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**“Posted on the European Wall”  
Representation of the European Parliament on Social Media**

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## **MA Programme Euroculture**

### **Declaration**

I, Kateřina Netopilová hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “Posted on the European Wall: Representation of the European Parliament on Social Media”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the List of References.

I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis Euroculture and about the general completion rules for the Master of Arts Programme Euroculture.

Signed .....

Date .....

## **Preface**

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# 1. Introduction

“The European Parliament is the people's assembly. In keeping with this, we try not just to attract readers to our website, but to be where the people are. And people are on social media.”<sup>1</sup>

The European Parliament clearly realizes the importance of social media nowadays. Social media play a significant role in our society. We can feel this impact throughout our homes, offices or educational institutions. Social media has become the number one activity on the internet.

When we realize the power social media have, we can undoubtedly agree that social media need a better understanding especially from organizations. Social media attract and engage the public with organizations; therefore, they should manage their organizational image on the Internet carefully. Certainly, on social media, organizations cannot control all the conversations, but they can influence them. As Qualman points out, social media are an excellent tool for companies with great products or services, but they might be an enormous disadvantage for companies with mediocre products or services.<sup>2</sup> Social media and the Internet, in general, have increased organizational transparency and accountability.

As social media help businesses to increase their brand awareness, they also help governments with better communication with its citizens. The European Union is facing various challenges that might be partially overcome through social media as they are great tool for two-way communication and engaging the dialogue.

This research is going to analyze the relation between the European Parliament and social media. In particular, the thesis will examine what image the European Parliament presents on different social media channels. Thus the research question of this thesis will be as follows:

Research Question 1: How is the European Parliament represented in selected social media channels?

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<sup>1</sup> European Parliament, “Parliament on social media,” Europa.eu, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00fd7b595a/Social-media.html> (accessed February 26, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Erik Qualman, *Socialnomics: how social media transforms the way we live and do business* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 265.

The thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter will introduce the concept of social media and what role does this phenomenon play in our society. The chapter will also elaborate the motives why people use social media by using various researches done on the topic and linked to Maslow's concept of psychological needs. Further, there will be briefly explained categorization of social media and its two most popular channels Facebook and Twitter. The chapter will stress that not only following rules of engagement on social media bring success but companies and institutions have to know their audience in order to influence them. How influential social media might be will be shown on various examples of successful social media campaigns. As social media are part of Public Relations nowadays, one section will analyze that connection and the advantage of two-way communication on social media. Initially, the potential of social media for businesses will be explained and later on the focus will be moved on governmental organizations. The second part of the chapter will move the attention from general topic of social media to specific usage by governments and governmental organizations. Furthermore, there will be a section devoted to the problems and challenges that the European Union is facing. Such issues as the European public sphere, humanization of the EU, political communication deficit and democratic deficit will be covered. These challenges have consequently led to improvements in the communication between the EU and its citizens. The first chapter will use mainly scholarly articles and books written by experts on social media.

The second chapter will provide the background of the European Union and the European Parliament. Then, there will be discussed the media use of the EU with the specification on social media. Furthermore, the chapter will present EU's communication strategy, including the White Paper and Europe for citizens programme. The White Paper, by the European Commission will stress the importance of two-way communication for a healthy democracy and will set specific measures how to improve communication with the citizens of the EU. This chapter will primarily use official documents by the European Union and Eurobarometer surveys.

The third chapter of the thesis will present European Parliament's current representation in different social media channels. This chapter aims to identify what are the key themes in the self-constructed image of the European Parliament. For this purposes, the two-dimension analysis will be used. Firstly, computer based quantitative analysis will be used to identify the key themes within the messages posted by the

European Parliament. Secondly, the qualitative research method will be applied on the selected messages based on the results from quantitative analysis. The analysis will identify how the European Parliament is presenting itself to the public through social media. Channels that will be primarily studied are social network Facebook and Microblogging site Twitter. The second part of the chapter will briefly describe EP's representation on other social media channels, specifically: LinkedIn, YouTube, Foursquare, Pinterest, Flickr and MySpace. As sources for this part, official messages posted by the EP itself will be used and the official website descriptions of each site will be used to have primary sources about the channels. The European Union is not officially represented on social media as one body, but it is divided into individual institutions, member countries and individual politicians. European Parliament has been chosen for this research because it is the only institution that is elected directly by the EU citizens and furthermore, it has far more the highest number of fans on Facebook and second highest number of followers on Twitter; therefore, it has the biggest opportunity to influence the audience.

Based on the research, the last chapter will propose another social media channel that is suitable for the needs of the European Union and that is currently not used by the EU. Therefore, the fourth chapter will be devoted to the proposal of possible representation of the European Parliament on the virtual world of Second Life. This proposal will firstly present the basic concept of virtual worlds and then explain how one of them, Second Life, works. Moreover, there will be given two examples of successful Second Life campaigns to demonstrate its opportunities. Thereafter, the SWOT analysis will be used to identify Second Life's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Finally, there will be shown how the possible representation of the European Parliament in Second Life might look like. The chapter aims to point out that virtual worlds might be used in the future in order to increase awareness about the EU. This chapter will mostly use books and articles by the most well known practitioners in the area.



## 2. Theoretical Background

The following chapter will start with the introduction of social media, its important features, rules of engagement and explanation why they are essential part of organizations' Public Relations nowadays. The second part of the chapter will focus on the social media usage by governments and governmental organizations. Furthermore, there will be discussed issues related to the European Union which have consequently led to improvements in the communication between the EU and its citizens.

### 2.1.Social media

The term social media is composed of two words: social, which refers to the intuitive need of humans to connect with other human beings; and media, which people use to keep those connections and as means of communication. Social media:

(...) refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios.<sup>3</sup>

Social media are not just a fad that will be gone in a few years; therefore it is not important only for businesses to use them but also for governmental institutions.<sup>4</sup> There are impressive statistics about social media that show how influential phenomenon social media is. Social media has become the most frequent activity on the Internet. If Facebook was a country, it would be the third largest country in the world. Every seventh person on the planet is a Facebook user. A new member joins LinkedIn every second and 80% of companies use social media for recruitment.<sup>5</sup>

Social media campaign is not about creating one profile page; it is about communicating throughout a wide variety of social media channels. Turner and Shah compare social media to a marriage. They explain that no one can expect to have a good marriage if the only conversation between a wife and a husband is ten minutes in the

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<sup>3</sup> Lon Safko and David K. Blake, *The Social Media Bible, Tactics, Tools & Strategies for Business Success* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 4-6.

<sup>4</sup> Qualman, *Socialnomics*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Erik Qualman, "Social Media Video 2013," Socialnomics, <http://www.socialnomics.net/2013/01/01/social-media-video-2013/> (accessed April 6, 2013).

morning. Social media require two-way conversation across multiple channels. This approach should ensure the public to have a feeling of being heard.<sup>6</sup>

Social media are also often likened to pubs or other public spaces. Turner and Shah explain that Facebook is a casual place where one can go and talk about everything they would talk in a pub.<sup>7</sup> Chris Brogan describes this analogy even more. He says: “Pubs are where people talk. There’s news. There’s gossip. There are deals and selling...” The same is happening on social media, people from all background can gather like in a pub.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, when a marketer shares something of value on social media, it can be compared to the situation when a person gets a drink for free.<sup>9</sup>

Among objectives of usage of SM by organizations is building a relationship with its stakeholders. In order to do so and reach prospects, audience and potential employees, they should build a strong social media strategy.<sup>10</sup> Generally, relationships on social media start on positive foundation. When a person becomes a fan or a follower of an organization, he/she is positively acknowledging being part of the community of interest; therefore, the list of fans on social media is incredibly worthy list with people who are willing to spread a good word.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Scott also emphasizes that people join Facebook and Twitter groups because they want to be informed, it is the reader’s choice, compared to intrusive emails, when businesses are often spamming their audience.<sup>12</sup>

There is an increasing tendency in using new media compared to traditional media. Harden and Heyman point out three main elements why it is so: 1. convenience- the fact, that consumers can get information any time on many different platforms- laptops, mobile phones, tablets etc., 2. relevance- consumers can choose those media that are interesting for them and they can get it anytime during the day, 3. depth-

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<sup>6</sup>Jamie Turner and Reshma Shah, *How to make money with social media: An Insider’s Guide on Using New and Emerging Media to Grow Your Business* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2011), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Brogan, *Social Media 101: Tactics and Tips to Develop Your Business Online* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 153.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Sweeney and Randall Craig, *Social media for business: 101 ways to grow your business without wasting your time* (Gulf Breeze: Maximum Press, 2010), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>12</sup> David M. Scott, *The New Rules of Marketing & PR, How to Use Social Media, Blogs, News Releases, Online Video & Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010) 177.

consumers may focus on a particular topic and, for example, by using search engines drill down to the level of detail they want.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.1. Classification of social media

This subsection explains the categorization of social media and presents two the most popular social media channels Facebook and Twitter. There are many channels in social media environment; however, there is currently no commonly agreed classification system for those tools. Safko and Blake decided to categorize social media and they presented fifteen categories: Social networking, Publish, Photo, Audio, Video, Microblogging, Livecasting, Virtual Worlds, Gaming, Productivity applications, Aggregators, RSS, Search, Mobile and Interpersonal.<sup>14</sup> People interact differently on every social media channel; each network cultivates its own culture. It creates a unique society that is influenced by the technological capabilities of the channel as well as the people who join that network.<sup>15</sup>

This thesis is mainly going to analyze two types of social media: a social network site Facebook and Microblogging site Twitter. The following scheme of the categorization with the logos of main tools in each category was created especially for this thesis according to the “Social Media Bible” by Safko and Blake. Nevertheless, as was mentioned above, there are many categorizations of social media channels and this is not perfect as well. According to my opinion, there is completely omitted “blogging” channel.

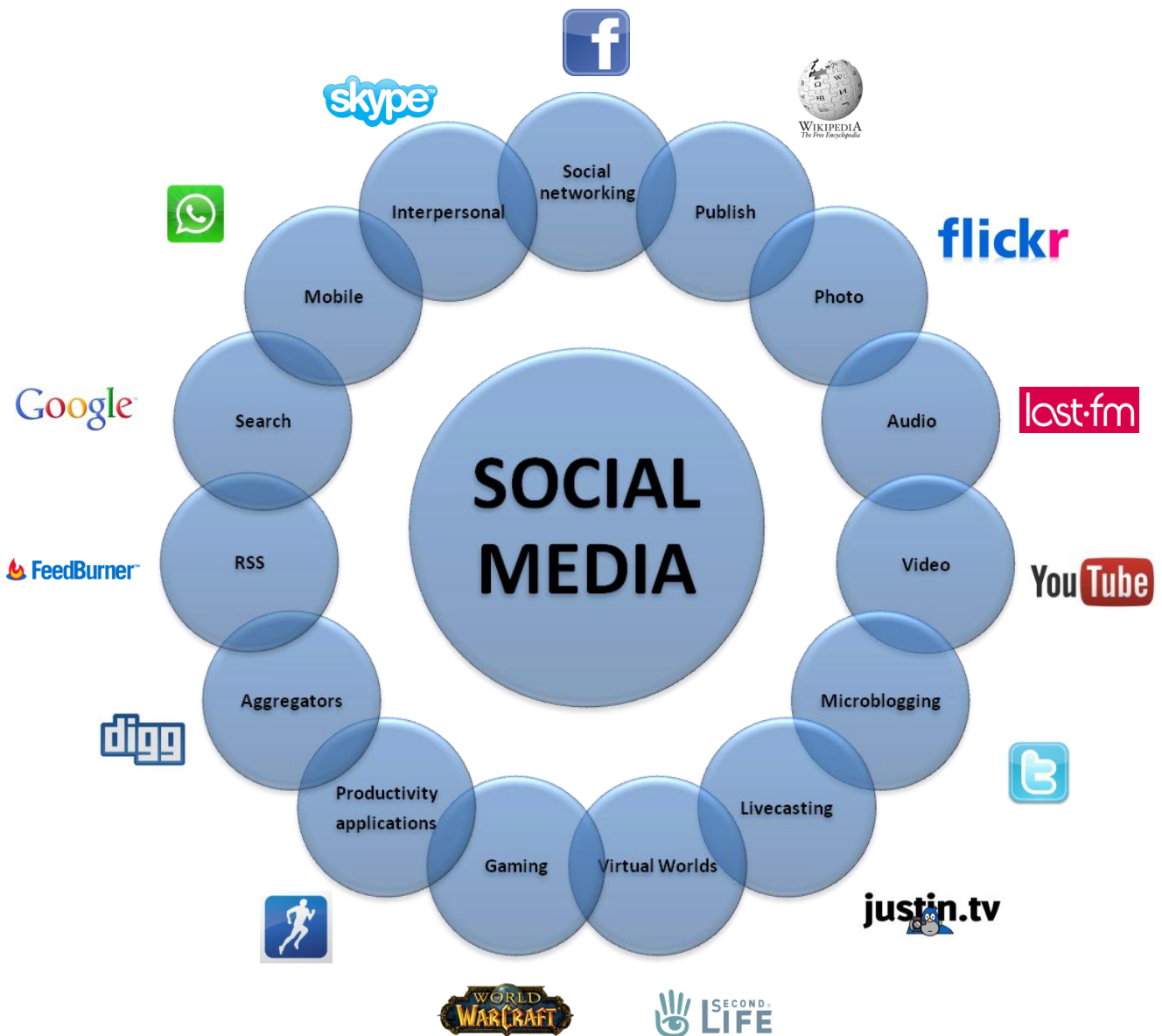
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<sup>13</sup> Leland Harden and Bob Heyman, *Digital Engagement: Internet Marketing that Captures Customers and Builds Brand Loyalty* (New York: AMACOM, 2009), 149-150.

<sup>14</sup> Safko and Blake, *Social Media Bible*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Solis, *Engage! The Complete Guide for Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure success in the New Web* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 13.

Picture 1: Categorization of social media



Source: my own

## Facebook

Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg originally as a social medium for students to get acquainted and nowadays Facebook has become the most visited website on the internet, which currently has more than 950 million active users. It provides an excellent platform to quickly connect with friends, coworkers or acquaintances in

various network groups.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to its popularity, Facebook can be used to promote the company, product or services. Facebook is considered to be a visual type of social media and as the famous saying says: ‘A picture is worth a thousand words’. Therefore, it is useful to attach a picture to the messages or express the message by the picture itself.

In 2011, Facebook launched new profile design called Timeline. The Timeline is supposed to tell one’s life story by sharing the most memorable photos, visited locations and life events since birth to presence.<sup>17</sup> Users are especially encouraged to add moments that happened before they joined Facebook. Friends can also see their friendship page with another user, where they would find their pictures together, same interests and groups they are both in. It depends on every user how much he/she wants to share; however, the Timeline is capable of deep emotional impact. In case of organizations, they can display their long-standing traditions, new products or show their growth.<sup>18</sup> By this profile change, Facebook expressed that it is really a social network focused on connecting people and socializing.

There is number of public institutions and political figures on Facebook. The “number one” of the highest number of fans in political pages on Facebook is the President of the United States Barack Obama with more than 35 million fans. Among the top places are, for example, also: NASA, The White House or Nicolas Sarkozy. The European Parliament was, at the time of writing, on the fiftieth position in number of fans.<sup>19</sup>

## **Twitter**

Twitter is the most successful Microblogging channel. Microblogging is something between blogging and text messaging. Twitter was created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Evan Williams and Biz Stone.<sup>20</sup> Twitter’s tagline is: “What are you

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<sup>16</sup> Safko and Blake, *Social Media Bible*, 452.

<sup>17</sup> Facebook, “Introducing Timeline,” Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/about/timeline> (accessed April 24, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Charlie Whitesep, “Why I Love Facebook Timeline,” Mashable, <http://mashable.com/2011/09/25/i-love-the-facebook-timeline/> (accessed April 24, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Socialbakers, “Facebook Pages Statistics & Number of Fans,” Socialbakers, <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-pages/politics/> (accessed March 26, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Safko and Blake, *Social Media Bible*, 39.

doing?” and that was the main purpose at the beginning of Twitter, to share people’s activities or moods with friends and strangers. Nowadays, the tagline is unofficially changed into: “What are you thinking?” The important feature of Twitter is that messages cannot be longer than 140 characters. These messages are called tweets and it is actually quite a challenge to write a quality tweet; since, it is difficult to squeeze all the important information into 140 characters and still keep the message interesting. Users can subscribe to other people’s tweets by which they become followers. On Twitter it is much more common to have followers that a person does not know in person. Recently, Twitter started to be used also as a free marketing research service and a tool for feedbacks on products and services.<sup>21</sup>

### **2.1.2. Why people use social media**

This subsection follows the section social media by explaining the motives why people join and use social media. The fact that an enormous number of people use social media is irrefutable but what are the motives behind them? Successful companies always start with the simple question “Why?” so they can make better products, improve their services or plan a good marketing strategy. There are many reasons why people use social media channels and it is fascinating to look on the basic motivations behind people’s actions.

Professional social media channel LinkedIn conducted a survey on this topic, where they surveyed more than six thousand users from twelve countries about their usage of nine different social media channels. LinkedIn concluded that people use different channels for different reasons; there is a clear distinction between personal and professional networks. On personal networks people usually just spend time by socializing, staying in touch and being entertained, whereas on professional networks users invest time to improve themselves and manage their future by maintaining professional identity, making useful contacts and searching for opportunities. They both

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<sup>21</sup> Safko and Blake, *Social Media Bible*, 536.

even show different emotions, personal networks bring nostalgia, fun and distraction; and professional networks bring achievement, success and aspiration.<sup>22</sup>

Donna L. Hoffman and Thomas P. Novak, both professors of marketing, conducted a research to examine why and how people use social media. Participation in social media introduces a potential for both positive and negative outcomes on ones well-being. However, despite some negative elements, people are usually attracted by exceeding the number of positive factors they can adopt by using social media. The research argues that the interactivity of SM allows four higher-order goals: connect, create, consume and control.<sup>23</sup> Hoffman and Thomas identified hundreds of motivations why people use at least one social media channel. Among those are: social interaction, entertainment, achievement, self expression, peer pressure and information.<sup>24</sup> This research divides reasons to social (49.8%) and non-social (50.2%). Examples of social goals among the results of the survey were: connecting with friends and family, meeting new people, sharing pictures and videos; and reconnecting with people they had lost touch. Among non-social goals were: reading the news, learning about events, listening to music, finding good deals and researching products.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, they argue that people have the need to connect with each other and social media enable these connections and offer users to fulfill their basic psychological needs.<sup>26</sup>

I believe that some psychological needs can be cultivated on social media. Psychologist Abraham Maslow introduced his famous concept of a hierarchy of human needs already in 1943. The theory is based on the principle that people are motivated to fulfill their basic needs before moving on to more complex needs. The hierarchy is usually displayed as a pyramid where the lowest levels represent the basic needs such as the need for air, food, sleep and safety; and more compound, psychological and social, needs are shown at the top of the pyramid. Specifically, there are five levels in

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<sup>22</sup> LinkedIn, “*The Mindset Divide*,” LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, [http://marketing.linkedin.com/sites/default/files/attachment/MindsetDivide\\_Infographic.pdf](http://marketing.linkedin.com/sites/default/files/attachment/MindsetDivide_Infographic.pdf) (accessed April 24, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Donna Hoffman and Thomas P. Novak, “*Why Do People Use Social Media? Empirical Findings and a New Theoretical Framework for Social Media Goal Pursuit*,” January 17, 2012, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1989586](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1989586) (accessed April 10, 2013) 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs: 1. Physiological Needs, 2. Security Needs, 3. Social Needs, 4. Esteem Needs and 5. Self-Actualizing Needs.<sup>27</sup>

Firstly, social needs include the need for belonging, love, friendship but also involvement in social, community or religious groups. Social networking sites are based on the principle of belonging and creating communities of people with the same hobbies, favorite brands, ideologies and beliefs. On Facebook, there are hundreds of thousands of various communities where people connect to fulfill these needs. Moreover, among the main reasons why people use social media are socializing and staying in touch with their friends and family. T. R. Reid, in his article "The United States of Europe," presents his theory about Generation E or the so called Erasmus generation. Reid stated that Generation E: "(...) represents a new breed of European: a person who considers the entire continent- not just one country or city- to be home." Generation E has the ability to live, work or study anywhere in Europe, can speak many languages, travels around the continent with budget airlines and moves towards a common European culture.<sup>28</sup> Because of these characteristics, traveling and programmes like Erasmus, people also cultivate their relationships and love on social media like Skype, where they can video-chat.

Secondly, on the second highest position of the hierarchy are esteem needs. These include success, prestige, achievement, respect by others, social recognition and feeling of accomplishment.<sup>29</sup> Some of these needs were also mentioned as reasons for using social media, among those: achievement, self esteem and self augmentation.<sup>30</sup> People like to share their good news and life achievements like a graduation, promotion or the wedding on social media as Facebook and Twitter. Respect and admiration by other might be also gained on professional social media channel LinkedIn, where users present their Curriculum Vitae.

Thirdly, on the highest level of the hierarchy is self-actualization. The need of self-actualization is about achieving one's full potential; however, it is actually never fully satisfied since there are always new opportunities to grow. The need includes

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<sup>27</sup> Kendra Cherry, "Hierarchy of Needs: The Five Levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," About.com Psychology, <http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm> (accessed April 23).

<sup>28</sup> T.R. Reid, *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 197-225.

<sup>29</sup> Cherry, *Hierarchy of Needs*.

<sup>30</sup> Hoffman and Novak, *Why Do People Use Social Media?*, 28.



creative activities, problem solving, morality and wisdom.<sup>31</sup> On social media, creative activities might be presented and one can get feedback for example on blogs, YouTube or Flickr.

### 2.1.3. Important features of social media

This subsection examines in more detail advantageous features of social media. Firstly, peer recommendations that are useful for both the businesses and governmental organizations. Secondly, two-way communication and its usefulness for communication with the public are presented.

#### **Peer recommendations**

Peer recommendations or so called “word of mouth” model, where information goes from one person to another has always been among the most effective marketing tools. However, via this model, the information spreads slowly and the meaning can be altered. The internet and especially social media overcome these imperfections and the “word of mouth” model takes another level and becomes something what Qualman calls “World of Mouth,” where the information goes from one person to many people; therefore, the information spreads much faster.<sup>32</sup>

Getting feedback by the audience is one of the most helpful features of communication with the audience, and social media are highly suitable medium for comments and feedbacks. There are many researches saying that people have bigger trust into the customer’s review than into regular commercials. Safko points out that people do not trust and do not want to hear commercials anymore; on the contrary, they want to get their products/services reviews by people they know and trust. On social media, people share their experience, both bad and good.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, studies show that a dissatisfied customer will tell up to twenty people about a bad experience; whereas, satisfied customer shares his/her good experience with only nine to twelve people.<sup>34</sup> These findings were also confirmed by Qualman with his statistics that 90% of

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<sup>31</sup> Cherry, *Hierarchy of Needs*.

<sup>32</sup> Qualman, *Socialnomics*, 1-2.

<sup>33</sup> Safko and Blake, *Social Media Bible*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

consumers trust peer recommendations but only 14% trust commercials.<sup>35</sup> Social media has opened a new side of relationship between an organization and the audience. The same applies to governmental profiles on social media. A person more likely becomes a fan of a page like the European Parliament after he/she sees that some of his/her friend has become a fan or commented a message. It is more influential than when a person sees the profile address somewhere else.

### **Two-way and symmetrical communication**

Grunig's global theory of public relations suggests following some generic principles and adjusting them to one's needs and to the background in the local area. Two-way and symmetrical communication is mentioned among those principles. According to Grunig two-way, symmetrical relations: "uses research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflicts and to cultivate relationships with both internal and external strategic publics more than one-way and asymmetrical communication."<sup>36</sup>

One of the biggest advantages of social media is that it enables the two-way communication between the organization and its stakeholders. Turner and Shah use very suitable metaphor which mentions that social media are more like a telephone than a megaphone. The metaphor shows the contrast between traditional media using a monolog or one-way message as by a megaphone; compared to social media which are characterized by a dialogue or two-way communication likened to a telephone.<sup>37</sup> Grunig's research reveals that symmetrical communication is more successful in building relationships between the organization and the public.<sup>38</sup>

The two-way communication feature of social media and its importance for governmental organizations is stressed in two documents of the European Union that are more developed in the next chapter.

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<sup>35</sup> Qualman, Social Media Video.

<sup>36</sup> J. E. Grunig, "Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalization," *The Public Relations Resource Centre* 6, no.2 (2009): 6, <http://www.prismjournal.org/fileadmin/Praxis/Files/globalPR/GRUNIG.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Turner and Shah, How to make money with social media, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Grunig, Paradigms of Global Public Relations, 5.

## 2.2.Social media and social engagement

The section social media is followed by this section which gives better understanding of the engagement on social media and offers certain rules to organizations how to engage SM properly. The Internet and the digital environment of the world are changing. Solis calls this change “digital Darwinism” which affects all forms of marketing. In the tough world of marketing, organizations have to endure a rule Survival of the fittest. Solis sees the survival in engagement. The motto of his book “Engage!” is “Engage or die.”<sup>39</sup>

For the proper understanding and usage of new social media landscape it is essential to realize that it is much more about sociology and anthropology than about technologies. Companies need to know their audiences in order to influence the public by the most efficient way. They have to give them something in what they believe. Social sciences studying the social life of human groups, sociology and anthropology, help organizations with the notion about their audience.<sup>40</sup>

### 2.2.1. How to engage social media properly

As social media become more and more in the center of attention, there are emerging guidelines that might be called “rules of engagement”. Even though, opinions of social media experts on how to engage social media strategy properly differ, there is some consistency. There are certain rules that should be followed in order to accomplish some significance of one’s campaign. There are multiple books on the market on the topic of social media marketing with similar content. The following advices are mainly based on the book “301 Ways to Use Social Media to Boost Your Marketing” by Catherine Parker, who provides SEO and social media consulting to businesses in the US. The book is well written and gives advices on effective use of social media mainly from the business prospective.

- Consistent voice: Social media campaigns are usually held on more than one channel and in order not to confuse the audience and have a coherent brand

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<sup>39</sup> Solis, *Engage!*, xiii.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 13.

messaging, the organization should deliver the consistent message across all channels.<sup>41</sup>

- Suitable channels: There is no need to use all the social media tools available. The success of social media campaign depend more on the right choice of channels that are appropriate for the organization.<sup>42</sup>
- Interaction: Interaction is the foundation of social media and it requires a time commitment. If no one responds to comments and questions raised on the profile, the organization would look like ignorant towards the public.<sup>43</sup> As Solis says: “...It’s listening that separates social media experts from social media theorists.”<sup>44</sup> Personal interaction with associated sentiment is much more human and sophisticated process than any automated web-based program. On social media, interaction might be measured by a number of clicks, inserts, comments and shares.<sup>45</sup>
- Connectedness: Various channels should be used to support each other, plus the link to the official website of an organization should be written on every social media channel.<sup>46</sup> However, traditional forms of marketing should not be forgotten, websites and social media profiles should be included in brochures, business cards and other material.<sup>47</sup>
- Engage regularly: There should be a regular activity engaged on every social media channel.<sup>48</sup> However, every channel has different norms, on Facebook the regular number of posts is about two per day but on Twitter there might be around six to eight messages per day. Recently, two independent research centers: Lab42<sup>49</sup> and TECHINASIA<sup>50</sup> conducted a research on reasons why people “unlike” pages on Facebook. Both of those researches revealed that the

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<sup>41</sup> Catherine Parker, *301 Ways to Use Social Media to Boost Your Marketing* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 3..

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>44</sup> Solis, *Engage!*, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Tia Fisher, “ROI in social media: A look at the arguments,” *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 16, no.3 (2009): 193.

<sup>46</sup> Christelle Mathee, “Towards the two-way symmetrical communication model: The use of Social media to create dialogue around brands” (MA thesis, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2011), 77.

<sup>47</sup> Parker, *301 Ways To Use Social Media*, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Sara, “Like Us!,” Lab42 Market Research, <http://blog.lab42.com/like-us> (accessed April 12, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Willis Wee, “Reasons people ‘Unlike’ Brands on Facebook,” Technasia, <http://www.technasia.com/facebook-marketing/> (accessed April 12, 2013).

main reason is that the company posted too frequently; therefore, companies should be careful about this aspect.

### **2.3. Successful campaigns on social media**

This section provides an overview of some of the most successful campaigns on social media to stress how powerful they can be. There are numbers of magazines, journals and blogs discussing the list of the world's best social media campaigns. Some of the campaigns were really creative while some had better success than the others. Success of the campaigns might be measured by the number of views/visitors, better brand awareness and increased sales of a company's product; however, to measure success in the area of social media is not clearly defined yet. Last year, magazine "Forbes" engaged three experts to rank the best campaigns of social media. Except for the success, they were asked to take into account various aspects, like the creativity of the campaign and the execution of it.<sup>51</sup>

The campaign called "Will it blend?" by Blendtec is among most of the top lists and it was ranked the second place in Forbes' list. This company started posting videos on YouTube that showed that the Blendtec blender can blend almost everything, from a baseball to an iPhone.<sup>52</sup> This series of viral videos resulted in a significant increase of brand awareness and it succeeded in 700% increase in home sales of blenders since 2006. Currently they uploaded 130 videos, where the most popular one is "Will it blend? – iPad" has more than 15 million views. Moreover, Blendtec's YouTube page has more than half million subscribers. Blendtec started with these videos when the new marketing director George Wright found out that the testing team is blending up wooden boards to test products toughness. Wright got the idea to shoot videos blending various products and post it on YouTube. The return of investments was enormous.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Jeff Bullas, "The 10 Best social Media Campaigns," BigDot Media, <http://www.bigdotmedia.co.uk/blog/industry-news/the-10-best-social-media-campaigns-guest-post-by-jeff-bullas/> (accessed April 5, 2013).

<sup>52</sup> Forbes, "Best-Ever Social Media Campaigns," Forbes, [http://www.forbes.com/2010/08/17/facebook-old-spice-farmville-pepsi-forbes-viral-marketing-cmo-network-social-media\\_slide.html](http://www.forbes.com/2010/08/17/facebook-old-spice-farmville-pepsi-forbes-viral-marketing-cmo-network-social-media_slide.html) (accessed April 5, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> Christian Briggs, "BlendTec Will It Blend? Viral Video Case Study," SocialLens Researcher, [http://www.socialens.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/20090127\\_case\\_blendtec11.pdf](http://www.socialens.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/20090127_case_blendtec11.pdf) (accessed April 5, 2013).

On the third place of the Forbes's list is "Smell Like a Man, Man" campaign by Old Spice. It all started with a truly successful TV commercial, but what actually made the impact was the interaction that came afterwards.<sup>54</sup> Old Spice invited fans and customers to submit questions on Twitter and Facebook, which were later on supposed to be answered personally by the Old Spice Guy himself. In 48 hours, Old Spice received more than 2000 questions. The company stated that the campaign had a significant impact on sales. Finally, it is worth mentioning some impressive number that were achieved: 300% increase in traffic to the official website, 800% increase in Facebook fan interaction, 2700% increase in Twitter followers and 105 million YouTube views of the campaign.<sup>55</sup>

February 2012 recorded uproar among whiskey lovers, specifically those of "Maker's Mark". On 9<sup>th</sup> of February, the aforementioned company announced that they will be reducing the alcohol content of its whiskey. Maker's Mark fans did not like this change and used company's Facebook page to complain. The next day the news was reported by press in the US and in the UK- this triggered the reaction on Twitter. After all complains and negative reactions, Maker's Mark COO Rob Samuels announced that they will follow their customers' desires and not reduce the amount of alcohol. In detail, he said: "What we've learned is that this is the customer's brand." Moreover the Twitter post said: "You spoke. We listened."<sup>56</sup> In two hours, this statement drew more than 14 000 likes and 2200 comments. Nonetheless, afterwards on the Internet some considerations emerged concerning whether it was not an exceptionally well done campaign and strategy by the company itself to increase the brand awareness.

Obviously, this list would not be complete without Barack Obama's victory of his social media campaign in 2008. Obama's presidential campaign four years ago is mentioned in many books about social media as one of the first and the most successful campaigns. Obama raised, by 5 USD and 10 USD donations, a record sum of money from his followers and supporters on social media.<sup>57</sup> His campaign on the Internet was enormous, he took advantage of YouTube for advertising, and he had a profile on

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<sup>54</sup> Forbes, "Best-Ever Social Media Campaigns."

<sup>55</sup> Mike Norton, "Old spice," PG Innovations, [http://www.pg.com/en\\_US/downloads/innovation/factsheet\\_OldSpice.pdf](http://www.pg.com/en_US/downloads/innovation/factsheet_OldSpice.pdf) (accessed April 5, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Gemma Storey, "Maker's Mark: proof that a week's long in social media?" eModeration social media management, <http://www.emoderation.com/makers-mark-proof-that-a-weeks-a-long-time-in-social-media> (accessed April 5, 2013).

<sup>57</sup> Qualman, *Socialnomics*, 65.

basically all the social media channels. Obama's team was really creative and posted online also their original footage of event with "behind the scenes" moments. Users loved that because it gave Obama a real human face. Furthermore, the Washington Post even gave Obama the title "King of Social Networking." Arianna Huffington, editor of the Huffington Post said: "Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not be president. Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not have been the nominee."<sup>58</sup> Obama used social media channels to his advantages in both elections in 2008 as well as in 2012.

Even though social media can be a great help to a company, they can cost a huge harm too. Excellent evidence is the case of the United Airlines. In 2008, Dave Carroll, a musician from Canada experienced bad customer service from the United Airlines, when his guitar worth 3500 USD was damaged during a flight. After nine months of trying to receive some compensation, he turned to the power of social media. Carroll and his band created a song "United Breaks Guitars" and posted the video on YouTube. The video went viral, four days after it was launched; the video had more than a million views. During one week United Airlines stock dropped 10% that equals to 180 million USD in value.<sup>59</sup> Nowadays, the video has more than 13 million views. This case brought attention to bad customer service of some companies but it also warns organizations that customers now have much more power than they used to have. Social media are a revelation that people have voice, especially when they are united.<sup>60</sup>

## **2.4.Public Relations**

Social media are significant part of public relations nowadays. This section provides background information about this relationship between the organization and the public with special emphasis on social media. New digital media make it easier to establish relationships anywhere in the world. They are dialogical, interactive and have global properties; therefore, they are well suited for strategic management of public relations.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Claire Cain Miller, "How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics," *New York Times*, November 7, 2008, <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics> (accessed November 30, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> Born Social, "'United Breaks Guitars'- A Case Study," Born Social, <http://bornsocial.co.uk/blog/archives/103> (accessed April 9, 2013).

<sup>60</sup> Solis, "Engage!" 9.

<sup>61</sup> Grunig, *Paradigms of Global Public Relations*, 2.

One of the most powerful relationships is between the organization and its public and public relations is in charge of this relationship. Public Relations Society of America defines public relations as: “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, there is a connection between stakeholders and the organization. Actually, Freeman and Gilbert define an organization as “a connected set of relationships among stakeholders where the emphasis is on the connectedness.”<sup>63</sup> Moreover, they state that organizations as connected networks are effective because they are built on the principles of cooperation and that each stakeholder is adding something to the value. The most often quoted definition of a stakeholder is the one by Freeman, who stated that: “any individual or group who can effect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of the organization.”<sup>64</sup>

There is number of definitions of public relations; however, they generally emphasize that the management of the organization has to pay attention to its environment and stakeholders. The purpose of public relations is to help the management, including the marketing, to build a relationship with its stakeholders through various communication programmes.<sup>65</sup> It is an essential element of successfully functioning organization. The value of public relations is also in protecting the organization to prevent any crisis. James E. Grunig, well known public relations theorist in “The Excellence Theory” stated:

The interviews with CEOs and senior public relations officers revealed that good relationships were of value to organizations because they reduced the costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, and negative publicity caused by poor relationships; reduced the risk of making decisions that affect different stakeholders; or increased revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Public Relations Society of America, “What is Public Relations? PRSA’s Widely Accepted Definition,” PRSA, <http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/PublicRelationsDefined> (accessed March 25, 2013).

<sup>63</sup> Carl H. Botan and Vincent Hazleton, *Public Relations Theory II* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 30.

<sup>64</sup> Freeman, *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach* (Boston: Pitman, 1984) as cited in S.J. Moon and Ki D. Hyun, *The Saliency of Stakeholders and Their Attributes in Public Relations and Business News* (2009).

<sup>65</sup> Grunig, *Paradigms of global public relations*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> James E. Grunig, “Excellence Theory in Public Relations,” University of Maryland, [http://kdpaine.blogs.com/files/encyclopedia-of-communication-9781405131995\\_chapter\\_399.pdf](http://kdpaine.blogs.com/files/encyclopedia-of-communication-9781405131995_chapter_399.pdf) (accessed April 20, 2013).



Grunig also discusses the use of new digital media for public relations in his article “Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalization”. He believes that: “...new media have the potential to make the profession more global, strategic, two-way and interactive, symmetrical or dialogical, and socially responsible.”<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, Grunig warns that some practitioners use new media as they used to do with traditional media, when they should use new media as a tool for interacting with the public. In his article, he offers suggestions for the use of new digital media. As a matter of fact, interaction and engaging a dialogue is one of the biggest advantages of new media, especially of social media.

Social media promises to have a positive impact on the public relations if they are used correctly and their full potential is used.<sup>68</sup> However, no one should forget what Kent and Taylor stress, that it is the way how technologies are used to influence the public. Technology itself can neither destroy nor create relationships.<sup>69</sup>

New media are used by every individual in its own way, everyone is looking at different sites at different times, which is not comparable with traditional media, when an enormous number of people is watching the same TV channel or is buying the same newspaper every day.<sup>70</sup> However, Gilpin stresses that boundaries between modern and traditional media are blurring. Television and newspapers are promoting their news reports or articles online and at the same time, they are also monitoring new media for information about their news stories.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, no one should forget about the importance of traditional media in our society.

## **2.5.Social media and political communication**

This section gives introduction to the usage of social media by governments and governmental organizations. Companies have reacted quickly on the transformation of the Internet usage to engage with their customers; however, governments slowly

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<sup>67</sup> Grunig, *Paradigms of global public relations*, 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Michael L. Kent and Maureen Taylor, “Building Dialogic Relationships Through the World Wide Web,” *Public Relations Review* 24, no.3 (1998): 324.

<sup>70</sup> Trevor Morris and Simon Goldsworthy, *PR Today, The Authoritative Guide to Public Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 142.

<sup>71</sup> Dawn Gilpin, "Organizational Image Construction in a Fragmented Online Media Environment," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 22, no. 3 (2010).

followed businesses in managing new media too. Now they are focusing on investments in social media as a part of their communication strategy.<sup>72</sup> Politicians, governmental organizations and the entire governments all over the world are starting to take notice and incorporate social media into their communication strategies to connect with their communities in a new way.

Adam Estes, a writer and former social media editor at the Huffington Post, said that governments are using social media in order to be more open, to humanize the face of government and, at the same time, they use it as a customary service.<sup>73</sup> The strength of social media lies in increasing audience engagement that helps governments to accomplish their missions.<sup>74</sup> Social media are also used when natural or man-made crises occur and they are changing the way how state and local governmental elections are covered.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, since Barack Obama's campaign in 2008, politicians from all over the world use social media to support their own campaigns.

On the contrary, social media were also used for communication within big crowds during protests in the summer of 2011 or in order to express dissatisfaction of elected representatives. Either way, governmental usage of social media will probably continue to reflect both a tension and a reality; nonetheless, social media is not going to go away. Although, it does not mean that traditional media will disappear, conversely, people and governments will continue to use a combination of traditional media and new media as social media. As Kavanaugh et al. emphasize: "Governments know they have diverse audiences with different needs and preferences. Social media are just another set of communication channels to get the word out and serve the interest of different (mostly younger) citizens."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Mohammad Dadashzadeh, "Social Media In Government: From eGovernment To eGovernance," *Journal of Business & Economics Research* 9, no.11 (November 2010): 81.

<sup>73</sup> Zachary Sniderman, "How Governments Are Using Social Media for Better & for Worse," Mashable. <http://mashable.com/2011/07/25/government-social-media/> (accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>74</sup> Dadashzadeh, Social Media in Government: From eGovernment to eGovernance, 86.

<sup>75</sup> Alex Howard, "How Governments Deal With Social Media," *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/08/how-governments-deal-with-social-media/243288/> (accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>76</sup> Andrea L. Kavanaugh et. al., "Social media use by government: From the routine to the critical," *Government Information Quarterly* 29, (2012): 489, <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/government-information-quarterly> (accessed April 16, 2013).

## 2.6.Challenges faced by the EU

The following section provides a theoretical framework of the challenges that the European Union is facing. Firstly, the concept of the European public sphere will be introduced, followed by other challenges such as: humanization of the EU, political communication deficit and democratic deficit.

### 2.7.1. European Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere is mostly related to Jürgen Habermas and his key work “The Structural Transformation of the Public sphere.”<sup>77</sup> The concept stresses the crucial role of media in shaping the public sphere and even though, the concept was developed in the 60s, the theory is still of reference for most researchers approaching the issue.<sup>78</sup> Public sphere is defined: “...by the debate between the state’s institutions and the citizens, debate moderated by the public opinion, which is today shaped and voiced by the media.”<sup>79</sup> Habermas’s definition of the public sphere consists of three concepts: the individual, the debate and the public space. No individual possesses the absolute truth; therefore, decisions influencing the whole society should be taken through debates which would include as many different perspectives as possible.<sup>80</sup>

The article “D 6 Theory Building “European Identity building/ European Publish Sphere” by Kopper and Leppik investigates the media’s impact on the emergence of the European public sphere and brings together a variety of different perspectives on the issue. Nowadays, there have been developed various different approaches to Habermas’s work and the concept. Kopper and Leppik offer two normative concepts of an ideal public sphere.<sup>81</sup>

Firstly, the liberal-representative model of public sphere is presented. According to this model: “a public sphere should function in creating transparency, ensure the mutual observation of government and governed citizens, and also enable the citizens to

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<sup>77</sup> Gerd G. Kopper and Tanja Leppik, “D 6: Theory Building “European Identity building/ European Publish Sphere,” *Centre of Advanced Study in International Journalism*, (October 2006): 2, [http://www.aim-project.net/uploads/media/D6\\_Theorie\\_Building.pdf](http://www.aim-project.net/uploads/media/D6_Theorie_Building.pdf) (accessed May 27, 2013).

<sup>78</sup> Ancuta-Gabriela Tarta, “Clash of the European public sphere: offline versus online, and cultural versus political,” (Ph.D. Candidate, University of Copenhagen).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Kopper and Leppik, “D 6: Theory Building “European Identity building/ European Publish Sphere,” 2.

control the government.”<sup>82</sup> The model stresses the importance to keep citizens informed about political actors and their actions. Secondly, the deliberative-discursive model of public sphere is offered. According to this model: “the public sphere should not serve only to create transparency, but also to include actors of civil society and citizens, and to initiate common learning processes.” The communication processed based on the mutually respected dialogue and exchange of rational arguments.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, Kopper and Leppin demonstrate two concepts of the way how the European public sphere might possibly develop. Either a common European-wide public sphere with common language, common European media system and the perception of European media by all citizens of the EU may develop or the Europeanisation of national public sphere, where the coverage of EU topics is covered in national public spheres.<sup>84</sup> The first concept is very unlikely going to happen. Currently, most of the coverage of the European topics happens in national public spheres but the EU tries to increase a common media system (e.g. the European Parliament TV and social media campaigns) and developing the sense of togetherness.

The media can be seen as a promoter of ideas and interests in the society. Tarta, in her paper “Clash of the European public sphere: offline versus online, and cultural versus political” points out that media represent the crucial connection between the citizens and the European institutions and decision-making processes. People have their image of the activity of the European institutions and the European Union in general based on what they see in the media.<sup>85</sup> However, Eurobarometer survey shows that the majority of European citizens feel to be ill-informed about European matters; even though, they believe that their national media give sufficient coverage to it.<sup>86</sup>

The concept of the public sphere is based on the debate, which is difficult in the European Union since it has twenty-three official languages. Moreover, basically every country has its own media coverage. Social media representation partly overcomes these complications; inasmuch as, social media are available everywhere in Europe and they

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<sup>82</sup> Kopper and Leppik, “D 6: Theory Building “European Identity building/ European Publish Sphere,” 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>85</sup> Tarta, “Clash of the European public sphere,”

<sup>86</sup> European Union, European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 78, *Media Use in the European Union report*, by Directorate-General for Communication (November 2012), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf) (accessed June 3, 2013). 41.

attract citizens from all member countries of the EU. Even though, the majority of profiles are held in English language it is not as problematic as among the characteristics of the Generation E that is significantly present on social media is the knowledge of English language. Social media can be seen as one of the starting points to stimulate the discussion between citizens and the European Union. Moreover, in the future, it may become a powerful instrument in creating/supporting the European public sphere.

### 2.7.2. Other challenges

In 1994, Václav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, stressed that the European Union is facing a problem that the Union lacks the human face. According to Havel, it is hidden behind the amount of administrative, economic, systematic, technical and monetary measures. He emphasized that the European Union should be visibly bonded by more than a set of rules and regulation but by something what might be called European identity, a clear articulation of European responsibility, of its charisma. During his speech in European Parliament, Havel suggested that many people might have an incorrect impression of the European Union that is just an administrative, monetary and economic body with many regulations. He stated:

If the citizens of Europe understand that this is not just an anonymous bureaucratic monster that wants to limit or even deny their autonomy but simply a new type of human community that actually broadens their freedom significantly, then the European Union need not fear for its future...<sup>87</sup>

The desire of European institutions is to present Europe as a human, friendly and peaceful community. Do positive news and symbols of Europe lead to the slow emergence of the European identity? According to Bruter and his book “Citizens of Europe?” the impact of institutions on the European identity is particularly clearly confirmed. Bruter has also shown that a European identity has progressively emerged over the past 35 years. It was so because of the influence of European institutions by means of European symbols, news about European integration and the EU in general.

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<sup>87</sup> Václav Havel, “About European identity,” (speech given to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Strasbourg, 8 March, 1994).

The media are the most obvious source of images of Europe, which affect people's perception of what Europe is.<sup>88</sup> As can be seen, the role of the media is central.

To have a coherent organizational image is essential for every organization. Good organizational image might have a strong influence on the feeling of individuals and on what they think about the organization. It might also have an influence on how individuals identify with the organization and how they understand their roles within that organization. To have a good image is crucial for the European Union. In 1993 a group of experts on information and communication policy chaired by Willy de Clercq delivered a report suggesting ways how to improve the EU's weakening image, where he indicated that there are several values shared by Europeans that could form the basis of the European identity. He identified that the priority groups that must be inclined are women, youth, journalists and business people.<sup>89</sup> Social media are, without any doubt, a perfect tool for addressing youth.

Other problem that the European Union is facing is the fact that the majority-73% of Europeans believes that they are ill-informed about European matters. Among those who feel well-informed about European matters are: most educated people, managers and Europeans for whom the image of the European Union is positive.<sup>90</sup> Kaitatzi-Whitlock argues that growing ignorance of the EU citizens about European affairs and hence also their disaffection comes from the political communication deficit.<sup>91</sup> It is a result of various aspects including the absence of appropriate communication system of the EU and the fact that political news about the EU is mostly nationally based. However, minimal visibility of European political issues in national media and sometimes negative reporting contribute to problems such as: Euro-scepticism and Euro-phobia.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Bruter, *Citizens of Europe? The emergence of a Mass European Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 151.

<sup>89</sup> European Union, European Parliament, *Reflection on information and communication policy of the European Community*, by the Group of Experts chaired by Mr. Willy de Clercq (1993), [http://aei.pitt.edu/29870/1/DE\\_CLERCQ\\_REPORT\\_INFO\\_COMM\\_POLICY.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/29870/1/DE_CLERCQ_REPORT_INFO_COMM_POLICY.pdf) (accessed 2 May 2013). 4.

<sup>90</sup> European Union, European Commission, Standart Eurobarometer 76, *Media Use in the European Union report*, by Directorate-General for Communication (autumn 2011), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_media_en.pdf) (accessed 26 March 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "The Missing European Public Sphere and the Absence of Imagined European Citizenship: Democratic deficit as a function of a common European media deficit," *European Societies* 9, no 5 (2007): 687.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 691.

The issue of the political communication deficit follows up the democratic deficit, which is a concept arguing that the European Union lacks a democracy and is not accessible to the ordinary citizen.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Europa, "Democratic deficit," Glossary, [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/glossary/democratic\\_deficit\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/democratic_deficit_en.htm) (accessed June 10, 2013).

### **3. Communication in the European Union**

The following chapter starts with the background information about the European Union and the European Parliament. The second part of the chapter deals mainly with the Internet communication strategy of the European Union, where some of the official documents regarding the topic are presented. This chapter explains the need for social media campaigns of the European Parliament and other institutions.

#### **3.1. European Union**

European Union (EU) is an economic and political partnership between 27 countries in Europe. It was established after the Second World War to foster economic cooperation and retain peace in Europe. However, it evolved into the union, where because of the abolition of border controls, people can travel, live or work freely throughout most of the continent. There are three main institutions that are involved in EU legislation: the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.<sup>94</sup>

The European Parliament is the only institution that is elected directly by EU voters every five years. It is a representative of all European citizens. The EP has legislative powers, budgetary powers, supervisory powers and takes care about relations with national parliaments. Among the main roles of the European Parliament are: debating and passing European laws, scrutinizing other EU institutions and adopting the EU's budget. Furthermore, it is the defender of human rights that fights for democracy, freedom of speech, fair elections and the rights of the oppressed. The number of the Members of the Parliament differs for each country in proportion to its population.

The EU is trying to influence citizens' perception by both political institutions and by the mass media. The EU created symbols of the European Union that are meant to push forward a positive perception of Europe with which people can identify. The first and the most significant symbol of Europe was the creation of the European flag in 1972 that shows twelve golden stars forming a circle against the blue sky. Other symbols are: the European anthem "Ode to Joy", the motto "United in diversity" and the

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<sup>94</sup> European Union, "Basic information on the European Union," Europa.eu, [http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_en.htm) (accessed February 21, 2013).



Europe Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>95</sup> These symbols are designed to give people a particular and more humanized image of Europe.<sup>96</sup> The European Commission is concentrating on seven elements in order to promote this European image: education (via mobility programmes among EU countries), culture (cooperation between artists and projects like The European Capital of Culture), languages, symbols, publications (leaflets, brochures and books about the institutions and activities of the EU), internet and media.<sup>97</sup>

### 3.2. Communication strategy

The European Union has involved the Internet in the communication strategy since an early stage. New technologies have led to new opportunities for governments, politicians and public bodies to communicate with citizens and to enhance the democratic process.<sup>98</sup> Among the goals of the EU Internet strategy is to encourage interest in EU affairs on other websites and to broaden the debate on the European Union. Features of the Internet moved from being purely informative to tool for two-way communication. Already in the document “Communication to the Commission” from year 2007 is stated that these features reflect the increasing importance of social media on the Internet. Among others, the document sets objectives for the official website of the EU “europa”, where some of them are more appropriate for social media channels. Firstly, to allow citizens to express and exchange their opinions and views throughout Europe; and secondly, to help create a sense of European community as a supplement to the national sphere. Nowadays, the official website is kept as an informative channel whereas social media channels are pursuing these objectives.<sup>99</sup>

In a 2006 document named White Paper, the European Commission identified that there has been recognized a significant gap between the European Union and its

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<sup>95</sup>European Union, “EU symbols,” Europa.eu, [http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/index_en.htm) (accessed February 21, 2013).

<sup>96</sup> Michael Bruter, *Citizens of Europe?*

<sup>97</sup> Chiara Valentini, “The Promotion of European Identity,” [http://www.chiara-valentini.org/the\\_promotion\\_of\\_european\\_identity\\_book%20version.pdf](http://www.chiara-valentini.org/the_promotion_of_european_identity_book%20version.pdf) (accessed January 29, 2013), 15-16.

<sup>98</sup> European Union, Commission of the European Communities, *Communication to the commission: Communicating about Europe via the Internet, Engaging the citizens*, (Brussels, 2007), [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/comm-initiatives/internet-strategy2007\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/comm-initiatives/internet-strategy2007_en.pdf) (accessed June 2, 2013.) 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

citizens. Moreover, it stresses the importance of two-way communication for a healthy democracy. From the Eurobarometer survey, it can be seen that citizens are still feeling little informed about the EU and that they have little say about the decision-making process; therefore, there was introduced an Action Plan in 2005 with specific measures how to improve communication with the citizens of the EU. Among the elements mentioned in the plan are for example the following: bigger access to information for citizens and paying more attention to listening to people's views. Apart from the Action Plan, Plan D was also launched. Its purpose is to involve citizens in the discussions on the EU.<sup>100</sup> The European Commission proposed a new approach to reinforce dialogue, from an institution-centered to citizen centered communication. "It should be based on genuine dialogue between the people and the policymakers and lively political discussion among citizens themselves."<sup>101</sup>

Neither of these plans included the representation and communication strategies on social media, which is fairly logical since social media were in their very beginning at that time. Nevertheless, social media are great tools for two-way communication and reinforcing the dialogues.

In the second part of the White Paper, the Commission has specified that they identified five areas for action in partnership of the EU and the civil society. Moreover, the Commission stated that the list is not carved in stone and that it will expand as society evolves and technologies change.<sup>102</sup> This statement is also supporting the good step to have a representation in social media. The Commission was counting on the fact that technologies evolve very rapidly nowadays and they have decided to represent individual institutions, countries and people on social media.

As mentioned above, there are five areas for action:

1. Defining common principles – The democracy in Europe is built on the right to information and freedom of expression. Other important principles are: inclusiveness (information should be available among different channels, including new technologies), diversity (different social and cultural background must be

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<sup>100</sup> European Union, The European Commission, Commission of the European Communities, *White Paper on a European Communication Policy* (Brussels: 2006), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0035:FIN:EN:PDF> (accessed March 25, 2013)

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 5.

respected in the public debate) and participation (citizens of the EU should have a right to express their views).<sup>103</sup>

2. Empowering citizens – Citizens needs must be in the center of EU communication policy. There are three main objectives. Firstly, improving civic education, this includes help people to use new technologies such as internet. Secondly, connecting citizens with each other, which is reminding that even though modern communication technologies are important, face-to-face meeting is still remaining essential. Thirdly, connecting the citizens and public institutions from the local to the European level.<sup>104</sup>
3. Workings with the media and new technologies – There have been set three main targets: Giving Europe a human face, The national, regional and local dimension and Exploiting the potential of new technologies. Moreover, the Commission stated that the media should be involved effectively in communication on Europe by pro-active use of new technologies.<sup>105</sup>
4. Understanding European public opinion – Public opinion in all EU member countries and candidate countries is observed by the Eurobarometer survey.<sup>106</sup>
5. Doing the job together – There should be a partnership between member states, EU institutions, regional and local levels, political parties and civil society organizations.<sup>107</sup>

To summarize this, the European Commission by the White Paper outlined the challenges which the European Union has been facing in case of communication and connection with the public.

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<sup>103</sup> European Commission, *White Paper on a European Communication Policy*, 5-6.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

### 3.2.1. The Europe for citizens programme 2007-2013

The Europe for citizens programme was adopted after the decision made by the European Parliament and the Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2006. This legal framework aims to support various activities and organizations promoting European citizenship. The European Commission is trying to encourage the engagement of European citizens in all aspects of the life of their community. The main objectives of The Europe for citizens programme are stated as the following:

- Giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in contributing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European union;
- Developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture;
- Fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens;
- Enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.<sup>108</sup>

For the purpose of assisting all those interested in receiving financial support or developing projects under this programme was created the “Programme Guide” there, which gives information on how to apply and what level of grant can be offered. Applicants are encouraged to address at least one of the permanent Programme’s priorities, which are the following: The future of the European Union and its basic values, Active European Citizenship: civic participation and democracy in Europe, Inter-cultural dialogue, People’s wellbeing in Europe: employment, social cohesion and sustainable development and Impact of EU policies in societies.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>European Union, European Commission, *Europe for citizenship programme 2007-2013, Programme guide*, Directorate General for Communication, 2011,

[http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/programme\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/programme_guide_en.pdf) (accessed 28 March 2012), 4-5.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

### 3.3. Media Use in the EU

This section provides information and statistics about internet usage by the citizens of the EU. The Eurobarometer survey called “Media Use in the EU” from autumn 2011 was focused on the relationship of the Europeans with the media, with special attention to social media. This Eurobarometer showed that television still remains to be the most widely used medium; however, young people tend to watch television via the Internet.<sup>110</sup> In 2011, the Internet was used at least once a week by 64% of Europeans, while it is particularly widespread among youth, students, managers and the most educated respondents.<sup>111</sup> Other aspect to be considered is the trust that the citizens have in the media. Radio is still considered being the most trustful media, followed by television, the press and the Internet. Even though the Internet with its 37% is on the forth position, this number is continuously increasing.<sup>112</sup> On the Internet, the highest credibility is into institutional and official websites.

#### 3.3.1. EU and social media

This subsection follows up the media usage of the citizens of the EU; however, with the special emphasis on social media. The subsection covers both the European Union and the European Parliament.

“The European Parliament is the people's assembly. In keeping with this, we try not just to attract readers to our website, but to be where the people are. And people are on social media.”<sup>113</sup>

It is evident that the European Union realizes the importance of the promotion in social media in order to address younger audience. As it is stated in the Eurobarometer, the influence of the social networks in the field of politics has significantly increased. The European Parliament, as well as the European Union as a whole, has been keen to utilize the opportunities for better communication that social media offer. On the official website of the European Parliament is stated: “Instead of guessing what people might want to know, the Parliament is now able to find out directly what questions and

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<sup>110</sup> European Union, *Media Use in the European Union report*, 5-7.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>113</sup> European Parliament, “Parliament on social media,” Europa.eu, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00fd7b595a/Social-media.html> (accessed February 26, 2013).

concerns they have.”<sup>114</sup> Except for the official websites, that contain all the relevant information, documents and news, the EU is also present on social media channels Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blog, LinkedIn, Flickr, Foursquare and Pinterest. However, the Parliament points out that they are always looking for new ways to interact with the public; therefore, the Parliament will be present on some other new platforms in the coming years.<sup>115</sup>

From Eurobarometer survey in autumn 2011, it is visible that the Internet media is especially widespread among young people, who use it on daily or near-daily basis. The survey also showed that over a third of Europeans use online social network and they would consider useful to find information about the EU on such networks. On the contrary, a majority – 44% of Europeans still do not use social networks and only 9% of respondents mentioned online social networks as a useful source of information on the EU.<sup>116</sup> The survey revealed three favorable perceptions of Europeans about the social media: 1.social networks are seen as a modern way to keep abreast of political affairs, 2.they are perceived as a good way of getting people interested in political affairs, 3.they are seen as a good way to have your say on political issues. However, the reliability of the information on political issues on social media is still in a question, 40% of respondents believe, that information on social networks cannot be trusted.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> European Parliament, “Social media: revolutionising the way EP communicates with you,” europa.eu, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20120220STO38576/html/Social-media-revolutionising-the-way-EP-communicates-with-you> (accessed February 27, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> European Union, *Media Use in the European Union report*, 34.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 36.

## 4. The European Parliament on SM

The following chapter is going to explore the relationship between the European Parliament and social media. Particularly, it will be examined how the European Parliament is represented in various social media channels while the main attention is given to social networking site Facebook and Microblogging site Twitter, which both have the highest number of users. Thereafter, there will be briefly described representation of the EP on the rest social media channels which the EP already uses.

The European Union is not officially represented in social media as one body, but it is divided into individual institutions, member countries and individuals. The European Parliament has been chosen for this research because it has the highest number of fans on Facebook and second highest number of followers on Twitter. Therefore, it has the biggest opportunity to influence the audience. Moreover, the European Parliament is the only directly elected EU institution.<sup>118</sup>

### 4.1.Method

The two-dimension analysis will be used in the research. Firstly, computer based quantitative analysis will be used to avoid human errors and bias. The key themes within the posts and messages posted by the European Parliament will be identified by using the Semantic Network Analysis. Semantic Network Analysis is a quantitative method which filters the most frequently co-occurring words from large bodies of texts. The software used for this analysis is called Tropes.

Tropes software is based on the content analysis that consists in revealing the framework of a text. Even though, Tropes performs different types of text analyses, the research was mainly focused on statistics on the co-occurrence and connection rates of Equivalent classes. Tropes software detects contexts, isolates themes and identifies principal actors through the application of levels of semantic classifications.<sup>119</sup> The equivalent classes are constituted by words with closely related meaning that appear

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<sup>118</sup> European Union, "European Parliament," europa.eu, [http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-parliament/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-parliament/index_en.htm) (accessed February 21, 2013).

<sup>119</sup>Semantic Knowledge, "Tropes: High Performance Text Analysis for Professional Users," <http://www.semantic-knowledge.com/tropes.htm> (accessed March 8, 2013).

frequently throughout the text.<sup>120</sup> Tropes software is made by Semantic-Knowledge, which is a leading provider of semantic search engines, text analysis, intelligent desktop searches and other programmes. The choice of this specific software was influenced by the fact that Tropes is one of reputable content analysis software products that is also free of charge. Among the other options was for example Crowdad Text Analysis Software, which proved to be unsuitable as the full version costs ninety-five USD and the free trial version is not fully compatible with new operating systems such as Windows 7.

Secondly, the qualitative research method will be applied on the selected messages based on the results from quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis revealed six most frequent key themes word groupings. From each of those six groups were chosen two examples which represented typical content of messages in a particular category. Those two examples were analyzed qualitatively. The analysis will answer on the first research question that is stated as the following: How is the European Parliament represented in selected social media channels?

#### **4.1.1. Data**

The data examined were Facebook posts and Twitter messages that were posted by European Parliament itself during the studied period. The studied period was six months - from 1<sup>st</sup> of June to 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 2012. The total number of posted messages on Facebook during the studied period was 203. The total number of Twitter messages was 1115. Quantitative analysis using the Tropes software can analyze only the plain text; therefore, all the messages were transformed into text document. Pictures were included in the qualitative analysis.

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<sup>120</sup>Semantic Knowledge, "Semantic Engine," <http://www.semantic-knowledge.com/semantics-3.htm#References> (accessed March 8, 2013).



## 4.2. Findings

This section will bring forth how the European Parliament uses social media as well as what are its main purposes of this act. The social media channels that were chosen for this analysis are: social networking site Facebook and Microblogging site Twitter. I will start with the analysis of Facebook and continue with the analysis of Twitter. The analysis basically answers on the question: What is the text about? It shows the core references of the text posted by the European Parliament itself.

### 4.2.1. Facebook

The European Parliament joined Facebook on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 and went public on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2009. From this date, the number of fans, who like the European Parliament's page, climbed to 728 050 (March 31, 2012). The number of fans is pretty successful; however, taken into account that there are around 193 000 000 citizens of the EU active on Facebook, the number could have been much higher.<sup>121</sup> This does not necessarily mean that it is a finite number of people interested in EP's Facebook profile, there might be people looking on the page without becoming a fan of the EP's Facebook page.

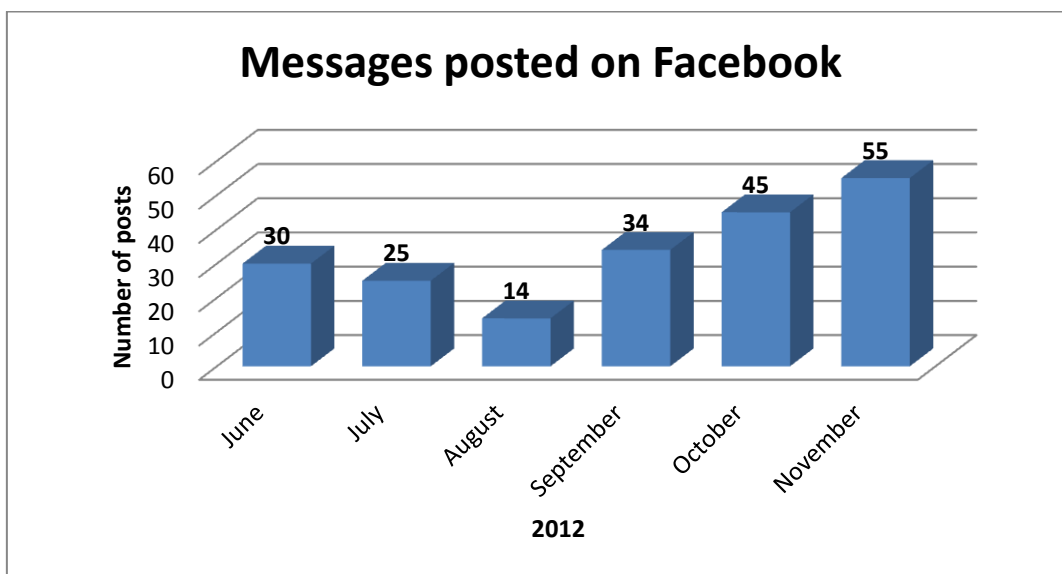
One of the possibilities of a relatively low number of fans of the European Parliament on Facebook might be a language barrier. Even though the European Union has twenty-three official languages, the Facebook page is led only in English, one of the working languages. Even though, there are some EP's profiles in other languages, there are not in all official languages. This aspect could have been improved in the future, which will make information about the EP more accessible to all EU citizens. The most popular age group of the EP's Facebook page is 18 to 24.

One of the important features of the studied period on the European Parliament's Facebook page is the frequency of posting messages. As was mentioned earlier, on social media it is essential to engage regularly.

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<sup>121</sup>Internet World Stats, "European Union Internet Users,"

Figure 1: Number of posted messages on Facebook per month.



Source: my own

On the graph, there can be seen the increase of posted messages every month; while during summer the number is low. This graph includes only messages that included text; however, every month there were on average two posts extra. These posts were mainly albums of photos and interviews.

Before starting the discussion about messages posted by the European Parliament on Facebook let's look into the layout of the EP Facebook profile. The content of the EP Facebook page is divided into several sections. The *About* section contains the basic info, address, link to the official website, mission of the EP, company overview and a timeline. The timeline goes from the foundation of the EU in 1952 to 2012 and it shows important events in almost every year. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2013 section *Photos* contains fifty-nine albums with photos and pictures and one album with videos. Far the highest number of pictures is in the album *Timeline Photos*, where are placed all the pictures that are actually posted on the Wall. Next section, *EPTV Youtube*, is EUROPARL TV presenting videos on other type of social media YouTube. There are four channels: *Interviews*, *Backstage*, *History* and *How it works*. Furthermore there is an application *Chat*, where fans can chat with important figures of European politics. The section *The Citizens Wall* is a new project in 2013, which says "EUROPEAN YEAR OF CITIZENS 2013. THIS IS ABOUT YOU." Next section *Pinterest* leads to other type of social media channel Pinterest. Section *MEP's* shows all 754 members of the parliament. People can look after a member by the search by a political group,

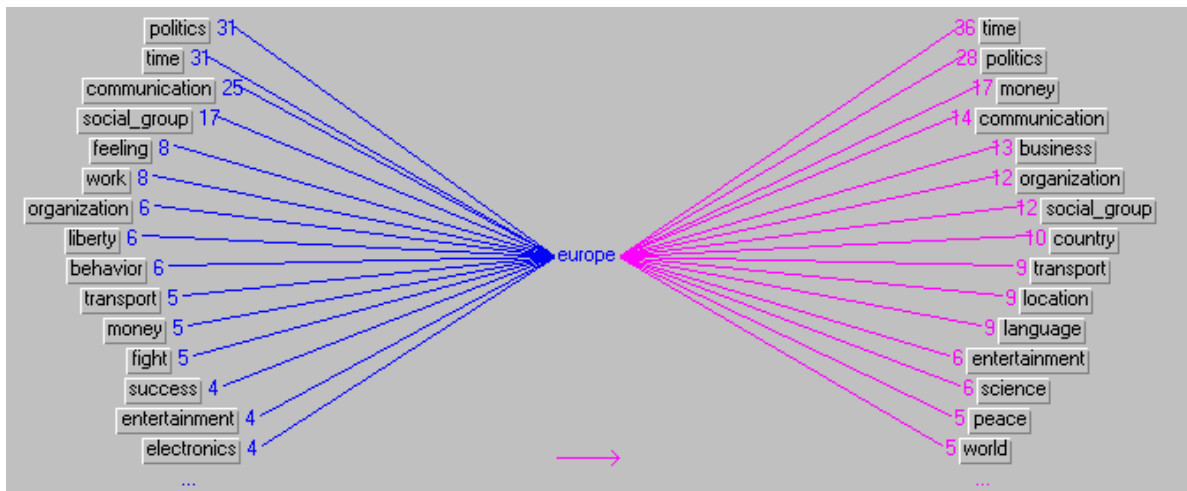
country or name. In the *Information Offices* section, there is a map of the European Union. By clicking on the desired country, the link on the information office appears. Section *Likes* contains basic statistics about EP Facebook page, like the number of fans or the most popular age group. Then there are sections that do not need any explanations: *EP official website*, *Moderation Policy*, *Ask the EP* and *Map*.

The most important section of EP Facebook page is the *Wall*. As mentioned above, during the period of six months, the European Parliament posted 203 messages on the Wall. This section is going to analyze the key themes within these messages. Those key themes will give a better picture of a message sent by the EP to its citizens through social media.

Starting with the analysis of the key themes of the wall messages, the most frequently mentioned word grouping is the term **Europe**, with 423 results. This word grouping includes not only terms such as: Europe, EU, European, European Parliament, but also names of European countries and cities, like: Brussels, France or Strasbourg. However, the number might be a little bit exaggerated because of the fact, that this word grouping also includes the “.eu” from the hyperlinks used, since many of the Facebook messages include hyperlinks to the official website or other social media for more information regarding the topic.

The content of the messages that include the term Europe have a great range since it is an essential word for the European Parliament and European Union in general. However, among the messages, there are for example topics such as: specific information about the European Parliament, European Union, EU citizens or interesting facts about Europe. Even so, there are three main word categories that are in relation to the term Europe: communication, time and politics. The following scheme shows the word categories that are in relation to word grouping Europe. Words situated on the left (blue) were situated in front of the key word in the sentence and words on the right (pink) were following the key word in the sentence.

Figure 2: Word categories in relation to word grouping Europe.



Source: my own, made in Tropes software

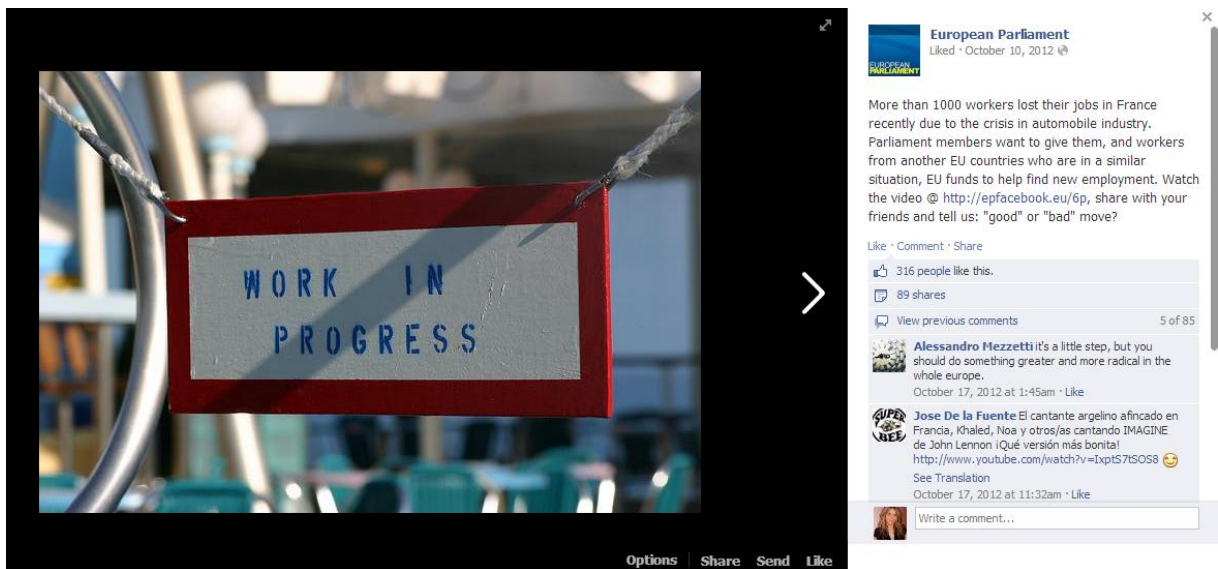
The following examples were chosen as typical posts in this category.

More than 1000 workers lost their jobs in France recently due to the crisis in automobile industry. Parliament members want to give them, and workers from another EU countries who are in a similar situation, EU funds to help find new employment. Watch the video @ <http://epfacebook.eu/6p>, share with your friends and tell us: "good" or "bad" move?<sup>122</sup>

This example demonstrates sympathy and understanding of the European Parliament toward not only workers from France but also to common people from other member states that are found in a similar situation. Messages of this type aim to humanize the face of the EP. At the same time, it encourages the discussion of actions that the EP has to take and asks the public for their opinion about it.

<sup>122</sup> Facebook, "European Parliament," <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament> (accessed June 1, 2012).

Figure 3: Facebook message in the category “Europe”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament>

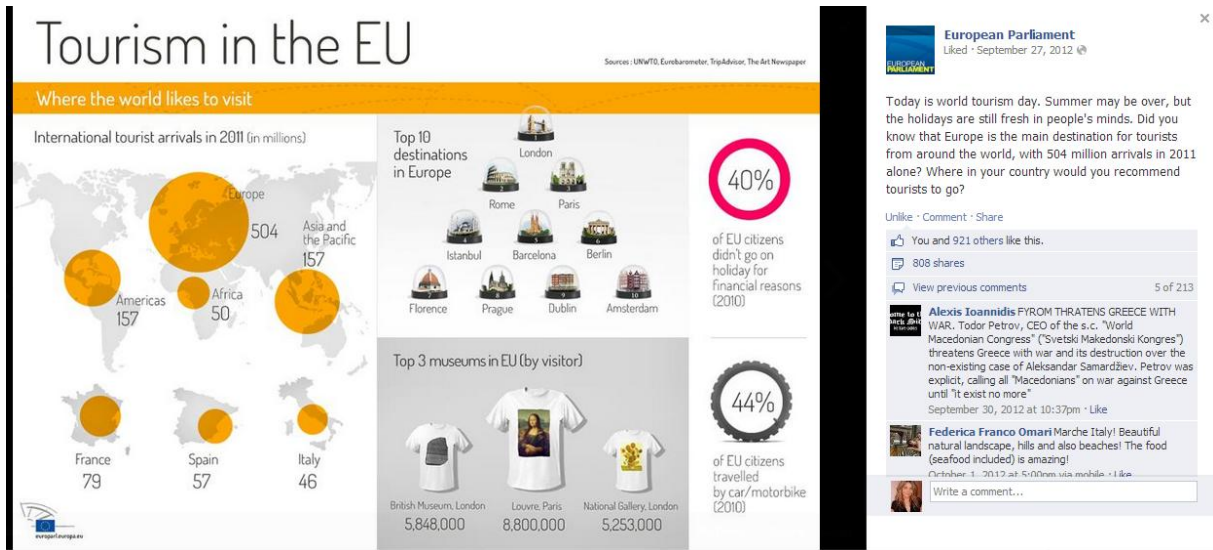
The following example does not deal with the serious issue; conversely, it celebrates the whole Europe. The message combines the interesting world fact with exciting information that Europe is the main tourist destination. Moreover, the EP asks the public for their recommendations and raises the discussion.

Today is world tourism day. Summer may be over, but the holidays are still fresh in people's minds. Did you know that Europe is the main destination for tourists from around the world, with 504 million arrivals in 2011 alone? Where in your country would you recommend tourists to go?<sup>123</sup>

The message is annexed with infographic regarding the tourist topic. The picture is informative, interesting and meaningful itself. In this example the picture is exceptionally the main part of the post and the content of the text is only supporting the image. This post has a big number of shares which support the traffic on EP's Facebook page.

<sup>123</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

Figure 4: Facebook message in the category “Europe”

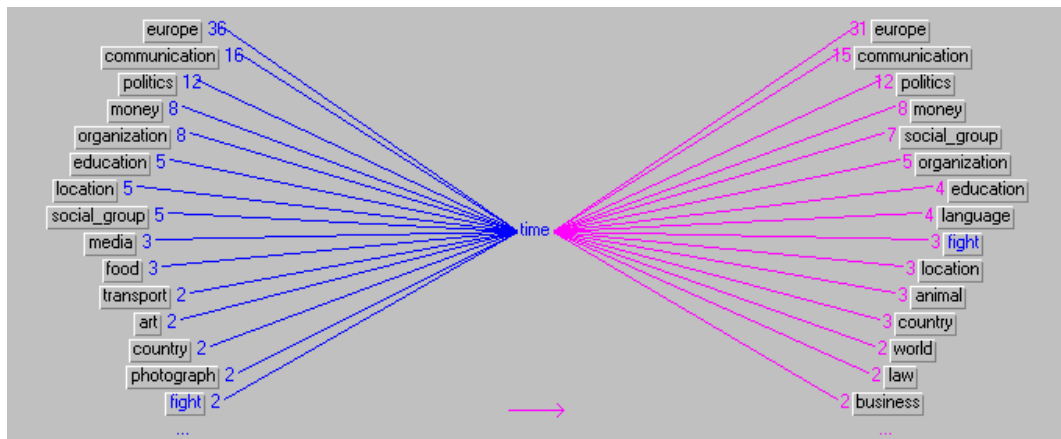


Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The second highest number of results had the word grouping **time**, specifically 183. The word grouping time includes terms such as: day, year, specific months/time or future. In these messages, the European Parliament informs its audience about activities of the EP and its MEPs. Other posts are often inviting the audience to particular happenings or debating the future of the European Union.

The following scheme shows word categories in relation to word grouping time. The main relations are to: Europe, communication and politics. The most frequent relation is to the term Europe, where the messages inform the public what happens at a particular time in a particular place, usually the EP, Brussels and Strasbourg. These posts should provide transparency and better awareness about activities of the EP. The scheme confirms the statement that posts in this category often invite citizens to engage in the debate or chat; since, the connection of time is mainly in relation to word categories communication and politics. Therefore, the messages express the information about a specific date and time when the chat or election is taking place. These posts are supposed to ensure the increase of the public engagement in the European issues by informing them about the possibilities of being heard. Words situated on the left (blue) were situated in front of the key word in the sentence and words on the right (pink) were following the key word in the sentence.

Figure 5: Word categories in relation to word grouping time.



Source: my own, made in Tropes software

The following example of a message in the category **time** is an example of invitation to chat with the EP President Martin Schulz. The post informs people about the opportunity to chat with him in advance with specific information about the date and time of the event. Furthermore, this post wants to show the audience that every citizen of the European Union is important part of the Union and it encourages the participation and sharing opinions of a common citizen. Moreover, the message ensures the audience that the EP is aware of the fact that the economic situation is not ideal and it reminds that they want to hear views of the public.

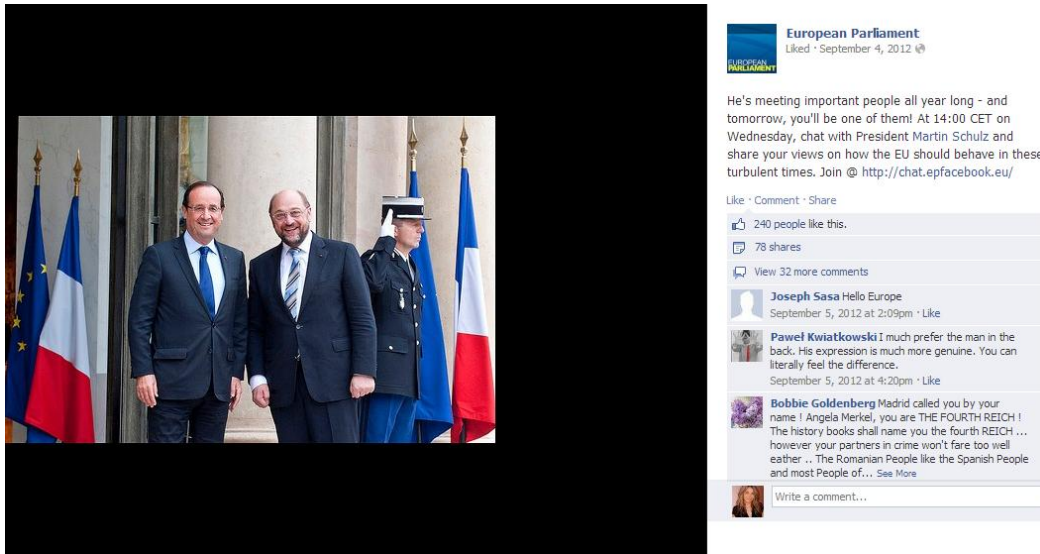
He's meeting important people all year long - and tomorrow, you'll be one of them! At 14:00 CET on Wednesday, chat with President Martin Schulz and share your views on how the EU should behave in these turbulent times. Join @<http://chat.epfacebook.eu/><sup>124</sup>

The picture shows Martin Schulz with the French president François Hollande. The picture was taken during Schulz's official visit to Paris in July 2012.<sup>125</sup> The text in the message and the picture together want to point out that every citizen of the EU is equally important to Martin Schulz as the French president.

<sup>124</sup> Facebook, "European Parliament,"

<sup>125</sup> Flickr, European Parliament, [http://www.flickr.com/photos/european\\_parliament/7564731452/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/european_parliament/7564731452/) (accessed May 26, 2013).

Figure 6: Facebook message in the category “time”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The next example expresses the sympathy for citizens of poor countries, where there still is a huge problem with hunger. The post wants to bring attention to this problem and tell people what has been happening in Brussels that day. The post is informative, compassionate and social.

Today is World Food Day. Still, more than 1 billion people go hungry. Today, representatives from all over the world gather in Brussels to tackle this problem during the European Development Days. Watch it live @ <http://epfacebook.eu/7e>, share and tell us: do you think the right to a daily meal should be included in the basic human rights?<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, the post informs people about the opportunity to watch the live broadcast online. The picture associated with the message is simple illustrative, showing a big sign “food”. The image gives the reader a hint of the content of the post without reading it.

<sup>126</sup>Facebook, “European Parliament,”



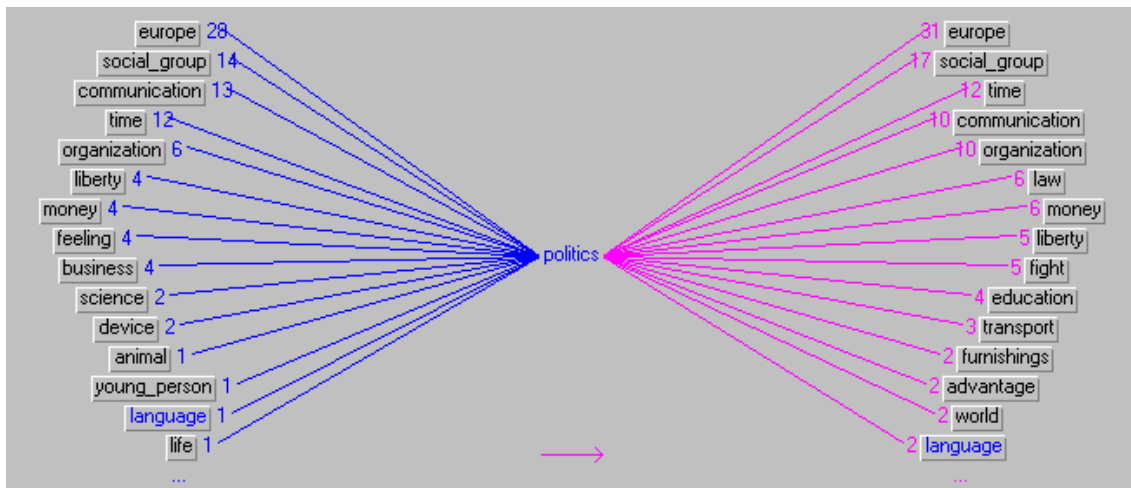
Figure 7: Facebook message in the category “time”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament>

The third highest number, in particular 180 had the word grouping **politics**, which includes terms such as: parliament, democracy, elections or vote. Obviously, the word Parliament is mentioned the most, since this Facebook page is supposed to increase awareness about the European Parliament. There are messages about news from the European Parliament, famous visitors or parliament’s actions, activities and plans. The category of politics has mainly relations to: Europe, social group, communication and time. The following scheme shows these relations. The relation of politics with a social group is closely related since the social group includes terms as a leader or president. Categories communication and time are connected to politics in messages informing about Parliament’s and leader’s activities; and election schedule. Words situated on the left (blue) were situated in front of the key word in the sentence and words on the right (pink) were following the key word in the sentence.

Figure 8: Word categories in relation to word grouping politics.



Source: my own, made in Tropes software

The following example is a perfect demonstration of a typical post informing about activities of the EP, specifically next plenary week:

Action-packed plenary week in Parliament: the budget, shale gas and Lux prize are all on the agenda. Sign up now for e-mail updates @ <http://epfacebook.eu/gq> & get a tailor-made info package delivered straight to your inbox. What topics would you like to see featured on our Facebook page this week?<sup>127</sup>

The post primarily informs the audience of what is happening in the EP the following week. Informative posts like this give the public better picture of all the issues that the EP is dealing with and increase citizens’ knowledge of basic responsibilities of the EP. Secondly, the message offers the audience the possibility to have delivered updates about the EP via email. In the picture associated with the post is a dog carrying a newspaper. The picture is clearly only illustrative. This picture might had been chosen because of the variety of topics in the post and the offer of delivering email updates straight to one’s email address as newspaper to one’s mailbox.

<sup>127</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

Figure 9: Facebook message in the category “politics”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The next example shows the attempt to humanize the face of the European Union. The message directly addresses the reader. At the same time, it is raising participation and asking the question to the public; therefore, applying two-way communication.

Saturday was International Day of Democracy, and we couldn't celebrate it without YOU - the citizen. Your vote, initiatives and opinions keep it alive. Like it, share it and tell us: How can the EU improve participation? More @ <http://epfacebook.eu/3Q><sup>128</sup>

There is an illustrative picture associated with the message.

<sup>128</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

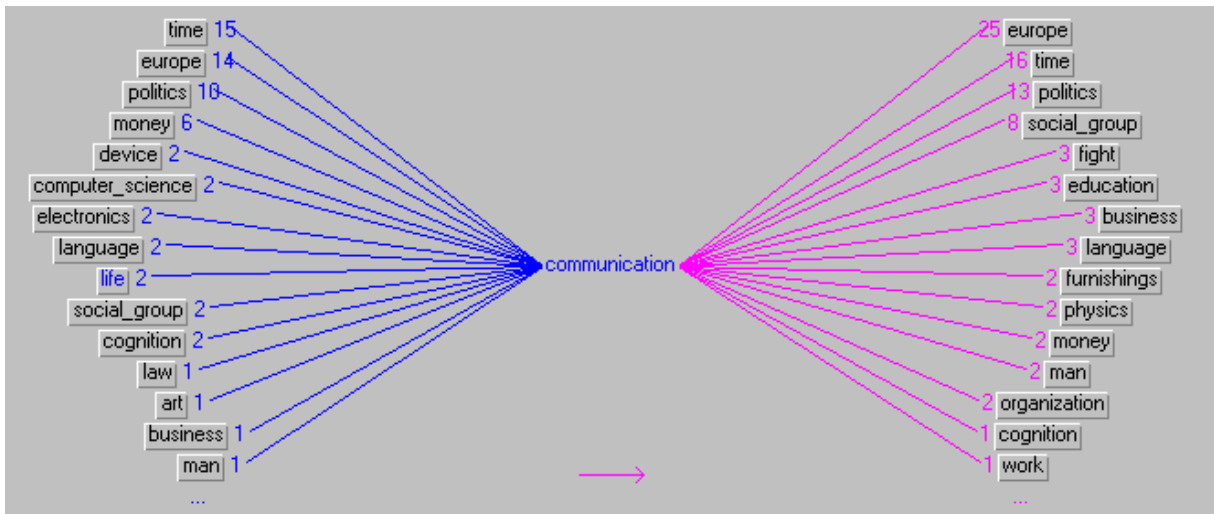
Figure 10: Facebook message in the category “politics”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

Another frequently mentioned word category is **communication**. This word grouping includes for example: negotiations, interview, chat or debate. These terms were mentioned among the studied period 125 times. These posts are mostly invitations for joining the debates on the European topics or chats with key figures of the European politics. Messages in this category try to increase public engagement and aim to enhance more discussions and debates on the EU issues. This category is in relation with previously mentioned categories: Europe, time and politics. The connection between time and communication is in messages that inform the public when the particular chat or debate is taking place. The following scheme shows these relations. Words situated on the left (blue) were situated in front of the key word in the sentence and words on the right (pink) were following the key word in the sentence.

Figure 11: Word categories in relation to word grouping communication.



Source: my own, made in Tropes software

As EU leaders are discussing the future of the EU budget, Parliament is reminding them that it's time stop to funding the EU with money from member states only and find own resources instead. Parliament's top budget negotiator Alain Lamassoure presents his ideas in an interview with EuroparlTV @<http://epfacebook.eu/Dn>. Yes or no?<sup>129</sup>

This message combines most of the word categories mentioned in the analysis: communication, time, social group and money. As the European Parliament is responsible for the budget of the EU the issue of budget can be seen in many messages. It is an essential aspect since this issue is in the center of attention among the public and it should be as transparent as possible; moreover, the EP recognizes its earlier flaws and states that they should try another approach regarding the topic. At the same time, the post informs the public what is happening at the Parliament at the moment and it remind the public the possibility to watch EP's TV. The picture attached to the message is brilliant. It definitely attracts attention and express what the message is about. Furthermore, the image targets both the older generation and the young generation. Inasmuch as, the original picture "Keep Calm and Carry On" was used as a motivational posted during the Second World War and since that time it is occasionally used in other context. Since the last year it has been highly modern trend on the Internet to use the concept in various alternations.

<sup>129</sup> Facebook, "European Parliament,"

Figure 12: Facebook message in the category “communication



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The following example announces the statement of Parliament president Martin Schulz after the EU has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The post expresses pride and gives credit to all the citizens of the EU and celebrates them. There is included a link on EP YouTube channel with a video interview of Martin Schulz after the announcement. Moreover, it asks the public for participation.

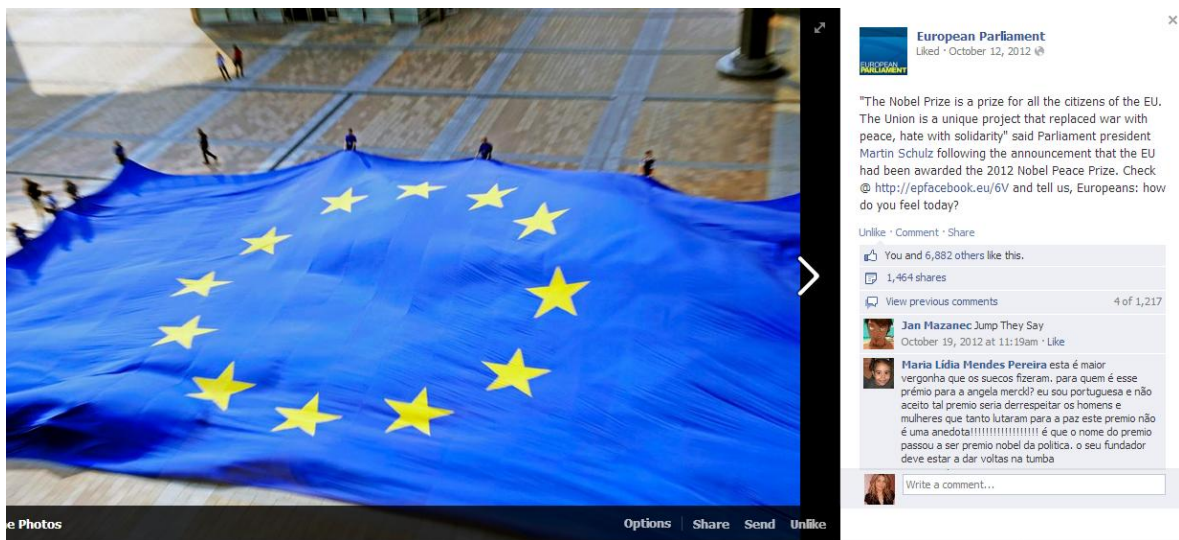
The Nobel Prize is a prize for all the citizens of the EU. The Union is a unique project that replaced war with peace, hate with solidarity" said Parliament president Martin Schulz following the announcement that the EU had been awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. Check @ <http://epfacebook.eu/6V> and tell us, Europeans: how do you feel today?<sup>130</sup>

As the post is about winning the Nobel Prize, the image shows the symbol of the EU, the flag of the enormous size.

<sup>130</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”



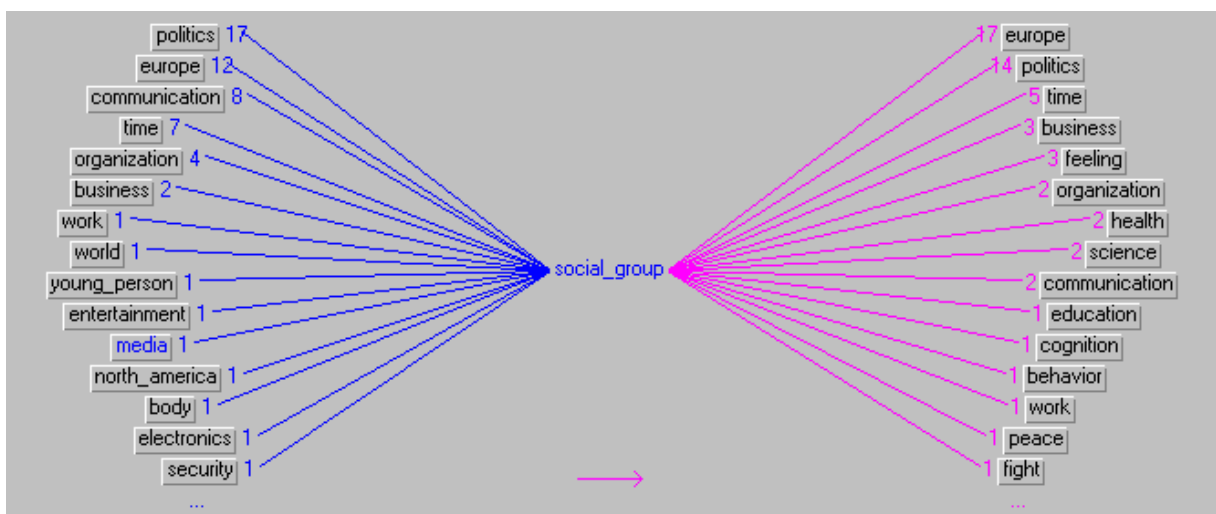
Figure 13: Facebook message in the category “communication”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The next word grouping **social group** had 75 results. The category includes terms as: people, president, celebrity or leader. The messages that involve terms from social group often address the people or informed them about individual actions and activities of the European Union’s leaders. Word grouping social group is mainly in relation to politics, Europe, communication and time. The following scheme shows word categories in relation to word grouping social group. Words situated on the left (blue) were situated in front of the key word in the sentence and words on the right (pink) were following the key word in the sentence.

Figure 14: Word categories in relation to word grouping social group.



Source: my own, made in Tropes software

The following example cites the Member of the Parliament Hannes Swoboda and addresses the issue of the European youth guarantee, which is an Initiative that aims to drive down youth unemployment. The message again fosters the debate on the issue and simultaneously it invites the public to chat with Swoboda to express own views and opinions. Moreover, it addresses the topic focused on the youth.

"We demand a social pact for a better European future, with decent living wages and a European youth guarantee," says Hannes Swoboda, leader of Parliament's Social Democrat group. Would you sign onto that? Join the chat with him next Thursday to share your views! <http://chat.epfacebook.eu/><sup>131</sup>

The picture of Hannes Swoboda is connected to the message. In the picture Swoboda is giving a hand as he has pleasure meeting the reader, it is a highly welcoming and kind gesture.

Figure 15: Facebook message in the category “social group”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The next post uncommonly addresses parents and brings attention to the need of better protection on the Internet, especially of children. Furthermore, it announces the desire of the European Parliament to contribute for the protection of children while they

<sup>131</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

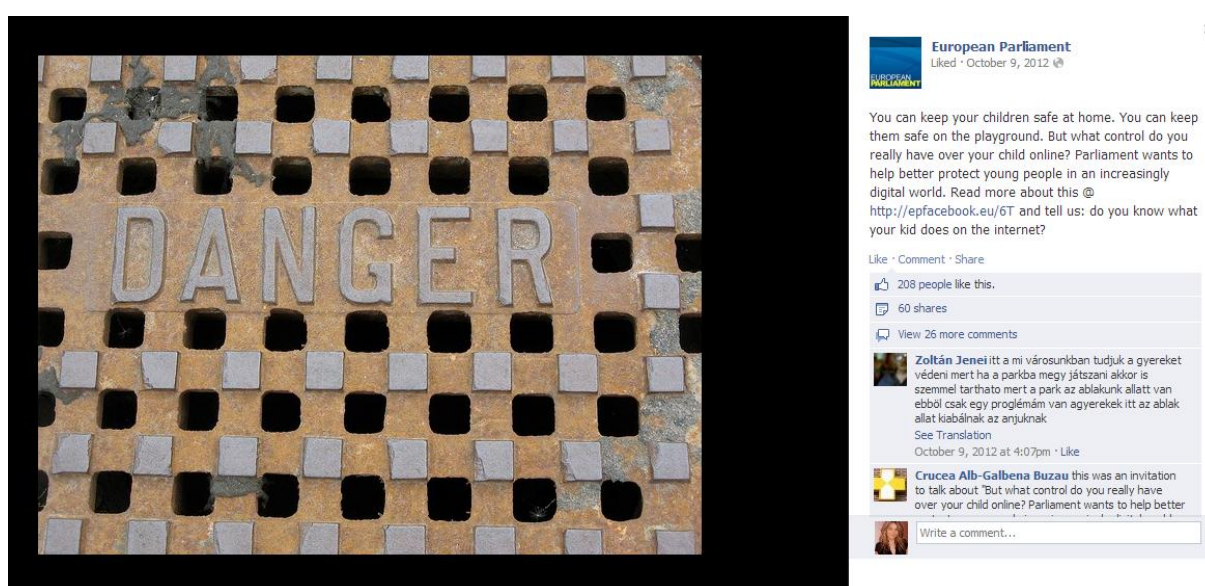


are on the Internet. At the end of the post again encourages and attempts to engage the audience to express their experiences and opinion about it.

You can keep your children safe at home. You can keep them safe on the playground. But what control do you really have over your child online? Parliament wants to help better protect young people in an increasingly digital world. Read more about this @<http://epfacebook.eu/6T> and tell us: do you know what your kid does on the internet?<sup>132</sup>

The post is annexed by the simple image of “danger” sign, which should bring attention to an important topic of children’s safety.

Figure 16: Facebook message in the category “social group”



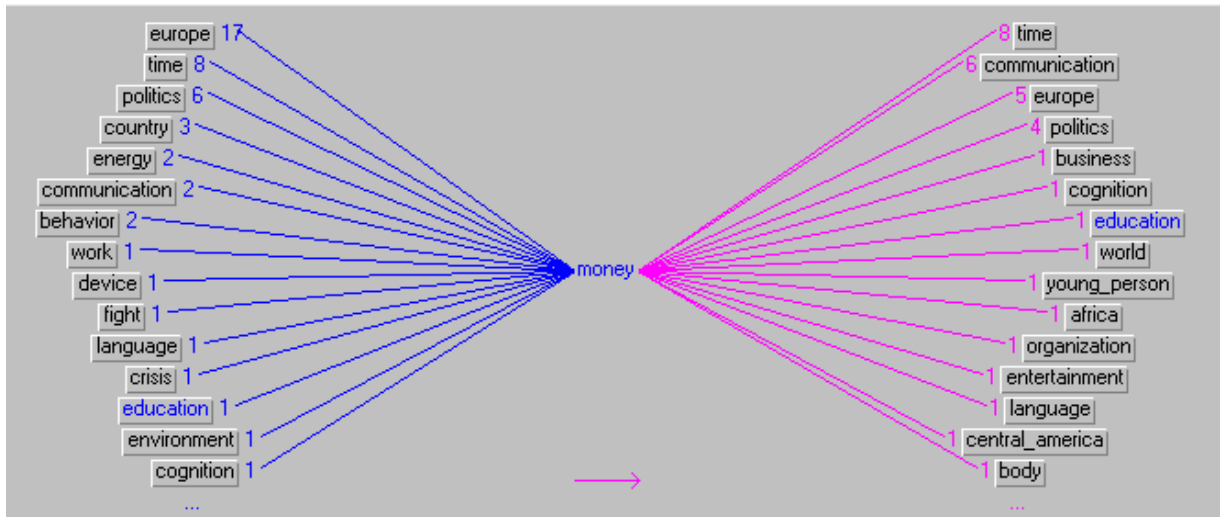
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The word grouping **money** had 64 results in the analysis. Among the terms that were included in this grouping are: budget, euro, money or funds. Since the European Parliament is responsible for adopting the European Union’s budget, the EP posts variants of how the budget can be divided. Moreover, they often ask the audience about their opinion concerning the budget of the European Union or the specific fields of the EU’s budget. The budget of the EU is very delicate matter; therefore, the messages should be treated carefully. The public wants to hear where the money goes so it is crucial to post this information online. Laudable, the term budget was indicated several times more than other terms in this category. The word category money is mainly related to Europe, time, politics and communication. The following scheme shows word

<sup>132</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

categories in relation to the word grouping money. Words situated on the left (blue) were situated in front of the key word in the sentence and words on the right (pink) were following the key word in the sentence.

Figure 17: Word categories in relation to word grouping money.



Source: my own, made in Tropes software

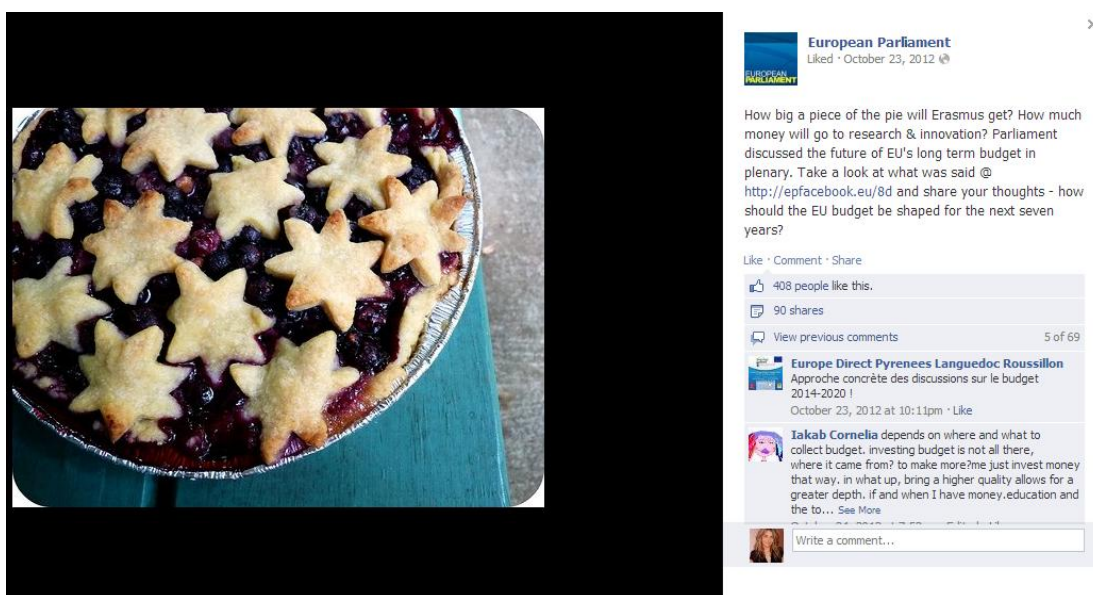
Evidence of the previous statement is the following post, which encourages the audience to read, what was discussed in the plenary session about the EU budget; furthermore, the message was asking the citizens about their opinion on the EU budget for the next seven years.

How big a piece of the pie will Erasmus get? How much money will go to research & innovation? Parliament discussed the future of EU's long term budget in plenary. Take a look at what was said @ <http://epfacebook.eu/8d> and share your thoughts - how should the EU budget be shaped for the next seven years?<sup>133</sup>

As the message uses the phrase “piece of pie”, the staff annexed the message with the picture of real pie. Even though, the idea is nice, the picture does not grab the attention of the audience and it has no meaning to be there. This illustrative picture does not give the audience any idea what the message is going to be about and takes away the attention of the important topic.

<sup>133</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

Figure 18: Facebook message in the category “money”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

The next example brings the topic of Erasmus programme. The message announces the result of the plenary session and gives good news to all the students who are interested in using this programme. The post also asks the question to the public to support discussion.

As students all over Europe held their breath, Members insisted again today that yes, Erasmus can indeed be saved. They want 18 billion euros for education programmes in 2014-2020 which will allow over 5 million students to enjoy EU support. Read more @<http://epfacebook.eu/E9> Would you like to see the Erasmus programme continue?<sup>134</sup>

The fact that the Erasmus programme has been chosen as an example also suggests that this channel is focused on youth for whom programmes like this are made in order to promote solidarity and youth communication within Europe and about Europe. This message was associated with particularly well chosen illustrative picture. The picture is cute, funny and introduces the topic of the post in itself. This message had the highest number of “likes” in the studied period. Moreover, the number of shares to one’s friends is very high. These aspects are crucial, because not only that these aspects show the satisfaction of the public but it also brings a big traffic to the EP Facebook profile and it increases the number of fans.

<sup>134</sup> Facebook, “European Parliament,”

Figure 19: Facebook message in the category “money”



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>

## Pictures

On Facebook, pictures are a vital part of the message. Facebook is considered to be a visual type of social media; therefore, it should be a matter of course to accompany most of the posts with a picture. In this regards, the staff responsible for the European Parliament’s Facebook page is doing a good job, because the vast majority of posted messages include some image. These pictures are either real ones from the European Parliament or Members of the Parliament; or just illustrative picture associated with the topic. Percentage distribution of the picture is 22,8 real pictures to 76,2 illustrative pictures. It follows that illustrative pictures significantly exceeds the number of real photos. Some of the illustrative pictures might have been chosen more carefully and more appropriately to the topic of the message. However, illustrative pictures are usually informal, modern and funny which shows that the European Parliament targets young audience on Facebook. Among the recurring themes of illustrative pictures are: Star Wars, Lego and other toys.

## Readability of the text

Other aspect is the accessibility to the general public, which is not only about access to the Internet and language, but also readability of the text. In order to be heard by the public, organizations should communicate with their customers or the audience as they would speak face-to-face, not only because of the ease of understanding but also to be seen as more social and friendly.<sup>135</sup> As a large majority of citizens of the European Union are not native speakers of English, text should be easy to understand. In order to engage in dialogue or discussions, texts on social networks should be simple and have high readability. Readability might be defined as: “the ease of understanding or comprehension due to the style of writing.”<sup>136</sup> Most of the definitions focus on the style of writing; however, in some of them the attention is drawn to the readers. As in the following one by McLaughlin, who mentions that: “the degree to which a given class of people find certain reading matter compelling and comprehensible.”<sup>137</sup>

Flesh Reading Ease Formula by Rudolph Flesh is considered to be one of the most accurate readability formulas. This formula was published already in 1948 and later on was improved by John Kincaid. It is based on the sentence and words length. Specifically, the mathematical formula is:  $RE = 206.835 - (1.015 \times ASL) - (84.6 \times ASW)$ , where ASL is average sentence length and ASW is an average number of syllables per word. The scale goes from 0 to 100, as the number goes lower, the text is more difficult. The standard score is considered to be between 60 and 70.<sup>138</sup>

To analyze the readability of European Parliament Facebook page, an online calculator Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease was used. I used the same data as in the content analysis; therefore, posted messages between June 1 and November 30, 2012. The result was 68.9, which was estimated as standard level and fairly easily understandable.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, the section *About* had a result only 24.5, which is considered to be highly confusing; however, it is easily understandable by college graduates.

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<sup>135</sup> Solis, “Engage!,” 7.

<sup>136</sup> William H. DuBay, “*The Principles of Readability*,” (Costa Mesa, 2004)  
<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/readab/readab.pdf> (accessed April 4, 2013). 3.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Readability Formulas, “The Flesch Grade Level Readability Formula,”  
<http://www.readabilityformulas.com/flesch-grade-level-readability-formula.php> (accessed April 4, 2013).

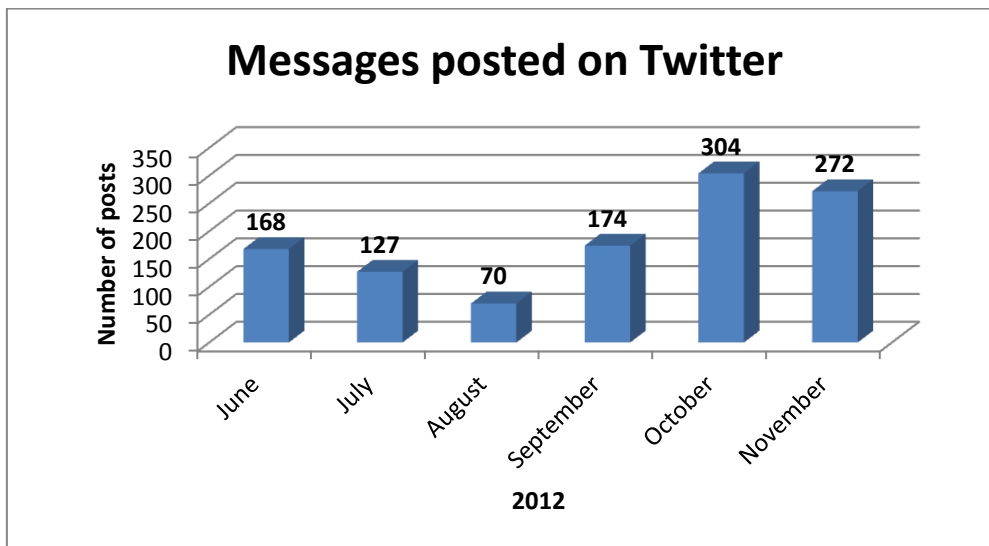
<sup>139</sup> Text Statistics, “Readability Score,” <http://www.readability-score.com/> (accessed April 4, 2013).

#### 4.2.2. Twitter

The European Parliament is also represented on the Microblogging site Twitter. On Twitter, there are twenty-three individual profiles of the European Parliament; there is one profile in every official language of the European Union. As well as on Facebook, the research was focused only on the English profile of the EP. On March 31, 2012 European Parliament Twitter profile had 20 264 followers. The number of followers is significantly lower compared to Facebook page. This is probably due to the fact that Twitter is not very popular in Europe, especially compared to the USA. Nevertheless, Twitter may gain a better attention in the future.

The total number of messages posted on the European Parliament Twitter channel in English per the studied period of six months is 1115, which is in average approximately 186 messages per month and 6, 2 messages per day. As it was mentioned earlier, the dynamics on Twitter is different than on Facebook. As tweets have a maximum length of 140 characters, their frequency is significantly higher. The following graph shows the number of posted messages per individual months during a studied period of six months. It is clearly visible that July and August have extensively lower number of tweets like on social media channel Facebook.

Figure 20: Number of posted messages on Twitter per month



Source: my own

As on Facebook page, Twitter messages were mostly dependent on the world grouping **Europe**. The word grouping included terms like: Europe, EU, Europeans, European Parliament and specific countries and cities. The number of results was 567 and it was



presumed that the word grouping Europe would have the highest number on Twitter too. The purpose of Twitter page is essentially to share news, decisions and facts about the European Parliament.

The EP created profiles on various social media channels to inform citizens of the EU about their rights and opportunities. As the following example notifies citizens about their right to complain about miscellaneous problems to the European Parliament: “Every European citizen can make a request or complain to European Parliament [@Peti\\_EU](#)- here is how [ow.ly/ff6pTht](#)”<sup>140</sup> Next example of Twitter post expresses the work and the concerns of the EP towards citizens’ safety. At the same time it brings attention to threats on the internet. “Parliament looks at how to keep Europe safe from online threats [http://t.co/vkdnfaHr](#) #cybercrime”<sup>141</sup>

The second most frequent word category on Twitter was **communication**, with 367 results. This word grouping included words such as: chat, debate, negotiations, conference or Facebook. Since the term Facebook is mentioned quite often, the EP aims to increase the traffic on FB profile and possibly get more fans on that profile too. Posts in this category are supposed to increase the engagement between the European Parliament and the citizens of the EU. Therefore, the messages in the category communication are mainly referring to the possibility to chat with some member of the parliament or they are informing about the discussions taking place in the parliament itself.

Since Twitter is not well suited channel for comments and discussions, tweets often invite the audience to other social media channel. It is shown in the following example that Twitter page encourages public to join chat with Member of the Parliament Hannes Swoboda on Facebook. Moreover, it raises a question of austerity from the social point of view: “Is austerity threatening social equality in Europe? Join Facebook chat with @Hannes\_Swoboda at 2pm CET! [http://t.co/f1UxXWRM](#)”<sup>142</sup> The next example informs what kind of debates are taking place in the European Parliament, such as foreign affairs of the EU: “Topics of #EP debate until 9pm CET: #Gaza,

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<sup>140</sup> Twitter, “European Parliament,” [https://twitter.com/Europarl\\_EN](https://twitter.com/Europarl_EN) (accessed June 1, 2012).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

#EUenlargement, EU Security and Defence Policy, EU-Kazakhstan partnership <http://t.co/7YTo08kj>”<sup>143</sup>

Another frequently mentioned word grouping is **time**, with 342 results. Among the terms in this category are: week, day, specific dates/months or presidency. As on Facebook page, messages including terms from this word category are usually informing the audience about the schedule of the European Parliament, its leaders or individual events taking place. On the Twitter channel, there was mentioned the term presidency couple of times, usually related to, at that time, future presidency of Ireland or to the current presidency. Interestingly, the term presidency was not mentioned at all on Facebook page.

The following tweet reports about the actions of the EP and refers about the upcoming Irish presidency: “EP visit to Ireland: the Irish unveil priorities for upcoming Council presidency. Article <http://t.co/hLQIJCgM>”<sup>144</sup> Almost every week, the EP Twitter channel notifies the audience what is happening in the EP that week. As the next example, which informs about Angela Merkel’s visit and debates about EU’s programmes, legislation and foreign affairs: Article on #EP this week: Angela Merkel visit, airport legislation, Erasmus, aid for laid-off workers, trade with China <http://t.co/DiOxZPmF>”<sup>145</sup>

The third most frequent word category was **social group**, with 223 results. There were included terms as: president, leader, meeting or people. In the messages, there are information about individual EU leaders and their activities or they are addressing the audience. Many messages report about the activities of EP president Martin Schulz. Evident is the following example, where Schulz emphasizes that people are more significant than markets: “Put people before markets, urges EP president Schulz at European summit <http://t.co/hXLfuu5g>”<sup>146</sup> The next example reminds the audience that the Nobel Peace Prize 2012 was awarded to the European Union and informs its citizens that four young citizens have the opportunity to collect the prize in Oslo. This message addresses the audience; moreover, the EP used informal language and Twitter slang in

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<sup>143</sup> Twitter, “European Parliament,”

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.



this post: “PLS RT! Four young Europeans will collect [#Nobelpeaceprize](#) with EU leaders in Oslo & YOU could be one of them [#peace4eu](#) [ow.ly/fh2gB](#)”<sup>147</sup>

The next word grouping with a significant number of results-212 is **politics**. This group includes terms as: votes, governments, elections and democracy. In these messages, the European Parliament informs us about the political issues of the European Union or about the upcoming elections of the Members of the Parliament 2014. However, the term foreign affair was also mentioned repeatedly, since the European Parliament informs us about the relations with other countries or about key events happening- as for example the presidency election in the United States. As the following example shows: “While waiting for results of US elections, read about how [#EP](#) helps democratic process thru election observation. Blog <http://t.co/IeH8ZD5M>”<sup>148</sup>

The next example of another important topic of this category is democracy. The post includes a link to infographic with the information of what the European Parliament does to ensure democracy and fundamental rights: “Check our infographic for overview of what [#EP](#) does for democracy, freedom of speech, fair elections. <http://t.co/B15bFWmt>”<sup>149</sup>

High number of results had also word groupings organization and language. These terms were not mentioned as often on Facebook channel. The word grouping **organization** had 187 results and mainly included the term committee but also Commission and delegation. Those posts principally informed the audience about committee’s activities and actions. Word grouping **language** appeared 154 times and included terms such as: article, talk, speech, dialogue. Primarily, these messages offer the public to read an article for more information on the official website of the EP. Interestingly, the word grouping money was not mentioned as often on Twitter as on Facebook channel, there were only 108 results of this term.

Twitter is mainly an informative channel of the EP, which is not as humanized as Facebook channel. European Parliament is using so called “twitter jargon” which are terms used uniquely on Twitter that help to cope with the fact that messages might be only 140 characters long. There was noticed also a repetition of posts. Sometimes, the same or similar messages were posted a couple of times within a short period of time.

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<sup>147</sup> Twitter, “European Parliament,”

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

### 4.3. Other social media channels

#### 4.3.1. YouTube

YouTube channel was founded in 2005 and it allows people to upload, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube is a very impressive channel that has more than one billion unique users visits each month. There are 72 hours of video uploaded every minute and over four billion hours watched each month. Furthermore, YouTube allows users to comment videos and subscribe to other user's profiles.

The European Parliament created its profile on YouTube already on June 2, 2007. The EU document "Communication to the Commission" reports that YouTube has been a first and successful step in giving the Commission a higher profile in the Internet environment.<sup>150</sup> Even though the document stresses the Commission, the information is applicable to all European institutions. Since 2007, the EP YouTube channel has 3250 subscribers and the total number of video views is almost 1, 4 million. The EP indicates France as the country of origin, which shows no consistency with other SM channels, where usually Brussels is set as location. The profile shows logos with links to other SM channels: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn and MySpace, plus the link to the official website.<sup>151</sup>

Till the time of writing, the EP uploaded 848 videos that have total duration of four hours. The variety of uploaded videos is enormous, from explanatory videos how individual aspects of the EP works, interviews, news reports, promotional videos to those who are supposed to help citizens with their life. Videos have in average around one hundred views. Some of those videos have much higher number of views because they are promoted on other social media channels as for example the one called "What is the European Parliament all about" that is presented on SM channel LinkedIn.<sup>152</sup> Comments are disabled to a great number of videos; nevertheless, the EP encourages the public to post a comment on EP Facebook page.

However, a great success and good planning is the most popular video called "Drop a pin for humanity" which has almost 400 thousand views. The video was made

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<sup>150</sup> European Union, "Communication to the Commission," 12.

<sup>151</sup> YouTube, "European Parliament," <http://www.youtube.com/user/EuropeanParliament> (accessed April 20, 2013).

<sup>152</sup> LinkedIn, "European Parliament," [http://www.linkedin.com/company/european-parliament/video-what-is-the-european-parliament-all-about-872053/product?trk=biz\\_product](http://www.linkedin.com/company/european-parliament/video-what-is-the-european-parliament-all-about-872053/product?trk=biz_product) (accessed April 20, 2013).

to support and advertise the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought that is awarded each year by the EP to honor individuals or organizations fighting for human rights.<sup>153</sup> This video reminds the public that the European Union cares for humankind.<sup>154</sup>

#### 4.3.2. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest professional network with 200 million members and more than 2, 6 million companies in 200 countries all around the world. The channel has been launched in 2003 and it is available in nineteen languages. This channel aims to connect professionals of all professions and get them access to jobs, news, other people and insights that help users to improve themselves.<sup>155</sup>

On April 19, 2013 the European Parliament LinkedIn profile has more than 20 500 followers. The section *About* explains what the EP is, lists the headquarters and the official website. The main part of the profile is devoted to *Recent Updates*, where news articles are. Usually, there is short description of an article and a link to EP official website; however, comments and discussion happens on LinkedIn. Some news updates lead directly to the official Parliament discussion group on LinkedIn.

Section *Products & Services* compiles of what the European Parliament provides for both professionals and people who want to know what the EP has to offer. Among those are for example links to materials on other social media channels as links to photo gallery on Flickr or video about EP on YouTube, but there is also a link to virtual visit of the EP in 360 degree panorama or advertisement on EP visitors' centre in Brussels Parliamentarium. These products and services provide public with more information about the EP and show them the possibilities where and how to be more engaged and knowledgeable citizen of the EU.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Facebook, "Sakharov Prize," European Parliament, [https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament/app\\_235367443257538](https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament/app_235367443257538) (accessed April 20, 2013).

<sup>154</sup> YouTube, "Drop a pin for humanity – Sakharov Prize," European Parliament, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4PRgcV-d0k> (accessed April 20, 2013).

<sup>155</sup> LinkedIn, "About Us," <http://www.linkedin.com/about-us> (accessed April 21, 2013).

<sup>156</sup> LinkedIn, "European Parliament," <http://www.linkedin.com/company/1816?trk=tyah> (accessed April 21, 2013).

### 4.3.3. Foursquare

Foursquare is a social media channel focused on locations, by “check in” a user shows to his/her friends where he/she currently is. The major principle of Foursquare is based on personalized recommendations and tips, whether it is a restaurant, hotel or historical site. The community of Foursquare has over 30 million people worldwide and millions check-ins every day.<sup>157</sup>

European Parliament Foursquare profile invites the public with the catchy phrase to “Check out the European Parliament and check in to Europe.” At the time of writing, the profile had more than 4500 likes. EP profile on Foursquare is relatively new, year 2012; therefore the number of likes might improve with the time. The profile shows a map of European Parliament locations, photos, recent updates and lists. There are four lists: European Parliament information offices, European Green Capitals, Parliament of Brussels and EU Capitals of Europe.<sup>158</sup>

This social media channel does not offer place for comments or discussions but it increases the awareness about important EU locations and traditions like EU Capital of Culture or new annual award focused on environment European Green Capital.

### 4.3.4. Pinterest

Pinterest is a tool for collection and organizing thing one love. A motto of this social media channel is: “No matter what you’re interested in, there’s a place for it here.” Pinterest is based on creating boards of various interests, where users pin images and videos. Those pins can be further repined, which creates connection between boards and users. Users can follow each other to see their pins and boards.<sup>159</sup>

European Parliament on Pinterest has, at the time of writing, 446 followers. *Header* contains a name of the profile, link to the official website and location (only Brussels). The European Parliament might have to put there also links to other social media channel in order to increase the awareness and the “traffic” on those channels. The European Parliament created 37 boards, 23 boards are EU Infographics in 23

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<sup>157</sup> Foursquare, “About Foursquare,” <https://foursquare.com/about/> (accessed April 21, 2013).

<sup>158</sup> Foursquare, “European Parliament,” [https://foursquare.com/euoparl\\_en](https://foursquare.com/euoparl_en) (accessed April 21, 2013).

<sup>159</sup> Pinterest, “Pinning 101,” <http://about.pinterest.com/basics/> (accessed April 23, 2013).

official languages of the EU; moreover, there is already a board of Infographics in Croatian. EP does not forget one of its main responsibilities – EU budget even on this social media channel, where it has its own board. Moreover, there are boards as “EP Chat” with pictures from regular chats between MEPs and EP’s Facebook fans, “Nobel Peace prize ceremony,” “Milestones of the EP” or various pictures of the EU flag in the twelve stars board.

At this SM channel is not place for interaction; however, the human face is shown on some boards as: “Art at the EP”, “Colours in the EP” with photos of nature from Strasbourg and the “Most romantic place in Europe.” Nevertheless, the last mentioned board might be improved, as it has 32 photos but it does not include all member states. Every country has its own beautiful romantic places and usually citizens appreciate to find a picture of their own country.<sup>160</sup>

#### 4.3.5. Flickr

Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application, which has two main goals. Firstly, to help people make their photos available to their friends and family and secondly, to enable new ways of organizing users’ their photos and videos. Users might add notes, tags and comments. All albums might be public or private.<sup>161</sup>

European Parliament joined Flickr in March 2009. According to its profile, photos are property of the EP or of third parties. This SM channels sets the hometown of the EP to Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, which shows no consistency with other channels, where the EP usually sets the location to Brussels only. The profile tab displays a link to the official website; however, it lacks links to other social media profiles.

At the time of writing, the profile contained 192 albums with 4684 photos and had more than 3900 contacts or followers. Nonetheless, this channel does not require being a member in order to look at the pictures. Tab *Photostream* contains recently added photos. Each picture is supplemented by a description of the time and place

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<sup>160</sup> Pinterest, “European Parliament,” <http://pinterest.com/epinfographics/> (accessed April 23, 2013).

<sup>161</sup> Flickr, “About Flickr,” <http://www.flickr.com/about/> (accessed April 24, 2013).

where it was taken, plus there is fairly comprehensive description. Moreover, every photo enables to post comments to it.

Albums are categorized into four collections: “Best of”, “Plenary Sessions”, “European Elections 2009”, and “Miscellaneous.” Collection “Best of” includes albums with best pictures of the EP from 2008 to 2012. The album “Miscellaneous” is the least formal one, there is a wide variety of albums, from official visits of the President of the EP Martin Schulz, “International Women’s Day” to “I ♥ EU.”<sup>162</sup> Empathy and social sentiment is expressed for example in album: “Remembering Utøya's victims.”

#### 4.3.6. MySpace

The European Parliament also has a profile on social media channel MySpace, however, this channel is considered among the public as dead tool. MySpace is focused on entertainment and on the connection of people to the music, movies, games and celebrities they like.

The profile is not listed among other SM channels on the official website but it is kept in case someone would be interested. The profile has almost four thousand friends and it includes links to other social media channels and press releases on the official website. The last picture was uploaded in 2011 and it was promoting EP Facebook page.<sup>163</sup>

### 4.4. Discussion

Rodger D. Johnson, social media consultant, mentioned that in order to have high number of fans on social media channels, it is essential to make the content helpful and celebrate the people. Both aspects were mentioned in examples. However, Johnson mainly stressed the importance of humanizing the content of Facebook post, in order to humanize a company or organization.<sup>164</sup> As mentioned in the second chapter, already in

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<sup>162</sup> Flickr, “European Parliament,”

<sup>163</sup> MySpace, “European Parliament,” <http://www.myspace.com/europeanparliament> (accessed April 21, 2013).

<sup>164</sup> Talk given during the lecture advanced “Organizational Communication” at the IUPUI university in the US

1994, the former president of the Czech Republic Václav Havel, was aware this fact, even though in another relation than to social media. As it was mentioned earlier, Havel emphasized that many people have an incorrect impression about the European Union that is just an administrative, monetary and economic body with many regulations; therefore it is necessary to show the human face of the Union.<sup>165</sup>

On the European Parliament Facebook, this attempt to humanize the organization is visible. Many of the messages start by “Did you know” to encourage the discussion of the citizens concerning current European topics. Moreover, they are not posting only messages about the European Parliament or the European Union, but also current topics about Europe, citizens of Europe or international affairs. For example, the message announcing the re-election of the US President Barack Obama develops the discussion about the topic of international relations of the European Union with the United States of America.

Another way of humanizing the image of European Parliament is that the Parliament is posting messages announcing every-year events as World’s AIDS Day, World Food Day or International Students’ Day. This type of messages usually increases the traffic on the profile thanks to the high number of likes and shares of the post.

In general, the findings from the Microblogging site Twitter and social network site Facebook are very similar, which shows the consistence of the messages across the two studied channels. As it was mentioned earlier, having a consistent voice among various channels of social media campaign creates more coherent brand messaging; therefore, it is essential.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, the way of expressing messages is different on studied channels. Posts on Facebook were more personalized thus- involving the audience and showing a human face of the European Parliament, which is a very powerful aspect on social media. Facebook includes much more questions, which gives the public the feeling of being heard.

Twitter is based on a frequent posting of short messages and that does not make such an opportunity to include the public as much as Facebook. However, thanks to this fact, the European Parliament Twitter page is also informing the audience about the

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<sup>165</sup> Václav Havel, “About European identity,”

<sup>166</sup> Parker, *301 Ways to Use Social Media to Boost Your Marketing*, 3.

secondary actions and news, compared to the Facebook page, where only the main events were posted.

#### **4.4.1. Limitations and future recommendations**

Firstly, the analysis does not take into account pictures accompanied with messages posted on Twitter. This is due to the fact that Twitter shows only limited number of tweets and tweets from the studied period are not visible anymore. Nevertheless, in general there are pictures associated with the message on EP's Twitter profile only occasionally and those pictures are almost exclusively real pictures from the EP or of its members. Secondly, the analysis does not follow the debate that has developed from the messages posted by the EP since the number is rather high. However, the EP monitors the discussion and usually replied to some of the messages posted by the public. The thesis aims to show how the European Parliament presents itself to the public and what messages does it send to EU citizens through social media. Nonetheless, as a continuation it would be beneficial research to follow the discussions taking place on social media.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

The research examined the relationship between the European Parliament and social media. The research showed the main issues that are dealt with on the EP' social media channels, together with some examples of typical messages posted on those channels. The analysis showed that the content of the messages posted by the European Parliament is mainly relating to the terms: Europe, time, communications, politics, social group and money.

Primarily, the messages reflect specific information about the European Parliament, the European Union and Members of the Parliament. Further, the posts inform the public about activities of the EP and its leaders. Very often the posts express the invitation for joining chat or debates on current topic with the EU leaders. Another important topic is the budget of the EU. The EP not only informs the public about the budget but they also ask the audience about their opinion concerning the topic. All these messages are posted on social media with the desire to increase the awareness about the European Parliament and its activities.



However, there are many messages announcing every-year world's events or revealing some interesting facts about Europe. Even though, this type of messages does not have anything to do with the European Parliament, they often gain a big number of likes and shares, which brings the traffic to the EP's profile and subsequently increase the number of fans. This type of posts, together with some other, for example demonstrating sympathy towards other countries or some group of citizens, shows the human face of the EP. To humanize the organization is an important advantage of social media.

The EP does not try to convince the public about its greatness; conversely, the EP expresses its consciousness and admits earlier imperfections in several messages. As was indicated in the Eurobarometer survey, the citizens feel to be little informed about the EU and have little say about the decision-making process. The EP addresses the public in the messages and they not only inform them about the possibility to chat with the leaders, but they also include the question to the public in almost every message. The staff tries to foster the debate in the majority of posts. Moreover, they ask the public about their opinion, view or they ask for their recommendation. Some of the messages on Twitter also informed the citizens about their human rights. These aspects of posted messages should ensure the increase of public engagement in the European issues and by participating in the discussion citizens should have a better feeling of being heard by the EP.

The assumption that the social media campaign of the EP is focused especially on the young generation was confirmed by various aspects. Firstly, the messages are written in informal language and Internet slang. Secondly, some of the topics focused on the youth are more stressed. The Erasmus programme was mentioned couple of times and the messages always brought a big attention among the audience. Thirdly, the images associated with the messages are mainly illustrative, informal, modern and funny. However the fact that the youth do not even make an independent word grouping shows that the focus on this target may be much stronger.

Concerning the regular activity on social media channels, on both channels the activity was low during summer; however, since September the activity has significantly improved with the increasing tendency. The research answered the

research question and elaborated the presence of the European Parliament on social media and the focus on the young generation.

## 5. Proposal for Further Application

Based on the finding from the third chapter about Internet communication strategy of the EU, this chapter will present the basic concept of virtual world and explain how one of them, Second Life, works. Then it will be shown how the possible representation of the European Parliament in Second Life might look like. In the 3D virtual environment of Second Life, the European Parliament might build a virtual headquarter, where common European symbols like the flag, the anthem or the motto can be very well presented.

### 5.1.Introduction

As it was mentioned earlier, the European Union has stated in various official documents that the EU wants to exploit the potential of new technologies. In one of those documents called the White Paper is stressed that the list of social media channels used by the European Union is not final; on contrary, that this list is going to evolve as new media and technologies evolve.<sup>167</sup>

Among new technologies is also Second Life, the most popular virtual world. Virtual worlds are natural extension to the other popular social media channels such as Facebook or Twitter. Many experts view virtual worlds as a new element in the promotional mix and a new way how to reach out to a new generation of audience or customers.<sup>168</sup>

This chapter is going to propose a practical use of this social media channel that is currently not used by the European Union. It is going to serve as a proposal how to effectively manage other type of social media, specifically virtual worlds. The proposal is going to show how the European Parliament might be promoted in Second Life and how it might present its purposes and objectives there.

The European Union is nowadays trying to develop a sense of European identity and one of the programmes that are supposed to support it is called The Europe for Citizens Programme. It seeks to deepen awareness of what it means to be European and

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<sup>167</sup> European Commission, *White Paper on a European Communication Policy*, 5.

<sup>168</sup> Natalie T. Wood, *Marketing in Virtual Worlds* (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2011), 18.

assists in developing a sense of European identity. This chapter wants to show how the European Union can use virtual worlds, particularly Second Life, in promoting itself.

## 5.2.Virtual worlds

This section explains what virtual worlds are, as it not a very well known tool. In a simplified way, it might be said, that virtual world is a combination of social networking, instant messaging, and Internet-enabled audio communication in 3D environment that resembles and functions similarly to online computer games.<sup>169</sup>

Even though the term virtual world is frequently used, there is currently no commonly agreed definition. Nevertheless Mark Bell from Indiana University attempted to find a common ground among the existing formal definitions and came up with the new one. This final definition is a combination of the main elements of definitions by key academicians from this field: Richard Bartle, Raph Koster and Edward Castronova. The new definition is stated as the following: “A synchronous, persistent network of people, represented as avatars, facilitated by networked computers.” Thanks to this definition we can distinguish what is and what is not considered a virtual world. Sometimes, social networks such as Facebook are incorrectly called virtual worlds.<sup>170</sup>

I have chosen Second Life as a virtual environment for this proposal, because it is not only the largest project of all virtual worlds but also the most successful and famous one. Thanks to that many international corporations, prestigious universities and governmental agencies have joined Second Life.

The concept of virtual world is a natural extension of other popular social networks like Facebook or Twitter, and Second Life is not much different. Users are also able to join groups according to their hobbies, nationalities and other interests. Moreover they can also build their own social circle and virtually hang out with them.

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<sup>169</sup> Wood, *Marketing in Virtual Worlds*, 10.

<sup>170</sup> Mark W. Bell, “Towards a definition of Virtual Worlds,” *Journal of Virtual World Research*, no.1 (2008), [http://www.google.cz/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGcQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fjournals.tdl.org%2Fjvwr%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F283%2F237&ei=4LauT7W4NKis0QXAwfmICQ&usg=AFQjCNExtbn-bRZcvUi-dU\\_SZx6dRz8kdw&sig2=dBoPdzoLoDOAtnVaMhKmTw](http://www.google.cz/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGcQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fjournals.tdl.org%2Fjvwr%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F283%2F237&ei=4LauT7W4NKis0QXAwfmICQ&usg=AFQjCNExtbn-bRZcvUi-dU_SZx6dRz8kdw&sig2=dBoPdzoLoDOAtnVaMhKmTw) (accessed 24 March 2012).

All in all, virtual worlds may offer a unique way to socialize, share information or increase the awareness about the EU.

### 5.3. Second Life

For the purposes of establishing a proper understanding of the proposed promotion design of the EP in Second Life, this section explains the basics of this virtual world. Second Life (SL) is a three-dimensional virtual world that was launched on June 23, 2003 by the American company Linden Research, later renamed to Linden Lab. This company was established in 1999 by Philip Rosendale with the aim to build a place where people can share 3D space and together build the place around them. One of the main characteristic of this world is the fact that it is not produced simply by the company, but the main credit is given to the users. Every user has tools by which he/she can create and edit objects, like clothes, vehicles and buildings. These objects can be used for personal usage or for business.

Second Life is sometimes incorrectly called a game; however, as Philip Rosendale stated: “I’m not building a game. I’m building a new continent.”<sup>171</sup> SL representative of a real-life person is called avatar. Users can choose from many appearances, races and ages and also change the avatar later.<sup>172</sup> (See Annex for the illustration, picture n.4). Living in the skin of an avatar, looking through its eyes and socializing with others can be an intense experience, which takes it to another level, compared to simple chatting on other social media channels.

In 2011, there were more than twenty million registered users but when we talk about active users, the number is only about 800 000. In 2007 SL experienced the biggest boom. Second Life has its own real economy, and the currency which is used there is called Linden dollar (L\$). This currency can be normally exchanged into American dollars or many other currencies. At the time of writing the exchange rate was 249,2 L\$ for one American dollar.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Gail Perry, “Flying around CPA Island with Tom Hood,” AccountingWEB, <http://www.accountingweb.com/item/107147> (accessed 25 April 2012).

<sup>172</sup> Richard Mansfield, *How to do everything with Second Life*, (McGraw-Hill Osborne Media, 2007).

<sup>173</sup> Second Life, Private account, <https://secondlife.com/my/community/?lang=en-US> (accessed 2 April 2012).

Virtual worlds attract companies and organizations for their opportunities in collaboration, communication, research, education or promotion. For these reasons international companies like IBM, Dell, T-mobile or top universities as Indiana University or Harvard University have, or at least had for some time, their branches in Second Life. (See Annex for the illustration, pictures n.5 and 6).

### 5.3.1. How SL works

- **Technical requirements:** For the usage of the SL, users have to download a client program Second Life Viewer 2 and then make a registration. For the proper functioning of SL, there is a saying: The better your computer and internet connection, better your Second Life will work.<sup>174</sup>
- **Communication:** Second Life offers several methods of communication between users in written and spoken form. Among them: public or private chat, voice chat, instant messages or notecards.<sup>175</sup>
- **Transport:** Avatars can move around the world by three ways: walking, flying and teleport. The first two mentioned methods are used within short distances, usually within one island. Teleport is used for transfer to further destinations.
- **Land:** The Second Life grid is divided into mainland and private estates, more frequently called islands. If a user wants to own a building, he/she has to have a piece of land. There are multiple options how to gain a land: rent it, buy it directly from the Linden Lab company or to buy it from other private real estate companies.<sup>176</sup>
- **Membership:** There are two possibilities of membership: basic and premium. Basic membership is for free and allows users to do most of the activities in SL. For premium membership, the user has to pay fees, which are in the form of an annual premium membership costing 7.20 USD. The most important information about this membership is the fact that user can own a land in comparison to basic membership.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Sarah Robbins and Mark Bell, *Second Life for Dummies* (Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2008), 16.

<sup>175</sup> Second Life, "Communication," Second Life Wiki, <http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Communication> (accessed 22 April, 2012).

<sup>176</sup> Second Life, "Land," Second Life Wiki, <http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Land> (accessed 22 April, 2012).

<sup>177</sup> Michael Rymaszewski at al., *Second Life: The Official Guide* (Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2007), 19-21.

### 5.3.2. How it can be used

Land property in SL functions as a website on the Internet. SL includes tools for content creation, so everyone who has some information technology basis can build a place that is attractive and functional. With the support of the Linden Scripting Language it is also possible to build interactive displays or for example working vehicles.

As was already mentioned, SL supports many channels of communication and one of the biggest advantages of SL is the fact that there is a possibility of real-time communication. Voice chat is more personal; therefore, many people prefer this real-time type of communication compared to emails or messages. Additionally, there can also be used: interactive displays, put up signs, banners, 3D visualization, profiles, posts on the official forums, list of events etc. Moreover there is a wide range of sharing media like videos, podcasts or view web pages.<sup>178</sup> (See Annex for the illustration, picture n.7).

Natalie Wood also stated that SL can be used as a unique environment for marketing students, who can by many experimental exercises enhance their marketing knowledge and build their skills. “In virtual worlds you not only have the ability to build a 3D store, but you can also receive feedback on your design from other avatars after they have visited it.” Wood also points out that many of these activities would be almost impossible to complete in real life, whereas virtual worlds bring us these opportunities.<sup>179</sup>

Second Life offers flexibility, diverse of the user-created content and freedom much more than any other platform of this kind. Websites are certainly more valuable and SL cannot replace them any time soon. However, as Kimberly Rufer-Bach stated: “it offers an entirely different experience from looking at a website. Visitors go to your site and look at it. Visitors go to your space in Second Life and interact with one another and share the experience.”<sup>180</sup> This aspect would be highly desirable for the European Parliament because it would be totally different way of approaching its citizens.

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<sup>178</sup> Kimberly Rufer-Bach, *The Second Life Grid: the official guide to communication, collaboration, and community engagement* (Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2009), 8-10.

<sup>179</sup> Wood, *Marketing in Virtual Worlds*, 10.

<sup>180</sup> Rufer-Bach, *The Second Life Grid*, 22.

## 5.4. Successful projects

The proper use and success of representation in Second Life can be very well demonstrated by the example of some companies and organizations in SL, specifically of an American technology and consulting corporation IBM and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

### 5.4.1. IBM

IBM saw the potential of Second Life from the beginning; moreover, Irving Berger, Vice-Chairman Emeritus of the Academy of Technology, had an idea to hold a conference on virtual world in one of them. Therefore, in 2008 the IBM's Academy of Technology held a Virtual World conference and Annual Meeting in Second Life. They built special conference space for sessions, keynotes, a library, plus numerous areas for social gathering.

Craig Becker, Global architect for IBM's digital convergence, was a chief architect of this project. Becker together with a group of volunteers spent several months by developing sixteen regions in Second Life. Other group of volunteers was in charge of training sessions for new members of Second Life.<sup>181</sup>

The conference took place on October 21 to 23, 2008 and attracted more than two hundred members who attended three keynotes and thirty-seven sessions. There were not only classical simple presentations but presenters were encouraged to try creative and interactive approaches, so there were for example some interactive presentations displayed in the garden or a 3D model of a server showing details how to service the machine.<sup>182</sup>

Participants of the conference agreed that the Virtual World Conference was a great success and that it exceeded their expectations. Joanne Martin, president of IBM Academy of Technology said: "The meeting in Second Life was everything that you could do at a traditional conference- and more- at one fifth the cost and without a single

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<sup>181</sup> Linden Lab, "Case Study: How Meeting In Second Life Transformed IBM's Technology Elite Into Virtual World Believers," Linden Research, [http://secondlifegrid.net.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/Second\\_Life\\_Case\\_IBM\\_EN.pdf](http://secondlifegrid.net.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/Second_Life_Case_IBM_EN.pdf) (accessed March 18, 2013.)

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.



case of jet lag.”<sup>183</sup> Savings were incredible, with the initial investment of 80, 000 USD, the IBM estimated that they saved in total over 320, 000 USD compared to usual expenses of holding a conference in a real world.

After the success of the conference, Martin decided to hold Annual General Meeting also in Second Life. Becker and Martin were stressing the real-like feeling after the conference and the meeting, which is really important. Becker stated: “When people woke up the morning after the virtual meetings and thought about the day before, it wasn’t like remembering a webcast or a phone conference. We truly felt as if we had attended a real-time meeting, interacting with others and carrying home practical information.” Even though not everybody was optimistic about the idea of holding a virtual conference at the beginning and many members were skeptics, after the meeting, Neil Katz said that the conference changed skeptics into true believers.<sup>184</sup>

#### **5.4.2. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**

NOAA is aiming for creation of an informed society that understands the role of the ocean, coasts and atmosphere. Eric Hackathorn, NOAA’s Virtual Worlds Program Manager, have chosen Second Life because of its technical capabilities, potential audience, and its cheap visualization offer. NOAA joined Second Life in hope to reach new audiences. This mission was successful because there was reported that forty percent of visitors of NOAA’s island in SL had not heard of this organization before their visit. On the island it can be found for example: an iceberg that is melting because of the global warming, tsunami hitting a village or other natural disasters and phenomena. Hackathorn stated: “You can read about a tsunami in a textbook or you can experience one in a virtual world; I believe that experience has a greater impact.”<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Linden Lab, “Case Study: How Meeting In Second Life Transformed IBM’s Technology Elite,”

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Linden Lab, “Case Study: Engaging the Public in Environmental Learning & Enhancing Scientific Collaboration: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Second Life,” Linden Research, [http://secondlifegrid.net.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/Second\\_Life\\_Case\\_NOAA\\_EN.pdf](http://secondlifegrid.net.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/Second_Life_Case_NOAA_EN.pdf) (accessed March 19, 2013).

## 5.5.SWOT analysis of Second Life

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method which is commonly used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of a project. I have decided that to make this analysis on Second Life myself based on the literature I have read about this topic, my experience and lectures I had during my bachelor studies.

### Strengths

- *Reduced distances*: This generation is under the common trend of globalization, which brings high mobility of workers. In virtual worlds it does not matter if the colleague is at the next desk or in other part of the world. Workers may also work from their homes which is another trend of many companies. It has proven to be a good place for business meetings, conferences or training courses.
- *Relatively low costs*: Compared to the costs of the business or marketing in real life, the costs in SL are minimal.
- *Graphic quality*: Second Life has a very good graphic quality which brings up many possibilities for creativity of designers.
- *Publicity*: Second Life is the biggest and the most famous virtual world.
- *Real-like feeling*: Since the SL is graphically portrayed so well it renders users with the feeling of real experience. This is a very important factor for conferences or in the field of education.

### Weaknesses

- *Leaving of some big corporations*: There has been lately a tendency of some big corporations, such as IBM, of leaving the SL or the representation for only short time period. (In case of IBM, the project proved to be so successful, that the company decided to build similar platform of their own.)
- *High technical requirements*: The application is designed in such quality that its proper functioning required a good computer and very fast Internet connection; therefore, it is not accessible very easily.
- *VAT for the EU member states*: Last years there was introduced VAT for the EU member states, because it is technically considered to be trade with electronic goods. It revealed a number of negative emotions among SL residents from these countries.

- *Partial anonymity*: Some people may behave inappropriately or even illegally even though there are number of restrictions, when feeling anonymous.
- *Adult content*: SL is full of sexual content. There are almost no restrictions in these activities so it can be seen very often. This fact is particularly not suitable for education and governmental organizations.

### **Opportunities**

- *New contacts*: In SL there is high possibility of meeting new people from all over the world and create contacts that might be useful in the future.
- *New cooperation*: In some cases, possible cooperation may emerge.
- *New market*: New market brings new opportunities. It is up to creativity and skills of the user to manage it properly and bring into success.
- *Potential growth*: The world is constantly growing, together with SL accounts. If this trend keeps continuing, it means a bigger and bigger audience.
- *Image*: Joining SL gives an organization an innovative image and shows that it can use new media to reach new audience.

### **Threats**

- *The possibility of rising prices*: The aim of Linden Lab is to earn money, so there is a possibility that they may increase prices for the land or monthly fees.
- *The possibility of undesired phenomenon*: The world is basically created by the users themselves, so there is a possibility that it can gradually turn into something different from what was expected.

## **5.6.Modern marketing strategies**

There is a high possibility that the virtual environment will change the basic nature of marketing, and companies and organizations should keep an eye on how it will change in order to react quickly. Experts foresee that virtual environments are likely to emerge as the leading Internet interface.<sup>186</sup>

Of course there is a question whether residents of the virtual worlds behave similarly in the real life as they behave under the shadow of their avatars and therefore

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<sup>186</sup>Wood, *Marketing in Virtual Worlds*, xiii.

if they are willing to buy some of the products they tried or saw in virtual environment. As one famous cartoon, showing a dog sitting in front of the computer, says: “On the internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.” The line between virtual and real worlds is blurring in many ways.

Marketing is one of the main reasons why companies and organizations use Second Life. It brings the image of an innovative organization and helps to get into the subconscious of people. For sure this marketing strategy is targeted mostly to younger generation, since the average resident is in his late twenties/early thirties.<sup>187</sup> Promotion in SL is quite cheap and it brings similar advantages as other advertising on the Internet. So, why not try it, while there may be little to lose from experimenting?

Nonetheless, organizations have to bear in mind that the turnout is probably never going to be as high as on the web sites or some more popular social media channels like Facebook or Twitter. It is good to consider Second Life as a supportive marketing tool. The best marketing strategies among virtual world of Second Life are those that are linked to real world.

One of the rules how to be effective in virtual worlds’ marketing strategies is that the promotion needs to be consistent with the virtual environment and enhance participants’ experience.<sup>188</sup> One of the options is also the possibility to use the actual avatar for advertising, as a form of brand personification. As an example can serve the Nesquik Bunny avatar, created by Nestlé Nesquik company that was walking around the world in SL and attended various events.<sup>189</sup> Apart from a little research conducted about marketing in virtual worlds, it is still virtually unexplored marketing territory.

### **5.7. Proposed design of the promotion project in Second Life**

I got the idea for this proposal after my visit of the new visitors’ centre in Brussels called Parliamentarium. This centre encourages people of all ages to discover in a refreshingly new way more about the EU and the European Parliament. It is an interactive multimedia centre where visitors may find: history of the EU, EU enlargements, information about individual member states and its representation in

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<sup>187</sup> Wood, *Marketing in Virtual Worlds*, 14.

<sup>188</sup> Robert Freedman, *How to Make Real Money in Second Life* (McGraw-Hill Professional, 2007), 116.

<sup>189</sup> Second Life, “Advertising in Second Life,” Second Life Wiki, [http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Advertising\\_in\\_Second\\_Life](http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Advertising_in_Second_Life) (accessed April 24, 2012).

institutions and many others. By the creation of Parliamentarium, the EU showed that it is trying to attract citizens' attention by modern interactive media.<sup>190</sup> When I was walking there, I realized that most of those interactive displays might be very similarly presented in virtual world of Second Life.

Based on the already mentioned current marketing trends, aims of the European Union and functioning of the SL, a possible promotion design of the European Union in Second Life can be proposed.

The first thing that has to be done is getting a Premium membership. The next step would be to decide whether to rent or to buy a land and decide its proportions. Since the institution as the European Parliament should have representative areas, the purchase of a Full Private Region is proposed. This is the most common way of action by corporations and educational institutions. It can seem strange to buy a virtual land with real money but the user is basically renting server space and the opportunity to control what goes on there, along with the technical support and administrative tools.<sup>191</sup>

The next step is the building itself, plus the landscape. (See Annex for the illustration, picture n.8). This is the most costly part of the project. Bigger corporations and organizations usually hire professional assistance- a solution provider, who brings client's in-world projects to fruition. Among the services they usually provide are: creating custom content (like buildings, avatars, landscaping or scripts), running events, training in SL skills and property management. The salaries for SL content development and services vary a lot; nevertheless the average is about 20 USD per hour.<sup>192</sup> Even though, in SL there is usually a tendency to impress people by an unusual look of the building, in case of the European Parliament, it is desirable to keep the building unobtrusive, modern and simple. Therefore, there could be proposed a similar design as the European Parliament headquarters in Strasbourg has. The following pictures show 3D models of the EP and demonstrate how the representation in SL might look like.

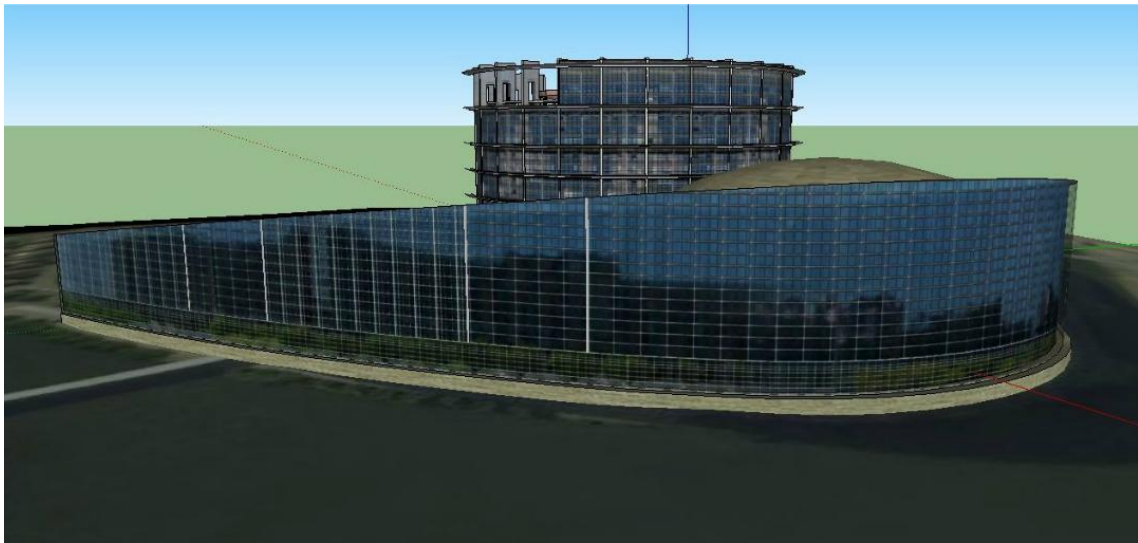
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<sup>190</sup> European Parliament, "Parliamentarium, The European Union's Visitors' Centre," European Parliament Visiting, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/parlamentarium.html> (accessed 3 April 2012).

<sup>191</sup> Rufer-Bach, *The Second Life Grid*, 154.

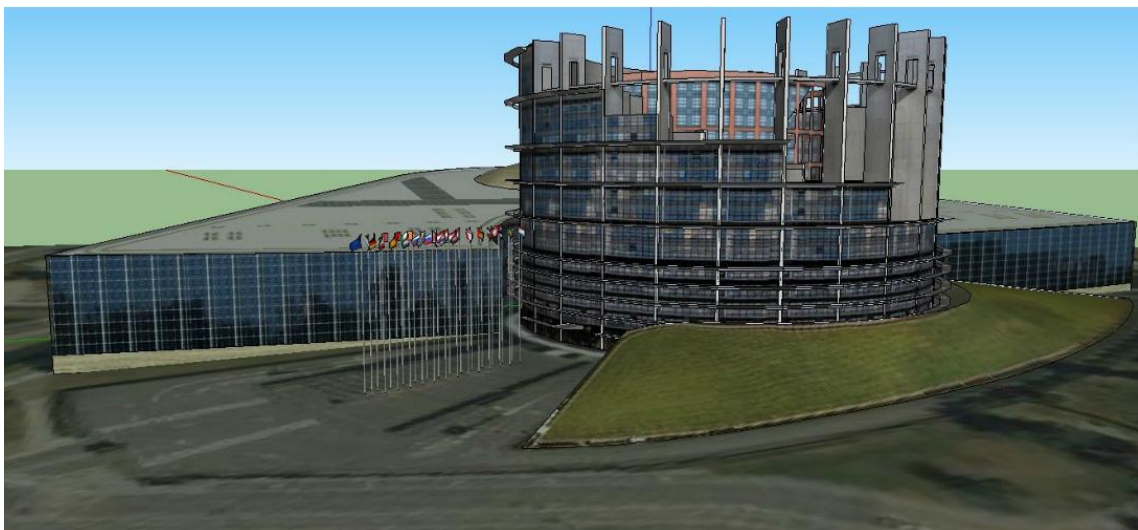
<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 260-261.

Picture 2: 3D model of the European Parliament



Source: Google SketchUp

Picture 3: 3D model of the European Parliament



Source: Google SketchUp

Virtual building should have a lot of open spaces for easier movement of avatars. Open spaces as much as possible is one of the basic unwritten rule of the inside spaces in SL, because it is easier for avatars to move. The space is usually divided into individual parts:

- **Reception:** At the front there should be situated a reception deck with a real avatar or a simulation that can greet visitors or give general information.

- **Open space:** The main part of the building should be devoted mainly to the presentation of aims, values and programmes of the EU and the EP to the visitors. In this space, there are many options how the EU can promote all the information by an interactive way. It might put 3D interactive models presenting for example aims of the EU; other model can give information about the European programmes, as Erasmus. There might also be screens with videos or the same documents that are distributed on the web site.
- **Conference room:** Every organization building should also include a conference room, a quiet place, for meetings or team working. These rooms are possible to make private only for the members of the group.

More options for creativity are coming up concerning the surrounding of the building. It is desired to have attractive surroundings; therefore, grass, trees, flowers, waterfalls or something totally imaginary on their property should be built. The most favorite type of land theme in general is tropical islands. The open community part of the island is essential; it should be a place where avatars can spend time. As mentioned earlier, it is very useful, when there is something interesting for the users, which attracts them. For example NASA has rockets and solar system models, so the EP could possibly have miniature monuments of the member states.

As it was mentioned earlier, the European Commission is focusing on the promotion of the European image via seven elements. All of these elements might be, to some extent, promoted in Second Life. The following section will propose methods how to accomplish it.

- **Education:** Firstly, students and teachers mobility programmes among member countries are promoted (e.g. Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci). In SL there might be displays with information about these programmes and experiences of the participants. Other option might be to organize the event, where participants may express their experiences and outcomes in real-time communication, together with answering questions of possible future participants of these programmes. The cost of this event would be only a little promotion on the SL web. Secondly, the EU is encouraging universities and research centre for cooperation and response to major socio-economic challenges. Second Life is a great place for international meetings and research programmes. For these purposes, conference rooms should be built in SL.

- Culture: One of the aims of European Commission is to foster cooperation between creative artists and cultural institutions. One of the well known EU's projects is the European Capital of Culture. In SL there might be a show room with presentation or recreation of the current capital of culture.
- Languages: the European Commission is aspiring for the cross-cultural diffusion of all languages in all countries through education levels, Internet and cultural programmes. However, displays in SL might have a choice of all the official languages in the Union, as the official website has.
- Symbols: As was already mentioned, the EU created a set of symbols to present a more tangible image of the Union. All symbols might be very well presented in SL. The waving flag might be situated in front of the building and in individual rooms. An anthem might be played by the virtual orchestra in the surroundings of the building and the EU's motto might be hanging on a poster. In case of European Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, an event might be held.
- Publications: Electronic versions of the publications about the EU institutions might be distributed.
- Internet: The importance of internet as a source of information and communication is growing every day. The EU's pivotal project on the Internet is an official website accessible in all official languages. This website, <http://europa.eu/>, should be shown on one of the interactive panels, as the link between SL and websites is essential.
- Media: Means of communication are desired to be not only informative but also promoting cultural diversity by the form of art. In SL there might be a room similar to cinema with the screens playing European Parliament's Web-television.

### 5.7.1. Expected outcomes

It is not possible to say whether by the promotion in Second Life, people will gain more sense of belonging to European identity, nevertheless by this project the European Parliament can reach new audience and raise awareness about the European Union in general. In the virtual world, people can learn about the aims, values and programmes in a fun way. The European Union can show its image of innovative organization and it might foster the feeling of European identity among some people. People can gain



greater awareness of the activities and news about the EU, which is one of the objectives of the Europe for Citizens Programme.

## **5.8.Conclusion**

The EU created European symbols that are supposed to give a particular image of Europe and the European Commission is working harder and harder to promote this image, to which people can identify with. One of the programmes that is intended to, by different ways, promote the sense of European identity within its citizens is the Europe for Citizens Programme. One of its objectives is also to increase public awareness of Union's actions and functioning of the individual institutions. It was confirmed that there is a significant impact made by European institutions and mass media on those issues. One of the most important groups of citizens that should be targeted in the promotion of the European identity is youth, as the future generation. Moreover the EU showed that it is trying to attract citizens' attention by modern interactive media by its presence in various social networks and by building new interactive visitors' centre Parliamentarium.

Second Life has proven to be a good media for modern advertisement of real world companies and governmental agencies. Marketing is one of the main reasons why they join Second Life. It brings the image of innovative organization and helps them to get into the subconscious of people. Obviously it should be taken only as a support marketing tool, mostly targeted on younger generation, since most of the resident are about thirty years old. Moreover the SWOT analysis of the environment showed that the strength and opportunities of SL outweigh the weaknesses. One of the biggest strengths is the image of the organization as a part of modern innovative society.

In this work it has been shown that the European Parliament might be very well presented in Second Life, so it might use it as other type of media in order to gain better awareness. This proposal demonstrated what the virtual headquarters of the European Parliament might look like and what facilities could be installed there. It has been shown how the promotional aims of the European Commission might be presented in Second Life via the seven different elements: education, culture, languages, symbols, publications, internet and media.

This proposal cannot clearly say whether it is possible to increase the sense of togetherness among citizens of the European Union via Second Life. Nevertheless it can gain bigger audience and raise their awareness about the European Union in general.

## 6. Conclusions

The European Parliament as well as other governments all over the world starts to incorporate social media into their communication strategies to connect with their citizens. Governments use social media as another communication channel with their citizens in order to be more open, to humanize the face of government and also as something like a customary service. However, public relations specialists have to work carefully, as social media can be a great help as well as they can do serious harm to the organization. Each social media channel cultivates its own culture and they are divided into personal and professional channels. One of the biggest advantages of social media is that it enables the two-way communication between the organization and its stakeholders and it reinforces the dialogue.

The EU identified the need to close the gap between the European Union and its citizens. Among the objectives of the EU are: using the two-way communication for healthy democracy, connecting the citizens with each other, giving citizens better access to information, paying more attention to listening to people's views and developing a sense of European identity. The desire of the EU institutions is to present the EU as a human, friendly and peaceful community. Moreover, it was recognized that the priority groups that must be inclined are women, youth and business people. These challenges have been identified in a range of the EU document and by various politicians long before the emergence of social media.

Some of the challenges can be overcome or ease on social media. The European Union conducted a survey about people's perception of social media in order to determine the importance and need for the use of social media. According to the citizens, social media are a modern way to keep abreast of political affairs, even though there is still some uncertainty about the reliability of the information on political issues on social media. The European Parliament is using social media especially for targeting the young generation, who is using social media and the Internet in general the most.

The analysis of the EP's representation on social media channels revealed the key themes of the messages posted by the European Parliament itself. By asking questions and opinions of the public, the EP expresses its desire to enforce the dialogue between the citizens of the EU and the institution. Even though, it was not part of the analysis, from my observation, the EP did not just pose a question but also replied to

some of the reactions of the public to secure the two-way communication. By variety of posts, the EP attempts to show the human and friendly face of the European Parliament. Furthermore, the research showed the focus on the young generation in its language, topics and images.

As some of the official documents of the EU state, the EU wants to exploit the potential of new technologies as they come. Therefore, the last chapter offered a proposal of another social media channel. Second Life proved to be suitable for the needs of the EP and the in SWOT analysis the strengths and opportunities overcome the threats and weaknesses.

To sum up, the European Parliament is making an effort to overcome the challenges that the European Union is facing nowadays. Social media cannot be taken as the major communication channel with the citizens; however, without any doubt, it is a good channel focusing mainly on the youth. The European Parliament keeps abreast with new technologies and makes use of their advantages.

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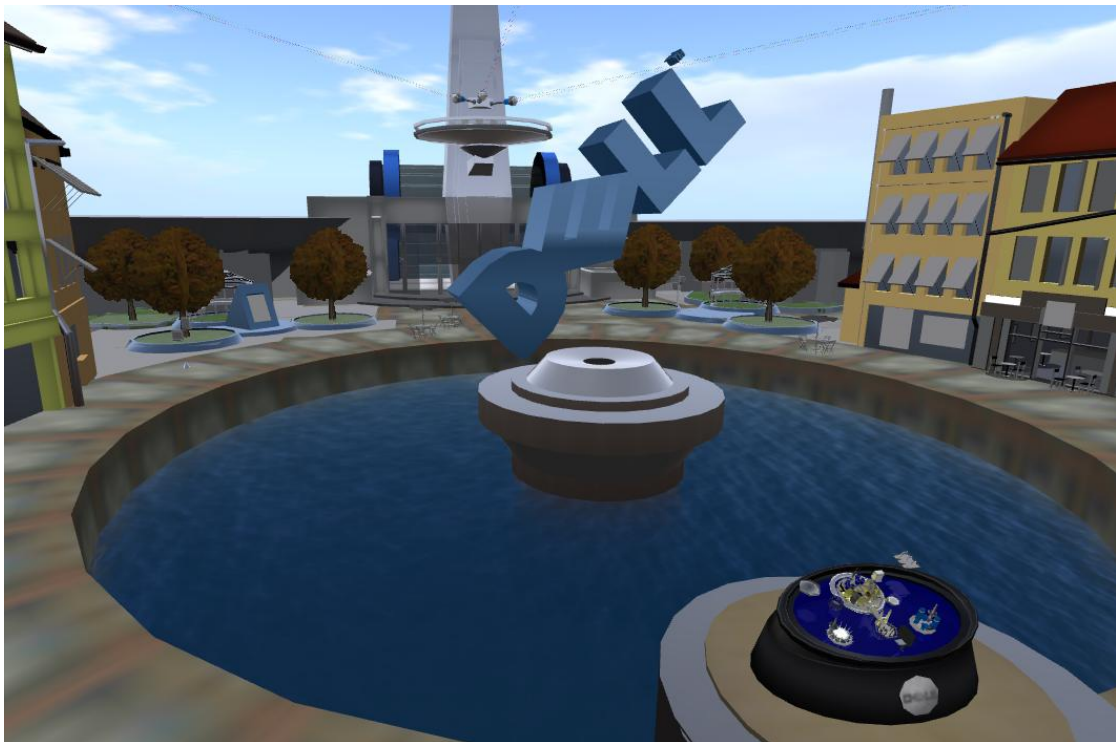
## 8. Annex

Picture 4: Choice of avatars during registration



Source: my own, made in SL

Picture 5: Part of the Dell island



Source: my own, made in SL



Picture 6 Philosophical faculty, Palacký University



Source: my own, made in SL



Source: my own, made in SL



Picture 7: Example of the interactive display: eGov island



Source: my own, made in SL

Picture 8: Building of the Second Life Model United Nations



Source: my own, made in SL

## **9. List of abbreviations**

3D - three-dimensional

CEO – chief executive officer

EP – European Parliament

EU – European Union

L\$ - Linden dollar

SM – social media

SL – Second Life

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States of America

USD – United States dollar

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