

EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES *JUST SIGNED UP ON* SOCIAL MEDIA. AN ANALYSIS OF SECRET SERVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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Abstract

In the last decade a large number of public institutions, including intelligence services, make extensive use of social media to communicate with citizens. Much scholarly attention is paid to the benefits of online communication and the way governmental institutions presents themselves online. However, we know little about intelligence services and their presence on social media. This paper addresses this gap in literature and analyzes what kind of social networks European intelligence services prefer. The article is based on quantitative research of the social platforms used by the intelligence services of all 27 European Union Member States. The findings indicate that intelligence services are present in the social media environment to a different extent and the social platforms they choose to use are different.

Keywords: intelligence services, social media, European Union.

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Introduction

Social media started as a personal communication and entertainment tool used by individuals but has evolved as a popular marketing tool used by institutions and organizations. Social media includes a number of services and platforms that we have all become very familiar with: social networks as Facebook, Instagram, blogs, collaborative projects as Wikipedia or media sharing as YouTube. They represent today one of the main drives of change in our societies with a huge potential that allows users to have conversations, to share information and create web content. The four main uses of social media are sharing, learning, interacting and marketing¹.

When society develops new forms and methods of communication, such as social media, public institutions must be able to adapt to these changes. Citizens and governments live today increasingly digital lives² while open data has changed the perspective of transparency and accountability of governments around the world. Public institutions are in a process of updating themselves and intelligence services are not an exception.

Intelligence services help protect national security. To do this successfully, they often need to work in secrecy. The dilemma that arises is that the world created by social media is a world of transparency and openness in which intelligence services need to be „openly secret”. During the last years, intelligence services understood the need to be present in social media and started to *sing in* on platforms as Twitter or Facebook. Many studies discuss the relation between social media and intelligence studies but less is known about what social platforms European Unions’ intelligence services use. This paper tries to fill this gap in the literature and studies the online presence of the intelligence services of EU states.

¹ The purpose of social media, <<http://thoughtfullearning.com/inquireHSbook/pg271>>.

² Amanda Clarke and Helen Margetts, “Governments and Citizens Getting to Know Each Other? Open, Closed, and Big Data in Public Management Reform,” *Policy and Internet* 6, no. 4, 2014, pp. 393–417.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. The first section defines the main concepts: intelligence services and social media and talks about the presence of intelligence studies on social media. Next, I will briefly present the research design of the study with emphasis on the case selection and data methodology. The third section includes a short introspection into the social media presence of intelligence agencies from European Union Member States.

Strategic communication: intelligence services on social media

Intelligence services

According to the Cambridge dictionary, intelligence services are defined as government bodies responsible for various duties such as: protecting and ensuring the security of citizens and important policies and collecting and analyzing information about enemies.

In the specialized literature, intelligence services are defined as "state organizations that use different means of collecting, analyzing and disseminating information that are generally related to threats and dangers to the national security of a state"³. The fundamental objectives of these intelligence services are to protect both national security and the fundamental values of a state's society by using the specific means of secret information⁴. Intelligence services are defined as state-authorized structures designed to provide the state political environment and political decision-makers in the state with both overall perspectives and long-term forecasts, needed in order to be able to plan decisions and future actions against threats of any nature to one's own state.⁵

³ Hans Born, Aidan Wills, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, *Overseeing Intelligence Services: A Toolkit*, Geneva : DCAF, 2012, p. 5.

⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights., *Supravegherea de către serviciile de informații: măsurile de protecție și căile de atac privind drepturile fundamentale în Uniunea Europeană : rezumat.*, Publications Office, LU, 2016, p. 4,

⁵ Ion Drăghici, „Importanța serviciilor de informații în identificarea deficiențelor de natură a periclită siguranța națională”, *Revista pro patria lex*, vol. X, no. 2, 2012, p. 282.

Intelligence services exist for at least four reasons, and these are: to avoid surprises of a strategic nature (events, threats and forces that could endanger the existence of a state), to provide long-term expertise, to support the policy process intelligence structures provide policymakers with timely, constantly adapted information that they consider providing background on certain information, threats, risks, benefits and outcomes in certain specific situations, to keep the information, need and methods secret⁶.

In other words, the intelligence services are those bodies whose main responsibility is the production of information products (intelligence) to ensure the security of the state and individuals. Each state has one or more specialized information services (agencies) in several areas of interest. For the most part, intelligence services can focus on a single field of interest, in this sense we find internal, external, military, forensic or economic intelligence⁷. When they come together, they create an intelligence community.

Intelligence services are existing today in a very complex and dynamic environment abundant with information. The culture in the secret services is one of secrecy, and the present culture in society is to be as open as possible⁸. One of the challenges they need to face now is gaining the trust of their citizens and for this they need to become more transparent than before. Social media, with its features creates a framework for where this can happen.

⁶ Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: from secrets to policy*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2009, pp. 24–27.

⁷ Hans Born, Aidan Wills, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, *Overseeing intelligence services: a toolkit*, Geneva: DCAF, 2012, p. 2.

⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Surveillance by Intelligence Services: Fundamental Rights Safeguards and Remedies in the EU Mapping Member States' Legal Frameworks*, vol. II.

Social media

Social media has received many definitions over time, these being influenced by the development of technology. Social media as defined by Kawaljeet Kaur Kapoor is "consisting of various user-driven platforms that facilitate the dissemination of compelling content, dialogue creation and communication to a wider audience." ⁹ Davis et al. refers to social media technology as "web-based and mobile applications that enable individuals and organizations to create, engage with, and share new user-generated or existing content in digital environments through multidirectional communication." ¹⁰ Social networks can take the form of blogs and social networking sites that facilitate communication between people ¹¹. Among these platforms we can mention Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Instagram, TikTok, etc.

Before reaching this level of popularity, social media went through different stages. Before 1900, the method of communication used was mail. This method involved writing the letter and delivering it from one person to another. In 1792, the telegraph was invented which facilitated communication and made possible to transmit information over a long distance in a short time. In the 20th century, social media acquired a different configuration through the advancement of technology and the invention of the first computer in 1940 ¹². For the development and improvement of communication using the computer, the first network that gave birth to the Internet was developed.

⁹ K. Kapoor *et al.* "Advances in Social Media Research: Past, Present and Future", *Information Systems Frontiers*, no. 20, 2018, pp. 531-558.

¹⁰ Charles Davis *et al.* "Social Media in Higher Education: A Literature Review and Research Directions", Report printed by the University of Arizona and Claremont Graduate University, 2012.

¹¹ University of South Florida, Introduction to Social Media, <<https://www.usf.edu/ucm/marketing/intro-social-media.aspx>>, accessed on 7 January 2022.

¹² Fajjun Mim, Md. Ashraful Islam, Gowranga Kumar, „Impact of the Use of Social Media on Students' Academic Performance and Behavior Change", *International Journal of Applied Mathematics*, vol. 3, 2018, pp. 5–6.

Among the earliest and well-known forms of the Internet are CompuServe (for email)¹³, UseNet (virtual newsletters)¹⁴, Six Degrees (it was the first platform that allowed users to create a profile and make friends with other users)¹⁵. Social media currently consists of a multitude of platforms that facilitate communication. Today, social media provides users with a number of options to interact on various topics and allows content to be created and shared between users. According to the authors Savrum Melike and Leon Miller, social media operates like a hegemon from the perspective of the spread of information and the power it holds¹⁶.

Because of their many features, social media platforms are transforming state-society relations. Numerous governments embraced social media and use it to share information, to engage with citizens. Governments around the globe developed ways to incorporate social media into their daily work¹⁷.

Social media has changed the world we live in. The changes it produces affect not only the way we interact but also the way some institutions function. In the case of the intelligence services, the transformations are multiple. After a review of the literature that discusses the relationship between social media and intelligence services, we can say that the changes that social media brings to the intelligence communities can be divided into two main categories: (a) changes to the intelligence process¹⁸, and changes

¹³ Peter H. Lewis, „Personal Computers; The CompuServe Edge: Delicate Data Balance”, *The New York Times*, 29 November 1994.

¹⁴ Christopher Lueg, Danyel Fisher, *From Usenet to CoWebs: Interacting with Social Information Spaces*, London, New York: Springer, 2003.

¹⁵ Danah M. Boyd, Nicole B. Ellison, „Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship”, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210–230.

¹⁶ Melike Yagmur Savrum, Leon Miller, „The Role of the Media in Conflict, Peace Building and International Relations”, *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2015, pp. 13–34.

¹⁷ Ishmael Mugari and Rudo Chisuvi, “Social Media and National Security in Zimbabwe: Embracing Social Media for National Security and Addressing Social Media Threats,” *African Security Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2021, pp. 86–101.

¹⁸ Anja Bechmann and Geoffrey C. Bowker, “Unsupervised by Any Other Name: Hidden Layers of Knowledge Production in Artificial Intelligence on Social Media,” *Big Data and Society*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–11.

related to their image, the way they communicate and present themselves to the citizens. In other words, social media is a vector of change in terms of the space where information can be gathered, but also an element of change in the strategic communication direction of these institutions.

If information is power, then the real time flow of data and information circulating in social media is very important for the intelligence community. A study revealed that a minute on the internet in 2021 means 70,000 photos shared on Instagram, Twitter users around the world send close to 600,000 tweets, more than 690,000 Facebook stories are uploaded, 188 million emails are sent, 69 million messages are sent on Facebook Messenger and Whatsapp and 500 hours of content is uploaded on YouTube¹⁹. The volume of information increases considerably. When society develops new forms of communication, intelligence services need to be able to adapt and develop the best ways to exploit this information. The information services have perfectly understood the fact that they must be present where the information exists and social media must not be ignored. That is why, in recent years, they have developed new methods of collecting information from social media sources. In this context, a new intelligence collection discipline (INT) began to be more relevant and useful. Coined by Sir David Omand, the term Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) describes a type of intelligence that focuses on the collection and analysis of information available in social media²⁰ that can be used by state actors to enhance a safety and security environment but also by private actors who can formulate better strategies. This new intelligence discipline comes with many opportunities and challenges broadly discussed in

¹⁹ What Happens on the Internet in one Minute?, <<https://www.stackscale.com/blog/internet-one-minute/>>.

²⁰ Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, "A Balance Between Security and Privacy Online Must Be Struck...", Demos Report, <<https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/intelligence-Report.pdf>>, 2012.

the literature ²¹ that won't be addressed here as this is not the objective of this article.

For the purpose of our paper, the most relevant change produced by the growing phenomenon of social media concerns the way in which intelligence services redefine their strategic communication.

Social media represents a good communication tool, an ideal environment for purposeful messaging, a strong connection with the citizens that these institutions serve. Citizens now expect to receive information immediately and in a format they can easily use. In an age of mediatic conglomerates, 500 channel cable services, and the internet, citizens have many sources of information they can choose and social media is one of them²². Public institutions understood this need and have gradually adapted to it. The presence of government departments and institutions on social media is part of an organic development of our societies. In this dynamic, even the intelligence and security agencies established online presence on various platforms. The arrival of intelligence agencies on social media symbolically suggests a new more open era²³. In this era, intelligence services as CIA, NSA or Federal Intelligence Service from Germany are present on at least one of the following social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube or LinkedIn.

In his study, McLoughlin states that government social media presence revolves around five functions:

²¹ Adrian Ivan *et al.*, "Social Media Intelligence: Opportunities and Limitations," *CES (Centre for European Studies) Working Papers*, vol. 7, no. 2a, 2015, pp. 505-510; Daniel Trottier, "Open Source Intelligence, Social Media and Law Enforcement: Visions, Constraints and Critiques," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4-5, 2015, pp. 530-547; Kenneth C. Werbin, "Spookipedia: Intelligence, Social Media and Biopolitics," *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 33, no. 8, 2011, pp. 1254-65; Robert Dover, "SOCMINT: A Shifting Balance of Opportunity," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2020, pp. 216-32.

²² Bruce D. Berkowitz, "Information Age Intelligence," *Foreign Policy*, vol. 103, no. 103, 1996, p. 35.

²³ Liam McLoughlin, Stephen Ward, and Daniel W.B. Lomas, "'Hello, World': GCHQ, Twitter and Social Media Engagement," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2020, pp. 233-251.

- (1) *Providing information on policy.* Public institutions use social media to keep citizens informed about their activities and their policies. This is something that intelligence agencies can do online. It is true that because of the nature of the activity and the policies they carry out, intelligence services are not able to present every aspect openly online. However, intelligence services can use social media platforms to inform the public about those aspects that can be exposed.
- (2) *Delivering services online.* Over the past two decades many government services have moved online to provide ease of access for citizens and increase their efficiency and lower the costs of service delivery²⁴. The services that intelligence agencies provide revolve around ensuring the security of a state interests, safeguarding classified data or collecting information on external enemies. These kinds of services are not discussed with the public, so unlike other government institutions, the information services will not use this function on their online platforms.
- (3) *Interacting and engaging with the public.* Social media platforms have various features that allow governmental institution to engage in communication with the user. Social media platforms can help citizens access various services provided by those institutions. This is not the case for intelligence service. Because of their nature, intelligence services are institutions governed by the idea of secrecy and discretion and their level of interaction with the public is low. On their Facebook or Instagram accounts citizens will not identify dialogue options or online forms that can be accessed.

²⁴ Marijn Janssen and Elsa Estevez, "Lean Government and Platform-Based Governance-Doing More with Less," *Government Information Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2013, pp. S1-S8.

- (4) *Impression management*: Social media arguably allows organizations to communicate their message more directly to audiences without relying on the potentially distorting prism of mainstream media. Hence, there is the ability for organizations and institutions to shape their messages, control their image, market themselves, and ultimately to create a brand image with the public²⁵. This function is often used by information services that, through social media platforms, have at their disposal an environment that allows them to shape as they wish the message they transmit. In this direction, social media is an ideal place for information services to manage their public image and a place to shape the public perception. Using social media, they have the chance to dispel certain myths about them and discourage conspiracy theories.
- (5) *Building consent and legitimacy*. Governmental institutions use social media to humanize bureaucracies through the personalization of interactions and storytelling for audience. In the case of intelligence services, social media offers a framework in which storytelling can take place in order to humanize the activity it carries out and contribute to increasing transparency and accountability of the institution.

Because of their unique role and position, intelligence service has a different approach of their online presence. The limitation of what intelligence agencies can do and share on social media are somehow obvious. They are providing a service but unlike other government agencies these services are not publicly measurable and the information they can share is not complete or 100% transparent. Nonetheless, the establishment of social media pages is indicative of new opportunities for interface between the intelligence community and the public. Just like other institutions that choose to be present on social media, information services

²⁵ McLoughlin, Ward, and Lomas, *op. cit.*

have the chance to shape perceptions about the activity they carry out, to increase transparency and accountability and effectively *meet people where they are*²⁶ with the frequently positive benefits of public education, engagement and participation, service provision, collaborative efforts and co-production, openness, transparency and accountability, trust building, and efficient communication²⁷. Social media offers to intelligence services an avenue to engage, educate and give insight into intelligence activities.

Method

To analyze the presence of online intelligence services, we have selected the case of the European Union, more precisely the 27 member states and their intelligence institutions. Even if the European Union does not have a common policy in the area of intelligence and information services are an attribute of state sovereignty, the case of the EU states is relevant for understanding the general perspective of the relation between intelligence services and social media presence.

The collected data represents a quantitative x-ray about the platforms used by European intelligence services.

Data used was collected using available on-line sources connected with intelligence services of European Union member states (27 countries). Official websites and social media accounts were considered to be representative for the on-line activity of the above-mentioned actors, since these tools are widely used for public communication, direct interactions with citizens, rising awareness or recruitment or engagement.

The official website of an intelligence service is a basic communication instrument and can be associated with a business card. Through them, general information and details regarding the structure, leadership, mission and objectives are shared with anyone interested and, in most cases, versions in multiple languages are available.

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

²⁷ *Ibidem.*

Besides this, other official accounts on social media platforms improve content shareability and contribute to a higher level of transparency. Facebook was selected as a relevant source since it is the social platform with highest popularity among internet users, regardless of age or location²⁸. Instagram is also a significant app since it is widely used by Gen Z and Millennials (as of April 2022, 61,9% of the users were aged between 18-34 years old, according to Statista²⁹). On the other side, YouTube users (implicitly intelligence services) that are sharing content through this service place the longest-standing video social media platform in the world on the second place.

Moreover, LinkedIn is the most popular business oriented online network and it allows professional from all over the world to connect, share and gather based on their specific interests. As such, its usage by intelligence services can be considered as a recruitment instrument. *Annex 1* is an overview of the collected data.

European intelligence services and social media

Intelligence services play a crucial role in protecting national security and helping law enforcement to uphold the rule of law. This is particularly true across the European Union today, with terrorism, cyberattacks and organized crime groups located outside of the EU all posing serious threats to the Member States³⁰. Member States need to work on national level and in partnership to create a secure environment. After 9/11 the EU and its Member States understood the need to reorganize their intelligence communities and to improve the cooperation with other

²⁸ Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users, <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>>.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Surveillance by Intelligence Services: Fundamental Rights Safeguards and Remedies in the EU Mapping* (Vol. I. Member States' Legal Frameworks), Vienna, 2017.

national authorities. Because national security remains the sole responsibility of each member state of the EU, national intelligence services are not viewed as part of EU politics³¹. However, they are part of a democratic organization and understand that they are accountable and need to be responsible and as transparent as they can in front of their citizens. European intelligence services adapted to the changes brought by the information era. They incorporated social media in their communication strategies and use it as a direct connection between them and the citizens they serve.

The landscape of European intelligence services is diverse. Each Member State has configured its own architecture. In most European countries, the mission of the intelligence services is split up: for example, some authorities are in charge of foreign intelligence services and other of domestic intelligence. A pattern is discernible: the bigger and more politically important a country is, the more intelligence actors has³². A good example in this direction is France which has three main intelligence bodies: a domestic intelligence structure (General Directorate for Internal Security) a foreign intelligence agency (General Directorate for External Security) and a military intelligence structure (Directorate of Military Intelligence) compared with Cyprus where Cyprus Intelligence Service does both domestic and foreign intelligence missions, same goes with Luxembourg. In other countries as Ireland, intelligence services don't exist as a different institution: they are part of other ministries: foreign intelligence is done by structures within the Ministry of Defense while domestic intelligence is embedded in the Interior Ministry.

³¹ Yvan Lledo-Ferrer and Jan Hendrik Dietrich, "Building a European Intelligence Community," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2020, pp. 440–451.

³² *Ibidem*.

Websites

Intelligence agencies use website to convey information to citizens on organizational values, history, leadership and their mission. In one word, they are used for branding: with photos, graphics and text they are able to provide a visual story of their area and the mission they have.

At the European Union level, all intelligence services have a website. The intelligence services that do not have a website are those who are integrated in one ministry or another. In this case, the respective services have a web page where the most relevant aspects are briefly presented. In most situations, the content of the website is similar: each intelligence service presents its institution, the missions they have and the way of working. Many of these institutions use websites to disseminate annual reports. Sections `what we do` and `annual reports` are intelligence services way of showing transparency and accountability. Even though the websites are not very interactive they have valuable information on them that allows citizens to better understand them.

Facebook pages

Facebook pages represent a place where European information services are present. Through the functionalities they have, Facebook pages offer many benefits to intelligence services. Facebook pages allow the users to contact their community every day and remind them about their presence. The posts shared by intelligence services show up in the News Feed of the followers which have the chance to interact with the content. Facebook pages in the case of intelligence services are a great way to establish the institution as an expert in the field of security and intelligence and a good branding tool. It helps intelligence services to tell the story they want to tell, to share the relevant information and to create a public perception. Thanks to the share button, the story that intelligence service post can be distributed and seen by others.

In the case of the European intelligence services, out of the 69 analysed structures, 20 own and maintain a Facebook page. Most of the time, domestic and foreign intelligence services are present on Facebook. Military intelligence institutions do not develop or administrate Facebook pages. Some European countries are very active on Facebook like: Germany, Romania or Estonia. In the case of these states, the internal and external information services are active and interact with Facebook users. A brief analysis of the information posted by them shows that, most of the time, the content disseminated is related to security challenges, awareness or recruitment. It is unclear why in other states owning a Facebook page is not a part of communication strategy. This can be a subject that should be researched in another article.

Twitter

Twitter presents a unique way for governments and intelligence services to connect with the people that matter most. Via Twitter, intelligence services can address topics that are relevant, can share news and ideas fast. In case of an emergency Twitter is a valuable tool to communicate with users.

Our quantitative analysis revealed that only 10 intelligence services 'tweet' about their activity. The country with the most Twitter accounts is Germany. The information services are also present on Twitter in other countries such as Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Estonia and Finland.

Strictly from a statistical perspective, the fact that the number of Twitter accounts is lower than those of Instagram is justified by the popularity of the social network in Europe. According to statistics, in October 2022, Twitter was used by 5.6% of Europeans, while Facebook by 80.5³³. If the citizens of European states do not use Twitter, the intelligence services are not there.

³³Social media stats, <<https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/europe>>.

Instagram

Instagram became the fastest growing social media platform. Many young people are active there and enjoy its functionalities. In the case of governmental institutions Instagram allows to increase transparency, raise awareness, take polls, share some of the day-to-day operations of government officials, and more. Citizens can like, share, and comment on the content they are interested about. It is useful, personable and fun for everyone.

In the European Union only 10 intelligence agencies have an Instagram account. Instagram is used by intelligence services in Germany, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. One of the explanations can be related to the technical options that the platform offers, which in a way or another limit the expression capabilities. However, judging by the large number of users of various ages with multiple professional backgrounds, Instagram will soon become a place taken into account by information services that want to be closer to their citizens.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest business-oriented networking website oriented specifically towards professionals. It has over 500 million members, in over 200 countries. A professionally written LinkedIn profile allows you to create an online professional brand which can open doors to opportunities and networks that you may not have been aware of, without the help of social media³⁴. In the latest years various intelligence services understood its benefits and decided to sign in on LinkedIn. In most of the cases, the usage of LinkedIn is the modern way of approaching unknown talents, a new way of recruiting personnel. The collected data show that, at the level of the European Union, only in eight states the information services have a LinkedIn page. These countries are: France, Germany, Romania and Finland.

³⁴ Sarah Rycraft, 7 Benefits of Using LinkedIn, <<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-benefits-using-linkedin-sarah-rycraft/>>.

The collected and analysed data reveal the fact that the European intelligence services are not that present in social media. Three different behaviours can be identified: (1) intelligence services are absent from social media platforms (2) intelligence services have understood the need to use social media, but do not exploit it to the maximum and (3) intelligence services have developed a communication strategy in which the presence on the most popular social networks is natural and an objective. The intelligence services from Ireland and Denmark have chosen to stay away from social media, while other agencies from countries such as France, Germany, Romania and Estonia *signed in* every relevant social platform. In the second category we can place the vast majority of European intelligence services. They are present on at least one social network selected, probably, in accordance with society trends.

The motivation behind these behaviours are difficult to identify because the communication strategies of the intelligence organizations are documents not available to general public. Without an official explanation, any statement is just a supposition. In this context, the only perspective that can be addressed is related to the motivations of the intelligence services that choose to join social media platforms, an analysis that requires different methods and can be the subject of another research paper.

Conclusion

Social media is one of the phenomena that govern both the lives of individuals and aspects of government institutions. The intelligence services, in their intention to serve the national interests in a transparent and responsible way, have recently chosen to be much more active in the online environment. They understood very clearly that social media is a source of information that should not be ignored and that should be exploited to produce informative products relevant to their missions. In addition to this aspect, they see social media as a driver for marketing and branding purposes. In this direction, following the example of other

government institutions that have chosen to join social platforms, the intelligence services have launched Facebook pages, created Instagram, Twitter or even LinkedIn accounts. Through them, they are present and have the ability to transmit information much more easily.

Following the analysis of the online presence of the intelligence institutions of the Member States of the European Union, we found that the presence in social media is not as overwhelming as one might think. The European intelligence services choose to be extremely present online, to be totally absent or to have a minimal presence. In countries such as Germany, Romania, Estonia or France, social media is a communication strategy. In countries like Ireland and Denmark, social media is not compatible with intelligence services. When they choose to be present, most intelligence agencies choose Facebook. This is due to the popularity of the network, but also its functionality, which offers a dialogue space, an environment in which different media contents can be distributed. The second choice after Facebook is Twitter and Instagram. The rationales behind these choices are hard to identify, as are the reasons that lead intelligence services to join social platforms.

Although the benefits of the online presence of government institutions is a matter documented by specialized literature and practice, in the case of European information services, social media does not seem to be a voice as compatible with the nature of the institutions as we would think.

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Annex 1

Country	Intelligence Service	W	F	T	L	I
Austria	Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung (BMLV): Federal Ministry of Defence	x	x			
	Heeresnachrichtenamt Army Intelligence Office	x				
	Direktion Staatsschutz und Nachrichtendienst (DSN): State Security and Intelligence Directorate	x				
	BMI - Bundesministerium für Inneres	x	x			
Belgium	State Security Service - Veiligheid van de Staat - Sûreté de l'Etat					
	General Information and Security Service - Algemene Dienst Inlichting en Veiligheid					
Bulgaria	State Intelligence Agency - intelligence extern la fel ca Sie - Държавна агенция "Разузнаване"	x	x			
	State Agency for National Security - intelligence intern - Държавна агенция "Национална сигурност" Darzhavna agentsiya "Natsionalna sigurnost"	x				
	Defense intelligence service	x				
Croatia	Security and Intelligence Agency- Sigurnosno-obavještajna agencija	x				
	Military Security and Intelligence Agency - Vojna sigurnosno-obavještajna agencija					
Cyprus	Cyprus Intelligence Service - Κυπριακή Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών					
Czechia	Security Information Service- Bezpečnostní informační služba (BIS)	x		x		
	Office for Foreign Relations and Information - Úřad pro zahraniční styky a informace	x				

Country	Intelligence Service	W	F	T	L	I
	Military Intelligence -Vojenské zpravodajství	x				
Denmark	Danish Security and Intelligence Service - Politiets Efterretningstjeneste	x				
	Danish Defence Intelligence Service - Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste	x				
	Intelligence Regiment - Efterretningregimentet					
Estonia	Internal Security Service - Kaitsepolitsei	x	x	x		
	Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service - Välisluureamet VLA	x	x			
Finland	Finnish Defence Intelligence Agency - Puolustusvoimien tiedustelulaitos Försvarmaktens underrättelsetjänst	x				
	Intelligence Division of Defence Command - Pääesikunnan tiedusteluosasto Huvudstabens underrättelseavdelning	x				
	Finnish Security Intelligence Service - Suojelupoliisi (Finnish), xSkyddspolisen (Swedish)	x		x	x	
France	General Directorate for Internal Security - Direction générale de la Sécurité intérieure	x	x			
	General Directorate for External Security -Direction générale de la Sécurité extérieure	x	x		x	
	Directorate of Military Intelligence - Direction du renseignement militaire	x			x	
Germany	Federal Intelligence Service - Bundesnachrichtendienst	x	x			x
	Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution - Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV)	x		x		
	Federal Office for Information Security - Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik	x	x	x	x	x

Country	Intelligence Service	W	F	T	L	I
	Military Counterintelligence Service - Militärischer Abschirmdienst (MAD)	x	x	x		x
Greece	National Intelligence Service - Εθνική Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών	x				
	Hellenic National Defence General Staff - Γενικό Επιτελείο Εθνικής Άμυνας	x				
Hungary	Information Office - Információs Hivatal	x	x			
	Constitution Protection Office (intern) - Alkotmányvédelmi Hivatal AH	x				
	Counter Terrorism Centre - Terrorelhárítási Központ	x				
Irland	Directorate of Military Intelligence - Stiúrthóireacht na Faisnéise					
	Communications and Information Services Corps -An Cór Seirbhísí Cumarsáide agus Eolais					
	Domestic Police Intelligence - An Garda Síochána					
Italy	Department of Information for Security - Dipartimento delle informazioni per la sicurezza	x		x		x
	Internal Information and Security Agency - Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna AISI					
	External Intelligence and Security Agency - Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Esterna AISE					
	Joint Intelligence Centre -Centro Intelligence Interforze CII					
Latvia	The Defence Intelligence and Security Service -	x				
	State Security Service - Valsts drošības dienests VDD	x				
Liuthania	State Security Department - Valstybės Saugumo Departamentas VSD	x	x			

Country	Intelligence Service	W	F	T	L	I
	Second Investigation Department - Antrasis Operatyvinių Tarnybų Departamentas AOTD					
Luxemburg	State Intelligence Service - Service de Renseignement de l'État	x				
Malta	State Security Service	x				
Netherlands	General Intelligence and Security Service - Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst	x			x	
	Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service - Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst					
	National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism - Nationaal coördinator terrorismebestrijding en veiligheid	x	x	x		
Poland	Foreign Intelligence Agency - Agencja Wywiadu AW	x				
	Internal Security Agency ISA - Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego ABW	x				
	Military Counterintelligence Service - Służba Kontrwywiadu Wojskowego	x				
Portugal	Informations System of the Portuguese Republic - Sistema de Informações da República Portuguesa SIRP	x				
	Security Information Service - Serviço de Informações de Segurança SIS	x				
	Defense Strategic Information Service - Serviço de Informações Estratégicas de Defesa SIED	x				
Romania	SRI - Serviciul Român de Informații	x	x	x	x	x
	SIE - Serviciul de Informații Externe	x	x		x	x
	STS - Serviciul de Telecomunicații Speciale	x	x		x	x
	General Directorate for Defense Intelligence - Direcția Generală de Informații a Apărării DGIA					

Country	Intelligence Service	W	F	T	L	I
	General Directorate for Internal Security - Direcția Generală de Protecție Internă DGPI	x				
Slovakia	Slovak Information Service - Slovenská informačná služba (SIS)	x	x			x
	Military intelligence - Vojenské spravodajstvo					
Slovenia	Slovenian Intelligence and Security Agency - Slovenska obveščevalno-varnostna agencija SOVA	x				
	Intelligence and Security Service of Slovenian Ministry of Defence - Obveščevalno Varnostna Služba OVS	x				
Spain	Department of Homeland Security - Departamento de Seguridad Nacional	x		x		x
	National Intelligence Centre - Centro Nacional de Inteligencia	x				
	Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado - Intelligence Center for Counter-Terrorism and Organized Crime					
Sweden	Swedish Security Service	x		x	x	

Note: W=Website; F=Facebook; T=Twitter; L=LinkedIn; I=Instagram

