visits they are paying to charitable organisations, other states or media. They are all sharing these day to day activities that are part of their duties but some of them also share more of their free time activities. The next paragraphs will talk more about their engagement.

The President of Ireland has 112,000 followers on his Instagram which makes it little over 2% of the population of Ireland. Mr. Michael D. Higgins usually posts once or twice a week, pictures with short comments of the occasions. His posts are written in 3<sup>rd</sup> person, as '*President Higgins this morning received...*' (Instagram, 2023), which makes him the only representative to use this form. The posts are in English as it is the native language of Irish people. All other representatives use their native language as well. Which indicates that the Instagram profiles are predominantly for the population of the state that they are governing. Ms. Katherina Sakellaropoulou, the President of Greece, engaged little over 0.5% of total population of Greece with her posts, as she has gained 53,000 followers so far. The low engagement is most probably due to lack of engagement as she posts once or twice a month on average. The only exception is during holidays, where she is able to perform a little better, with one post a week. Although a very interesting is the form of speech she is using, writing the longer comments in the 1<sup>st</sup> person of plural, addressing it as We, the Republic of Greece or the presidential office. The third president, Mr. Petr Pavel, the President of Czech Republic posts quite frequently, two or three times a week and with this engagement he gained the popularity of approximately 6.5% of Czech population. He mostly posts from official business visits, but also from the less formal environment, like tree planting for the Earth Day or running a marathon. The

comments accompanying the posts are rather short and to the point, which indicates his military background. He addresses his audience, similar to the rest of the representative in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, stating everything as his own thought, e.g. *'I was visiting...*The next representative, the President of Slovakia, Zuzana Čaputová, gained the most popularity from the five analysed as her posts are of interest for more than 8.3% of Slovaks. From the analysis, it can be concluded that her posts vary the most, as there are professional events, opinions or current statements on political situation both in the world and home state. The descriptions or comments under her posts are rather long, as it is more in-depth description of the event, situation it is concerning. The last and youngest representative is Ms. Vjosa Osmani, the President of Kosovo engages almost the same proportion of population as the President of Slovakia. Little over 8% of Kosovo's population is interested in her day-to-day activities concerning both professional and personal life, that she posts more or less every day with multiple posts a day if there is any special occasion like important visit, conference or holiday. The comments she is sharing are mix of both shorter and longer once, according to the occasion.

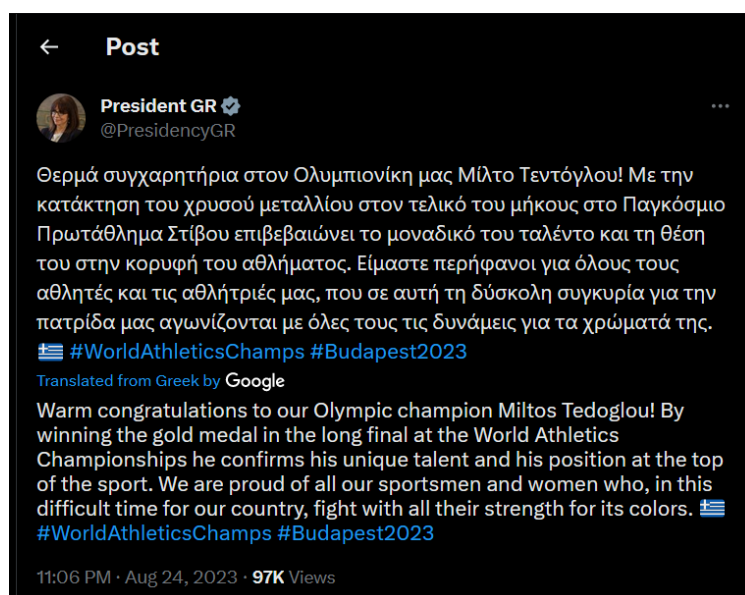
### **2.2.2 The usage of platform X (formerly known as Twitter)**

X, formerly known as Twitter was mostly used for sharing short messages, containing some idea or opinion on certain trending topic, allowing users type only certain number of characters per post. Nowadays it is more flexible in the sense that users are allowed to post without less restrictions, text, photos, even videos of any length.

The five chosen representative for the analysis can be divided into three groups according to their usage of the platform X. The first group, containing Mr. Michael D. Higgins, Ms. Katerina Sakellaropoulou, and Mr. Petr Pavel have official profiles of the presidents of each country, e.g. President GR and President of Ireland, which makes it a little more difficult to get to their profile, because on social media, people are usually searching individuals by name not by the profession they are occupying. The other reason why these three representatives can be put into the same group is the way they use social media platforms X and Instagram, which is very similar and described in the next paragraphs.

The President of Ireland is using his X profile to share more or less the same content as on his Instagram page, which can also be understood from the bio description of both profiles, as both of them claim to share the work of Mr. Michael D. Higgins. However, there is slight difference between X and IG, as on his X profile he is also adding some links to his speeches, for example statement concerning the ongoing violence in Middle East, the death of important persona from Ireland or short commentaries on his activities, which are written in third person, like The president has signed a bill... and some more important statuses are written in Irish and English language, within one thread clearly distinguishing between the languages but also making it clear it is only a translation (Higgins, 2023).

The President of Greece is a more frequent user of the platform X, compared to her IG usage. She posts at least twice a month, mostly pictures with a comment in Greece. The difference between her IG and X profile is that, if the post is concerning global, international or foreign affairs, she does not hesitate to post in English. Ms. Katerina Sakellaropoulou also uses X to write down and post her thoughts, beliefs and statements on different topic (e.g., international politics, wins of Greece sportsmen, etc.) (see Figure 10). Some of the posts also include a link to her Facebook posts, as the number of characters are limited on X and she posts longer statements on Facebook (Sakellaropoulou, 2023).



X Katerina N. Sakellaropoulou (2023)

**Figure 10 Screenshot of post on the platform X of Katerina N. Sakellaropoulou**

The President of Czech Republic is using his profile in a similar way to the President of Ireland. The posts are more frequent on his X profile, he is posting the same content as on IG, but with different graphics. Mr. Petr Pavel is also using his profile on platform X to share his work activities and his approach towards topics he is dealing with as a president. His bio description on both profiles is the same, saying “The president of Czech Republic” in his mother tongue (Pavel, 2023).

The President of Slovak Republic, differentiate between the usage of X and Instagram, which is also defined in the bio of her X profile (see Figure 11), as it says: “Official Twitter account of the President of the Slovak Republic for international audience in English | Pre vyjadrenia v SK sledujte FB a IG.” (Čaputová, 2023). The last part of the quote being in Slovak, meaning for statements in Slovak language follow Facebook and Instagram. This makes her the only representative from the five chosen that distinguishes between these two social media platforms. Not only the language used is different for each social media, but also the content is very divergent. Even though the topics are often the same, the graphics, commentary used is all very different and it might be concluded that the platform X is taken more professionally, with short targeted posts, concerning all kinds of topics, whereas the Instagram posts are more heartwarming and personal.



X Zuzana Čaputová (2023)

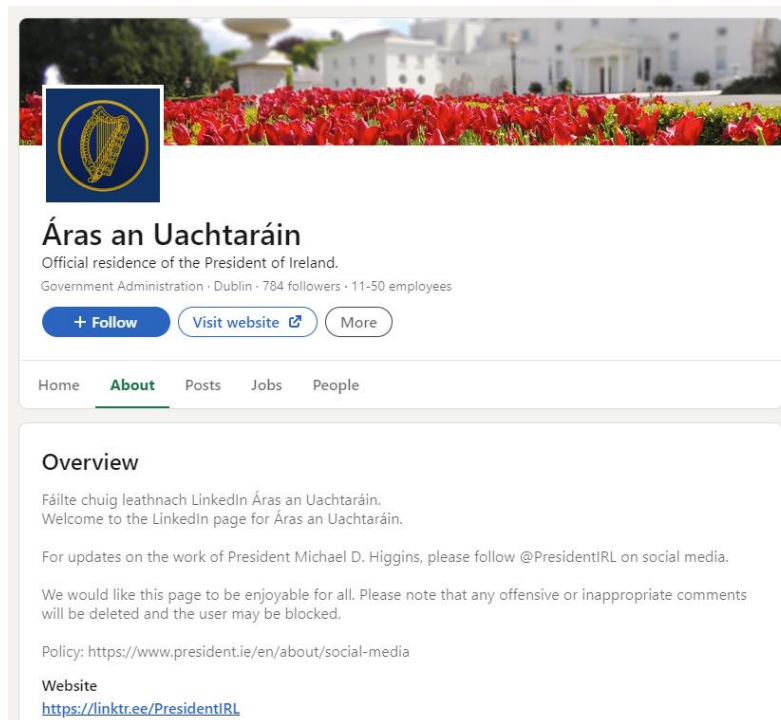
**Figure 11 Screenshot of X profile Zuzana Čaputová**

The President of Kosovo is also taking an interesting and different perspective on her usage of platform X. Even though, at first it might as it is very similar to the Instagram profile and the usage is identical to how the other three representatives are using the platforms X and Instagram, deeper observation shows otherwise. Both the profiles seem more like complementary things, where if you look at one and then the other, you can find more information, different pictures and deeper understanding of her work and visits.

### **2.2.3 Heads of states and LinkedIn Accounts**

“LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the internet. You can use LinkedIn to find the right job or internship, connect and strengthen professional relationships, and learn the skills you need to succeed in your career. You can also use LinkedIn to organize offline events, join groups, write articles, post photos and videos, and more” (LinkedIn, 2023). As it is social media platform meant to be used for sharing professional achievements, the expectation would be frequent usage by the heads of states for promoting their work and also headhunting of candidates for the team of the presidents.

However, the office of the President of Ireland is using LinkedIn differently. Mr. Higgins does not have his own official LinkedIn profile, neither as a presidential seat is represented on this platform. Only official LinkedIn profile is promoting the residence of the President, Áras an Uachtaráin (see Figure 12). Information about the events happening at the residence or the formal visits that have been welcomed at the residence. Even the description of the profile states that for any updates of Mr. Higgins work, people should follow his updates on social media under the username @PresidentIRL. Which is making it very efficient when starting the search, as other social media presence can be easily examine, simply by searching said username. Even greater help in researching the online presence of the President is a link added to the description of the LinkedIn profile, where all his social media can be found, from the one analysed in this work, like Instagram and X, to TikTok, Facebook and many more.



LinkedIn Áras an Uachtaráin (2023)

**Figure 12 Screenshot of LinkedIn profile of Áras an Uachtaráin**

Ms. Katerina N. Sakellaropoulou, the President of Greece has no LinkedIn profile, neither the presidential position or any official page on LinkedIn connected to the presidential office. As well as the President of Kosovo, Ms. Vjosa Osmani, who also has no LinkedIn presence. The only way thing that will come up after putting each of the ladies into the search bar are mentions of them done by different people and profiles on LinkedIn, that have had the chance to interact with them or have an experience or opinion to share.

Even though Mr. Pavel has its own LinkedIn profile (see Figure 13), nothing has been posted since he was appointed the President of Czech Republic. Last posts are mentioning him packing and moving into the castle, for the presidential chair. Before this period though, he was quite active, in the role of NATO chairman, he would post about the updates and work. Nowadays, the profile is only used for commenting and reacting to other people's posts, to keep up the network he has built until now. It seems like the profile is now used more as a personal promotional tool, rather than professional as his other social media handles.

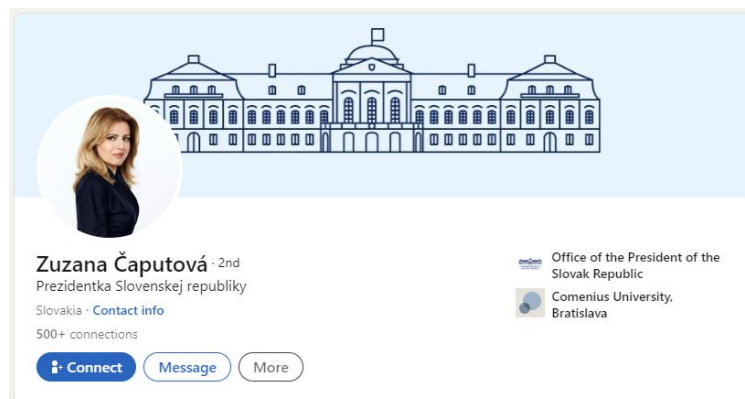




LinkedIn Petr Pavel (2023)

**Figure 13 Screenshot of LinkedIn profile of Petr Pavel**

The President of Slovakia is using her LinkedIn profile (see Figure 14) the most often, but as with the other three representatives, it is her least active platform from the three analysed. On LinkedIn, Ms. Čaputová posts only her more professional activities and she is using the same graphics and commentary as on her IG profile, which makes it only a summarizing profile of her professional life highlights. She posts about the climate change crisis and the steps the presidential office is taking in order to avoid as much damage as possible. Another topics that the President of Slovakia is sharing on her LinkedIn profiles are pictures from different visits she is getting or paying to different organizations, e. g. European Night of Researchers in Bratislava or veterans, she welcomed on the International Veteran Day.



LinkedIn Zuzana Čaputová (2023)

**Figure 14 Screenshot of LinkedIn profile of Zuzana Čaputová**

### 3 Own draft solution or application

According to website called Social Sheperd (2023), X has been primarily used by people in the age group between 25 and 34 years old and only 10% of all the users are generating more than 90% of the content on X. From these statistics it can be concluded that X is used by younger generation, similar to Instagram and LinkedIn. Instagram users in the same age group account for 30.3% of users and 31% are between the ages of 18 to 24 (Statista, 2023). For LinkedIn the users demographics is more straightforward, as over 60% of the users are from the same age group as majority of users of X and IG (Statista, 2022).

From those statistics, it can be concluded that as of now, all of the social media platforms are more targeted towards the younger generation. That shows that if the heads of states need to gain more attention and popularity between the first time voters or the young millennials, their primary focus during the pre-election period or even their functional period should be on social media and online promotion. On the other hand, if a head of state is struggling with reputation among the older generations, social media might not be the key, or they must choose the right one to be successful.

As it can be seen at the Table 2 and was also mentioned in the previous chapter, Ms. Zuzana Čaputová has the biggest following base compared to the population of the country. However, overall Mr. Petr Pavel is the most famous from the five analysed, with the number of followers over half a million. On the other hand, the least popular Instagram president is Ms. Katerina Sakellariou, with little over 50 thousands of followers. This low number is mostly caused by her inactivity on this platform, as she is not posting on her main feed frequently and she completely omits the option to post stories, which generates the most engagement on Instagram.

The platform X, formerly known as Twitter, is showing almost the same results, as Mr. Petr Pavel is the most followed person on this platform from the chosen representatives and Ms. Zuzana Čaputová has the biggest proportion again. However there is a difference when it comes to the exact number of followers of others compared to Instagram. Representatives who are doing significantly better on Instagram have lower follower base on X, while the ones that do not generate as

much engagement on Instagram have twice as many followers, e. g. Mr. Michael D. Higgins or Ms. Katerina Sakellariopoulou. The higher number of followers on platform X is highly due to their more active approach towards this social media platform. And the lower number of followers in case of Mr. Petr Pavel and Ms. Zuzana Čaputová is on the other side, caused by their lower activity and engagement with the audience, then on Instagram.

Ms. Vjosa Osmani is relatively popular on both of those platforms, when the fact that Kosovo is a very small country is taken into account. This is due to the fact, that she is very active on both platforms.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Instagram followers</b>	<b>X followers</b>	<b>LinkedIn followers</b>
Michael D. Higgins	Ireland	5,067,035	112,000	204,100	785
Katerina Sakellariopoulou	Greece	10,341,277	53,200	101,600	X
Petr Pavel	Czech Republic	10,495,295	687,000	361,000	79,238
Zuzana Čaputová	Slovakia	5,795,199	486,000	224,100	X
Vjosa Osmani	Kosovo	1,791,864	150,000	91,700	X

**Table 2 The statistics of followers**

### **3.1 Gaining more followers on Instagram**

Mr. Michael D. Higgins and Ms. Katerina Sakellariopoulou are not really popular on Instagram, even more so when the population of each country, Ireland and Greece, is taken into account. For both of them, it would be rather beneficial, according to the second of ten steps to successful online presence (Smith, Zook, 2020) to engage more with the audience and use more of the features that platform such as Instagram offers. The more obvious step would be to share more from their lives as presidents through Instagram stories. The topic for stories could be less formal, showing more from their official visits, similar to behind-the-scenes clips from movies. Showing how they are preparing for a speech, TV or radio discussion.

Another topic could even be how they are spending their free time, for example a picture from family dinner on Christmas evening or similar gatherings.

All of the analysed heads of states would definitely benefit from the steps five and six, which talk about creating a strategy for their social media presence. Having different colour schemes for commentary of their official statements to differentiate from the less formal posts, posting at certain time of the day, or having monthly campaigns concerning a certain topic, like Fridays from the Presidential Office, where they would share some interesting facts from the day-to-day office life of a president. Planning and having strategy would be especially beneficial for the president of Kosovo, Ms. Vjosa Osmani. It would give her Instagram presence more structure and it would also avoid over posting from one event, which is a very frequent case for her. These changes would make her profile less spamming for the followers, as it sometimes happens that there are very similar pictures from one event divided into several posts. If she is interested in posting more pictures at once, Instagram reel, short video that could be constructed from both pictures and videos would be a better step. Not only it would minimize multiple posts, it would also help her exposure, as scrolling through reels is very popular activity for all age groups nowadays.

Another step to consider for all of the presidents, is to focus more on their organizational structure, or to be more precise the office that they are heads of. Being a president is particularly interesting job, as in every country there is just one at a time. It would be very surprising and engaging topic to show how many people it takes to run such office and who all is needed for a presidential office to run smoothly. It could also be connected to creating a strategy, where once in a month the president could introduce one of his colleagues from the office, make a small talk, where the audience gets to know more about all the professionals and their journeys to such an office. This step could allure bigger audience and new followers as people could be also inspired by those stories to try for their dream.

The last recommendation for the Instagram platform of analysed heads of states, would be to either switch they commentaries to English, which would make their profiles more interesting for global exposure, hence earning them more followers and popularity. On the other hand, as those profiles are primarily target for the audience coming from their home country, better recommendation would be to make

their profiles bilingual, as majority of Instagram users also enjoy to read those commentaries to learn more about the situation or event from the pictures.

### **3.2 Gaining more followers on X and LinkedIn**

Even though Ms. Katherina Sakellariopoulou, the President of Greece is relatively popular on the platform X, the following base could be increased, if she switched to English, like Ms. Zuzana Čaputová did. And if she is want to save her integrity and Greek language, she could always write her posts bilingually , as in many cases the translation provided by the platform might not always showcase the same meaning as it is intended to share in the native language. It is the same recommendation as in the previous chapter for all the representatives and their presence on Instagram.

Ms. Vjosa Osmani might increase her audience, if she applied more planning and strategizing into her platform, as already mentioned within the chapter about Instagram. Some posts are very hectic and also she is again over posting, which might come out annoying for some people and they simply decide to stop following her because of it.

For the rest of the representatives, it would be beneficial to use a different content to Instagram or divide the topics between those platforms as repeating the same posts will make the people unfollow the representatives on one of the two.

When it comes to the LinkedIn accounts, all of the heads of states should work on those. Except the president of Slovakia, neither of them establish an online presence on LinkedIn in their role of presidents. Which might not be a very good step for their future career, as it is a great tool for PR, place where they could share their personal achievements in their profession. The audience is mostly formed of professionals either following other people's professional journeys, which leads LinkedIn to become an opinion forming platform when it comes to the working life. It might be a great opportunity to gain fresh talents for the president and their office or campaigns as LinkedIn also works as a recruitment platform and is more and more often chosen and preferred by young talents searching for job.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this thesis has extensively examined the communication methods employed by heads of state within the European Union. It aimed to explore the depth, nuances, and variations in their approaches to communication. Through the structured pursuit of various sub-objectives, including a literature review including areas like marketing communication, political marketing, and social media communication, followed by a detailed analysis of communication methods used by heads of states of European Union, this study aimed to discern patterns across different channels.

By scrutinizing the social media presence on Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and LinkedIn, this thesis offers recommendations to enhance the social media outreach and presence of selected presidential representatives. Ultimately, this research endeavours to contribute to a better understanding of the multifaceted communication styles adopted by the highest-ranking representatives of member states within the European Union and proposes strategies for improving their online engagement and presence. The recommendations include using the tools that are offered by each social media platform more actively, e. g. on Instagram the use of stories or reels would be beneficial for most of the representatives or even more planned and better strategized organization of their platform, to make more clear for people who wants to get to know the representatives through these channels.

The suggestion in this bachelor thesis should improve the social media presence of the highest representatives of states and would increase the number of people that follow them on these platforms, which could lead to more people being engaged in the political situation, current global political topics and overall increase the interest of people on the governance of the state.

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## ANNOTATION

<b>AUTHOR</b>	Natália Korcoňová		
<b>FIELD</b>	6208R087 Business Administration and Sales		
<b>THESIS TITLE</b>	Political Promotion of Heads of States across European Union		
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<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	KMM - Department of Marketing and Management	<b>YEAR</b>	2023
<b>NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	31		
<b>NUMBER OF PICTURES</b>	13		
<b>NUMBER OF TABLES</b>	2		
<b>NUMBER OF APPENDICES</b>	0		
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<p>The thesis explores how heads of state in the European Union communicate, particularly focusing on their use of social media and personal channels. The study scrutinizes presidents' online presence on platforms like Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. It aims to identify patterns in communication strategies. By analysing these strategies, the thesis provides recommendations to enhance the social media reach and presence of selected presidential representatives, aiming to offer insights into effective communication for high-ranking leaders in the EU.</p>		
<b>KEY WORDS</b>	<p>political promotion, heads of states, European Union, social media, marketing communication</p>		