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# Digital Political Communication in the European Parliament: A Comparative Analysis of Threads and X During the 2024 Elections

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**Abstract:** In an era marked by digital transformation and political polarization, the European Union faces significant challenges in maintaining effective communication and public trust. This study examines the European Parliament's use of Threads and X (formerly Twitter) during the 2024 European Parliament elections, analyzing the types of content published, multimedia resources employed, and engagement generated on both platforms. Using a quantitative content analysis of 171 posts from the official English-language accounts, this research identifies key differences in communication strategies across platforms. Findings reveal that X prioritizes video content, mentions, and reposts, fostering higher user engagement, whereas Threads leans toward infographics and a more informative approach. The study highlights the fragmented nature of digital political communication and underscores the necessity for the European Parliament to adapt its strategies to the dynamics of each platform. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of institutional communication in an evolving digital ecosystem and its implications for electoral mobilization and public discourse.



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**Keywords:** social media; Twitter; X; Threads; political communication; digital communication; European parliament

## 1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is navigating an era of intensified digital transformation, where Euroscepticism, political polarization, and misinformation have emerged as defining challenges (Wardle, 2023; Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; Gosztonyi, 2024). As traditional media struggle to maintain credibility and influence, digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Threads have become essential tools for institutional communication, political engagement, and electoral mobilization (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2023). However, while these platforms provide opportunities for direct interaction, they also expose institutions to algorithmic bias, audience fragmentation, and the influence of political influencers (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

The 2024 European Parliament elections illustrate the growing importance of digital political communication as political actors increasingly rely on social media to mobilize voters, counter misinformation, and shape public opinion (Nulty et al., 2016; Husovec, 2024). At the same time, the fragmentation of audiences across platforms complicates institutional messaging, requiring strategic adaptations that balance credibility, transparency, and engagement (Poell et al., 2019). Algorithm-driven visibility, audience segmentation, and viral

political narratives further reshape traditional models of political discourse, making digital adaptation a necessity rather than an option (Trenz et al., 2021).

In light of these challenges, this study examines how the European Parliament has evolved its digital communication strategy, focusing on its use of X and Threads. By analyzing 171 posts from the official English-language accounts, this research identifies key differences in content formats, audience engagement strategies, and narrative approaches. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how institutional actors navigate an increasingly volatile digital ecosystem—one shaped by personalized algorithms, artificial intelligence, and evolving political rhetoric. As the EU seeks to maintain democratic legitimacy and transparency, this study provides crucial insights into the effectiveness of social media in contemporary institutional communication.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: The Digital Turn in Political Communication

The digitalization of political communication has transformed how political actors interact with citizens, shaping electoral processes, political discourse, and governance strategies. Unlike traditional media, which historically mediated political communication through structured gatekeeping, digital platforms now allow for direct, unfiltered interaction between politicians and voters. Social media has profoundly reshaped how citizens access, consume, and share information, becoming fertile ground for disinformation. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the global energy crisis of 2021–2022, the overabundance of unverified information—referred to as an infodemic—has generated confusion and hindered accurate understanding of events (Pérez-Curiel & Velasco Molpeceres, 2020a, 2020b; Dutta et al., 2022).

This phenomenon is linked to a crisis of trust in traditional institutions, where the media play a key role in shaping social reality through the selection and framing of facts. This shift has been particularly significant in the European Union (EU), where issues such as Euroscepticism, political fragmentation, and declining public trust have compelled institutions to adopt new digital engagement strategies. Information manipulation is not a new phenomenon, but the digital era has amplified its reach. In this regard, emotions—such as fear, anger, and frustration—have been strategically used as tools of manipulation, fostering public polarization and the spread of conspiracy theories.

This process fuels Euroscepticism and reinforces social divisions (Happer & Philo, 2013; Arnold-Forster, 2023; Liu, 2022; Teneva, 2023). Audience fragmentation and emotional manipulation on digital platforms have hindered EU institutions' efforts to counter negative narratives. In this context, populist movements, particularly those on the far right, have exploited emotions to mobilize public opinion against European institutions, deepening the disconnect and complicating the construction of a shared European identity (Tuñón Navarro & Sánchez del Vas, 2022; Gerbaudo, 2018; Casero-Ripollés et al., 2023; Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2023; De Vries, 2018).

The 2024 European Parliament elections exemplify the increasing reliance on digital platforms for political messaging (Gosztonyi, 2023; Dąbrowski & Suska, 2022). Social media networks such as X (formerly Twitter), Threads, Facebook, and TikTok have emerged as dominant spaces for mobilization, discourse shaping, and information dissemination. These platforms allow political figures and institutions to bypass traditional media filters, target specific demographics, and optimize their campaigns through algorithmic curation (Gerbaudo, 2024).

Additionally, personalized digital campaigning, AI-driven voter segmentation, and microtargeting have reshaped the dynamics of electoral competition (Campos-Domínguez et al., 2022). This is not exclusive to Europe: Donald Trump's 2024 campaign in the United States has demonstrated how digital strategies—such as the strategic use of deepfake content,

AI-powered political persuasion, and social media echo chambers—have redefined modern electoral tactics.

Despite the democratizing potential of digital engagement, these technological advancements also pose significant risks. The rapid spread of misinformation, algorithmic bias, and the amplification of populist rhetoric have intensified polarization and weakened institutional trust. Political actors increasingly exploit engagement-driven algorithms that favor viral content, often at the expense of factual accuracy and democratic deliberation. The weaponization of digital platforms for political manipulation raises critical concerns about the integrity of democratic processes (Altay et al., 2022). As political engagement becomes increasingly intertwined with algorithmic decision making, it is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and regulatory institutions to address these challenges. Future governance frameworks must strike a balance between promoting open political discourse and mitigating the risks associated with digital misinformation, AI-driven manipulation, and the monopolization of electoral narratives.

### 2.1. *The Platformization of Politics: A New Electoral Landscape*

Media, broadly understood, are considered fundamental pillars of democracy in the Member States of the European Union (EU). In fact, the EU promotes and mandates the existence of public service media (PSM), whose development has been shaped by a complex process influenced by structural challenges and both political and commercial pressures (Dragomir et al., 2024). Since their inception, PSM have played a crucial role in providing impartial and accessible information to citizens, aligning with public interest and the common good. However, these media outlets have been subjected to attacks by political actors and private media conglomerates seeking to influence their editorial agenda or undermine their economic viability (Šimunjak, 2016).

The expansion of multichannel broadcasting in the 1990s and the subsequent digitalization brought about an identity crisis for PSM, forcing them to compete with commercial platforms, thereby affecting their editorial independence and public service mission (Larsen, 2016). The rise of the internet and the expansion of digital platforms in the early 21st century have profoundly transformed the production, distribution, and consumption of content. This phenomenon of “platformization” (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Helmond, 2015) has reconfigured the media ecosystem, with digital platforms permeating all aspects of the information landscape. The rise of platformization—the dominance of social media and digital ecosystems in political communication—has profoundly reshaped electoral campaigns, governance models, and political engagement (Poell et al., 2019). Unlike traditional public service media (PSM), which historically curated political debate through journalistic oversight, contemporary platforms prioritize engagement-driven content, often favoring sensationalist narratives over substantive policy discussions.

One of the most visible consequences of platformization is the fragmentation of political audiences. Unlike traditional media, which reached broad and diverse populations, digital platforms enable highly personalized, microtargeted political messaging. This has contributed to the creation of ideological echo chambers and filter bubbles, where users are exposed primarily to viewpoints that reinforce their preexisting beliefs (García-Orosa, 2021).

Right-wing populist movements, including Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, Rassemblement National in France, and Lega in Italy, have leveraged these dynamics to mobilize support through platform-optimized messaging. Studies show that populist narratives—often framed around themes of nationalism, anti-immigration sentiment, and Euroscepticism—gain disproportionate algorithmic amplification, further intensifying polarization and disinformation (Bíró-Nagy & Szászi, 2024; Wagner & Enyedi, 2024).

The emergence of political influencers represents another key shift in digital-era politics (Campos-Domínguez et al., 2022). Figures like Elon Musk, Nigel Farage, and Giorgia Meloni have leveraged digital spaces to circumvent institutional gatekeepers, shaping political narratives through viral, memetic, and algorithmically optimized content.

Unlike traditional politicians, political influencers lack institutional accountability while exerting significant influence over electoral discourse. Their content strategies—rooted in provocation, populist rhetoric, and direct audience engagement—resonate particularly well within platform-driven environments (Guevara & Theviot, 2024).

As electoral strategies become increasingly dependent on AI-driven content amplification, misinformation regulation, electoral transparency, and the ethical dimensions of algorithmic persuasion emerge as urgent policy considerations (R. Liu et al., 2022). Without stronger governance measures, the political information ecosystem risks becoming an unregulated, engagement-driven battleground, where emotionally charged content eclipses democratic debate.

## 2.2. Digital Democracy and the Transformation of Political Institutions

The digitalization of democratic institutions has profoundly reshaped political engagement, governance transparency, and electoral participation. The increasing reliance on digital tools by political institutions, particularly in the European Union (EU), has transformed traditional models of governance and political communication. However, while digital democracy fosters greater accessibility and participation, it also presents challenges related to disinformation, cybersecurity, and the evolving role of non-institutional political actors.

Historically, political communication was mediated by mass media, where institutional legitimacy played a central role in shaping public opinion (McNair, 2017). Today, social media platforms have disrupted this structure, enabling real-time interactions between political actors and citizens while simultaneously undermining institutional credibility through algorithmic bias and the amplification of populist discourse (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2024; Gosztanyi, 2024). The EU, in response, has attempted to modernize its political outreach, adopting digital governance models that emphasize participatory democracy, real-time engagement, and counter-disinformation efforts.

Despite these advancements, the integration of digital tools in democratic processes raises concerns over electoral manipulation, data privacy, and the role of foreign influence operations in shaping political discourse. The challenge facing European institutions is ensuring that digital democracy remains transparent, inclusive, and resistant to the risks posed by algorithmic-driven disinformation and cybersecurity threats.

The European Parliament and national legislatures have increasingly turned to digital platforms to modernize electoral communication and mobilize voter participation. Unlike traditional campaigns that relied on mass media and centralized messaging, contemporary digital strategies enable direct interaction with voters, real-time policy discussions, and algorithmic-driven audience segmentation (Bleyer-Simon et al., 2024).

Key components of digital electoral mobilization include the following:

- (1) Real-time citizen engagement: European institutions have expanded their digital presence through live Q&A sessions, interactive policy forums, and real-time debates. Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook Live, and YouTube have become essential tools for legislators to engage directly with the public (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2024).
- (2) Transparency and digital governance: The European Parliament provides real-time updates on legislative proceedings, policy decisions, and voting outcomes through

online platforms. This initiative aims to bridge the democratic deficit by fostering greater institutional accountability (Shahreza, 2024).

- (3) Counter-disinformation initiatives: To address the proliferation of fake news and manipulated political narratives, the EU has partnered with fact-checking agencies, AI-driven verification tools, and independent media watchdogs (Zinnbauer, 2021). These measures seek to ensure that electoral processes remain free from digital manipulation.

However, despite these innovations, institutional communication faces challenges in competing with the digital strategies employed by non-institutional actors. Political influencers, populist leaders, and digital activists often outperform official institutional accounts due to their ability to harness viral content, emotive rhetoric, and microtargeted messaging. Studies indicate that digital-native populist movements, particularly those on the far-right, have successfully utilized social media algorithms to dominate political discourse, sidelining institutional narratives (R. Liu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, political institutions struggle with algorithmic disadvantages—unlike influencers and partisan media outlets, whose content benefits from high engagement metrics, official institutional messaging often appears bureaucratic and less engaging within platform-driven digital ecosystems (García-Orosa, 2021). Addressing this disparity will require innovative content strategies, including more personalized messaging, interactive digital storytelling, and partnerships with trusted independent media outlets.

The expansion of digital democracy has coincided with an escalation of cybersecurity threats, foreign disinformation campaigns, and electoral manipulation. The 2024 European Parliament elections were particularly affected by coordinated foreign interference from state-affiliated actors, including Russian and Chinese disinformation networks (Gerbaudo, 2024). These operations aimed to undermine trust in European institutions, spread Eurosceptic narratives, and exacerbate political divisions over sensitive issues such as NATO, the Ukraine war, and EU immigration policies.

Foreign-led disinformation efforts in European elections have typically followed three primary strategies:

- (1) Amplification of Eurosceptic and nationalist rhetoric: state-sponsored media outlets and troll farms have strategically promoted anti-EU sentiment, portraying Brussels as an authoritarian bureaucracy that undermines national sovereignty.
- (2) Deepfake propaganda and AI-generated misinformation: advances in artificial intelligence have enabled the creation of hyper-realistic deepfake videos, falsely depicting EU officials and candidates engaging in fabricated scandals or making misleading policy statements.
- (3) Exploitation of algorithmic biases: foreign actors have leveraged social media platforms' engagement-driven algorithms to spread viral misinformation, ensuring that misleading content reaches millions before fact-checking mechanisms can intervene (R. Liu et al., 2022).

A key challenge in combating foreign digital interference is that disinformation spreads more rapidly than fact-checking efforts can contain it. Research suggests that false narratives travel six times faster than verified news, primarily due to the emotional and sensationalist nature of misinformation (Vosoughi et al., 2018). While platforms such as Meta and X have implemented stricter moderation policies, enforcement remains inconsistent, and loopholes in digital governance allow disinformation networks to adapt and persist.

Beyond disinformation campaigns, cybersecurity vulnerabilities pose a direct threat to electoral integrity. Political institutions, campaign offices, and electoral databases have become prime targets for cyberattacks, with hacking attempts aimed at disrupting voter reg-

istration systems, altering public perception, and leaking sensitive government information (Gosztonyi, 2024).

Key concerns include the following:

- (1) Election infrastructure attacks: reports indicate that cyberattacks targeting electoral commission databases, campaign email servers, and government digital platforms have increased in frequency, raising concerns over potential data breaches (Bleyer-Simon et al., 2024).
- (2) Bot-driven political manipulation: automated bot networks have been used to flood social media discussions with fabricated narratives, artificially amplifying divisive political debates while suppressing legitimate discourse (García-Orosa, 2021).
- (3) Algorithmic content distortion: malicious actors manipulate search engine algorithms and trending topics to ensure that misleading political content dominates online political discussions in critical election periods (Tucker et al., 2018).

To counteract these threats, the EU has adopted regulatory measures such as the following:

- (1) The Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA): these legislative frameworks impose stricter obligations on digital platforms regarding content moderation, political advertising transparency, and data protection (Kettemann & Schulz, 2023).
- (2) Fact-checking partnerships: European institutions have established collaborations with independent media organizations and fact-checking agencies to mitigate the spread of digital misinformation (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2024).
- (3) Election security task forces: coordinated efforts between EU cybersecurity agencies and member-state intelligence services aim to strengthen digital infrastructure resilience and prevent foreign electoral interference (Gerbaudo, 2024).

Despite these initiatives, challenges remain in enforcement and platform compliance. Major technology companies often resist regulatory intervention, citing concerns over free speech and operational autonomy. Additionally, the sheer volume of digital misinformation exceeds the capacity of fact-checking institutions, making it difficult to contain its impact before it influences voter behavior (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

As European institutions continue to embrace digital democracy, the balance between technological innovation and democratic integrity will remain a defining challenge. Future strategies must develop more sophisticated digital engagement strategies to compete with populist digital actors, strengthen cybersecurity defenses to protect electoral integrity, and enforce stronger platform accountability measures to curb algorithmic manipulation and misinformation and expand digital literacy programs to empower citizens in navigating online political discourse.

The digital transformation of political institutions presents opportunities for greater political participation, but without robust safeguards, transparency mechanisms, and regulatory enforcement, digital democracy risks being overshadowed by misinformation-driven electoral manipulation and cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

### 2.3. Misinformation and Algorithmic Manipulation in Elections

Misinformation has become one of the defining challenges of digital political communication (Zuhdi et al., 2023). The growing reliance on social media platforms for political discourse has led to an ecosystem where profit-driven, engagement-maximization algorithms prioritize viral, sensationalist content over fact-based political messaging. As a result, political misinformation spreads rapidly, shaping public perceptions and influencing electoral decisions in ways that undermine democratic deliberation.

Algorithmic curation of political content has fundamentally altered the way elections are contested, particularly in democratic systems where free access to information is essen-

tial. Research suggests that platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok rely on algorithmic recommendation systems that disproportionately amplify emotionally charged narratives over policy-based discussions (Borz & De Francesco, 2024). These biases manifest in several ways:

- (1) Emotional Amplification and Political Polarization: Studies indicate that anger, outrage, and fear-based narratives perform better than fact-based, policy-driven discussions (Borz & De Francesco, 2024). This phenomenon fosters ideological polarization, making bipartisan consensus-building increasingly difficult (Campos-Domínguez et al., 2022).
- (2) Filter Bubbles and Echo Chambers: Algorithmic personalization leads to self-reinforcing ideological echo chambers, where users are repeatedly exposed to content that aligns with their preexisting beliefs, reducing exposure to diverse perspectives (Bene et al., 2025). This has significant implications for voter behavior, as users become less likely to engage with countervailing viewpoints (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024).
- (3) The Rise of Algorithmic Populism: Populist rhetoric thrives in high-engagement digital environments, disproportionately amplifying anti-establishment messaging while sidelining institutional perspectives (McNair, 2023). This has led to an increase in populist electoral successes, as algorithm-driven amplification provides a direct pathway to mass mobilization without reliance on traditional media channels (Taneja, 2024).

The intersection of digital misinformation and algorithmic bias has introduced new vulnerabilities to electoral integrity. Social media networks, driven by business models that prioritize user engagement, often facilitate the spread of misleading or outright false political content (Bene et al., 2025).

Several key trends characterize this landscape:

- (1) Automated disinformation networks: Political campaigns and foreign actors have increasingly relied on bot networks to manipulate electoral discourse. These AI-driven systems can flood digital platforms with coordinated narratives designed to influence voter sentiment (Bleyer-Simon et al., 2024).
- (2) Deepfake political content: The 2024 European elections and Donald Trump's U.S. presidential campaign saw an increase in the use of AI-generated political deepfakes. These sophisticated disinformation tactics erode public trust and make it increasingly difficult to differentiate between genuine political messaging and synthetic media.
- (3) Platform resistance to regulation: Despite increased scrutiny, major digital platforms have resisted comprehensive regulatory oversight, citing concerns over free speech and innovation (Kettemann & Schulz, 2023). The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) represents a step toward platform accountability, yet enforcement mechanisms remain limited in scope (Gerbaudo, 2024).

In conclusion, the 2024 European elections and Trump's 2024 digital campaign highlight the escalating role of digital platforms in shaping political outcomes. As electoral engagement becomes increasingly algorithmic, new challenges will emerge in the following areas:

- (1) Regulating AI-driven misinformation and political deepfakes: governments must strengthen regulatory oversight to combat emerging threats such as AI-generated disinformation and synthetic political content.
- (2) Ensuring electoral transparency through stronger governance mechanisms: the enforcement of digital political advertising disclosures, content moderation policies, and data privacy protections is essential for maintaining democratic accountability.
- (3) Empowering digital literacy initiatives to combat algorithmic polarization: public education on media literacy and critical thinking is necessary to counteract the effects of algorithmic bias and misinformation.

Future regulatory frameworks must adapt to safeguard democratic integrity in an era where digital media monopolize political engagement (Borz & De Francesco, 2024). Without proactive intervention, the unchecked spread of digital misinformation threatens to erode the foundations of free and fair elections in democratic societies.

The 2024 European elections and Trump's 2024 digital campaign highlight the escalating role of digital platforms in shaping political outcomes. As electoral engagement becomes increasingly algorithmic, new challenges will emerge in regulating AI-driven misinformation and political deepfakes, ensuring electoral transparency through stronger governance mechanisms, and empowering digital literacy initiatives to combat algorithmic polarization. Future regulatory frameworks must adapt to safeguard democratic integrity in an era where digital media monopolize political engagement (Borz & De Francesco, 2024). Without proactive intervention, the unchecked spread of digital misinformation threatens to erode the foundations of free and fair elections in democratic societies.

### 3. Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- (O1) To analyze the posts made on the European Parliament's Threads and X accounts during the 2024 European Parliament election campaign.
- (O2) To identify the differences in content publication between the European Parliament's Threads and X accounts in their English versions.
- (O3) To quantify the engagement of followers on both social media platforms.

The research questions are as follows:

- (RQ1) What type of posts does the European Parliament publish on the Threads and X social media platforms?
- (RQ2) Are there any differences in the content posted on the European Parliament's Threads and X accounts?
- (RQ3) What is the engagement level of followers on the European Parliament's Threads and X accounts?

### 4. Materials and Methods

This analysis focuses on the period between 1 May and 9 June 2024, coinciding with the electoral campaign for the 2024 European Parliament elections. This time frame allows for an examination of the European Parliament's communicative behavior in a context of high informational activity and political relevance.

For the study, the official English-language accounts of the European Parliament were selected, as they attract the largest number of followers and constitute the preferred language in European institutional communication. This selection is based on representativeness and outreach criteria, ensuring that the results reflect the communicative impact of the posts on the target audience.

The sample analyzed consists of a total of 171 posts distributed across the two platforms: 67 posts from Threads and 104 from X. In the case of X, three posts that were subsequently re-shared were excluded in order to avoid duplicates and ensure the integrity of the data. These data were manually collected on 20 and 21 January 2025. Therefore, the engagement data and follower count refer to those dates. To avoid reliability errors in content coding, this task was carried out by a single researcher. This ensures the reliability of the data.

This study considers four main dimensions for analyzing the posts. First, the type of content published was examined, classifying it into various categories: original posts, re-shared posts, re-shared posts with mention, individual posts, thread posts, and complete



threads. This classification allows for the identification of the strategies employed by the European Parliament on each platform.

Second, the multimedia resources used in the posts were analyzed, including text, photographs, edited images (images with added graphs or images created from scratch using computer software), infographics, external links, surveys, videos, emojis, memes, and GIFs. This analysis aims to explore the diversity and complexity of the visual and textual elements used. It also allows for an assessment of the multimedia narrative capacity of each of the social media platforms.

The third dimension examined the interactions generated by the posts, considering engagement metrics such as the number of user interactions—likes, comments, and shares—as well as the use of mentions and hashtags. This approach enables the evaluation of audience response to the posts on both platforms. For calculating engagement rate, we used the formula used by Tardy (2022) and Xu et al. (2023). The authors calculated the engagement rate for each of the tweets they analyzed. In our case, we calculated all of them at once. For this reason, we adjusted the formula by dividing the result of the interaction-to-user ratio by the number of posts analyzed for each social network in our work (67 for Threads and 104 for Twitter). This way, we obtained the appropriate result. Then, the formula used was as follows:

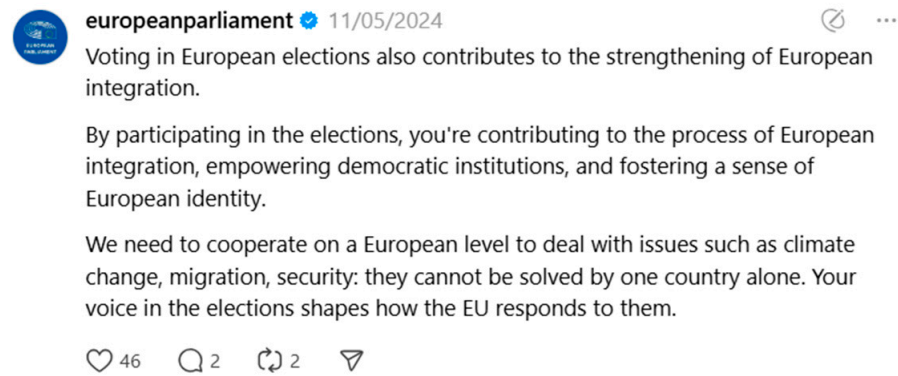
$$\text{Engagement rate (in \%)} = [(\text{total interactions} / \text{number of followers})] / \text{number of post analyzed} \times 100$$

“Any percentage above 1% can be considered a very high engagement tweet, 0.16% to 0.99% a high engagement tweet, 0.05% to 0.15% an average or good engagement tweet, and 0% to 0.04% a low engagement tweet” (Xu et al., 2023, p. 2018). As it is a social network based on the same parameters as Twitter, the Threads values have been considered in the same terms.

Finally, the intention of the message was analyzed, distinguishing between posts whose primary goal is to inform, persuade, or issue a call to action. Informative publications are those whose purpose is to convey data, facts, or knowledge objectively, without influencing the recipient’s opinion. On the other hand, persuasive content aims to convince or influence the recipient’s attitude, opinion, or behavior, delivering messages that rely more on emotions than on data. In this case, these were publications that seek to persuade users to go and vote. Below are some examples of both types of publications (Figures 1 and 2).

It is important to note that a single post may serve one or more of these functions, allowing for a richer understanding of the communicative strategies employed.

The methodology used is based on the quantification and comparison of posts made on the two selected platforms. First, the total number of posts made on Threads and X was recorded, classifying them according to the variables described above. Subsequently, the obtained data were compared to identify differences and similarities in the use of both platforms.



**Figure 1.** Example of persuasive publication in Threads.



**Figure 2.** Example of informative publication in Threads.

## 5. Results

Upon analyzing the data, it is observed that X has 37 more posts than Threads during the analyzed period. This is logical, considering that the X account has nearly one million followers. This implies that the European Parliament's account on X has 10 times more followers than its counterpart on Threads, which is also natural considering X existed as a social network (even as Twitter) long before Threads did. In fact, the date when the European Parliament joined Twitter is April 2009, while it joined Threads in December 2023, as both profiles of these social platforms show. For this reason, the communication department of the institution increased its efforts on X, as they could reach a much larger audience, consisting of 989,497 followers on X compared to 91,706 followers on Threads.

The messages conveyed on both networks are, on some occasions, very similar, but in most cases, the content on one platform is distinctly different from the other. For example,

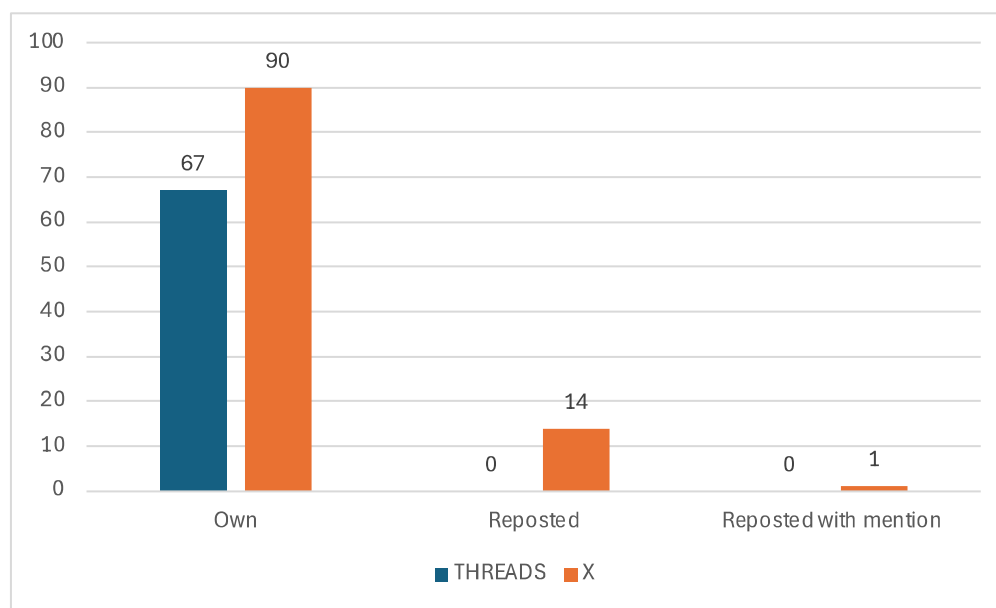
on 2 May, while X was discussing agricultural policy, Threads published an infographic about voting intentions in different countries. The posts published on 9 May 2024 also present a striking case. On X, nine posts were made, six of which referred to Europe's support for Ukraine in its war with Russia and three of which encouraged voting in the 6–9 June elections. On Threads, only one post was made, celebrating Europe Day. This desynchronization is seen throughout the month and nine days analyzed. Therefore, it does not seem that there is a coordinated posting strategy across both social media platforms.

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

### 5.1. Types of Posts

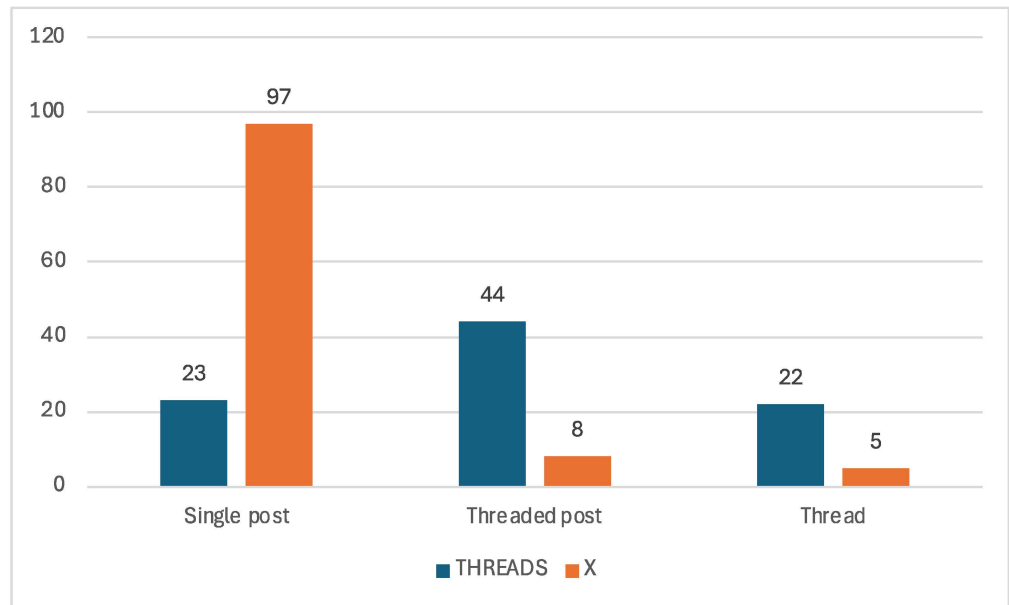
Regarding the type of posts uploaded on each social media platform, clear differences are observed between the accounts on the two networks.

As shown in Figure 3, 100% of the posts on Threads are original creations from the European Parliament's account. Therefore, no reposted content appears on this platform. This is not the case on X, where 86.54% of the posts are original—90 posts—while 13.46%—14 posts—are reposted from other accounts. Additionally, reposted content with mentions is also included. In this case, the X account uses this option to generate content on its feed, thereby reinforcing its message through other accounts.



**Figure 3.** Types of authorship on Threads and X.

A significant difference is observed between individual posts and those that are part of a thread (Figure 4). For Threads, individual posts account for 34.33%—23 posts—while on X, they account for 93.27%—97 posts—of the total. Thus, threads are much more frequently used on Threads than on X. On Threads, 22 threads were created—totaling 44 posts, or 65.67% of the total. It is important to note that all of the threads consist of only two posts. On X, however, only five threads were identified—totaling eight posts, or 7.69% of the total. In this case, the threads are as long as those on Threads, each containing two posts.

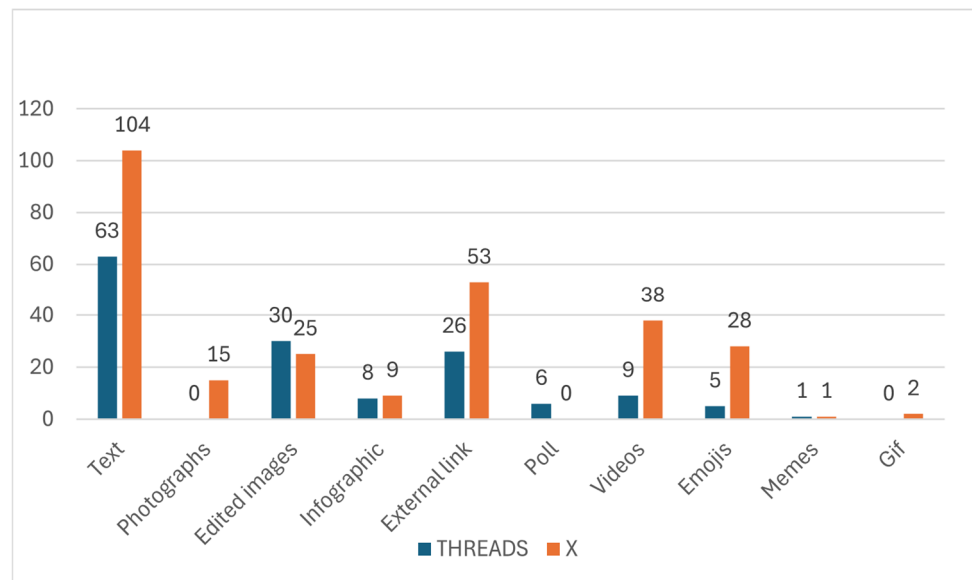


**Figure 4.** Types of posts on Threads and X.

In general, threads consist of an initial post followed by a second post providing a link to expand on the information being shared. Both accounts follow the same structure in this regard.

5.2. Multimedia Resources

As seen in Figure 5, regarding the use of multimedia resources, X has a higher quantity of these. This is expected, as X also has a larger number of posts. However, when considering the percentages of usage across both networks, differences between the two accounts become apparent.



**Figure 5.** Multimedia resources used on Threads and X.

The most commonly used multimedia resource on both social networks is text. This is logical, as both platforms are centered around text, enabling users to convey their messages. In 63 of the 67 posts published on Threads, this format is used, representing 94.03%. On

X, this resource is used in 104 tweets, which makes up 100%. Therefore, text is the most abundant resource in both networks, as one would expect.

Within the text, an element frequently used in social media conversations is emoticons. In this case, the Threads account uses at least one emoticon in 7.46% of its posts. This is a relatively low figure, considering the common use of emoticons on social media. In contrast, X's account uses emoticons in 26.92% of its posts. This indicates an attempt to appeal to a younger audience, who uses these pictograms for quick and visual communication. Therefore, it appears that X makes much greater use of this resource than the Threads account.

Regarding the use of photographs, it is notable that no photographs were found on Threads, while they appear in 14.42% of the posts on X. On the other hand, Threads includes 30 posts with edited images, accounting for 44.78% of its posts. This is a relatively high figure, considering that X uses this resource in only 24.04% of its posts. In this regard, Threads nearly doubles X.

Another resource used by both accounts is infographics, which are highly useful for explaining large sets of information. In this case, once again, the Threads account has more content of this type, with a total of eight infographics (11.94% of posts). The X account, on the other hand, published nine infographics, which account for 8.65% of its total posts.

If photographs, edited images, and infographics were counted as a single multimedia resource, considering that they are published as images on both social networks, Threads would use this resource in 56.72% of its posts, while X would use it in 47.12% of its posts. In this case, the multimedia narrative employed on the Threads account is richer than that of X.

In terms of video content, the Threads account includes videos in nine posts, or 13.43% of its total posts. X, on the other hand, uses this format more frequently, including it in 36.54% of its posts (38 videos). This somewhat compensates for the lower use of images in posts. Video is currently the most widely used format by internet users. The use of this resource generates more engagement on X than on Threads, achieving higher levels of interaction compared to other multimedia elements. The 38 posts with video content on X garnered 13,793 likes (43.15% of the total), 4269 reposts (39.24% of the total), and 3421 comments (48.1%). These figures show that 35.51% of posts featuring this format almost account for half of the total interactions on the account during the analyzed period.

This is not the case for Threads, where the numbers decrease considerably. Posts with videos on Threads received 486 likes (10.49%), 62 reposts (12.42%), and 17 comments (11.41%). Therefore, it seems that the use of video on Threads does not generate as much engagement as on X.

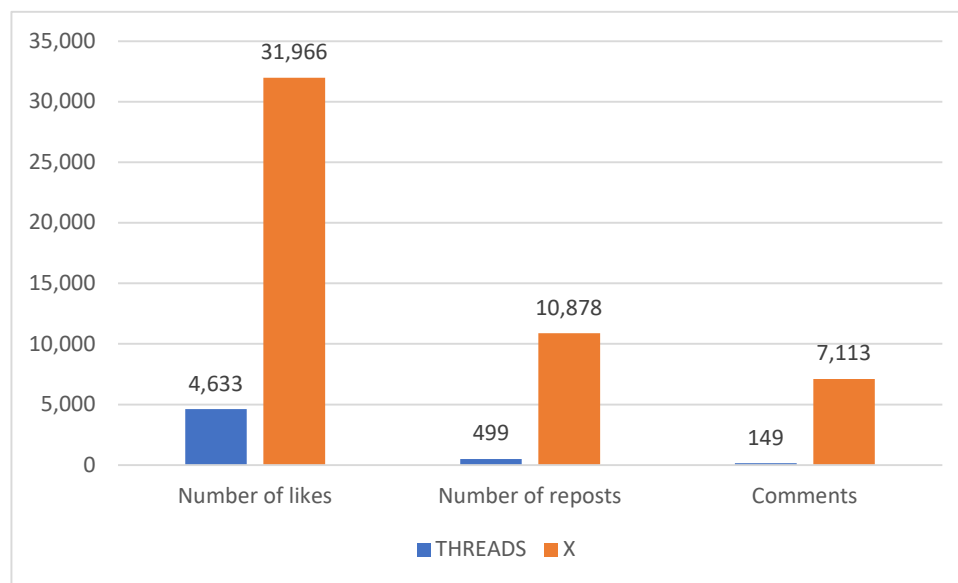
On the other hand, external links appeared 26 times on Threads and 52 times on X. This represents 38.81% and 50.96%, respectively. In this case, it is X that more consistently encourages users to visit external websites, primarily the European Parliament's website, in order to provide more comprehensive information.

Regarding polls, none were found on the X account, while six polls were published on Threads during the analyzed period. The use of this tool is a good strategy, as it fosters closer engagement between followers and the European Parliament. Additionally, it is a way to gauge public opinion on specific matters. Therefore, it is striking that the X account did not make use of this feature.

Finally, in terms of multimedia tools, memes and gifs are also present, although to a much lesser extent than the other elements. One meme was posted on each account. As for gifs, two were posted on X, while the Threads account did not use any.

### 5.3. Interactions on the Accounts

As shown in Figure 6, the number of likes, reposts, and comments on the X account are significantly higher than those on the Threads account. As with the multimedia elements, this is expected, given that X has 40 more posts. Furthermore, the X account has 10 times the number of followers as the Threads account. However, when analyzing the engagement per follower for each account, it becomes apparent that the engagement is very similar on both social networks of the European Parliament.



**Figure 6.** Interactions on the European Parliament’s X and Threads accounts.

In the case of Threads, the engagement rate is 0.09%, while on X it stands at 0.05%. Both accounts have a good engagement rate, with Threads having a slightly higher rate. Therefore, both accounts show very similar engagement rates despite the significant difference in followers and interactions on each platform.

Regarding mentions and hashtags, no mentions were found in any of the posts analyzed from the Threads account. In contrast, mentions were identified in 11 posts on X, accounting for 10.58% of the total posts from this account.

As for hashtags, 28 posts on Threads include them in their text, representing 41.79% of the total posts. On X, the number of posts featuring hashtags is higher, with 58 posts using them, which represents 55.77% of the total.

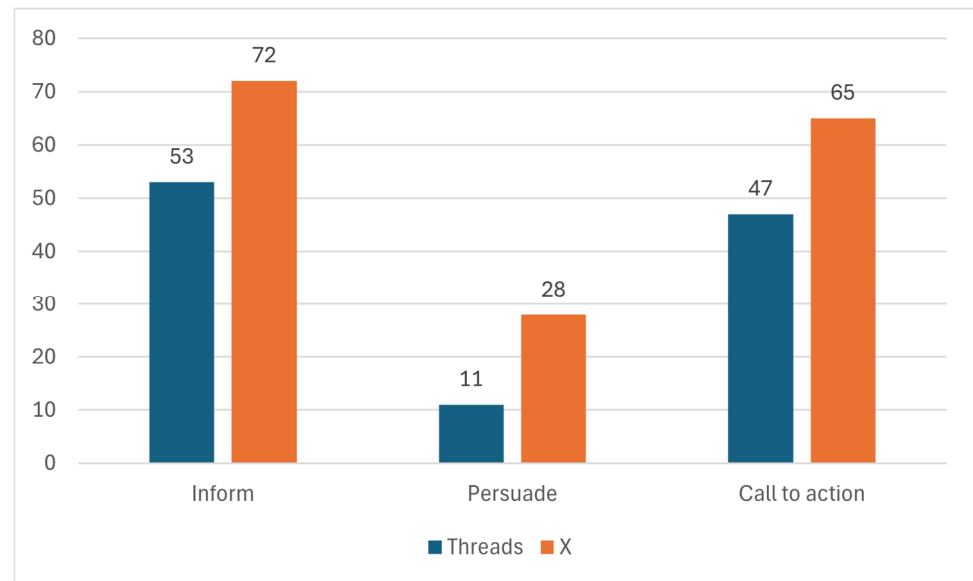
What stands out in the case of Threads is that, in many posts, despite using the phrase “Use Your Vote”, which is employed as a hashtag on several occasions, it is not actually used as a hashtag. This results in a missed opportunity to reach new users, as this tool allows for specific searches within the platform. Consequently, this approach can be considered a poor strategy.

### 5.4. Message Intent

The posts published on both accounts served three main functions: (1) to inform, (2) to persuade, and (3) to call users to action—primarily to mobilize citizens for the elections.

Figure 7 illustrates that the primary intent of informing is the most prevalent in posts made by the European Parliament on both X and Threads. On X, this intent appears in 72 instances (69.23%), while on Threads, it is evident in 53 posts (79.1%).

The intention to call users to action, whether to vote or to engage in other actions, such as participating in surveys within the app, appears in 65 instances on X (62.5%) and in 47 posts on Threads (70.15% of the posts).



**Figure 7.** Intended message of post.

Lastly, the persuasive intent to encourage voting is observed in 11 posts on Threads (16.42%) and in 28 on X (26.92%). Often, posts fulfill one or more functions, rather than just one of the three identified during this period.

## 6. Discussion

The results of this study on the European Parliament's communication on X and Threads during the 2024 elections reveal significant differences in how digital platforms facilitate political interaction. As previous research has shown, digital transformation has structurally altered institutional communication, enabling direct engagement with citizens but also presenting challenges such as audience fragmentation and the spread of misinformation (Poell et al., 2019; Gerbaudo, 2018; Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Gosztonyi, 2024).

One key finding is the higher participation and interaction on X compared to Threads, suggesting that platform-specific characteristics influence the reach and dissemination of institutional messages. While X has become a space where political communication relies on immediacy and the virality of audiovisual content, Threads maintains a more informative approach, emphasizing infographics and text-based posts (Nieborg et al., 2019; Gerbaudo, 2024). These results align with broader trends in social media, where highly visual content and algorithmic personalization enhance engagement and amplify political messages (García-Orosa, 2021; Campos-Domínguez et al., 2022).

### 6.1. Audience Fragmentation and Algorithmic Logic

One of the most evident challenges of digital political communication is audience fragmentation and the impact of algorithms on information dissemination. Previous studies have shown that recommendation algorithms generate echo chambers and filter bubbles, where users are predominantly exposed to content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs (Bene et al., 2025; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024). This may explain why interaction on Threads is lower, as the platform has not yet developed an algorithmic ecosystem as optimized as X for content amplification (García-Orosa, 2021).

Additionally, the absence of reposts and mentions on Threads suggests that the European Parliament has opted for a more controlled dissemination strategy, with less reliance on external amplification. Conversely, in X, where reposts and mentions account for 13.46% of total posts, interaction dynamics seem to be driven by virality and the strategic posi-

tioning of political figures such as European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, whose posts generated high levels of engagement (Gerbaudo, 2024; Guevara & Theviot, 2024).

### 6.2. *Emotionality and Virality in Political Communication*

Emotions play a crucial role in digital political communication. Studies have demonstrated that messages eliciting indignation, fear, or euphoria are more likely to go viral on social media (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2023; Bíró-Nagy & Szászi, 2024). On X, the most posts with the most interaction included videos and messages about the war in Ukraine, reinforcing the idea that emotionally charged content is more effective at capturing public attention and generating online debate (Gerbaudo, 2018; García-Orosa, 2021).

In contrast, the predominant use of infographics and polls in Threads suggests a less emotional and more informational strategy. Previous research has indicated that such content can help reduce polarization and misinformation by providing structured information rather than divisive messages (Pérez-Curiel & Velasco Molpeceres, 2020a, 2020b; Zinnbauer, 2021). However, the challenge of this approach lies in achieving greater engagement in an environment where virality is driven by emotional impact rather than factual depth (R. Liu et al., 2022; Borz & De Francesco, 2024; Gosztonyi, 2024).

### 6.3. *Disinformation and Algorithmic Manipulation*

Another key challenge of institutional digital communication is disinformation. Recent studies have raised concerns about the spread of deepfakes and disinformation campaigns in electoral processes, which can distort public perception and weaken trust in democratic institutions (R. Liu et al., 2022; Borz & De Francesco, 2024). The amplification structure of X, combined with its broader reach, could make it a more vulnerable environment for misinformation compared to Threads, which, being a more closed ecosystem, limits exposure to unverified content (McNair, 2023; Altay et al., 2022).

The Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) have been promoted by the European Union as regulatory frameworks aimed at enhancing transparency in content moderation and political advertising (Kettemann & Schulz, 2023). However, enforcing these regulations remains a challenge, particularly in terms of real-time detection and removal of manipulated content (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Gosztonyi, 2024). In this regard, using differentiated communication strategies on X and Threads could serve as a preventive measure against information manipulation in the European electoral context.

### 6.4. *Institutional Communication Strategies in the Digital Era*

The findings of this study reaffirm the need to tailor institutional communication strategies to the specificities of each platform. While X is better suited for the dissemination of high-impact messages and audiovisual content, Threads offers an opportunity to strengthen institutional communication based on structured and less polarized information (Dragomir et al., 2024; Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2024).

To improve the effectiveness of political communication on digital platforms, the following strategies are suggested:

Content optimization for each platform: the European Parliament may use videos and mentions on X to increase engagement and visibility, while on Threads, they could develop more interactive infographics and structured informational posts.

Engagement strategies based on participation: implementing polls and real-time Q&A sessions could increase interaction on both platforms, strengthening the connection between the European Parliament and citizens (Shahreza, 2024).

Monitoring and content verification: to counteract disinformation, it is advisable to reinforce partnerships with fact-checking agencies and AI-powered verification tools for early detection of misleading content (Zinnbauer, 2021).



Balancing transparency and digital security: as political campaigns become more dependent on algorithmic segmentation, it is crucial for European regulation to ensure data transparency and accountability in political advertising (Bleyer-Simon et al., 2024).

### 6.5. Conclusions

The analysis of the European Parliament's use of X and Threads during the 2024 elections highlights the importance of adapting communication strategies to the specific characteristics of each platform. X fosters greater virality and but also presents risks of manipulation and polarization, whereas Threads offers a more controlled and objective communication style, and a bit of a higher engagement rate. These findings confirm that political communication in the digital age requires differentiated strategies that combine interactivity, transparency, and monitoring to ensure effective and democratic communication.

## 7. Conclusions

This study examined the European Parliament's use of X and Threads during the 2024 European Parliament elections, focusing on content publication, engagement levels, and platform-specific communication strategies. The findings indicate that the institution does not follow a fully unified social media strategy but rather adapts its messaging to the characteristics and user behaviors of each platform. These results highlight the importance of platform differentiation in digital political communication, particularly in the context of algorithm-driven visibility, audience segmentation, and engagement patterns.

### 7.1. Key Findings and Insights

X prioritizes multimedia content and interaction-driven engagement, leveraging videos, mentions, and reposts to maximize visibility. This aligns with the platform's algorithmic design, which amplifies dynamic and emotionally engaging content, making it an effective medium for political mobilization and high-reach messaging.

Threads, by contrast, focuses on structured, informational content, relying more on text-based posts and infographics. This suggests a deliberate strategy to maintain an objective, less polarized communication style, consistent with Threads' positioning as an extension of Instagram's ecosystem.

User base size significantly impacts engagement dynamics, with X boasting a much larger audience and greater algorithmic amplification potential. However, engagement per follower remains relatively similar across both platforms, indicating that Threads, despite its smaller reach, still fosters meaningful interaction when the content is tailored effectively.

Content desynchronization is evident, as messaging differs not only in terms of format but also timing and thematic focus. This suggests that the European Parliament employs a platform-specific adaptation approach rather than a synchronized cross-platform strategy.

Message intent varies between the platforms, with X placing greater emphasis on calls to action and persuasive discourse, while Threads maintains a more neutral and information-driven tone. This reflects broader trends in digital political communication, where X fosters reactive engagement and Threads supports deliberative discourse.

### 7.2. Strategic Implications for Institutional Digital Communication

Given these insights, several strategic recommendations emerge for optimizing the European Parliament's social media approach:

- (1) Enhancing cross-platform coordination without losing differentiation: While distinct messaging strategies for X and Threads are valuable, ensuring better content synchronization where relevant could strengthen message consistency and reinforce

- institutional narratives. And developing a complementary posting strategy—where Threads serves as an informative hub while X maximizes engagement through real-time interactions—could enhance the effectiveness of institutional messaging.
- (2) Leveraging the unique strengths of each platform: X should continue to be the primary space for high-engagement political discourse, utilizing videos, mentions, and reposts to drive visibility and mobilization. Threads should be optimized for credibility and transparency, emphasizing fact-based communication, infographics, and structured posts to counter misinformation and foster civic awareness.
  - (3) Expanding multimedia and interactive strategies on threads: while X benefits from the virality of video content, Threads' engagement potential could be improved by introducing more interactive formats, such as explainer graphics, polls, and Q&A sessions.
  - (4) Strategic content scheduling for maximum impact: Identifying and aligning optimal posting times on each platform can enhance audience engagement and content visibility. And utilizing data-driven scheduling approaches could improve content reach across different demographic segments.
  - (5) Moving beyond traditional engagement metrics: Instead of focusing solely on likes, shares, and reposts, engagement should be measured by qualitative factors, such as policy impact, discourse longevity, and audience sentiment analysis. Threads, despite lower overall interaction levels, could serve as a repository for structured political communication, complementing the more fast-paced, reaction-driven engagement on X.

### 7.3. Final Considerations

This study underscores the complexity of institutional digital communication, revealing that X and Threads serve distinct but complementary functions in the European Parliament's outreach strategy. X excels at engagement, virality, and mobilization, while Threads provides a more stable and credible environment for structured information sharing. As digital platforms continue evolving, institutional actors must refine their strategies to maximize visibility, strengthen credibility, and foster meaningful public interaction.

By balancing platform differentiation, engagement optimization, and message coherence, the European Parliament can enhance its ability to navigate the challenges of digital political communication, ensuring greater transparency, accessibility, and audience impact in future electoral campaigns.

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