



ActEU - Activating European citizens' trust in times of crises and polarization

Reporting on Deliverable D6.1 – Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan

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Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan

This document, deliverable D6.1 within the ActEU project, functions as the prime reference point for the project's communications, dissemination and exploitation activities, variously implemented in the framework of Work Package 6 as well as throughout other thematic Work Packages. Hereafter are outlined all major elements of the project's activities in this area: overall and specific objectives, main target groups, channels used to reach those groups as well as methods employed on those channels, measures taken to secure communication within the project's consortium and a risk assessment and mitigation plan. In addition, this document outlines guidelines for use of the project's visual identity and rules for ensuring the visibility and transparency of ActEU's European funding. Key Performance Indicators are established, as well as ways the project will track its achievement in them. This document is the first, and most important, step in implementing ActEU's communications, dissemination and exploitation.



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Communication and Dissemination Objectives	3
Target Audiences.....	4
Communications, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities	5
The Three Dimensions of CDE Activities	5
Aims, Strategies, and Targets of CDE Activities	6
ActEU's Channels.....	13
Intra-Consortium Coordination of Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities ...	13
Risk Identification and Management	14
Visual Identity	16
Project Logos: Description & Uses.....	16
Visibility: European Flag and Funding Statement	17
Measuring ActEU's Impact.....	17
Exploitation of Results.....	18
ANNEXES.....	20
ANNEX 1 – List of Tasks within WP6.....	20
ANNEX 2 – List of Deliverables within WP6	21
ANNEX 3 – Current Online Following of the ActEU Consortium (Social Media, 5-2023).....	22
ANNEX 4 – Visualisation of ActEU's Decentralised Social Media Strategy	22



Introduction

This Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (Deliverable D6.1) is a primary reference document for the ActEU project, outlining the broad methodology to be used in order to ensure project outputs reach the widest possible audience within identified target groups. This document aims to set out approaches whereby the project's scientific, policy and societal impact (as defined in the Grant Agreement) can be maximised. This document will 1) outline the project's key communication and dissemination objectives and means to achieve them, 2) define target groups and relevant communication channels, 3) provide a plan for the exploitation of project results, and 4) define a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) used to measure the project's progress in achieving these aims.

Each section of the plan will set out procedures and best practices to optimise communication, dissemination and exploitation, thus working towards the project's overarching objective to contribute to the reinvigoration and resilience of representative democracy across Europe.

In order to set out a comprehensive communication and dissemination strategy, the scope of this plan is not limited to activities and deliverables included in Work Package (WP) 6 "Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation", but also includes activities from other Work Packages which have a relevance in terms of impact and dissemination. Overall, ActEU's communication, dissemination and exploitation activities will ensure that the tangible results and outcomes of the project will achieve long-term impact and contribute ultimately to an enhancement of political trust in and legitimacy of European representative democracies.

Communication and Dissemination Objectives

ActEU brings together a pan-European consortium of experts and research institutes under the project lead of the University of Duisburg-Essen, and the scientific lead from Saarland University. The project operates a dedicated Work Package (WP) implementing its communications, dissemination, and exploitation strategy and activities. This WP carries with it a set of specific objectives directly linked to facilitating the achievement of the ActEU's overarching project objectives, as elaborated on in the Description of the Action (DoA):

- 1) Providing an innovative conceptual framework as well as an original empirical infrastructure based on new quantitative and qualitative empirical data (focus groups, experimental surveys, web scraping) and an innovative combination thereof to study political trust, legitimacy and representation in polarizing times in the European multi-level system.
- 2) Mapping and investigating the issue of legitimacy of European representative democracies via a triangular approach focusing on political attitudes, political behaviour and political representation.
- 3) Identifying a set of clear-cut factors to counteract the problem of decreasing political trust, legitimacy and representation in European democracies for immediate intervention and in the long term.
- 4) Analysing the context sensitivity of solutions for engendering trustworthy institutions as well as a less divided society in Europe. We will do so in terms of both level of polity (local, regional, national, EU) and three of the most polarizing policy fields (migration, environment, gender inequality).
- 5) Developing a toolbox of remedial actions including two toolkits for (1) European, national, regional and local policymakers, and (2) civil society and the educational sector to (re-)activate citizens and to enhance trust in and legitimacy of representative democracy. For



the co-creation of the toolbox, we will systematically cooperate with and get input from civil society actors and political stakeholders as well as (young) citizens and the broader public.

- 6) Communicating and disseminating ActEU findings across three different target groups (citizens including the younger generations, policymakers and stakeholders, and academics) in multifaceted and innovative ways (educational cartoons “Cartooning for democracy”, podcasts, videos, blogs, policy briefs, reports, and others) and building up an ActEU Civil Society Network.

The project’s scientific outputs will enable completion of these objectives. However the consortium understands that in order to maximise the scientific, policy, and societal impact of ActEU’s results, a strong strategy to properly communicate, disseminate, and enable further exploitation of those results is required. While objective (6) refers to strict communication and dissemination activities, all overarching objectives have a significant communication and dissemination dimension. As such, Work Package 6, led by the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) will ensure the project’s output will be disseminated successfully due to TEPSA’s prior experience and impact capacity, demonstrated by its involvement in previous Horizon research and innovation, and coordination and support actions, where it has consistently served as WP lead for communication, dissemination, exploitation and sustainability.

WP6’s objective is to ensure that the comprehensive body of research generated by ActEU, as well as its toolbox outputs, is effectively translated into policy-relevant advice readily available to policy-makers at the EU and national levels of governance, as well as into formats accessible to the broad academic community, civil society and citizens. Work Package 6 is implemented with the involvement of all other project partners, and has three main objectives:

- 1) Raising awareness about ActEU as well as trust in/legitimacy of democratic institutions and citizens’ political participation across a range of relevant stakeholders;
- 2) Disseminating project results and making them available for further use by the academic community, policymakers and civil society; and
- 3) Ensuring the sustainability of ActEU’s results beyond the funding timeframe.

These objectives are reached through a wide range of measures including awareness-raising, networking and outreach activities (both online and offline) targeting researchers, policy-makers and civil society; teaching and training activities targeting graduate students, teachers and young researchers; and community-building measures aimed at institutionalising the network of experts created by the project. The scope of the project’s overarching aims requires that its output be integrated into a single coherent stream of content able to be communicated to each of its main target groups in such a way as to achieve a precise impact for each unique target group and project output. For more on these measures, see below “Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities”.

Target Audiences

The project has defined three key target audiences as follows:

- 1) **Research Community**, made up of academics and think tankers. While this target group may be sub-divided by age, between young researchers under 30 and established members of the community who are over 30, ActEU will operate with a special emphasis on the former. By offering 7 Postdocs and 4 PhD positions, the project has a particular focus on impacting the next generation of researchers.



- 2) **Policy Community**, a key target for ActEU's toolbox of remedial action as they are the main actors of policy change. This target group is sub-divided between the EU-level and national level, with further divisions within these two groups. At the EU level, the project aims to reach practitioners in the European Parliament, European Commission, and Council of the EU, in addition to the Committee of the Regions and European Economic and Social Committee. Moreover, the representative offices of the European Political Parties and their respective Political Foundations and Think Tanks will also be targeted as part of this first sub-group. At the (sub-)national level, ActEU aims to reach national counterparts of the above, such as parties and political foundations as well as institutions where citizens are represented by politicians.
- 3) **Civil Society, Citizens, Teachers, Lecturers, and Students**, a broad group representing ActEU's key targets among the European citizenry. Activities aimed at this target group will seek to meet Europeans where they are, involving them as participants in project activities and thus instilling within them ActEU's key messages. Members of this target group can act as knowledge multipliers in their own circles (families, universities, high schools, civil society organisations, etc.) thereby maximising the impact of ActEU's results. Reflecting the project's ongoing focus on Europe's next generation, particular attention will be paid to reaching out to university students (BA and MA) and young graduates, who are key actors in education, experiences social media users, thus, key multipliers for the project's outputs. In this group, especially within the subsection of citizens and youth, special attention will be paid to reaching marginalised and disenfranchised communities, often vulnerable to the threats posed by populist parties and social groups.

Communications, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities

The Three Dimensions of CDE Activities

Project output relevant to the communications, dissemination and exploitation work of ActEU can be divided into three categories describing core aims, and further into various sub-categories which can describe the purpose and medium for dissemination of the output:

- 1) **Communication – Raising awareness about the project:**
 - a. Project reference points & online presence, including the ActEU website and social media campaign;
 - b. Audio-visual materials, such as the podcast series, animated videos & video explainers produced by TEPSA, and infographics & factsheets outlining the key findings of the project;
 - c. Public events, such as ActEU's presence at and organisation of conferences which have an awareness-raising component;
 - d. Participation initiatives, such as the organisation of online focus groups and a video award, enabling citizens to express their perceptions of the present and future of representative democracy and political trust. In addition, the creation of an ActEU Civil Society Network.
- 2) **Dissemination of project results:**
 - a. Public events, including aforementioned organisation of and participation in conferences such as, inter alia, TEPSA's Pre-Presidency Conference or ECPR Joint Sessions;
 - b. Meetings, such as a 4-day young researchers' workshop in Brussels, and ActEU Youth Democracy Labs in 13 cities across Europe in addition to a final online trans-European edition.



- c. Written publications, such as press releases informing on major project milestones and activities, channeling the multiplier effect of press engagement to further disseminated ActEU's outputs.
- 3) **Making project results available for further exploitation:**
- a. Written publications, including research papers, articles, a blog series, as well as the production of datasets to make project results available in an easily accessible and understandable context;
 - b. "Cartooning for democracy", a set of educational cartoons helping to convey ActEU's key messages and findings to non-specialised audiences;
 - c. Training outputs, including an online methods workshop series to raise awareness of the project's innovative approach among the academic community, as well as a paper contest, and 3-day online seminar for university students, and a 4-day workshop in Brussels for PhD students and young researchers; Advice to practitioners and professionals, such as ActEU's toolbox, which includes a toolkit for policymakers at the European, national, regional, and local level, as well as teaching materials for school teachers and other actors in the field of citizenship education.

These three categories, which have a demonstrable overlap in the relevance of certain sub-categories, share a variety of differing target audiences and communications & dissemination strategies. Meanwhile the project's data generated from each activity will be handled with all respect to privacy regulations and in such a way as to maximise the potential for further use in other research and the development of policies. Regarding the dissemination of these results, with an aim towards further exploitation beyond the lifetime of the project, three key steps are to be taken:

- 1) ActEU will make use of innovative dissemination methods throughout its implementation with the aim of achieving a greater initial visibility of results, as well as a more accessible long-term availability, thus increasing the potential for future exploitation;
- 2) While data from closed-door activities (such as online focus groups) will be kept in line with privacy regulations and confidentiality with those participating in the project, their use in research by ActEU will allow these to remain a valuable and useable resource after the project's completion.
- 3) Since project research outputs will be made accessible in different forms as part of the project's communication, dissemination and exploitation strategy, researchers will be able to continually return to this data beyond the end of the project's implementation, thus enhancing the project's utility long-term.

Aims, Strategies, and Targets of CDE Activities

ActEU's implementation is challenged by the three project activity categories mentioned earlier – raising awareness of the project, disseminating its results, and ensuring they are available for further exploitation. This is because these categories involve a complicated network of communication and dissemination activities, objectives, tactics, and intended audiences that are closely interrelated. Whereas any one activity may be useful to any number of target audiences, ActEU's strategies to reach different audiences may differ at a fundamental level; whereas any one communication and dissemination aim may be achieved by any number of activities, some aims may not match one section of an activity's target audience. This section seeks to outline the aim, target audience, and strategy of each individual activity, while still noting that the project should approach its communication, dissemination and exploitation in an adaptable manner.



ActEU's approach is to consider its communication and dissemination in a consolidated and holistic manner. As such, activities which can strictly be considered 'communications activities' in the traditional sense (project reference points & online presence, audio-visual materials, public events, , and participation initiatives) are not the only project outputs with clearly defined communication aims and target audiences. Outputs which could be considered more traditionally dissemination-oriented, such as academic papers, the organisation of or attendance at scientific conferences, and more, are also considered as key awareness-raising tools of ActEU as a whole. This is especially relevant in reference to the project's overarching aim to contribute to the reinvigoration and resilience or representative democracies in across Europe, which can only be achieved by the effective communication, dissemination, and future exploitation of ActEU's scientific outputs.

Project Reference Points & Online Presence: ActEU will benefit from a single primary communication resource serving as an anchor for all project activities, namely [its website](#), which gathers together all material in a coherent and easily navigable format. Beyond this, the project's unique decentralised approach to its social media presence will allow ActEU to link a broad and varied audience back to this main resource, as well as to reach beyond the potential of a more traditional, centralised approach to social media. Thus, ActEU's online presence should cater to all audiences targeted by the project, approached in a strategic manner to ensure maximum exploitation of outputs' communication and dissemination potential, and in such a way as not to lose any of the project's core identity. Besides basic information about the project, the website will function as a platform to gather outputs linked to the project including, inter alia, new episodes of the podcast series, reports and papers, and video materials. While TEPSA will operate on social media in a more central role on behalf of the #ActEU campaign, the campaign's decentralised nature will mean that all consortium members will be encouraged to engage with #ActEU via their own institutional (and researchers') social media channels in order to broaden the reach of the project's output using their pre-existing audiences. More information on the institutional reach of the consortium on social media can be found in the annexes.

Audio-visual materials: ActEU will produce a number of audio-visual materials to communicate about its themes and disseminate its research conclusions, including a podcast series, infographics, video explainers and animations. Due to their nature as easily shared media, these activities carry with them the greatest potential for outreach among the key target group of European citizens (of all ages, and of various levels of engagement with/understanding of ActEU's themes), while also adding value to the academic and policy-making target audiences. Audio-visual materials will raise awareness about the project's activities, inform the public about the project's themes, and communicate with target audiences about the project's results. They aim respectively to stimulate expert reflection on key topics in an accessible way, and disseminate the project's conclusions, conveying key findings of scientific papers in an effective manner, and summarise key concepts and insights from ActEU papers.

Public Events: ActEU will itself organise three major project conferences (a kick-off, mid-term, and final conference), and ActEU researchers will participate in various major conferences external to the project throughout its implementation (including inter alia, ECPR Joint Sessions and General Conference). Moreover, it will co-organise panels at conferences or specialised workshops with partners including other consortia funded under the same topic and TEPSA, who will organise a panel at one of its Pre-Presidency Conferences to discuss the findings of ActEU. Such events will foster a forum for exchange primarily with the academic and policy-making target groups, but will nonetheless also be made readily available to the target group of European citizens (including students), giving the project the opportunity to, inter alia, raise awareness about the project and its results, discuss topics of relevance to the project in high-level fora, and present ActEU's conclusions



and the toolbox of remedial actions with a special focus on discussing policy recommendations with EU policy-makers.

Training outputs: ActEU's focus on encouraging remedial action to reinvigorate the resilience of representative democracy across Europe carries with it a number of key training outputs. These include an online methods workshop series, , a 3-day online seminar for university students and young graduates, and a 4-day workshop in Brussels for PhD students and young researchers . These are in addition to the ActEU toolbox, which includes a set of teaching materials for schoolteachers and other actors in the field of citizenship education. These activities are crucial to ActEU's main objectives, and aim to reach specific target audiences for each activity within the wider group of training outputs, respectively: doctoral and post-doc researchers, early career researchers, currently-enrolled university students and recent graduates, policy-makers at various levels of government, and citizenship educators across Europe. These activities will, inter alia, allow ActEU to present and teach its methods and findings to the next generation of researchers, gather analyses from these researchers to foster an exchange of ideas among this target group, and raise awareness among young Europeans of the role of the European Parliament in EU governance with a view to encouraging electoral participation. Furthermore, ActEU's toolkit will allow the project to, respectively: package the project's results in an accessible and actionable way for policy-makers, and enable citizenship educators to more effectively mobilise young citizens in politics on the issues that are most relevant for them.

Participatory Initiatives: as with training outputs, ActEU heavily relies on participatory initiatives to achieve its overarching long-term objectives. In particular, the project's participatory focus is on encouraging communication from the target group of European citizens and civil society upwards, via ActEU's activities, towards the academic and (crucially) policy-making target groups. As such, ActEU will organise a paper contest for university students and young graduates, online focus groups and a video award to foster such communication from citizens in non-specialised circles, and create a Civil Society Network to foster the same from civil society representatives. This network will gather 20 key stakeholders from this target group, to actively contribute towards the work of the project by bringing in unique perspectives from the civil society. These activities aim respectively to better understand how citizens perceive political trust and legitimacy by specifically targeting "disconnected", "average", and "committed" citizens, to enable citizens to express in an artistic format how they see the present and future of representative democracy and political trust, and to foster a structured dialogue, thus co-creating knowledge with practitioners and activities working on strengthening resilience of representative democracies.

Advice to practitioners: ActEU aims at proposing solutions that will allow political actors to better deal with problems of trust and legitimacy and foster the participation of citizens. To this end, ActEU will create a toolkit of remedial actions for the use of which policymakers at the European, national, regional, and local level and include short- and long-term policy. This toolkit will consist of policy briefs authored by consortium members and will include both short- and long-term policy recommendations. The briefs will cover a range of topics, such as the factors that undermine trust and measures to counteract them, the relationship between trust and various forms of participation, and measures to promote new forms of participation. Additionally, the briefs will discuss patterns of representation and trust, and measures to enhance subjective representation.

Meetings: a series of structured meetings throughout the project, the youth democracy labs, will gather young Europeans for a grassroots discussion on the future of representative democracies in Europe. Taking place across 13 meetings in 13 cities across Europe (capitals and medium-sized cities included), and culminating in a final online trans-European youth democracy lab, will further enable bottom-up communication from young Europeans from non-specialised circles.



Written Publications: such as press releases, research papers and articles, datasets, and a blog series will make the project's scientific results accessible in an easily digested manner, thus facilitating their further exploitation by relevant target audiences, and carrying with them an inherent communication of the project's added European value. Press releases will inform on major project milestones and activities to channel the multiplier effect of press engagement to communicate these to relevant target audiences, while research papers and articles will ensure maximum capacity both for reaching target audiences (via publication in peer reviewed journals) and for further exploitation (via the general policy to publish in diamond, gold, or green open access wherever possible). Datasets will make data collected via the focus groups, web-scraping exercise and experimental surveys publicly available to ensure transparency of the scientific process and results, while representing the most updated collection of data on the themes covered by ActEU. A blog series will ensure reach among an expert audience and a broader public (with a special emphasis on younger activists from civil society organisations via its hosting in the prominent "Der (Europäische) Föderalist" EU policy blog.

"Cartooning for Democracy" will make the project's scientific results accessible to a non-specialised audience in an easily digested manner. This unique approach to citizen education can be considered a unique selling point of the project to stakeholders, thus facilitating their further exploitation by relevant target audiences due to the activity's point of difference and ensuing recognisability.

Figure 1 - ActEU's Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities

OUTPUT	AUDIENCE	AIM	METHOD
Project Reference Points & Online Presence	All audiences targeted by ActEU's activities.	Serve as a platform for the project's communications output and dissemination of all outputs; raise awareness about the project.	The use of tailored campaigning based on the idiosyncrasies of each project output will allow for tailored dissemination activities for each output; the project's decentralised approach to social media in particular will enable a wider reach than traditionally achieved by centralised strategies.
Audio-visual materials	Broad public of interested citizens, with particular reference to the under 30 demographic. Academics and policy-makers additionally.	Raise awareness about the project, inform the public debate on the challenges faced by representative democracy, and foster reflections on the project's scientific outputs.	The algorithmic preferences of online channels will determine the format and production style of audio-visual publications. To reach a wider audience, all recordings will be in English, a widely understood language. Video publications will have subtitles to ensure accessibility for



			the hard of hearing. The production of audio-visual products will allow for the creation of shortened clips that can be disseminated through diverse online channels.
Public Events	Academics & think tankers; policy-makers; media & civil society organisations; students; citizens additionally.	The objective is to increase knowledge and understanding of the project among external stakeholders, share important initial results with stakeholders and seek feedback from the academic community. Additionally, the goal is to communicate the primary project findings to pertinent EU policy-makers and representatives of EU Institutions, as well as to academics, think tank professionals, media, and civil society.	Organisation of three major project conferences to take stock within the consortium as to the state of implementation of ActEU; participation and co-organisation of other conferences throughout the project's duration will serve to raise awareness of ActEU's activities and outputs; all conferences will seek to foster a dynamic and cross-cutting exchange of ideas and best practices, in-keeping with the project's overarching aims.
Training outputs	Policy-makers (EU & national level); university students & young researchers.	Foster a knowledge base for the next generation of researchers, providing them with a framework and guide for analysis of the themes of the project.	Activities targeted at university students will be tailored in such a way as to foster a cross-cutting and interdisciplinary exchange of ideas, while activities targeted at early career researchers will in addition to this be implemented so as to provide impactful training on best practices as developed by ActEU's scientific outputs. Meanwhile, the 4-day young researchers' workshop will broaden ActEU's horizons in the



			inclusion of early-career researchers beyond the consortium, by opening up participation opportunities to researchers from across Europe.
Advice to practitioners and professionals	Policy-makers (EU & national level); citizen educators.	Provide a broad target audience of citizenship educators and policy-makers with the tools to effectively take action to reinvigorate the resilience of representative democracy across Europe (ie. policy uptake both at governmental and grass-roots level).	The ActEU toolbox will contain accessible and easily understood takeaways from the project's scientific outputs, packaged in a manner tailor-made to allow for ease of use by the relevant target audiences.
Participatory Initiatives	Citizens from non-specialised circles ("disconnected", "average", "engaged"), as well as students and early-career researchers.	Raise awareness about the project; engage on a proactive basis with wider society; foster communication between ActEU's target audiences via participation in project activities, thus introducing a crucial bottom-up perspective to the exploration of the project's key themes.	The participation of citizens in these activities will allow ActEU to collect on-the-ground views and experiences relating to the key themes of the project, building a broad base of data for use in other areas of the project (eg. in the publication of datasets) in addition to allowing the project to foster cross-cutting communication between the target group of citizens and civil society with the target groups of academics and policy-makers.
Meetings	Young Europeans; early-career researchers.	Contribute to the dissemination for further exploitation of project results via collective reflection and exchange of ideas; further enable bottom-up communication	The unique structure of the youth democracy labs, which culminate in the participation of selected attendees of national- and regional-level meetings in a



		from young Europeans from non-specialised circles.	final youth democracy lab online, will allow for a long-term engagement of the project in the representative democracy priorities of young Europeans.
Written Publications	Academics & policy-makers, media & the interested public	Disseminate the main findings of the project's researchers to an audience of peers in the academic community, in such a way that their results can have a significant impact on academic discourse and foster future research surrounding the challenges faced by representative democracy; provide policy-makers with easily digested insights into the project's results which can inform that audience's work in tackling key project themes at all levels of government (ie. encourage policy uptake).	To reach a broader audience, publications are produced in English, which is a commonly understood language among the target audience. Written publications will be presented and discussed in public events, while project website will be used for their permanent availability. Dissemination via social media according to which platforms are used by the target audience.
"Cartooning for Democracy"	Citizens from non-specialised circles, with an emphasis on youth.	Convey ActEU's key messages and findings in an easily-understood and accessible manner, in order ultimately to promote participation.	Cooperation with political cartoonists will ensure this product is linked with not only the ActEU brand, but also a known artist, thus lending the initiative more legitimacy in the eyes of the target audience; inclusion in the toolkit for civil society and the educational sector will further increase the reach of this activity.



ActEU's Channels

ActEU's consortium gives the project a sizeable geographic scope, and, thanks to the variety of types of institutions which comprise the ActEU consortium, the project also benefits from a broad and relevant base of outreach capabilities. The project consortium comprises 31 researchers from multi-disciplinary backgrounds and from 12 institutions (universities, think tanks, and research networks) in 10 EU Member States. ActEU's outreach is further expanded by TEPSA's nature as a pan-European network comprising 47 research institutes in 37 European countries (EU27+10). The combined social media reach of the consortium, which boasts over [1 852 861] followers across Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube, gives an indication as to the public outreach capabilities of the ActEU consortium in the new media landscape.

ActEU's approach to social media will be tailored to the idiosyncrasies of each platform. On Twitter, where such an audience is prevalent, it will reach an audience primarily of professionals in the field, meaning EU- and national-level practitioners, as well as think tankers and university academics, journalists and civil society stakeholders. On Facebook and Instagram, the project will endeavour to reach an audience more among the public, in keeping with the profiles of the primary user-bases for these platforms; on Facebook, a target group of non-specialised citizens mainly in the 30-64 & 65+ age categories will be pursued, while on Instagram, a target group of non-specialised young citizens under 30 will be pursued. Both age groups within the broad target of European citizens can further be reached via publication of videos on YouTube. On LinkedIn, students and early-career researchers will be the primary audience, once again in keeping with the primary user-base of that platform.

Furthermore, ActEU's approach is heavily influenced by the aforementioned potential reach of the project network's existing social media presence. Rather than opening new accounts on social media platforms for the duration of the project and building a following from the ground up, the project will benefit from the pre-existing and significant audience of its network by managing its social media presence via a hashtag campaign using the hashtag #ActEU. Such an approach allows for anyone to engage with the campaign: while it will be led primarily by TEPSA as WP6 leader, all consortium member institutions will be encouraged to post about project outputs, and individuals associated to the project (researchers, staff members, activity participants) will also be encouraged to post about their involvement. As such, a decentralised social media strategy will allow ActEU to foster a true community of stakeholders online, and reach far beyond the potential of a more centralised approach. The structure of this decentralised strategy can be found visualised in Annex 4. This approach also ensures greater sustainability of ActEU's impact, as these channels will remain in use even after the project's completion and will be able to continue disseminating its findings.

13

Intra-Consortium Coordination of Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities

The project consortium is made up of 12 members across 10 European countries, with a significant geographic spread (including across multiple time zones). Moreover, the consortium includes a variety of types of institutions (university faculties, research institutes, think tank networks), each with unique internal communication and dissemination policies. Consortium members vary in the size of their online audiences, as well as in their internal capacities and working practices. Finally, there is a task division in managing the project's online presence, whereby the project's coordinating institution manages the website and TEPSA manages the social media campaign.



These factors may present significant challenges to the coherence and coordination of ActEU's decentralised campaign.

To combat this, in addition to the Communications, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan, TEPSA will take the lead in the #ActEU campaign, leading by example for other consortium members. In addition, TEPSA will create a number of templates for the dissemination of project results available to all consortium members, and a handbook will be developed and shared among the consortium, thus ensuring a consistent identity throughout the project's lifetime. Finally, specific guideline handbooks for certain activities (such as the ActEU panel at the TEPSA Pre-Presidency Conference) may be produced if required.

The breadth of activity types occurring throughout the consortium, across various members and multiple WPs, poses a risk to the coherence and effectiveness of ActEU's communications, dissemination and exploitation strategies. The complexity and scope of the project's implementation thus poses a fundamental challenge to internal coordination and intra-consortium communication writ-large. As part of WP6, a structured and regular coordination will take place between TEPSA, in the role of leader for the communications, dissemination and exploitation WP, and the University of Duisburg-Essen and Saarland University, in their respective roles as project coordinator and scientific lead.

Risk Identification and Management

The scope of ActEU as a project, in the variety of activities it includes, in the geographical spread of the consortium, and in its lengthy implementation period, requires that its communications apparatus be ready and able to anticipate, guard against, and react to certain risks. Four main risks have been identified:

14

- 1) **Risk 1 – Failure to engage consortium members in project communications:** the structure of the task division within ActEU allows for an effective work towards the achievement of the project's main objectives. However, this also carries with it a certain risk that consortium members could operate in "silos", engaging primarily or only with their own immediate tasks within their respective WPs. While this document, as a reference for the entire consortium, firmly establishes the cross-cutting nature of ActEU's communications, dissemination and exploitation efforts, the risk remains that the consortium may choose not to support the work of WP6 in favour of their own scientific priorities.

Measures taken: the decision to include key project activities with significant communications, dissemination and exploitation components into scientific WPs (eg. the project's toolkits, which are crucial to the uptake of ActEU's conclusions among its target audiences) guards against this risk. In formally coupling project outputs which hold significant added value in terms of communication, dissemination and exploitation to the purely scientific work of the project, ActEU has inbuilt measures to mitigate the risk of consortium members operating in such silos. As a result, all consortium members must liaise outside of their immediate scientific priorities in order to complete the tasks contained within the thematic WPs. Moreover, TEPSA will create a dedicated handbook for all consortium members to give guidance on how to engage in an easy a coherent manner with ActEU's day-to-day communications, dissemination, and exploitation activities, thus facilitating members' involvement as much as possible.

- 2) **Risk 2 – Failure to engage citizens in participatory initiatives:** ActEU's broad aims require strong engagement with the project's target audiences. In particular, a significant risk of not properly engaging the target group of European citizens is extant throughout the



project's activities. While other targets (practitioners, academics, etc.) can be assumed to be already engaged in political affairs, much of ActEU's targeted audience among citizens from non-specialised circles cannot be assumed to be as engaged. Thus, the project faces not only the challenge of engaging its target (here, practitioners and academics) in the specific themes within political affairs which ActEU covers, but also of engaging its target (here, EU citizens) in political affairs in the first place. This risk is most prevalent in the project's participatory initiatives, where a greater investment of time and effort is required from this target audience.

Measures taken: the scope of the ActEU consortium is crucial in reaching this wide target group effectively. The variety of types of institutions included within the consortium, ranging from the university departments to think tanks and think tank networks, allows the project access, via these well-established and known institutions, to a certain captive audience which already implicitly trusts those institutions as carriers of the project's message. This is compounded by the added value of two project initiatives: the Civil Society Network, bringing in community stakeholders in a directly engaged manner, further expanding the project's reach to citizens from non-specialised circles, and the Cartooning for Democracy initiative, putting project conclusions into an easily-understandable and – crucially – unique and memorable format, increasing the chances of information retention by targets. Moreover, ActEU will seek out synergies with other projects and consortia focussing on similar themes, thus opening opportunities for citizen engagement to the maximum possible extent.

- 3) **Risk 3 - Changes in the social media landscape:** the centrality of the #ActEU campaign to the project's online communications entails a reliance on the stability of the social media channels on which that campaign takes place. However, developments in the social media landscape over recent years, in particular the crisis faced Facebook which eventually resulted in its rebranding to Meta and the crisis faced by Twitter as a result of Elon Musk's acquisition of the platform in late 2022, have caused a dip in public trust of such platforms. Should this trend continue, it is possible that the ActEU project will face a crisis in its social media strategy during the project's implementation.

15

Measures taken: the choice to implement ActEU's social media presence in the form of a decentralised hashtag campaign across multiple platforms guards against the impacts of this risk, as it is foreseeable that #ActEU be used on any platform where a consortium member operates an account. As such, should one of the project's main social platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube) experience a major crisis during ActEU's implementation, the campaign is able to be transferred to a new set of platforms as required.

- 4) **Risk 4 – Emergence of unforeseen risks:** while this document outlines three key risks already apparent in the implementation of ActEU, the possibility of unforeseen future challenges cannot be discounted. As such, the project requires a mechanism to react positively and proactively to such potential future risks.

Measures taken: the leading role taken by TEPSA in the implementation of ActEU's communications, dissemination and exploitation allows the project to benefit from the experience and expertise of a diverse team of European communicators. TEPSA has a longstanding expertise as communications partner in projects similar to ActEU, and benefits from a wide pan-European network of member institutes. Day-to-day implementation of WP6, led by TEPSA, will include regular internal management meetings, with the aim of regularly assessing the WP's performance relative to the KPIs established



in this document. Moreover, regular contact with consortium leadership and members will allow TEPESA to maintain a clear leading role in the project's communications apparatus. The regularity of this contact will also allow TEPESA to quick adapt to any potential future challenge, altering its implementation to suit, and communicating any required changes in comms implementation throughout the consortium in an effective manner.

Visual Identity

Project Logos: Description & Uses

The ActEU project requires a clear and recognisable visual identity, as dictated by the project's main logo, especially in view of its decentralised online communication and dissemination strategy. This identity should be used on all published material, whether written or audio-visual, produced by the project. The basic colour scheme of ActEU is as follows:

Figure 2 - ActEU's Primary Colours



HEX: #8A0505
RGB: 138 / 5 / 5
CMYK: 0.00 / 0.96 / 0.96 / 0.46



HEX: #D72726
RGB: 215 / 39 / 38
CMYK: 0.00 / 0.82 / 0.82 / 0.16

16

The ActEU logo comes in two formats: one main logo elaborating not only the project's abbreviation but also its full title, one secondary logo elaborating only the project's abbreviation. The project logo uses the "Aleo" family of fonts, which should be used in project materials to ensure a branding consistency. A video version of the logo has also been produced, which can be viewed [here](#).

Figure 3 - Primary Logo



Figure 4 - Secondary Logo



Visibility: European Flag and Funding Statement



Funded by
the European Union

The use of the funding logo shall be consistent with the terms set out in Article 17.2 of the Grant Agreement: all communication and dissemination activities related to the action shall acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate). The emblem shall

remain distinct and separate and shall not be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text. Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo shall be used to highlight the EU support. When displayed in association with other logos (e.g. of beneficiaries or sponsors), the emblem shall be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

In compliance with Article 17.3 of the Grant Agreement, communication and dissemination outputs shall use factually accurate information and include the following disclaimer: *"Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or [name of the granting authority]. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them."*

Measuring ActEU's Impact

In order to keep an ongoing record of the project's impact on identified target audiences, and in view of tracking progress towards the achievement of its main aims in this area, ActEU identifies a number of KPIs. These will be monitored throughout the project's duration via analytics documents sourced from Google Analytics to track visits to the ActEU website. In order to track social media impact, TEPSA will further source analytics documents from each social media channel used by the project as part of TEPSA's own use of the #ActEU campaign. In addition to this, TEPSA will track engagement with non-TEPSA posts using the hashtag. As WP6 leaders, TEPSA will coordinate with relevant partners throughout the consortium to gather relevant data for analysis. As such, a centralised impact analysis will be possible in spite of the decentralised approach to social media communication and dissemination. All tracking will be recorded in documents specially designed by TEPSA to ensure the consistency of measurements, comparability of results, and ensuring the results are fungible. ActEU will track the following KPIs

- **Visits to the ActEU website:** in tracking both the number of unique users and pageviews for the project's primary online presence, ActEU will monitor not only the number of times the website was accessed, but also how much interest each user expressed in the project's activities (ie. did users remain on the website or visit merely to access one page). In addition, a record will be kept of the most viewed webpages on the website. The coordinator will cooperate with WP6 leaders to collect this data.
- **Engagement with the #ActEU Campaign:** in tracking the number of times the hashtag #ActEU was used on key social media platforms, as well as the number of times posts using that hashtag were engaged with (eg. likes, reshares, etc.), ActEU will monitor engagement with the project's activities not only by the consortium, its researchers, but also by members of identified target groups.
- **Growth of consortium social media following:** As established above, ActEU's consortium will be an important aspect of the project's dissemination network on social media. As such, the growth of consortium-linked accounts over the course of project can be considered an indirect indication of the interest being shown on social media towards, among other things, the project and its output.



- **Number of participants in project events:** Insofar as event attendance demonstrates a proactive engagement with the project's activities on the part of each participant, the number of participants in ActEU events will be tracked to gauge interest in the project's activities and results.
- **Number of accesses to project publications:** ActEU aims to have a significant impact on the research environment, particularly in sections of the academic community which focus on themes tackled by the project's activities. As such, via the generation of analytics through Google Analytics, the project will monitor the number of times project publications were accessed via the ActEU website.
- **Audience type:** monitoring impact within its target audiences will allow ActEU to keep track of its progress in impacting those audiences. Where relevant and possible, and in full respect of the given data protection regulations, the project will monitor the institutional affiliations of event attendees using only information which has been voluntarily provided. This will allow ActEU to verify whether (and in what proportion) participants belong to the "Research Community", "Policy Community", or "Civil Society, Citizens, Teachers, Lecturers, and Students" target audience.
- **Qualitative feedback on project activities:** Where applicable, ActEU will solicit oral or written feedback from participants in project activities in order to monitor the engagement and impact each activity has on its target audience.

Exploitation of Results

ActEU's overarching aims, including the broad goal of contributing to the reinvigoration and resilience of representative democracy across Europe, require that project outputs be widely available, usable, and understandable so that they can be successfully exploited by the relevant actors, as they should ultimately contribute to the growth of knowledge and practice: fostering the next generation of academics and practitioners, and training current practitioners at every level in effective methods to boost citizen participation and engagement. The ActEU project seeks to facilitate this uptake of its outputs to the maximum extent, both in terms of scientific conclusions generated during the lifetime of the project as well as how those conclusions will be exploited in a sustainable manner beyond the project's lifetime by policy stakeholders and education institutions. To achieve this, a number of crucial steps will be taken.

Scientific results generated by project research will provide a well-grounded and empirical knowledge based on declining trust and the current state of and multidimensional threats to European representative democracy. This will be done in an open and transparent manner, including via the publication of datasets. ActEU will comply with open science standards by granting open access to publications, since one of the key targets of the project is to increase transparency and reproducibility. As such, the project seeks to make its results easily findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable. This will be guaranteed thanks to the project's policy to strive for diamond, gold, or green open access status for all publications. For more on ActEU's open science standards, the Grant Agreement (pp. 119) can be consulted. The future exploitation of these results in various fields will be facilitated due to the many participatory initiatives and meeting activities which the project envisages to gather specifically targeted members of the academic and policy-making communities in an engaging and training-oriented forum. ActEU will contribute to the growth of literature on its main thematic areas by publishing in a variety of formats including research papers, articles, blogs, as well as via the audio-visual dissemination of project results.

The ActEU toolbox activities, including two toolkits aimed at multi-level policy-makers and citizenship educators respectively will allow not only for the dissemination of project results in the



immediate timeframe, but will be packaged in such a ways as to make those results readily available, understood, and easily used by each toolkit's primary target audience. Thus, the project has the potential to lead to:

- 1) change in policy at EU, national, regional, and sub-regional/local levels, thereby contributing to an increased legitimacy in public policy-making, to greater trustworthiness of democratic institutions, and as a result, ultimately to the reinvigoration of resilience of representative democracy; and
- 2) an expansion of tools available to civil society actors in the educational sector (high school teachers, university lecturers, and other citizenship educators), thereby enhancing citizenship education with a view to expanding political participation and civic engagement as well as mitigating societal polarisation, ultimately contributing to a more active and inclusive citizenship.

Finally, the leading role which the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) has taken in the project's communication, dissemination and exploitation apparatus reflects the value ActEU sees in ensuring a sustainable project output. The membership of two consortium members to the TEPSA Network, in addition to the involvement of TEPSA itself, will allow for the dissemination and exploitation of results in a large group of researchers working in multiple academic foci and across a broad geography. TEPSA's Network consisting of 47 member institutes in 37 European countries (EU27+10) ensures the project's outputs will be made available to a broad set of academics.



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – List of Tasks within WP6

- **T6.1 Setting up communication and dissemination structures (lead TEPSA and UDE; M1-36)**
Preparation of a detailed communication, dissemination and exploitation strategy (lead: TEPSA); Design of an appealing visual identity for the project, including project logo etc. (lead: UDE); Design, setup and continuous updating of the project website (lead: UDE); Continuous management of the project's social media engagement via TEPSA and consortium partners' existing accounts (lead: TEPSA; contribution from all partners); Management of relations with press and media, inter alia via ActEU press releases prepared by TEPSA. All project partners will be responsible for this activity in their local contexts, to make sure that project results are disseminated to media actors in all countries covered by the consortium.
- **T6.2 Multimedia activities (lead: TEPSA, UDE, USAAR, with contribution from all partners; M1-36)**
8 Video animations (2 per thematic WP) disseminating the findings of reports (lead: TEPSA); Infographics and fact sheets (lead: TEPSA); 6 Explainer videos (e.g. why is representative democracy in flux and what are the challenges to it, issues and findings concerning decline in citizens' trust, current trends in political participation in Europe, etc.) (lead: TEPSA); Podcast series (6 episodes) exploring e.g. the causes and consequences of declining trust in and legitimacy of democratic political institutions, changing voting attitudes and behaviors, etc. (lead: TEPSA); Blog series (6 episodes), with a specific focus on EU-level institutions (lead: UDE); 1 video contest, gathering submission via an open call for application for videos on the issue of citizens' trust in representative democracy. Submissions will be judged by TEPSA in cooperation with ActEU Civil Society Network. The winner will be invited to attend the project's final conference, where their work will be showcased (lead: TEPSA); 1 awareness raising video at the onset of the project, presenting ActEU. (lead: TEPSA); 1 concluding video at project completion, summarizing project results (Lead: TEPSA). Whenever possible, videos will have subtitles in all the languages of the consortium to increment ActEU's reach and ensure accessibility for people with hearing impairments.
- **T6.3 Outreach to civil society (lead: TEPSA; M1-36)**
Building and updating an ActEU Civil Society Network, an advisory body made up of around 20 members of civil society organizations active in the policy areas that are most relevant to the project, such as multi-level governance, citizens' and youth participation, climate, gender equality, and migration; In-person workshop in Brussels for project researchers and members of the ActEU Civil Society Network at the beginning of phase 2 (back-to-back with the mid-term conference) to gather input on the project's research activities and recommendations to be included in the toolbox of remedial actions developed by WP 5.
- **T6.4 Outreach to the educational sector (lead: UDE; M27-35)**
Online workshop with high school teachers and school directors, as well as policymakers and civil servants in the educational sector, to disseminate the educational toolkit developed by WP 5.
- **T6.5 Outreach to youth (lead: TEPSA; M1-36)**
3-day online seminar for 15-20 university students (selected via an open call for applications) in the run up to the 2024 European elections. Lecturers in the seminar will be



project researchers and EU practitioners; Paper contest for university students and young researchers, looking into current challenges and the future of representative democracy in Europe. The 2 winners may be invited to attend the final conference; TransEuropean youth democracy lab (online), gathering selected participants from the national labs (see WP 5) to discuss challenges to representative democracies and possible remedies.

- **T6.6 Outreach to policy stakeholders (lead: TEPSA; M27-35)**
PPC panel discussing topics of relevance to the ActEU project within one of TEPSA's Pre-Presidency Conferences, a bi-yearly key forum of exchange between academics and policymakers; Final conference in Brussels (1 day), serving as a key forum to convey the main findings of the project and the toolbox of remedial actions to relevant policy makers and representatives of EU institutions, in addition to academics, think tankers, media and civil society.
- **T6.7 Creation of a sustainable ActEU academic community (lead: TEPSA; M1-36)**
Building a sustainable network of researchers studying changing patterns of institutional trust and citizens' political participation from a diverse set of academic disciplines that will continue to exist after the end of the funding period; 4-day workshop in Brussels for 15 PhD candidates and young researchers (selected among consortium partners and via an open call for applications), exploring the decline in institutional trust and political participation. The workshop will include lectures by project researchers and practitioners. It will be organized under the academic coordination of USAAR; Mid-term conference in Brussels to present and share findings and exploit synergies across different WPs in light of the beginning of phase 2. The conference will be open to other academics upon invitation; Joint participation at academic conferences, within the framework of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Joint Sessions, or as part of panels organized by pertinent Standing Groups ("Participation and Mobilization"; "Political Parties"; "Political Representation"; "Democratic Innovations") at the ECPR General Conference (lead: all).

ANNEX 2 – List of Deliverables within WP6

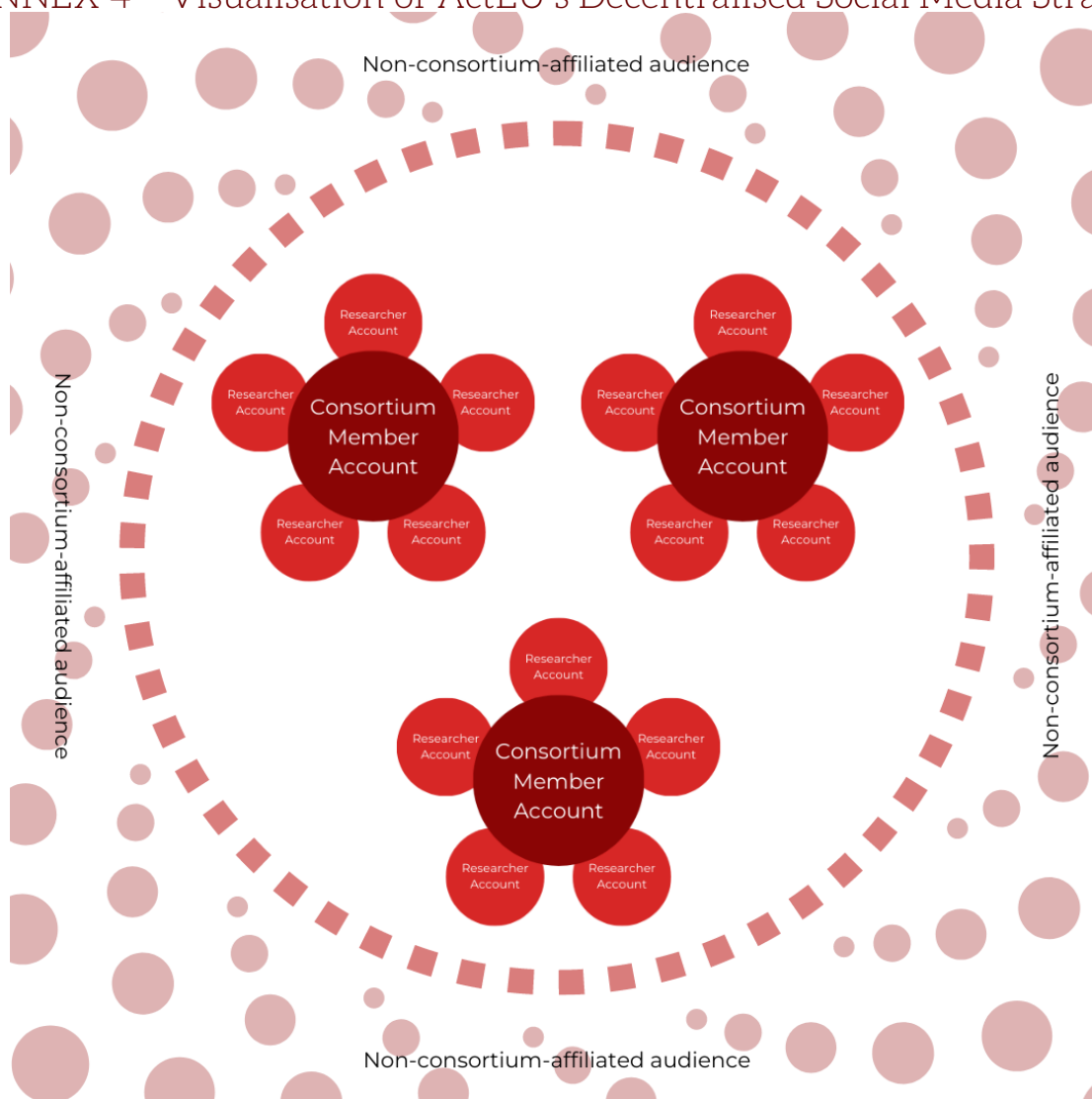
- **D6.1 Communication, dissemination and exploitation plan** (R, PU; TEPSA; M3)
- **D6.2 Report of mid-term conference** (R, PU; TEPSA; M23)
- **D6.3 Report of final conference** (R, PU; TEPSA; M36)



ANNEX 3 – Current Online Following of the ActEU Consortium (Social Media, 5-2023)

	Twitter	Facebook	LinkedIn	Instagram	YouTube
UDE	16 245	41 452	63 589	28 100	11 900
USAAR	5 177	28 000	41 912	12 800	3 180
PLUS	3 106	16 000	27 761	9 285	142
TEPSA	3 498	3 244	4 918	522	1 404
IIR	4 694	11 048	2 188	1 338	1 210
AAU	7 999	12 000	1 532	9 213	891
Sciences Po	147 802	139 457	233 655	79 200	50 000
ICL	4 796	11 000	1 330	5 904	1 420
AUTH	1 614	93 000	102 553	6 395	578
UNITN	6 474	38 000	68 767	18 900	3 830
SWPS	461	225 796	61 645	27 600	7 070
UNIOVI	18 046	23 000	92 187	7 031	2 970
TOTAL	219 914	641 997	700 067	206 288	84 595

ANNEX 4 – Visualisation of ActEU's Decentralised Social Media Strategy





About ActEU

How can we conceptualize and empirically measure political trust and legitimacy beyond the usual survey question “How much trust do you have in the parliament?”? Does the multi-level nature of European representative democracies require an identical level of citizen support at the regional, national and EU levels? How does social polarization on key policy issues of our times – immigration, climate change, and gender inequality– challenge the political trust in, and legitimacy of, democratic political systems? And what can policymakers and civil society do to master these challenges? ActEU aims at finding answers to these questions pursuing two overarching goals: In phase 1, we map and investigate persistent problems of declining trust, legitimacy and representation in Europe with a particular attention to the polarization of societies and the EU’s multi-level structures. Providing an innovative conceptual framework on political attitudes, behavior and representation across Europe, we establish an original empirical infrastructure based on an innovative combination of methods and newly collected quantitative and qualitative empirical data (focus groups, experimental surveys, web scraping). In phase 2, these results will flow directly into the creation of a toolbox of remedial actions to enhance political trust in and legitimacy of European representative democracies. In cooperation with a newly created Civil Society Network, Youth Democracy Labs across 13 European cities and in exchange with political cartoonists “Cartooning for democracy”, we will develop context-sensitive solutions for all polity levels and some of the most polarizing policy areas, and craft tailor-made toolkits for both policymakers and civil society and the educational sector. Finally, we deploy a differentiated dissemination strategy to maximize ActEU’s scientific, policy and societal impact in activating European citizens’ trust and working towards a new era of representative democracy.

www.acteu.org

ActEU Consortium



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