

# Journalists and Social Media

## Aggregate report

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## Eurobarometer Qualitative studies

### **Journalists and Social Media**

Conducted by TNS Qual+ at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication, "Research and Speechwriting" Unit

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**Country Abbreviations<sup>1</sup>**

1. Austria	AT
2. Belgium	BE
3. Bulgaria	BG
4. Cyprus	CY
5. Czech Republic	CZ
6. Denmark	DK
7. Estonia	EE
8. Finland	FI
9. France	FR
10. Germany	DE
11. Greece	EL
12. Hungary	HU
13. Ireland	IE
14. Italy	IT
15. Latvia	LV
16. Lithuania	LT
17. Luxembourg	LU
18. Malta	MT
19. The Netherlands	NL
20. Poland	PL
21. Portugal	PT
22. Romania	RO
23. Slovakia	SK
24. Slovenia	SI
25. Spain	ES
26. Sweden	SE
27. The United Kingdom	UK

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<sup>1</sup> In the body text of the report the listing of Member States in parentheses indicates that the relevant issue was primarily raised by journalists from that country..

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Increasingly governments are interested in harnessing new social media to increase involvement and participation in policy development and evaluation<sup>2</sup>. Social media is transforming communications from old notions of “broadcasting information” to “contributing and interacting”.

Social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue and they can take many different forms, including internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. The most commonly used social media include: Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, Flickr, and YouTube.

The aims of the research are to provide detailed qualitative information to DG COMM on journalists’ views and attitudes to social media as well as how they use it as part of their work.

The study consisted of in-depth interviews with five journalists in each of the 27 Member States according to the following quota:

- TV news journalists: 1 public and 1 private
- Radio news journalists: 1 public and 1 private
- Written press journalist: 1, public or private

This report is based on the combined responses from journalists across these different groups and provides an overview of the key issues identified in the study.

Overall, 135 respondents participated in the study.

## 1.1. *Background to the use of social media*

- The **majority of respondents had 10 – 20 years experience in journalism** and have dedicated their entire professional career to this field.
- Just more than two-thirds of journalists **specialised exclusively in the type of medium** they currently work in (TV, radio or the press respectively).
- The work of the majority of journalists involved researching, writing and editing their own stories.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/social\\_media\\_policy](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/social_media_policy)

- The journalists **work on an extremely wide range of topics** and the majority worked in general news departments and therefore had no particular area of specialty, but reported on current news that would be relevant to the local, regional or national population.
- All respondents had covered EU stories as part of their general news reporting. **In just more than half of the Member States there was at least one journalist who mentioned the EU as an area of specialisation.**
- In describing their organisations, respondents used different descriptors such as whether it is a public or private organisation, its size, and its purpose and audience. **Nearly all respondents worked for one of the large, well-known media organisations in their country.**
- **Journalists generally had difficulty describing a typical approach** in gathering information for stories. Similarly, **nearly all journalists held that the timeframes that they have to produce stories is again story-dependent.** However, there was a subset of journalists who also acknowledged the role played by the medium that they work in, for example TV and radio journalists were generally under greater pressure to produce a story quickly and report on changes as the story evolves.
- Journalists use a **wide range of both traditional sources and social media.** The most widely used traditional sources involve talking to people, the Internet and national and international press agencies.
- **The majority of journalists did not experience difficulty in finding the information that they needed,** although some raised questions about the reliability and appropriateness of information.

## 1.2. *Use of social media*

- **The majority of journalists interviewed use social media in their work.** It is clear that the **most prominent types of social media used by journalists in their work are Facebook and Twitter.** A clear distinction is made between the use of Facebook and Twitter - while Facebook is used for work and privately, Twitter is predominantly used for work.
- There was some variation in the number of years that journalists have been using social media in their work: the younger journalists have used social media since the beginning of their careers; others have reportedly used social media since its start and had followed the development of the different types of social media; the remainder of the journalists seemed to have been using social media for about 3 – 5 years.
- **The majority of journalists also used social media in their personal life. Respondents were divided about whether they keep their work and private use separate.** Although a substantial number of journalists did make this distinction, **the majority did not** for reasons of practicality, authenticity (it is more credible and natural), and convenience.

- The tasks that journalists perform for work while using social media centres predominantly around searching for specific information and generally staying up to date on news. An important capability of social media is that it allows the journalists to identify and approach people that would otherwise be difficult to find.
- The frequency with which journalists access social media for work and the estimated amount of time that they spend on it varied. At one end is a group of journalists who are continuously connected to social media and at the other end those who log on and off several times a day. The majority of journalists interviewed thought that their use of social media would increase in future.
- Journalist clearly **preferred following social media content in their local language, although the majority of journalists are able to use English as a working language** and would be able to follow social media content in English.

### ***1.3. Benefits, challenges and barriers of social media***

- Journalists were able to mention a number of **benefits of social media over more traditional media**. The most important of these included **speed/instantaneous access; easier access to information; and access to a greater variety of sources, people and opinions**.
- Although journalists had mixed views about whether they regard websites as part of traditional sources, it was generally felt that this was the case, especially because they lack an interactive component.
- Journalists were almost equally divided between those who thought that people who contribute to social media are at the forefront of public opinion and can influence the majority to share their views over time, and those who opposed this view.
- Respondents identified the **reliability and credibility of information as the greatest risk or danger of using social media**.
- The majority of journalists interviewed did not experience significant infrastructure or other barriers to using social media.

### ***1.4. Approaches to social media***

- Journalists use social media both in a passive and active manner. It is clear that the most important sources are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs.



- The credibility of information is very important to all journalists. **Nearly all journalists were of the opinion that the social media content by government services or EU institutions are regarded as trustworthy**, compared with information by individuals or businesses that are regarded as more untrustworthy. The main reason for this is that the source behind the information is known and regarded as credible.
- However, such **information should still be verified** and can in some cases be filtered and biased.
- **It is clear that the primary use of social media is around the broader process of compiling stories, promoting them and getting feedback from the public.**
- Social media is regarded as extremely useful and easy to use. The only concern that was raised was regarding the credibility of the information.

### **1.5. Journalists' organisations**

- **Nearly all of the organisations that the interviewed journalists work for use social media**, albeit to varying degrees.
- The organisations use much the same types of social media as the journalists: Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube.
- The organisations **use social media mainly for the following purposes**: to interact with the public; to communicate, for example about programming information; to promote their programmes; and to drive traffic.
- Journalists from more than two-thirds of Member States held that their **organisations did not have formal guidelines** on how social media should be used.
- Although formal guidelines might not exist, **social media is not seen as separate from the more general reporting ethics** that governs the use of both traditional sources and social media.

### **1.6. European Commission**

- The **frequency with which journalists reported on the European Commission varied according to their speciality**. Those who primarily specialise in European matters reported on the EC on a daily basis, or at least several times a week. Journalists who reported on general news or had other specialities report on the EC once a month or less frequently.
- More than half of journalists were aware that the European Commission is using social media, although their level of awareness differed.

- The **majority of journalists did appreciate the actual or potential benefits of the EC communicating via social media and were open to its use.** However, **a substantial number of journalists had already developed set patterns of looking for information about the EC elsewhere and regarded these sources as sufficient for their purposes.** Although this does not mean that they are completely closed to the idea of following the EC on social media (although some are more reluctant than others), it does mean that there has to be an added benefit to doing so.
- None of the journalists made any real distinction between how they would use social media for stories on the EC as opposed to other stories and they would therefore follow the same approach.
- Journalists had varied opinions about the effectiveness of what the EC has done so far in terms of social media. Journalists who had not been aware of the Commission's presence on social media regarded their lack of knowledge as a negative reflection on the effectiveness of the EC's use of social media as they as journalists should be made aware of it.
- When asked **how the EC could use social media more and better**, the journalists offered suggestions around: changing the tone and image of communication, improving the social media content, increasing awareness of the EC's activities on social media, increasing the frequency with which social media is updated, greater interaction with journalists, consolidating the information, and bringing added value.
- When **engaging with the public through social media there are three general points that the EC should keep in mind:** 1) who is the **target group** that the EC is addressing and whether they use social media; 2) the **information should be made relevant** to the life of the person the EC would like to communicate with; 3) the **language** in which communication takes place should be clear and not overly technical language.
- When communicating to groups that are hard to reach, such as younger people, the most important points to keep in mind are that to communication should be clear and concise and that the youth should be presented with issues that are important to them.
- The **majority of respondents were of the view that social media could be used to develop policy, although they did express some reservations on the extent to which it can be used**, the most important of these being that views expressed on social media are not representative of public opinion in general as it only involves people who have access to social media.
- Journalists were asked whether, if the EC used social media more, they would support it and what impact it would have on their jobs. Although there was **support amongst journalists in the majority of countries** for the EC to use social media more, there were also a **substantial number of journalists who were ambivalent about such an increase.** The predominant reason for such ambivalence is that the journalists already benefit from extensive sources of information on the EC and find these sources satisfactory.

- If the EC wants to increase its use of social media it should promote it more amongst journalists, and use it better in the ways that the journalists suggest.

### **1.7. *Differences between groups***

The interviews did not yield notable differences between groups of journalists, for example private vs. public; and radio, TV and press journalists. The only example of this across the reports was when journalists described the timeframes that they have in which to produce stories. Although the timeframes were story-dependent, there was a subset of journalists who also acknowledged the role played by the medium that they work in, for example TV and radio journalists were generally under greater pressure to produce a story quickly and report on changes as the story evolves.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### ***2.1. Background and objectives***

Increasingly governments are interested in harnessing new social media to increase involvement and participation in policy development and evaluation<sup>3</sup>. Social media is transforming communications from old notions of “broadcasting information” to “contributing and interacting”.

Social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue and they can take many different forms, including internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. The most commonly used social media include: Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, Flickr, and YouTube.

The aims of the research are to provide detailed qualitative information to DG COMM on journalists’ views and attitudes to social media as well as how they use it as part of their work.

### ***2.2. Methodology and sampling***

#### **2.2.1. Design**

The study consisted of in-depth interviews with five journalists in each of the 27 Member States according to the following quota:

- TV news journalists: 1 public and 1 private
- Radio news journalists: 1 public and 1 private
- Written press journalist: 1, public or private

The only exception to this quota was in Luxembourg where not public TV journalist was interviewed, but two press journalists.

Only journalists who cover any EU stories were included in the study.

This report is based on the combined responses from journalists across these different groups and provides an overview of the key issues identified in the study.

Overall, 135 respondents participated in the study.

Interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length and most were conducted over the phone, and a minority in person.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/social\\_media\\_policy](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/social_media_policy)

### **2.2.2. Discussion content**

The discussion in the in-depth interviews explored the overall topic of how journalists use social media in their work. Questions were asked about journalists' experience in using social media and what they regard as the benefits of, and challenges to using social media. The interviews explored in detail the types of social media used and journalists' approaches to social media, in other words how and why they use it. The study also explored what social media is being used by journalists' employers. The interviews concluded with a detailed exploration of journalists' knowledge of the way in which the European Commission uses social media and how the Commission could make more use of these channels of communication.

The discussion guide used in the study is included in the appendix of this report.

### **2.2.3. Timings**

The overall start and end dates of the study ranged from the start of fieldwork on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September to the submission of national reports on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.

## 2.3. Respondent profile

Member State	Age range	Gender	
		Male	Female
Austria	24-48	2	3
Belgium	25-45	5	0
Bulgaria	26-55	0	5
Cyprus	23-45	3	2
Czech Republic	31-43	4	1
Denmark	30-38	3	2
Estonia	23-45	3	2
Finland	29-64	3	2
France	33-54	4	1
Germany	30-50	4	1
Greece	31-50	3	2
Hungary	33-42	3	2
Ireland	27-49	4	1
Italy	33-60	5	1
Latvia	28-53	3	2
Lithuania	24-36	2	3
Luxembourg	34-46	3	2
Malta	29-39	4	1
The Netherlands	28-60	4	1
Poland	27-51	3	2
Portugal	31-54	1	4
Romania	30-46	1	4
Slovakia	25-35	3	2
Slovenia	31-41	4	1
Spain	28-48	4	1
Sweden	38-64	3	2
United Kingdom	27-48	5	1

- As can be seen from the table above, the majority of the journalists interviewed were male, although a sizable number of female journalists (just more than one third) were also included in the study.
- Respondents from a wide range of age groups were interviewed - the youngest respondent was 23 years old and the eldest 64. The majority of respondents fell within the 30 – 49 year age group, followed by those in their 20s and those older than 50 years.
- Although levels of seniority differed, respondents generally included fairly senior journalists of which a minority (approximately 10%) were reported to have their own radio or TV programmes and are therefore prominent public figures.
- The majority of respondents had 10 – 20 years experience in journalism. This corresponds to the age group that the majority of respondents derived from (30 – 49 years) and also indicates that the majority of journalists interviewed have dedicated their entire professional career to this field.

- However, a significant number (just less than one third) of journalists had fewer than 10 years experience, while an important minority (about a sixth of journalists interviewed), had more than 20 years experience in journalism.

## **2.4. Contextual considerations**

There is a wide range of factors which might provide relevant context to respondents' views presented in this report. The local research team in each Member State provided input to the following section and the factors identified below are based on this input.

- An overall trend across the different Member States is the existence in each country of a public broadcaster(s) (both TV and radio) accompanied by a number of private competitors. In some cases the public media have lost market share to their more competitive private counterparts.
  - The balance between public and private TV channels and radio stations varies across the Member States.
  - There is also variation in the reach of the TV channels and radio stations with some broadcasting nationally, while others broadcast locally or regionally (in country).
  - The national reports also included reference to select examples of public and private broadcasters dedicated to broadcasting in a specific language (e.g. in Belgium where there are both Dutch and French TV channels and radio stations).
- The content that is broadcast by TV channels and radio stations generally take on one of three formats – general news or programming and dedicated programming (either aimed at a specific group, such as the youth; or focussing on a specific topic such as entertainment shows).
- There was some indication in the national reports that programming had shifted somewhat towards entertainment and reality shows and away from programmes concerned with politics. However, in many countries political news still dominate in different forms, such as through morning TV shows or the written press. It was apparent that certain TV or radio stations support certain political parties.
- In some cases both the printed press and TV and radio stations have reduced the number of journalists they employ, because of financial pressure as a result of the global financial crisis, resulting in many journalists doing work on a freelance basis.
- In terms of the written press, despite the existence of fairly large numbers of different newspapers in most Member States, there appear to be a handful in each country that remains dominant. Again, there is variability in terms of the existence of national and local newspapers and ones that focus on general and specific (e.g. sport) news; as well as the frequency with which they are published (e.g. daily, weekly, etc.).

- Select examples were mentioned of newspapers that offer bilingual editions.
- Some national reports indicated a decline in the printed press and the increasing online availability of newspapers. There was also some indication that the printed press is under pressure due to the introduction of free newspapers, because of the growth of advertising on the Internet, and because people do not buy newspapers as a money saving measure.
- Social media appear to be popular across the different Member States, especially amongst the younger generation.
- The most popular social media used seems to be Facebook (which has established itself as the prototype for social media) and is widely used across Member States. There was some variability in the popularity of Twitter and YouTube as they were popular in some countries, but not others. LinkedIn was popular for professional networking.
- Other examples of social media that appeared to be popular included discussion forums and blogs, Flickr and national social networking sites and discussion forums.
- Despite the popularity of social media and the surge in user numbers, a minority of national reports indicated a recent slow-down in the uptake of social media such as Facebook (a reason provided included concerns about data protection).
- A minority of national reports also indicated a move of interest away from Facebook, towards Twitter and Google+.
- The national reports highlighted a number of reasons why the public uses social media. These included:
  - Staying in touch with friends and family
  - Journalists increasingly use social media for work
  - Staying up to date on news
  - Tracking down lost contacts
  - Networking, for example in the search for a new job
  - Showing who you are and what you do as a person, or business
  - Because everybody is using it and people do not want to be left behind
  - Entertainment
  - Advertising ones business
  - Reading about famous bloggers who give their opinion on all kinds of topics
  - Posting ones own news
  - Looking at other people's photos or posting your own
  - A way of spending leisure time.
- A minority of national reports mentioned the degree to which social media plays a role in public and political processes. Political and civic activities mobilised through social media usually take the form of petition signings.



- In at least one country (Ireland) social media has contributed positively to the employment market as Google and Facebook have their European headquarters in Dublin and Twitter had announced the opening of an international office in Dublin.

### 3. BACKGROUND TO THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter describes the journalists' experience, where they work, their attitudes to social media and how they gather information for news stories.

#### 3.1. *Key findings*

- The **majority of respondents had 10 – 20 years experience in journalism** and have dedicated their entire professional career to this field.
- Just more than two-thirds of journalists **specialised exclusively in the type of medium** they currently work in (TV, radio or the press respectively).
- The work of the majority of journalists involved researching, writing and editing their own stories.
- The journalists **work on an extremely wide range of topics** and the majority worked in general news departments and therefore had no particular area of specialty, but reported on current news that would be relevant to the local, regional or national population.
- All respondents had covered EU stories as part of their general news reporting. **In just more than half of the Member States there was at least one journalist who mentioned the EU as an area of specialisation.**
- In describing their organisations, respondents used different descriptors such as whether it is a public or private organisation, its size, and its purpose and audience. **Nearly all respondents worked for one of the large, well-known media organisations in their country.**
- **Journalists generally had difficulty describing a typical approach** in gathering information for stories. Similarly, **nearly all journalists held that the timeframes that they have to produce stories is again story-dependent.** However, there was a subset of journalists who also acknowledged the role played by the medium that they work in, for example TV and radio journalists were generally under greater pressure to produce a story quickly and report on changes as the story evolves.
- Journalists use a **wide range of both traditional sources and social media.** The most widely used traditional sources involve talking to people, the Internet and national and international press agencies.
- **The majority of journalists did not experience difficulty in finding the information that they needed,** although some raised questions about the reliability and appropriateness of information.

### 3.2. Experience

Respondents were asked how long they have worked in journalism and what areas of news they specialize in.

As stated in Chapter 2, the **majority of respondents had 10 – 20 years experience in journalism** and have dedicated their entire professional career to this field. Although a minority, the interviews indicated that some journalists had in fact started working in journalism while they were still studying, for example part-time work in media related jobs or volunteering for college radio stations or newspapers.

**Just more than two-thirds of journalists specialised exclusively in the type of medium they currently work in (TV, radio or the press respectively).** Of the journalists who reported having worked in more than one field of journalism, just less than one-third currently work across different fields. Interestingly, radio was the one media that all of these respondents worked in. The combinations between radio and other media that the journalists worked in are as follows:

- Radio and TV (SI, CY, MT, NL)

*“This is my 22<sup>nd</sup> year as a journalist. Nowadays I work more in the electronic media that is television and radio rather than written press.” (Male public radio and television journalist, CY)*

- Radio and the press (IT, UK)

- Radio, TV and the press (IE, CY)

Nearly all journalists were employed full-time and it was only in a small minority of cases where they worked on a freelance basis (DE, IE, NL, SE, SI, SK, UK).

As noted in Chapter 2, respondents included a minority of journalist who have their own radio or TV programmes and are therefore prominent public figures. Others were editors in the written press or of TV or radio programmes. A minority were also managers or producers of programmes. However, the work of the **majority of journalists involved researching, writing and editing their own stories.**

The journalists **work on an extremely wide range of topics** and the **majority worked in general news departments and therefore had no particular area of specialty**, but reported on current news that would be relevant to the local, regional or national population.

*“I don’t have a particular specialisation...” (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

*“The topics come out every day from the meetings, as happens for all daily papers, and then we gather information, we write the articles, we talk about the city to people who know the city.” (Male, press journalist, IT)*

*“Of course I cannot just pick any story I just like and find interesting myself. I have to find the relevance for the public and it has to be sufficiently relevant on a national level. But in most cases, what interests the public also interests me – I mean, that’s what I live for, informing the public, so it’s all about finding the angle where you can report on the important issues and make it relevant and interesting for the average Joe.” (Male, public TV journalist, DK)*

Despite the wide range of topics that the journalists cover, the interviews did highlight a number of interesting points or patterns about the journalists’ work:

- Some were national reporters and would report on EU related topics if it applied to the national context; others reported on foreign news or were foreign correspondents; while others covered both national and international news and reported on what they regarded as most newsworthy and relevant to their audience.

*“Basically I’m a domestic journalist but I make all kinds of TV news stories in a large scale.” (Female, private TV journalist, FI)*

- All respondents had covered EU stories as part of their general news reporting. **In just more than half of the Member States there was at least one journalist who mentioned the EU as an area of specialisation** (AT, BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HU, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, UK). They had reported on issues such as the financial crisis, Europe 2020, economics in the EU, security and defence, EU members and their work, and EU institutions.
- Other topics that the journalists mentioned covering within their broader work as general news journalists included a wide range of social, political and economic issues:
  - Employment, trade unions, social policies, growth forecasts, healthcare, education, poverty, culture, crime, elections, music, entertainment, human interest (and stories that were considered bizarre or out of the ordinary), finance and business, sports, the environment, law, conflict, technology, tourism, drugs, diplomacy, women’s issues, children and youth.

*“I am also news presenter on a morning show from one to a few times a week. I have also had individual programmes on the issues of women, family policy. Programme about education. Most often my topics are related to social politics.” (Female, public radio journalist, LT)*

*“...I take a big issue and I apply it to the life of the individual, for instance, if we take the Greek recession, I could talk about a shopkeeper on an island using his stratagems to survive.” (Male, private radio journalist, IT)*

*“I am a journalist who makes current affairs programmes. I follow politics, economy and EU-matters more closely than other subjects.” (Female, public radio journalist, FI)*

### 3.2.1 Work organisation

When asked to describe the organisation they work for, respondents working in the fields of TV or radio **firstly referred to whether it is a public or private organisation.**

*“News office in public television.” (Female, public TV journalist, LT)*

*“It is a private company, one of the biggest television companies in Portugal. We have the general channel and the information channel.” (Female, private TV journalist, PT)*

An equally **important descriptor was the size** of the organisation. **Nearly all respondents worked for one of the large, well-known media organisations in their country**, be it a prominent radio or television station, or newspaper. If respondents did work for smaller, specialist organisations, such as regional TV stations or specialist newspapers (e.g. a paper focusing on business), the organisation was still highly regarded and respected.

*“Big, many great people. I think the result is great.” (Male, public TV journalist, EE)*

*“We are a traditional newspaper, long-established in Austria. As a newspaper of high quality we also offer news articles of very high standard to the readers. The European Union department, which I am responsible for, is very important, next to the everyday news and articles.” (Male, press journalist, AT)*

*“Large consortium with local newspaper, three local radio stations, a TV station, [the] consortium owns also one of the biggest printing offices in the country.” (Male, private radio journalist, FI)*

Although by no means a discernable trend across all of the Member States or the organisations the journalists worked for, there were individual instances where the private organisations were described as smaller than the public organisations, less resourced, focusing more on entertainment news because it results in larger viewership, and in some instances more flexible and less cumbersome structurally and more creative in the programme that they can present.

*“We, the editorial staff, are interested in information, also in can-can [showbiz] news, because they score ratings.” (Female, private TV journalist, RO)*

*“...traditionalist people work there [at a public media organisation], who do not really like innovations, which slows things down; and that also applies to the possibility of using editing methods that allow us to use all the possibilities.” (Male, public TV journalist, IT)*

Other descriptors that respondents used to a lesser extent when they talked about their organisations related to its **purpose or audience**.

*“We are a public service radio station. To me, this means that we have to give something special to people and we have to make them think about things...I think we try to appeal to thinking people.” (Male, public radio journalist, HU)*

*“A private TV channel which purpose is to engage people aged 15-49, both men and women, and this affects the selection of programmes and news.” (Male, private TV journalist, EE)*

*“We read the western papers and we do our work based on these. Being an economics newspaper, we are following in the footsteps of British journalistic tradition. The Financial Times is our role model, because we do not want to adopt a narrow-minded economic approach...Our target group is highly-educated, top executives.” (Female, press journalist, HU)*

A minority of respondents also expressed views about **how they experience working at their particular organisation**.

*“Overall, I’d say there is this professional bunch of people who do their job well and, by the way, put their heart into it. In this respect an ideal place, where I personally like working.” (Female, public radio journalist, EE)*

*“[It is a] transparent company. It is valued, it is worth one’s effort as you are read by [a] select audience and it is a respected means of media with full creative freedom...” (Male, press journalist, LT)*

*“The newspaper I work for is very good (good reputation) but I believe it needs to be upgraded...there is already a plan set and it will eventually be implemented.” (Male, press journalist, CY)*

### 3.2.2 Gathering information

Journalists were asked whether there was a general or typical approach that they followed in gathering information for stories. **Journalists generally had difficulty describing a typical approach** as their approach seemed to be dependent on a number of different factors such as the story itself (how much they already knew about the topic, how complex the story is, etc.) and how much time they have to produce the story. The latter is partially dependent on the medium that the journalists work in, for example TV and radio journalists usually have less time to produce stories than press journalists. However, depending on the nature of the story, TV and radio journalists might have longer timeframes to research a story.

*“I am fairly flexible, so the approach varies each time. Sometimes the idea is my own, sometimes it is suggested by others. At other times, I see something challenging on the internet. It varies greatly.” (Male, private radio journalist, NL)*

Although there was no typical approach, there were some typical tools used to gather information:

- An aspect that stood out in the way that journalists approach their work and stories was that they attempted to stay on top of what is happening in the news generally, or in their area of speciality.
- The Internet appeared to be an important tool for journalists either as a way to stay up to date on news updates and developments, or as a support tool to get more information.

*“I start gathering information by reading wire copies on daily events. Then I look through all the Internet websites that I use on a daily basis, in order to find out what is happening / did happen in Austria in the last 24 hours.” (Male, press journalist, AT)*

*“I’ve often asked myself what I would do if I didn’t have the Internet. It makes work a whole lot easier.” (Male, private TV journalist, DE)*

- Journalists made use of the wide spectrum of sources available to them to research their stories (this is discussed below).

As with their approach to gathering information, **nearly all journalists held that the timeframes that they have to produce stories is again story-dependent** and influenced by factors such as whether it is a general news story or in-depth feature, whether research is required, the importance of the story, where information needs to be sourced from (in-country or abroad), etc.

*“That can vary dramatically, from a couple of hours to a couple of weeks”. (Male, press journalist, FR)*

*“It depends on whether the story needs research or not. For instance, if I have to publish a politician’s speech it will take me a few hours because I will just have to make a video of what he said. If, now, I have to produce a whole reportage and do research, then, it will take days.” (Female, public TV journalist, EL)*

*“It always depends on the story: whether it is a matter of obtaining information quickly for a story that is going to be broadcast shortly or a story that needs in-depth research, in which case we have more time to work on it...” (Female, private radio journalist, PT)*

A minority of journalists also pointed out that as journalists they would want to provide information to the public on recent events that other news partners don’t have. In this sense, production has to happen as quickly as possible. (AT, BE)

*“We try to get information from as many sources as possible that other newspapers do not have; and we try to use information as some kind of new impulse for our stories...” (Male, press journalist, AT)*

In one instance it was also pointed out that the timeframes do not only depend on the journalists as there are whole teams of people involved in producing a story. (EL)

*“It does not depend only on me. I might be ready in two days and then the technical team needs to start working or sometimes all these are taking place simultaneously, I produce the reportage, other people do the montage etc...so is not up to me only.” (Female, public TV journalist, EL)*

Journalists use a **wide range of both traditional sources and social media**.

*“I have lots of sources like phone interviews, reading reports and scientific web magazines and other web pages, asking my friends. Also some groups on Facebook. I do my stories quite quickly, two or even three per day.” (Male, press journalist, FI)*

*“I don’t have a typical approach. Yes, my approach depends on the story”. (Male, press journalist, FR)*

An interesting point illustrated by the interviews is the interaction between the two types of sources (traditional versus social media) which appears to be quite fluid - if journalists find information from one type of source they will also look for it in others.

**Examples of traditional sources** used included:

- Formal and informal contacts (phone or face-to-face interviews) / people who are knowledgeable on the topic / the general public. (BE, BG, CZ, FR, LU, PL, PT, RO, ES, SE, IE, AT, CY, EE, FI, EL, HU, IT, LV, LT, MT, SK, DK, DE, NL)

*“I hear some gossip, for example, when commuting to work on the tram. So then I check it out on the web and, if it is true, then I offer the topic at our daily meeting at work.” (Male, private TV journalist, CZ)*

*“I also do some research by phone or via the internet in order to get in contact with experts on the various topics – especially regarding EU politics.” (Male, private TV journalist, AT)*

- The Internet (AT, BG, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, CY, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, SE, UK, IE, HU, IT, LV)
  - Websites of local, national and international newspapers (e.g. EU Observer, European Voice, Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera. (CZ, FR, IE, CY, EE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, UK, EL)
  - General search engines, such as Google. (CZ, FR, IE, EE, FR, DE, HU, LT, PL, SK, SI)
  - Official sites, e.g. government or European Institutions (e.g. euro active). (DE, DK, EE, IT, LV, PL, EL)

*“Since I am dealing with issues related to European Commission, I visit relevant sites in order to get information or an idea of what to produce.” (Female, public TV, EL)*

- Wikis (CZ, FR, IE, DE, IT)



- Published reports (FI)
- Press review websites (Press Europe, Caffè Babel) (IT)
- Press agencies, both local and international. (Reuters, Belga, DPA, CTK, Bloomberg, Ritzau, Infomedia, ANP, Associated Press, Mediafax, Agence France Presse (AFP), Press Bureau, etc.) (BE, AT, CZ, DK, FR, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, UK, CY, EE, HU, IT, LV)
- Press conferences and press releases. (BE, CZ, IE, LT, LU, MT, RO, SK, ES, AT, DE, IT)
- The use of social media that is instantaneous and that journalists can stay connected to all day. (BE, BG, EE, HU, LV, NL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE)
- Site visits (CY, IE, LV)

*“What a print journalist could do with a phone call, I can’t. That’s no good to me. I have to have someone on camera talking to me. I need shots. I need people. I need happening. I need places.” (Male, private TV journalist, IE)*

- Exchanging views with other journalists or foreign correspondents (EL, IT, LV)
- Printed daily and weekly papers or foreign TV channels (HU)
- Reading previous stories on the topic (EL)
- Journalists pointed out that if one has been active in a field for a while and have the same address, then topics and contacts begin to find you. (EE, LT)

The use of **social media as a source seemed to be widespread** and examples include: Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube. Facebook seemed to be the most popular.

*“In Facebook it is easy to get information, the respective Facebook-user is providing us with information and updates; yet in Twitter one has to use certain catch phrases.” (Female, private TV journalist, AT)*

Facebook was regarded as better for getting information on specific topics, e.g. politics and economics. (EE)

*“Most of the politicians live in Facebook and when there is something that they are not satisfied with, they write there. But everyday issues of coping and health are not really prominent there.” (Male, private TV journalist, EE)*

However, other respondents found both of these media (Facebook and Twitter) useful:

*“I can ask on Twitter if there is someone in the country where the event has taken place, and then I contact him/her by phone...or with Facebook we were able to contact someone who usually doesn’t answer questions while he did it via this media.” (Male, public TV journalist, IT)*

Twitter seemed particularly useful to gather information for international news (MT). Some journalists follow the ‘breaking news’ Twitter accounts of major American newspapers like the Washington Post and the New York Times (NL). They also follow the accounts of government institutions like the White House and the European Commission (NL).

Journalists were asked how easy or difficult it is to access the information they need. **The majority of journalists did not experience difficulty in finding the information that they needed**, and a reason for this was technological developments such as the Internet and social media.

*“It’s a lot easier than it used to be. It’s always been tricky to find relevant cases and judge the credibility of sources, but at least now you have easy access to a lot of information.” (Male, press journalist, DK)*

The ease with which to find information can also be attributed to years spent building up contacts and sources.

*“It is not so hard for me to get information, but this does not mean that it requires no effort...I have put many years of work into this. During this time I have always had to be fair and reliable so that my sources know that they can share confidential information with me, and that they will not find themselves in a difficult situation because of it.” (Male, public radio journalist, HU)*

In one instance the ease of obtaining information from EU institutions was mentioned. It was said that EU institutions provide easy and user-friendly access to information (BG).

However, there were **specific instances of journalists having difficulty accessing the information they needed**:

- Accessing information from institutions, and particularly national state institutions, was considered to be difficult. This is because there is more bureaucracy in state institutions and it is more difficult to get into contact with the right person to provide the information. These institutions usually also take time to respond to journalists’ queries, which does not fit the timeframes they have to produce their stories. In addition, politicians and spokespeople are not regarded as keen to talk to journalists about problematic issues and often try to trivialise them. (BG, PT, RO, SK)

*“Ministries, members of Parliament, are very difficult to access, they give too little information. If we call them, they tell us they don’t have information or to call back. It applies to all the [public] institutions...” (Female, public radio journalist, RO)*

- Information on sensitive or confidential topics is more difficult to obtain. (MT, PT)

*“In a sensitive story such as the crisis of Libya, whereas before our contacts were more forthcoming, now because issues are more sensitive and of a national security nature, access is limited.” (Male, private TV journalist, MT)*

- A journalist from the written press said that obtaining and accessing information has become harder as he writes about a specific topic and service providers have started to ask more money for sharing information. (EE)
- Two respondents highlighted the difficulty of finding trustworthy sources when working on sensitive news stories. (FR)

*“We, for example, work on public interest stories and court cases, so we really depend on our sources, we need good sources that give us reliable and detailed information, if not we can struggle to gather information”. (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

Another respondent pointed out the difficulty he has finding information when he wants to distinguish himself from his rivals:

*“It’s not always easy getting a scoop”. (Male, public radio journalist, FR)*

- Research on foreign issues proves to be more difficult – distance and time differences can delay the flow of news. It is often necessary to travel and censorship prevails in many countries. (DE)
- One private TV journalists mentioned that it is difficult to find original and unpublished images for TV. (IT)
- When information is required for a unique, one-off analytical story, e.g. an event that has large repercussions such as an explosion, or political upheaval, information can be difficult to find. (LT)

*“It is difficult when material is exceptional, original. When you want to tell about some important matter.” (Female, public TV journalist, LT)*

- Obtaining a statement for TV. (MT)

*“Some people feel hesitant about being seen on camera, so while they might be OK with giving a statement over the phone, they might not be willing to give the same statement in front of a camera and with TV news people expect to see footage.” (Male, public TV journalist, MT)*

Despite the general ease of access to information, respondents from a minority of countries raised the issues of the **reliability and appropriateness of information**. The greater ease and availability of information has meant that finding relevant information has become time consuming and requires more intensive checking for reliability. (BE, EL, FR, LT, RO)

*“I think that the more extensive it [information] is, the more difficult it will be, and will take more time in any case.” (Male, public radio journalist, BE)*

*“Finding information isn’t difficult; it’s finding good, relevant information that is”. (Male, press journalist, FR)*

## 4. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter explores how journalists use social media in their work. They were provided with Stimulus 1, included as an appendix to this report, with examples of the different types of social media.

### 4.1. *Key findings*

- **The majority of journalists interviewed use social media in their work.** It is clear that the **most prominent types of social media used by journalists in their work are Facebook and Twitter**. A clear distinction is made between the use of Facebook and Twitter - while Facebook is used for work and privately, Twitter is predominantly used for work.
- There was some variation in the number of years that journalists have been using social media in their work: the younger journalists have used social media since the beginning of their careers; others have reportedly used social media since its start and had followed the development of the different types of social media; the remainder of the journalists seemed to have been using social media for about 3 – 5 years.
- **The majority of journalists also used social media in their personal life. Respondents were divided about whether they keep their work and private use separate.** Although a substantial number of journalists did make this distinction, **the majority did not** for reasons of practicality, authenticity (it is more credible and natural), and convenience.
- The tasks that journalists perform for work while using social media centres predominantly around searching for specific information and generally staying up to date on news. An important capability of social media is that it allows the journalists to identify and approach people that would otherwise be difficult to find.
- The frequency with which journalists access social media for work and the estimated amount of time that they spend on it varied. At one end is a group of journalists who are continuously connected to social media and at the other end those who log on and off several times a day. The majority of journalists interviewed thought that their use of social media would increase in future.
- Journalist clearly **preferred following social media content in their local language, although the majority of journalists are able to use English as a working language** and would be able to follow social media content in English.

## 4.2. Social media in work and at home

This section highlights the differences in the way journalists use social media at work and at home.

Journalists were asked whether they use social media in their work. **The majority of journalists interviewed use social media in their work** (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FR, FI, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK)

The following table provides a summary of the types of social media that respondents reportedly use.

TYPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	USED PROFESSIONALLY BY RESPONDENTS FROM:	USED PRIVATELY BY RESPONDENTS FROM:
Facebook	AT, BE, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK, CY	AT, BE, CZ, DK, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK
Twitter	AT, BE, CY, CZ, FR, DE, EL, IE, LV, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK, IT	AT, IE, IT, LV, ES, UK
Blogs	DK, EE, LU, PL, PT, RO, SE, BE, CY, EL, IT, LT	FR, EL, PT, RO
YouTube	BE, CZ, DK, FR, EL, IE, LU, RO, SE, MT	DK, EL, IT
LinkedIn	DK, FI, IE, MT, ES	DK
Wikis	EL	EL, IT
Myspace	CY	IT
Flickr	LU	
Xing	DR	

Three points are worth noting from the table:

- It is clear that the **most prominent types of social media used by journalists in their work are Facebook and Twitter**.

*“Well, for me it’s simple, I’ll tell you how I start my day. When I get to work I open my email, go online and log in to Facebook and Hotmail.” (Female, private radio journalist, FR)*

- A clear distinction is made between the use of Facebook and Twitter - while Facebook is also fairly widely used privately, Twitter is predominantly used for work.

*“I draw a clear line: I use Facebook exclusively in the private realm. Xing and Twitter are solely for professional use.” (Male, private radio journalist, DE)*

- Other types of social media, such as blogs and YouTube are still used for work purposes, although they are used by respondents from between half and one-third of Member States.

In a minority of cases journalists described how Facebook was initially only used privately, but that they then started to increasingly use it professionally as a result of increased public uptake. It became an additional resources that they could tap into for their work (BE, BG, CY, LT).

*“The people who came onto Facebook were a private circle, and the professional sphere was then added.” (Male, press journalist, BE)*

*“Ever since Bulgarians started using social media to discuss politics and even to organise actions, I intensified my use of social media professionally.” (Female, private radio journalist, BG)*

However, in one instance it was mentioned that the use of Facebook in the workplace is not always feasible for everyone as there are certain rules/limitations imposed on its usage by employers (e.g. only for limited amount of time, or during breaks) (CY).

Journalists were asked **how long they have been using social media in their work**. Although some journalists had trouble distinguishing between time differences for public and private use, a number of points were evident:

- A number of journalists have reportedly used social media since the beginning of their careers. These appear to be the younger journalists interviewed. (AT, BE, CY, IE, IT, SK, SI, UK)
- Others have reportedly used social media since its start, for example:
  - First YouTube, then Facebook, and Twitter - respondents' uptake followed the development of these different types of media (BE, LT, NL, FI, SE)
  - Some used other forums before the introduction of Facebook:
    - Myspace and Okrut (EE)
    - They read blogs (FI, UK)
    - They had used Bebo (IE)
    - They had used Wikis (UK)

*“I would say that I have used it more intensively for a couple of years. Forums have been in use longer, but a place where everybody can post their messages, like Twitter (which seems to be on its way down) and in Facebook, it came a year or two ago. When Orkut was popular, then there was no such posting as there is today with Facebook.” (Male, private TV journalist, EE)*

- Also, the beginning of their use of social media coincided with the boom of social media in their respective countries. (LT, PL, PT, RO, SK)

*“Facebook since the very beginning, I think since 2007.” (Male, press journalist, LT)*

- The remainder of the journalists seemed to have been using social media for about 3 – 5 years. (HU, CZ, EE, FR, ES, MT, SI, BE, IT, LV, SK)
- Although it was not true across all Members States, there was some indication of age differentiation in the use of social media:
  - Those who are older reportedly still have to get used to social media and do not use it as extensively as their younger counterparts. They therefore rely more on traditional sources and contacts (AT, IE, LV, CY, IE, LV, EL). Some respondents in this older group also questioned the reliability of information on social media and did not see it as ‘real journalism’ (LV, EL).

*“I won’t take the risk to produce something because I saw it in social media, this is not professional. It is risky. And what if it is not true?” (Female, public radio journalist, EL)*

*“This is not my idea, but an idea that I’ve read somewhere, this is not journalism.” (Male, press journalist, EL)*

As illustrated in the table above, the **majority of journalists also used social media in their personal life** although, overall, it did seem that the journalists interviewed tended to use it more for their work, although individual differences of course exist (AT, BE, BG, DK, EE, FI, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, UK). Considering that journalists use social media both for work and privately, an important question that was asked was whether they try to keep these uses separate or not. Respondents were **divided in their views, although the majority did not keep their professional and personal use separate** and/or thought it impractical to do so (BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, HU, IE, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, UK).

*“I have only one profile in social media (not separate personal and professional ones).” (Female, private radio journalist, BG)*

Respondents cited a number of reasons for this view:

- Practicality (CZ, EE, HU, IE, LV, LT, LU, NL, RO, MT, PL, SK, BG)
    - In their work it is important and useful to maintain as many various contacts as possible and it seems impractical to deal with different profiles at the same time. There is also some overlap between friends, acquaintances and sources. (CZ, EE, HU, LT, LU)
    - They might come across something in their personal capacity that they want to use in their work. (MT, PL, RO, SK, BG)
- “I use social media to collect information and therefore it is basically the same type of use as a person and as a journalist.” (Female, press journalist, BG)*
- When contacting someone they are able to keep work and personal conversations separate. (EE, CZ)

*“I do not differentiate between work and personal use of Facebook. This has been working well in my communication with friends, as well as with work. It has spontaneously developed into a working tool.” (Male, private radio journalist, CZ)*

- The nature of their work means that there is not a clear separation between work and non-work time. (IE, LV)
- They don't post much personal information in any case that they would not want the public to see. (EE)

*“I do not go very personal there and I am not ashamed about things that I do...” (Male, public TV journalist, EE)*

- Authenticity - it is more credible and natural (DK, EE, EL, UK, SI, BG)
  - As journalists are public figures and they use their own personality in their work and must gain the trust of sources, it seems more credible and natural not to separate professional and personal profiles.

*“It's kind of the same thing – I'm the same person on Twitter...I'll tweet my friends and have a bit of banter as well as [using it for work]... It just seems more natural to do it like that.” (Male, private radio journalist, UK)*

- Convenience (CZ)
  - Having one profile on for example Facebook, is seen as similar to having one mobile number.

However, these journalists did mention some precautions that they take when using social media, for example they are careful about what they post – they do not post information that is too personal, or that can be interpreted as biased towards a particular view (they attempt to stay neutral) (HU, PT, SI). Respondents from Hungary also mentioned that if they post something professionally, they make their involvement clear and if they get ideas from other people they use it for their own purpose and don't involve the person.

*“It probably would be better to separate my public and private face, however I just cannot see how this can be done properly. In general I never post any pictures, but sometimes people tag me on private pictures and I wish they wouldn't as it isn't exactly very professional.” (Female, private TV journalist, DK)*

A large number of journalists **kept their use of social media for work and private use separate** (AT, BE, BG, CY, EE, LT, LU, MT, NL, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK). Reasons for this separation included:

- A general willingness to keep their personal and professional life apart. (BG, SK, EE)



- Fear of personal exposure or the risk of personal confrontation and being victims of cyber-crime. (BG, SK)

These respondents have come up with various methods for keeping their work and private use separate:

- They use different types of media for different purposes (AT, CZ, IE, LT, BE, EL, MT, NL, PL, UK)
  - Facebook generally for personal use (BE, CZ, EL, IE, LT, MT, NL, PL, UK)

*“I use Facebook only for personal reasons; I go there quite rarely, like once a week, just to see if there is anything new with my friends.” (Male, public radio journalist, CZ)*

- Twitter for work purposes (AT, BE, CZ, EL, MT, NL, PL, UK, IE)

*“I try to keep them separate by focusing on professional issues on Twitter, while using Facebook more for my personal life - if you want to follow me as a journalist you should follow me on Twitter.” (Male, press journalist, MT)*

- YouTube for work (BE, IE)
  - Blogs for work (PL)

- They create different user profiles (BG, CY, EE, LV, LT, RO, ES)

*“I have separate profiles for personal and professional use of social media and I connect to different people, groups, etc. via the different profiles. I don’t want to intertwine them.” (Female, public TV journalist, BG)*

- They have differentiated privacy settings for close and intimate friends vs. periphery network friends that mostly serve the purpose of being sources and links to cases; and they are careful about who they add to their network. (DK, FI, LU, RO, SI, MT)

- They use some kind of self-censorship and do not post something personal on their professional accounts. It is for this reason that they do not join any political groups or groups that support only one side of an issue. (AT, CZ, DK, MT)

*“A lot of my own Facebook friends were active in posting political viewpoints during the recent national elections but I was very careful not to “like” or comment on anything they said on the matter. I have to stay neutral in these matters and it is something I am very conscious about whenever I navigate on social media platforms. The ideal of journalism is to stay objective so we cannot have that it becomes known that I vote for this or that etc. Then I would lose credibility as a news journalist as I have to have a neutral front and report the world as it is – and not have it blurred by people thinking that I have some kind of hidden agenda.” (Male, private radio journalist, DK)*

### 4.2.1 Usage

Respondents were asked to describe their professional use of social media and for what purpose they use it. Respondents' use of social media can generally be described as passive (keeping an eye on certain sites and just following what is going on); active (searching for information); and interactive (posting and uploading information). These descriptions are not necessarily mutually exclusive as the same respondent could be more active on one type of social media, while passive in another.

The following table summarises the tasks that journalists perform for work on social media sites.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	EXAMPLES	MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS FROM...
Searching for information	<p>Exploratory – to generate ideas and get a general view of the current events and public mood</p> <p>To confirm information</p> <p>Looking for information on a particular issue or event</p> <p>Supplementing traditional sources, but not replacing them</p> <p>Searching for people's contact details</p> <p><i>"I use Facebook...when I have somebody's name from a news[story] and we must make contact with them...Many times we find their Facebook account and succeed to establish contact this way... (Female, private TV journalist, RO)</i></p> <p>Contacting people that would otherwise be difficult to find</p> <p><i>"Another thing is that of course in social media it is much easier often to find some persons about which, let's say, no information can be obtained from other sources". (Female, press journalist, LV)</i></p> <p><i>"It is very fast and you are immediately able to access people who are normally very difficult to get hold of. For example, the British Minister of Justice can be easily accessed via Twitter..." (Male, press journalist, NL)</i></p> <p>Being able to humanise a story because more background information is available, e.g. for crime stories</p> <p><i>"The person is no longer a name...now through social networks you can easily gain more information about the person." (Male, private TV journalist, MT)</i></p>	<p>AT, BG, CZ, CY, DK, EE, FI, DE, EL, IE, IT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK, HU, LT, MT, LV, SK, UK, FI, SI, LT, NL</p>

	<p>Getting access to the kinds of multicultural gatherings and debates you would not otherwise have any possibility of joining</p> <p>Finding information that would otherwise be difficult to find</p> <p><i>“... information about the EU as well. A typical case was recently...when Olli Rehn presented the report on the financial situation in Europe. This was a feverishly anticipated report, but he, the commissioner, was not at the presentation. You cannot find out any other way why he wasn't there... There is no official information, so I, as a TV news host, check on Twitter if something is there. I mark the topic # Rehn to see what is going on. What people who are well informed about the EU are saying...” (Female, public TV journalist, SI)</i></p> <p>Contacting people who can provide first-hand information on a story</p>	
Generally following what is happening / remaining up to date on the latest developments	<p>Including key persons as friends on Facebook and then being able to follow what they are doing</p> <p><i>“You have inserted all public figures who think something as your friends and journalists' invitations to become friends are always accepted – they want to be friends with journalists.” (Male, private TV journalist, EE)</i></p> <p>Getting to know what people think / gauge public interest</p> <p><i>“This helps my awareness regarding what they [companies, political parties, organisations, etc.] are doing, this way I am always in the loop.” (Male, press journalist, MT)</i></p> <p>See what colleagues/other journalists are working on</p>	BE, CY, EE, FI, DE, EL, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, ES, SE, RO, SK
Creating engagement amongst listeners	<p>Responding to posts on their own social network sites</p> <p>Informing listeners about the content of radio programmes and encouraging them to become interactive</p> <p>Checking people's reactions to programmes or stories</p> <p><i>“Feedback from people helps me put stories into the right perspective - I get to know what people are mostly interested in and affected by...” (Male, press journalist, Malta)</i></p> <p>Eliciting debates on topics</p> <p>Comparing different viewpoints on an issue</p>	AT, DK, EL, LU, MT, FI, SK, IT, LT, PT

Advertising / promoting forthcoming programmes	Disseminating information on journalists' activities, articles and programmes  <i>"Lately I have been using Facebook not only as a source of information but also to show the work I and the station are doing. It is one more platform." (Female, private radio journalist, PT)</i>  <i>"For example, sometimes I have a story which is published on print and online and then I link the story through Twitter and Facebook." (Male, press journalist, MT)</i>	FI, UK, NL, MT, PT, SI
Looking for photographic or sound material	Songs or music  To find photographic material  <i>"Sometimes we upload videos from YouTube. Television copyrights are complicated; it is much easier with YouTube videos. When there is no choice, you look for material there." (Male, private TV journalist, LT)</i>	SK, IT, LT, MT, NL, SI
Generating content	Writing blogs for third parties	UK

Respondents were asked **how often they access social media in a day as well as the estimated amount of time that they spend on it**. Responses varied considerably, and respondents noted that their use of social media depended on factors such as their research needs, the time they have available, the number of sources at their disposal, etc. Some respondents also had difficulty estimating time spent on social media because of the changing nature of the working day, and because they access social media on a rolling basis in between other activities.

*"I couldn't tell you. I'm more or less on my computer all the time..." (Male, public radio journalist, FR)*

Nevertheless, a number of interesting and common themes emerged:

- At one end is a group of journalists who are continuously connected to social media. (AT, BE, EE, FI, DE, HU, IT, LU, RO, SE, SK)
  - They check constantly and 'refresh' the page anything between every 15 - 60 minutes.
 

*"Every now and then, when there is a free moment, I check it – I press "refresh" and see if there is something new." (Male, private TV journalist, EE)*
  - Or they have set their smartphones so that they are alerted when new information arrives.
 

*"Facebook is open all the time in my mobile, it is open all the time at my workplace and also all the time on my home computer. I can't say that I visit there so or so often since I am there all the time, I live there." (Female, private TV journalist, FI)*

- Another group of journalists log on and off several times a day (AT, BE, BG, CY, DK, EL, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, PL, SI, SE, SK, ES, PT)
  - The amount of time they spend using social media depends on the task - receiving a general news update which might only take a minute or doing research on a story which might take hours.
  - They log on and off between 1 and 4 times a day.
  - The time spent varies between 30 minutes in total per day to 8 hours.

There was a minority of journalists who use social media less than once a day. (FR, IE, SK, LU, MT)

*“There are times when I use social media several times a day, and then there are times when I don’t use it for a couple of weeks”. (Male, private TV journalist, FR)*

*“I started using it [Facebook] when everyone else did, three/ four years ago...I can categorically say I have never [updated my status], I put up photographs, responded to messages, got reminded of birthdays. But I never go on it, I just never think of logging on [anymore]. (Male, private TV journalist, IE)*

Journalists in the Netherlands pointed out that as using social media can be quite time consuming, the key lies in following the right people.

Journalists were asked about their expected use of social media – whether, over the next 12 months - they intend to use social media more, and if so, for what purpose? Journalists have quite varied views on this topic and **although the majority thought that they probably would use social media more, a large number also thought that their use would remain stable, or were unsure about their answer to the question.** Those that reported that they would use social media more in future (AT, BE Dutch speaking, BG, CY, CZ, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SK, ES, SE) had the following reasons:

- The value of social media for their work:
  - They regard it as a necessary part of their work and value the range of possibilities that social media offers in terms of communicating with readers, listeners and viewers. (AT, SE, MT, BG, CY, LU, DE, EL)
 

*“I think it will increase as it seems that we are becoming more dependent on social media.” (Female, private radio journalist, MT)*
  - Because of the competitive nature of their work, journalists need to be in touch all the time and get information from different sources. (PL, MT)
 

*“In journalism you need to be first in the competition, to realize something faster than others do. And in the space of social media many things happen. You can use it to be before your competitors, you can’t ignore that...” (Female, private radio journalist, PL)*

*“Although personally I don't believe that social networks are providing any added value to peoples' lives, the world is competitive and if others are using social networks you have to use these as well.” (Male, public radio journalist, MT)*

- They intend promoting their professional activity/outcome and attract more public/readers/viewers to their news/shows. (RO)

*“I see it as a means to promote information I produce, I can promote my news, my information, my show. It's a way to attract viewers to me, without waiting for the Marketing and Communication departments to come before me. I, as the producer, can simply pass it on to people.” (Female, public TV journalist, RO)*

- To make their shows more interactive. (RO)
- To make new interactive broadcast/talk-shows directly on social media environments. (RO)

*“Yes, I have a new purpose now. I decided to make an online broadcast where I can host a kind of talk show, which I used to do on TV, considering that Internet broadcasting is the future and so more people that live in the US or China or wherever they are can enjoy it or criticize it.” (Female, private radio journalist, RO)*

- TV journalists who use it to search for cases and informants expect to increase their intensity as it becomes more and more common to interact with others through social media. (DK)

*“As usage of social media increases in general, I too will start using social media more and more to find sources. It's ideal because people reveal so much about themselves online and don't really consider that everyone in Denmark can know intimate details about you if they would only look through your public profile.” (Male, public TV journalist, DK)*

- Expectance of an increase in the use of social media by members of the public or specific people

- They expect an increase in the number of people using social media which means journalists will have to increase their activities to follow these users. (BE, HU, MT, CY, FR, IT, SI, DK)

*“I believe that it's only going to increase.” (Male, public radio journalist, BE)*

- They expect there to be an increase in the range of social media used, e.g. Twitter or Google+ and because these will become more popular with the public, journalists will have to follow them. (MT, IT)

- Increased use because of a specific event, such as an upcoming national elections. (MT, FR, IE)

- There will be an increase in the number of younger journalists and the assumption is that they will all be able to use social media for their work. (DE, IT)

*“I think it’s most definitely a question of age, as with the entire population. I think that older colleagues are probably not so open to social media or simply don’t dare to use them.” (Male, public radio journalist, DE)*

- It is anticipated that the organisations that journalists work for will increasingly encourage the systematic and occasional use of social media. (IT, LT)
- There might be an increase for journalists from online and electronic media (TV and radio) and less so for print. (DE)

*“I assume that journalists from the audio-visual media are more open to social media than in the classic print media...because they perhaps have a greater connection to technology and these forms of media.” (Male, public radio journalist, DE)*

- There might be an increase for journalists working within specific fields, such as foreign policy, as they have to collect news from non-local sources. (DE)
- They will use social media more in cases where traditional sources might not be much help. (SK)

Journalists from more than a third of Member States held that **their use of social media has stabilised and they are unlikely to use it more in future** (BE French speaking, BG, HU, LV, LT, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, UK). Reasons for their view include:

- Their and the public’s use of social media has reached a plateau after steady increases in recent years. (BG, HU, LV, NL, SI, SK, BE, DK, FI)

*“I don’t see any further usage of social media which could enrich my work.” (Male, private TV journalist, Slovakia)*

*“I’m at cruising speed at the moment. All that can happen is that the technology evolves further, and that I will use it more often in order to keep up with the evolution.” (Male, press journalist, BE)*

- Their professional needs are constant and established. (IT)
- Lack of time. (UK)
- Those with more sparse social media habits had no intention of intensifying it even further. (FI)

Journalists who were **unsure about whether their use of social media will change in the future** held this view because they felt uncertainty about possible changes in the technological landscape. An increase in use depends to some extent on whether the technology changes and they need to adapt accordingly (BG, BE, EE, LT). This is in part based on their experience with social media predating Facebook, such as Okurt, that phased out.

*“I cannot say at the moment, it’s like fashion, for now it is Facebook where all share their opinion. Maybe it will go out of fashion.” (Male, private TV journalist, EE)*

*“I think that I will not use more, but never say never. A year ago I would not have thought that I would use blogs as much as I am using them this year. Difficult to say. Maybe, using it for search of information will increase, maybe, not increase, but channels will change.” (Male, private TV journalist, LT)*

*“I think 10 years from now radio, TV and the internet will merge. We will use a completely different media channel then. Who knows what is going to happen with current offerings - or what is coming to replace them...” (Male, public TV journalist, HU)*

In a small minority of cases journalists interviewed were of the view that their own and society’s **use of social media might actually decrease in future**. The predominant reason for this view is that these journalists thought that social media has reached a plateau and that its popularity amongst the public will decrease as the novelty wears off (HU, LT, DK).

*“Nah...if you had asked me six months ago I would have said that my usage would increase over the next period of time. But now I think it has lost its novelty. It’s like people are getting tired of it, there’s not nearly the same buzz around social media as there was a year ago. It’s like people are getting annoyed or bored, you could say they suffer from ‘social media fatigue’ and as a journalist I find that social media platforms as being the fountain of good stories is running thin.” (Male, press journalist, DK)*

Journalists were asked what their language preferences are when using social media and whether they would be comfortable following social media content written in English only. **The majority of the journalists preferred following social media content in their local language** (EE, FI, FR, HU, DE, CY, DK, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, SK, AT). The most prominent reason for this is convenience – it requires less time to scan news in a language that they are very familiar with. It also saves time and effort as translating news might be both complicated and time consuming considering that respondents have to report in their local language. Journalists in Cyprus stated that they would prefer to have the option to choose the language that they want to use.

*“The only issue with information in foreign languages is that it takes time to translate it in order to present it in the media, but this is not a real issue.” (Female, public radio journalist, BG)*

*“If enough information is available in German, then I don’t read the English texts; this is simply a matter of saving time.” (Male, private TV journalist, DE)*

However, there were examples of journalists from more than one-third of the Member States **who also follow social media content in a language other than their home language** (and in many cases in English) (FR, IE, IT, LT, MT, PL, PT, SI, ES, UK, LU). Examples of circumstances under which this is done are:



- When it is an international news story

*“It’s essentially in French [that I follow social media content] because I work in a sector that is mainly French, so sources in English are less useful to me, but when it’s necessary, like when I’m working on a more international story, for example, the recent events in Libya or the massacre in Norway, then I will work with English-language sources and that doesn’t pose any problems”. (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

- To determine whether a story is interesting or not
- If information is not available in their local language

*The next language is English which I use, let’s say, there are things that I must additionally search for in the portals of EU institutions...” (Male, public radio journalist, LV)*

- When comparing sources coming in from different countries
- Those who deal with foreign affairs are used to reading foreign newspapers online everyday as well as foreign blogs.

Although these journalists follow social media in languages that are different from the ones spoken locally, it appears quite rare that they actually post in those languages.

*“Generally, people write back to me in Spanish, but every now and then, I might send a message in English. For example, if it is something related to the EU, I might just get the urge and write it in English. In those cases, people write back to me in English, but most of my traffic is in Spanish...” (Male, public TV journalist, ES)*

In select instances journalists made a distinction between the language they use on different types of media, for example Facebook is dedicated to communication with friends (people who speak your language) vs. Twitter which has the objective of broadcasting information worldwide (English is needed) (BE, CZ, SI). Similarly, on Twitter people communicate about international topics in English and domestic topics in the local language (SI).

Although there was some indication of differences in language proficiency, the **majority of journalists are able to use English as a working language** and would be able to follow social media in English (AT, DK, EE, BG, FR, EL, HU, CY, CZ, DK, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, ES, SE).

*“A good English source would not be a problem...” (Male, private TV journalist, LT)*

A concern was raised by journalists in Denmark about following a story in-depth in English as a lot of translation would then be required.

*“English is perfectly fine if you need to find the main source – the origin of the claim or rumour. However, considering that I work under a strict deadline, there is a better chance that I will read through background information if it’s in Danish. It’s faster and I don’t misunderstand anything, especially if it’s a rather complex subject.” (Male, press journalist, DK)*

Journalists in the predominantly English speaking Member States (UK and IE) prefer to use English, although there were select examples of journalists following social media in other languages.

Journalists in Romania prefer to follow social media in English rather than their local language as the information loses important elements in translation and some internet/online terms are not easy to translate into Romanian.

*“No, I prefer English. Especially because transmitted texts are written with some abbreviations, which can fall victim to inappropriate translation. More, I have a better perspective if I read them in English.” (Female, private TV journalist, RO)*

Journalists in Luxembourg also predominantly follow social media in English and there was some indication that journalists interviewed in Belgium are increasing their uptake of English social media content.

*“I will switch more and more to English, I think.” (Male, private TV journalist, BE)*

Individual respondents in a select number of countries are also proficient in languages other than their home language in which they could follow social media:

- French (FI, HU, IT, LT, PT)
- Russian (LV, LT, UK)
- German (FI, HU, LT)
- Dutch (LT, UK)
- Swedish (FI)
- Spanish (HU)
- Portuguese (HU)
- Serbian (HU)
- Croatian (HU)
- Latvian (LT)
- Polish (LT)

## 5. BENEFITS / CHALLENGES / BARRIERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter explores what journalists regard as the benefits, challenges and barriers to the use of social media in their work.

### 5.1. Key findings

- Journalists were able to mention a number of **benefits of social media over more traditional media**. The most important of these included **speed/instantaneous access; easier access to information; and access to a greater variety of sources, people and opinions**.
- Although journalists had mixed views about whether they regard websites as part of traditional sources, it was generally felt that this was the case, especially because they lack an interactive component.
- Journalists were almost equally divided between those who thought that people who contribute to social media are at the forefront of public opinion and can influence the majority to share their views over time, and those who opposed this view.
- Respondents identified the **reliability and credibility of information as the greatest risk or danger of using social media**.
- The majority of journalists interviewed did not experience significant infrastructure or other barriers to using social media.

### 5.2. Benefits

Journalists were asked what they regarded as the benefits of social media over more traditional media. The table below summarises their responses.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA	EXAMPLES	MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS FROM...
Speed / instantaneous access	<p>Fast transfer of information – quickly receiving information that would otherwise take much longer</p> <p><i>“From social media sites a journalist might get useful information that would otherwise take hours looking for!”</i> (Female, public TV journalist, AT)</p> <p><i>“No form of media gets me thinking about a topic as quickly as Twitter.”</i> (Male, private radio news journalist, DE)</p>	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, HU, IE, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK

	<p>Speed with which stories can be broken or disseminated</p> <p>Receiving instant feedback</p> <p><i>“Feedback to your or other stories was not as forthcoming, in the past feedback came through a letter to the editor or a call on the radio” (male, newspaper journalist, Malta)</i></p>	
Easier access to information	<p>Easier to get into contact with the people at the heart of a story</p> <p>Easier to find people who might otherwise be difficult to find</p> <p><i>“It is easy to find very specific people with a very specific profile to exemplify a case or support an opinion. On social media I can instantly find sources that I would normally spend hours or even days digging up.” (Male, public TV journalist, DK)</i></p> <p>Easier to find information that might otherwise be difficult to find</p> <p><i>“You might find information that it is impossible to find anywhere else.” (Male, press journalist, EL)</i></p> <p>Easier to provide background information to a story / more depth</p> <p>Better assessing what the trends are in terms of what people are feeling and the state of debates</p> <p><i>“Currently, it’s more about being aware of the state of the debate. Is a particular subject of interest? Does a particular subject cause controversy? Does my paper have an impact? What does the general public on Facebook and the milieu [other people specialised on the topic] on Twitter think about what is currently happening?” (Male, press journalist, BE)</i></p> <p>Easier access to visual information</p> <p><i>“You don’t have only the information but it might be followed by images and videos...” (Female, public radio journalist, EL)</i></p> <p>More personalised information / humanise a story</p> <p><i>“A direct line to the citizen.” (Male, public TV journalist, DE)</i></p> <p>Interactivity and immediate feedback</p> <p>Critical mass – you are where people are and see what concerns them</p>	<p>BE, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, UK</p>

	<p>Less filtering of information – people tend to be more direct and outspoken / unedited information</p> <p><i>“A great advantage is that people seem to have less of a ‘filter’ when being online. Sometimes you can get lucky as even professional sources and politicians etc. have a tendency to be more blunt and frank on Facebook - and that’s definitely something that we benefit greatly from as journalists. If they say something that causes a stir - that can always become a good story.”</i> (Male, press journalists, DK)</p> <p>Easier access to quotes</p> <p>Real-time interactive conversation</p> <p>The ease with which the public can communicate with journalists</p>	
Variety	<p>Access to a wider variety of opinions</p> <p><i>“The major difference is who the source of information is. Traditional media present the journalistic point of view or interpretation. Social media present the real people’s opinion, first-hand information.”</i> (Female, private TV journalist, BG)</p> <p><i>“Social media offers freedom, anyone can say whatever he/she wants however he/she wants to...”</i> (Female, private TV journalist, CY)</p> <p>An increase in the number of sources of information</p> <p><i>“The possibility of having many more sources.”</i> (Male, press journalist, IT)</p> <p>Being in contact with people from different countries.</p> <p>Social media creates the idea of the ‘citizen journalist’ because members of the public are present where an event is taking place</p> <p><i>“During the Syrian revolution, you could read what was happening on Facebook, even if it is difficult to distinguish between what is propaganda and what is not, but then you understand how you can do that...we could follow the Arabian situation on Twitter through the citizen journalist”</i> (Male, public radio journalist, IT)</p>	BG, CY, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, LT, PL, RO, ES, SE, UK
Creating a community of followers	<p>Reinforcing loyalty through a feeling of community as people feel valued and listened to</p>	BE, DK, FR, DE, MT, NL, ES

	<p>Good for networking with sources</p> <p>Closer rapport with the audience</p> <p>Better relationship with the public due to greater interaction</p>	
Credibility and authenticity	<p>Being able to provide exclusive, updated information adds to journalists' credibility as news providers</p> <p>More exclusive and original information</p> <p>Getting information from sources that are trustworthy as they are known to the journalist or part of their network</p> <p><i>"If the source telling you is a primary source and you trust the person, yes, it's an advantage to contact them on Twitter."</i> (Male, private radio journalist, ES)</p> <p>Receiving direct and uncensored information</p>	BE, CZ, FI, DE, PL, ES
Easier to communicate with people	<p>Contact people directly on a common platform</p> <p>Journalists receiving updates on recent events that happened in people's lives</p> <p>It is possible to reach a wider audience of people</p> <p><i>"Access to audiences that we couldn't have reached before...Because everything is suddenly happening much more quickly, things are spreading much more quickly and widely, so yes, the impact, the 'strike force', of the information could be greater..."</i> (Female, private radio journalist, FR)</p>	AT, CY, EE, FR, LV
Receiving focussed information	<p>Being able to filter the information one receives by directly following experts and people of interest</p> <p><i>"By choosing who to follow on Twitter I can regulate the information I get."</i> (Male, private radio journalist, AT)</p> <p><i>"I get hundreds of PR mails of no interest to me and on Twitter I have only what I want myself and once I stop liking something, I just unsubscribe."</i> (Female, private radio journalist, PL)</p>	AT, PL, PT, SI
Increasing the profiles of journalists	<p>It is possible to drive the profile of a journalist or organisation through a Facebook page</p> <p><i>"It does raise your profile. People follow you and they're interested in what you have to say. Maybe people who wouldn't watch the news for whatever reason - time [constraints] or their view of [the station] or whatever - but they might be</i></p>	IE, NL

	<i>more interested in your tweets.” (Male, private TV journalist, IE)</i>	
Finding story ideas	Finding inspiration for stories and different angles	DK
Cost-efficient	It is a cost-efficient way of looking at what is happening in the world right now	FI
Always at hand	Easily accessible through smartphones	HU
Generally keeping up with events	Social media plays an important role in keeping journalists up to date on a variety of issues	IE
Freedom of speech	Social media is difficult to control – freedom of expression and speech can easily prevail  <i>“The advantage is that they are free, they are difficult to censor and they can do counter-information, those who do counter-information are quite popular among people” (Male, public TV journalist, IT)</i>	IT

Despite these benefits mentioned, journalists from Bulgaria and Slovenia held that they would like to avoid a direct comparison between social media and traditional sources as they are regarded as complimentary and part of a bigger mix of sources available for journalists to use.

Respondents were asked whether they regard websites as part of traditional sources. The journalists had mixed views on this issue, but nearly all felt that **websites are part of tradition sources** (DK, FI, EL, SK, AT, BG, CZ, EE, FR, DE, EL, CY, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SE, UK, IE, HU, IT, LV). The main reason for this is that **they lack an interactive component**. Where websites have incorporated interactive capability, they were considered to be part of social media (BG, PL).

*“All traditional media with their websites have allocated a place for comments and this is just like the social media.” (Female, public radio journalist, BG)*

However, there were some journalists who regarded websites as part of social media irrespective of the lack of interaction as they are part of ‘modern media’ – they are online, they are quick to provide information. (IT, SI)

### 5.3. Are social media leaders influencing other people?

Journalists were asked whether they agree with the view that those that contribute to social media are at the forefront of public opinion and can influence the majority to share their views over time.

The journalists viewed this as a complicated issue and were **roughly equally divided between those who agreed with the statement and those who opposed it**. Those that **agreed** that contributors to social media are at the forefront of public opinion and can influence the majority to share their views over time gave the following **reasons** (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI, SE, UK):

- The speed of the transfer of information is enormous
  - Those who are using social media are probably reading and receiving news sooner than others and therefore also disseminating that information to others.
  - The speed of information sharing leads to a snowball effect – information is shared quickly, irrespective of its authenticity and that implies a certain power to those who launch the information.

- People tend to believe what they read and watch on social media

*“I definitely agree that if you are told something enough times you will start believing it yourself. So there is power in repetition as well as the reach of social media...” (Male, private radio journalist, DK)*

- The larger the following, the larger the influence

*“On Twitter, you can gain influence with the audience. A person who has 1,000 or 2,000 or 4,000 or 10,000 or 100,000 followers will have a greater influence than a person who has 44 followers.” (Male, press journalist, BE)*

*“It depends greatly on how many followers someone has got. You can influence a lot of people, but you need to have the audience in order to do this.” (Male, private radio journalist, UK)*

- Social media provides an opportunity for ordinary people with interesting points of view to become visible and there are well known social media users who have become opinion leaders.

*“I totally agree, because these people, if they have strong opinions and offer sustainable facts backing their views, they can influence people.” (Female, private radio journalist, CY)*

*“Social media provides a channel for those opinions which are not so easily published in other media.” (Male, public TV journalist, FI)*

- Social media can mobilise support for a cause and influence people to act, or sway their view in a particular way (e.g. protests in Greece and the Arab countries).

*“Yes, I agree and we have a real example of that with the ‘movement of angry citizens’ (this movement was set up through Facebook urging people demonstrating in a peaceful way, to the main square of Athens, against measures that the government have taken).” (Male, private TV journalist, EL)*

- Social media contributors influence the opinions of certain groups only, such as the younger generation that uses social media.
- Politicians are using social media to disseminate their ideologies and mobilise opinion.



- Social media can also be used to spread ‘negative’ views, such as xenophobia.

Those who **disagreed held that despite the benefits of social media, it does not make contributors opinion leaders *per se*** (BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, FR, LV, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE). They gave the following reasons:

- Other media sources, such as TV, radio and the press, have greater potential to influence public opinion than social media.

*“No, no, because if you compare them to the radio or the TV, I don’t think more people use social media sites than watch TV or listen to the radio, I hope I’m not mistaken.” (Male, public radio journalist, FR)*

*“...in my opinion even nowadays television is the means which can actually influence people. It’s the means which combines sound, image and credibility of the journalist who transmits the information.” (Male, public TV journalist, CY)*

*“I think that visibility in social media is not sufficient to really put forward and enforce a cause or opinion. It needs to be forwarded by the traditional media as well...” (Female, public TV journalist, BG)*

*“The traditional media are still dominant in influencing public opinion. The social media have only an intermediary influence: what the journalist read on social media is then projected and interpreted in their actual work.” (Male, public radio journalist, CZ)*

- If people are able to influence others it is because of who they are and what they say, not the medium they use. Those who become opinion leaders in social media are the kinds of people who would have become opinion leaders anyway, although they are able to do this during a shorter period of time and with a larger audience. It is not social media that is responsible for the leadership of some persons, as they already have a presence and credibility ‘offline’.

*“He has to have something else to offer than just an online blog. If it’s just some random blogger ranting away he won’t get far. He has to be known already for people to pay attention.” (Male, print journalist, DK)*

- Social media is an exchange platform that enables people to build groups, communicate and network – the aim is not to bring a single person to the fore.
- A lot of information shared on social networks relate to ordinary daily life, rather than substantive issues.

*“There are some people who profile themselves as opinion-makers, but there are also many children, pensioners and ordinary adults who feel it is important to announce the death of a pet or what they are going to cook for dinner.” (Female, public radio journalist, NL)*

- If a person's post is popular it does not necessarily mean that this person is popular and could influence a large portion of the population. It just means that what they have posted at a specific time was catchy.
- Social media influences politics and social reality, but not public opinion.

*"It is quite complicated. I do not think social media have a large influence on public opinion, in general. Yet, they are creating new problems by using new communication options, such as demonstrations organised on Facebook or the case when a politician had some racist remarks on his Facebook page."* (Male, public TV journalist, CZ)

- Social media has a limited audience

*"I disagree, because this includes only a number of people who use the specific media and if we think of the age groups especially in Cyprus of those individuals who have access to these networks..."* (Male, public TV journalist, CY)

- There are too many different opinions voiced on social media for one to stand out and become influential. Pertinent, in-depth analysis in other types of media (e.g. the press) is more likely to influence public opinion.
- People's opinions are generally quite difficult to change, irrespective of the medium used.

#### 5.4. Risks of social media

Respondents were asked what they regarded as the risks or dangers of using social media. These risks are summarised in the following table:

RISK CATEGORY	EXAMPLE	MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS FROM...
Credibility / reliability of information	<p>The risk of not verifying sources and broadcasting false information</p> <p><i>"I check several sources and if there is inconsistency, I don't use the information. Therefore, I prefer to use only opinions coming from social media, not facts."</i> (Female, public radio journalist, BG)</p> <p><i>"To reproduce something that has not been confirmed and proves to be untrue..."</i> (Male, press journalist, CY)</p> <p><i>"Trustworthiness is the issue. I do not see the face of the person, I do not know if they are being sincere and honest."</i> (Male, private radio journalist, CZ)</p> <p>If the real identity behind a source is unknown it makes it more difficult to verify information</p>	BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FR, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK

	<p><i>"I remember a blogster from Syria who described what was happening during the revolution, the terrible things that were happening there. But she later turned out to be someone from America."</i> (Male, private TV journalist, BE)</p> <p>Biased reporting – reporting only one side of the story</p> <p>Superficial reporting – not going in-depth into a story</p> <p>People are able to 'hide' online and not show their real identity</p> <p>The danger of 'jumping on the bandwagon' and evaluating a reported story to be more credible or significant than it is in reality</p> <p><i>"As a journalist, I work on the principle that it [social media] isn't a source...it's an indication, a trend."</i> (Female, private radio journalist, FR)</p> <p>Using social media as the only source of information for a story</p> <p><i>"The only risk is to let yourself focus on what social media say and make them be your only source. If you do that, you are not a journalist. Journalism is about searching, developing primary ideas and not taking the ideas from somewhere else and presenting them as yours. They can only have additional value."</i> (Male, press journalist, EL)</p> <p>Using information that had been manipulated</p> <p><i>"You need to know how to spot [what is] just propaganda...the real interest which is, for a politician, to gain supporters."</i> (Male, public TV journalist, PL)</p> <p><i>"The risk of manipulation is far higher than in the case of television or written press. I don't think there is another environment to hold a greater capacity to be used for manipulation than this zone [social media]."</i> (Female, private TV journalist, RO)</p> <p>Lack of time to validate information</p> <p><i>"When I am not sure, I say it – I got this news item online, so that everybody knows."</i> (Male, private radio journalist, IT)</p> <p><i>"Twitter can be great, but it's like a frenzy of Chinese whispers at its worst"</i> (Male, press journalist, UK)</p>	
Risk of personal or professional harm	<p>Becoming too involved in discussions and giving ones personal opinions / not remaining neutral</p> <p><i>"If you are not careful, you give people an excuse to attack you."</i> (Male, private TV journalist, HU)</p> <p>Getting addicted to social media and it</p>	BE, EE, EL, HU, IE, MT, NL, RO, SI, UK

	<p>consequently disrupting your life</p> <p>Risking your reputation due to your own openness on social media</p> <p><i>"Tweeting their personal views and inappropriate things...people not distinguishing between social media and their personal life and day job...there definitely are dangers for journalists in that sense". (Female, private TV journalist, UK)</i></p>	
Data protection / information security	<p>Fear of private information being hacked</p> <p><i>"There are hackers who can hack and get your personal information." (Female, private radio journalist, CY)</i></p> <p>Fear of their online activity being followed – a person's online activity might be under surveillance</p> <p><i>"My activity can be followed. All accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Gmail are linked together, so there is no possibility for anonymity." (Female, private radio journalist, PL)</i></p>	AT, CY, DK, FI, PL, RO, SI
Private / professional boundaries	<p>Revealing too much personal information about yourself that will affect your reputation</p> <p>Posting personal information on a professional medium such as Twitter</p> <p><i>"Being added to certain groups which might harm your reputation as a journalist without your knowledge" (male, public TV journalist, Malta)</i></p> <p><i>"Privacy, both personal and professional, and... certain confusion between private and professional lives, which sometimes overlap" (Male, public radio journalist, ES)</i></p>	AT, BE, EE, MT, SK, ES
Lack of regulation of the information on social media platforms	<p>Spreading harmful messages - easily propagating race prejudice, xenophobia, etc.</p> <p><i>"Spreading hate speech becomes too attractive for some people when you are able to do that by using anonymous user identity." (male, Public TV journalist, FI)</i></p>	FI, FR, RO, SI
Accidentally violating copyright or publishing information not for public consumption	<p>Using someone else's information as your own</p> <p><i>"The dangers: 'borrowing' someone else's texts and having to deal with copyright issues which in actuality it is very easy to do given the timeframes we work under..." (Male, public TV journalist, CY)</i></p> <p>Publishing content that is not for public consumption</p> <p><i>"The risks lie in publishing content that is not actually intended for the public." (Male, private radio journalist, DE)</i></p>	CY, PL, DE

More scrutiny of their work	A mistake made is a mistake seen by the world <i>“Your work reaches peoples faster, more directly, this increases the pressures of deadlines and quality... if you make a mistake it won't be seen once in a newspaper, but it will be seen on the website and whenever people share your story... the mistake keeps circulating online.” (Male, press journalist, MT)</i>	MT, ES
The involving nature of social media	Too much information is posted which is time consuming to sift through <i>“It is very involving. You must select a lot, think a lot, you spend a lot of time acting not necessarily in the fastest way although it could be faster to call someone on the phone. But you are already lazy to remember some ways. That is simulation culture and you are a part of it. Information repeats, you find less and less unique things. And you increase what already is known. Not adding to anything new.” (Female, public radio journalist, LT)</i>	LT

### 5.5. Barriers to using social media

Journalists were asked what they thought the main barriers to using social media are in their work and whether there are any specific infrastructure barriers.

**Nearly all the journalists interviewed did not experience significant infrastructure barriers.**

*“There are no barriers; you can always have access to everything anytime you want. It is up to you how to use them [social media].” (Male, private TV journalist, EL)*

A minority of journalists would like to have smartphones and regarded not having them as a barrier to access. (BE, CY, PL)

*“Not being able to have a mobile phone which has internet access, email access or even an iPad where at any time you can find the information you need and transmit it...the employer should not be forced to provide these services to you but he should at least get special deals from providers for this.” (Male, public TV journalist, CY)*

Other infrastructure barriers related to low internet connection speed, especially when journalists are out in the field (CZ, FI, ES), but also occasionally in the office (MT). Internet connection fees and the high price of devices were also mentioned in one instance (MT).

As with infrastructure, the majority of journalists **did not report any other significant barriers.**

*“I don’t know if there are any real barriers. Using social media is quite easy and simple when you know what you are looking for. If connections fail then it is an obstacle.” (Male, private radio journalist, FI)*

However, some journalists mentioned the following minor barriers:

- Limited use of social media because of their own lack of skills. They would like to take steps to expand their use of social media even further, especially the older journalists. (CY, DK, FI, EL, MT, PT, SE)

*“I think we journalists are stuck in our traditional ways of thinking, which in many ways can hinder us in our development.” (Female, press journalist, SE)*

*“The barrier is that I do not know how to use them, except for Facebook. The barrier for me is that nobody in my organisation has ever taught me how to use them.” (Female, public radio journalist, EL)*

- Difficulty identifying the interesting information amongst all the information that they receive. (BE, LT)
- Employers who are not convinced about the benefits of social media for journalists’ work or who restrict use during work hours. (CY)
  - Agreements made with employers about what can and cannot be communicated via social media. (NL)

- Not having enough time to use social media as much as they would like to. (CY, FR)

*“We all have a computer, we all have internet access, but it all requires an investment of time, so it’s a little bit time consuming.” (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

- Being required by some social media platforms to enter personal information in order to register with them. (FR, LV)
- Social sites are very strongly monopolised. (LU)
- It is not always possible to know the real identity of people using pseudonyms, especially in forums, where participants want to remain anonymous. (LU)
- The credibility of information obtained through social media. (EL)

*“Credibility is the only barrier, you cannot be sure and as a journalist you must always be 100% sure of what you say otherwise you put your career in danger.” (Male, private radio journalist, EL)*

- Searching systems in social media channels are not convenient. (LT)

*“Search[ing] works badly. If something is longer in [the] Facebook feed, you cannot do ctrl+F, you have to go through ‘show more’. But that is a minimal obstacle.” (Male, press journalist, LT)*

- Limited depth in the information obtained through social media. A personal or telephonic interview yields more in-depth information. (AT)

*“A journalist gets more information from an interview partner by phone or in a personal interview, than by simply communicating in social media sites. Social media cannot express the social interaction and gestures; they are more some kind of supplement in this regard.” (Female, private TV journalist, AT)*

## 6. APPROACHES TO SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter explores what types of social media journalists use, what their views are on the credibility of social media sources, and what they are trying to achieve through their use of social media.

### 6.1. *Key findings*

- Journalists use social media both in a passive and active manner. It is clear that the most important sources are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs.
- **It is clear that the primary use of social media is around the broader process of compiling stories, promoting them and getting feedback from the public.**
- Social media is regarded as extremely useful and easy to use. The only concern that was raised was regarding the credibility of the information.
- The credibility of information is very important to all journalists. **Nearly all journalists were of the opinion that the social media content by government services or EU institutions are regarded as trustworthy**, compared with information by individuals or businesses which are regarded as more untrustworthy. The main reason for this is that the source behind the information is known and regarded as credible.
- However, such **information should still be verified** and it was felt that it may in some cases need to be edited.



## 6.2. Types of social media used

Journalists were asked to describe the types of social media that they use professionally and how they use it. The following table summarises their responses.

FACEBOOK		
Examples of use	What they like / don't like about it	Mentioned by respondents from...
<p>Update newsletters with comments and postings</p> <p>Search for information</p> <p>Contact people who they would like to interview – individual, company, political party, etc.</p> <p><i>“In my job as a journalist I look for information on social media sites. Every now and then I try to get in contact with people, but for the most part I am conducting information research.” (Male, press journalist, AT)</i></p> <p>Gather opinions</p> <p>Generating ideas</p> <p>Checking for indications of the public mood</p> <p>Acquiring feedback on already published/transmitted material</p> <p><i>“We also use Facebook to engage in dialogue with the audience, to capture feedback and then, in some cases, to make this feedback live.” (Male, public radio journalist, DE)</i></p> <p>Find specific examples</p> <p>Search for story ideas</p> <p>Promote their own work</p> <p>Get information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain</p> <p>Publishing articles</p> <p>Create profiles for specific programmes</p> <p>Keep in touch with other journalists</p>	<p>Communication with the general public is more accessible</p> <p><i>“Facebook seems to be the easiest way of people organising themselves and therefore it is indicative for us journalists that something is happening.” (Female, private TV journalist, BG)</i></p> <p><i>“Facebook is the medium where most of our listeners are so that is where we are if we want to reach them. The day Danes switch to mainly using another social platform we will switch along with them. You have to keep up – and be where they are.” (Male, private radio journalist, DK)</i></p>	<p>AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE, UK</p>

TWITTER		
Examples of use	What they like / don't like about it	Mentioned by respondents from...
<p>Comment on recent events on Twitter</p> <p>Search for information</p> <p>Contact people who they would like to interview</p> <p>Reading / following the accounts of specific people or organisations</p> <p>Keep in touch with news in their country and abroad</p> <p>Drive traffic – tweeting details about an upcoming show</p> <p>Promote stories</p> <p>Managing a community of followers</p> <p><i>"The programme has a Twitter account that I follow and the programme follows me. Those in charge of the programme's account put out questions to Twitter followers because there is active participation on the programme on Twitter and Facebook. They then ask a question on air and I might then retweet it so that it reaches more people." (Female, private TV journalist, ES)</i></p> <p>Initiate and encourage controversy to direct traffic to their accounts</p>	<p>Less used by the public and used more by professionals</p> <p>Consider more professional and reliable and is used by big organisations</p> <p>Important because of the fast flow of succinct information</p> <p>It is completely open (as opposed to Facebook) – you can follow anyone you like and anyone can follow you</p> <p>Less user-friendly than Facebook and also less popular amongst the public</p>	<p>AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, FI, FR, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK, CY</p>

YOUTUBE		
Examples of use	What they like /don't like about it	Mentioned by respondents from...
<p>To find video files</p> <p><i>"I can see a deputy's speech again if I want and I know that this is the original one. This helps me to check things, to refresh my memory, etc."</i> (Female, public TV journalist, EL)</p> <p>To browse amateur video footage</p> <p>Finding supporting material for their stories (audio or video footage)</p> <p><i>"I use it to for images and not for news/information."</i> (Female, private TV journalist, CY)</p> <p><i>"I use Youtube a lot. I receive news from some agency, for example, it comes from France Press text-only. No images on Reuters, no images on CNN, no images anywhere. So we go on YouTube and many times we find a video there. It is very useful."</i> (Female, private TV journalist, RO)</p> <p>Get people involved, e.g. positing a clip for a radio show which people then comment on</p> <p>To find material that is original and would distinguish you from the competition</p>	<p>Useful when reporters cannot reach an event</p> <p>The footage can be amateurish and not good quality</p>	<p>AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, FI, FR, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK</p>
BLOGS		
Examples of use	What they like / don't like about it	Mentioned by respondents from...
<p>Gather information</p> <p>See what people are thinking and what their views are on current issues</p> <p>Accessing it only when being sent a link through Twitter</p> <p>Read and research different viewpoints on current topics</p> <p>Read blogs of people who are seen as authoritative</p> <p><i>"I'm increasingly reading more blogs...they give you good analytical insight..."</i> (Male, public radio journalist, IE)</p> <p>Contributing to blogs / having their own blogs</p> <p><i>"I'm involved in blogging, even if I'm not actually accessing or reading them."</i></p>	<p>Time-consuming</p> <p>More difficult to search specific topics compared to Twitter which offers summarised information and a search tool</p> <p>Regarded as somewhat outdated</p> <p>Seen as professional and sophisticated</p>	<p>BE, BG, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, EL, HU, IE, IT, LT, MT, PL, RO, SE, UK</p>

(Male, press journalist, UK)		
<b>LINKEDIN</b>		
<b>Examples of use</b>	<b>What they like / don't like about it</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
To create an online CV To create a network of people Promote themselves as journalists Do a quick background check on people they might want to interview	Get the information directly from the right sources	BE, CY, DK, DE, IE, MT, NL, SI, ES, UK
<b>WIKI</b>		
<b>Examples of use</b>	<b>What they like / don't like about it</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
For quick background information	Less reliable because everyone is able to broadcast information	BE, FI, HU, SI
<b>MYSPACE</b>		
<b>Examples of use</b>	<b>What they like / don't like about it</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
Searching for people who could appear on TV or radio programmes		FI, SI
<b>FLICKR</b>		
<b>Examples of use</b>	<b>What they like / don't like about it</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
To find pictures to use in stories		MT, NL
<b>XING</b>		
<b>Examples of use</b>	<b>What they like / don't like about it</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
Create a network of people	Get the information directly from the right sources	DE

It is clear from the above that the most important sources are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs. An interesting point about Twitter is that, according to the journalists, in some countries it has so far not become popular amongst the public or the journalists themselves (EE, FI, BG, CY, DK). It is also regarded as quite restricted because of the 140-character limit.

*“Twitter is very secondary. I created an account in Twitter several years ago when it was spreading. What disturbed me most was that only 140 characters was the limit of the post or tweet. I could not even pass on my idea...Seemed pointless to me.” (Male, press journalist, EE)*

Journalists use social media both in a passive and active manner.

### 6.3. Views about credibility of information

It has already been discussed in the previous chapter (see 5.4) how the journalists spontaneously viewed the **credibility and reliability of information obtained through social media as one of the greatest risks of using this source**. Such credibility concerns centred around the difficulty of verifying information, the anonymity of sources, using biased and manipulated information, superficial reporting and the risk of using social media as the only source.

Journalists were specifically asked how important the trustworthiness of information provided via social media by government services or EU institutions is compared with information provided by private individuals/bloggers or businesses.

The journalists again stressed the importance of credible information in their work.

*“Credibility of information is very important for me as a journalist, as I constantly have to be aware who the source is and who is behind the source... verifying the source of information is one of the pillars of journalism.” (Male, public radio journalist, MT)*

**Nearly all journalists were of the opinion that the social media content by government services or EU institutions are regarded as trustworthy**, compared with information by individuals or businesses that are regarded as more untrustworthy.

*“It instinctively seems more trustworthy because it comes from an institution and is therefore labelled and identified as such...so it’s as reliable as a press release that you receive by fax or a press conference. In any case, it’s more reliable than information provided by a blogger who isn’t necessarily known or identified as a source of information.” (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

*“Of course if I see something from EU institutions via social media I will trust it more because I think that [the] EU checks its profiles and if something is not valid they will take it out immediately.” (Male, private TV journalist, EL)*

*“Of course, government services or EU institutions are much more reliable than private companies or individual citizens. Government institutions need to communicate but not to manipulate, they are more reliable.” (Male, public TV journalist, PT)*

The **reasons** why respondents regarded this information as more reliable included:

- The source behind the information is known and regarded as credible. (AT, BE, FI, EL, LT, NL, RO, ES, SE, UK)

*“Definitely [reliable] this is based on facts since especially in the EU everything is documented in transcripts and I believe that the information originating from them is more reliable than logging into a website that might provide incorrect information.” (Female, private radio journalist, CY)*

- Information received via social media from these institutions is regarded as official communication. (HU, FR, LT)
- These institutions are accountable – they cannot publish false information and risk their reputations. The information has been verified and checked internally. (LV, FR, SK, UK)

*“I think that the information distributed by institutions is more reliable today because a large group or a public institution or a private group can’t allow itself to say whatever it wants...and that’s because if it does, there will be a very quick negative knock-on effect on the web”. (Male, private TV journalist, FR)*

- The information can be verified by links to the organisations’ websites. Social media profiles by government services and EU institutions are regarded as a more social and interactive front to their website. (CZ, DK)

However, despite viewing government and EU sources as more reliable, journalists still regard it as good journalistic practice that this information should not be their only source. Such **information should still be verified** in case of human errors and to get different viewpoints on the story. (EE, FR, HU, IE, BG, NL, RO, ES, UK)

*“As with all information, we have to verify it.” (Female, private radio journalist, FR)*

There were also journalists who felt that the **information provided through such official sources (be it governments or EU institutions) are also filtered and biased**; and that they therefore cannot be used as the only source of information on a story. (FR, IE, IT, CY, EE, PL, RO, SI)

*“Everyone who writes is writing from some kind of angle or an agenda, so you’ve got to understand their agenda...I don’t think everybody does [understand] this though.” (Female, private TV journalist, UK)*

*“It’s not as reliable as I’d like it to be... I find that it’s often biased and not factual enough...I get the impression that it’s over-edited by spin doctors, that things are presented in another language, in technocratic newspeak that is very bureaucratic and very European, which distorts reality a bit...I don’t think that the information is presented in a neutral enough way”. (Male, press journalist, FR)*

*“Everyone puts only information on the internet that is in their interest. The EU must be forced to give you information on the salaries of the EU members of parliament, because it is not in their interest to tell you this...” (Female, national TV journalist, SI)*

It was also questioned how reliable posts from individual politicians are as one cannot be sure that it is really them who are posting (EE, SI).

*“I do not believe that a politician has enough time to enter posts...you cannot manage to write all those things yourself.” (Male, public TV journalist, EE)*

Journalists also stressed that social media cannot be the only source that these institutions use to communicate with them, as the information provided is necessarily shorter than what journalists require (BE).

*“In themselves, the social media are not sufficient for these institutions... They may give a warning or a reaction, but they cannot communicate in the traditional sense of the word.” (Male, press journalist, BE)*

## 6.4. What they are trying to achieve

This section describes what journalists are trying to achieve by using social media; whether it is to communicate, collect information, create support, collect opinion, challenge people, consult, or connect with others, build communities, find information, collect feedback, decide if there is a story to dig out, etc.

Journalists were asked about the use of social media in 11 different tasks. Based on their responses, some uses of social media are clearly more popular and widespread than others, as illustrated below.

PRIMARY USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA
Collecting information for a news article <sup>4</sup>
Finding relevant information
Deciding if a story is worth digging into
Connecting with others
Communicating messages to others
Getting feedback on stories
SECONDARY USES
Collecting public opinion
Creating support/sponsorship
UNPOPULAR USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA
Challenging political rhetoric
Consulting or encouraging participation
Community building

These findings echo those in Chapter 4 (see 4.2.1) where journalists were asked about the tasks that they use social media for in their work context. **It is clear that the primary use of social media is around the broader process of compiling stories, promoting them and getting feedback from the public.**

The remainder of this section briefly discusses each of these uses in turn.

### 6.4.1 Collecting information for a news article

This is clearly one of the primary ways in which the journalists use social media (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK). They look for new/original information as well as background information to write a story.

<sup>4</sup> These are not ranked in order of popularity, but are simply grouped together as the more popular and widespread uses of social media by the journalists.

*“This is the main thing [use of social media].” (Male, private TV journalist, LT)*

*“I usually read and collect information just to get the feeling of what people believe” (Male, private TV journalist, EL)*

Collecting information for a news article includes looking for ideas for stories, or looking for relevant written information.

*“There is always something that catches the eye. Someone has seen some story that you yourself have not noticed, it is commented and then you go to the original source. I use it, definitely.” (Male, public TV journalist, EE)*

Finding visual information for a story on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube is especially useful when it is difficult to reach a specific destination.

*“In radio, sound is what matters and during a story we have to include sound trails. I use YouTube a lot, sometimes I find there a sound trail that I do not find elsewhere.” (Female, public radio journalist, PT)*

Collecting information for a news article also includes contacting those involved in a topic, e.g. politicians, CEOs, etc. This can be done through Facebook or Twitter. Individuals are found to sometimes be more responsive on social media platforms than on email or SMS.

*“I think it’s an ideal way to reach people.” (Male, private TV journalist, BE)*

Searches are conducted via various types of social media such Facebook, Twitter, blogs, video sharing, etc. Although it is not generalisable across the sample, some journalists described that they use Twitter to see what everyone is saying on a particular topic, Facebook to search for information and YouTube to find information for illustrative purposes. Others find local and national information primarily (but not exclusively) through Facebook, while international information is collected primarily (but not exclusively) through Twitter.

Social media is regarded as a quick way in which to collect information, but as emphasised by journalists throughout this report, it should not be their only source of information, but rather combined with traditional sources; and the information should be verified.

*“Yes, as long as it’s verified and validated with other sources.” (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

*“It could be a base, but always need to check. I can also find some background information to complete a better image of the news.” (Female, public TV journalist, RO)*

*“We generally gather information through social networks to complement, check and add to what we have obtained from traditional sources. Sometimes we start with social networks, depending on wherever we find the news and then we continue with the traditional networks or vice versa.” (Male, public radio journalist, ES)*



### 6.4.2 Finding relevant information

This is another popular use of social media amongst journalists and is related to the bigger process of compiling a story or article. (CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, IE, IT, LV, LT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE)

Finding relevant information can take the form of passively following information, or more actively searching for it, for example writing messages on the wall/in one's status on Facebook, inserting a link to one's news, etc.

*“This is the most important thing for me. Why else would I be there? I am searching for information that I would not get while just communicating with people or moving on the street.” (Male, press journalist, EE)*

Relevant information could again include identifying and speaking to people who are in the midst of the developing news.

*“[During the Japanese earthquake] I put out a tweet ‘Any Irish people in Japan?’ and within an hour we had two of them [on the show] over Skype.” (Male, private radio journalist, IE)*

Speed is the advantage here over traditional media and the journalists use a variety of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and video sharing to find the relevant information.

Journalists again stressed the importance of verifying any news information they might find.

*“Yes, but any information must be verified, because we all know that the internet is a big trash box, which contains, I don't know, the reports of the USA embassy, but at the same time also a big pile of absolutely useless information...” (Female, press journalist, LV)*

### 6.4.3 Deciding if a story is worth digging into

Social media plays a role in journalists' general awareness of what is happening in the news, and then deciding whether a story might be worth digging into. (AT, BG, CZ, DK, FI, FR, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, RO, SK, SI, ES)

*“I just read what happens (to my personal life) and if I found something interesting I might search it more through traditional sources so as to see if I can turn it into a professional article.” (Female, private radio journalist, EL)*

The popularity of a story on social media is sometimes used as an indication that a story might be worth exploring further.

*“When one recognises that there are a lot of reactions and comments on a particular story, then it is considered to be important and it is worth digging into.” (Male, press journalist, AT)*

*“I see to what extent something attracts interest. I see what people comment. If I see a link to news that happened recently and make 100 comments, it means people are interested in it, so I take it.” (Male, press journalist, RO)*

The journalists might also follow some themes and keywords on Twitter or decide according to collected feedback whether to dig into the story or not.

However, many journalists were at pains to point out that although social media may trigger journalists to further explore a story, it is by no means the deciding factor in whether a story will eventually be written and broadcast/published. Here, other factors play a more important role such as work meetings where decisions are made about the perceived attractiveness of the theme; discussions with colleagues; assessing the broader socio-political context in the country at the moment and whether the story would be relevant. Ultimately it is the journalist who should be able to decide what public issue to address rather than relying on what other people think on social media.

#### **6.4.4 Connecting with others**

Using social media to connect with others is closely related to collecting information for stories and finding relevant information. (BE, CZ, FI, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK).

Social media is used in more general terms to build up a network of people who might be able to provide one with specific information when needed and strengthening these links. Or it is used for more specific purposes in order to get the contact details and information of a specific individual, usually through Facebook and Twitter. Using social media to connect with people allows journalists to more easily find people representing different sides to a story, e.g. supporters and opponents, etc.

Respondents used LinkedIn to connect with their professional network of people.

*“If you do not find the person anywhere else, you go to Facebook.” (Female, private radio journalist, LT)*

*“It is very fast and you are immediately able to access people who are normally very difficult to get hold of...” (Male, press journalist, NL)*

#### **6.4.5 Communicating messages to other users**

Journalists use social media to communicate messages to other users, both nationally and internationally (AT, BE, CZ, EE, FI, FR, DE, IE, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, ES, SE). They use this function in three ways.

Journalists communicate messages or information about their own stories to other users in order to promote a future programme and generate more viewers/listeners.

*“If we do something special in the programme, we will also tease and trigger it via Twitter and Facebook, and via the website or forum of [our channel].” (Male, public radio journalist, BE)*

They also forward interesting posts or news links on Facebook and Twitter (retweet) on to others after they might have commented on these posts and links themselves.

*“...sharing links, emailing, posting information on the internet, on facebook, receiving comments on posts from colleagues or general public...” (Male, public TV journalist, CY)*

Journalists also send messages to individuals in their professional and private capacity through Facebook.

*“There are two possibilities – to do it publicly or privately. I have used both. I think it is very nice. When someone is calling out, then you wish him/her a good journey or something else. Or you may write that ‘I left you a package’ and you send it as a private message.” (Male, public TV journalist, EE)*

#### 6.4.6 Collecting feedback on stories

The journalists had found social media helpful in gathering reactions and opinions on their stories (AT, BG, DK, EE, FI, FR, EL, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, UK). They regard social media as an appropriate way to do this due to its speed and the access to a large audience. Feedback is collected through Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

Journalists collect feedback on a story or programme after it had been aired or published. They also ask for feedback in an interactive way in discussions with the public through Facebook and Twitter while a programme is on air.

*“We also use Twitter a lot when we are presenting [our programme], we are on Twitter all the time as well, we are tweeting about what will happen in the programme, what has been said, we look ahead and we react to what has been said, such as outrageous quotes that are tweeted.” (Male, public radio journalist, BG)*

*“I like to get feedback to my stories, to know what people felt about them; sometimes there are even people that provide additional information and this can lead to further work on that subject.” (Female, public radio journalist, PT)*

*“I communicate a lot, send a lot of messages, I am connected to a lot of people, on Facebook I have almost 2,500 friends, I’ve created a group where I get my feedback from.” (Female, private radio journalist, RO)*

*“I check what people say about my yesterday’s show through the fan page of my show on facebook.” (Public, public TV journalist, Greece)*

However, not all journalists collect feedback on a consistent basis and it might be story-specific. Some felt that they and their organisations are not making full use of this yet – the journalists were not explicitly looking for feedback in their individual profiles and some organisations have not set up their social media in such a way to receive feedback.

*“...while broadcasting live, people should be able to have the capability to contribute with their views...one of the restrictions that we are facing is that we are not allowed to use Facebook on live programmes (TV) because it would be considered as advertising as per the Cyprus Radio Television Authority.” (Male, public radio and TV journalist, CY)*

In one instance a journalist who had not actively encouraged feedback, but had received it was surprised with the level of feedback they had received.

*“It becomes very vociferous where you put your article out on the internet, it gets retweeted – then suddenly, it catches like wildfire because people email each other, but also retweet and stick it out on social media. You get the onslaught that you didn’t have a clue about. When you put it online, you know how many people look at it, because of the page impressions.” (Male, public radio journalist, UK)*

In Ireland, journalists had not always found social media as a very helpful tool to get feedback on their stories as they were aware that there will always be good and bad feedback on stories and the view therefore appeared to be to ignore both rather than interact with either.

#### **6.4.7 Collecting public opinion**

Collecting public opinion through Facebook and Twitter was used by journalists in the majority of Member States, but it was less widely used than the tasks described above. (BE, DK, EE, FI, FR, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, NL, PL, RO, SI, SE).

Collecting public opinion would for example take the form of passively reading public comments to see what topics the public might find interesting. The journalists follow public opinion on social media and this is one of the criteria to decide whether the topic is interesting to write about.

It could also take the form of letting people know of an upcoming programme and asking for their input or asking what songs to play on the radio.

*“It’s great for getting people involved. Like, say you are having a visit from some politician. You write out on Facebook: ‘today [this politician] is coming on the show – what do you think we should talk to her about? Which questions should we ask her?’ and then immediately comments start floating in, and a lot of these questions are selected for the radio programme.” (Female, public radio journalist, DK)*

*“To generate interest, I present an idea to my followers and see how they react to it. I will ask my followers for their opinions about, for example, the Queen’s Birthday or the Annual Budget. And I receive all kinds of suggestions.” (Male, private TV journalist, NL)*

Comments posted on social media are sometimes used by journalists to describe what the public thinks in relation to a specific topic.

However, although social media was seen as an important way to garner a wider opinion than traditional media might allow for, there was also a realisation of the dangers of giving a small representation of the public more attention than they might warrant because of the fact that their opinions could be accessed more easily than others. Public opinion collected through social media can therefore not make any claims to being representative.

*“These social networks are mostly used by urban crowds of people, which are certainly not an exact representation of the Slovenian public opinion.” (Female, public TV journalist, SI)*

*“You get to know the public opinion of a specific network...it’s a sample that remains selective”. (Female, private radio journalist, FR)*

*“It’s a better idea to send a reporter into the street – one can get material about people’s opinions in half an hour.” (Male, public radio journalist, HU)*

One journalist from the Netherlands did not think that collecting public opinion was a good idea at all as journalists have to guide opinion, not follow it.

*“I don’t find that [collecting public opinion] appealing at all. No disrespect, but it’s a slippery slope if you start going down that path. After all, you have to guide opinion and not follow it. So you should not start conceding to what the public wants.” (Male, private radio journalist, NL)*

#### **6.4.8 Creating support/sponsorship**

Journalists had mixed views about whether creating support or sponsorship is something that they should be involved with. They also interpreted in different ways. Some were not sure what was meant by it. (EE, IE, SI)

A minority felt that this works particularly well for charities or in relation to charity related topics (CY, LU)

*“This works very well on charity related topics” (Female, private radio journalist, CY)*

Where respondents interpreted it as creating support/sponsorship for their organisation, station, programme or paper, it was seen as a function of their marketing department, rather than their role (BE, BG, DK, FI, PL). It was only journalists in Romania and The Netherlands who had had to drum up public support when their programme had received fewer subsidies (NL) or who had to collect funds for a show.

*“I host a broadcast show. For this I search for sponsorships, I’ve done this before.” (Female, public radio journalist, RO)*

### 6.4.9 Challenging political rhetoric

In the majority of cases journalists regarded the challenging of political rhetoric as something that is beyond their role, especially considering the emphasis that they place on remaining neutral. They regarded themselves more as the reporters of news, rather than its challengers. It is considered to be unprofessional and potentially harmful to one's career.

*“Citizens can do it more easily, I cannot express my personal opinion via the social media.” (Male, public TV journalist, BE)*

*“We do quite a lot of political stories, but we don't challenge the opinion. We are not creating the opinion, we are merely the messenger that enables others to discuss and be critical.” (Male, private radio journalist, DK)*

*“I think it is not beneficial to me that someone will know my opinion in the public space. I would simply not comment much as I do not want to raise suspicion that I am in favour of one or another party.” (Female, public radio journalist, LT)*

However, in a minority of cases journalists reported that they do engage in the challenging of political rhetoric (FI, BE, FR, NL, ES, RO). This appears to be done more by journalists who report on political topics (FI), and happens on Twitter or Facebook. (BE, RO).

*“I do this yes, on my blog, and sometimes, in very short reactions, on Facebook.” (Male, press journalist, RO)*

*“This is something that is really good on social networks because you can maintain dialogue with politicians directly and you can challenge them, so yes...the institutional advertising that they give you, questioning it directly and you can catch them out...” (Male, public TV journalist, ES)*

One journalist regarded the challenging of political rhetoric as one of the core tasks of a journalist and held that it was not about reporting one's own opinions, but showing the other side of the story (NL).

*“A journalist has the duty to call things into question.” (Male, private radio journalist, NL)*

### 6.4.10 Consulting or encouraging participation

None of the journalists in question use social media to deliberately put across a certain view on a topic and encourage their audience to support for it. Again, the idea of neutrality seems central.

However, a minority of journalists saw a link between consulting or encouraging participation, collecting public opinion, and community building (see below). But this again refers to encouraging their (community of) viewers to participate in programmes or online debates. Consulting is seen as taking the form of consulting with other journalists on a topic, or connecting with people who are at the heart of a story.

### 6.4.11 Community building

Where community building was interpreted as building a community of followers on social media who they could draw on as sources or who become part of the community of loyal viewers/listeners/readers, journalists viewed this as an appropriate use of social media. (BE, CZ, DK, EE, SI, FR, DE). They also saw community building as a community of contacts (SI, ES, PL).

However, where the community was understood as a community of interest, built around a specific topic or issue, journalists shied away from this as it was not regarded as in line with the professional ethics of neutrality of the respondents.

*“I don’t really believe in creating communities.” (Male, press journalist, IT)*

*“I think this is a little bit of wishful thinking. I think it could work for football clubs like Ajax. Football is something people are passionate about.” (Male, private radio journalist, NL)*

Two journalist indicated that they participate in such a community of interest, but to a very limited extent.

*“I participate but I do not create as this would mean that I make my positions known.” (Female, private TV journalist, CY)*

*“I have created something like a blog for my municipality.” (Female, public TV, EL)*

For the tasks that the journalists use social media for, it is regarded as extremely useful and easy to use. The only concern that was raised was regarding the credibility of the information found.

## 7. JOURNALISTS' ORGANISATIONS

This chapter explains how the organisations that the journalists work for are using social media and whether they have any guidelines about its use.

### 7.1. Key findings

- **Nearly all of the organisations that the interviewed journalists work for use social media**, albeit to varying degrees.
- The organisations use much the same types of social media as the journalists: Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube.
- The organisations **use social media mainly for the following purposes**: to interact with the public; to communicate, for example about programming information; to promote their programmes; and to drive traffic.
- Journalists from more than two-thirds of Member States held that their **organisations did not have formal guidelines** on how social media should be used.
- Although formal guidelines might not exist, **social media is not seen as separate from the more general reporting ethics** that governs the use of both traditional sources and social media.

### 7.2. Employers' use of social media

Respondents were asked what social media their employers use and for what purpose. **Nearly all of the organisations that the interviewed journalists work for use social media, albeit to varying degrees.**

In a minority of cases journalists were not really aware of the detail of their employers' use of social media, particularly where the journalist was working for more than one organisation as a freelancer. (CY, FI, EL, HU, SK, UK, PL)

*"Don't know, some of my employers use social media and some others don't, but I don't know what exactly, I don't have a clue..." (Male, private radio journalist, EL)*

In two instances journalists regarded the uptake of social media by employers as having been driven by journalists, rather than it being a policy-drive approach (IE, LV).

*"The journalists brought it [social media] in, the shows coped on to it and the editors and producers thought 'we better get on to this'...Now if you asked me who isn't on social media, it's probably the management and CEO." (Male, private radio journalist, IE)*



**The organisations use much the same types of social media than the journalists:**

- Facebook (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK, PL)

- In addition to organisations' image profiles, individual radio and TV programmes sometimes have their own profiles and discussion groups which apply to specific programmes and regular broadcasts.

*"There is a Facebook page for the broadcaster itself, but various programmes also have their own Facebook profile. The same applies to Twitter; here, the broadcaster has its own account, where one can find information about content that has appeared on the website. There are also Twitter accounts for one programme or another, or for one colleague or another." (Male, public radio journalist, DE)*

*"The organisation has a Facebook profile. One can ask questions there, people can write their reviews. It is quite interactive. You can say what the direction of the programme should be on Facebook. Mostly used for self-advertising." (Female, public TV journalist, LT)*

- Twitter (AT, BE, CZ, EE, FI, FR, DE, IE, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK)

- It is used as a broadcasting medium.

*"Many clips are uploaded with a link on Twitter. People who have not yet seen them can thus watch them on the Internet." (Male, private TV journalist, NL)*

- Listeners can use Twitter to react to broadcasts or programmes.

- Blogs (AT, FI, HU, PT, SE, IT)

- Blogs are sometimes hosted on the organisation's webpage. In this way they have integrated social media functionality on their webpages that allows them to receive feedback.

- Some organisations expect journalists to blog through their personal accounts.

- Journalists have blogs where they publish news/information/articles from the TV/radio stations or newspapers they work for.

- YouTube (BE, EE, MT, SE)

- Companies upload TV stories or specially filmed material to YouTube.

*"We upload video files to Facebook. Also to YouTube. When we had an advertising photo session of the season, they made a video of the*

*photo session and uploaded it to YouTube.” (Female, public TV journalist, LT)*

**The organisations use social media for the following purposes:**

- To interact with the public (EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, LT, MT, NL, PT, SK, ES, SE, UK, AT, BE, DK, CY, BG, CZ)
  - Interact with the public to find out what interests them
 

*“Colleagues use their Facebook account to interact with other people; if they have an interesting interview planned they ask the ‘community’ what would interest them, and which questions they should ask regarding this issue.” (Female, public TV journalist, AT)*
  - To hear what the public’s opinions and questions are and incorporate that in their programmes / generate input for the media programmes
  - To collect feedback on aired/published material
 

*“Our TV has its own website and the TV, as well as each programme, has its Facebook page. This is used usually for collecting feedback and sometimes for receiving information from citizens.” (Female, private TV journalist, BG)*
  - To find respondents who would be otherwise difficult to contact in order to provide a statement or relate an experience.
- To communicate (EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, LV, LU, MT, PT, SK, ES, SE, UK, PL)
  - Communicate with viewers and keep them up to date on programming
 

*“Our organisation mainly uses Facebook and Twitter; by posting information about our programme we can keep our viewers up-to-date...” (Female, private TV journalist, AT)*
  - Communicate about special events they are organising
- To promote or sell (IT, LT, MT, PT, RO, SE, PL, BE, EE, FI, DE, HU)
  - Promote their programmes
 

*“Promoting a programme to viewers and all such involvement is via social media...” (Male, private TV journalist, EE)*

*“My employer uses Facebook and Twitter to promote TV programmes, soap operas and novelties on the channel.” (Female, private TV journalist, PT)*
  - Promote news, programmes, articles and reports on the company’s website

- To create greater visibility for their brand online
- Selling DVDs and publishing materials
- Drive traffic (CY, CZ, FR, MT, RO, UK, AT, BE, EE)
  - Organisations request that journalists use their private Facebook accounts to the benefit of the organisation by referring people to the organisation's website.
  - Driving traffic through competitions, polls, etc.
  - Employers encourage journalists to have blogs as it improves the online visibility of both the employer and their own professional identity
  - Twitter and Facebook feeds of organisations are linked to their official websites, and websites are linked to social media feeds. This allows the sharing of news to a wider audience through retweets and promotes the organisation's brand.

*"In terms of Facebook, what we've done is integrated our website so that content we have on our website, you can then 'like' on facebook. So suddenly [organisation's name] is popping up on people's newsfeeds, which is quite helpful...for getting people to listen to the radio." (Male, private radio journalist, UK)*

- To create loyalty amongst the audience / to create a community of users (DE, HU, LT, DK, AT)
- As a broadcasting medium (SI, PL, IE, LV, AT)
  - Publish programmes, clips and podcasts
  - To communicate breaking news through the Twitter accounts of different departments
- Research (CY, PT, RO)
  - They have agreements with various social networks that they can use. (CY)
  - To research news and information (RO)
- To run campaigns (CY, EE, FI)
  - This is done to get people involved and engaged in the programmes run by the TV channels and radio stations (EE)
  - Such campaigns are run through Facebook (FI)
- To assist in production (CY, CZ)

- Using the opinion and ideas of social media users in the actual broadcasting of TV or radio news. For example, a screenshot from Facebook is shown on TV to illustrate a point made in the news.

Journalists from more than two-thirds of Member States held that their **organisations did not have formal guidelines on how social media should be used**. It was only in a small minority of cases that journalists were aware of guidelines that are in the process of being drafted (AT, FI, SI, ES).

*“We haven’t created institutional policy about it. Social media content is best to be left up to those that are interested in it (not to institutionalise it).” (Female, public TV journalist, BG)*

*“There are no guidelines, it is a free space for everyone to decide on and handle.” (Male, private radio journalist, CZ)*

*“No he [our boss] has never told us anything. I think he doesn’t have to, since, social media have automatically turned into a tool and therefore, we feel free to use them if we want.” (Male, press journalist, EL)*

Journalists did not express a strong need for formal regulation.

*“No. We don’t have any guidelines. Or let me say it another way: If we do have any guidelines I certainly don’t know them. And I don’t miss any guidelines either. I’ve never experienced a hint from management about something I did that wasn’t OK. You have to use your common sense and they trust us completely to act online as we would offline.” (Male, press journalist, DK)*

In some instances journalists assumed that formal guidelines exist, but did not know the details (DE, HU, FI). In the instances **where formal guidelines exist**, these either took the form of separate guidelines on social media usage, or formed part of the organisations more general guidelines, such as a code of ethics. (AT, FI, FR, DE, HU, LV, MT, NL, RO)

*“There’s a Charter that’s just been published. It’s a Charter on the good usage of social networks, so it’s a Charter of good practices, there aren’t any obligations...so it’s more like guidance for the employees...” (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

These formal guidelines included:

- When and how somebody should post a certain statement on social media – according to the programme schedule. In the time between programmes and specific shows they have the possibility to upload certain event information and other news.

*“We post our statements on Facebook or Twitter according to the time schedule of our programmes. Programmes which are on the air at the moment should be also discussed online.” (Male, private radio journalist, AT)*

- Not to post too much information

*“Always keep in mind what kind of information is important and should therefore be posted. The user should not be bored or scared off by too much information.” (Male, private radio journalist, AT)*

- Prohibiting people from revealing business secrets

*“We have written guidelines. They give us orders not to tell any secrets and so on.” (Female, private TV journalist, FI)*

- They should not to speak ill of the employer on social media.
- They cannot refer to Facebook or Twitter as official sources.

*“My company has clearly stated that we cannot refer to Twitter or Facebook as official sources, well, that’s a preconception but at least it’s clear...because we’re on the radio, imagine that this directive wasn’t complied with, that means using sources with a copyright, I imagine that there would be repercussions from the editors in chief”. (Female, private radio journalist, FR)*

- Be careful about the types of groups which they ‘like’ and the comments they post.
- They must verify and refer to the source they use.
- They cannot belong to any political party.
- Journalists should always mention on personal blogs that it is their views, not that of the organisation.

The journalists were unable to say how these guidelines are enforced. One journalist mentioned that it was enforced informally during the yearly evaluation. None of them had experienced problems relating to the use of social media and in some cases these rules are guidelines only and do not create a specific obligation.

An important point raised by journalists is that **although formal guidelines might not exist, social media is not separate from the more general reporting ethics** that should apply and therefore there exists an almost unwritten code of conduct when it comes to social media that is the same as when working ‘offline’ (BE, DK, FI, DE, IE, LV, NL, IE, SI, SK, ES, UK). This was summarised by one journalist as:

*“Don’t put anything on [social media] that you wouldn’t want to see on the front of a newspaper.” (Male, press journalist, IE)*

Other aspects of good reporting ethics that also apply to social media usage include:

- Stay neutral when reporting.
- Journalists cannot criticize other productions of their organisation so as to protect the reputation and credibility of the media

*“We don’t have guidelines, but I definitely remember stories about politicians or spin doctors putting their foot in it by forgetting their public image and being too blunt on Facebook. Then we have all looked at each other and shaken our heads at the naivety of such an action, and some boss have said ‘yikes, not so clever please never do that’. So we don’t have guidelines, but we definitely have an unwritten code of conduct which shows when someone breaks it.”*  
(Male, public TV journalist, DK)

- Always verify information.
- Respect it when someone says ‘no’.
- Always seek to cast light on the subject from different angles.
- Never post anything that does harm to others.
- Always delete any posts from others that might be considered offensive. (DK, IE, NL)
- Do not speak ill of an employer.

*“The most important thing is to be very careful with it, that you don't criticize your ‘own home’.”* (Male, public radio journalist, BE)

## 8. EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Respondents are asked about how the European Commission uses social media and how it could be improved.

### 8.1. *Key findings*

- The **frequency with which journalists reported on the European Commission varied according to their speciality**. Those who primarily specialise in European matters reported on the EC on a daily basis, or at least several times a week. Journalists who reported on general news or had other specialities report on the EC once a month or less frequently.
- More than half of journalists were aware that the European Commission is using social media, although their level of awareness differed.
- The **majority of journalists did appreciate the actual or potential benefits of the EC communicating via social media and were open to its use**. However, **a substantial number of journalists had already developed set patterns of looking for information about the EC elsewhere and regarded these sources as sufficient for their purposes**. Although this does not mean that they are completely closed to the idea of following the EC on social media (although some are more reluctant than others), it does mean that there has to be an added benefit to doing so.
- None of the journalists made any real distinction between how they would use social media for stories on the EC as opposed to other stories and they would therefore follow the same approach.
- Journalists had varied opinions about the effectiveness of what the EC has done so far in terms of social media. Journalists who had not been aware of the Commission's presence on social media regarded their lack of knowledge as a negative reflection on the effectiveness of the EC's use of social media as they as journalists should be made aware of it.
- When asked **how the EC could use social media more and better**, the journalists offered suggestions around: changing the tone and image of communication, improving the social media content, increasing awareness of the EC's activities on social media, increasing the frequency with which social media is updated, greater interaction with journalists, consolidating the information, and bringing added value.
- When **engaging with the public through social media there are three general points that the EC should keep in mind**: 1) who is the **target group** that the EC is addressing and whether they use social media; 2) the **information should be made relevant** to the life of the person the EC would like to communicate with; 3) the **language** in which communication takes place should be clear and not overly technical language.

- When communicating to groups that are hard to reach, such as younger people, the most important points to keep in mind are that communication should be clear and concise and that the youth should be presented with issues that are important to them.
- The **majority of respondents were of the view that social media could be used to develop policy, although they did express some reservations on the extent to which it can be used**, the most important of these being that views expressed on social media are not representative of public opinion in general as it only involves people who have access to social media.
- Journalists were asked whether, if the EC used social media more, they would support it and what impact it would have on their jobs. Although there was **support amongst journalists in the majority of countries** for the EC to use social media more, there were also a **substantial number of journalists who were ambivalent about such an increase**. The predominant reason for such ambivalence is that the journalists already benefit from extensive sources of information on the EC and find these sources satisfactory.
- If the EC wants to increase its use of social media it should promote it more amongst journalists, and use it better in the ways that the journalists suggest.

## 8.2. Awareness of EC social media

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (see 3.2), all respondents had covered EU stories as part of their general news reporting. **In just more than half of the Member States there was at least one journalist who mentioned the EU as an area of specialisation** (AT, BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HU, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, UK).

The frequency with which journalists reported on the European Commission varied according to this speciality.

- Those who primarily specialise in European matters reported on the EC on a daily basis, or at least several times a week.

*“I report on the EU daily, as I am the main person responsible for it at our radio. Now, with the debt crisis, it really is every day.” (Male, public radio journalist, CZ)*

*“I deal with European facts, for instance, the Euro crisis, euro-MPs and work, parliament reports, interviews to politicians ... it depends on what is going on; these days, we talk even too much about it.” (Male, press journalist, IT)*

*“Almost every day on the show... if it's not a reportage, it might be someone who represents a particular field and wants to promote his/her views; compare what is going on in Cyprus in relation to the European Union...” (Male, public TV journalist, CY)*

- Those who did not specialise in European topics, but were responsible for foreign news tended to report on the EC weekly or slightly less frequently.



Here is also depends on the subject of the news and whether a connection can be made between the EC and national news.

- Journalists who reported on general news or had other specialities report on the EC once a month or less frequently.

*“Mostly reflect things that are somehow related to Lithuania. Or the general issues such as crisis in Greece and attempts to help. We specifically don't look for them but when there is a story there it is. I think between 10-15 per cent of the reports are relevant for us.” (Male, private TV journalist, LT)*

*“I have come across it when reporting on cultural issues, for example in connection with the project of the Cultural Capital.” (Female, public radio journalist, EE)*

*“It depends on the subject and the news. Sometimes it might be everyday and some others I might not do anything for a period of time.” (Male, private TV, EL)*

In two instances journalists mentioned that European topics are not dealt with as much as the journalists would like to because the information on domestic affairs tends to prevail and it is only certain groups within society that will take an interest in EC news (IT, DE).

*“I do not write about European facts as much as I would want to because, unfortunately, Europe is not given much space in newspapers and it does not have much appeal...it's something abstract and distant, but that's also the papers' fault because they don't talk much about it.” (Male, press journalist, IT)*

*“The European Commission is not exactly one of the preferred topics.” (Female, press journalist, DE)*

**More than half of journalists were aware that the European Commission is using social media, although their level of awareness differed.**

*“Many institutions use social media as information and communication channels, and so does the European Commission.” (Female, public radio journalist, AT)*

*“I use the information on their page and I am aware that they are strongly betting on these new platforms to spread information. It is still in the beginning...” (Female, private radio journalist, PT)*

The kinds of social media that they were aware of include:

- The EC Twitter account and the Twitter accounts of some Commissioners (AT, BE, CZ, DK, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE)

*“I know [that the EC uses social media], it was Herman Van Rompuy himself that announced the agreement with Twitter.” (Female, press journalist, PT)*

- The EC Facebook page. (AT, BG, CY, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, LU, MT, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE)
- YouTube. (EL, HU, MT, SK, ES, CY)
- Blogs / blogs on the EU website. (FR, ES, SE, PT)

*“I think that the Commission was the first European institution to have a blog.”  
(Male, public TV journalist, ES)*

- The Facebook pages of the European Commission’s Representation in their respective countries. (EE, HU)
- The Facebook page of the European Parliament. (HU)
- The Facebook pages of the individual members of the European Parliament. (EE)
- MySpace. (CY)
- Facebook pages of individual EC institutions. (LT)

*“I see that they use. For example, European Institute for Gender Equality has its own Facebook profile. But I don’t use it very much because for me this is such kind of information which is still provided by traditional sources in great amounts.” (Female, public radio journalist, LT)*

- Other Twitter accounts such as europarl tv and europarl news. (CY)

Despite the general awareness by the majority of journalists, there was still a **substantial number who were completely unaware that the EC is making use of social media**. (BE, DE, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SK, SI, ES, UK, CY, HU, CZ, EE, EL)

*“No, I didn’t know. I have never used their social media.” (Female, public TV journalist, LT)*

*“I am not aware of any official presenting of EC activities via social media.”  
(Male, press journalist, SK)*

*“I absolutely am not [aware]. I’m surprised that I don’t [engage with the EC] or haven’t picked up something through some of the other journalists I follow. [There’s] nothing on Facebook or Twitter anyway.” (Female, private TV journalist, UK)*

Amongst those who were aware that the EC is making use of social media, those who were following the EC in this way (some more actively than others), were in the minority. Examples of such activity include:

- Following individual Commissioners on Facebook or Twitter. (AT, BE, ES, LT, RO, CZ, IT, MT, NL)

*“Our Twitter account is programmed just like a newsletter; since it is constructed just like the department of a news agency we currently receive news and statements from Twitter accounts of the European Commission.” (Female, public radio journalist, AT)*

*“The Commission has opened obligatory Twitter accounts for certain members. I use them to glance and see if there are any press releases, where they are going, statements by the Commissioner or weekly forecasts, which are also posted here in Spain.” (Male, private radio journalist, ES)*

*“I know that commissioners have Twitter accounts but I don’t know if it is their idea or if it’s mandatory. I follow Barroso, Neelie Kroes, Ashton, Lewandowski, Piebalgs, Stefan Fule.” (Female, public TV journalist, PL)*

- Following the EC Twitter account. (ES)
- Following the Twitter account of European Commission Representation in their country. (ES)
- Following the European Parliament on Facebook. (HU)
- Following individual EC institutions on Facebook. (LT)
- Following the EC Twitter accounts on different policy areas. (RO)

*“Yes, I know of these Twitter accounts. I follow the ones for agriculture, Dacian Ciolos. Justice and Internal Affairs, Cecilia Malmstrom, Health and Consumer Protection, John Dalli. Them mainly.” (Female, public TV journalist, RO)*

- Following blogs by EU officials or policy areas. (FI, RO)

### **8.3. Use of EC social media**

The journalists were asked whether they would use social media if they were reporting on a story about the European Commission and how they would do that.

As starting point, it is important to note that **a substantial number of journalists had already developed set patterns of looking for information about the EC elsewhere and regarded these sources as sufficient for their purposes.** They do not use social media when reporting on stories about the EC, but find information through the Commission’s website, the EC press department and spokespeople, the EU Parliament website, press releases, mailing lists, the EC Representative in their country, foreign news agencies, other webpages such as EU4Journalists and Ejc.net, the European Journalist Center, etc. Although this does not mean that they are completely closed to the idea of following the EC on social media (although some are more reluctant than others), it does mean that there has to be an added benefit to doing so. They also think that the EC website provides more background information, which is what they need and that the information is easier to understand. (SK, MT, BG, UK, HU, EE, AT, BG, PT, DE, PL, FI, IT, LT, IE)

*“There is nothing to provoke me to use social media in my work related to the EC. When the information appears on social media, I already have it on my e-mail. So, what’s the point?!” (Female, private TV journalist, BG)*

*“I get my information through the EC websites and there's a press office if I need to talk to somebody. I haven't found it to be a barrier getting information from the EC. I prefer to go somewhere to get the information that I'm looking for, rather than having it broadcast necessarily.” (Male, press journalist, UK)*

*“I am impressed with the management of the EC. Their press department is really good. I really do not have a problem in obtaining information.” (Male, public radio journalist, SK)*

*“I know that EC uses social media, but I rarely use it. When institutions are concerned, I usually use institutional channels. I use social media for monitoring opinions and getting in contact with ordinary people. EC has excellent institutional information channels.” (Female, private TV journalist, BG)*

*“It’s a waste of money. Traditional sources work very well when there is a need to spread official information. Social media is just an additional channel to spread the information which is already spread through traditional channels. You have to pay to the agency for the additional channels.” (Male, press journalist, LT)*

However, **the majority did appreciate the actual or potential benefits of the EC communicating via social media and were open to its use** (AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, IT, RO, SE, LV, MT, NL, PT, SK, LT, ES, PL). Potential or actual benefits include:

- Convenience: staying in touch with the news when always on the move
- Reliability: easy access to a reliable source of news
- Speed:
  - Fast and immediate communication with EC commissioners and politicians via EC social media is perceived as useful and effective in comparison to emailing

*“It is definitely more effective than emailing: I receive about 500 emails a day and I delete most of them. When something interesting appears on Facebook, it’s better for me, as it is shorter. So having the opinions of EU politicians presented via social media may be effective and practical for my work.” (Male, private TV journalist, CZ)*

  - It would be quicker than gaining information from a press release
- Broadening the number of sources they use
- Possibly getting verbatim comments

- Establishing a more informal and direct relationship between the EC, the media and citizens

*“They [the EC] uses social networks to make people become more aware of what they are doing and to speak to citizens.” (Male, press journalist, IT)*

*“It has been one of the EU’s leading themes to be closer to its citizens. So every method which brings Europe closer to its citizens is important...” (Female, public TV journalist, PL)*

**None of the journalists made any real distinction between how they would use social media for stories on the EC as opposed to other stories** and they would therefore follow the same approach (AT, BE, CY, DK, FI, EL, IT, LU, MT, RO, SK, SE, PT, PL, NL, UK, ES)

*“I would use [social media], because I use it anyway. I would use them as I do now for any other story, for collecting information mostly. (Female, public TV journalist, EL)*

*“The source is different but the work with data/information stays the same.” (Male, private TV journalist, SK)*

*“It wouldn’t be a different approach. Maybe a little more attention and severity, as you are not talking about a football match. You give it attention if it has impact over those that receive it. But this depends on you as a journalist, to make it interesting.” (Female, private radio journalist, RO)*

They would use social media in the following ways when reporting on a story on the European Commission:

- Read the tweets and follow the links to the broadcasted articles.
- Use it as one of many sources.

*“When I am writing on a story about the European Commission I frequently visit social media sites in order to get more detailed and also more up-to-date information. By receiving statements and comments, also directly from politicians, I can use this as a source of information for my report.” (Male, private radio journalist, AT)*

- Search for status updates and look through online discussions and blogs.
- Use social media to complete news coming from the European Commission. For example, if they had news about a certain area of interest, they would add the Commissioner’s reaction from Facebook or Twitter on that aspect.
- Follow individual Commissioners on Facebook or Twitter.

*“Well, if the commissioners had Twitter accounts, then I would do so. I will keep an eye out. However, I would not respond on, for example, Twitter or Facebook. I would see if it was newsworthy and would then pick up the phone.” (Male, private TV journalist, NL)*

- Use social media when they don't have images for news.

*"Instead of putting some writing on the screen with some statement the Commissioner made for France Presse, I would make a capture of his Twitter page and put that on the screen, get some visual impact with it, show the viewer his face and words." (Female, private TV journalist, RO)*

- They would not spontaneously search on social media, they need to be alerted.
- Social media would act as a signposts to more detailed information
- They would use social media to get a general overview of the news and then follow up on specific links.

*"I would first check the information on social media just to get a general overview of the subject, then I would look into it in detail and maybe I would even call our correspondent in Brussels to help me. " (Male, press journalist, CY)*

The journalists were asked **what their views were on what the EC has done so far in terms of using social media** and whether it is regarded as effective/ineffective. Journalists who had not been aware of the Commission's presence on social media felt that they could not comment directly on its effectiveness. However, they regarded their lack of knowledge as a negative reflection on the effectiveness of the EC's use of social media as they as journalists should be made aware of it. (DE, MT, EE, BE, CY, DK, PL, LV, SK, FR)

*"I think at the moment it's underexposed, so I think that there are certainly other institutions that are essentially more advanced in this area." (Male, private radio journalist, DE)*

*"I feel that there is not enough information...so, maybe if there is more awareness about the type of social media that the EC uses I would be more likely to use these." (Female, private radio journalist, MT)*

*"I haven't seen it so I don't know...I'm sceptical, but I'm curious, so straight after we've finished I'm going to go on the Twitter account of two or three Commissioners and look at what they're Tweeting...you've aroused my curiosity". (Male, press journalist, FR)*

Those who regarded it as **effective** did so for the following reasons (EL, AT, BE, RO, MT, NL, ES):

- The respondents that visited European's Commission twitter account found it effective since they get information easy and fast.

*"For me it works effectively, I get information easy, wherever I am since I can have access in Twitter though my mobile phone as well. It is quick. It would have taken me more time if I had to find the person in charge and make phone calls." (Male, private TV journalist, EL)*

- It helps the EC to reach a wider audience

*"I think it is on the right track... the EC has to use social media, it has to go in the same direction of the people...they have a problem as information regarding the EU takes long to trickle down to the man in the street...for example this is evident when looking at the percentage of people who vote in the EU Parliament elections...social media is effective for the EC as the scope of social networking is to bring people closer..." (Male, press journalist, MT)*

- One of the interviewees stated that he was aware of the work that the European Commission is doing with specialised bloggers on EU matters and views this in a very positive light. (ES)

*"They are doing a good job in the case of bloggers. They invite them to certain events, they give them information. They almost have the same status as journalists ...." (Male, private radio journalist, ES)*

Those who regarded the EC's use of social media as **ineffective** did so for the following reasons (SI, RO, NL, ES, UK, LV, MT, DE, DK):

- The Twitter accounts of individual Commissioners are not regarded as effective as they:

- Duplicate information

*"Most announce the same as the press releases. However, if there is a decent reaction, I will use it." (Male, press journalist, NL)*

- Don't post often enough

- Use others to post on their behalf.

*"It is also important for the person to do it themselves, rather than entrusting it to a spokesperson. Of course, that is not the point of social media. It is all about interaction." (Male, private radio journalist, NL)*

*"When I joined Twitter I first followed the European commissioners, I do not know if I followed the EC itself. The PR team of the European commissioners received the instruction every once in a while to write something on Twitter. The poor little intern then quickly had to post a message for the public." (Female, public TV journalist, SI)*

- The Commission is regarded as slow in releasing information

*"Should they release breaking news quickly, then it would definitely be useful. That said, in my experience, 'breaking news' is only announced once everyone has become aware of it. It is often too late to be useful." (Male, press journalist, NL)*

- The Commission should do more the popularize their presence on social media

*“They probably have a problem of notoriety, because they didn’t succeed in convincing me to become a constant reader, and, theoretically, they should have convinced me.” (Male, press journalist, RO)*

- The content and language in which the information is written. The information provided by the European Commission on Twitter is regarded as bureaucratic, institutional and lacking the pull required to be newsworthy.

*“When they put information on social networks, I think they are less accurate. Yes, they are not as accurate and clear. They still speak in a very legal language and they get too lost...” (Male, public TV journalist, ES)*

*“I feel that the EC speaks in a language which is too heavy and technical.” (Male, public TV journalist, MT)*

*“What they are tweeting is way too abstract. It’s a long and winding road from what they are tweeting to what I should write as a journalist. So it was just too much noise. It wasn’t segmented communication, they just overloaded with information that was not very concrete and tangible...So I gave up [following them on social media] in the end.” (Female, public radio journalist, DK)*

There were also a number of journalists who had reservations about whether the EC’s presence on social media could in fact be effective, for the following reasons (BE, IE, DE, DK, FI, UK, LT, BG, ES):

- It would only be effective if the European Commission develops a Twitter account where, everyday, some spokespersons would tell what happened at the Commission or Parliament.
- The amount of potentially communicable information is so vast that organising it into something workable could be problematic.

*“I know the European Commission has a Facebook page and a Twitter account, but it’s all very scattered. The Commission is a complex thing: Those in Brussels tweet and the Germans Facebook and that doesn’t make things any simpler. It would be easier if there were one central point of contact that managed it all.” (Male, private radio journalist, DE)*

- Because of the type of language the EC uses, some thought the EC would find it difficult to communicate effectively in, for example, a 140- character Tweet.
- The EC is regarded as a formal and rigid organisation and respondents had their reservations about whether it could manage to operate quickly and adaptively enough in social media to be useful for the needs of fast daily broadcasting.

*“I wouldn’t use it since I have an image that the EC is such a formal and rigid organisation. So I wouldn’t first think of using social media. I have to get the stories together quite quickly so I believe that the EC couldn’t have quick enough service for me.” (Female, private TV journalist, FI)*



- The information that journalists really wanted (e.g. perhaps on sensitive issues) are unlikely to be published on social media. (UK)

*“They want to get their message across, but as a journalist, I know there are stories you’ve got to dig for. They’re not going to volunteer certain info on certain stories.” (Male, public radio journalist, UK)*

- Social media is more suitable for private individuals rather than public institutions and interest in social media is stagnating.

*“Serious institutions must be serious. This is not a place to play. Moreover, it is too late. Interest in social media has stopped growing...” (Female, private radio journalist, LT)*

- However, an opposing view was held by journalists in the UK who assumed that the EC would be present on social media. It was felt that an institution of its size and stature would need to have some kind of presence.

## 8.4. Opportunities for improvement

### 8.4.1 More and better use

Journalists were asked whether there are opportunities for the EC to use social media more/and or better and what would make journalists consult the Commission’s social media channels more frequently. The majority of journalists were clear about the improvements that could be made. These categories of improvements and examples are presented in the following table.

IMPROVEMENT	EXAMPLE	MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS FROM...
Change the tone and image of communication	<p>Use a language style that is clear and easy to follow</p> <p><i>“Moreover, if they want me to visit their profiles they need to speak in a more ‘humane language’, a language that most people will understand and not use terminologies that nobody knows...” (Female, public TV journalist, EL)</i></p> <p><i>“If they were able to present everything in the social media in a simpler, more understandable way, with simple examples. So that it is clear to every granny what any of the directives means. If I could see that those complicated directives are explained in simple words, then I would look at them.” (Male, private TV journalist, LT)</i></p> <p>Do not hide behind legal and academic terms</p>	BE, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, LT, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK

	<p>Write messages that are easily translated into journalistic articles</p> <p>Focus on stories with a positive outcome which will help bring a community feeling across the EU</p> <p>Only upload information that clearly communicates the relevance, e.g. what does it mean for the EU citizen or for specific countries?</p> <p>Have EC ambassadors – people who are appointed to report on the EC, but in their own names</p> <p>Reinforce the political presence of the EC in general</p> <p>An organised social media communication strategy should be put in place</p> <p><i>“They need to have a big push, don’t they...if the EC is looking to do something they need to make a big shout about it and have a big launch.” (Female, private TV journalist, UK)</i></p>	
Improve the social media content	<p>Present more national news, if possible</p> <p>Provide more links to further information</p> <p>Make sure that content is relevant for the audience</p> <p>Have information available in more than one language</p> <p>Provide more personal news (e.g. people’s own opinions and perceptions of the issues) to distinguish it from a press release</p> <p><i>“It would be great if more personal opinions of the EC people were presented via Twitter, such as what they think about the topic. Otherwise, it is very similar to a press release and isn’t going to catch my attention.” (Female, press journalist, CZ)</i></p> <p>Use social media in a structured way as important information might get lost / divide the information into segments</p> <p><i>“Only really essential things should be prioritised. Maybe the EC Twitter account could be divided into sectors – EC science, EC economics, EC foreign policy, etc. Or post less news and emphasize only the important things, like when the EC president wrote a letter to the leaders of the EU Member States this summer about how to proceed in the European financial crisis.” (Male, public radio journalist, CZ)</i></p> <p>Have video blogs available as a source of material for TV and radio journalists / provide material for direct use on YouTube,</p>	BE, CY, CZ, DK, FR, DE, HU, IE, LV, MT, NL, SK, SI, ES, UK, BG

	<p>but this needs to be of high quality</p> <p>Providing more MP3 format materials via social media (just as video files are provided on YouTube)</p> <p><i>"I hope that there will be more mp3 sound files available in all social media that EC uses, not just video files."</i> (Female, public radio journalist, BG)</p> <p>Focus on the story – one message per story</p> <p><i>"Social media should be used to communicate single issues that are close to people's everyday lives. This way you will create more engagement and support of the European Project."</i> (Male, public TV journalist, DK)</p> <p>Updates on parliamentary reports and press conferences</p>	
Increase awareness of the EC's activities on social media	<p>Promote the EC's use of social media</p> <p><i>"Considering the fact that I had no idea the EC was even using social media I think there is great potential for the EC to use this type of media in a better and more effective way."</i> (Male, public TV journalist, DK)</p> <p><i>"I cannot answer that question [how can they be more effective?] because I don't know what they do already, I don't have a clue. So, what they need to do at a very first step is to make me familiar with the social media they use and inform me about them."</i> (Female, public radio journalist, EL)</p>	BE, CY, DK, EE, DE, EL, IE, LV, LU, PL, SK, SI, UK, DK
Increase the frequency with which social media is updated	<p>More regular updating</p> <p><i>"To the question what would make me consult EC's social media channels more frequently, my answer would be faster updates."</i> (Female, private TV journalist, CY)</p> <p><i>"In order to make me consult their channels they need to have real time information, direct information of what is happening now."</i> (Male, private radio journalist, EL)</p> <p><i>"In the same way as the White House, they could also use live streaming more often. This would resolve the issue concerning speed. I would then no longer have to wait for a press release."</i> (Male, press journalist, NL)</p>	BE, CY, DK, DE, EL, HU, IE, LV, MT, NL, RO, SI
Greater interaction with journalists	<p>Greater interaction between journalists and individual commissioners</p> <p><i>"For example, I sometimes ask questions to commissioners, but simply never receive a response. Either they feel it is below them"</i></p>	NL, PT, SI, BG

	<p><i>or they do not have enough time to respond. The actual aim of social media is to generate dialogue." (Male, private radio journalist, NL)</i></p> <p>Provide easier access for journalists to EC experts in particular fields</p> <p><i>"Probably there could be a LinkedIn group or list of profiles with experts on EU topics. That can ease the contact with such experts." (Female, press journalist, BG)</i></p>	
Consolidate the information	<p>Journalists would benefit from a website summarising recent news updates and press releases / bringing the social media under one roof</p> <p><i>"It would be a good opportunity for the European Commission to install some kind of online platform for the institutions of the European Union, a platform where recent events and news are displayed on a daily basis." (male, private radio journalist, Austria)</i></p> <p><i>"It needs to be co-ordinated and linked up ... otherwise it just feels a bit scattergun – they need headline accounts and ways of directing people to the information they most need..." (Female, private TV journalist, UK)</i></p>	AT, LU, UK, BE, DE
Bring added value	<p>Use social media in a way that is different from traditional media – do not just duplicate information</p> <p>Use visual elements, e.g. visuals press conferences</p>	BE, DK

### 8.4.2 Using different types of social media

The journalists were asked what kinds of social activities they would like to see the EU use and how they think the EU could use social media to:

- Encourage the public to take a greater interest in the work of the Commission
- Inform the public of the European Union's political priorities
- Encourage more public consultation
- Collect feedback on what the EC is doing
- Contribute their own views about what they would like to see the EC do.

In response, the journalists offered a number of comments that had been mentioned in previous sections and that they felt generally applied to all five these points:

- The EC's use of social media should be informed by **the target group** that the EC is addressing. It is important to ask whether the target group uses social media; what language do they speak; and are the presented issues important and relevant to their everyday lives. (SK, LU, NL)

*"It should be taken into account how many people are online (in Slovakia). It is more efficient for the EC to communicate via traditional media – TV, radio, press." (Male, public radio journalist, SK)*

- **Make the information relevant to the person** the EC would like to communicate with. This is especially important as the EU institutions are in many cases still perceived as quite distant (AT, BG, DK, EE, MT, FI, EL, HU, IE, IT, LT, NL). Ways in which to communicate to reduce the feeling of distance includes:

- Let the communication be initiated by the local EC Representation. (BG)
- Make social media interactive, for example through Facebook (BG, PT, RO)

*"There should be a feeling of no distance/direct contact. People should get the feeling that they speak to Barroso and not to his assistants." (Female, public TV journalist, BG)*

- Use simple and not overly technical **language** – the language should be clear and concise (BE, DK, FI, FR, EL, MT, PL) and where possible the local language of the population should be used as English might be a barrier for many, especially the older generation (BG, MT).

*"By staying as close as possible to the facts and by trying to avoid spin and by making the communication less politicised..." (Male, press journalist, FR)*

*"If they go to social networks and speak in the same tone and jargon which they use with journalists, nobody will listen to or understand them." (Male, press journalist, MT)*

- Before the Commission should engage the public, it should make sure that the journalists are engaged properly on the work of the Commission (BE)

The journalists also offered specific suggestions regarding each of these five points:

**1. Encourage the public to take a greater interest in the work of the EC**

- Using YouTube to disseminate short films would be appropriate. The medium of film is able to articulate quite complicated messages in a simple format. (UK)

*“YouTube would be an interesting format to use because it would ‘soften the image’ and it connects in a different way. You could put something on YouTube and then distribute it through Twitter and there you’ve got something very interesting. People like to watch and see things and people would be more likely to forward [something like] that on to their friends.” (Male, private radio journalist, UK)*

- Ensuring that correct and accurate information is disseminated. (SE)
- Make the content creative and interactive:
  - Use video campaigns to explain things in an interesting way (MT, LT)
  - Upload important conversations on to YouTube (FI)
  - Videos, feedback on Twitter, applications, competitions. The information must get across solid content prepared specifically for the target public of social networks and must be accompanied by offline events such as conference, book presentations, and film screenings. (ES)

*“...instead of sending a conventional/formal text stating the facts, it might be interesting if they would send a cleverly produced video that would make you build up the story not in the conventional way...for example they could send a video showing Mr. Barroso holding his head in despair contemplating on all the repercussions of the financial crisis...and then showing different spots with his reactions; following this, they could comment/talk about the financial crisis...this is just an example...” (Male, public radio and TV journalist, CY)*

- Allowing the public to vote online. (FR)

*“Perhaps by letting the public vote online would immediately make it a participative network...we can imagine that the Internet and social networks will in the future become a kind of participative voting system that will show the predominant trends...that could be a sort of instant public opinion”. (Female, private radio journalist, FR)*

- Personalise the information. (AT, EE)

*“It would be very interesting to follow a Commissioner on Twitter while he is attending a conference in the European Parliament, for example.” (Female, private TV journalist, AT)*

- Provide ‘behind the scenes’ information. (LV)

*“On the one hand well – there are some official press conferences and so on, but they can also film behind the scenes. It, of course, interests people much more.” (Male, public TV journalist, LV)*

- The information must be relevant to people’s lives. (EE, IE)

## **2. Inform the public of the European Union’s political priorities**

- Have entertaining content that caught people’s attention, which could then be spontaneously forwarded by users to their friends. (UK, SI)

*“What you really want is for something to go viral so that you get people to go ‘wow, have you seen this?’ Once you have this captive audience you then need to get into the meat of stuff, so the challenge will then be to hold their interest.” (Male, private radio journalist, UK)*

- Be clear on what the priorities are. (SE)
- Keep citizens up to date in a language that they understand. (ES, SI, CZ)
- Create Facebook pages for specific policies which have an impact on people’s lives where the information is explained in clear language. (BE)

*“I think the European Commission should go on Facebook because the audience is larger, and should then present themselves in very concrete terms.” (Male, private TV journalist, BE)*

- Have an approach that resonates with individuals, for example appealing to people’s emotions. (BE)

*“For example, Van Rompuy who says ‘We’ve worked hard, I’m very happy, we’ve done it!’ at midnight or at 2 in the morning; in my opinion, this would ‘stick’ better or have more impact than a press release!” (Male, press journalist, BE)*

- Focus on something that is of interest to locals. (CY, CZ, IE)

*“Information on such things has to be of direct concern to the public. For example, if nuclear power stations are to be shut down in Germany, nobody is interested in this news. But if you say that, as a consequence, the price of electricity will increase, it becomes interesting and relevant and people start saying, ‘Don’t shut them down!’ (Male, private TV journalist, CZ)*

- Use blogs to inform people of priorities. (EL)

*“By open blogs so that people will be free to interact with the Commission and with each other.” (Female, public TV journalist, EL)*

### 3. Encourage more public consultation

- Making information understandable and accessible. (SE)
- Create Facebook accounts in the national languages to discuss with the public what their expectations are. (BE, FI, EL)
- Encourage consultation on issues that directly affect people. (CY, CZ, EE, IE)
- Advertise when public consultations will be taking place. (MT)
- Perhaps social media is not the best forum for this. (LV)

*“It sounds good, but I doubt whether let’s say Twitter would be a serious way and place to find out let’s say the public opinion about agricultural policy. It seems to me that such discussions must be in the framework of non-governmental organisations or somewhere else.” (Male, public TV journalist, LV)*

### 4. Collect feedback on what the EC is doing

- This could be arranged through Facebook groups and to a lesser extent, Twitter, by encouraging users to feedback on EC activity using hash tags. (UK)
- Collecting comments from different internet platforms / creating responsive forums. (BE, CY, FR, EL, IT, RO)

*“Collecting comments from internet surfers regarding the projects or decisions the Commission is working on. This would therefore mainly be on Facebook, which affects the masses.” (Male, private internet journalist, BE)*

- Target those who are interested in providing their feedback. (MT)

*“If people have a vested interest they are more likely to respond.” (Male, public radio journalist, MT)*

- Use public polls, discussions, fast responses to peoples’ questions and chats on Facebook. (CZ)

### 5. Contribute their own views about what they would like to see the EC do

- Create blogs per country with the main theme being ‘My life in [European country] about [specific topic]. (BE)
- Individual commissioners should have blogs. (RO)

*“They should have a blog for every Commissioner. Every Commissioner should carry out dialogues on their own Facebook pages. Then you have more sources to express your opinions.” (Female, private TV journalist, RO)*

- This might be useful, but if vast amounts of people participate, will this not be too much information for the EC to consider? (CZ, LU)



- Perhaps it would be better for people to express these views to their governments rather than the EC, as the Commission is considered to be quite distant. (EE)

It was suggested that the Commission **uses the networks that are most frequently used in each country. The most popular types of social media are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs.** This will allow the Commission to reach large audiences and would therefore be a return on investment.

*“Those three [facebook, twitter and youtube] are the top three channels to use.” (Female, private TV journalist, UK)*

### 8.4.3 Developing social policy

The journalists were asked **how the European Commission could communicate more with hard to reach groups such as younger people** and what kinds of things are likely to appeal to this group. All respondents regarded social media as well suited to reach the younger generation because they are familiar with the new technologies.

The journalists had the following suggestions:

- Communicate in a clear and concise way / clear and informal language. (CY, CZ, EE, FR, EL, LT, LU, MT, PT, SI, DE)

*“It cannot be such dry text. Somebody has to open it up for them.” (Male, press journalist, EE)*

*“Speak their language by using music and videos.” (Male, press journalist, MT)*

*“It seems to me that specific matters should be explained as simply as possible. If I appeal to a fifteen-year-old person, it is important what kind of words, language I use so that he would start listening. They should simplify the language first of all and then everything should be easier.” (Male, private TV journalist, LT)*

- Presenting issues that are important to the youth (CY, EE, FI, NL, SI, SE, HU), of relevance to their country (EE) and make them feel that they are involved. (LU)

*“Younger people could be reached through social media if the EC just could find some way get them interested. I can’t say what that might be, something to do with their lives.” (Female, public radio journalist, FI)*

*“For example, the Telecommunications Act in Europe. You should explain the consequences for youngsters in order to get them involved.” (Male, press journalist, NL)*

Respondents in Romania thought that it will be very difficult, if not impossible to engage the youth on topics of interest.

*“There isn’t much to do from my point of view. A young public, not interested in European affairs, won’t be interested no matter what, even if he sees the Commission of Hi5 or other networks he spends time on.” (Female, private TV journalist, RO)*

- Young people are active, they need activities and respond to visually appealing information – logos and catchy phrases. Therefore include competitions, quizzes, fun events, etc.. (LT, RO, ES, CY, LV, LT, BE)
- Facebook is a great online tool to reach young people. (AT, CY, EE, SK)

*“Facebook serves as a good online tool to get hold of young people; by sharing information on Facebook the European Union and all its institutions would become more transparent and understandable for young people...in this regard, Facebook would offer a better access to this topic than Twitter.” (Female, private TV journalist, AT)*

*“They [the EC] needs to create channels that are interesting to young people. A group on Facebook for example, with interesting stories for them.” (Female, public radio journalist, EL)*

- Use fun and instructive videos on YouTube that could be promoted on Facebook. (BE, CZ, UK)

*“When the quotas on fruit and vegetables are an issue, I am not interested in watching boring videos from parliament, but instead, trees, gardens, real farmers.” (Male, private radio journalist, CZ)*

- Link the EC and social media to schools / the education system. (DK, HU, AT)
  - The EC should develop educational material for high school level that called for involvement and engagement.
  - In the social study class the EC could provide educational material that would prompt high school students to go to the EC website as well as the EC platforms on social media, such as Facebook.
    - Develop an App where different assignments would appear which the student would download and log on to in class.
    - Develop online puzzles, quizzes and role playing around dilemmas and challenges for the EU and EC policy making to engage the student.

*“Appeal to the teenagers’ gaming mentality, always being online and always looking for ways to be entertained. Create some kind of role play or puzzle that will give them insight into the work the EC is doing and let them make up their mind about different dilemmas or issues that the EU is discussing and trying to deal with, or example the environment.” (Male, private radio journalist, DK)*

- In the final years of high school let students do a mandatory assignment about a self-chosen EU topic. (DK)

- Incorporate social media in school curricula when it comes to subjects such as politics

*“Sharing information on social media might be very useful in schools; it would offer young people a different and modern access to the work of the European Union.” (Male, press journalist, AT)*

- All the advantages that social media offers should be used. (SI, BE)

*“It’s all going round in circles: you can spread a video that you’ve put on YouTube via Twitter, and can start discussions about this video among people on Facebook.” (Male, public TV journalist, BE)*

- Show how distant activities influence the everyday life of an ordinary human being - providing personalised information rather than statistics. (PL, CY)
- Advertise more on traditional media for those who do not use the internet. (MT, UK)
- Young experts should be hired or experts for this type of medium. (SI)
- Social media is a different way to become politically active – you don’t have to join a political party. (IT)
- Make use of the fact that most students have computers and some smart phones. (DK)

**The majority of respondents were of the view that social media could be used to develop policy, although they did express some reservations on the extent to which it can be used.** Possible uses include:

- Engaging citizens / using discussion forums and generate opinions and discussion. (SK, BG, NL, HU, MT, SE, ES)
- Social media helps to raise important issues and has made political debate more open. (FI, EL, LV)
- Promote interactivity in the process of policy development, e.g. promoting the idea of politicians who look for direct contact with the citizens of the different countries. (IT, PT)
- Social media is a natural indicator of public moods. Therefore it is also suitable to indicate the public’s mood towards an existing or proposed policy. (BG)

*“Social media can be used for indications, but not to be considered a reliable source to base important decisions on.” (Female, private TV journalist, BG)*

- Social media can be used to profile Commissioners and their areas of interest. (SE)

- Social media can be used to advertise public consultation related to particular policy development. (MT)
- Consultation on policies can take place through social media. (RO)
- Social media can be a tool to educate people on social policy and different viewpoints. (PT)

*“Right now young people and people in general are little interested in political and economic information. Therefore the European institutions should invest strongly in the conveying of information to influence mentalities, policies and changes.” (Female, private radio journalist, PT)*

However, respondents felt that policy consultation through social media needs to be done in cooperation with other media, such as TV and radio. (EL, LV)

*“It they [policies] are not supported by TV and radio, little will happen. What social media does is make things known, but not to establish policies and ideas.” (Male, private radio journalist, EL)*

Respondents also warned that social media such as Facebook and blogs cannot serve as a medium for developing policy or encouraging public consultations as they are contact points and interaction is superficial (DK). Social policy could be skewed by an organised campaign and the process is therefore not necessary inclusive or balanced (IE). Most importantly, it must be remembered that views expressed on social media are not representative of public opinion in general as it only involves people who have access to social media (BG, EE, IE, IT, ES).

*“For elderly people TV news are still the only authoritative voice, while for young people, they [social media] are one of the many voices...” (Male, public TV journalist, IT)*

#### 8.4.4 Impact on Journalists

Journalists were asked whether, if the EC used social media more, they would support it and what impact it would have on their jobs. Although there was **support amongst journalists in the majority of countries** (AT, BG, CY, DK, EE, FI, FR, EL, IE, LV, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK); there was also a **substantial number of journalists who were ambivalent about such an increase** (AT, BG, BE, HU, LT, SI, ES, UK). The predominant reason for such ambivalence is that the journalists already benefit from extensive sources of information on the EC and find these sources satisfactory – this point was also discussed in 8.3 above. Journalists also pointed out that the issue might not be ‘more’ use of social media by the EC, but ‘better’ use (CY).

*“I will definitely continue to follow the work of the European Commission on social media websites; by visiting and looking for information frequently.” (Female, public TV journalist, AT)*

*“I’m not the right target because I was already interested in what they are doing and I get what I need.” (Male, public TV journalist, BE)*

*No impact. If they wrote on Facebook what you can't find on websites, that would make me even angry because the penetration of an internet page is larger than that of a Facebook profile.” (Male, press journalist, LT)*

Those who were of the view that an increase use of social media will improve their work gave the following examples (BE, CY, DK, FI):

- It would improve the flow (speed) and access to information. (FR, EL, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SE, EE, PT)

*“That would facilitate the circulation of information, so...the more information that is provided quickly, and the more ways there are of speeding up this flow of information, the more it helps our work”. (Male, public TV journalist, FR)*

It was only journalists in Luxembourg and the Netherlands who expressed concern that an increase in the amount of information might impact on them negatively as it will add to their workload.

- It might cause them to report more on the EC as they will have a better understanding of its work. (PL, RO, SE, BE, DK)
- It would generate interest, debate and involvement amongst listeners, viewers and readers. (DK)
- It would bring journalists closer to the EC officials. (LU)
- It would help journalists identify stories of national interest. (IE)
- They would be able to find out what others are interested in. (PL)
- Generally staying on top of information. (EE)

*“There are a lot of topics and if they did it [use social media more] then journalists would not miss the news.” (Male, private TV news journalist, EE)*

When journalists were asked **how the European Commission should use social media to provide concrete added value to their work as journalists**, there was substantial overlap to journalists' responses with section 8.4.1. where they articulated how the EC can improve their use of social media. These points included: change the tone and image of communication, improve the social media content, increase awareness of the EC's activities on social media, increase the frequency with which social media is updated, greater interaction with journalists, consolidate the information, bring added value – use social media in a way that is different from traditional media.

Additional points raised by journalists included:

- Being informed about what is going on in a way that does not take too much time and effort. (NL)
- Create a Facebook page that explains who is who at the Commission. (NL)

- Present more comparative information between the Member States and examples of good practice from other EU countries. (RO)

The journalists had **varied opinions on whether certain groups** of journalists (specialised journalists vs. general mass media vs. regional/local media journalists) **are more likely to use social media than others**. A minority of journalists did not see any difference in use between groups (CZ, DK, HU, SK, SE); while others held that it depends on the individual journalist's approach to social media (LT, SI).

*"I think that it is a completely personal decision to use or not to use social networks." (Male, private TV journalist, SI)*

Those journalists who thought that there were differences between groups gave the following examples:

- Younger journalists use social media more in comparison to older journalists although this is steadily improving. (BG, BE, FR, HU, IE, IT, MT, NL, PT, SK, SI, ES)

*"Yes, it's very clearly a generational issue, I'm sure. The limit is 40/50, after 50 it's impossible." (Male, press journalist, FR)*

The journalists had varied views about how this might improve over the next 12 months. Some thought that the older journalists would use social media more, others thought it would be the younger journalists who would increase their use, while another group thought that there would be no change.

- Those working on international topics (including the EU) and political journalism use social media more as opposed to local and regional journalists. (BG, CY, FI, IT, MT)
  - Opposing view: Local and regional reporters use social media more as they do not have as much access to people at the heart of the story (LT, EL)

*"If I want to do reportage I go to the parliament and that's it. But a journalist in Ioannina should travel 6 hours to come to Athens and he will not have the contacts that Athenian journalists have for sure. Therefore, I think it is more possible to use social media so as to get information." (Male, private radio journalist, EL)*

- Those working for big organisations use social media less as they have more resources to travel to different locations. (CY, SE)
- General news journalists use it more as opposed to specialised news journalists. (LV)
- Sports journalists make more use of social media. (LU)
- Radio journalists have less time to use social media because the timeframe within which they operate is very tight. (EE)
- TV journalists use social media less because they need 'live' information as social media serves as background information. (EE)

- Press journalists have more time and access social media more frequently. (PT)

*“I think that the journalists that work in a newspaper have more time to use social media.” (Female, private TV journalist, PT)*

- Journalists working on current affairs use social media more. (NL)
- Journalists working on the internet news desk use social media more (NL, MT)
- Those working for public media have less time to use social media. (RO)
- Specialist journalists access social media more frequently as they have more time. (RO)

## 9. DISCUSSION GUIDE

### **JOURNALISTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL DEPTH INTERVIEWS (45 MINS) JOURNALISTS – DRAFT**

*The aims of the research are to provide detailed qualitative information to DG COMM A5 on journalists' views and attitudes to social media as well as how they use it as part of their work. This information will help DG COMM transform the way it seeks to communicate and involve citizens across the EU. The findings will be presented to a conference of EU representatives planned to take place in later November 2011.*

*Increasingly governments are interested in harnessing new social media to increase involvement and participation in policy development and evaluation. Social media is transforming communications from old notions of "broadcasting information" to "contributing and interacting".*

*Social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue.*

*Social media can take many different forms, including internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. The most commonly used social media include: twitter, facebook, myspace, flickr, and youtube.*

*As with all qualitative discussion guides this document is not intended to be an exhaustive questionnaire but, rather, an indication to the interviewer of the topics to be covered, the approximate time to be apportioned to each area of discussion and to provide some suggestions around possible areas of investigation. The discussion guide will be accompanied by an in-depth briefing of the interviewers, to provide them with a full understanding of the research and its objectives.*



## 1. INTRODUCTIONS (3 minutes)

*In this section the interviewer establishes the rules of the interview, and begins to develop the essential rapport with respondents, putting them at their ease and beginning to get to know them.*

### Interviewer

- Introduce self
- TNS Qual+ / local institute
- Independent

### Process

- Audio recording
- No right / wrong answers
- Confidentiality

### Subject

- How journalists use social media
- How different types of media are suitable for different tasks
- Future of social media

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA (5 MINUTES)

How long have you been a journalist [in TV, Radio, Print]?

What type of journalism do you specialise in? What are the main types of stories that you work on?

Can you describe the organisation you work for?

How do you generally go about gathering information for stories? Is there a "typical approach" or does it always depend on the story?

How do you go about producing stories? What are the usual timeframes that you work to, in producing a story?

What are the sources of information that you normally use (PROBE: traditional and social media)?

How easy/difficult is it to access the information you need.

## 3. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA (5 MINUTES)

*Explain: I want to talk now specifically about social media and how you use that in your professional life. I am particularly interested in examples of how you use social media as part of your role as a journalist. By social media I mean internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Examples would include in particular, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, but also myspace and flickr. Provide respondent with STIMULUS 1: Types of Social Media.*

*Do you use social media in your role as a journalist?*

How long have you been using social media in your role as a journalist?

Do you also use social media as part of your personal life, and if so do you try to keep them separate or not? Why is that? [If separate: in what ways do you use personal and professional social media differently?]

Present use of Social Media: Thinking about your professional use of social media, how would you describe your current usage (How? For what tasks? Other?)

Expected future use of Social Media: Do you intend to make, over the next 12 months, more intense use of Social Media? If so, for what purposes?

How often might you access social media in a day? What would you estimate is the total amount of time you might access social media in a day?

What are your language preferences? Are you comfortable with following social media content written in English only?

#### **4. BENEFITS/CHALLENGES/BARRIERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA (7 MINUTES)**

What would you say are the benefits of using social media? PROBE: What does it provide that traditional sources (does "traditional" also contain a website, for example?) do not?

Some people say that those that contribute to social media are at the forefront of public opinion – and can influence the majority to share their views over time. Do you agree or not? Why do you say this?

What would you say are the risks, if any, of using social media?

PROBE: What are the dangers of using social media?

What about the barriers to using social media? What would you say the main barriers are? Are there specific infrastructure barriers?

## **5. APPROACHES TO SOCIAL MEDIA (10 MINUTES)**

In general can you explain how you use social media in your professional work as a journalist?

PROBE:

- The types of social media used. What is the role of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube among the social media platforms you are using?
- What are you doing on social media (reading / contributing / searching?)
- How is it then used in your role as a journalist?
- Views about credibility of information? How important is the trustworthiness of information provided via social media by government services or EU institutions compared with information provided by private individuals/bloggers or businesses?

Use the following list to PROBE approaches to using social media: (STIMULUS 2: Approaches to Social Media).

- Communicating messages to other users
- Collecting information for a news article
- Creating Support/Sponsorship
- Collecting public opinion
- Challenging political rhetoric
- Consulting or encouraging participation
- Connecting with others
- Community Building

- Finding relevant information
- Collecting feedback on stories
- Deciding if a story is worth digging into

## **6. YOUR ORGANISATION (5 MINUTES)**

What social media does your employer use? How does employer use social media (e.g. research, assist in production, promote/sell, communicate, campaign, drive traffic, interact?)

Does your organisation have any guidelines about how social media should/should not be used? What are they? How does your organisation reinforce them?

## **7. EUROPEAN COMMISSION (10 minutes)**

*In this final section, I would like to talk to you about how the European Commission currently uses social media, as well as your ideas about what they could improve or do differently.*

Just to confirm, as part of your work you report on the European Commission? How often would you do that as part of your role as a journalist?

Are you aware of the European Commission using social media?

What kind of social media have you been aware of that the EC has used? [If not aware mention: for example did you know that the EC has set up twitter accounts for Commissioners and on some policy areas? Have you heard of this? Are you following any of them?]

Would you use social media if you were reporting on a story about the European Commission? Can you describe how you would do that? Would it be different in any way from using social media to report any other type of story? [PROBE: in what ways, can you give examples?]

What are your views about what has been done? Do you consider it has been effective/ineffective?

Do you think there are opportunities for the EC to use social media more and/or better? What would you make consult the Commission´s social media channels more frequently?

What kinds of social media activities would you like to see the EC use?

How do you think the EC could use social media to:

- Encourage the public [in your country] to take a greater interest in the work of the EC?
- Inform the public (in your country) of the European Union´s political priorities?
- Encourage more public consultation?
- Collect feedback on what the EC are doing?
- Contribute their own views about what they would like to see the EC do?

What online tools would be best for what activities (here I am thinking about for example, Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, , Forums, Blogs, Videosharing, Photosharing)?

In what way do you think the EC could communicate more with hard to reach groups, e.g. younger people? What kinds of things are likely to appeal to this group?

How could you see social media being used to develop policy?

If the EC used social media more, what impact would it have on your job or role? Would it change? Would they support it?

How should the European Commission use social media to provide concrete added value for you as a journalist in (country)?

Do you think that certain groups of journalists (specialised journalists vs general mass media vs regional/local media journalists, etc) are more likely to use social media than others? How do you think could this develop over the next 12 months?

## **8. WRAP-UP (2 minutes)**

Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

Thank and close.

## STIMULUS 1 – TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA



## **STIMULUS 2 – APPROACHES TO SOCIAL MEDIA**

- Communicating messages to other users
- Collecting information for a news article
- Creating Support/Sponsorship
- Collecting public opinion
- Challenging political rhetoric
- Consulting or encouraging participation
- Connecting with others
- Community Building
- Finding relevant information
- Collecting feedback on stories
- Deciding if a story is worth digging into