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**SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE
– QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS. SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL INDEX 2014**

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Introduction

It seems to be unnecessary to prove the thesis that the Internet plays a significant role in contemporary political communication. If one takes a closer look at all election campaigns in democratic countries, one can notice an increasing importance of this particular channel of communication. The channel is very rich in various forms of media (newspapers, radios or televisions broadcasting exclusively online as well as Internet versions of traditional mass media). One can find space for unhindered communication by means of one's own websites and blogs, it is possible to use email and mechanisms of direct marketing and last but not least to use social media that have recently been gaining popularity.

It is worth advancing a thesis that the basic difference between classic, non-virtual forms of political communication and the communication on the Internet consists in providing mass communication with a feature so far reserved for rather small meetings with voters – two-directionness¹. Politicians

¹ Cf. O. Annusewicz, *Funkcje komunikowania politycznego w Internecie*, [in:] "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 14, Warszawa 2009, p. 275.

become not only senders of information meticulously prepared by campaign teams, but also participants of communicative interactions. The change is, however, significant for the voter, who may transform from a passive receiver into an active participant of the dialogue – he may publicly ask a politician to provide answers to questions, he may comment on them and challenge them.

It should be also emphasized that social media are developing so quickly that many editorial teams of traditional media "open" their social media accounts and use them to interact with viewers, listeners and readers. Politicians are also trying to colonise this space – however, the question arises – to what extent?

The question has become a starting point for the research carried out by the Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw entitled Social Media in Political Communication in Central Europe. Its aim was to determine the extent to which politicians used the most popular social media to communicate with Internet users. Creating Social Media Political Index – a political index of social media use that would allow for comparing the phenomenon within Central Europe and for watching changes in the future was another objective. The question concerning political popularity of particular social network services was also raised, i.e. which one – in particular countries – was the most popular among politicians.

It is important to note that so far several attempts have been made to study the phenomenon of social media in political communication. Some of them were theoretical or focused on functionality of certain social media²,

² Among polish authors worth mentioning are: I. Grzywińska, *Zastosowanie nowych mediów w procesie komunikacji politycznej na przykładzie kampanii prezydenckiej w Stanach Zjednoczonych w 2008 r.*, [in:] J. Garlicki (ed.), "Studia Politologiczne" vol. 16, J. Garlicki, D. Mider, *Wykorzystanie Internetu w komunikowaniu politycznym elit z wyborcami*, [in:] E. Marciniak (ed.), "Studia Politologiczne" 2010, vol. 25, J. Zieliński *Komunikacja polityczna na Facebooku*, <http://demopol.net/publikacje.html>, 01.04.2014.

others described case studies of political campaigns in social media³. Also some reports concerning politicians' activity in certain social media can be found – they are mostly about number of posts/tweets, “retweets” and “shares”, followers, likes or favourites⁴. However, neither quantitative and comparative research on the use of social media as a set of communication tools have been found, nor comparative studies between countries in one region. Consequently, the authors of this study had to propose a new and original approach to the analysis of the data gathered in the research.

Methodology

From January, 1 to January, 31 2014 research was conducted by means of which it was examined which politicians and public authorities communicate in social media. The group whose activity in social media was measured included all MPs (of all chambers) and Members of the European Parliament as well as heads of states, prime ministers and ministers (or ministries) of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In total, it was 3173 individuals and institutions. It was examined if they had user accounts in four most popular social network services: Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube. The subject of the analysis was also the activity of the accounts, i.e. if within four weeks prior to account verification anything had been posted there.

³ See: J. Aaker and V. Chang, *Obama and the Power of Social Media and Technology*, <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/?p=1627>, 15.03.2014, I. Grzywińska, *Analiza komunikacji w serwisach społecznościowych (NK.pl i Facebook.com) podczas prezydenckiej kampanii wyborczej w 2010 roku*, J. Garlicki (ed.) “Studia Politologiczne” 2011 vol.21, M. Górnicka, *Social Media Superstar - raport Obama 2012*, <http://studiumprzypadku.com/social-media-superstar--raport--obama-2012/>, 15.03.2014.

⁴ See: http://mojepanstwo.pl/media_spolecznosciowe, 16.03.2014, L. Vesnic-Alujevic, *Members of the European Parliament Online: The use of social media in political marketing*, http://martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/ces_mep_web.pdf, 15.03.2014.

Data gathered within the research was juxtaposed with statistical data from EUROSTAT⁵ – the percentage of individuals aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and with the percentage of individuals who use the Internet to interact with politicians and civil service representatives⁶.

A separate analysis was conducted for each country, it comprised:

- Determining the index of political representation of a social network service in particular social media expressed by the ratio of politicians' or government administration bodies' registered accounts to the total number of such entities.
- Determining the maximal probability of politicians reaching their potential voters with a given service. It constitutes the index of "critical" political potential of a particular social network service which illustrates the maximal probability of politicians using a given social tool (both in an active and inactive manner) to reach potential voters in general population. When determining the index critical value, it has been assumed that: firstly – each Internet user has an equal chance to use the service (i.e. each Internet user is or can be a user of a given service), secondly – political representation of a social service can include/cover by communicative activity the whole Internet user population. The index is expressed by the product of political representation index of a given social network service and the percentage of citizens aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet.
- Determining the active presence index for a given social network service by comparing the number of registered accounts in a given social

⁵ Source: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> , 10.03.2014.

⁶ Org. *Individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities*, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, data for 2013, 10.03.2014.

network service to the number of active accounts (understood as the ones on which something had been posted at least once within 30 days prior to the research).

- Determining the active political potential index of social network service in particular social media by establishing the ratio of politicians' and government administration bodies' registered active accounts to total number of such entities that had been examined.
- Determining the active potential index of a social network service which would show the maximal probability of politicians active in social network services to reach their potential voters who regularly use the Internet. As in the case of the maximal probability of reaching, it has been assumed that each Internet user has an equal chance to use a given service and political representation of the service can cover with its communicative activity the whole Internet user population. The index is established by the product of active political representation index of a social network service and the percentage of citizens aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and thus.

The aim of determining the abovementioned components is an attempt to create a complex look on the presence of politicians and public authorities in particular social media. The index of political representation of a given service shows the percentage of politicians that made an attempt to communicate politically in social media, whereas the index of active presence and the index of active political representation show how many of them really communicate online.

Determining the maximal probability of politicians reaching their potential voters with a given service and the maximal probability of politicians

active in a social network service to reach their potential voters allows for assessing the significance of communication in a given social medium. The higher they are, the more important the role of a social network service, which should encourage both potential voters to become its users and politicians to use this channel of communication.

However, an additional justification is necessary to explain the reasons for using such given data, as the percentage of citizens aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and the individuals who had actively used Internet to interact with politicians and public authorities in methodological construction of the research. The choice of the data was a compromise between the problem of statistical data availability and the original methodological plan of the researchers. The accuracy of an index is decided by the precise range of reality to which the measurement of a given phenomenon refers⁷. In this case an appropriate component would be the user number of a given social network service. Gaining the data, however, turned out to be impossible. Its owners either did not respond to the research team request or responded negatively, denying access to it. At the same time, there is no reliable alternative source of the data for all services in question and for all countries. There are some media studies available (in Poland e.g. Megapanel conducted by PBI/Gemius) that estimate the user number of particular services, the results, however, are not comparable with similar studies carried out in other countries. For this reason it has been decided to choose alternative data that yet still reflect the examined social reality and are comparable for all examined countries due to a single methodology used to measure all observation units.

All abovementioned indexes are additionally standardised and take continuous values within a range from 0 to 1. Due to keeping this methodolog-

⁷ Cf. E. Babbie, *Badania społeczne w praktyce*, Warszawa 2004, p. 166-167.

ical premise, the obtained index values can be compared both in a relative (between each other) and in an absolute perspective (with setting the boundary of the so-called "absolute zero").

As it has already been mentioned, the aim of the research was first and foremost to compare the extent to which social media are used in particular countries of Central Europe that belong to the European Union and to create a new index – Social Media Political Index (SMPI). In order to ensure its comparability for particular countries, apart from data obtained in the research, also previously mentioned indexes from data provided by EUROSTAT concerning the percentage of individuals aged 16-74 who regularly use the Internet and percentage of individuals who use Internet to interact with politicians and public administration representatives were taken into consideration.

It has been decided that the SMPI should include four elements:

- Activity Factor (AF) – calculated separately for each country by comparing the total number of political accounts in social media and the number of active accounts (whose owners at least once posted anything within a month prior to the research).
- Saturation Factor (SF) – created by comparison of the total number of active accounts in all services in question and the total maximal number of political accounts in social media (calculated as four oldness – since in the research four services were examined – of the analysed number of politicians and public authorities).
- Reaching Factor (RF) – created by comparison of the Saturation Factor and the percentage of citizens who regularly use the Internet (according to the Eurostat data).

- Auxiliary Reaching Factor (ARF) – calculated by comparison of the Saturation Factor and the percentage of citizens using Internet to interact with politicians and public authorities (according to the Eurostat data).

Each of the abovementioned factors is important if one wants to determine the level of maturity of social media use for political communication. Activity Factor illustrates a relation of declaration (account registration) to the real use of the channel of communication (activity). Saturation Factor shows the potential for development of political communication in social media. Reaching Factor, in turn, indicates the importance of this communication channel – it correlates active senders and potential receivers. And similarly Auxiliary Reaching Factor, which refers to individuals using the Internet and interacting with politicians and public administration representatives. The indexes, however, do not bear the same significance. To calculate Social Media Political Index the following formula was applied, taking into consideration the importance of particular factors to determine the level of social media use in political communication:

$$SMPI = 0.3 * AF + 0.2 * SF + 0.4 * RF + 0.1 * ARF$$

The above formula is based on the conviction that the maturity of social media use by politicians of a given country is manifested, on the one hand, by their real activity in services in which they have created user accounts and by the ratio of politicians who have undertaken any activities in this communication channel to the total number of political actors. On the other hand, the data should be a subject to objectivization by means of comparing it with the real number of potential receivers and partners of communication, hence high importance of the Reaching Factor. While working on the method of calculating the SMPI, it has been decided that the total activity weight (Activity Factor and

Saturation Factor) has the same value as a potential reaching group (Reaching Factor and Auxiliary Factor altogether). The authors think that between the Activity Factor and Saturation Factor, the former is more important since it concerns real actions: setting-up an account and its actual use. Saturation Factor shows the relation of reality (the number of active accounts) and potentiality (the maximum number of accounts). Also SF has its impact on Reaching Factor and Auxiliary Reaching Factor so it has been decided to put more weight on AF than on SF. At the same time a decision has been made to vary the weight of Reaching Factor and Auxiliary Reaching Factor. Again, it has been assessed that since every Internet user could be a target group for political campaigns, and interacting with public authorities is an important but additional data for setting the SMPI formula.

SELECTED SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE COUNTRIES

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria 32% of politicians and public authorities have registered an account on Facebook (FB) (Table 1). For comparison, 8% of the surveyed respondents have an account on Twitter (TT), 6% on Google+ (G+), and 8% on YouTube (YT). One can venture a statement that on the one hand the most important social network service in this country is FB but the probability of reaching potential voters even in this case amounts to merely 17%, which results first of all from a low factor of political representation but also from one

of the lowest (among the examined countries) percentage of citizens using the Internet regularly – 51% of Bulgarians use the Internet on a regular basis⁸.

Tab. 1. Politicians in social media in Bulgaria.

BULGARIA	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	32%	8%	6%	8%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	17%	4%	3%	4%
Active presence factor	55%	61%	18%	18%
Active political representation factor	18%	5%	1%	1%
Active political potential factor	9%	3%	1%	1%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

An interesting phenomenon – repeated also in the case of other countries – is quite a big group of individuals and public authorities who having registered an account in social network service do not use it in an active manner, i.e. they do not communicate⁹. 55% of "political" users of Facebook and 61% of Twitter users actively used the services during the research. The data looks much worse in the case of Google+ and YouTube – each had 18% of active "political" users. If we compare active users of a given service with the total number of politicians and public authorities, it turns out the active representation factor in Bulgaria amounts to 18% for Facebook, 5% for Twitter and 1% each for YouTube and Google+. As a result, the probability for political communication of active politicians and public authorities to be effective at the stage of

⁸ Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 15.03.2014.

⁹ As it has been mentioned, the activity criterion was met if a given user had posted anything in the examined services within 30 days prior to the research.

reaching receivers who use the Internet to interact with authorities' representatives is scarce. Active political potential factor for Facebook amounts to 9%, for Twitter 3% and for YouTube and Google+ 1%.

Croatia

Politicians and public authorities in Croatia (Table 2) also prefer Facebook as a tool of Internet communication with voters, 63% of them have an account in this social network service. Users of Twitter and Google+ constitute 21% each of the examined group, whereas 16% have YouTube channels. Since 63% of Croatians aged 16-74 regularly use the Internet, the maximal probability of political message reaching potential voters amounts to 40% for FB, 13% for TT, also 13% for G+, and 10% for YT.

Tab. 2. Politicians in social media in Croatia.

Croatia	Facebook	Twitter	Google	YouTube
Political representation factor	63%	21%	21%	16%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	40%	13%	13%	10%
Active presence factor	51%	50%	11%	48%
Active political representation factor	32%	10%	2%	8%
Active political potential factor	20%	6%	1%	5%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

The ratio of active presence for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube fluctuates at a level of 50%, Croatian politicians have the fewest accounts on Google+. Yet again one can notice the lack of consequence in communicating

on the Internet and a low real active political representation on the Internet, which in the case of Facebook totals 32% and for the other analysed portals does not exceed 10%. It means that the active political potential factor totals 20% for FB, 6% for TT, 1% for G+ and 5% for YT.

Czech Republic

72% of Czech politicians and public authorities have an account on Facebook, but among them there are 57% active accounts (Table 3). The other portals come out worse – a profile on Twitter have 28% (out of which 43% are active accounts), 19% of the politicians have registered their account and 7% actively run them on Google+, whereas in the case of YouTube it is 14% and 5% accordingly. The ratio of active political representation for the given services in the Czech Republic amounts to 41% for FB, 12% for TT, 1% for G+ and 1% for YT.

Tab. 3. Politicians in social media in the Czech Republic.

Czech Republic	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	72%	28%	19%	14%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	51%	20%	13%	10%
Active presence factor	57%	43%	7%	5%
Active political representation factor	41%	12%	1%	1%
Active political potential factor	29%	9%	1%	0%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Since 70% of Czechs regularly use the Internet¹⁰, the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and the active political potential factor are significant only in the case of Facebook and total 51% and 29% accordingly. For Twitter the factors amount to 20% and 9%, whereas for Google+ and YouTube accordingly 13% and 1%, and 10% and 0%.

Estonia

The country is famous for being very modern and for using the majority of newest telecommunications technologies connected with the Internet. It is shown e.g. by the percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet¹¹, which is the highest among the examined countries. Interestingly enough, the opinion is only partially reflected in the extent to which particular social network services are used by politicians and public authorities. Indeed, 70% of them have an account on Facebook, out of whom 57% are active, which gives the active political representation factor in this service at a level of 39%. However, in the case of other tools, the data is not as impressive (Table 4).

¹⁰ Individuals regularly using the Internet - % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 15.03.2014.

¹¹ Individuals regularly using the Internet - % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 15.03.2014.

Tab. 4. Politicians in social media in Estonia.

Estonia	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	70%	28%	16%	16%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	54%	21%	12%	12%
Active presence factor	57%	39%	0%	21%
Active political representation factor	39%	11%	0%	3%
Active political potential factor	30%	8%	0%	3%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Especially striking is low interest in Google+ and YouTube – only 16% of the surveyed respondents have an account in the services and the vast majority do not use them actively at all – the political active representation factor for Google+ totals 0% and for YouTube – 3%. In the case of Twitter, 28% of the surveyed respondents have an account, 39% of which are active; the active political representation factor amounts to 11%.

Maximal probability of reaching potential voters and active political potential factors in Estonia in the case of Facebook total accordingly 54% and 30%. For Twitter the factors amount to 21% and 8%, whereas for Google+ and YouTube accordingly 12% and 0%, and 12% and 3%.

Hungary

The last analysed research group were politicians and public authorities in Hungary. Once again the most popular social medium is Facebook – 54% of the surveyed have registered accounts, which is two or even three times more

than on the other services (Twitter – 18%, Google+ – 14%, YouTube – 12%) (Table 5).

Tab. 5. Politicians in social media in Hungary.

Hungary	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	54%	18%	14%	12%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	39%	12%	10%	9%
Active presence factor	86%	36%	9%	46%
Active political representation factor	47%	6%	1%	6%
Active political potential factor	33%	4%	1%	4%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

The highest registered active presence factor in the service is worth noticing – 86% (for Twitter the factor equals 36%, for Google+ 9% and for YouTube 46%).

As a result, the active political representation factor for Facebook in Hungary amounts to 47% (for TT – 6%, G+ – 1%, YT – 6%). With 71% Hungary citizens regularly using the Internet¹², the maximal probability of reaching potential voters by means of Facebook totals 39% but due to the high active presence factor, the active political potential factor comes to 33%.

Latvia

Even though 59% of the surveyed politicians and public authorities have an account on Facebook, yet only 42% actively use the service, which gives 19% of the active political representation factor. However, it is Twitter

¹²Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> , March 2014.

that is more popular– among 56% of the surveyed respondents as many as 69% use it actively, which results in a high, 39% active political representation factor (Table 6). On Google+ and YouTube accordingly 27% and 12% of the respondents run their accounts, yet only 9% and 7% constitute active users and the active political representation factor equals 2% and 1%.

Tab. 6. Politicians in social media in Latvia.

Latvia	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	59%	56%	27%	12%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	42%	40%	19%	9%
Active presence factor	32%	69%	9%	7%
Active political representation factor	19%	39%	2%	1%
Active political potential factor	13%	27%	2%	1%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Since 71% of Latvians regularly use the Internet¹³, the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and active political representation factors for Facebook and Twitter amount to 42% and 13%, 40% and 27% accordingly. Whereas for Google+ and YouTube the factors total accordingly 19% and 2%, 9% and 1%.

¹³Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 15.03.2014.

Lithuania

Politicians and public authorities in Lithuania also use Facebook to the largest extent – 77% of the surveyed respondents have an account in this social network service, 44% of whom are active individuals and public authorities, which makes the active political representation factor amount to 34% (Table 7). The other services are not that popular, it is worth mentioning, however, that as many as 32% of the surveyed respondents have an account on Google+, yet only 18% are active, which translates into 6% of the active political representation factor. Fewer have an account on Twitter – 22% of the surveyed respondents, yet 42% of them are active and the active political representation factor amounts to 9%. Accounts on YouTube have 23% respondents, 19% of them are active accounts, the active political representation factor totals 4%.

Tab. 7. Politicians in social media in Lithuania.

Lithuania	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	77%	22%	32%	23%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	50%	15%	21%	15%
Active presence factor	44%	42%	18%	19%
Active political representation factor	34%	9%	6%	4%
Active political potential factor	22%	6%	4%	3%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Since 65% of Lithuania inhabitants use Internet¹⁴ regularly, the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and the active political potential factors in Lithuania in the case of Facebook come to 50% and 34% accordingly. For Google+ the factors total 21% and 4%, whereas for Twitter and YouTube 15% and 6%, 15% and 3% accordingly.

Poland

In comparison with the other examined countries of Central Europe, Polish politicians and public authorities seems to use social media most eagerly – as many as 84% of them have an account on Facebook, 48% on Twitter, 40% on YouTube and 27% on Google+ (Table 8). What is more, in the case of the first two services, the active presence factor totals 68% and 61% (for G+ it equals 11% and for YT – 17%). As a result, the active political representation factor amounted to 57% and 30% (11% and 17% for G+ and YT).

Tab. 8. Politicians in social media in Poland.

Poland	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	84%	48%	27%	40%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	50%	29%	16%	24%
Active presence factor	68%	61%	11%	17%
Active political representation factor	57%	30%	3%	7%
Active political potential factor	34%	18%	2%	4%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

¹⁴ Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> , 15.03.2014.

Simultaneously – in comparison with other countries in the region – Poland has a comparably small number of citizens regularly using the Internet, which constitutes 60% of individuals aged 16-74 (a smaller percentage was registered only in Bulgaria – 51% and Romania – 45%)¹⁵. As a result, the maximal probability of reaching potential voters for the examined social media amounts to 50% for FB, 29% for TT, 16% for G+ and 19% for YT. Active political potential factors for the above services equal 34%, 18%, 2% and 4% accordingly.

Romania

In the case of Romania only Facebook is of importance for political communication, since 72% of the surveyed politicians and public authorities are its users. In the other services, the political representation factor does not exceed 20% (Table 9).

Tab. 9. Politicians in social media in Romania.

Romania	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	72%	17%	20%	17%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	32%	7%	9%	8%
Active presence factor	56%	41%	11%	21%
Active political representation factor	40%	7%	2%	4%
Active political potential factor	18%	3%	1%	2%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

¹⁵ Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 15.03.2014.

With active presence factors at a level of 56% for FB, 41% for TT, 11% for G+ and 21% for YT, the services – with an exception of Facebook (40%) – have the active political representation factor below 10%.

Juxtaposing the data with the fact that only 45% of Romania's citizens regularly use the Internet (which is the lowest result among the examined countries)¹⁶ allows for a conclusion that the maximal probability of reaching potential voters by active politicians is scarce – in the case of Facebook it amounts to 32% and 18% accordingly, whereas for the other media, the factors fluctuate from 1% to 9%.

Slovakia

Round 75% Slovak politicians and public authorities have an account on Facebook, 24% on Twitter, 39% on Google+ and 25% on YouTube. In comparison with the other countries in the region, it is worth noticing the biggest popularity of Google+ (39%) and the smallest of Twitter (24%) (Table 10). The active presence factor for the analysed social media in Slovakia amounted to 43% for Facebook, 22% for Twitter, merely 3% for Google+ and 19% for YouTube. The consequence of such a situation are active political representation factors that equal accordingly 33%, 5%, 1% and 5%. The question should arise why – with as many as 75% citizens regularly using the Internet¹⁷ – the factors are so low.

¹⁶ Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> , 15.03.2014.

¹⁷ Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> , 15.03.2014.

Tab. 10. Politicians in social media in Slovakia.

Slovakia	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	75%	24%	39%	25%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	56%	18%	29%	18%
Active presence factor	43%	22%	3%	19%
Active political representation factor	33%	5%	1%	5%
Active political potential factor	24%	4%	1%	3%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

As a result, despite the fact the maximal probability of reaching potential voters for particular services is at an average level when compared with the other countries in the region (accordingly 56%, 18%, 29%, 18%), yet with the low active political representation factors, the active political potential factors for particular social media are small (24%, 4%, 1% and 3%).

Slovenia

71% of Slovenian politicians and public authorities have registered an account on Facebook, 49% on Twitter, 40% on Google+ and 16% on YouTube. Interesting is the fact that out of 102 individuals and public authorities whose activity was verified, 40 users run their accounts actively on Facebook and 40 on Twitter, these are, however, not the same subjects, even though they overlap to a large extent (Table 11). Hence, the active presence factor in Slovenia is the highest (56%) for Twitter, with 39% active political users of Facebook, 5% of Google+ and 30% of YouTube. As a result, the active political representation factor equals 28% both for Facebook and Twitter and accordingly 2% and 5% for Google+ and YouTube.

The percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet in Slovenia totals 69%¹⁸ – which gives the maximal probability of reaching potential voters and active political potential factors of particular services at a level of 49% and 19% for FB, 34% and 19% for TT, 28% and 1% for Google+ and 11% and 3% for YT. It is worth noticing that the difference in factors for Google+ results from the fact that despite many registered political accounts, only 5% are active.

Tab. 11. Politicians in social media in Slovenia.

Slovenia	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	YouTube
Political representation factor	71%	49%	40%	16%
Maximal probability of reaching potential voters	49%	34%	28%	11%
Active presence factor	39%	56%	5%	30%
Active political representation factor	28%	28%	2%	5%
Active political potential factor	19%	19%	1%	3%

Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL INDEX 2014

As it has already been mentioned in the introduction, the main aim of the research was to compare the extent to which social media is used in political communication in the countries of Central Europe that belong to the European Union. To underline once again – the researchers' objects of interest were:

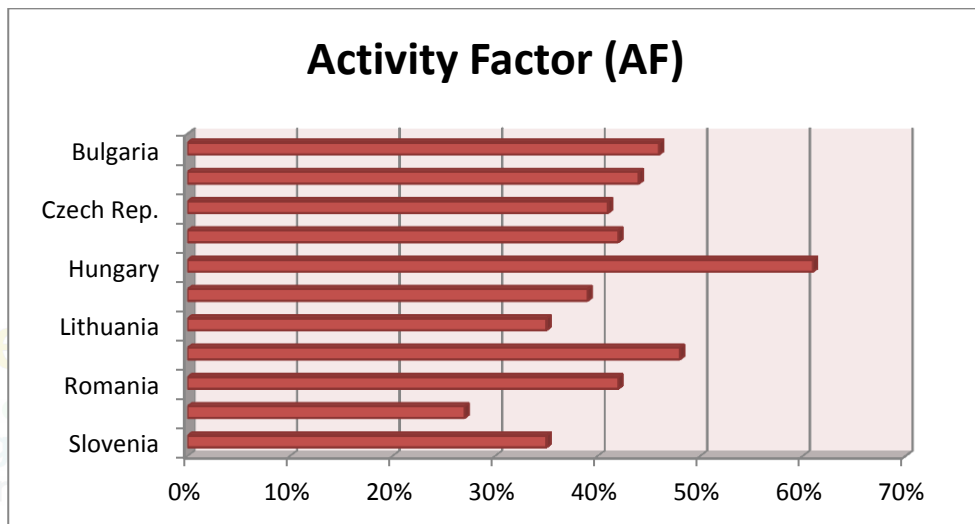
¹⁸Individuals regularly using the Internet – % of individuals aged 16-74, data for 2013. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, March 2014.

- Real activity of politicians in social media understood as the relation of the total registered accounts to the number of users who actively communicate by means of the media.
- Using the social media potential analysed by determining the Saturation Factor calculated by comparison of the active account number to the maximal potential account number in social network services for each country.
- Analysis of the reaching extent of politicians and public authorities with their political message using the Saturation Factor and the data concerning individuals who regularly use the Internet and individuals who use the Internet to interact with political actors and institutions.

The highest Activity Factor is registered in Hungary – Hungarian politicians in comparison with representatives of the other countries in the region are the most consequent in using social media – 61% out of all accounts registered by Hungarian politicians and public authorities are active. Poland takes the second place (48%), Bulgaria the third (46%). The lowest Activity Factor is registered in Slovakia (27%) and in Slovenia and Lithuania (35%) (Fig. 1).

While Hungary is the leader of consequence in political communication by means of social media, Poland is a country with the highest Saturation Factor. For 2520 accounts possible to register in the four examined services (the research was carried out on 630 Polish politicians and public authorities, which makes the maximal account number in social media in a given country this number multiplied by four), there are in total 609 active accounts, which gives the Saturation Factor at a level of 24%. For the other countries, the factor fluctuates from 11% (Slovakia) to 16% (Slovenia).

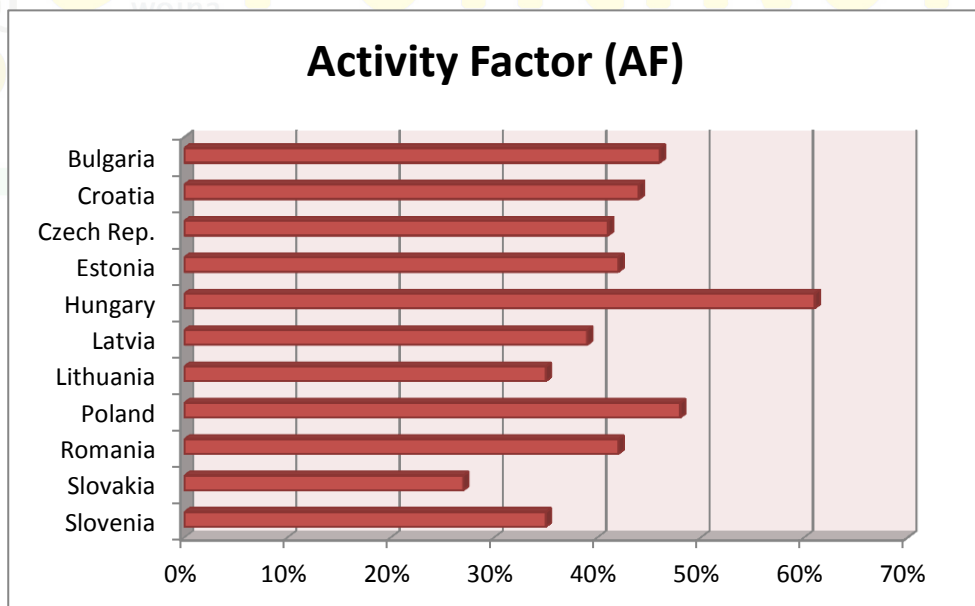
Fig. 1. Activity Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.



Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

A negative case, however, is Bulgaria – its Saturation Factor amounts to 6% (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Saturation Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.



Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

The Reaching Factor (Fig. 3) which is calculated by comparing the Saturation Factor with the percentage of individuals who regularly use the Internet. It comes out best also in the case of Poland (15%) even though only 60% of Poles regularly make use of an access to the Internet. The second place take Latvia, Slovenia and Hungary (11%). The worst Reaching Factor has Bulgaria (3%), which directly results not only from a limited communication activity of its politicians, but also from the fact that only 51% of the country citizens regularly use the Internet.

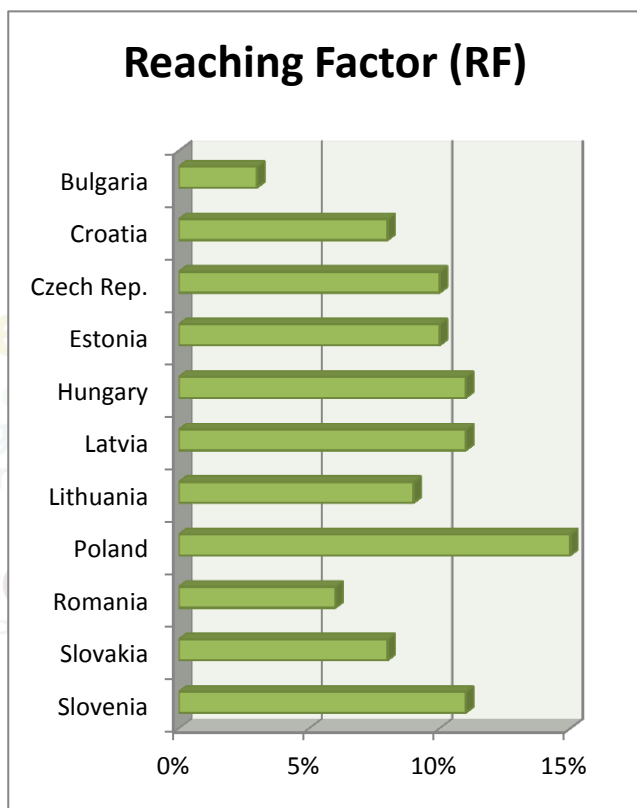
Tab. 12: Use of the Internet by the citizens of the countries in Central Europe that belong to the European Union.

	BG	CZ	EE	HR	HU	LT	LV	PL	RO	SK	SI
% of individuals regularly using the Internet	51	70	77	63	71	65	71	60	45	74	69
% of individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities	23	29	48	25	37	34	35	23	5	33	52

Source: Eurostat, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 15.03.2014.

The Auxiliary Reaching Factor uses an additional variable, which is a percentage of citizens who use the Internet to interact with public authorities. It is the group of individuals who may to the largest extent be interested not only in receiving political communication but also participating in its two-directional aspect.

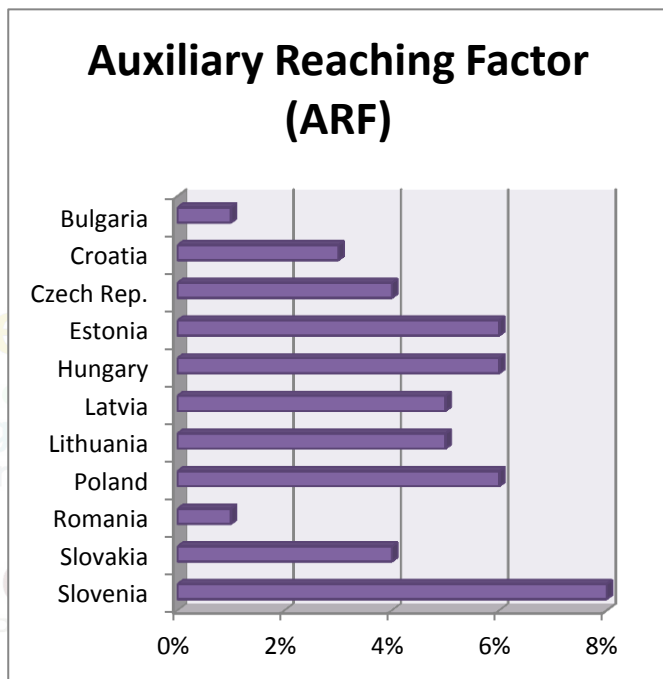
Fig. 3. Reaching Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.



Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

The value of ARF in the case of all examined countries does not exceed 10% (Fig. 4) – it is the highest in Slovenia (8%, which is a result of 52% of individuals interacting with politicians and public authorities on the Internet and 16% Saturation Factor) followed by Estonia, Poland and Hungary (6%). The lowest ARF value is registered in Bulgaria and Romania (1%).

Fig. 4. Auxiliary Reaching Factor in the research Social Media Political Index 2014.



Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

The four above factors have been designed as constituents of the original index created for the purpose of this research – Social Media Political Index (SMPI), whose aim is to compare the extent to which social media are used in political communication. As it has been shown at the beginning, the SMPI consists of two components, each of which is described by means of two factors. On the one hand, the activity on the side of senders in communication process is taken into consideration, on the other hand – conditions in which the communication takes place, i.e. the readiness of recipients to partake in the process, understood as the outcome of the percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet and the ones using the Internet to interact with politicians and public authorities.

It is worth repeating the formula used to calculate SMPI for the examined countries:

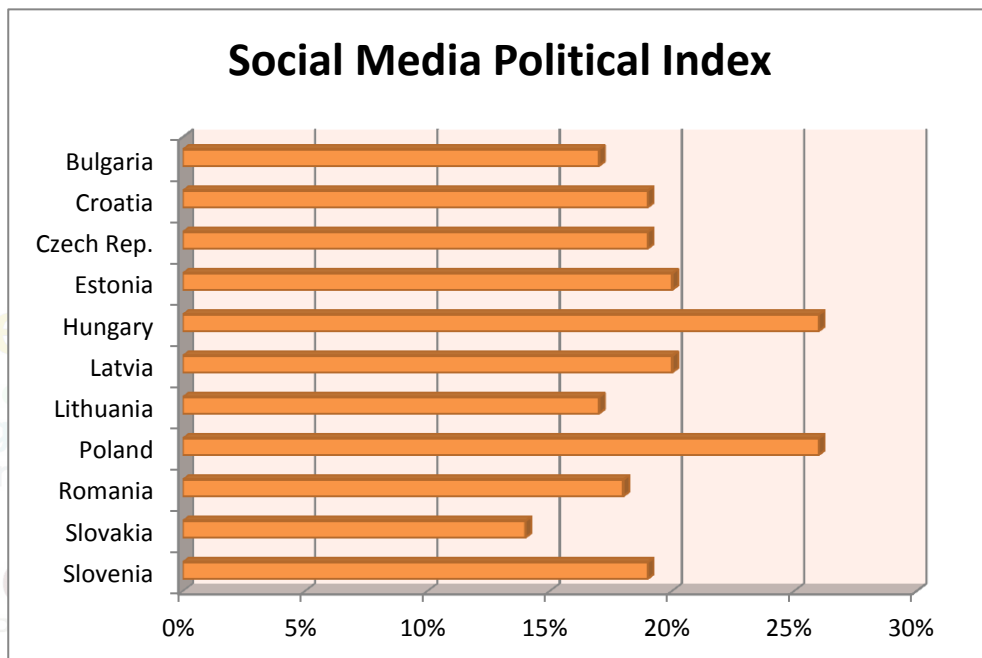
$$\text{SMPI} = 0.3 \cdot \text{AF} + 0.2 \cdot \text{SF} + 0.4 \cdot \text{RF} + 0.1 \cdot \text{ARF}$$

(where AF stands for Activity Factor, SF – Saturation Factor, RF – Reaching Factor and ARF – Auxiliary Reaching Factor).

Social Media Political Index 2014 (Fig. 5) for the particular countries examined in the research looks as follows:

1. Poland – 26%
1. Hungary – 26%
3. Estonia – 20%
3. Latvia – 20%
5. Croatia – 19%
5. Czech Republic – 19%
5. Slovenia – 19%
8. Romania – 18%
9. Bulgaria – 17%
9. Lithuania – 17%
11. Slovakia – 14%

Fig. 5. Social Media Political Index 2014.



Source: Own work based on the data collected during the research carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014 by Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw.

Poland's high classification in the ranking is first and foremost influenced by the highest saturation and Reaching Factors, whereas in the case of Hungary, on the one hand, the high Activity Factor is of much importance, on the other hand, a comparably high percentage of individuals using the Internet regularly. The last position of Slovakia results from the fact that politicians and public authorities in the country do not make use of an outstanding number of active Internet users and have one of the lowest activity and Saturation Factors.

It should be also noticed, however, that with an exception of Poland, Hungary and the last Slovakia, the index values of the other countries are similar, which may show a certain regularity that necessitates further inquiries.

Conclusions:

1. The most popular social network service among politicians and public authorities in Central Europe is Facebook. The second place most often takes Twitter, whereas the positions of Google+ and YouTube change and are country-dependent.
2. No service can be considered dominating. Even though FB plays the biggest role in all countries, other communication channels in social media should also have their place.
3. Politicians in all examined countries are not consequent, many accounts are inactive. It means, on the one hand, ignoring an important communication channel, on the other hand ignoring one of the principles of election campaigns – cohesion – also between all used communication channels. In the end, such a lack of consequence leads to a situation when a receiver on the other side of the screen cannot easily establish an interaction with a politician and having found that the politician's profile is hardly ever (if at all) updated, he stops visiting it. So even if a politician posts something, it may turn out that it will be seen or read by very few. On the other hand a possible reason for quite a small Activity Factor in almost all countries is that politicians tend to be active in social media only during electoral campaigns. If this explanation is true we could say that they treat social media users instrumentally and do not understand the idea of permanent campaign.
4. In general it needs to be stated that there are many perspectives for the use of social media for political communication in the countries of Central Europe – both when it comes to the number of active politicians and public authorities and the extent to which the potential of numerous services of this kind give. At the same time politicians should

be interested in taking action aimed at progressive informatization of the society, understood not only as improving the Internet access, but also encouraging citizens to politically interact in the virtual world of the Internet.

The undertaken research, whose results are presented in this article, is a quantitative introduction to a qualitative study of how politicians use social media and what functions such media can perform, why some services are more popular than others among politicians, finally what and how politicians communicate. It seems that its biggest asset – the possibility to have real interactions with voters, which is a realization of two-directional function of communication – will make other politicians and public authorities not only register accounts in social network services, but also actively use them both as senders and interlocutors. Also new social media should be expected to appear and they can replace the ones considered most significant today. Even now, apart from the portals discussed in the article – Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube, there are new ones that are developing intensively – Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Ask, and politicians are also starting to mark their presence there.

Comments

The research of the Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw entitled Social Media in Political Communication in Central Europe – Quantitative Analysis. Social Media Political Index 2014 was carried out from January, 1 to January, 31 2014. Chief scientist of the research project: Olgierd Annsewicz, PhD; research coordinator: Antoni Morawski, MA; verification of the analytic formulas: Aneta Marcinkowska, MA. Team responsible for gather-

ing data: Aleksandra Beczek, Elżbieta Borowska, Grzegorz Burtan, Patrycja Bytner, Joanna Dziuba, Dominik Héjj, Monika Kaczmarek, Anna Kęsicka, Antoni Kolek, Stefan Kołucki, Adam Kowalczyk, Aleksandra Kozaczuk, Katarzyna Koziół, Katarzyna Kropiak, Bartłomiej Machnik, Marta Michalska, Piotr Michalski, Norbert Nowakowski, Iwona Nowicka, Karolina Olszewska, Patrycja Operacz, Rafał Orzechowski, Aleksandra Osuch, Yuliya Panko, Magdalena Papierz, Beata Piotrowicz, Katarzyna Puchta, Marta Sienkiewicz, Michał Szczegielniak, Tomasz Wiesław Szklarski, Katarzyna Tołoczko, Klaudia Wolniewicz.

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Abstract

Authors of the article present results of the research entitled Social Media in Political Communication in Central Europe – Quantitative Analysis. Social Media Political Index 2014. Its aim was to determine the extent to which politicians used the most popular social media to communicate with Internet users. Creating Social Media Political Index – a political index of social media use that would allow for comparing the phenomenon within Central Europe and for watching changes in the future was another objective. The question concerning political popularity of particular social network services was also raised, i.e. which one – in particular countries – was the most popular among politicians.

Main conclusions from the research are as follows: although the most popular social network service among politicians and public authorities in Central Europe is Facebook, no service can be considered dominating. Politicians in all examined countries are not consequent, many accounts are inactive. In general it needs to be stated that there are many perspectives for the use of social media for political communication in the countries of Central Europe – both when it comes to the number of active politicians and public authorities and the extent to which the potential of numerous services of this kind give.

MEDIA SPOŁECZNOŚCIOWE W KOMUNIKACJI POLITYCZNEJ W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWEJ – ANALIZA ILOŚCIOWA. SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL INDEX 2014

Abstrakt

Autorzy artykułu prezentują w nim wyniki badań zatytułowane *Media społecznościowe w komunikacji politycznej w Europie Środkowej – ujęcie ilościowe. Social Media Political Index 2014*. Jego celem była odpowiedź na pytanie o stopień wykorzystania przez polityków najbardziej popularnych mediów społecznościowych do utrzymywania komunikacji z internautami. Chodziło także o stworzenie Social Media Political Index – wskaźnika politycznego wykorzystania mediów społecznościowych, który pozwalałby na porównanie występowania tego zjawiska w regionie Europy Środkowej oraz umożliwił śledzenie zmian w przyszłości. Postawiono także pytanie o polityczną popularność poszczególnych serwisów społecznościowych, tj. który z nich – w poszczególnych krajach – jest najbardziej popularny wśród polityków. Główne wnioski płynące z uzyskanych wyników przedstawiają się następująco: najpopularniejszym serwisem społecznościowym wśród polityków i instytucji politycznych Europy Środkowej jest Facebook. Żaden serwis nie może być traktowany jako jedyny, dominujący. Politycy we wszystkich badanych krajach nie są konsekwentni,

wiele kont jest nieaktywnych. Generalnie należy stwierdzić, że wykorzystanie mediów społecznościowych do komunikacji politycznej w państwach Europy Środkowej ma duże pole do rozwoju – zarówno jeśli chodzi liczbę aktywnych komunikacyjnie polityków i instytucji, jak i stopień wykorzystania potencjału, który daje liczba serwisów tego typu.

