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On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische  
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pledge that I have neither given nor received  
unauthorized assistance on it.

*feni is Jelland*



## ***I. ABSTRACT***

In recent years, the European Union has become more than just a trade union. It tries to position itself continuously as a global player. However, to be perceived as an active global player, it must work on its positive image through public diplomacy. Part of this public diplomacy is digital diplomacy, which becomes increasingly important within international relations. Thus, this work deals with the question: To what extent does the European Union promote its positive image as a global actor in its digital diplomacy on the example of environmental issues? Therefore, the Twitter profiles of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and the Council of the EU are explored with a modified form of the critical discourse analysis. The research showed that the institutions do not act in coherence to the outside and that each institution seems to promote a different positive image.

## ***II. ABSTRACT DEUTSCH***

Die Europäische Union hat sich in den letzten Jahren zu mehr als NUR einer reinen Wirtschaftsunion gewandelt. Sie versucht sich als globaler Akteur fortwährend zu positionieren. Damit sie jedoch als vollständiger globaler Akteur wahrgenommen wird, muss sie an ihrem positiven Image, mit Hilfe von öffentlicher Diplomatie, arbeiten. Teil dieser öffentlichen Diplomatie ist die digitale Diplomatie, welche innerhalb internationaler Beziehungen immer mehr an Bedeutung gewinnt. Diese Arbeit behandelt die Frage: Inwiefern bewirbt die Europäische Union ihr positives Image als globaler Akteur, in seiner digitalen Diplomatie, am Beispiel von Umweltthemen? Um diese Forschungsfrage bestmöglich zu beantworten, werden die Twitter Profile des Europäischen Parlaments, der Europäischen Kommission, des Europäischen Rates und dem Rat der EU mit einer abgeänderten Form der kritischen Diskursanalyse erforscht. Die Forschung zeigte auf, dass die unterschiedlichen Institutionen nicht geschlossen nach außen agieren und dadurch unterschiedliche Schwerpunkte im Bezug des positiven Images kommuniziert werden.



**'Joining all our cultures together to achieve our shared goals  
and serve our common interests is a daily challenge, but it is also  
our greatest strength: diversity is what makes us strong.'**

Federica Mogherini 2016



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## ***VI. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS***

Brexit	The planned exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union.
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
Coreper	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DG	Directorate-General
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG CA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
ECHO	Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFP	European Foreign Policy
EU	European Union
FVP	First Vice President
MEP	Members of the European Parliament
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



## ***VII. LIST OF HASHTAG AND TAG ABBREVIATIONS***

#agrifish	Agriculture and Fisheries Council configuration
#deepeningEMU	deepening a fairer economic and monetary union
@DSMeu	Digital Single Market EU
#EUCO	European Council
@eucopresident	President of the European Council (Donald Tusk)
@eu_eeas	European External Action Service (EEAS)
@eu_echo	Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO)
@eu_env	EU Environment
@eu_near	European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
@europeaid	International Cooperation and Development – EuropeAid
@EU_Growth	Internal Market of the EU: Market, Industry & Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
#EUProtects	part of the priority: justice and fundamental rights by the EC
#GAC	General Affairs Council
#GHG	Greenhouse gas
#MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
#SustDev	Sustainable Development
@UN	United Nations
@ro2019eu	Romanian Presidency of the European Council





## **VIII. DEFINITIONS**

Consilium                      European Council and Council of the European Union summarized

Followers                      accounts on social media which follow your account

Followings                      people you follow on social media

Hashtag (#)                      turns words on social media into links, respectively turns it into a searchable term. It is usually used to mark the post with a specific topic.

Snap                              a short-living post on Snapchat. It deletes itself within 24 hours. As direct message, it can be viewed only max. twice.

Tag (@)                              whenever you want to mention a profile – this account then gets notified.

Tweet                              a post on Twitter that is limited to 280 characters.

Tweeting                              publishing a post on Twitter

Retweet                              republished Tweet on Twitter – either of someone else or from your very own account

Retweeting                              the doing of republishing



## 1. INTRODUCTION

***'The EU will enhance its strategic communications, investing in and joining up public diplomacy across different fields, in order to connect EU foreign policy with citizens and better communicate it to our partners. (...) We will continue fostering an open and inquiring media environment within and beyond the EU, also working with local players and through social media'.***

(European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 26)

Over the decades, the European Union became more than just a trade union, which was trying to maintain peace within Europe. In fact, it became one of the most important global players and has established a vital international role. The European Union is not just a crucial geographical region but also a crucial element of modern international life (Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker 2017, 19). As a supranational organization and global player, the European Union needs sufficient policies in all areas: environment, trade, security and foreign policy, and so forth. Its policies, especially its foreign and security policy, is known as based on diplomacy, and being in compliance with international law in order to maintain cooperation with other key players throughout the globe.

Due to new challenges occurring worldwide – internal and external challenges such as climate change, terrorism, cyber and energy security – new strategies such as the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy were developed and implemented in 2016. The Global Strategy even contains a new form of public diplomacy in this very plan – namely, digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy put simply is *'the use of social media for diplomacy purposes'* (Bjola and Holmes, Digital diplomacy: theory and practice 2015, i). This rather new tool of foreign policy helps to position the EU's policy to domestic and foreign audiences (Adesina 2017, 1). This new field of public diplomacy brings new challenges for the international relations scholars but also promising new aspects for diplomacy itself. Also, new aspects are what the European Union needs, especially after the British referendum, also known as Brexit. More than ever, a strong Union that *'thinks strategically, shares a vision and acts together'* (Mogherini 2016, 3) is needed. In order to mirror *this* strong Union, the European Union may not only



act untied but needs to fulfil the expectation of a global actor to its international partners, too (Mogherini 2016, 3). Still, unity and global actorhood within a new field of public diplomacy brings barriers which need to be overcome. The European Union, nonetheless, is well aware of this fact and is building upon its positive perception towards others<sup>1</sup>.

Hence, this work tries to answer the following research question: To what extent does the European Union promote its positive image as a global actor in its digital diplomacy on the example of environmental issues? Within the framework of these criteria, we will answer follow up questions such as: How do different EU institutions coordinate? What image of the EU is provided? Moreover, of course: What does this mean for the European Union as a global actor?

In order to answer the above-stated research question, this work is divided into nine chapters. At the very beginning, right after the table of content, a list of abbreviations as well as a list of hashtag- and tag-abbreviations can be found. These lists are meant to help the reader for a better understanding. Thus, a list of definitions which might be useful for digital diplomacy can be found there, too.

Chapter one and two then talk about the research project in general. Here, the research approach, the literature review, the research question, the methodology, and the constraints of this work can be found.

In chapter three, the main institutions of the European Union are explained. Notable here, there is a big focus on the Treaty of the European Union as well as the legal acts of these institutions and their functions. Furthermore, a brief overview of the policies and priorities can be found here. This chapter is meant to give a basic legal outline about the competencies of the European Union.

Chapter four conveys major aspects of the EU's global actorhood. Additionally, the aspects and strategies of the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy will be discussed. Here, we will talk further about the Global Strategy. Besides, we will focus on the coherence and the ability of the Union to communicate with

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<sup>1</sup> such as international key player, citizens, politicians, and so forth.



a single voice. This ability is an important factor for the perception and image building of the EU, which will be further discussed in this very chapter.

In chapter five and six, we will then focus on digital diplomacy, its origins, strengths, opportunity as well as its weaknesses. We will look into Twitplomacy, too, and discuss Social Media in general. The basics and a brief history of the examined social media platform – Twitter – can be found here as well.

Chapter seven gives a brief overview of the EU's Climate Diplomacy and the Single-Use Plastics Directive, which was used as starting point for the research (as stated in chapter two).

The eighth chapter then, goes straight into our case study and looks at the EU's environmental behaviour online, and examines the Twitter accounts of the European Parliament, Consilium, and the European Commission. In this very chapter, we will apply the transformed critical discourse analysis. In this matter, we look at the linguistic features, content, image, information, and hashtags of the examined Tweets.

Last but not least, chapter nine concludes the research, and summarizes the major points of this work. Furthermore, a policy recommendation for the future will be provided here.



## 2. RESEARCH APPROACH

### 2.1. Literature review

Since digital diplomacy is a rather new field within public diplomacy, only a few pieces of research have been done – in contrast to other public diplomacy studies. However, in recent years there has been considerable interest in this area and became even popular scientific. Despite the fact that social media grew rapidly over the past few years, and was more and more used by politicians, embassies and international organization, it was President Trump's Twitter account, which seemingly fascinated the vast majority. This setting includes not only civilians interested in popular science but scholars, too. Thus, most of the conducted research is based on investigations on social media in America. Nonetheless, recent papers on the potential of digital diplomacy within the EU or regarding the EU have been carried out.

One of these recent studies was by Collins and Bekenova (2018). They examined the digital diplomacy intents of the European Union *'on data that show the patterns of use of Facebook by European embassies in Kazakhstan.'* (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 1) Collins and Bekenova concluded that the Facebook features are only used for one-way communication (2019, 1). It means in effect that there was no interaction between the Facebook users and the European embassy in Kazakhstan. Studies on public diplomacy (Melissen 2005, Zaharna 2007, Gilboa 2008) show that one-way communication is a prevalent practice.

Iarovyi (2014) published an article about the 'horizontal coherence in EU social media diplomacy' on the case of Ukraine. This research verifies the horizontal coherence of the EU online on the Ukraine case. However, it shows some minor failures, too, such as unsuited rhetoric and missing references to each other (Iarovyi 2014, 7). Due to the analysis of horizontal coherence, this article will be discussed further later.

As already mentioned before, digital diplomacy is only in the fledgling stage. Thereby, many scholars try to establish methodologies and research approaches. This may include 'Strategic Issue Management' (Zhang 2013), 'Structural Analysis' (Manfredi-Sánchez, Sánchez-Giménez and Pizarro-Miranda 2015) 'Quantum



theory' (Bjola, Getting digital diplomacy right: what quantum theory can teach us about measuring impact 2016), 'Strategic Communication' (Strauß, et al. 2015) to name only a few. These theories have their origin in common. Except for the Quantum Theory (Bjola, Getting digital diplomacy right: what quantum theory can teach us about measuring impact 2016) all of these research methods stand in relation to linguistic, communication, and texts in general.

## **2.2. Research Question**

*To what extent does the European Union promote its positive image as a global actor in its digital diplomacy on the example of environmental issues?*

With this research question, I seek to understand the image building and positioning of the European Union as a global leader in the digital sphere. In order to explain it detailed, a case on environmental issues is conducted. Therefore, we look at the provided image of the European Union. This image, however, is differentiated between internal and external perception. By identifying whether the EU institutions try to persuade the European citizens or the international community, and by association with other global actors. Thus, we also have to ask what this means for the European Union as a global actor? In the further course, we are examining how different EU institutions coordinate with each other. Especially within the European Union's diplomacy, coherence plays a crucial part since it enables the Union to speak with a single voice.

## **2.3. Research Details**

In order to answer the research question, the right research approach is needed. Since we want to find out more about the EU's positive image through their digital diplomacy, we have to examine its most used social media channel – namely, Twitter. The literature on digital diplomacy shows that most of the researchers focus on Twitter and, now and then, on Facebook.

Indeed, Twitter has been preferred to other social media platforms by politicians. Probably due to its microblogging nature but classical social media approach. Other social media channels, such as Instagram focus on pictures and



videos. According to Iarovyi (2014, 12), nonetheless, Twitter is used for research in digital diplomacy due to the broader reach of the audience as well as the minor activity on Facebook of important actors<sup>2</sup> and possible duplicate content<sup>3</sup> of Twitter Tweets on Facebook. Thus, we will look into the Twitter account of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Consilium within a specific time frame first.

This specific timeframe is built on a special occasion, namely the adaptation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive by the European Parliament on 27 March 2019. The time was then set to two weeks prior and two weeks after the adaptation of this very directive. Hence, the time frame of the research concludes 13 March 2019 to 10 April 2019. By doing so, we not only have one full month of research material but also two weeks of data before and after such an important directive. Due to the fast-moving nature of the internet and social media which likely turn every event fast outdated, it is crucial to choose a recent case: as a result, the Single-Use Plastics Directive was selected. Furthermore, it has political and environmental importance because it was the first concrete measurements to ban various plastic goods in order to fight marine litter in the EU.

The collected data are posts, which have been produced by the social media teams of the European institutions. As social media teams have to follow a strict practice of editorial calendar and content plan, which has to be approved by a supervisor, we can get a good impression of the thinking structure and working plan of these institutions, which means that we can reconstruct their priorities towards the European future. This is very interesting in terms of the defined and pursued common policies and actions of the Union's external action. Indeed, through this *modus operandi*, one can assume the image which is (meant to be) provided.

In order to conduct the research, the posts of the main institutions are collected, looked through, selected, analyzed, and compared with each other. The collection of the Tweets is executed with the online platform [allmytweets.net](https://allmytweets.net)

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<sup>2</sup> In his research: even because of minor activity on Facebook of crucial actors of the EU foreign policy.

<sup>3</sup> Meaning the same content (text, picture, video, and so forth) was posted on both platforms.



(Airtight Interactive Inc. 2019). The platform lists the last 3.200 Tweets of every Twitter account which you put into the search box on the web site. The output is then selected according to the set time frame. In a further course, the Tweets are collected by environmental topics. These topics are, on the one hand, compared with the EU policies, and on the other hand, by the topics and the content of each post. The Tweets then are analyzed and categorized in linguistic features, content, image (internal v external perception), information (factual or advertising), and hashtags.

Since the research is focused on the horizontal coherence and the single voice ability, the investigation does not cover the representation of the Member States but the three main institutions only. Further, this research focus on the institutional level, the consequence being that important persona of the European Union are not part of the examination. Thus, it is meant to examine the external coordination of the main institutions online – being in the field of digital diplomacy.

#### *2.4. Methodology*

It is crucial to find the right research method to examine this work properly. Since the study on social media is a rather new field of application, there is no standard research method, which is used on all social media analysis. However, what most of the research methods have in common, is their relation to linguistic, communication, and texts in general.

The idea of the research method of this work is based on the paper '*Horizontal coherence in EU social media diplomacy: case of Ukraine 2014*' by Dmytro Iarovyi. He uses the content analysis as well as the critical discourse analysis in order to examine his research question. This paper, however, will use the critical discourse analysis only, and not the content analysis because content analysis focuses on the frequency of wording, which is not useful when to examine qualitatively. According to Iarovyi (2014, 12), 'content analysis is closer to the sphere of quantitative research (and) typically used for getting what messages and categories are prevailing in quantity.' Hence, the critical discourse analysis was chosen.





### 2.4.1. Discourse Analysis

Nonetheless, it is important to mention that there is another form of discourse analysis, too – the descriptive discourse analysis. Generally speaking, discourse analysis focuses on the linguistic aspect of use (Gee 2014, 8).

The descriptive discourse analysis helps to analyze the language and describes how it works. This is done in the hope to gain detailed explanations of how and why language works the way it does (Gee 2014, 9). The critical discourse analysis goes a bit deeper. Still, the descriptive part is included too, but in contrast to the descriptive discourse analysis the critical discourse analysis wants to '*intervene in institutional, social, or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world*' (Gee 2014, 9). Although researchers argue whether descriptive or critical discourse analysis is the better choice, Gee states that '*all discourse analysis needs to be critical, not because discourse analysts are or need to be political, but because language itself is (...) political*' (An Introduction on Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method 2014, 9). According to Gee, the political aspect of language is not only about contending political parties. Instead, it is about the distribution of social goods such as money, power, status and so forth. Furthermore, he stresses language always as 'political' because social goods and their distribution are endangered whenever we use language (Gee 2014, 8). Therefore, he sees every discourse analysis as critical discourse analysis (Gee 2014, 10).

According to Iarovyi, the European Union's digital diplomacy can be analyzed great with this type of discourse analysis because of '*its strong emphasis on understanding the ideological influence on power relations, which I the foremost component of diplomacy*' (Iarovyi 2014, 12). Yet, the design of this research is based on the three-dimensional model by Iarovyi: linguistic features, discursive practice and social practice (Horizontal coherence in EU social media diplomacy: case of Ukraine 2014, 12). However, to receive the best possible outcome, the three-dimensional model is slightly changed into four categories for this work: linguistic features, content, image, and information. Additionally, since the investigation is based on social media, hashtags and tags are examined, too.

The *linguistic features* of our analysis define the language aspects as well as how the content is performed. This implies that it is either formal or informal but also in which language the post was published. Furthermore, we will look into the



tone that was used – meaning: was a rather neutral or an emotional undertone used. And if there was emotional tone, was it rather positive or negative. Since Tweets are limited in 280 characters, many thoughts run into each post. The social media teams need to think about the right expressions in order to communicate the demanded substance. The *content* is about the production and consumption of the post regarding its topics as well as how the discourses interrelate in the end. This part also covers the analysis of media (photo, video, link, or pure text) which are used for each Tweet. The *image building* relates to the internal and external perception of the European Union. With this category, the global actorness or the degree of the global actorness is examined – it is a matter the interactions and implications regarding the rest of the world. Thus, we differentiate here between a global actor (external) or the European leader (internal) only. With *information*, we try to examine and distinguish the delivered content between *factual* and *advertising*. By this, we look into the intentions of a post: is it meant to inform others, or is it intended to promote the European Union and its work. Hashtags play a crucial role in social media and are usually common practice for each and every post. Hence, the hashtags are examined as well. In the very end, the posts of the three institutions are confronted and compared in order to examine the coherence online.

As the research is based on cases in a particular manner, this paper is conducting inductive research – meaning through the examination argumentations are made which lead to a conclusion and theory for the commonality.

### **2.5.Constraints**

Nonetheless, it is essential to mention the potential limitations of this work. First, the European Union covers many policies and work areas besides the environment and climate, which have a crucial impact on other (global) actors, such as trade, financial market, and so forth. By focusing on the case of the environment, we are limited to this view.

Second, digital diplomacy is not restricted to Twitter, although the European Union, and other political actors, are mostly active on this platform. A look at the web sites of the institutions show that they use other social media platforms, too



– which include Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube, and of course, Twitter. The European Parliament, additionally, is also represented on Pinterest, Flickr, Foursquare, Spotify, and Reddit. However, it has long been known that digital diplomacy is mostly used on Twitter whereas other platforms are usually left behind or not as actively used than others. Thus, to get the best and most accurate research findings, the focus usually lies on Twitter only. However, I argue that there has to be a particular reason why a Facebook and Instagram account was created by the institutions in the first place. Especially because these accounts are still active. Due to the set limitations of this work, questions as such are not examined.

Finally, Brexit deal negotiations with the EU took place during the examined time frame. Since the Brexit is an unheard-of case, it dominated the media. Thus, it concerns the social media accounts of the European Union, too. Hence, most of their content was related or referring to the British Referendum.



### 3. THE EU INSTITUTIONS

The European Union is based on an institutional framework in order *'to promote its values, advance its objectives, serve its interests, those of its citizens and those of the Member States, and ensure the consistency, effectiveness and continuity of its policies and actions'* (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/22)<sup>4</sup>. This institutional framework is not only complex but reflects innovations, a variety of histories, and trajectories (Vanhoonacker und Pomorska 2017, 119). It is considered as a unique set-up, which consists of seven institutions:

- the European Parliament,
- the European Council,
- the Council,
- the European Commission,
- the Court of Justice of the European Union,
- the European Central Bank,
- and the Court of Auditors.

(European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/22).

The Unions institutions have different competencies and functions within this very system but practice sincere mutual cooperation. Since not all EU institutions play a vital role in this work, only the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, and the European Commission are discussed further. This chapter gives a brief overview of the main EU Institutions, their legal basis, as well as their competencies within the institutional framework, which is fundamental in order to understand certain actions and behavior of the institutions.

#### 3.1. The European Council

The European Council consists of the President of the European Council, Heads of State of the Member States as well as the President of the European

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<sup>4</sup> Art. 13 (1)



Commission. Even though the High Representative<sup>5</sup> takes part in its work, she<sup>6</sup> is not part of the European Council. It defines the broad priorities and the agenda of the EU's general political direction (Consilium, The European Council 2019). The European Council meets at least twice every six months, or when the President of the European Council convenes a special meeting. (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/23)<sup>7</sup>.

### 3.1.1. *The President of the European Council*

Donald Franciszek Tusk has been the President of the European Council since 2014. Currently, he serves his second, and last term as its president. The President plays a crucial role in the foreign and security policy of the European Union. He is charged with '*the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy*' (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/23) without the influence of the High Representative's power. Furthermore, people associate the European Council with Mr. Tusk – they personify the institution with the President because he frequently appears on the news.

Generally speaking, the European Council is important for the functioning of the European Union since it gives the necessary impetus for the Union's development, namely its political direction and priorities. On 27 June 2015, the European Council agreed on five priority areas for this period of office named 'Strategic agenda for the Union in times of change.' They can be seen as a foundation of other EU institutions' agendas, and consist of:

- Job, growth, and competitiveness
  - Empowering and protecting citizens
  - Energy and climate policies
  - Freedom, security and justice
  - The EU as a strong global actor
- (Consilium, Setting the EU's political agenda 2017)

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<sup>5</sup> High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

<sup>6</sup> The current High Representative has been Federica Mogherini since 1 November 2014. Thus, further reference to the High Representative will be stated in her/she.

<sup>7</sup> Art. 15



Although the European Council determines and guides the political direction, it plays no vital role on the legislative side. In the EU legislation<sup>8</sup>, there are only three main institutions involved: the European Parliament (hereinafter referred to as 'the Parliament'), the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as 'the Commission') and the Council of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council'). The latter may not be confused with the European Council.

### *3.2. The European Parliament*

The European Parliament consists of 750 representatives directly elected by the Union's citizens as well as the President of the Parliament. Depending on the population of a Member State, there are six to 96 seats per Member State in the Parliament. Small Member States such as Luxembourg, Malta or Cyprus hold six seats, whereas Germany has 96 seats in the Parliament. Germany, however, is an exemption and the only Member State which holds the maximum number of seats currently. Unlike other EU institutions, the members of the Parliament are elected by the citizens of the Member States for a term of five years.

As already mentioned, the European Parliament plays a crucial part in the legislation of the Union. In accordance with the Council, the Parliament exercises the legislative functions and budget, as well as the functions of political control and consultation as a co-legislator. The legislative functions of this institution consist of the passing of EU laws and the policies through the Ordinary Legislative Procedure together with the Council and the European Commission. Further, the Parliament decides on international agreements, reviews the work programme of the Commission as well as votes on enlargements of the Union. (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/22)<sup>9</sup>. In contrast to the other two main institutions, the European Parliament cooperates with national parliaments of the Member States in order to get their input. According to the Parliament web site, it sees its role further in supporting the fight for essential liberties such as democracy, freedom of speech and fair elections across the globe (European Parliament 2019)

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<sup>8</sup> The EU legislation works through the Ordinary Legislative Procedure.

<sup>9</sup> Art. 14



In summary, it can be said, therefore, that the main roles of the European Parliament involve legislative, supervisory, and budgetary parts. However, always in accordance with other EU Institutions.

### *3.3. The Council of the European Union*

As mentioned before, the Council of the European Union may not be confused with the European Council or with the Council of Europe. The first two are different EU institutions with different functions and competencies. The Council of Europe, however, is not a body of the EU at all. In general, when people talk about 'the Council', they refer to the Council of the European Union. Since this very institution is part of the main decision-making body of the EU, it can be seen as a more powerful institution than the European Council. Together with the European Parliament, it exercises legislative and budgetary functions as well as carries out *'policy-making and coordinating functions as laid down in the Treaties'* (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/24)<sup>10</sup>.

The Council consists of government ministers of each Member State in order to amend and adopt laws. Further, the representatives have the authority to vote on behalf of their governments and commit the governments to these decisions. Although the Council is a matter of a single legal entity, it meets in ten various configurations. These council configurations depend on the subject which is being discussed. Each of them deals with different issues and is made of ministers from the Member States. These issues cover the fields:

- agriculture and fisheries;
- competitiveness;
- economic and financial affairs;
- environment;
- employment;
- social policy,
- health and consumer affairs;
- education, youth, culture, and sport;
- foreign affairs;
- general affairs;

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<sup>10</sup> Art. 16



- justice and home affairs
- as well as transport, telecommunications, and energy.

(European Council and Council of the European Union, Council configurations 2018).

There is no hierarchy among the Council configurations; however, the Foreign Affairs Council and the General Affairs Council have specific roles defined in the EU Treaties (European Council and Council of the European Union, Council configurations 2018). Whereas the General Affairs Council deals with the '*consistency in the work of the different Council configurations*' (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/24), the Foreign Affairs Council deals with the Union's external action and that the Union's action is consistent (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/24).

In summary, the Council is part of the main decision-making body and exercises budgetary functions in accordance with the European Parliament – also known as codecision. It develops the Union's foreign and security policy and coordinates Member States' policies, negotiated and adopts EU laws and budget, as well as concludes international agreements (Consilium, The Council of the European Union 2018).

### ***3.4. The European Commission***

Whereas the above-mentioned European institutions consist of representatives of the Union's Member States, the European Commission promotes the general interest of the European Union. Together with the European Parliament the Council of the European Union, the Commission produces policies and laws through the Ordinary Legislative Procedure and thus is part of the main decision-making body of the Union. In contrast to the other two institutions involved in the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, the Commission is the sole EU institution which may propose EU legislative acts – except where the Treaties of the European Union states otherwise (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/25). Thereby, it is determined to '*protect the interests of the Union and its citizens*' (European Union, European Commission 2019).





Further, it is assigned to ensure the Union's external representation, '*with the exception of the common foreign and security policy*' (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/25)<sup>11</sup>. The members of the Commission, who are in office for five years, are chosen by their general competencies and, first and foremost, by their commitment and passion for the Union. None of the members of the Commission should ask for instructions or take instructions from any government or other institution, body, office or entity. '*They shall refrain from any action incompatible with their duties or the performance of their tasks*' (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/25). Thereby, the Commission's responsibilities are carried out by it completely independent, and of course with set priorities. The priorities of the current Commission ensemble are:

- Jobs, growth, and investment
- Digital single market
- Energy union and climate
- Internal market
- A deeper and fairer economic and monetary union
- A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalization
- Justice and fundamental rights
- Migration
- A stronger global actor
- Democratic change

(European Commission, European Commission 2019)

In comparison with the European Council, we find overlaps between the priorities of the institutions. These overlaps consist of *jobs, growth, and investment; energy union and climate; justice and fundamental rights, and of course, a stronger global actor*.

To sum up, one could say that the main functions of the Commission lie within the proposing of new laws, the managing of EU policies, the enforcement of EU laws, the allocating of EU funding and the representation of the Union internationally.

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<sup>11</sup> Art. 17



Together, these EU institutions mark the most important ones. As already mentioned, priorities of the institutions also consist of being a stronger global actor, which brings us to the next chapter – namely, the EU as a global actor.



## **4. THE EU AS A GLOBAL ACTOR**

The European Union has been playing a vital role in international relations from the very beginning: starting from the Cold War, when the European integration was crucial as a stabilizer of the West to its status of a major Western actor with a crucial role within multilateral fora such as the United Nations (Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker 2017, 11). Its power as a global actor is related to its influence and impact on other actors as well as the international arena in general (Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker 2017, 14). Furthermore, the effectiveness and legitimacy of the European Union as a global actor have been impacted by fluctuations of several kinds: a) the fluctuating of the EU status due to its capacity to act collectively; b) the conditional legitimacy of the EU's external action due to the perceptions and priorities by the Member States, as well as the ability to coordinate as a single Union; c) instability through external (i.e. climate change, terrorism) and internal (i.e. financial crisis in Greece, Brexit) challenges and changes; d) tensions occurring due to EU engagement and Member States engagement in the world arena (Edwards 2017, 69). However, according to Edwards (2017, 69), the European Union persists to be a hybrid international actor, which experiences inevitability in its ability to act

Although the European Foreign Policy is an important tool for the EU to maintain international power, its international relations does consist of much more than that (Andreatta und Zambernardi 2017, 73). A popular explanation is that even though the European Union and its foreign policy is seen as a hybrid system, it is a vital global actor in economic and ideological terms (Andreatta und Zambernardi 2017, 90). The latter includes the fight against climate change, obviously, too.

### ***4.1. The European Foreign Policy***

Foreign Policy, in general, is understood as a sum of actions, intentions, and explanations of a state, or in this case of a supranational organization, in order to affect or rule the relations with each other. By discussing the different EU institution, one can tell that the European Union as an international organization which is attending international gatherings and is negotiating international



agreements, needs a foreign policy and security policy<sup>12</sup>. Generally speaking, this policy was designed to resolve conflicts as well as support and maintain international understanding (European Union, EU Foreign & Security Policy 2019). Still, it is a product of different factors such as domestic and international actors who are strongly involved in the decision making in foreign policy (Carlsnaes 2016, 114). Carlsnaes argues that there are two sorts of decision-making actors. On the one hand, there are the politically responsible decision makers, and on the other hand, there are the civilian and expert decision makers such as lobbying firms, think tanks, media, research institutions and so forth (2016, 114); which is important to mention in order to understand how foreign policy occurs.

The Union's member states gave up their sovereignty and agreed on a common trade policy but still distinguish between EU foreign policy and national foreign policy (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 36). That means each Member State of the European Union follows a national foreign policy on the one hand and a common European Union foreign policy on the other hand. Consequently, the member states have to adopt the Union's demand in their countries but try to mirror their own preferences on the European level as well, in order to realize their national objectives (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 37). According to Duke and Vanhoonacker, this can be seen as exploitation on the European level (2017, 37) but one may not forget that the representatives have to argue the EU's decisions on a national level, too. In the end, however, the European Union's foreign policy enables to tackle challenges, which one single Member State cannot solve alone by itself, and thus helping ensure prosperity and security for the European population (European Union, Publications Office of the European Union 2018).

On the one hand, the European Union can be thought of a coherent strategic actor, which plays an active and crucial role in international relations; on the other hand, the Union consists of comprehensive policies, some sort of '*corps diplomatique and crisis management tools*' (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 39) which leaves the Union's foreign and security policy in doubt (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 39). Thus, the Global Strategy was implemented in order to

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<sup>12</sup> The security policy, nevertheless, is a vital part too but does not play a crucial role in this work. Hence, it is only mentioned on the side.



shift the European Union to a more effective, credible, and joined-up actor (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 39).

#### 4.2. The EU's Global Strategy

In order to leave uncertainty out caused by nowadays threats<sup>13</sup>, the European Union developed a strategy – namely, the Global Strategy for European Foreign and Security Policy– which represents its principle, interests, and priorities paired with a shared vision and common action (Mogherini 2016, 3). It is crucial to note that the superior aim of the Global Strategy is unity and cooperation within the EU. The Global Strategy's potential significance lies within its *'attempt to think through the desired nature of the EU's actorness'* (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 36). Still, it has to deal with the national dynamics within its border but also has to handle global pressure from outside such as *'super-powers'* or *'fractured identities'* (Mogherini 2016, 4). Nonetheless, this does not mean that the European Union is working against other global actors but rather strengthening the partnership with other players. By doing this, the Union's interest and values are prioritized and promoted in the world. These interests consist of *'peace and security, prosperity, democracy, and a rules-based global order.'* (European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 13) For this work, *prosperity* plays a crucial role. The EU wants to increase the prosperity of its citizens by *'promoting growth, jobs, equality, and a safe and healthy environment'* with the foundation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in order to receive this kind of prosperity worldwide (European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 14). This includes shaping global economic and environmental<sup>14</sup> rules and a free flow facilitated by a free and secure Internet (European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 14).

The EU's Global Strategy states that engagement with the wider world, responsibility to address the root causes of conflict and poverty globally (2016,

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<sup>13</sup> such as climate change, terrorism, cyber and energy security, and so forth.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy refer to more than environmental issues but in the sense of this work, the environmental issues are prioritized.



17) and partnership with other global stakeholders will solve today's conflicts (2016, 18). Therefore, strategic communication needs to be optimized and spread across different areas, such as public diplomacy. As a consequence, the EU can communicate its foreign policy to its partners as well as can connect it with its citizens (European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 23); which also refers to public diplomacy<sup>15</sup> through social media, namely digital diplomacy.

These ideas are meant to be delivered through unity. It is stated that shared interests can only be fulfilled and make a positive difference in the world when unity across institutions, states, and people in Europe is given. (European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 16) Nonetheless, Duke and Vonhoonacker argue that the implementation of the Strategy might be struggling unless it goes through '*country, regional, continental, and thematic substrategies*' (2017, 36). Therefore, coherent policies implemented together on European and domestic level are vital.

#### *4.3. Cohesion – consistency – coherence*

As an active international player on the global economic and political scene, it is unarguable that the European Union needs functioning coordination at its domestic European level (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 25) but also on the institutional level. Thereby, the Union can perform united on the international stage. Hence, the literature mentions three different terms for communicating functioning coordination.

Cohesion, consistency, and coherence are three close, but different, concepts of cohesiveness, according to Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier (2014, 963). Thereby, cohesion is the reduction of regional and social disparities. Consistency, which is mentioned multiple times in the EU Treaties in relation to foreign policy, means the cutting across policies in other areas. Coherence, however, is a higher

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<sup>15</sup> Indeed, not only through digital diplomacy but through energy diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and economic diplomacy, too (European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy 2016, 49).



stage of structural harmonization (Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier 2014, 963) – and it will be the one we are focusing on in this paper. Gebhard states four types of coherence, namely vertical, horizontal, internal/intra-institutional, and external/interorganizational (The Problem of Coherence in the European Union's International Relations 2017, 129). According to her definitions, vertical coherence is between the member states and the EU level. Horizontal coherence, though, concerns the supranational sphere and the intergovernmental spheres – meaning the relationship between the main Union's institutions. Whereas internal or intra-institutional coherence deals within each domain of external action, external or interorganizational coherence concerns the relationship between the Union and third actors (Gebhard 2017, 129). Since we examine the relationship between the main EU institutions, horizontal coherence will be in the main focus.

Nonetheless, the consistency in and between the Union's external action is a crucial part of the European Foreign Policy in the Treaty on the European Union (European Union, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012, 326/29). The controlling organs for this matter are the Council and Commission, who are assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. As one of the European Commission's Vice-Presidents, the High Representative takes care of the consistency of the Union's external action. This consistency and coherence are not always given. However, *'the concept of cohesiveness captures the intuition that the EU will be more effective on the international scene by being united internally'* (Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier 2014, 964).

When the European Union makes use of its regional power, it seems not difficult to speak with one voice and put pressure on neighboring countries (Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier 2014, 962). This procedure is deemed to be the case whenever a new EU law is adopted. In international organizations or as a global political actor, however, disunity occurs. Nevertheless, disunity is not automatically a weakness. If anything, it can be seen and used as strength when it is strategically used right (Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier 2014, 962). Yet, to use this seeming strength strategically, may not seem as easy as described. Moreover, the findings of Conceição-Heldt and Meunier show that *'an internally cohesive EU is more effective in the international context'* (2014, 975), too. The



wider political dynamics and the higher competitive pressures on the international level might encourage the Union's Member State to act unilaterally and agree on a common foreign policy (Smith 2017, 166). On the other hand, however, does a high internal cohesiveness not be associated with high external effectiveness - which seems to depend on the area of negotiations. Due to the Lisbon Treaty, coherence, continuity, and political leadership were requested with the EU's foreign policy and action (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 34).

In fact, seemingly internal coherence is crucial for external cohesiveness, which also has been extended to the interaction with the United Nations and other international organizations (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 35). However, the degree of cohesions fluctuates significantly cross several issue areas (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 35). Since the situation of the diplomacy is not entirely rose all the time, the Union's external actions are still affected 'by inconsistencies and occasional double standards', which makes '*principled pragmatism*' very important for its cohesiveness and overall actorness (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 35).

#### ***4.4.External Image and Perception***

Perception plays a crucial role in understanding expectations and practices regarding the European Union as a global actor (Bretherton and Vogler 2005, 43). Still, perception or external images are not an infinity status quo but rather a changing concept, which develops and evolves, depends on the geographic region and related issues (Chaban and Holland 2014, 3). The EU's external image and perception give an overview of its own vision as an international leader as well as a sort of feedback on its position in the multipolar world (Chaban and Holland 2014, 1). Some researches (Rhodes 1999, Chaban and Holland 2014) then argue that this kind of perception can be used in order to reveal of how good intentions of the Union have been and whether a positive and reliable image was created.

Additionally, the perceptions of foreign policy is an important starting point in order to argue about the EU's role, since '*Domestic opinion, national and transnational, as well as the views held by outsiders, generate regular gaps between expectations of what the EU can do in the world, and its actual capabilities.*' (Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker 2017, 20) - which includes the Global Strategy, which provides '*a useful perspective, at least on the EU's self-image.*'





(Duke and Vanhoonacker 2017, 33). External image and perception are also interesting for observing the '*European identity and the effectiveness of European common foreign policy*' (Chaban and Holland 2014, 1). According to Holland and Chaban, international agreements such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals suit the EU's diplomatic and normative power well and provide a positive perception towards the European Union (Holland and Chaban 2014, 252).

In regard to environmental issues, the European Union produced an unparalleled image in climate change policy and positioned itself as an environmental leader (Elgström 2014, 27). This was caused by the EU's endurance and support towards the Kyoto Protocol 2001<sup>16</sup> as well as the ensurance of ratification from other actors (Elgström 2014, 27). Developing countries saw the EU positively as the most important actor at the Kyoto Protocol negotiations (Elgström 2014, 38). A vital factor, since external images can also be deemed negatively. From that time being, the EU was perceived as leader and influencer (Elgström 2014, 40). Today, in regard to environmental issues, the EU enjoys the same image since it was a major driver after the Paris Agreement in terms of ratification.

Nonetheless, the importance of changing roles on the international scale cannot be stressed too much. Due to emerging countries and powers, the international roles and strategies of the traditional great powers change (Elgström 2014, 40). According to Elgström (2014, 41), the EU deems to be seen as a strong influential actor, which has to be treated with respect on the international scale but is burdened as one of the Western powers which displeases other global actors. This might be the reason for the EU's wish '*to systematize and work within wider multilateral frameworks*' which causes struggles (Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker 2017, 15). Especially in terms of the expectation of the EU intervention – '*both complicated by the persisting fluidity of international order*' (Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker 2017, 15).

In order to maintain its leadership status, the European Union needs to work on unilateral initiatives, engage more in coalitions and '*work hard to maintain its*

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<sup>16</sup> The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty which commits the parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, it is a matter of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992.



*reputation as an actor that drives the process forward with the best of all actors in mind.'* (Elgström 2014, 42) The latter is vital for our research because it implies that the European Union needs to work on its reputation – meaning it has to promote itself as a global actor. However, it is not only the EEAS and its delegations, which might shape the perception positively but public diplomacy (Holland and Chaban 2014, 252). Thereby, social media seems to be an excellent tool for political staging and promoting.



## 5. DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Simply put, the term digital diplomacy is generally understood '*as the use of social media for diplomatic purposes*' (Bjola, Making sense of digital diplomacy 2015, 4). However, in order to understand digital diplomacy, one has to examine the two key factors of this scope: namely the digital (media) sphere as well as the diplomacy sphere. Hence, the current chapter looks into diplomacy, and public diplomacy as a subcategory to the prior one because digital diplomacy is a form of public diplomacy.

### 5.1. Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy

According to the dictionary, diplomacy is defined as '*the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations*' (Merriam-Webster Incorporated 2019) as well as a '*skill in handling affairs without arousing hostility*' (Merriam-Webster Incorporated 2019). This word definition by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary summarizes on a fundamental level the definitions of different scholars; namely, the peaceful approach to mediate states' interests on an international level (Bjola, Making sense of digital diplomacy 2015, 1).

Although diplomacy is vital to the international society, maintaining international order or an international system can be seen as a key player (Bjola, Making sense of digital diplomacy 2015, 2). Throughout time, the approach and manner of diplomacy and the international system changed. And thus, on the entire international sphere – usually by one nation. It is starting from the national interest as its ultimate purpose in the seventeenth century by France to the concept of the balance of power in the eighteenth century by Great Britain to the Concert of Europe by Austria or Germany's game of power politics in the nineteenth century to an American beacon and crusader attitude by the United States in the twentieth century to today's unique form of diplomacy (Kissinger 1994, 17). Even though diplomacy is known between international actors and their conduct between one another, the success or failure can be caused by the diplomats' ability (Bjola, Making sense of digital diplomacy 2015, 1).

Nevertheless, today's international system faces more difficulties than the ones before due to media and public opinion. Thus, public diplomacy as a new scholar and practice was developed (Gilboa, Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy



2008, 55). Public diplomacy can be understood as a vital tool within diplomacy and distribution of power through soft power (Nye 2008, 94). Soft power includes acts through attraction rather than through payment or violence.

Usually, tradition-conscious actors see changes as a passing trend or prefer the 'traditional way' better anyway. One can imagine that many diplomats and international actors thought the same way about digital diplomacy. However, this has developed to an important field of study for public diplomacy scholars, media as well as states, which employ dozens and hundreds of full-time staff members working on e-diplomacy (Holmes 2015, 14).

### *5.2.Digital Diplomacy*

The following paragraph was used in a seminar paper which I handed in for the seminar 'Digital Diplomacy' by Corneliu Bjola at the Diplomatisches Akademie Wien in the third term of the academic year 2018:

'Digital diplomacy has been interpreted and understood in different but still similar ways by scholars (Sotiriu 2015, 51). Some of the promises that digital diplomacy holds are those of an increasingly younger and more mobile audience as well as increased connectivity and popularity while facilitating knowledge acquisition and distribution (Sotiriu 2015, 33). As such, however, there is no widely accepted theoretical framework that covers this concept (Sotiriu 2015, 33). It has been built on recent diplomatic conceptual and empirical developments such as public diplomacy or soft power, which have been seen intrinsically connected with digital diplomacy, and have been given the spill-over of technological innovations into how states carry out their business both inside and outside their borders (Sotiriu 2015, 33). Through this, the concept of Twitplomacy was developed. This concept has been understood as a new platform expanding the channels of public diplomacy, as it has not only been carried out by the central government of a state and relevant organizations but also by millions of individuals globally (Su and Xu 2015). The aim is to form their images, releasing diplomatic



news and information, as well as articulating opinions and emotions in order to sustain and develop diplomacy and foreign affairs (Su and Xu 2015).<sup>17</sup>

Many people, policy practitioners, and scholars have been wondering whether digital diplomacy is a 'game changer' (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 1) in terms of diplomacy or just a fad. However, it can only be a new form of communication between diplomats and the public, too, or become a means of simplifying '*established patterns of behavior*' (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 1).

According to Collins and Bekenova, the European Union uses its social media decisively and meaningful as a fragment of its diplomatic effort (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 1). This statement is seconded by Federica Mogherini, the current High Representative, who sees social media channels such as Twitter as a ground-breaking (social) network as well as an innovative channel for diplomacy (Mann 2015). Further, it was Mogherini's wish to make Twitter one of the major tools to the EU's and the EU External Action Service's diplomacy (Mann 2015). With good reason because scholars and public policy practitioners are well aware of the opportunities given by social media, and of social media as an influential tool of public policy in general (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 3) as we know of the possibility of engagement with and from the audience.

Additionally, it is very important for democracy to have a functioning communication between citizens and politicians in order to formulate and articulate grievances, and in further consequence, to facilitate a common or popular consent (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 1). These dialogues, however, have actually always taken place in face-to-face settings in different locations – nevertheless always in person (Sørensen 2016, 664). Social media channels, however, seem to provide a place where politicians and civilians can communicate directly with one another. Nevertheless, this is just the theoretical concept of interactions online. The practice is shown in several studies<sup>18</sup>: politicians and institutions use social media predominantly as a one-way communication. This implies that there is no interaction between politician and user online. It is

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<sup>17</sup> End of paragraph used from the seminar paper which was handed in for the seminar 'Digital Diplomacy' by Corneliu Bjola at the Diplomatische Akademie Wien in the third term of the academic year 2018 (Yellow Hair 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Studies: (Collins and Bekenova 2019) (Yellow Hair 2018)



important to note that one big grievance of digital diplomacy is this lack of interaction between politicians and institutions with their audience. Still, it is not being said that there is no discourse or interaction going on at all. However, *if anything* the two-way communication happens, it is rather rarely or only with people from the same field – meaning only with other politicians or diplomats. Reason for this is on the one hand, the rather close acquaintance between the politicians or diplomats. On the other hand, it is about establishing a network. Thus, it is vital for politicians or diplomats to connect and engage with other politicians and diplomats to either build or maintain a network which is further needed for executing their jobs properly.

Nevertheless, *very little*<sup>19</sup> policy discourse is there, and obvious (Collins and Bekenova 2019, 1), and as little as it is, it can be found in most of the social media accounts. Rarely because of an intended discussion or engagement in general by the social media team but because of a misunderstanding of a post or because of a very sensitive topic (Yellow Hair 2018, 13). Being present or having an interactive communication on social media, however, is very important to maintain and develop a network online – whether it is a big or small account, political or private; it is rather a given and commonly known rule the online sphere (Yellow Hair 2018, 13).

Overall, digital diplomacy is not meant to be an end in itself but informative and serving, in terms of policy objectives (Bjola, Trends and counter-trends in digital diplomacy 2017, 1). Hence, we can say that digital diplomacy has affected how international actors and departments of state do business, but it never excluded the personal meeting which is seen as a core aspect of traditional diplomacy (Holmes 2015, 13).

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<sup>19</sup> One has to bear in mind that 'very little' has to be highlighted here!



## 6. SOCIAL MEDIA IN THEORY

Social media is defined as a web platform, which enables its *'users to create, share and exchange their ideas, content, information, videos or photos in computer-mediated groups and communities'* (Ackland and Tanaka 2015, 7). Nowadays, social media influences our human interaction not only on an individual level but also on a societal level, which is explained by the millions of individuals who interact through social media every day (Van Dijck 2013, 4).

Twitter is one of these platforms, which is used for the investigation of this work. What started as known as Twttr, became one of the biggest social media platforms, and was shortly after called Twitter (Adsoup 2018). Jack Dorsey, the founder of Twitter, sent the first tweet on March 2006 – which gave the platform its founding date (Adsoup 2018). From that time on, it evolved to one of the most popular social media platforms and is, as already mentioned, used not only by civilians but by heads of state and politicians, too.

However, Twitter is not the only popular social media platform. Another very prominent example is Facebook, which seems to be used mostly from the elderly as well as from business. Sometimes enterprises use a Facebook page instead of a regular web site – mostly small ones. A huge advantage in doing so, one enters already in social interactions online, which might have a positive impact on the business itself. This, however, is only the case in the Western World since countries like Russia have their own version of Facebook – VKontakte (ВКонтакте).

Instagram is another popular social media platform, and probably one of the fast-growing platforms. In addition, it is known as a flagship for picture related platforms and is very popular among teenagers. Whereas on Facebook and Twitter texts play a huge role, Instagram impresses with pictures only. Pinterest and Snapchat are known as further picture related platforms, whereas Snapchat's Snaps are very short-living.



## **7. THE EU'S CLIMATE DIPLOMACY**

As already mentioned before several times, one of the challenges the European Union faces is climate change. However, in comparison to all its other challenges, climate change pictures a different challenge due to its high risks and impacts as well as due to the high economic stakes, which are involved if you want effective actions to be taken (Vogler 2017, 287).

The European Union is considered as a prominent role in environmental politics on the global scale (Vogler 2017, 264). Through differences, however, the EU faces problems of coherence in its single voice between its policies such as environment, trade, and development (Vogler 2017, 264). Vogler stresses that this incoherence then leads to the limitation of the EU's effectiveness and legitimacy (2017, 264).

Although, in the field of environment and climate change, the Union's Member States remain impressively united (Van Schaik 2014, 1). However, the success of the EU in this field depends on various factors, which includes the willingness to commit to the emission reduction (Van Schaik 2014, 1) as stated in the Paris Agreement for example. It is important to highlight the fact that climate change is an international issue since it crosses national borders and cannot get pinned on one specific location (Van Schaik 2014, 7). In order to fight climate change, the European Commission set up policies such as climate strategies and targets, effort sharing: Member State's emission target, transport emissions, protection of the ozone layer, adaptation to climate change, funding for climate action, EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), land-based emissions, innovation fund, fluorinated greenhouse gases, and international action on climate change (European Commission, Climate Action Policies 2019).

Nonetheless, the Union plays a crucial role within international negotiations and pacts such as the UN Sustainable Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Mainly because the European Union take international agreements very seriously (Van Schaik 2014, 3) - which might be implied through the construction of the EU's Treaties.





### 7.1. Single-Use Plastics Directive

On 27 March 2019, the Single-use Plastics Directive was adopted by the European Parliament. It is part of the EU Plastics Strategy, and is seen as vital for the fight against marine litter. Because it is seen as *'the most comprehensive strategy in the world adapting a material-specific lifecycle approach with the vision and objectives to have all plastic packaging placed on the EU market as reusable or recyclable by 2030.'* (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019). Furthermore, this very directive is also an essential element of the Circular Economy Action Plan since it affects the production and the use of sustainable alternatives (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019). The directive contains the measures of banning single-use plastic products for which alternatives are provided on the market, this includes "cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, straws, stirrers, sticks for balloons, as well as cups, food and beverage containers made of expanded polystyrene and on all products made of oxo-degradable plastic." (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019)

Furthermore, it includes measures to reduce consumption, extended producer responsibility as well as a collection target for plastic bottles by 2029. (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019)

After the European Parliament gives its approval – meaning adapting it, the Council of Minister finalizes the formal adoption, which is then followed by the publication of the texts in the Official Journal of the Union. (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019) After that, the Member States will then have two years in order to implement the EU legislation into their domestic law (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019).



## 8. THE EU INSTITUTIONS ON TWITTER

First, we will look at the Twitter accounts of the EU Institutions and their quantitative numbers in order to get a glimpse of the institution profiles. Second, we will examine the tweets regarding the environmental policies, and put them in perspective with our predefined categories. Finally, the posts by the institutions are compared with each other in order to find similarities and – first and foremost – coherence in the digital diplomacy of the European Institutions.

The research consists of the examination of the Twitter accounts of the European Parliament, the shared account of the Council of the European Union and the European Council<sup>20</sup> as well as of the European Commission two weeks before and after the adopted Single-Use Plastics Directive on 27 March 2019.

Here, we do not quantify the likes, shares<sup>21</sup>, or comments by other users because, as mentioned before in chapter X, one may not confuse action in real life with interaction online. A comment or like is not a sign of influence because many people like posts only in order to show their sympathy with the account or the mentioned topic. In addition, this is a work of international relations, not sociology – meaning the view is on the *international* spectrum not on the civilians. Another quantitative aspect lies in the retweets. Reason for this is the intention of a retweet. Retweets are a form of posting the same Tweet again – from your own account or someone else's account. It is a form of interaction, approval of the content of the post, and importance of the (content of the) post – especially when it is a matter of your own Tweet. Consequently, in order to understand each institution better, we will only examine Tweets (and Retweets) that are not from other accounts.

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<sup>20</sup> As mentioned before, the European Council and the Council of the European Union share a common web performance under the term 'consilium'. This concerns not only the web site but the social media accounts such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, too.

<sup>21</sup> Meaning retweets; since we look into the tweets the institutions have retweeted, there should be no room for confusion or misinterpretation



	CONSILIUM	PARLIAMENT	COMMISSION	TOTAL
<b>POSTS TOTAL<sup>22</sup></b>	101	92	350	543
<b>POSTS ENV.<sup>23</sup></b>	10	6	35	
<b>RATIO<sup>24</sup></b>	9,90%	6,52%	10,00%	
<b>RT ENV.<sup>25</sup></b>	1	0	2	
<b>HASHTAGS / TAGS<sup>26</sup></b>	20 / 3	0 / 1	42 / 6	

**Table 1: Overview of the Twitter accounts**

### *8.1. The European Parliament on Twitter*

Since the Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by their voters of their member states, the MEP's represent the interests of their national voters within the European Union - which is important to be mentioned here because the European Parliament's web performance is divided and available in all 24 official working languages. As a result, there are 25<sup>27</sup> accounts of the European Parliament on Twitter – 24 for each official working language (or more precisely for each country which represents one of the 24 working languages) plus one generic English account. Thus, countries such as Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, and Luxembourg are missing an individual web site as well as an individual Twitter account. Reason for this might be that these countries are relatively small in the Union and have at least one official language of another EU member state. However, since this work is in the field *international* relations and based on the assumption of English as *the* global language, the generic English Twitter account of the European Parliament (Europarl\_EN) was examined here only.

<sup>22</sup> 'Posts total' consists of all tweets on each examined account within the selected timeframe.

<sup>23</sup> 'Posts Env.' displays all tweets on each examined account concerning environmental topics regarding sustainability and so forth, within the selected timeframe.

<sup>24</sup> 'Ratio' is the amount of posts about environmental topics in relation to the posts total in percentage.

<sup>25</sup> 'RT Env.' consists of all retweets within the selected timeframe and selected field.

<sup>26</sup> 'Tags' are used with the '@'-sign in order to mention someone

<sup>27</sup> Bulgaria (Europarl\_BG), Croatia (Europarl\_HR), Czech Republic (Europarl\_CS), Denmark (Europarl\_da), Estonia (Europarl\_ET), Finland (Europarl\_FI), France (Europarl\_FR), Germany (Europarl\_DE), Greek (Europarl\_EL), Hungary (Europarl\_HU), Italy (Europarl\_IT), Ireland/Gaeilge (Europarl\_GA), Latvia (Europarl\_LV), Lithuania (Europarl\_LT), Malta (Europarl\_MT), Netherlands (Europarl\_NL), Poland (Europarl\_PL), Portugal (Europarl\_PT), Romania (Europarl\_RO), Slovakia (Europarl\_SK), Slovenia (Europarl\_SL), Spain (Europarl\_ES), Sweden (Europarl\_SV), United Kingdom (EPinUK) as well as the general English account (Europarl\_EN).



### *8.1.1. @Europarl\_EN - the generic English account of the European Parliament*

The user's name of this very account 'Europarl\_EN' is named after the link of the web site of the Parliament (europarl.europa.eu)<sup>28</sup>. The generic English Twitter account consists of around 18.8k Tweets, 557k Followers, 9.4k Followings as well as 7.1k photos and videos end of May 2019. In the fast-moving internet sphere, these numbers are increasing steadily. Thus, it has more Followings than the European Commission and the Consilium together<sup>29</sup>. The in April 2009 created account shows Brussels and Strasbourg as location – which mirrors the locality of the European Parliament buildings. Every Twitter account has the possibility to place a link in the biography of the account. In the case of the European Parliament, it happens to be a link saying 'thistimeimvoting.eu'. A web site encouraging EU citizens to vote in the European Parliament elections of 2019 in May.

The Parliament's account produces most of its Tweets by itself and not through retweets, especially within our chosen topic. Within the chosen timeframe, the generic English account of the European Parliament on Twitter posted 92 Tweets in total of which 6.52% (6 Tweets) referred to an environmental topic. Notably here, there is not even a Tweet on the day (or at least a day later) of the passed Single-Use Plastic Directive. Although it was the European Parliament who adopted the directive and supported the Commission's proposal.

#### *8.1.1.1. Linguistic feature*

The language used in the Tweets show no emotions and are rather neutral and factual in terms of environmental topics. Mostly, the 280 characters of a Tweet are rarely used. Videos or links to articles on the web site of the English page of the European Parliament are used to elaborate the intended content.

#### *8.1.1.2. Content*

The content of the Tweets has a big focus on waste management. Further, energy efficiency, organic farming, and the 'Earth Hour' play another key role

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<sup>28</sup> This is also true for every other European Parliament account, except of the British one. The British account is connected with the generic English account.

<sup>29</sup> Within the Followings we can see that the Parliament follows not only their current and former representatives but also journalists and Head of States as well as other EU Twitter accounts.



here. However, nothing in particular about the Single-Use Plastic Directive. The findings also show that more videos than photos were used in order to communicate the content.

#### *8.1.1.3. Image*

Besides the Tweet about the 'Earth Hour' which is a global action and phenomenon, all posts of the European Parliament are intra-European – meaning the Tweets concern the Union as well as its member states but not another international actor.

#### *8.1.1.4. Information*

The Information given in the Tweets is very factual. This situation might be a result of the neutral and unemotional language used in the Tweets. Even though one gets more information about the EU, it does not seem as promotion for its image.

#### *8.1.1.5. Hashtags*

Within the predefined timeframe and within the scope of the research topic, only a single Tweet was posted with two Hashtags. These, however, were not a regularly '#'-sign but a '@'-symbol in order to tag that specific user. In this case, it is present in the post about the Earth Hour (@EarthHour & @WWF).

#### *8.1.1.6. Conclusion*

In conclusion, the European Parliament, respectively, its social media team, writes very factual and informative Tweets with no hashtags. Besides no hashtags, there were only two tags to the account of Earth Hour included. With the semblance of posting for the European population only and not on a global scale, we can see the competencies of the European Parliament mirrored in its actions online. As mentioned multiple times before, the Union's Parliament represents the interests of their member states' citizens. Thus, it makes absolute sense to have content that is important to Europeans, and that has (informative) value to them. Nevertheless, since the Single-Use Plastic Directive was adopted by the Parliament, not mentioning it online seems odd.



## *8.2. The Consilium on Twitter*

As stated before, the European Council and the Council of the European Union share a common web performance including the web site as well as their social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and so forth, under the term 'consilium' (consilium.europa.eu). Thus, the term 'consilium' is used further to elaborate on the social media account.

### *8.2.1. @EUCouncil – the Twitter account of the consilium*

At the biography of this very account, the connection of the European Council and the Council of the EU is shortly mentioned, where it describes itself as '*28 EU governments making decisions together at the European Council & Council of the EU.*' (EU Council, Twitter 2019) Additionally, it invokes its followers to learn from its content, participate with its Tweets and share them. In order to stay UpToDate, the EuCouncil account encourages to follow the latest news on another Twitter profile, which is tagged as followed: @eucouncilpress. Furthermore, it links two hashtags affiliated with its social media presence, namely #eucouncil and #euco. Besides its date of registration, October 2010, we can find the web site of the consilium as well as the location of the building - Brussels of course.

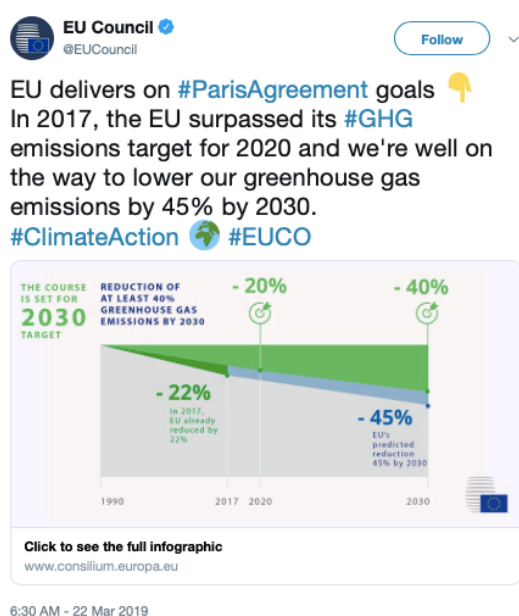
At the end of May, the consilium account has around 4.7k Tweets, 416k Followers, and 486 Followings. As already stated for the European Parliament, the numbers change daily due to the fast-moving digital sphere.

This account produces around two-third of its tweets by itself (according to the collected Tweets). During the timeframe of this research, 101 Tweets in total were posted. 9.9% of them (10 Tweets) were about environmental topics. Within these amounts of posts, only one Retweet occurred. Here again, however, we have no information or post about the Single-Use Plastic Directive – neither close to the 27 March 2019, nor at all during the timeframe of the research. Although the Council of Ministers has to finalize the formal adoption (European Commission, Circular Economy: Commission welcomes European Parliament adoption of new rules on single-use plastics to reduce marine litter 2019).



#### 8.2.1.1. Linguistic feature

In contrast to the previous institution's Twitter profile, this one uses a more emotional and personal tone in its language. The emotional aspect of the posts can be explored by the use of more adjectives in its Tweets than the previous account. Particularly adjectives which have a positive undertone. In addition, interaction on and with this account is sought through questions – especially leading question such as 'Are you curious to learn more about...' are used.



**Figure 1:** Tweet from 'EUCouncil' from 22 March 2019 (EU Council, Twitter 2019)

#### 8.2.1.2. Content

Even though the research is based on an environmental aspect, we can find a different subject broached, such as the EU Budget. Besides that, the content focused mainly on the UN 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, the EU climate strategy, and its topics. Additionally, except for one Tweet, which happens to be a Photo, every other post was a video. None of the Tweets, however, were a link or a text only.

#### 8.2.1.3. Image

Only a few Tweets were intended to be intra-European, whereas most of the Tweets gave the perception of the European Union as a global actor. A good example of this is shown in figure 1. This Tweet refers to the goals of the Paris Agreement – an agreement ratified by 125 international parties, which are mentioned indirectly by this wording. It mirrors the image that the EU is one of the parties that is actively fighting against climate change by lowering the Union's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

#### 8.2.1.4. Information

The consilium account does provide informative content, but more than half of the posts were rather advertising than actually informative only. Most of the time, the advertising of the European Union went hand in hand with the image building



of the EU as a global actor. However, 'hybrid'-forms, meaning a mix of information and promotion could also be found. This, nonetheless, was rather rarely the case.

#### *8.2.1.5. Hashtags*

In contrast to the European Parliament's Twitter account, the consilium used more hashtags – and this, always matching the content (see figure 2). In total, 20 hashtags and three tags within the research were used. These 20 hashtags correspond roughly to two hashtags per Tweet. Furthermore, the hashtags mentioned climate movements such as #climatemarch, #fridaysforfuture, #EarthHour2019, and #connect2earth. Most of the hashtags, however, concerned EU-related policies or actions such as #agrifish, #EUCO, #ClimateActionEU, #ClimateAction, #EUBudget, #GAC, #MFF, #bioeconomy, #ParisAgreement, #SustainableDevelopment<sup>30</sup>, and #GlobalGoals<sup>31</sup>. Of course, this very account used to function of tagging, too. Thus, we have posts mentioning @UN, @eucopresident, as well as @EarthHour. The latter could also be found at the account of the European Parliament.

#### *8.2.1.6. Conclusion*

In contrast to the Parliament, we find more 'environmental' Tweets as well as overall more Tweets on the Consilium's Twitter account than on the Parliament's. Further, the tone of language has an emotional touch instead of a neutral one. Meaning, the social media team tries to move people emotionally and gets them to interact with the Tweets in the form of shares or comments. This explains the use of Hashtags, too, which occur in every post. The Consilium works on many issues which are affecting the interests and concerns of the Union and its citizens (European Council and Council of the European Union, Consilium 2019). This could explain why the Consilium mentions different aspects, such as the EU Budget within its 'environmental' Tweets. Another focus lies on the image building of the European Union as well as putting the Union in a leading role – in other words: global actor.

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<sup>30</sup> Related to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

<sup>31</sup> Related to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda





### *8.3. The European Commission on Twitter*

As already mentioned in chapter X, the European Commission has different priorities which it tries to promote. Nonetheless, as the executive of the Union, its focus lies on promoting the Union's general interest, too (European Commission, European Commission 2019). The various priorities by the Commission affect its digital diplomacy tremendously – or more explicitly, it broadens their field of action online. In practice, this means either a very own Twitter account for each set priority or a very own created hashtag at least.

Thus, one can find for the following priorities<sup>32</sup> these Twitter accounts or hashtags:

- **Jobs, growth, and investment:**  
#InvestEU, #VentureEU
- **Digital single market:**  
@DSMeu (DigitalSingleMarket), #DigitalSingleMarket
- **Energy union and climate:**  
@Energy4Europe (Energy4Europe), @EU\_ENV (EU Environment),  
@EUClimateAction (EU Climate Action),
- **Internal market:**  
#SingleMarket, @EU\_Growth (Market, Industry & SMEs)
- **A deeper and fairer economic and monetary union:**  
#deepeningEMU, @efcin (EU Economy & Finance), @EU\_Finance (EU Finance)
- **A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalization:**  
@Trade\_EU (EU Trade)
- **Justice and fundamental rights:**  
@EU\_Justice (EU Justice), @EUHomeAffairs (EU Home Affairs),  
@EU\_Consumer (EU Consumer Affairs), #EUProtects, #SecurityUnion
- **Migration:**  
#refugeecrisis, #migrationeu

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<sup>32</sup> Priorities adopted word-for-word from the European Commission's web site (European Commission, European Commission 2019)



- **A stronger global actor:**

@eu\_eeas (European External Action Service – EEAS), @eu\_echo (EU Humanitarian Aid), @eu\_near (EU NEAR), @europeaid (EuropeAid)

- **Democratic change:**

#EUdialogues, #EUHaveYourSay, #EUTaketheInitiative

Naturally, the European Commission has its very own Twitter account, too. This, however, does mention issues regarding the Commission's policy priorities but never reposts from the other 'sub'-Commission's Twitter accounts. Hence, we can see the European Commission's Twitter account as a stand-alone – detached from the others. Conversely, the 'sub'-Commission's accounts do retweet from the Commission.

### *8.3.1. @EU\_Commission – the Twitter account of the European Commission*

The biography of this very Twitter account claims to post about '*news and information from the European Commission.*' (European Commission, Twitter 2019). In contrast to the previous Twitter account, this is the single one stating the fact that the Tweets are created and posted by their Social Media Team. Of course, nowadays people are aware that at Institutions as such experienced employees are in charge of the social media account. Yet, it has been the only account within our research that has stated it clearly in the biography of the profile. Furthermore, we can find the hashtag #TeamJunckerEU, which is referring to Jean-Claude Juncker, the current President of the European Commission, and the Commissioners – his team – chosen by him. Additionally, the web site of the European Commission ([ec.europa.eu](http://ec.europa.eu)) and a direct link to its priorities can be found. Notable here, the way of communicating the priorities: it is highlighted that these priorities are the priorities of Juncker's Commission Team.



The account was created in June 2010, and like all the other institutions, Brussels in Belgium was set as the location since the building is located there, too. In May 2019, the Commission has around 33.4k Tweets, 1.09M Followers, and 824 Followings. Thus, it has more Followers and Tweets than the Consilium and the Parliament together. Within the timeframe of our research, 350 Tweets were



**Figure 2:** Tweet by European Commission on 27 March 2019 (European Commission, Twitter 2019)

found. Consequently, one might say that this leads to a higher amount on environmental posts than in the previous examined accounts. Here, we find 35 Tweets about the environment, which leads to a ratio of 10%. From these posts, only two Tweets were not written by the Social Media Team but Retweets.

Another aspect to mention here, the European Commission is the only Institution of the three, which tweeted about the adoption of the Single-Use Plastic Directive – even on the very same day (see figure 2). Various reasons could explain this: the most reasonable would be to argue that this is a directive by the Commission which was (finally) adopted by the European Parliament. Hence, this reason would also lead to the conclusion

that this very subject is a matter of the Commission's priorities.

#### 8.3.1.1. Linguistic feature:

Similar to the Consilium uses the Commission a rather emotional tone in its written communication. Additionally, it spreads a feeling of community and collective when it uses words such as 'we', 'our', 'together', and so forth. Within our research, the posts vary from optimistic and bright future expectation to



scaremongering with the consequences of climate change. Overall, however, due to the conveying of the collective feeling, the posts seem very motivating and positive. We, therefore, can see a call for actions here, too.

### 8.3.1.2. Content:



**Figure 3:** Tweet by European Commission on 14 March 2019 (European Commission, Twitter 2019)

Even though the content is about the environment, it varies a lot due to the use of different subjects. Nevertheless, one can see the policy areas of the Commission's priority 'Energy union and climate' mirrored in the subjects of the content. Thus, we have 'environmental' Tweets about infrastructure, renewable and clean energy as well as energy security and energy transition – short energy market, waste management, greenhouse gas emission and recycling, and the financial sector as well as the investments to a greener economy, the protection of EU citizens concerning energy poverty and energy security, as well as the supporting part of research, innovation and competitiveness. Of course, the mentioning of the Climate Action Plan, the delivering on

already achieved climate goals as well as the Sustainable Development Goals were not left outside. In contrast to the other two institutions, the Commission uses a little bit more pictures than videos.

### 8.3.1.3. Image:

The European Commission represents the Union and acts as an executive. Therefore, one might assume that their digital diplomacy implicit an overall international approach – namely as a global actor. This, however, was not the case in the analysis. The research shows that their posts were rather balanced between global actor and intra-Europe. However, if we have to be precise, the Commission published five more Tweets for the European Community than for the rest of the world during our research.



#### 8.3.1.4. *Information:*

When it comes to environmental posts, it seems that the European Commission tries to develop more awareness for this issue and tries to inform its Followers as good as possible. Therefore, only nine Tweets in total were advertising, whereas the rest had an informative purpose. For this purpose, however, hashtags such as #EUdelivers or #EUprotects produce the image of advertising. Especially in order to show the Union's citizens what the EU actually does for them. Indeed, hybrid-forms could be found, too, when a distinction between advertising and information was not possible.

#### 8.3.1.5. *Hashtags:*

The Commission uses overall more hashtags than the Consilium and the Parliament together. However, this is caused by the exceeding number of Tweets by the Commission. If we break it down, we have around the same number of hashtags per post as at the Consilium. Notable here, the sum of hashtags created for the EU or its policies and programs, such as #LIFEprogramme, #EUbudget, #ClimateNeutralEU, #SustainableFinanceEU, #EUMultimodalityYear, #CleanEnergyEU, #EUBeachCleanUp, #ClimateAction, #mobilityweek, #PlasticsStrategy, and #EnergyUnion. Hashtags such as #EUdelivers, #ThisIsTheEU, #EUprotects, or #EUandMe are within the same category but also indicate that the Union does good for its citizens. By using these hashtags, the European Commission promotes its work as *Team Juncker*, as well as uses it as a positive image building for the Union in general. Since we look into environmental posts, we find many links related to sustainable issues, such as #CleanMobility, #RenewableEnergy, #EnergyEfficiency, and #ClimateChange. Another focus lies on international occasions or special days such as #InternationalForestDay, #EarthHour, #Connect2Earth, #EarthHour2019, and #GlobalGoals, whereas the latter is relating to the UN 2030 Sustainable Agenda.

When we look at the tags, which were posted beside the hashtags, we can see that with @Europarl\_EN, @EUCouncil, @mariannethyssen, and @ro2019eu only EU related tags were used. If we had to interpret this, one could tell that the European Commission did not address someone from the outside of the EU specific with a tag on Twitter.



#### 8.3.1.6. *Conclusion:*

The Commission uses an emotional undertone, and uses it to produce a feeling of community through words such as 'we', 'our', or 'together'. Additionally, it calls for action and tries to motivate people. The research shows that more pictures than videos were used and that the Tweets mirror the Commission's policy areas of its 'Energy union and climate' priority. As *the* executive of the European Union, one might expect more global actorness or image building. Nevertheless, this was not the case. The Commission posted more content for its citizens surprised with more factual posts on environmental issues than with advertising. Furthermore, it is the Commission, which produces advertisings for the Union as EU and not as a global actor. This distinction can be made through hashtags such as #EUdelivers and #EUprotects.

#### 8.4. *Coherence on Twitter*

Even though the EU advertises with unity in its Global Strategy, they do not show any form of coherence on their social media. There was just one single occasion when all three have posted about the same topic- which was EarthHour. For this event, they used almost the same hashtags in order to link the Tweet to the event and the related hashtags. Nevertheless, it surprises that there is no other coherence online, and even the Single-Use Plastics Directive is not mentioned by all of them.



## 9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the overview of the EU Institution's Twitter accounts shows us that the European Union is very active on Twitter. The Consilium and the Parliament post on average, around three Tweets per day<sup>33</sup>. The Commission stands out with around 11 posts per day, which is in comparison with the other institutions rather a lot. This amount is mirrored in the environmental related posts, too. With 35 Tweets about environmental issues, the Commission stands out here again – but only in total numbers. If we look into the ratio, we can examine that the Consilium with 9,9% and the Commission with 10,0% are pretty close to each other. The Parliament, however, falls behind with only 6,5% of environmental posts.

The research revealed that in terms of linguist features, the European Parliament refrains from emotional language and keeps it rather neutral and factual. The Consilium, however, uses an emotional and personal tone in its language by using more positive conjugated adjectives. Furthermore, this very institution tries to boost interaction on its social media page by using leading questions towards its audience. The Commission uses a rather emotional tone in its Tweets, too, and spreads a community feeling by addressing its Followers with 'we', 'our', and 'together'. Thereby, it tries to promote the European community.

On average, the EU institutions used more videos than pictures in their Tweets. Except for the Commission, which posted a slightly lower number of videos than pictures. Furthermore, the Tweets mirror the Commission's policy areas of its 'Energy union and climate' priority. Same applies to the Consilium. The Tweets of the Parliament, however, only cover organic farming, energy efficiency, and waste management. Surprisingly, in regard to the content is the fact that the Commission was the only examined institution, which mentioned the Single-Use Plastics Directive's adaptation. Indeed, one can argue that this results from the fact that it is the proposal of the Commission. However, this directive is still by the European Parliament adopted EU law. Additionally, through the Ordinary Legislative Procedure which involves the three main institutions in the law-making

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<sup>33</sup> Total posts of each institution (Consilium and Parliament) through the examined research timeframe.



process, one can expect a mentioning in a Tweet or at least a Retweet from the Commission.

The European Parliament acts as expected rather intra-European than globally. Since the Parliament consists of representatives from the Member States, who represent their citizens' interests in the EU, it seems rather important to address the citizens than other global actors. The Commission address both but the major focus lies again on its citizens. Surprisingly, because the Commission is the executive and represents the Union – especially towards other international players. The Consilium, however, did the opposite: most of the Tweets were on an international scale and address less European citizens than global actors. Although, one part of the Consilium, the Council of the EU, consists of national ministers from each Member State, and is thus responsible for the coordination of Member States' policies in various areas. The other part of the Consilium, the European Council, consists of the Heads of States of its Member States. Hence, one might argue for that particular reason, the focus should lie more on the European scale. However, we may not forget that the European Council defines the overall political direction of the EU, which includes political directions and priorities towards the international area, too. Seemingly, it is more important for the Consilium to represent the EU on a global scale and present itself as a global actor than it is for the other EU institution. Nonetheless, we have to acknowledge that the Commission tries to do both but does address more citizens within our research.

The European Parliament relies on factual Tweets, which provides its Followers with more information about the European Union. The same is true for the European Commission, which tweets more factual than promoting posts. Furthermore, it is the Commission, which produces advertisings for the EU as EU and not as a global actor. This distinction can be made through hashtags such as #EUdelivers and #EUprotects. The Consilium, on the other hand, provides more promoting information than factual. The findings show a correlation between promoting content and image building as a global actor. Since the advertising factor can be used to promote the EU within its borders, it is interesting to see that it is used for its image building as a global actor. This, however, correlates with our previously stated findings (see *image*).





Overall, we can say that the European Parliament seems to use its Twitter account to inform its Followers or its citizens. The Commission, however, uses it to inform the European community about the EU's work as well as mobilizes the citizen (in terms of a call to action). Yet, the Consilium seems to be the only institution's account, which promotes the European Union as a global actor to the international community. Indeed, the Commission does promote a positive image as a global actor, too, but it is the Consilium's account that seems to internalize it.

Seemingly, the coherence between the main institutions is rather low, since not even the adopted Single-Use Plastics Directive is mentioned by all of them. To be precise, it was only mentioned by the Commission. Nonetheless, the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, the law-making tool of the EU, includes the Commission, the Parliament, and the Council in this process. Thereby, when a directive, such as the Single-Use Plastics Directive is adopted, all three institutions are involved and play a major part here. Thus, one might expect a mentioning of it by these very institutions. Furthermore, the Earth Hour was the only subject which was tweeted on all three institutions on the same day during the research. This implies a rather low horizontal coherence in the EU. However, we may not forget that the content is produced and provided by the social media teams of each institution. This implies that the social media teams do not coordinate with each other when they set up a content plan for social media. Hence, just because the social media teams do not synchronize with each other does not mean that the Union and its institutions never coordinate. Nonetheless, this work deals with perception and image building on the digital sphere, and these actions appear as incoherent for outsiders.

In 2014, Holland and Chaban (2014, 252) already said that the European Union needs to work on its perception. Five years later, this is still a valid point and a reasonable recommendation. Furthermore, this can be seen as a part of self-reflection which the Union needs to do. It needs to think about what it wants for itself as a global actor and trade union as well as what it wants to provide its citizens. Although this is laid out in the Global Strategy, in the priorities and policies, and in the EU Treaties, the image towards the outside communicates differently. As Hill et al. already stated, *'the impact of 'absence' can be as*



*important as the impact of 'presence'* (2017, 16), and this is true offline and online. And for now, the EU shows an absence of coherence than presence rather – according to its digital performance on social media. A good start would be a coordination of the social media team of the institutions in order to promote the horizontal coherence, and their global actorness the way it is laid down in official papers.



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