
ESMH/STOA workshop

Virality and influencers in digital communication

Participants' booklet

WORKSHOP
ESMH | EUROPEAN SCIENCE-MEDIA HUB
STOA | PANEL FOR THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday 03.04.2019 – 09:30-12:00
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS
PAUL-HENRI SPAAK BUILDING – ROOM P3C050


European Parliament


#ViralityESMH
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Virality and influencers in digital communication



OPENING
Eva KAILI, MEP and STOA Chair

SPEAKERS
Giorgos MARKOPOULOS, Associate Professor at Department of Linguistics of School of Philosophy, University of Athens
Kristof VARGA, Social media research expert, Head of Bakamo Public
Diarmaid Mac MATHUNA, Communication expert on Digital campaigns and content strategy, Director at Indepics
Emmanuel RIVIERE, Chairman, Centre Kantar sur le Futur de l'Europe
Representatives from Facebook / Twitter

CLOSING
Paul RÜBIG, MEP and First Vice-Chair of STOA

MODERATOR
Philippe FELIX, Senior Online Communications Expert at Web-Minded

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

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3 April 2019, 9.30-12.00

Paul-Henri Spaak Building, Room P3C050

European Parliament, Brussels

Prepared by Eszter Fay, European Science-Media Hub (ESMH), Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA)

Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/en/events/upcoming/20190322WKS02361/european-science-media-hub-esmh-workshop>

Join the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag **#ViralityESMH** and by tweeting at **@EP_ScienceTech**

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1. Programme

09:30-09:45 *Welcome and introduction*

Eva Kaili, Member of the European Parliament, STOA Chair

09:45-10:45 **Panel 1 – ‘Science of Virality’**

‘Analysing text virality in social media’

George Markopoulos, Associate Professor at Department of Linguistics of School of Philosophy National and Kapodistrian, University of Athens

‘Virality on Social Media: Potentials and Pitfalls for Politics’

Michael Bossetta, Social Media Expert and Podcaster, Political and Data Scientist at the University of Copenhagen

‘What drives people to public conversation on-line? - Insight into people’s sharing behaviour’

Kristof Varga, (former) Director, Public Division at Bakamo.Social

“Questions & Answers”

10:45-11:45 **Panel 2 – ‘Practice of Virality’**

‘From theory to practice’

Diarmaid Mac Mathuna, Communication Expert on Digital campaigns and content strategy, Director at Indiepics

‘Gilets jaunes, from social networks to the streets’

Emmanuel Rivi re, Chairman, Centre Kantar sur le Futur de l’Europe

‘Facebook as a tool to convey more effectively your message to the outside world’

Meg Chang, Public policy Manager at Facebook

“Questions & Answers”

11:45-12:00 *Closing remarks*

Paul R big, Member of the European Parliament, STOA First Vice-Chair

Moderator: **Philippe F lix**, Senior Online Communications Expert at Web-Minded

2. Introduction

At the time of social media, influencers and algorithm-users may have an important role in influencing opinion that classical (written and electronic) media used to have in the past. In the current crisis of representative democracy and growing perceived distance between the elite and the public, promoting participation in European public policy is a bigger stake than ever. Using social media, as a new type of stakeholder dialogue and awareness raising tool is crucial not only to fight against disinformation but also to exercise positive communication, to promote evidence-based decision-making and to encourage the vote exercise.

Upon this basis, it is essential to explore and study the way the viral content and influencers' techniques work and to bring scientists, policy makers and communication experts to exchange and debate on the topic. In the view of European elections, it is important to investigate how activism and key messages work online to motivate and attract people also assessing their political impact. This is particularly relevant in the current European social and political context.

This workshop organised by the European Science-Media Hub (ESMH) of the European Parliament is focusing on the role of using modern technologies by the so-called 'influencers', in order to increase the number of their 'followers'. It is looking into how technologies can carry and amplify messages, becoming 'viral', and the type of communication used. It is exploring the issue of the so-called 'eco-chamber effect' in communication, within modern societies.

Besides the technological aspects, the workshop is also involving social sciences' considerations to deal with the psychological aspects of 'viral media communication' and its social impact, with special attention to political influence, e.g. the 'gilets jaunes' movement. The workshop will also explore the potential of social media listening methodology, going beyond keywords and sentiment, and looking at the full social discourse, which helps to understand the broad themes that attract and motivate people to join the conversation and gives insight into their behaviour.

The event involves the participation of various experts in the fields of communication technologies and social sciences, discussing the 'Science of Virality' and includes communication practitioners and social media representatives in a session on the 'Practice of Virality'. The workshop will be moderated by a senior online communications expert.

The event is taking place on 3rd April 2019, just fifty days before the next European elections. It can be also useful as an occasion to reflect, exchange and debate on the topic, especially among Members of the Parliament. It can help to better understand how the European message can be more effectively conveyed. In fact, 'influencers' and 'viral contents' can be a threat, a challenge, but also an opportunity to pass various messages. The European Science-Media Hub of the European Parliament, in its role of a promoter of science communication and evidence-informed decision-making, can be the perfect mean for achieving the purpose of better informing the Members of the Parliament and any other related and interested actor about the topic.

The subject is also relevant in the framework of the current discussions on the role of new media in relation to big data, analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), such as those taking place in the context of the [European Parliament resolution](#) of 12 February 2019 on a comprehensive European industrial policy on artificial intelligence and robotics (Ref. 2018/2088(INI)). It also bears on a number of ongoing STOA studies, especially those on algorithmic transparency and accountability,

polarisation and the use of technology in political campaigns, and regulating disinformation with artificial intelligence.

After the workshop, the ESMH will publish an event report including interviews with the speakers and summarising the discussion.

Follow [this workshop](#) online and join the debate via [Twitter](#): **#ViralityESMH** and by tweeting at **@EP_ScienceTech**

To keep up to date with other ESMH activities, follow our [website](#), the [STOA website](#), the [EPRS blog](#), and [Think Tank](#) pages.

3. Speakers' biographies

3.1. Eva KAILI, MEP and STOA Chair



Eva Kaili is Member of the European Parliament (2014-2019), head of the Greek S&D Delegation (PASOK/Elia) in the European Parliament, STOA Chair and ITRE representative on the STOA Panel.

Eva Kaili was elected twice to the Greek national parliament (2007-2012) with the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). She holds a bachelor degree in Architecture and Civil Engineering, and has done postgraduate studies in European Politics. Currently, she is conducting her PhD in International Political Economy. In the European elections of 2014, Ms Kaili was elected, ranked-first, with the political scheme of 'Elia', and she is a Member of the European Socialists and Democrats (S&D).

In her capacity as STOA Chair she has been working intensively on promoting innovation as a driving force of the establishment of the European Digital Single Market. She has been particularly active in the fields of blockchain technology, m/eHealth, big data, fintech and cybersecurity and has been the rapporteur of the ITRE opinion on the EFSI 2 file.

Eva Kaili chairs the Delegation for relations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (DNAT), and is a member of the Committee Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). She is also a substitute member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) and of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), and a member of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE).

3.2. Paul RÜBIG, MEP and STOA First Vice-Chair



Paul Rübzig was elected as the STOA Chair for the first half of the European Parliament's 8th legislature and as First Vice-Chair for the second half of the 8th legislature.

Previously, he served as STOA Chair from 2009 to 2012 and as First Vice-Chair from 2012 to 2014.

Born in Northern Austria, Paul Rübzig has been a member of the European Parliament since 1996 and belongs to the European People's Party (EPP). He is the owner of an Austrian blacksmith company and has a degree in Business Administration, Marketing and Production Engineering from the University of Linz, Upper Austria. He is married and has two children.

Paul Rübzig is a full member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and of the Committee on Budgets. He is Vice-Chair of the Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula and substitute member of the Delegation for relations with Switzerland, Norway and of the EU-Iceland Joint Parliamentary Committee.

He is also a substitute member of the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Parliamentary Committee. Furthermore, Paul Rübzig is a substitute member in the Committee on Development. Paul Rübzig is very active in the field of the small-scale business promotion.

He is president of SME Global, a working group of the International Democrat Union (IDU), whose objective it is to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and to improve their business environment.

3.3. Professor George MARKOPOULOS, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens



George Markopoulos is Associate Professor of Computational Linguistics at the Department of Linguistics and Director of the Phonetics and Computational Linguistics Laboratory at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, where he teaches and conducts research since 1993. He specializes in the computational processing of linguistic data, corpus design and annotation, and text mining and information retrieval.

He graduated from the Department of German Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in 1988 and continued his postgraduate studies in General Linguistics and Computational Linguistics at the University of Salzburg and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in 1992. He joined the Department of Linguistics as a postgraduate teaching and research assistant in 1993 and finished his PhD at the same Department in 1998.

He has also worked as research fellow, for three years (1998-2001), at the Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP). His research activities include participation in 3 European and 5 national research programs. His most recent activity includes the participation in the THALES Excellence Program “Levels of impairment in Greek Aphasia: Relationship with Processing Deficits, Brain Region and Therapeutic implications” (2013-2016), as research team coordinator for the design and annotation of the Greek Corpus of Aphasic Discourse.

3.4. Michael BOSSETTA, University of Copenhagen



Michael Bossetta is a political and data scientist at the University of Copenhagen. His research examines how politicians and citizens use social media during elections. In particular, he is interested in how the technical design of platforms influences campaigning. Michael has also conducted studies on Euroscepticism, populism, and Russian disinformation. He produces and hosts the Social Media and Politics podcast, which is available for free on any podcast app.

3.5. Kristof VARGA, (former) Bakamo Public



Kristof Varga is a social media research expert and the former head of Bakamo Public, a social media insight research company dedicated to serve the not for profit and public sectors. Kristof has two decades of experience in research, international development, philanthropy and government in elected and appointed positions. At the Open Society Foundations he assisted democratic decentralisation in the former Soviet Union, protected communities in Peru and Indonesia from the “local resource curse” and created a training network to educate NGO leaders in research based advocacy in West Africa. Kristof was twice elected to the Budapest City Council where he focused on budgeting, arts and culture, EU integration and – as the Information Commissioner - developed and implemented the first intelligent city program for the capital. He was research director for DEMOS Hungary, a progressive think tank. In the early 90s Kristof directed national election campaigns for the Hungarian liberal party. Kristof holds MAs in public policy (Johns Hopkins University), and psychology (Eötvös Loránd University).

3.6. Diarmaid MAC MATHÚNA, indiepics



Diarmaid has over 15 years of experience in marketing and communications in Ireland and across the EU. Named a Top 30 Business Tweeter by the Sunday Independent, he is passionate about combatting disinformation online.

Through audience-focused content strategy and creative messaging he has successfully implemented communications and marketing campaigns that engage diverse target audiences with factual information.

3.7. Philippe FELIX, Web-Minded



Philippe Félix is a senior Digital Communications Consultant with 25 years of experience in advising European institutions, national governments, businesses and non-profit organisations to exploit digital transformation and to provide citizens with powerful means of information and interaction.

During the last few years, Philippe has collaborated with most of the Brussels-based online communication agencies – Tipik, ICF Next, ESN, Emakina, Cecoforma, Gopacom, Pracsis... - helping them to develop and implement communication strategies with a special focus on digital channels. As an information architect, Philippe also designs user-centric digital ecosystems based on the web, social media and mobile applications.

Philippe is currently very involved in the *Next Generation Internet* project, a European initiative aiming at shaping, designing and implementing a more human-centric Internet that respects societal values, privacy, participation and diversity, and offers new functionalities to support people's real needs while addressing global sustainability challenges.

Among his most recent achievements, Philippe worked for the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel), advising it on its communication strategy towards third countries. He also developed, on behalf of DG TRADE, DG GROW and DG ENTR, an online collaborative platform enabling European businesses to better perform in Asia.

Finally, he is also a well-regarded trainer and speaker. He recently provided trainings to DG COMM, EDICS and EESC civil servants on how to improve their online communication towards their target audiences.

Philippe holds a Master's Degree in Marketing and Advertising; he is the former General Manager of Paradigm S.A. (subsidiary of Deloitte & Touche), a reputed e-business consulting firm.

3.8. Emmanuel RIVIERE, Kantar Public France



A graduate of Sciences-Po Paris, Emmanuel began his career at CSA in 1992. After a stint at Louis Harris, he became head of the Research and Surveys Department of the Government Information Service in 1999 and then joined TNS Sofres in 2005 as Director of the Political Department. Since 2016, he has been CEO of Kantar Public France and President of the Kantar Centre on the Future of Europe.

He is co-author with Nicolas Hubé of "Should we believe polls? "(2008, Editions Prométhée), and has contributed to various collective works: "Étudier l'opinion" (dir. Tchernia / Marc, 2018), "La France Blessée" (dir. Miquet-Marty / Gattolin, 2003), "La Démocratie à l'épreuve" (dir. Sniderman / Grunberg / Mayer, 2000), and regularly comments on current political issues on different media.

He teaches at the Master's degree in Political and Social Communication in Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), as well as at Science Po.

4. About STOA

4.1. Mission

The Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) forms an integral part of the structure of the European Parliament. Launched in 1987, STOA is tasked with identifying and independently assessing the impact of new and emerging science and technologies.

The goal of its work is to assist, with independent information, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in developing options for long-term, strategic policy-making.

The STOA Panel

The STOA Panel consists of 25 MEPs nominated from the nine permanent parliamentary committees: AGRI (Agriculture & Rural Development), CULT (Culture & Education), EMPL (Employment & Social Affairs), ENVI (Environment, Public Health & Food Safety), IMCO (Internal Market & Consumer Protection), ITRE (Industry, Research & Energy), JURI (Legal Affairs), LIBE (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs) and TRAN (Transport & Tourism).

Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO MEP is the European Parliament Vice-President responsible for STOA for the second half of the 8th legislature. The STOA Chair for the second half of the 8th legislature is Eva KAILI with Paul RÜBIG and Evžen TOŠENOVSKÝ elected as 1st and 2nd Vice-Chairs respectively.

The STOA approach

STOA fulfils its mission primarily by carrying out science-based projects. Whilst undertaking these projects, STOA assesses the widest possible range of options to support evidence-based policy decisions. A typical project investigates the impacts of both existing and emerging technology options and presents these in the form of studies and options briefs. These are publicly available for download via the STOA website: www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/.

Some of STOA's projects explore the long-term impacts of future techno-scientific trends, with the aim to support MEPs in anticipating the consequences of developments in science. Alongside its production of 'hard information', STOA communicates its findings to the European Parliament by organising public events throughout the year. STOA also runs the MEP-Scientist Pairing Scheme aimed at promoting mutual understanding and facilitating the establishment of lasting links between the scientific and policy-making communities.

Focus areas

STOA activities and products are varied and are designed to cover as wide a range of scientific and technological topics as possible, such as nano-safety, e-Democracy, bio-engineering, assistive technologies for people with disabilities, waste management, cybersecurity, smart energy grids, responsible research & innovation, sustainable agriculture and health.

They are grouped in five broad focus areas: eco-efficient transport and modern energy solutions; sustainable management of natural resources; potential and challenges of the Internet; health and life sciences; science policy, communication and global networking.

ESMH

The European Science-Media Hub (ESMH), operating under the political responsibility of the STOA Panel, is a platform for dialogue between scientists, politicians and the media promoting evidence-based information for citizens.

The ESMH facilitates knowledge sharing between the European Parliament, the scientific community and the media by creating a network among policy-makers, scientists and media involving science, academia, educational and research entities, professional associations of journalists and scientists.

The ESMH organises workshops and journalist trainings on current technological developments.

Via media monitoring tools, the ESMH follows the most popular topics in the field of science and technology on different platforms including science magazines, newspapers and social media.

The ESMH makes information available to journalists and citizens about new scientific developments and other science and technology topics that attract media attention for promoting information based on evidence.

The ESMH publishes on [its website](#) articles written in collaboration with science journalists and offer the opinion of one or more scientists. The articles are accompanied by a selection of links to related information, with a focus on European research and knowledge in the field.

4.2. STOA Bureau



Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO
(EPP, ES)
EP Vice-President responsible for STOA

Eva KAILI (S&D, EL)
Chair of STOA

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
(ITRE)



Paul RÜBIG (EPP, AT)
First Vice-Chair of STOA

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
(ITRE)

Evžen TOŠENOVSKÝ (ECR, CZ)
Second Vice-Chair of STOA

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
(ITRE)



4.3. STOA Panel members

 Tiziana BEGHIN (EFDD, IT) <i>EMPL Committee</i>	 Michał BONI (EPP, PL) <i>LIBE Committee</i>
Renata BRIANO (S&D, IT) <i>ENVI Committee</i> 	Carlos COELHO (EPP, PT) <i>IMCO Committee</i> 
 Mady DELVAUX (S&D, LU) <i>JURI Committee</i>	 Christian EHLER (EPP, DE) <i>ITRE Committee</i>
Maria Teresa GIMÉNEZ BARBAT (ADLE, ES) <i>CULT Committee</i> 	Andrzej GRZYB (EPP, PL) <i>ENVI Committee</i> 
 Danuta JAZŁOWIECKA (EPP, PL) <i>EMPL Committee</i>	 Jan KELLER (S&D, CZ) <i>EMPL Committee</i>

Bogusław LIBERADZKI (S&D, PL) TRAN Committee 	Anthea McINTYRE (ECR, UK) AGRI Committee 
 Momchil NEKOV (S&D, BG) AGRI Committee	 Marijana PETIR (EPP, HR) AGRI Committee
Michèle RIVASI (Greens/EFA, FR) ITRE Committee 	Virginie ROZIERE (S&D, FR) IMCO Committee 
 Claudia SCHMIDT (EPP, AT) TRAN Committee	 Kay SWINBURNE (ECR, UK) ENVI Committee
Neoklis SYLIKOTIS (GUE/NGL, CY) ITRE Committee 	Anneleen VAN BOSSUYT (ECR, BE) IMCO Committee 
 Kosma ZŁOTOWSKI (ECR, PL) TRAN Committee	Parliamentary Committees: AGRI: Agriculture and Rural Development CULT: Culture and Education EMPL: Employment and Social Affairs ENVI: Environment, Public Health and Food Safety IMCO: Internal Market and Consumer Protection ITRE: Industry, Research and Energy JURI: Legal Affairs TRAN: Transport and Tourism

4.4. STOA Administration

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