

Beyond *Erasmus*. Communication of European Universities alliances on social media

Mar García-Gordillo; Marina Ramos-Serrano; Rubén Rivas-de-Roca

Nota: Este artículo se puede leer en español en:
<https://revista.profesionaldelainformacion.com/index.php/EPI/article/view/87219>

Recommended citation:

García-Gordillo, Mar; Ramos-Serrano, Marina; Rivas-de-Roca, Rubén (2023). "Beyond *Erasmus*. Communication of European Universities alliances on social media". *Profesional de la información*, v. 32, n. 4, e320404.

<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2023.jul.04>

Manuscript received on 20th December 2022

Accepted on 29th March 2023



Mar García-Gordillo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9367-0366>

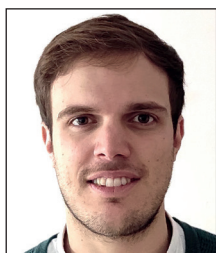
Universidad de Sevilla
Facultad de Comunicación
Departamento de Periodismo II
Avda. Américo Vespucio, s/n
41092 Sevilla, Spain
marggordillo@us.es



Marina Ramos-Serrano

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6871-9239>

Universidad de Sevilla
Facultad de Comunicación
Depto. de Com. Audiovisual y Publicidad
Avda. Américo Vespucio, s/n
41092 Sevilla, Spain
mramos@us.es



Rubén Rivas-de-Roca ✉

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5842-4533>

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos
Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación
Depto. de Comunicación y Sociología
Camino del Molino, 5
28942 Fuenlabrada (Madrid), Spain
ruben.rivasderoca@urjc.es

Abstract

The European Union has suffered several problems in recent years, which triggers a proactive action by its institutions to generate a united citizenry and awareness of the importance of the EU. In the field of higher education, the *European Strategy for Universities* born in 2019 aims to strengthen and developed a common university system. The *Erasmus* program has traditionally been identified as the main driver of integration, but the emergence of European universities may mark a new phase in the shaping of the *European Public Sphere (EPS)*. In this sense, social media are the key communication tool for higher education centers. The objective of this work is to examine the activity on social media of the 40 consortia of European Universities belonging to the first and second calls. First, the presence on the different social networks of these entities is analyzed to establish a map of the alliances, based on the number of social networks used, the volume of followers, the coordinating university and the year of the call. After identifying *Twitter* as the most used network, a content analysis is carried out on 12 variables of all the messages published by these consortia since their creation, with the aim of determining whether the content published on their *Twitter* accounts is professional in tone. The results reveal scant interactivity that does not take advantage of the potential of social networks. However, there is a certain influence of the national cultures in terms of use of digital platforms in the different countries that head each consortium, with Spain and France being rather remarkable in this aspect. Likewise, the advantage acquired by first-generation consortia boosts their greater impact. This leads to a reflection upon the true transnational dimension of the communication implemented by these universities.

Keywords

European Universities; European alliances; Institutional communication; Branding; Social media; Social networks; *Twitter*; Content analysis; *European Commission*; European public sphere; *Erasmus Plus*; European Union.



Funding

This research is part of the *European Chair* funded by the *European Education and Culture Executive Agency (Eacea)*, belonging to the *European Commission-Jean Monnet (Erasmus+)*, “Future of Europe Communication in times of Pandemic Disinformation” (Futeudispan) Ref.: 101083334-JMO-2022-Chair), located between 2022 and 2025 at *Carlos III University of Madrid (Spain)*.

Accountability

The content of this article is the sole responsibility of the authors, and the *Eacea* is not responsible for the use that may be made of the information disclosed herein.

1. Introduction

European Universities are a recent commitment of the *European Commission* within the *Erasmus Plus* programme to coordinate a new higher education area. According to the *European Strategy for Universities (European Commission, 2019)*, the aim is to create a strong university network that promotes citizen participation, social cohesion and a sense of belonging to the Union. In a context of ongoing crises and the rise of cultural Euroscepticism (**Treib, 2021**), which questions supranational integration processes on identity-based grounds, the document positions the university system as a vital agent for the interests of the EU.

Specifically, the initiative aims to support a total of 60 European Universities comprising more than 500 institutions by mid-2024. European Universities operate as consortia of higher education institutions spread across the countries that are part of the *Erasmus* area, and are therefore mainly funded by *Erasmus*, but also by *Horizon Europe* or the *Recovery and Resilience Mechanism*. They also respond to a request from European leaders at the *Gothenburg Summit* in Sweden in November 2017, which called for initiatives to strengthen strategic alliances in higher education.

The development of alliances is evidence of the proactive and pro-European policy implemented by EU institutions, with strong implications in the field of communication. This is visible in the massive use of social networks at an institutional level (**Vesnic-Alujevic, 2016**), as well as in the fact that the officials of these bodies recognise that they prioritise segmented communication campaigns aimed at young people (**Rivas-de-Roca; García-Gordillo, 2022a**), who constitute the population group most present in universities. After Brexit, the EU seems to want to move beyond the so-called “permissive consensus”, which consisted of a tacit acceptance of the European project (**Bee; Bozzini, 2010**), replacing it with a more robust support based on the generations that will play responsible roles in the future.

Following the resolution of the three calls (2019, 2020 and 2022), there are 44 European Universities comprising approximately 240 higher education institutions, both from capital cities and remote regions in 31 countries, including all EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway, Serbia and Turkey. These university consortia collaborate with over 1,300 partners ranging from NGOs to businesses to local and regional authorities. The potential synergies generated link with the four formal goals set by the European University Strategy:

- 1) to strengthen the dimension of the higher education system and its research;
- 2) to support universities as beacons of the European way of life;
- 3) to empower universities as players in the green challenge and the digital transition; and
- 4) to reinforce these institutions as drivers of the EU’s global and leadership role.

On the European continent, universities have undergone a profound transformation in the last 20 years, characterised by greater internationalisation and reputational competitiveness due to the proliferation of rankings (**De-Aguilera-Moya-no; Farias-Batlle; Baraybar-Fernández, 2010; Bustos-González, 2019**). Similarly, the growing concern for transparency in public spending has led universities to improve their communication policies in order to fulfil their third mission (**Montesinos et al., 2008**), that is, their commitment to society. This need makes it necessary to professionalise communication tasks, similar to what is happening at EU institutions.

University policy, but also the use of social networks by countries (**Newman et al., 2022**) or the degree of involvement in a potential European public discussion (**Hänska; Bauchowitz, 2019**), are determined by national and even local factors. Faced with this, initiatives such as the European Universities can spur a new type of integration, beyond the mere exchange of the *Erasmus* programme. In this context, this research seeks to explore these university spaces as autonomous institutions beyond their constituent entities, analysing their communication and capacity to influence public opinion. This is a pioneering approach to the communicative dimension of a recent transnational phenomenon, contributing to the state of the art. The aim is to shed light on the value of institutional communication in these publicly funded consortia.

Universities have undergone a profound transformation in the last 20 years, characterised by greater internationalisation and reputational competitiveness

2. Background

2.1. The mediatisation of the *European Public Sphere (EPS)*

At European level, the EU institutions have had a direct impact on the lives of European Union (EU) citizens for decades, which has led to a large number of discussions on the existence of a possible shared space for deliberation (Baisnée, 2007; Rivas-de-Roca; García-Gordillo, 2022b), known as the *European Public Sphere (EPS)*. Despite this, the literature coincides in highlighting the persistence of a communicative and democratic deficit surrounding the EU, which is perceived as a distant and bureaucratic entity (Koopmans; Statham, 2010; Frangonikolopoulos; Papadopoulou, 2021).

Traditionally, academia has focused on the role that the media might play in the *EPS* (Gripsrud; Weibull, 2010; Grill; Boomgaarden, 2017), illustrating the persistence of a predominantly national approach that continues to this day (Berry et al., 2021). However, the consolidation of digital platforms as political spaces (Casero-Ripollés, 2018), together with the personalisation and mediatisation of democratic processes (Amado, 2016), lead to a certain optimism that digital technologies will make it possible to achieve the *EPS*.

Authors such as Scharnow and Vogelgesang (2010) pointed out that information was not only key to promoting better knowledge of the EU, but that education should also play an important role. These academics referred to the *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*, which they argued would have a greater impact on countries with a longer history as member states. This approach did not prevent the *European Parliament* elections from remaining in the collective imagination as second-rank elections (Schneider, 2018), which saw a slight increase in turnout in 2019.

In a digitalised context, social networks have been the subject of profound debates and Europeanised phenomena, especially in the wake of the Eurozone crisis (Hänska; Bauchowitz, 2019; Císař; Weisskircher, 2021). These discussions have moved beyond the institutional arena, bringing the question of Europe into everyday affairs. However, the increased volume of mentions of the EU, both in the media and among the audience, does not necessarily imply a Europeanisation of public debates (Silva; Kartalis; Costa-Lobo, 2022). In fact, the literature still sometimes speaks of national spheres that can be oriented in a European way in their media-discursive plot (Von-Nordheim et al., 2021).

The findings are ambivalent, as other researchers point to the benefits of politicisation (De-Wilde; Leupold; Schmidtke, 2016), in the sense that political dissent and conflict are key to generating a sense of belonging to the EU. In any case, what is clear is that social media and digital platforms have reshaped the field of action of *European Communication*, which is occurring alongside increasing politicisation (Van-der-Brug; Gattermann; De-Vreese, 2022). This explains why EU institutions are working towards a Europeanisation of civil society, with a special focus on young people.

Institutional action now appeals directly to citizens, bypassing the filter of the press, although it is still very relevant in the articulation of public opinion (Nielsen; Ganter, 2018). In this sense, social networks enjoy interaction mechanisms that are linked to the notion of deliberative democracy that the *EPS* entails (Häussler, 2018). Faced with the secular absence of information on the EU in the national media (Goldberg; Brosius; De-Vreese, 2022), the EU is committed to Europeanising citizens, given that all inhabitants of the member states are potential members of this ideal space for debate.

2.2. Transnational European communication

The different crises experienced by the European project have led the EU to implement a new type of public communication, based on reconfiguring the idea of Europe (Papagiannas, 2017). Therefore, EU institutions are optimistic about the possibilities that digital public discussion can have for the European project. Citizen use of digital platforms would thus encourage the creation of the *EPS*, given that tools such as *Twitter* are an effective way of solving the problem of geographical distance from the EU (Tuñón Navarro; Carral, 2019). This conviction motivates the communication policy to occupy a privileged position in the EU organisational chart, with a special interest in social networks (Olsson; Ham-margård, 2016).

In today's pan-European communication, both traditional and digital media play a prominent role in the development of true accountability in European governance (Caiani; Guerra, 2017). The digital transformation has led to the emergence of new European transnational players, which have a certain capacity to set the media agenda (Bouza; Tuñón, 2018). This contrasts with the usual absence of a common communication strategy by European institutions (Tuñón; Bouza; Carral, 2019). Authors like Fazekas et al. (2021) report that most political players in Europe do not refer to EU issues to connect with their audiences, reflecting how the EU continues to play a secondary role in European politics.

In addition to the above issues, there are structural problems such as the lack of interest in the EU or the tendency for political activity on social media to be negative (Kim et al., 2021). All of these operate as conditioning factors that determine inclusivity and a true discursivity around the Union. Despite this, pan-European communication in the digital era also benefits from new low-cost instruments that make it possible to overcome the well-known communication deficit (Fazekas et al., 2021). Moreover, institutions seem to be increasingly focusing on citizens (Oleart, 2023), which is a contrast to their previous actions. It is therefore of particular interest to address the analysis of institutional communication in this digital environment.

“ The *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* has a greater impact on countries with a longer history as member states ”

2.3. Social networks as an institutional communicative element shaping public opinion

The aforementioned digitisation is one of the most significant challenges facing corporate and institutional communication as a whole (Almansa-Martínez; Fernández-Souto, 2020; Zeffass *et al.*, 2021). According to the European Communication Monitor, digitisation is the main reason for the rapid transformation of communication departments, consultancies and agencies.

Specifically, the phenomenon of social media has profoundly changed the way institutions communicate with their audiences (Roth-Cohen; Avidar, 2022). There is consensus on the interactive potential of these communication channels (Allagui; Breslow, 2016), which also contribute to strengthening engagement with audiences (Moreno; Fuentes-Lara; Khalil, 2018). At the same time, these technologies have allowed organisations, such as European institutions or universities, to communicate directly with their audiences without intermediaries (Sallot *et al.*, 2003; Wright; Hinson, 2017), although this communicative independence coexists with an empowerment of audiences (Navarro-Beltrá; García-Medina; Miquel-Segarra, 2020).

However, other research has shown that institutions are not taking advantage of the interactive possibilities of social networks (Kent, 2013) and that their use is more tactical than strategic (Moreno *et al.*, 2015). This coincides with professional reports that detect that professionals not only do not feel prepared, but also consider that their organisations are not committed to the paradigm shift (Zeffass *et al.*, 2021).

In this sense, social networks have become one of the main communication tools for universities to connect with internal and external audiences (Pringle; Fritz, 2019). In 2014, over 97% of Spanish universities had a *Twitter* account (Gómez-Calderón; Paniagua-Rojano, 2014). In fact, during the Covid-19 health crisis, universities mainly used *Twitter* to communicate with their audiences (Ferrer-Serrano; Latorre-Martínez; Lozano-Blasco, 2020). In this regard, it is important to select the right social networks based on their own interests and align them with their communication strategy to connect with their audiences (Peruta; Shields, 2017), with a growing use of *Instagram* being noticeable (Alcolea-Parra; Rodríguez-Barba; Núñez-Fernández, 2020).

Social networks are effective tools for achieving this connection and emotional engagement (Clark; Algoe; Green, 2018). For example, following social networks is generally related to a greater perception of the quality of the university by students, and, therefore, greater connection (Mostafa, 2015). Consequently, the correct planning of the institutional strategy of universities is essential to connect with different audiences, which is directly related to the importance that university governing bodies give to digital communication (García-García, 2018).

Together with the strategic planning of communication, the quality of the content published is key to achieving better interaction and, therefore, more followers on social networks (Lund, 2019). According to a recent study conducted in various geographical contexts, university publications on social networks are aimed at improving their institutional positioning and reputation (Capriotti; Losada-Díaz; Martínez-Gras, 2023), an instrumental sense also observed in more qualitative research with the communication managers of these institutions (Simancas-González; García-López, 2022).

In a changing context, European Universities are a new communicative phenomenon, with a plural and diverse audience, given that these consortia are made up of universities from different countries. Therefore, it is relevant to explore whether they are as institutionally active on social networks as their national counterparts. In view of the lack of studies on the subject that would allow us to draw hypotheses based on the literature, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. On which social networks are European Universities present?

RQ2. What is the volume of followers, as well as the information available on the profiles of these universities?

RQ3. How professional are their profiles on the preferred platform, in terms of original posts and regular updates?

3. Methodology

The main objective of this research is to make a first approximation to the social media presence of the 40 European Universities belonging to the first and second calls (see Appendix 1 with the full data), understood as consortia of conventional universities. This is the entire sample universe of these initiatives, excluding the four new universities approved in the resolution of the third call (27 July 2022), given that they have only just started and do not have a significant presence on the Internet. Moreover, and due to the exploratory nature of this research, two different stages have been established to achieve the secondary objectives.

In the first stage, the presence of the 40 European Universities on the different social networks has been analysed with the aim (RQ1) of drawing up a map of these alliances. This is a descriptive analysis taking into account the number of social networks used, the volume of followers, the coordinating university and the year of the call. From this first analysis, *Twitter* has been identified as the social network most used by the majority of European consortia. Of the 40 European universities, 37 have a presence on *Twitter*.

The second stage of the research focused on analysing the use of *Twitter* by the 37 university alliances, downloading all their messages through *Twitonomy* up to 9 October 2022. On the one hand, (RQ2) to analyse their presence on *Twitter*

based on the information of their profiles, the number of followers, the year the account was created. On the other hand, (RQ3) to find out whether European Universities use their *Twitter* accounts professionally, which has to do with the number of original messages, but also with the frequency. Both elements denote that social media activity is provided in a professional manner.

European Universities are a new communicative phenomenon, with a plural and diverse audience, given that these consortia are made up of universities from different countries

To answer the research questions, a quantitative methodology was used, applying the technique of content analysis to all tweets published by the 37 European consortia from the time of their creation up to 9 October 2022. Each of these universities start their activity on different dates, although they belong to the same call for European funds, which has led us to collect all messages in order to determine the sample universe of tweets. The collection and coding of the data was carried out between 18 September and 23 November 2022, using a content analysis form designed ad hoc based on **Medina-Aguerreberre, Medina and González-Pacanowski (2022)**.

Although the actual content of all the tweets was not analysed, 12 items that overlap with the nature of the messages were examined, grouped into three categories.

- The first part comprises a technical sheet composed of (1) the year the account was created and (2) the number of followers.
- Secondly, the presence of the different European consortia has been analysed based on the information contained in their *Twitter* profiles, namely (3) presence of the corporate logo, (4) use of hashtags, (5) link to the corporate pages, (6) full description of the consortium (for this point it has been taken into account whether the mission of the alliance is described), mention of the partners and the location, and finally (7) link to *Erasmus Plus*.
- The third part of the sheet corresponds to the tweets published during the period analysed. In this section, we have analysed (8) the total number of tweets from each of the European universities, (9) the number of tweets per day, (10) the percentage of original tweets, (11) the percentage of replies and (12) the percentage of retweets. The type of tweet provides insight into the degree of involvement in the production of original content and its response capacity. All these data are compared across alliances to provide an overview of their use of social networks.

Finally, as an exploratory qualitative analysis, the open artificial intelligence tool *Abbrevia.me*, which uses *ChatGPT* technology, has been used to analyse the image projected by a *Twitter* account to its users based on its content. This analysis has been conducted with the ten European University accounts with the highest number of followers. This approach to content was completed using the *Nvivo Release 1.7.1* program to generate word clouds with the most used terms in their publications (including mentions and hashtags) on each of the accounts, in order to determine the main topics and degree of interaction of the consortia.

4. Results

4.1. Presence of European Universities on social networks






Social media seems to be a common communication tool for European Universities. All the consortia that emerged from the *Commission's* first and second calls have social networks to address their communities, although the map they draw is uneven in different aspects (Table 1). The predominant social networks are *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *LinkedIn* and *YouTube*. Only one (*Arqus Alliance*) has *Spotify* and in almost all cases the social media profiles are linked on the homepage of their websites, with the exception of *AllianceYufe*.

From this first approximation, it can be deduced that the new European universities have considered social networks to be an essential space for publicising their activities and establishing a dialogue with their communities, at least in a formal way. Of these, *Twitter* stands out as the most used network, followed by *Instagram*, *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* (which coincide in the number of accounts) and, finally, *YouTube*.

The above platforms are the most popular among the general population, but it is worth noting that *Twitter* is a social network that stands out in terms of information. Furthermore, the data suggest that the frequency of social network use seems to vary between countries, with *Instagram* and *TikTok* being the most common among university-age young people (**Newman et al., 2022**). However, during the period under study, none of the European universities had *TikTok*.

If we analyse the number of networks that each consortium has according to the call to which they belong, we find the following data (Table 2).

Table 1. Distribution of social media use by consortia generation

Social network	First generation	Second generation	Total
	15 (all)	21 (except 3)	37/40
	10 (except 5)	18 (except 6)	28
	11 (except 4)	17 (except 7)	28
	10 (except 5)	21 (except 3)	31
	7 (except 8)	16 (except 8)	23

According to the information available, the second-generation consortia were committed from the outset to having a presence on social networks. The behaviour of the first-generation entities was more cautious, perhaps because in 2019 the European Universities initiative was at an early stage and there was still uncertainty as to how these new entities would materialise. In any case, most of them had profiles on three or more social networks, suggesting that they saw these platforms as a window of communication to their communities.

Following the ranking of the most used social networks, available in Table 1, presented below are the leading European Universities by number of followers on each of the platforms, following the localised order and incorporating descriptive information on their type of use. The coordinating university is of great interest, as its state affiliation may explain the social media activity of the alliances. In the case of *Twitter* (Table 3), the fact that it is the network with the largest number of consortia means that a content analysis is subsequently directed towards it, complementing the data presented here.

Table 2. Number of social networks used by first- and second-generation consortia

No. of social networks	First generation (2019)	Second generation (2020)	Total
5	3	15	18
4	6	3	9
3	3	5	8
2	2	0	2
1	1	1	2

Table 3. Main European Universities on *Twitter*

Acronym	Generation	Coordinating university	Country	N. of networks	<i>Twitter</i>	N. of followers
<i>UNA.Universitas</i>	1	X	X	4	@Una_Europa	3,322
<i>Civica</i>	1	<i>Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris</i>	France	2	@CIVICA_EU	2,713
<i>Civis</i>	1	X	X	4	@civis_eu	2,246
<i>ECIU</i>	1	<i>University of Twente</i>	Netherlands	3	@ECIUniversities	1,983
<i>AllianceYufe</i>	1	<i>Maastricht University</i>	Netherlands	1	@AllianceYufe	1,856
<i>Eutopia More</i>	1	<i>Universitat Pompeu Fabra</i>	Spain	5	@EutopiaUni	1,792
<i>Circle U.</i>	2	<i>University of Oslo</i>	Norway	3	@CircleU_eu	1,773
<i>1Core</i>	1	<i>Sorbonne University</i>	France	4	@4EUPlusAlliance	1,525
<i>Charm-Eight</i>	1	<i>Universitat Barcelona</i>	Spain	4	@charm_eu	1,514
<i>Arqus</i>	1	<i>Universidad de Granada</i>	Spain	5	@ArqusAlliance	1,248

Firstly, it is striking that two of the leading European universities on *Twitter* (*Una.Universitas* and *Civis*) do not state on their websites which institution is the coordinating institution, which denotes a certain lack of transparency, given that EU calls require this figure. Of the eight consortia with available information, three have Spanish coordinating universities, two French, two from the Netherlands and one from Norway. This shows some repetition in the countries that manage these profiles with the greatest impact.

Beyond the differences in the number of followers, which will be referred to in the following section, the data reveal that only two of the 10 alliances highlighted on *Twitter* have accounts on the five networks analysed. Four are present on four of these platforms, two on three, one on two and only one is exclusively dedicated to *Twitter*, from which it can be deduced that this network is not usually used solely, but rather accompanied by a presence on other channels. In this sense, the second most important space for the audience is *Facebook*.

Table 4. Main European Universities on *Facebook*

Acronym	Generation	Coordinator	Country	No. of networks	<i>Facebook</i>	Likes
<i>Arqus</i>	1	<i>Universidad de Granada</i>	Spain	5	Arqus Alliance	6,728
<i>Civis</i>	1	X	X	4	@Civis EuropeanUniversity	2,877
<i>1Core</i>	1	<i>Sorbonne University</i>	France	4	4EU+Alliance	1,400
<i>ECIU</i>	1	<i>University of Twente</i>	Netherlands	3	@eciuong	1,360
<i>EU-Conexus Plus</i>	1	<i>Rochelle Université</i>	France	5	@eu.conexus	1,293
<i>Eugloh 2.0</i>	1	<i>Université Paris-Saclay</i>	France	4	Eugloh - European University Alliance for Global Health	1,228
<i>Eutopia More</i>	1	<i>Universitat Pompeu Fabra</i>	Spain	5	@eutopiaalliance	801
<i>SEA-EU 2.0</i>	1	Universidad de Cádiz	Spain	2	European University of the Seas SEA-EU	783
<i>Eureca-PRO</i>	2	X	X	5	Eureca-Pro	719
<i>RUN-EU</i>	2	<i>Politécnico de Leiria</i>	Portugal	5	RUN - European University	693

In the case of *Facebook* (Table 4), there is a repeated lead for consortia created in the first call and which account for the majority of the list, in a finding that was also observed for *Twitter*. Specifically, only two European Universities from the second call rank in the top ten for *Facebook*, and they do so in the last two positions. The year of difference between alliances thus seems to determine the impact in terms of number of followers.

Another relevant fact is that half of the top ten European Universities have accounts on the five main social networks, while three have accounts on four platforms, one on three and one on two of them. Therefore, the use of *Facebook* is more often complemented by other social networks, with *Facebook* occupying a central position. For their part, the countries of origin of the coordinating universities are very similar to *Twitter*. Table 4 shows how Spain stands out with three, France with two, and the Netherlands and Portugal with one respectively. This predominance of Spain and France is even greater on *LinkedIn*.

Table 5. Main European Universities on *LinkedIn*

Acronym	Generation	Coordinator	Country	N. of networks	<i>LinkedIn</i>	N. of followers
Una.Universitas	1	X	X	4	Una Europa	3,032
Ulysseus	2	Universidad de Sevilla	Spain	5	Ulyseus European University	1,922
ECIU	1	University of Twente	Netherlands	3	ECIU	1,883
Eutopia More	1	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain	5	Eutopia European University	1,768
Eelisa	2	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	Spain	3	Eelisa European University	1,544
1Core	1	Sorbonne University	France	4	4EU+Alliance	1,470
EU-Conexus Plus	1	Rochelle Université	France	5	EU-Conexus	1,402
Arqus	1	Universidad de Granada	Spain	5	Arqus	1,314
Epicur-Shape-IT	1	University of Strasbourg	France	2	Epicur University Alliance	1,241
EUniWell	2	X	X	5	EUniWell - European University for Well-Being	1,190

According to the data available on *LinkedIn* (Table 5), first-generation universities still have a seven-to-three lead. However, the fact that some second-generation universities (*Ulysseus* and *Eelisa*) occupy leading positions in terms of volume of contacts is new. The cost of learning to position oneself on these networks is lower, at least for two alliances led by Spanish institutions.

It should be noted that five of the 10 have accounts on all the social networks analysed, again reflecting their complementary use. Moreover, as mentioned above, Spain (four), France (three) and the Netherlands (one) stand out by country, the latter through *ECIU*, which had a notable presence on *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*.

Table 6. Main European Universities on *Instagram*

Acronym	Generation	Coordinator	Country	No. of networks	<i>Instagram</i>	No. of followers
<i>Civis</i>	1	X	X	4	Civis - A European Civic University	2,952
1Core	1	Sorbonne University	France	4	4EUplus_alliance	1,844
<i>Forthem</i>	1	Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz	Germany	4	Forthem Alliance	1,830
Una.Universitas	1	X	X	4	Una Europa	1,703
Arqus	1	Universidad de Granada	Spain	5	arqusalliance	1,281
Eutopia More	1	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain	5	Eutopia - European University	1,151
EU-Conexus Plus	1	Rochelle Université	France	5	EU Conexus	1,065
<i>Eugloh 2.0</i>	1	Université Paris-Saclay	France	4	Eugloh	1,033
<i>Unita</i>	2	Università di Torino	Italy	5	Universitasmontium	1,028
<i>Charm-Eight</i>	1	Universitat de Barcelona	Spain	4	Charm.eu	900

As opposed to the lesser difficulty of consolidation on *LinkedIn* of the second call universities, the figures for *Instagram* (Table 6) show a great predominance of the oldest entities on this social network. In fact, only one European University is among the top 10 in 2020. Despite the dynamism that characterises this platform, the number of followers is very much determined by the trajectory of the account, that is, by the time elapsed since its creation.

On the other hand, five consortia have accounts on the five social networks and four have accounts on six of them, which may be related to the fact that it is considered a complementary network to the other networks for improving interaction with young people, but not a platform for informing the entire community. The usual reference countries (Spain and France, with three consortia) are joined by Germany and Portugal, with one respectively.

Table 7. Main European Universities on YouTube

Acronym	Generation	Coordinator	Country	N. of networks	YouTube	N. of followers
Arqus	1	Universidad de Granada	Spain	5	Arqus Alliance	593
Eureca-PRO	2	X	X	5	Eureca-PRO	307
Eutopia More	1	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain	5	Eutopia European University	267
RUN-EU	2	Politécnico de Leiria	Portugal	5	RUN – European University	267
Una.Universitas	1	X	X	4	Una Europa	209
NeurotechEU	2	Radboud University Nijmegen	Netherlands	5	NeurotechEU	172
EU-Conexus Plus	1	Rochelle Université	France	5	EU-Conexus European University	142
Ulysseus	2	Universidad de Sevilla	Spain	5	Ulysseus European University	141
Filmeu	2	Universidade Lusófona	Portugal	5	Filmeu - European University - Film and Media Arts	131
Civica	1	Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris	France	2	Civica, The European University of Social Sciences	126

Finally, with regard to YouTube (Table 7), the fact that the universities in the first and second calls for applications share the top ten positions equally is striking. In terms of the number of networks, eight of the ten have accounts on all of them, one has four and only one has two. This would confirm that, like Instagram, it is considered a complementary network to the rest of them, even more than it. In terms of countries, Spain stands out with three European University consortia, Portugal with two and France and the Netherlands with one.

The results show that there are several first-generation European Universities that once again occupy a privileged position on most social networks. Spain and France, two highly populated Member States with a long history of relevance to the EU, emerge as the home territories of the institutions with the highest impact on social networks. By platforms, LinkedIn and YouTube operate as spaces with a more permeable entry barrier, allowing the audience to be reached in less time, which may be of interest to universities joining in future calls.

4.2. Twitter as the preferred platform for dissemination

The value placed on Twitter by the vast majority of European Universities leads to a focus on this social network, in a context where EU institutions promote this type of direct digital communication. In fact, the funding granted for this initiative has a mandatory work package dedicated to communication. This sub-section is therefore structured as follows. Firstly, a description of the main elements used by the accounts is provided, as well as their impact on the number of followers. Next, an assessment is made of whether a professionalised action is performed on the basis of a content analysis, which compiles the data to provide calculations on the volume of daily tweets, percentages of own tweets, retweets and replies.

All European Universities have a corporate logo as their Twitter profile image, to which a link to the corporate pages of each consortium is added. The only exception is EU-Conexus, which does not have such a link. In contrast, there are several universities that do not provide a corporate description in their profile, in the sense of informing about the centres that make up the project and the mission of the project. Ten European universities, that is, a quarter of the sample, do not provide this information: 4EUPlusAlliance, Arqus Alliance, Civis, EDUC, Eutopia, Engage, EUniWell, EurecaPro, FilmEU and NeurotechEU.

For their part, the use of Twitter’s hypertextuality tools is limited, to the extent that only three of them connect to the accounts of the consortium members. This makes direct access to these universities impossible. Furthermore, only Enhance, EUniWell, FilmEU and Universeh have hashtags in their descriptions, while the link to other social networks can only be found in Eudres, which uses the Linktree tool to present its profiles on different platforms.

It is also striking that two European Universities (Civica and ECIU) refer to Erasmus Plus in their profile, which is the programme that funds this initiative, and another one (Charm Eight) refers to the European Commission, which is the institution behind the proposal.

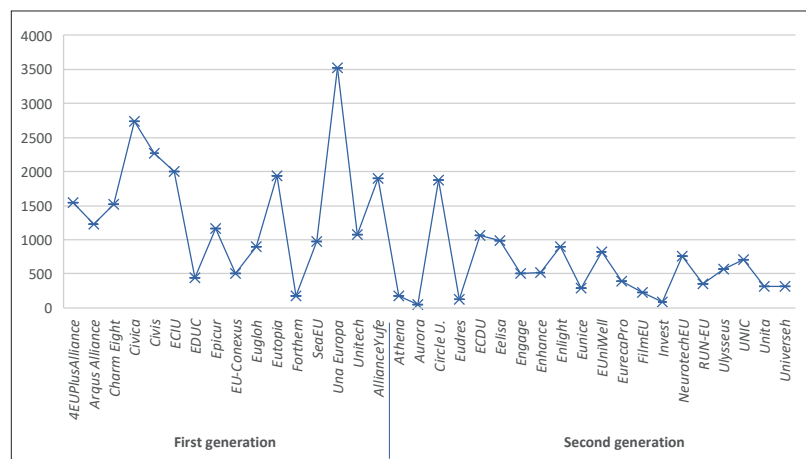


Figure 1. Number of followers of each consortia, distributed across generations.

With regard to the location of the account in their *Twitter* descriptions, 20 of the 37 do not indicate any location, 12 are generically located in Europe, two indicate countries but no city, and three are located in specific countries (Belgium, France and Germany), where their coordinating universities are from.

The number of followers again shows huge differences between first- and second-generation European Universities (Figure 1). Most of the latter do not reach 1,000 followers, the main exception being *Circle U.*, coordinated for the Norwegian *University of Oslo*. In contrast, there are several first-generation alliances with well over 1,000 followers. *Una.Europa*, *Charm Eight* and *Civica* are the highest volume cases in this area, with over 2,000 followers.

With regard to the production of messages, there is a very disparate volume between the different alliances, although a lower number of tweets published per day can be seen in the second-generation alliances (Table 8). Likewise, most of the universities that produce the most tweets correspond to those with a higher volume of followers. This is the case for *Civica* (1.66 tweets per day), *Civis* (1.2), *Eutopia* (1.09) and *Una.Europa* (1.05). However, the high number of tweets issued by second-generation universities with a low number of followers, such as *Ulyseus* (1.76), *ECDU* (1.13) and *Enhance* (1.12), is worth noting.

A high volume of production can be linked to the existence of a dedicated communication team. In this respect, another factor to consider is the volume of own tweets or replies, which imply a higher degree of work than merely retweeting. To this end, Table 9 shows the type of messages that prevail in each of the European universities, together with their percentage. Most universities concentrate their efforts on their own tweets, but it is not negligible that 10 of them do not reach 60% of their own tweets and that another 11 of them prioritise retweets.

According to the data collected, the alliances that stand out for a higher production of original tweets are *Eugloh* (93.1%), *EurecaPro* (91%), *Arqus Alliance* (88.7%) and *Film EU* (73.4%). On the contrary, the content of the *ECDU* (76.7%), *EDUC* (68.5%) and *ECIU* (60.7%) consortia is based on retweeting content from other accounts. Meanwhile, the alliances with the highest proportion of responses are *Eudres* (45.2%) and *Ulyseus* (41.1%). It should be noted that the average response rate of all consortia is 9.8%, a fact that demonstrates the unidirectional nature of the accounts. In fact, the profiles of *Eugloh*, *FilmEU* and *Invest* do not have any response tweets.

Table 8. Distribution of *Twitter* variables according to alliances

	Creation date	Number of tweets	Average tweets per day
<i>4EUPlusAlliance</i>	Feb-19	928	0.69
<i>Arqus Alliance</i>	Jun-19	971	0.79
<i>Charm Eight</i>	May-19	1,003	0.80
<i>Civica</i>	Nov-19	1,789	1.66
<i>Civis</i>	Oct-19	1,326	1.20
<i>ECIU</i>	Mar-15*	2,139	0.77
<i>EDUC</i>	Feb-19	235	0.17
<i>Epicur</i>	Jun-19	668	0.54
<i>EU-Conexus</i>	Jan-20	339	0.33
<i>Eugloh</i>	Apr-20	793	0.86
<i>Eutopia</i>	Dec-18	1,531	1.09
<i>Forthem</i>	May-21	511	0.97
<i>SeaEU</i>	Mar-20	625	0.65
<i>Una Europa</i>	Jul-18	1,648	1.05
<i>Unitech</i>	Oct-19	1,275	0.87
<i>AllianceYufe</i>	Feb-19	595	0.44
<i>Athena</i> (second generation)	Apr-21	143	0.26
<i>Aurora</i>	Sep-16*	765	0.34
<i>Circle U.</i>	Jul-19	752	0.63
<i>Eudres</i>	Mar-22	73	0.33
<i>ECDU</i>	Feb-19	1,529	1.13
<i>Eelisa</i>	Oct-20	611	0.83
<i>Engage</i>	Jun-20	218	0.25
<i>Enhance</i>	Oct-20	826	1.12
<i>Enlight</i>	Apr-20	229	0.25
<i>Eunice</i>	Jan-21	258	0.40
<i>EUniWell</i>	Apr-20	588	0.64
<i>EurecaPro</i>	Jul-20	111	0.13
<i>FilmEU</i>	Jul-20	273	0.32
<i>Invest</i>	Jun-21	102	0.20
<i>NeurotechEU</i>	Jul-20	119	0.14
<i>RUN-EU</i>	Aug-20	181	0.22
<i>Ulyseus</i>	Dec-20	1,192	1.76
<i>UNIC</i>	Apr-20	427	0.46
<i>Unita</i>	Nov-20	193	0.27
<i>Universeh</i>	Oct-20	166	0.22

The figures in **bold** refer to those accounts posting more than one tweet per day on average.

* *Twitter* accounts created prior to the European Universities call.

Table 9. Distribution of the type of tweets by consortium (%)

	European Universities
Predominance of own tweets	<i>Eugloh</i> (93.1), <i>EurecaPro</i> (91.0), <i>Arqus Alliance</i> (88.8), <i>FilmEU</i> (85.3), <i>NeurotechEU</i> (74.8), <i>EU-Conexus</i> (73.4), <i>Eunice</i> (72.5), <i>SeaEU</i> (70.9), <i>Eelisa</i> (67.9), <i>Engage</i> (66.5), <i>Unita</i> (61.6), <i>EUniWell</i> (60.7), <i>Epicur</i> (60.1), <i>Athena</i> (59.4), <i>Civis</i> (59.2), <i>Una Europa</i> (59.2), <i>Enlight</i> (58.9), <i>Aurora</i> (52.8), <i>Forthem</i> (51.6), <i>Civica</i> (51.6), <i>Charm Eight</i> (51.0), <i>AllianceYufe</i> (44.0), <i>Enhance</i> (40.4)
Predominance of responses	<i>Eudres</i> (45.2), <i>Ulyseus</i> (41.1)
Predominance of retweets	<i>ECDU</i> (76.7), <i>EDUC</i> (68.5), <i>ECIU</i> (60.7), <i>Eutopia</i> (58.7), <i>Circle U.</i> (58.3), <i>UNIC</i> (58.1), <i>Unitech</i> (56.0), <i>Invest</i> (55.8), <i>RUN-EU</i> (53.0), <i>Universeh</i> (52.4), <i>4EUPlusAlliance</i> (50.0)

On the other hand, Figure 2 shows the proportion of own content, retweets and replies, and their relationship with the number of followers. In this sense, *Una Europa*, the consortium with the highest number of followers, has a majority of original and own content (59.9% compared to 33.6%), with a response rate of 7.1%. In contrast, the European University with the lowest number of followers, *Aurora*, has a very similar percentage between original tweets (52.8%) and retweets (45.2%), and a response rate of 1.9%. Moreover, *EDUC* is the second with the second highest number of retweets and also one of those with the lowest volume of followers and messages published per day.

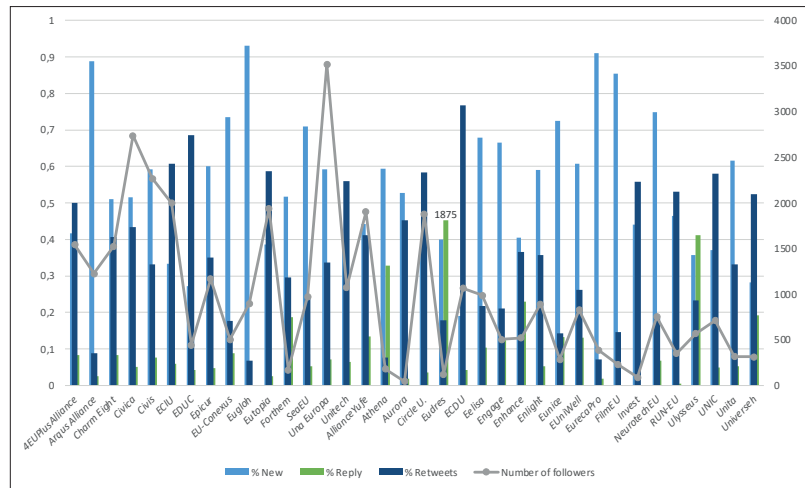


Figure 2. Distribution of own content, responses and retweets

It is important to be cautious when interpreting this data because there are consortia that combine a high percentage of original tweets and responses with a very low number of followers. This is the case with *Atenea* and *Eudres*. Similarly, *Circle U.* stands out for being the second-generation European University with the highest number of followers and the content of its account is mainly based on retweets (58.3%). On the contrary, *Ulyseus* has a high proportion of its own tweets and replies yet only has 570 followers.

The image projected by the ten most followed accounts of the European consortia, according to the platform *Abbrevia.me*, is described as follows.

Table 10. Description of the image projected by the 10 most followed accounts according to *Abbrevia.me*

University	Description
<i>Una Europa</i>	Projects an image of an academic organisation committed to diversity, inclusion and excellence in higher education in Europe. Its tweets cover a wide range of topics, from calls for proposals and research opportunities to university-related news and events. It also focuses on topics such as project management, the quality of higher education and the regulation of joint degrees in Europe. Overall, its tweets reflect an active organisation committed to the continuous improvement of higher education in Europe.
<i>Civica</i>	It projects an image of an academic organisation committed to cooperation and dialogue between European universities. In general, it talks about issues related to research, higher education, diversity, inclusion and sustainability. It also shares information about events and opportunities for students and academics in the <i>Civica</i> alliance.
<i>Civis</i>	It projects an image of an educational organisation committed to promoting learning opportunities for students and academics across Europe. In general, it talks about issues related to higher education, research, gender equality and global challenges. It also promotes online and face-to-face programmes and courses for students and academics from <i>Civis</i> member universities.
<i>ECIU</i>	It projects an image of an organisation committed to European-level university collaboration and innovation in education, research and development. In general, it talks about projects and events related to university cooperation, research, innovation and education in Europe. It also shares news and retweets about events and projects of other organisations related to education and research in Europe.
<i>AllianceYufe</i>	It projects the image of being an official account of the European university alliance <i>YUFE</i> , sharing information and news related to the European university initiative and its activities. In general, it talks about issues related to higher education, research, international collaboration and diversity in the university community. It also shares information about events and opportunities for students and academics.
<i>Eutopia</i>	It projects the image of a university committed to research and international collaboration. In general, it talks about issues related to higher education, research, science, culture and diversity. It also shares information about events and opportunities for students and academics.
<i>Circle U.</i>	It projects the image of an organisation that focuses on higher education and research, with a focus on diversity, inclusion and female empowerment. Its tweets include information about events, initiatives and training opportunities on topics such as global health, climate change, democracy and interdisciplinary research. It also shares retweets from other universities and organisations that share its values and goals.
<i>4EUPlusAlliance</i>	It posts mainly about events, projects and opportunities related to higher education and cooperation between European universities. It also shares information about online courses and master's programmes on topics such as the environment, entrepreneurship and sustainable development. Overall, the account projects an image of commitment to education and international collaboration.
<i>Charm Eight</i>	It projects the image of an academic organisation committed to sustainability and gender equality. In general, it talks about issues related to responsible research and innovation, collaboration between European universities, inclusive education and citizen engagement. It also shares information about events and learning opportunities in these areas.
<i>Arqus Alliance</i>	It projects an image of an academic and multidisciplinary organisation that promotes collaboration between European universities. In general, it talks about joint master's programmes, research opportunities, events and activities related to higher education and European culture. It also focuses on issues such as linguistic and cultural diversity, gender equality and the promotion of open science.

As can be seen from the descriptions of the artificial intelligence platform, the ten most followed European University profiles on *Twitter* are committed to the *EHEA*, and they do so in their publications, not only in terms of academic offerings, but also by reporting on interesting calls for proposals, scientific dissemination, events, culture, cooperation and gender issues.

This aspect is also evidenced in the word clouds obtained through the program *Nvivo* using the content of their publications.

Table 11. Word cloud of the 10 most-followed accounts according to the program *Nvivo*

4EUPlusAlliance	Arqus Alliance	Charm Eight	Circle U.

From the analysis of the terms most used by the top ten European universities (Table 11), it can be seen that self-referentiality is the general trend among the consortia. In other words, these universities use *Twitter* to make themselves known, not only by including themselves in the content, but also by generating hashtags with their name for monitoring purposes. There are also numerous mentions of the accounts of the universities forming the consortium, as well as allusions to the fundamental elements already described in Table 10, such as allusions to their students, research, sustainability, the *EHEA* and the concept of university.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Based on the descriptive compilation of the presence of European Universities on social networks and the content analysis of their activity on *Twitter* as a preferred network, this paper has tried to deepen the institutional communication of a new subject of higher education, called to channel a large part of the mobility resources in Europe over the coming years. European Universities are born out of the need to increase the impact of institutional collaboration on citizens, for which communication is essential. For this reason, the presence of these alliances on social networks was firstly analysed (RQ1).

The data show that these platforms are a widely used medium for institutional communication and are almost always linked from the consortium’s website. *Twitter* and *Instagram* are the most used platforms, making it possible to interpret that, on the one hand, priority is given to informative messages (*Twitter*) and, at the same time, use is made of a channel with a high penetration rate among the young population that forms the student body of these institutions (*Instagram*). The number of followers is extremely low for the communities they manage, and first-generation universities have a head start, with *LinkedIn*, *Instagram* and *YouTube* acting as complementary networks. Spain leads all rankings, followed by France, Portugal, the Netherlands and Italy. *Arqus Alliance*, led by the *University of Granada*, and *Eutopia*, led by *Universitat Pompeu Fabra*, are the only ones that stand out on the five platforms evaluated.

With regard to the activity developed on *Twitter* as the preferred social network of these European University consortia (RQ2), our research shows a scarce use of the interaction possibilities of this social network. Moreo-

“ Social networks are a common communication channel for European Universities, highlighting the use of *Twitter* and *Instagram* ”

“ The use of the interaction possibilities of *Twitter* is scarce, and the strategic use of this platform is punctual ”

ver, the descriptions could be much improved in terms of explaining the concept of the European University, its objectives or its members. First-generation alliances again show a clear superiority, visible in the number of followers. This figure does not reach 1,000 in most of the second-generation consortia.

“The institutional communication made is conditioned by the country of origin and the year of the call”

As a third contribution, with regard to content, some alliances demonstrate professionalised work (RQ3), but in general the first-generation initiatives produce more tweets and, specifically, those with more followers. The majority of the sample sends less than one tweet per day, with European universities of French and Spanish origin breaking this trend the most. Furthermore, a third of the sample gives more quantitative importance to retweets than to their own messages, implying that these institutional profiles serve as a sounding board for messages posted by others. The original use of *Twitter* appears to be ad hoc, being limited to a few European universities, which seem to be conditioned by elements such as national origin or seniority.

Moreover, with regard to the image projected by the content (RQ3), it can be considered, according to the exploratory analysis of the ten most followed accounts, that European Universities are committed to the *Higher Education Area (EHEA)* in their publications, to which they make reference in various aspects ranging from the educational offer to the dissemination of research results or events. It can also be considered that all of them make a communicative effort to promote themselves among their wide and dispersed communities by resorting to self-referencing through the tools enabled by *Twitter*: self-mentioning and hashtags. This would explain the excessive use of retweets by most of the European consortia analysed, which are forced to give visibility to the different events and activities of the universities comprising the consortium, but at the same time create an image of a common project.

The findings show that these universities are not so much “European”, but rather that the background of their coordinating university influences their institutional communication. Data from the *Digital News Report* illustrate the differences in the use of social networks by country (Newman et al., 2022). Spain stands out in the use of *Twitter* for both information and leisure purposes (32% of the population), followed by Italy and Sweden with 17%, and France and Portugal with 15%. However, reference is made to several countries where *Twitter* is residual, such as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. This may establish a relationship between the number of *Twitter* followers of European Universities and the cultures of use of this social network in the different countries leading each consortium.

Twitter remains the social network most used by university institutions, which is consistent with previous literature (Ferrer-Serrano; Latorre-Martínez; Lozano-Blasco, 2020). The low interactivity on this platform is also consistent with previous studies (Kent, 2013; Moreno et al., 2015; Zeffass et al., 2021). According to the analysis of the number of followers and the volume of tweets, strategic planning and quality of content are important for achieving a better relationship with followers (García-García, 2018; Lund, 2019). However, comparative data between first- and second-generation consortia show that long-term work is also defined as fundamental in gaining and maintaining a community.

With regard to the corporate culture of the coordinating university, which as discussed above may be connected to the country of origin, previous research on the *EPS* has suggested that the articulation of the *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* would have a greater reach in those countries with a long history of EU membership. This would help to understand why France and Spain are the most prominent in the field of European Universities, accompanied by other EU-15 member states, while Eastern European countries occupy a peripheral position.

A limitation of our work is that it does not consider the interrelationships generated by the communication flow of European Universities, as it does not analyse who is retweeted or how the alliances relate to each other and to other stakeholders. This study serves as a first approach to a recent phenomenon of the construction of supranational higher education entities, called to orchestrate the future of this field in Europe.

In a context of the survival of national communication spheres (Von-Nordheim et al., 2021), future research has the challenge of delving into the possible potential of this transnational communication, but also into the reservations that it may generate, for example, in terms of the extent to which local universities are involved in these initiatives. It would also be interesting to compare the results of the universities in such consortia with the European Universities themselves. These are still incipient projects, hence the need to investigate their impact in terms of awareness and involvement of members of the university community, especially young people, who are identified as a priority audience for the EU. The funding dedicated to this initiative needs to be traceable in terms of communication in order to ensure the involvement of its stakeholders.

6. References

Alcolea-Parra, María; Rodríguez-Barba, Dolores; Núñez-Fernández, Víctor (2020). “El uso corporativo de *Instagram* en las universidades privadas españolas. Estudio comparativo de 35 universidades”. *Ámbitos. Revista internacional de comunicación*, n. 47, pp. 109-134.
<https://doi.org/10.12795/ambitos.2020.i47.06>

- Allagui, Ilhem; Breslow, Harris** (2016). "Social media for public relations: Lessons from four effective cases". *Public relations review*, v. 42, n. 1, pp. 20-30.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.12.001>
- Almansa-Martínez, Ana; Fernández-Souto, Ana-Belén** (2020). "Professional public relations (PR) trends and challenges". *Profesional de la información*, v. 29, n. 3, e290303.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.may.03>
- Amado, Adriana** (2016). *Política pop: De líderes populistas a telepresidentes*. Buenos Aires: Ariel. ISBN: 978 987 3804366
- Baisnée, Olivier** (2007). "The European public sphere does not exist (at least it's worth wondering...)". *European journal of communication*, v. 22, n. 4, pp. 493-503.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323107083065>
- Bee, Cristiano; Bozzini, Emanuela** (2010). *Mapping the European public sphere: institutions, media and civil society*. Surrey: Ashgate. ISBN: 978 0 754673767
- Berry, Mike; Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin; García-Blanco, Iñaki; Bennett, Lucy; Cable, Joe** (2021). "British public service broadcasting, the EU and Brexit". *Journalism studies*, v. 22, n. 15, pp. 2082-2102.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1981154>
- Bouza-García, Luis; Tuñón, Jorge** (2018). "Personalización, distribución, impacto y recepción en Twitter del discurso de Macron ante el Parlamento Europeo el 17/04/18". *El profesional de la información*, v. 27, n. 6, pp. 1239-1247.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.nov.07>
- Bustos-González, Atilio** (2019). "Tránsito de universidad docente a universidad de investigación. ¿Un problema de información académica, de taxonomías o de rankings universitarios?". *El profesional de la información*, v. 28, n. 4, e280422.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2019.jul.22>
- Caiani, Manuela; Guerra, Simona** (2017). *Euroscepticism, democracy and the media: communicating Europe, contesting Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Capriotti, Paul; Losada-Díaz, José-Carlos; Martínez-Gras, Rodolfo** (2023). "Evaluating the content strategy developed by universities on social media". *Profesional de la información*, v. 32, n. 2, e320210.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2023.mar.10>
- Casero-Ripollés, Andreu** (2018). "Research on political information and social media: Key points and challenges for the future". *El profesional de la información*, v. 27, n. 5, pp. 964-974.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.sep.01>
- Císař, Ondřej; Weisskircher, Manès** (2021). "Left-wing social movements between strong European identities and the challenges of transnational activism: the case of DiEM25". In: Blokker, Paul (eds.). *Imagining Europe. Transnational contestation and civic populism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 33-57. ISBN: 978 3 030813680
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81369-7_2
- Clark, Jenna L.; Algoe, Sara B.; Green, Melanie C.** (2018). "Social network sites and well-being: the role of social connection". *Current directions in psychological science*, v. 27, n. 1, pp. 32-37.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417730833>
- De-Aguilera-Moyano, Miguel; Farias-Batlle, Pedro; Baraybar-Fernández, Antonio** (2010). "La comunicación universitaria. Modelos, tendencias y herramientas para una nueva relación con sus públicos". *Icono 14*, v. 8, n. 2, pp. 90-124.
<https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v8i2.248>
- De-Wilde, Pieter; Leupold, Anna; Schmidtke, Henning** (2016). "Introduction: the differentiated politicization of European governance". *West European politics*, v. 39, n. 1, pp. 3-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2015.1081505>
- European Commission** (2019). *Commission communication on a European strategy for universities*. Strasbourg: European Commission.
<https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>
- Fazekas, Zoltán; Popa, Sebastian-Adrian; Schmitt, Hermann; Barberá, Pablo; Theocharis, Yannis** (2021). "Elite-public interaction on Twitter: EU issue expansion in the campaign". *European journal of political research*, v. 60, n. 2, pp. 376-396.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12402>
- Ferrer-Serrano, Marta; Latorre-Martínez, María-Pilar; Lozano-Blasco, Raquel** (2020). "Universidades y comunicación. Papel de Twitter durante el inicio de la crisis sanitaria de la Covid-19". *Profesional de la información*, v. 29, n. 6, e290612.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.nov.12>

- Frangonikolopoulos, Christos A.; Papapadopoulou, Lambrini** (2021). "Greek correspondents and EU: organic critiques and proposed remedies to address EU's communication deficit". *Journalism practice*, v. 15, n. 8, pp. 1108-1128.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1772854>
- García-García, María** (2018). "Universidad y medios sociales. Gestión de la comunicación en la universidad española". *Prisma social*, n. 22, pp. 20-36.
<https://revistaprismasocial.es/article/view/2535>
- Goldberg, Andreas C.; Brosius, Anna; De-Vreese, Claes H.** (2022). "Policy responsibility in the multilevel EU structure - The (non-)effect of media reporting on citizens' responsibility attribution across four policy areas". *Journal of European integration*, v. 44, n. 3, pp. 381-409.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1863959>
- Gómez-Calderón, Bernardo J.; Paniagua-Rojano, Francisco-Javier** (2014). "Las universidades españolas en Twitter: mensajes, contenidos y públicos". *Historia y comunicación social*, n. 19, pp. 681-694.
https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_HICS.2014.v19.44994
- Grill, Christiane; Boomgaarden, Hajo** (2017). "A network perspective on mediated Europeanized public spheres: Assessing the degree of Europeanized media coverage in light of the 2014 European Parliament election". *European journal of communication*, v. 32, n. 6, pp. 568-582.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323117725971>
- Gripsrud, Jostein; Weibull, Lennart** (2010). *Media, markets & public spheres: European media at the crossroads*. Bristol: Intellect. ISBN: 978 1 841503059
- Hänksa, Max; Bauchowitz, Stefan** (2019). "Can social media facilitate a European public sphere? Transnational communication and the Europeanization of Twitter during the Eurozone crisis". *Social media + society*, v. 5, n. 3.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119854686>
- Häussler, Thomas** (2018). *The media and the public sphere: a deliberative model of democracy*. London: Routledge. ISBN: 978 0 367371692
- Kent, Michael L.** (2013). "Using social media dialogically: Public relations role in reviving democracy". *Public relations review*, v. 39, n. 4, pp. 337-345.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.024>
- Kim, Jin-Woo; Guess, Andrew; Nyhan, Brendan; Reifler, Jason** (2021). "The distorting prism of social media: how self-selection and exposure to incivility fuel online comment toxicity". *Journal of communication*, v. 71, n. 6, pp. 922-946.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqab034>
- Koopmans, Ruud; Statham, Paul** (eds.) (2010). *The making of a European public sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978 0 511761010
- Lund, Brady** (2019). "Universities engaging social media users: an investigation of quantitative relationships between universities' Facebook followers/interactions and university attributes". *Journal of marketing for higher education*, v. 29, n. 2, pp. 251-267.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2019.1641875>
- Medina-Aguerreberre, Pablo; Medina, Eva; González-Pacanowski, Toni** (2022). "Promoting health brands through social media. A quantitative analysis about the world's best cancer hospitals". *Communication & society*, v. 35, n. 4, pp. 165-184.
<https://doi.org/10.15581/003.35.4.165-184>
- Montesinos, Patricio; Carot, José-Miguel; Martínez, Juan-Miguel; Mora, Francisco** (2008). "Third mission ranking for world class universities: beyond teaching and research". *Higher education in Europe*, v. 33, n. 2-3, pp. 259-271.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720802254072>
- Moreno, Ángeles; Fuentes-Lara, Cristina; Khalil, Nadia** (2018). *Gendercom. Brechas y oportunidades de género en la profesión de gestión de la comunicación en España*. Madrid: Asociación de Directivos de Comunicación. ISBN: 978 84 0907 667 3
- Moreno, Ángeles; Navarro, Cristina; Tench, Ralf; Zerfass, Ansgar** (2015). "Does social media usage matter? An analysis of online practices and digital media perceptions of communication practitioners in Europe". *Public relations review*, v. 41, n. 2, pp. 242-253.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.12.006>
- Mostafa, Rania B.** (2015). "Engaging students via social media: is it worth the effort?". *Journal of marketing education*, v. 37, n. 3, pp. 144-159.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475315585825>

- Navarro-Beltrá, Marián; García-Medina, Irene; Miquel-Segarra, Susana** (2020). "Utilización de *Facebook* como canal de comunicación en el sector de la moda: una comparativa de su vertiente dialógica entre las marcas de moda rápida y de lujo". *Palabra clave*, v. 23, n. 3, e2335.
<https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2020.23.3.5>
- Newman, Nic; Fletcher, Richard; Robertson, Craig T.; Eddy, Kirsten; Nielsen, Rasmus-Kleis** (2022). *Reuters Institute digital news report 2022*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf
- Nielsen, Rasmus-Kleis; Ganter, Sarah-Anne** (2018). "Dealing with digital intermediaries: a case study of the relations between publishers and platforms". *New media & society*, v. 20, n. 4, pp. 1600-1617.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817701318>
- Oleart, Álvaro** (2023). "The political construction of the 'citizen turn' in the EU: disintermediation and depoliticisation in the Conference on the Future of Europe". *Journal of contemporary European studies*, first online.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2023.2177837>
- Olsson, Eva-Karin; Hammargård, Kajsa** (2016). "The rhetoric of the President of the European Commission: charismatic leader or neutral mediator?". *Journal of European public policy*, v. 23, n. 4, pp. 550-570.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1054298>
- Papagiannas, Stavros** (2017). *Rebranding Europe. Fundamentals for leadership communication*. Brussels: ASP Editions. ISBN: 978 9 057186202
- Peruta, Adam; Shields, Alison B.** (2017). "Social media in higher education: understanding how colleges and universities use *Facebook*". *Journal of marketing for higher education*, v. 27, n. 1, pp. 131-143.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2016.1212451>
- Pringle, James; Fritz, Samantha** (2019). "The university brand and social media: using data analytics to assess brand authenticity". *Journal of marketing for higher education*, v. 29, n. 1, pp. 19-44.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2018.1486345>
- Rivas-de-Roca, Rubén; García-Gordillo, Mar** (2022a). "Brussels will pay for everything. The shaping of the European public sphere before *NextGenerationEU*". *Profesional de la información*, v. 31, n. 3, e310301.
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2022.may.01>
- Rivas-de-Roca, Rubén; García-Gordillo, Mar** (2022b). "Understanding the European public sphere: a review of pending challenges in research". *European politics and society*, v. 23, n. 3, pp. 380-394.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2021.1884965>
- Roth-Cohen, Osnat; Avidar, Ruth** (2022). "A decade of social media in public relations research: A systematic review of published articles in 2010-2020". *Public relations review*, v. 48, n. 1, 102154,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102154>
- Sallot, Lynne M.; Lyon, Lisa J.; Acosta-Alzuru, Carolina; Ogata-Jones, Karyn** (2003). "From Aardvark to Zebra: A new millennium analysis of theory development in public relations academic journals". *Journal of public relations research*, v. 15, n. 1, pp. 27-90.
https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1501_2
- Scharkow, Michael; Vogelgesang, Jens** (2010). "Effects of domestic media use on European integration". *Communications*, v. 35, n. 1, pp. 73-91.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/comm.2010.004>
- Schneider, Christina J.** (2018). *The responsive union: national elections and European governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978 1 108589413
- Silva, Tiago; Kartalis, Yani; Costa-Lobo, Marina** (2022). "Highlighting supranational institutions? An automated analysis of EU politicisation (2002-2017)". *West European politics*, v. 45, n. 4, pp. 816-840.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.1910778>
- Simancas-González, Esther; García-López, Marcial** (2022). "La comunicación de las universidades públicas españolas: situación actual y nuevos desafíos". *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico*, v. 28, n. 1, pp. 217-226.
<https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.76011>
- Treib, Oliver** (2021). "Euroscepticism is here to stay: what cleavage theory can teach us about the 2019 European Parliament elections". *Journal of European public policy*, v. 28, n. 2, pp. 174-189.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1737881>
- Tuñón, Jorge; Bouza, Luis; Carral, Uxía** (2019). *Comunicación europea. ¿A quién doy like para interactuar con Europa?*. Madrid: Dykinson. ISBN: 978 84 9148 9771

Tuñón, Jorge; Carral, Uxía (2019). "Twitter como solución a la comunicación europea. Análisis comparado en Alemania, Reino Unido y España". *Revista latina de comunicación social*, v. 74, n. 63, pp. 1219-1234.

<https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2019-1380>

Van-der-Brug, Wouter; Gattermann, Katjana; De-Vreese, Claes H. (2022). "Electoral responses to the increased contestation over European integration. The European elections of 2019 and beyond". *European Union politics*, v. 23, n. 1, pp. 3-20.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165211036263>

Vesnic-Alujevic, Lucia (2016). "European elections and Facebook: Political advertising and deliberation?". In: Deželan, Tomaž; Vobič, Igor (eds.). *(R)evolutionizing political communication through social media*. Hershey, PA: Information science reference/IGI global, pp. 191-209. ISBN: 978 1 466698796

<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-9879-6.ch010>

Von-Nordheim, Gerret; Bettels-Schwabbauer, Tina; Di Salvo, Philip; Kennedy, Paula; Kiss, Kornélia R.; Kús, Michal; Pinto Martinho, Ana; Stefanikova, Sandra; Telo, Décio (2021). "The state of Europeanisation: between clash and convergence. A comparison of the media coverage of the 2019 European elections in seven countries". *Revista mediterránea de comunicación*, v. 12, n. 1, pp. 95-113.

<https://www.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM000021>

Wright, Donald K.; Hinson, Michelle-Drifka (2014). "An updated examination of social and emerging media use in public relations practice: A longitudinal analysis between 2006 and 2014". *The public relations journal*, v. 8, n. 2.

<https://instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014WrightHinson-1.pdf>

Wright, Donald K.; Hinson, Michelle Drifka (2017). "Tracking how social and other digital media are being used in public relations practice: A twelve-year study". *The public relations journal*, v. 11, n. 1.

<https://prjournal.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/PRJ-2017-Wright-Hinson-2-1.pdf>

Zerfass, Ansgar; Buhmann, Alexander; Tench, Ralph; Verčič, Dejan; Moreno, Ángeles (2021). *European Communication Monitor 2021. CommTech and digital infrastructure, video-conferencing, and future roles for communication professionals*. Brussels: Euprera/EACD. Berlin: Quadriga Media.

<https://www.communicationmonitor.eu/2021/05/21/ecm-european-communication-monitor-2021>

7. Annex. First and second generation European Universities

Acronym	Name of the European University	Gener.	Coordinator	Country	URL
4EUplusAlliance	4EU+European University Alliance	1	Sorbonne University	France	https://4euplus.eu/4EU-1.html
Arqus Alliance	Arqus European University	1	Universidad de Granada	Spain	https://www.arqus-alliance.eu
Charm Eight	Challenge-Driven, Accessible, Research-based and Mobile European University	1	Universitat de Barcelona	Spain	https://www.charm-eu.eu
Civica	The European University of Social Sciences	1	Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris	France	https://www.civica.eu
Civis	CIVIS- a European Civic University	1	X*	X	https://civis.eu/es
ECIU	ECIU University	1	University of Twente	Netherlands	https://www.eciu.org
EDUC	European Digital UniverCity	1	University of Potsdam	Germany	https://educalliance.eu
Epicur	European Partnership for an Innovative Campus Unifying Regions	1	University of Strasbourg	France	https://epicur.education
EU-Conexus	European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability	1	Rochelle Université	France	https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en
Eugloh	European University Alliance for Global Health	1	Université Paris-Saclay	France	https://www.eugloh.eu
Eutopia	European Universities Transforming to an Open Inclusive Academy	1	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain	https://eutopia-university.eu
Forthem	Fostering Outreach within European Regions, Transnational Higher Education and Mobility	1	Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz	Germany	https://www.forthem-alliance.eu
SeaEU	The European University of the Seas Alliance	1	Universidad de Cádiz	Spain	https://sea-eu.org/seaeu2
Una Europa	Una Europa	1	X	X	https://www.una-europa.eu
Unitech	Unite! University Network for Innovation, Technology and Engineering	1	Technical University of Darmstadt	Germany	https://www.unite-university.eu

Acronym	Name of the European University	Gener.	Coordinator	Country	URL
<i>AllianceYufe</i>	<i>Young Universities for the future of Europe Alliance</i>	1	<i>Maastricht University</i>	The Netherlands	https://yufe.eu
<i>Athena</i>	<i>Advanced Technology Higher Education Network Alliance</i>	2	<i>Politécnico do Porto</i>	Portugal	https://athenauni.eu
<i>Aurora</i>	<i>Aurora Alliance</i>	2	<i>University of Iceland</i>	Iceland	https://alliance.aurora-network.global
<i>Circle U.</i>	<i>Circle U. European University</i>	2	<i>University of Oslo</i>	Norway	https://www.circle-u.eu
<i>Eudres</i>	<i>Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions</i>	2	<i>ST. Pölten University</i>	Austria	https://eudres.eu
<i>ECDU</i>	<i>European Campus o City-Universities</i>	2	<i>University of Poitiers</i>	France	https://ec2u.eu
<i>Eelisa</i>	<i>European Engineering Learning Innovation and Science Alliance</i>	2	<i>Universidad Politécnica de Madrid</i>	Spain	https://eelisa.eu
<i>Engage</i>	<i>The European University engaged in societal change</i>	2	<i>University of Mannheim</i>	Germany	https://www.engageuniversity.eu
<i>Enhance</i>	<i>European Universities of Technology Alliance</i>	2	<i>Technische Universität Berlin</i>	Germany	https://enhanceuniversity.eu/es
<i>Enlight</i>	<i>European University Network to promote Equitable Quality of Live, Sustainability, and Global Engagement through Higher Education Transformation</i>	2	<i>University of Ghent & University of Bordeaux</i>	The Netherlands and France	https://enlight-eu.org
<i>ERUA</i>	<i>European Reforming University Alliance</i>	2	<i>Universität Konstanz</i>	Germany	https://erua-eui.eu
<i>Eunice</i>	<i>European University for Customised Education</i>	2	<i>Poznań University of Technology</i>	Poland	https://eunice-university.eu
<i>EUniWell</i>	<i>European University for Well-Being</i>	2	X	X	https://www.euniwell.eu
<i>EurecaPro</i>	<i>The European University Alliance on responsible Consumption and Production</i>	2	X	X	https://www.eurecapro.eu
<i>EuroTeq</i>	<i>EuroTeQ Engineering University</i>		<i>Technische Universität München</i>	Germany	https://euroteq.eurotech-universities.eu
<i>FilmEU</i>	<i>The European Universities Alliance for Film and Media Arts</i>	2	<i>Universidade Lusófona</i>	Portugal	https://www.filmeu.eu
<i>Invest</i>	<i>INnoVations of Regional Sustainability: European University Alliance</i>	2	X	X	https://www.invest-alliance.eu
<i>NeurotechEU</i>	<i>European University of Brain and Technology</i>	2	<i>Radboud University Nijmegen</i>	The Netherlands	https://theneurotech.eu
<i>RUN-EU</i>	<i>Regional University Network European University</i>	2	<i>Politécnico de Leiria</i>	Portugal	https://run-eu.eu
<i>T4E</i>	<i>Transform4Europe: The European University for Knowledge Entrepreneurs</i>	2	<i>Universität des Saarlandes</i>	Germany	http://www.transform4europe.eu
<i>Ulysseus</i>	<i>European University for the citizens of the future</i>	2	<i>Universidad de Sevilla</i>	Spain	https://ulysseus.eu
<i>UNIC</i>	<i>The European University of Post-Industrial Cities</i>	2	<i>Erasmus University Rotterdam</i>	The Netherlands	https://www.unic.eu/en
<i>Unita</i>	<i>Universitas Montium</i>	2	<i>Università di Torino</i>	Italy	https://univ-unita.eu/Sites/unita/en
<i>Universeh</i>	<i>European Space University of Earth and Humanity</i>	2	<i>University of Toulouse</i>	France	https://universeh.eu
<i>EU4Art**</i>	<i>Alliance for Common Fine Arts Curriculum</i>	1	X	X	https://eu4art.eu/#

*Universities marked with an X do not specify their coordinating institution.

**Officially recognized European University only between 2019 and 2022, as its EU funding has not been renewed.