



DATIS

**Data for Inclusive Societies: Foes and Friends of Inclusiveness in
contemporary Greece**

D4.4 Report on the collection and analysis of users' social media posts

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Introduction

The landscape of political communication has undergone a structural transformation since the inception and widespread adoption of social networking sites (SNS). Within this digital ecosystem, Facebook has emerged as a primary arena for political campaigning, discourse, and mobilization, offering political actors direct, unmediated access to the electorate. A pivotal moment in the evolution of this platform occurred in February 2016, when Facebook expanded its primary engagement metric, the "Like" button, into a more nuanced suite of six emotional "Reactions": Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry. This transition from a binary positive indicator to a multidimensional emotional spectrum provided users with a more complex paralinguistic vocabulary, allowing for "click speech" that conveys specific sentiments without the cognitive burden associated with textual commentary (Larsson, 2024). For political scientists and communication scholars, these digital traces represent paralinguistic digital affordances (PDAs) that function as indicators of public sentiment, indicators of issue salience, and catalysts for algorithmic visibility (Hayes et al., 2016).

This report focuses on the large-scale collection and computational analysis of social media posts, aiming to develop an integrated and comprehensive framework for decoding the factors that shape social inclusiveness in Greece. As digital infrastructure becomes inextricably linked with civic life, social media platforms such as Facebook have transcended their original purpose to become the central arenas of public expression, ideological debate, and identity formation. Unlike traditional media, these platforms provide unique, real-time, and unmediated insights into the socio-political psyche.

The Theoretical Framework of Paralinguistic Digital Affordances

The conceptualization of Facebook reactions as paralinguistic digital affordances suggests that these icons serve as non-verbal communicative cues that signal relation-based sentiment through a single click. Unlike textual comments, which require a high degree of cognitive effort and commitment, reactions inherit the low cognitive effort of the "Like" button while providing a more precise emotional label. This form of engagement is often categorized along two primary dimensions: the level of cognitive effort required and the emotional state of expression. In the hierarchy of engagement, likes and reactions represent "lightweight signals," whereas sharing and commenting are viewed as more active forms of participation, indicating higher levels of user commitment and a greater willingness to participate in political debate.

The shift toward a multidimensional reaction system was necessitated by the inherent ambiguity of the original "Like" button. Prior to 2016, a "Like" on a post concerning a tragic event or a controversial policy could be interpreted as either support for the politician or an insensitive affirmation of the event itself. The introduction of specific emojis allowed users to better clarify their intended meaning, aligning the interface with the complex emotional realities of sociopolitical discourse (Anwar & Giglietto, 2024). Consequently, these reactions

have become a "sentiment barometer" for political actors, providing a real-time feedback loop that influences campaign strategies and policy positioning (Humprecht et al., 2024).

Engagement Metric	Cognitive Effort	Communicative Intent	Commitment Level
Like	Minimal	General Affirmation / Phatic	Low
Reaction (Love, Angry, etc.)	Low	Specific Emotion / Affective	Low to Moderate
Share	Moderate	Broadcasting / Endorsement	Moderate to High
Comment	High	Deliberation / Self-Expression	High

Data synthesized from research regarding digital engagement hierarchies and commitment levels.

Algorithmic Prioritization and the Valuation of Emotional Intensity

The relationship between user reactions and the visibility of political content is governed by Facebook’s News Feed algorithm, which functions as a digital gatekeeper. Between 2017 and 2020, Facebook’s ranking algorithm underwent significant changes that directly impacted political discourse. A critical development during this period was the implementation of "Meaningful Social Interactions" (MSI) metrics, which aimed to prioritize content that encouraged active engagement over passive consumption.

Internal documents and journalistic investigations revealed that for a period of three years, Facebook’s algorithm treated emoji reactions as significantly more valuable than standard likes. Specifically, reactions such as "Angry," "Love," and "Wow" were weighted five times more heavily than a "Like" in the ranking process. The rationale offered by the company was that selecting an emoji reaction required an extra step beyond a single click, signaling that the post had made a greater emotional impression on the user. This algorithmic bias created a structural incentive for political actors to post sensationalist or polarizing content that was more likely to trigger immediate emotional responses, as these interactions effectively subsidized their reach and visibility (Metzler & Garcia, 2024).

The Evolution of Reaction Weighting in the News Feed

The prioritization of "Angry" reactions became particularly controversial as internal research suggested a strong correlation between high volumes of anger and the presence of misinformation, toxicity, and low-quality news (Metzler & Garcia, 2024).

Following the decision to set the weight of the "Angry" reaction to zero in late 2020, company data scientists observed a decrease in the prevalence of misinformation and graphic violence in users' feeds (Metzler & Garcia, 2024). This suggests that the algorithmic infrastructure itself

was a primary driver of the "rage clicks" and toxic discourse that characterized online political interactions during that era. In addition, reactions to news declined by 78% as the platform deprioritized political content (Talaga et al., 2025).

The Psychopolitical Drivers of Engagement: Out-Group Animosity and the Confrontation Effect

A fundamental question in the study of social media politics is what motivates a user to click a reaction button. Research consistently points to the power of negative sentiment and "out-group animosity" as the primary engines of engagement and virality. A study by Rathje et al. (2021) analyzed over 2.7 million posts from Facebook and Twitter to determine the linguistic predictors of sharing behavior. The researchers found that language referring to political opponents—the "out-group"—had a significantly greater effect on a post's virality than any other emotional or moral factor.

Specifically, for every additional word referring to a political out-group, the odds of a post being shared increased by approximately 67%. This effect was even more pronounced in posts by members of Congress, where each additional out-group word boosted shares by 65% to 180%. The emotional mechanism driving this engagement was identified through user reactions: posts containing high levels of out-group language provoked a disproportionate number of "Angry" and "Haha" reactions, indicating that such posts are designed to provoke either indignation or mockery toward political enemies.

This data supports the existence of a "confrontation effect" (Mochon & Schwartz, 2024). Contrary to the popular "echo chamber" theory, which suggests that users avoid information that contradicts their beliefs, individuals are actually more likely to interact with counter-ideological content when it challenges their core values. This interaction is frequently driven by outrage; users feel compelled to voice their displeasure or defend their identity when exposed to the views of the opposing side. Consequently, many of the comments and reactions on a politician's page may come from people who disagree with them, creating a cycle of toxic discourse that the platform's algorithms have historically exploited to maximize user activity (Mochon & Schwartz, 2024).

Emotional Valences and the Virality of "Angry" Sharing

The relationship between specific reactions and the broader spread of content is not uniform. A longitudinal study of Norwegian political campaigners across three election cycles (2017, 2019, 2021) found that while "Angry" and "Sad" reactions were positively and consistently related to the number of shares a post received, "Love" and "Care" reactions did not exhibit such a clear relationship with virality (Larsson, 2024). This suggests that negative emotions function as a "call to action," prompting users to broadcast the offensive or threatening information to their own networks.

This phenomenon of "angry sharing" is particularly potent in the realm of populist and hyperpartisan news. Posts from populist actors and alternative media outlets consistently elicit

elevated levels of "Angry" reactions, often utilizing exclusionary or anti-elitist language. These negative emotions can propagate incivility and reinforce affective polarization, as users who engage with such content are increasingly exposed to similar high-arousal, divisive information (Samuel-Azran et al., 2017). In contrast, "Love" reactions are more commonly associated with inclusive populist messages or positive depictions of "ordinary citizens," which, while generating deep in-group support, may have a smaller reach across the platform's broader network (Anwar & Giglietto, 2024).

Rhetorical Styles and Content Characteristics

The effectiveness of political posts in eliciting reactions is deeply tied to the rhetorical strategies and communication styles employed by political actors.

Populist vs. Mainstream Communication

Populist communication is characterized by a Manichean worldview that separates society into two antagonistic groups: the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite". This style is highly compatible with the logic of social media, which favors simplified, emotionally charged narratives. Research comparing the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) found that the populist FPÖ utilized attention-grabbing tools—such as exclamation marks and aggressive framing—more frequently than its mainstream counterpart, resulting in a higher volume of "Angry" and "Haha" reactions (Sandberg et al., 2022)

Sentiment and Issue Salience

The effect of a post's sentiment on user reactions is often moderated by the salience of the issue being addressed. Eberl et al. (2020) demonstrated that negative sentiment in a post directly increases the number of "Angry" reactions, while positive sentiment increases "Love" reactions. However, when a post addresses a policy field that constituents perceive as highly salient—such as immigration in the European context—this salience positively influences the number of "Angry" reactions only. This suggests that for highly important issues, users are more prone to react with anger or indignation, regardless of whether the post's tone is positive or negative, because the topic itself activates deep-seated, often defensive, attitudes (Eberl et al., 2020).

Regional Case Studies and Variations in User Engagement

The dynamics of Facebook reactions are not universal; they are influenced by local political cultures and the specific "platformization" of communication in different countries.

Northern Europe: Norway

In Norway, the relationship between "Angry" reactions and shares is remarkably stable across election cycles (Larsson, 2024). This suggests a consistent communicative culture where social media serves as a platform for voicing dissatisfaction. Politicians in this region are heavily reliant on the "two-step flow" of communication, where their messages are spread by the

"converted" (active supporters) to reach wider audiences

Central Europe: Austria

The Austrian context provides a clear look at the success of populism on Facebook. The populist FPÖ has been more active and effective in triggering emotional reactions than mainstream parties, utilizing the platform's "people's platform" logic to its fullest (Sandberg et al., 2022). Austrian politicians have also observed that the weight given to emotional reactions by the algorithm forced them to adopt more provocative stances to maintain visibility.

Southern Europe: Greece

The Greek political sphere on Facebook is characterized by high levels of access but limited deliberative depth. While 85.5% of Greek households have internet access, and Facebook is the most popular social network (42% of users), much of the interaction is "low-effort clicktivism" (Világi & Baboš, 2025). During the turbulent social and economic period of the mid-2010s, intensive Facebook use was actually correlated with a decline in offline political participation, as the platform functioned more as a tool for entertainment or for expressing disillusionment with the political system (Petrou, 2024).

Israel

In Israel's 2022 elections, populist leaders like Itamar Ben-Gvir used Facebook to build a massive following through confrontational and emotive discourse (Yavetz, 2025). By emphasizing his "personal side" and using simplified messaging, he was able to cultivate a direct relationship with voters that bypassed traditional media gatekeepers.

Psychological and Socio-Behavioral Consequences

The reaction economy of Facebook has profound implications for individual well-being and the health of democratic institutions.

Affective Polarization and Toxicity

The algorithmic prioritization of engagement—regardless of its sentiment—has been criticized for fueling affective polarization. Because "out-group animosity" is the most effective way to go viral, the platform actively promotes content that increases hostility toward political opponents (Mochon & Schwartz, 2024). This can lead to a "dissonant public sphere" characterized by public fragmentation and an inability to communicate across differences (Kruschinski et al., 2024).

The Future of Affective Political Engagement

The introduction of multidimensional reactions on Facebook has provided researchers with a

rich dataset for understanding the emotional drivers of political behavior. However, the evidence suggests that this system has also introduced significant structural risks. The "anger-to-virality" pipeline has historically rewarded the most divisive voices, while the "confrontation effect" has ensured that users are frequently exposed to the content they hate most.

For citizens and policymakers, understanding these dynamics is essential for navigating an information environment where our emotions are not just personal experiences, but valuable commodities in a global attention economy.

User Engagement and Voter Reactions

A central component of the analysis focused on how voters react to policy-related posts. To achieve this, we examined:

- the comment content, using sentiment analysis and qualitative coding to interpret supportive, hostile, neutral, or issue-driven reactions;
- the engagement metrics (likes, shares, reactions) as indicators of resonance and audience mobilisation;
- variation in reactions across topics, to identify which policy areas provoke stronger positive or negative responses

Comparative Party Analysis

Using the topic distributions and engagement data, we conducted a comparative analysis across parties. This enabled the identification of:

- which topics are most frequently emphasised by each political party,
- how audience reactions vary by party and by topic,
- points of convergence or polarisation in digital political communication.

This comparative dimension offers insights into the broader patterns of online political discourse, revealing how parties construct distinct policy narratives and how these narratives are received by the public.

Findings

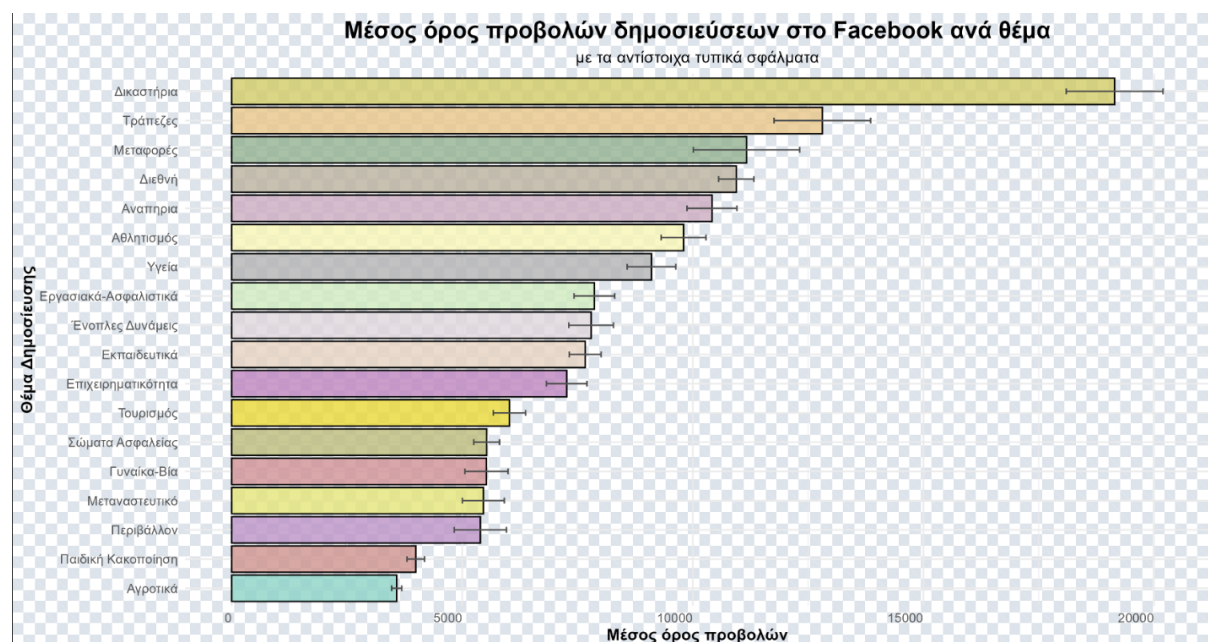
Mean Views per Topic

The analysis of audience engagement on Facebook (Figure 1), as measured by the average number of views per category, reveals distinct trends regarding public interest and the reach of different thematic units. The "Courts" (Δικαστήρια) category holds the dominant position, recording the highest average reach with nearly 20,000 views.

Following the lead, "Banks" (Τράπεζες) and "Transport" (Μεταφορές) rank second and third respectively, with views ranging between 12,000 and 14,000. This confirms that topics related to daily financial life and logistics consistently capture high levels of user attention. Similarly, "International News" (Διεθνή) and "Digital Services" (Ψηφιακές Υπηρεσίες) round out the top five most impactful categories.

In the mid-range of the scale, topics such as "Sports" (Αθλητισμός), "Health" (Υγεία), and "Labor & Social Security" (Εργασιακά-Ασφαλιστικά) maintain a steady performance, averaging between 8,000 and 10,000 views.

Conversely, the lowest engagement levels are observed in the "Agriculture" (Αγροτικά) and "Child Abuse" (Παιδική Κακοποίηση) sectors, both of which fall below the 5,000-view threshold. The lower reach in these areas, along with topics like "Environment" (Περιβάλλον) and "Migration" (Μεταναστευτικό), highlights the challenge these subjects face in gaining traction within the platform's algorithm or generating the same level of immediate public interest as economic or institutional news.



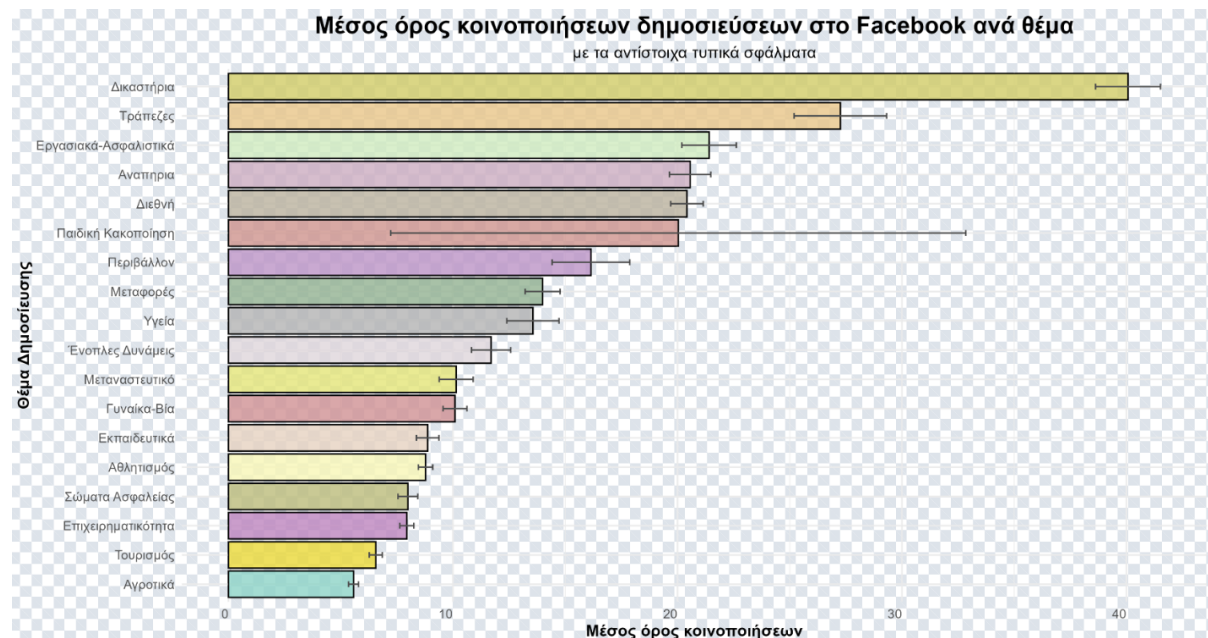
1. Mean Views of Facebook Posts by Topic

Shares per Topic

Figure 2, which provides the mean shares of Facebook posts by topic, shows that users more frequently share about court-related topics (~40 mean shares), followed by banks ("Banks," ~28), labor-insurance (~22), disability (~21), and international affairs (~20). In contrast, the topics related to Tourism (~7) and Agriculture (~6) received the least number of shares.

As sharing behavior reflects content perceived as worthy of amplification to personal networks, the prominence of judiciary topics suggests that users view these issues as requiring broader

public awareness. In addition, the topic related to Banks, which holds the second-place position in the figure, is significant in the Greek political context, reflecting ongoing public concern over financial sector regulation, non-performing loan management, and the legacy of the debt crisis.

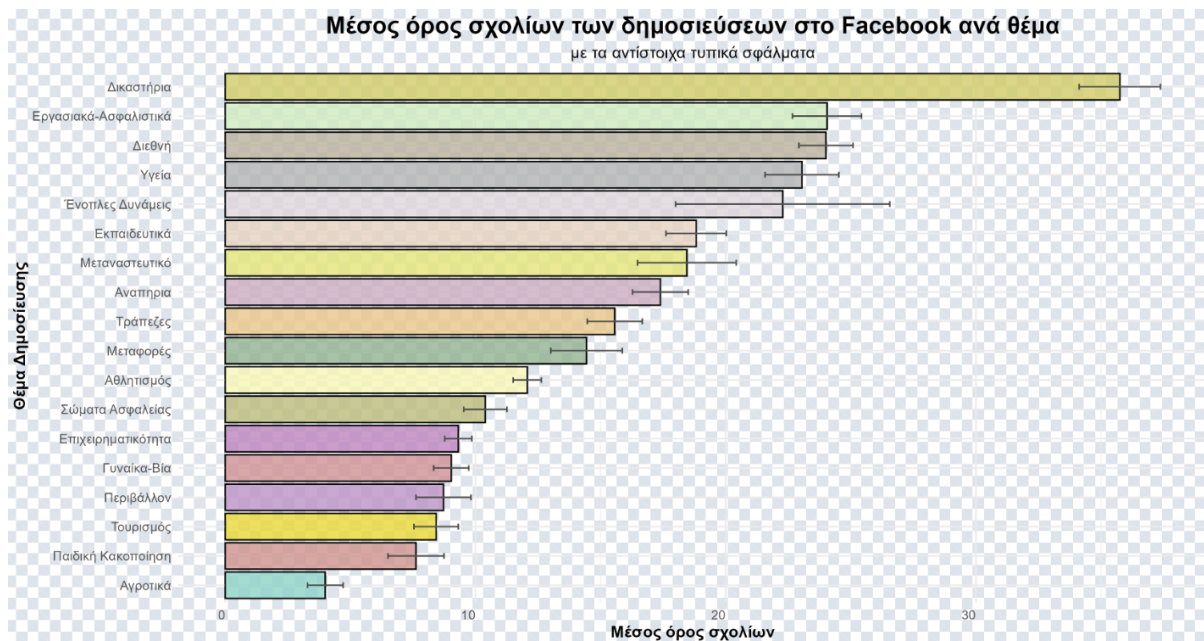


2. Mean Shares of Facebook Posts by Topic

Comments per Topic

The quantitative analysis of user interactions reveals that "Courts" dominate the discourse, leading with an average of approximately 35 comments per post. This is followed by a cluster of high-engagement topics, including "Labor & Insurance" (~25), "International Affairs" (~24), "Health" (~23), and the "Armed Forces" (~22). In contrast, "Agricultural" topics record the lowest level of participation, averaging only 5-6 comments.

Commenting behavior reflects deliberative engagement with the content. The dominance of judiciary topics across both negative reactions and comments suggests that these posts spark genuine public debate rather than merely emotional responses. The relatively high commenting on armed forces, despite low negative reactions, indicates a different type of engagement: supportive or patriotic discourse rather than conflict-driven discussion.



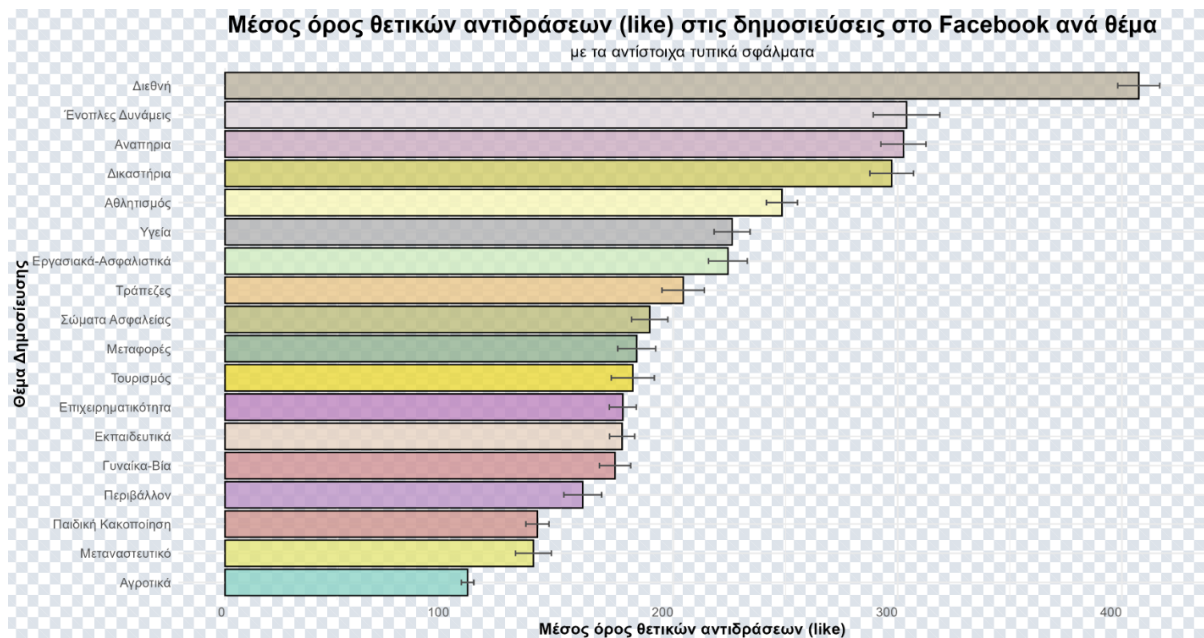
3. Mean Comments of Facebook Posts by Topic

Likes

Figure 4, which presents the average number of positive reactions (likes) by topic, shows that international affairs ("Διεθνή") receive the highest positive responses (~420), followed by the armed forces ("Armed Forces," ~310), disability issues (~305), and courts (~300). Immigration ("Μετανάστευση") and child abuse ("Παιδική Κακοποίηση") receive among the lowest positive reactions (~130-140), along with agricultural topics (~120).

In the mid-to-lower range of the scale, categories such as "Sports" (~255), "Health" (~240), and "Labor & Social Security" (~235) maintain a moderate level of positive interaction. These topics appear to sustain a consistent interest, though they do not reach the peak engagement levels seen in top-tier institutional categories.

Conversely, immigration ("Μετανάστευση") and child abuse ("Παιδική Κακοποίηση") receive among the lowest positive reactions (~130–140), along with agricultural topics ("Αγροτικά"), which record the minimum average of approximately 120 likes. The limited number of positive reactions in categories such as child abuse or migration likely reflects the serious and often distressing nature of the subject matter.



4. Mean Likes of Facebook Posts by Topic

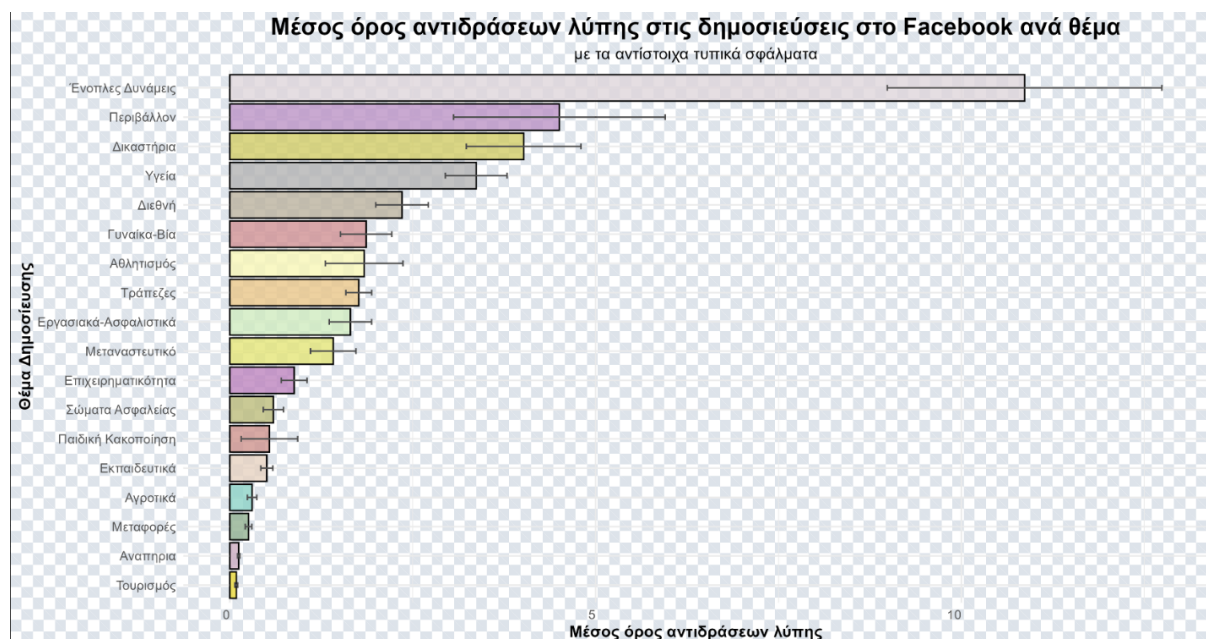
Sad Reactions

The distribution of sad reactions across different topics provides a profound look into the emotional impact of social media content and the specific areas that evoke public empathy or distress. According to Figure 5, the "Armed Forces" (Ένοπλες Δυνάμεις) category stands out significantly, recording the highest average of "sad" reactions, exceeding 10.

Following the Armed Forces, environmental issues ("Περιβάλλον") and the courts ("Δικαστήρια") evoke the next highest levels of sadness, with means ranging between 3.5 and 4.5 reactions. The emotional weight attached to environmental degradation and judicial outcomes reflects a public that is deeply affected by systemic issues and social justice. "Health" (Υγεία) also maintains a significant presence in this emotional bracket, averaging approximately 3.5 reactions, which underscores the personal and communal grief often associated with medical news.

In the mid-range of the scale, categories such as international affairs ("Διεθνή"), women-violence ("Γυναίκα-Βία"), and sports ("Αθλητισμός") elicit between 1.5 and 2.5 sad reactions. The presence of women-violence in this tier is particularly telling, as it suggests that users often process this sensitive content through a lens of mourning or empathy. Interestingly, banks ("Τράπεζες") and labor & social security ("Εργασιακά-Ασφαλιστικά") also appear in this range, indicating that economic hardships can trigger a sorrowful response from the community.

Topics such as transportation ("Μεταφορές"), disability ("Αναπηρία"), and "Tourism" (Τουρισμός) record minimal sad reactions, often averaging near zero.



5. Mean Sad Reactions of Facebook Posts by Topic

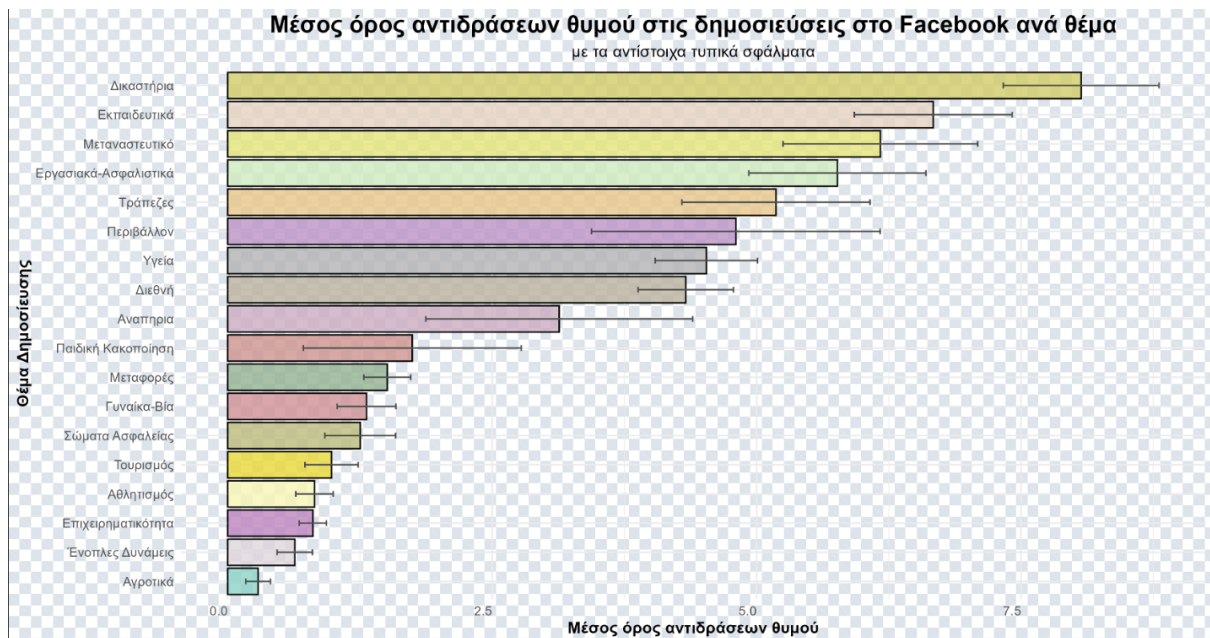
Angry Reactions

Figure 6 outlines a distinct hierarchy of public frustration, revealing that specific institutional themes generate significantly higher negative engagement than others. The examination of negative sentiment, specifically through "Angry" reactions, provides critical insight into the levels of social dissatisfaction or polarization elicited by different thematic categories on Facebook. According to Figure 5, the "Courts" (Δικαστήρια) category exhibits the highest mean of angry reactions, exceeding 7.5.

High levels of dissatisfaction are also observed in the "Education" (Εκπαιδευτικά), "Migration" (Μεταναστευτικό), and "Labor & Social Security" (Εργασιακά-Ασφαλιστικά) sectors, with means ranging between 6 and 7 reactions. The concentration of anger in these categories underscores public sensitivity toward social policy and state infrastructure, where reforms or crises often trigger negative feedback. Furthermore, "Banks" (Τράπεζες) and the "Environment" (Περιβάλλον) consistently generate measurable discontent.

In the mid-to-lower range of the scale, categories such as "Health" (Υγεία), "International Affairs" (Διεθνή), and "Digital Services" (Ψηφιακές Υπηρεσίες) show moderate levels of friction. Notably, categories like "Women & Violence" (Γυναίκα-Βία) appear lower on the anger scale.

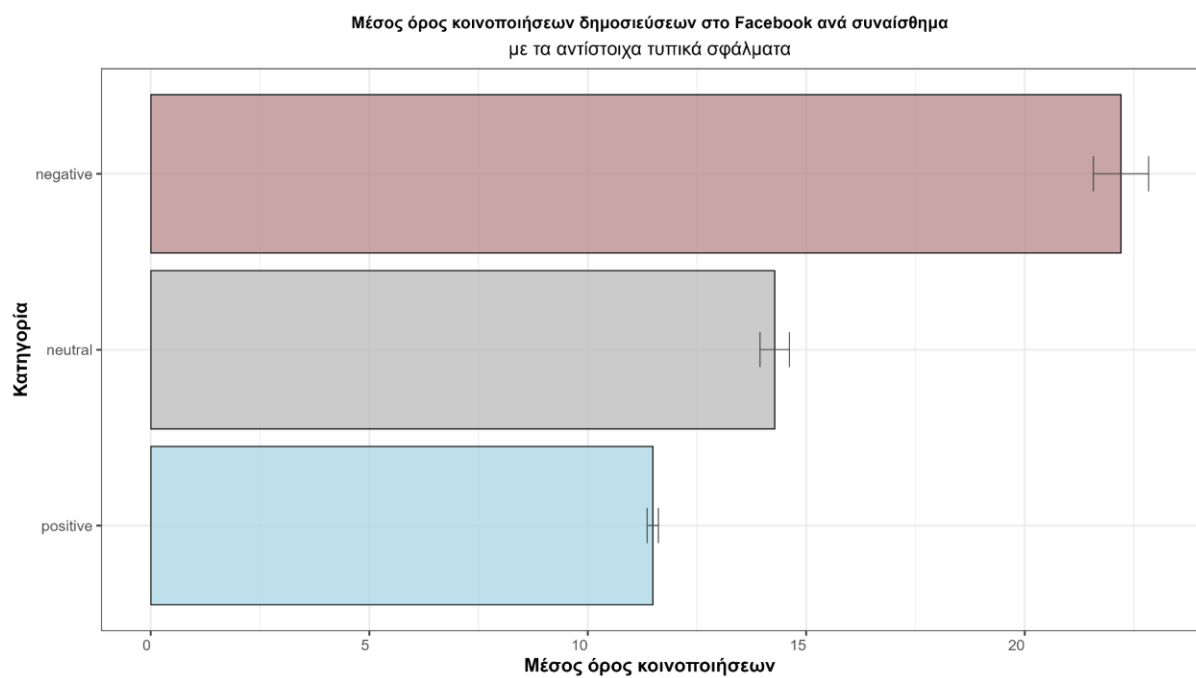
The lowest frequencies of angry reactions are recorded in "Sports" (Αθλητισμός), "Entrepreneurship" (Επιχειρηματικότητα), "Armed Forces" (Ένοπλες Δυνάμεις), and "Agriculture" (Αγροτικά).



6. Mean Angry Reactions of Facebook Posts by Topic

Facebook Posts by Sentiment

Shares by Sentiment

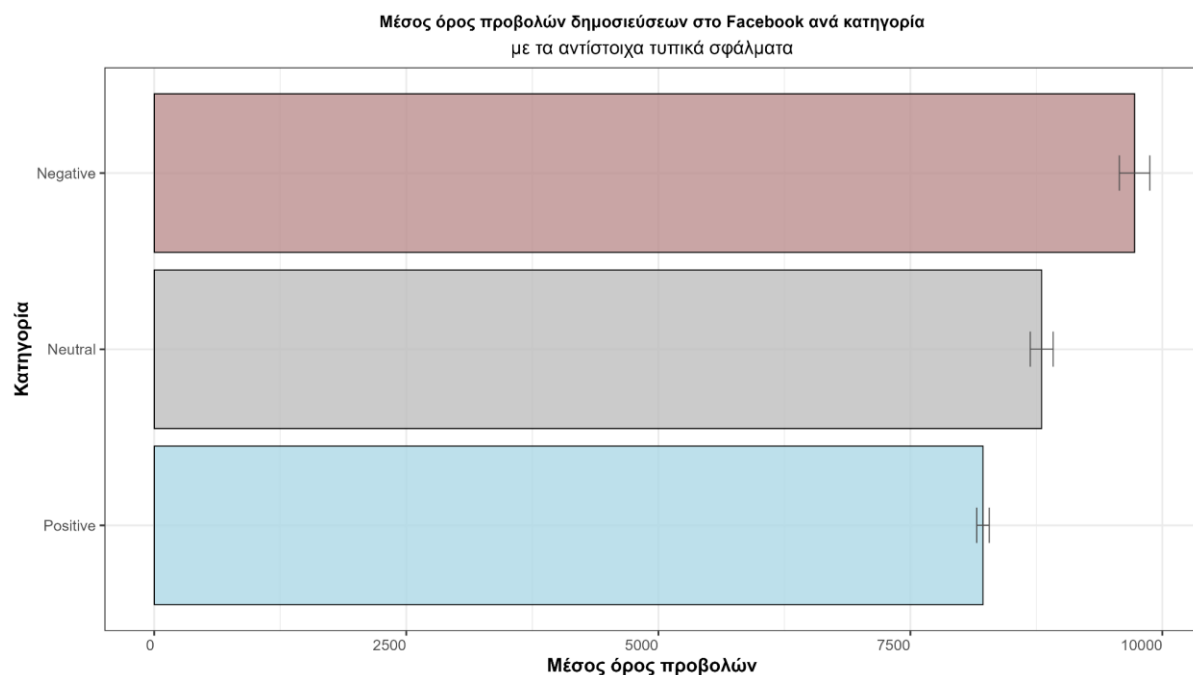


7. Mean Shares of Facebook Posts by Sentiment

Following the sentiment-classification procedure described extensively in Deliverable 3.2, “Report on the text analysis (automated and coding)”, Facebook posts were categorized as positive, neutral, or negative. Figure 7 presents the mean number of shares for each category, with error bars showing the corresponding standard errors. The results indicate that negatively coded posts achieve the highest average sharing levels, approximately 22-23 shares, neutral posts occupy an intermediate position, approximately 14-15 shares, while positively coded posts receive the fewest shares on average, approximately 11–12 shares. Overall, the descriptive evidence suggests that, within the analyzed corpus, negative sentiment is associated with substantially higher levels of content recirculation via sharing compared to neutral or positive posts.

Views by Sentiment

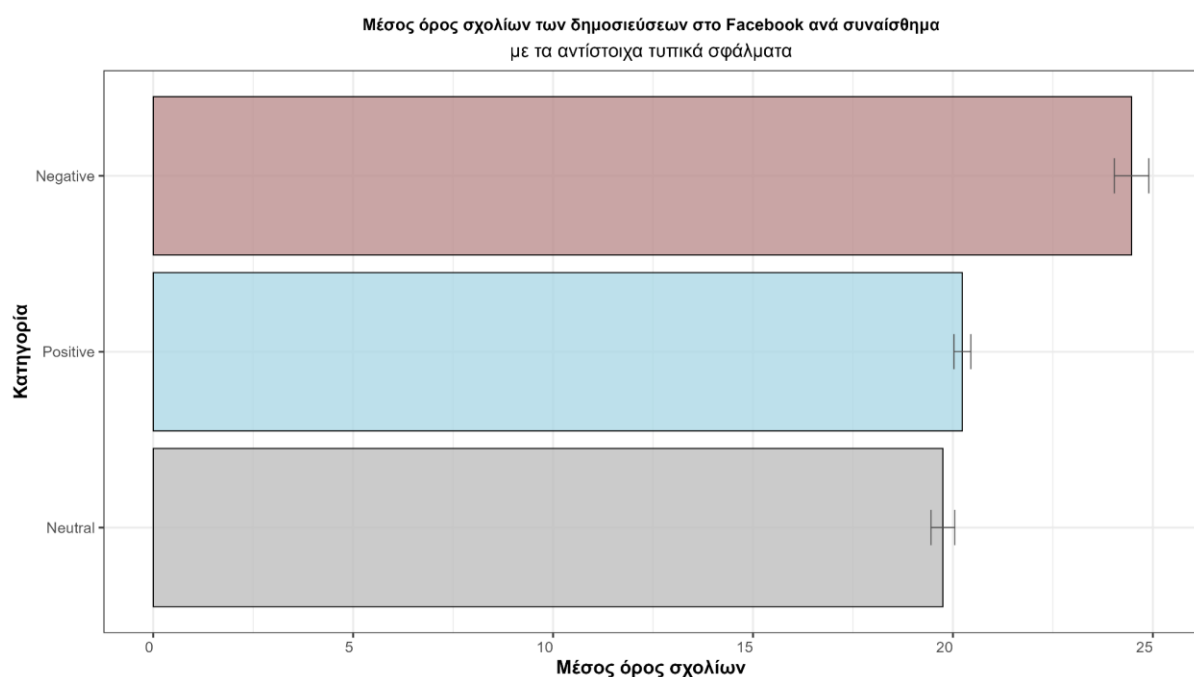
The relationship between post sentiment and audience reach on Facebook reveals a distinct trend towards higher engagement for negatively charged content. Figure 8 presents the average number of Facebook post views by sentiment category, along with the corresponding standard errors. The results reveal a clear differentiation in audience reach depending on the emotional tone of the content. Posts with negative sentiment achieve the highest average number of views, approaching or exceeding the 10,000 view threshold, indicating substantially higher audience exposure. In comparison, neutral posts record a lower average reach of approximately 9,000 views, while positively framed posts exhibit the lowest average visibility, with mean views around 8,500.



8. Mean Views of Facebook Posts by Sentiment

Comments by Sentiment

Figure 9 presents the mean number of comments per Facebook post across sentiment categories (positive, neutral, negative), with error bars indicating the corresponding standard errors. The results show that negatively coded posts attract the highest average level of commenting (approximately 24 comments), followed by neutral posts (approximately 20 comments), while positively coded posts receive the fewest comments on average (approximately 19 comments). Overall, the pattern suggests that posts with a more negative tone are associated with higher levels of audience interaction in the form of comments, whereas positive posts elicit slightly less discussion.



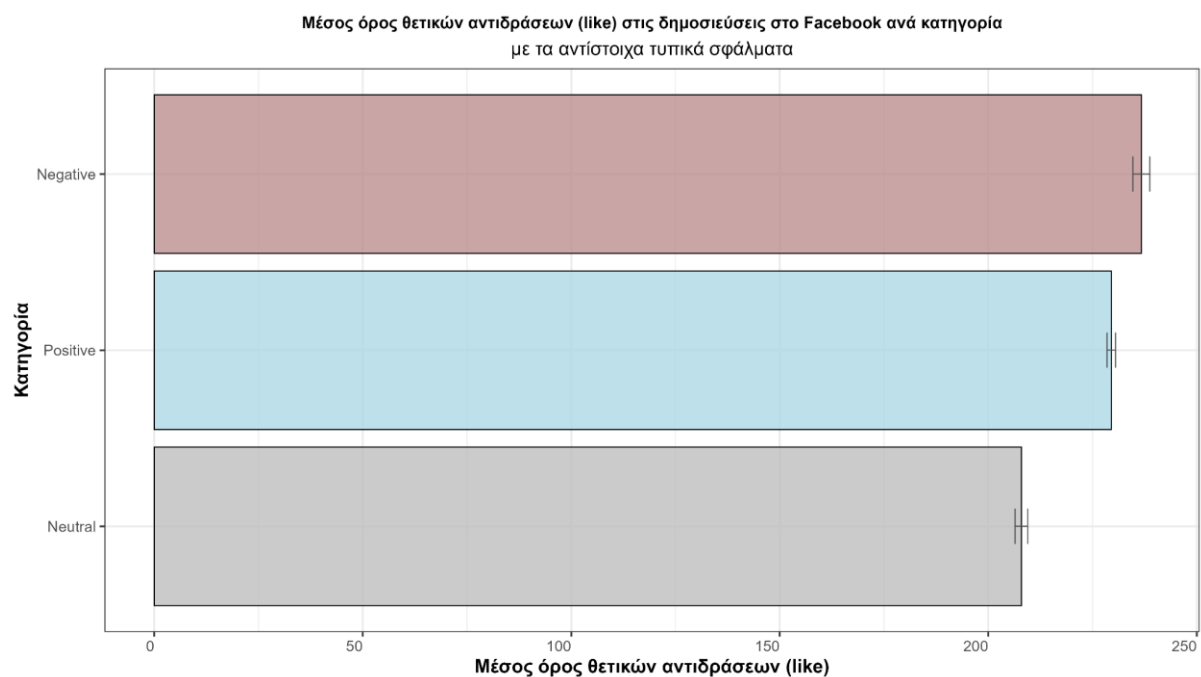
9. Mean Comments of Facebook Posts by Sentiment

Likes by Sentiment

Figure 10 illustrates the relationship between the sentiment of Facebook posts and the average number of positive reactions (likes) they receive. The data is categorized into three distinct sentiment groups, Negative, Positive, and Neutral.

The analysis reveals a clear trend: emotionally charged content consistently outperforms neutral information. Posts with a negative sentiment record the highest level of engagement, averaging approximately 245 likes per post. This is followed closely by positive content, which averages around 235 likes. In contrast, neutral posts garner the lowest level of interaction, with an average of approximately 215 likes.

The statistical proximity in the number of "likes" between negative and positive posts (~245 vs ~235) can be interpreted through the lens of issue salience. According to this theoretical framework, when a topic is perceived as highly important or controversial, the inherent significance of the subject matter outweighs the specific tone (valence) of the post. Because these topics activate deep-seated attitudes, users are driven to engage with any content that takes a clear stance, regardless of whether that stance is framed through a positive or negative lens. In this context, the "like" serves as a functional tool for political validation or agreement; users utilize it to signal their support for a specific viewpoint on a vital issue. Consequently, while negative posts may uniquely trigger "Angry" reactions as noted in the literature (Eberl et al., 2020), both positive and negative posts successfully cross the threshold of emotional activation required to drive high volumes of likes. This explains the dramatic drop-off observed in Neutral posts, which, by failing to provide a clear emotional or partisan anchor, do not resonate with the audience's perceived importance of the topic.

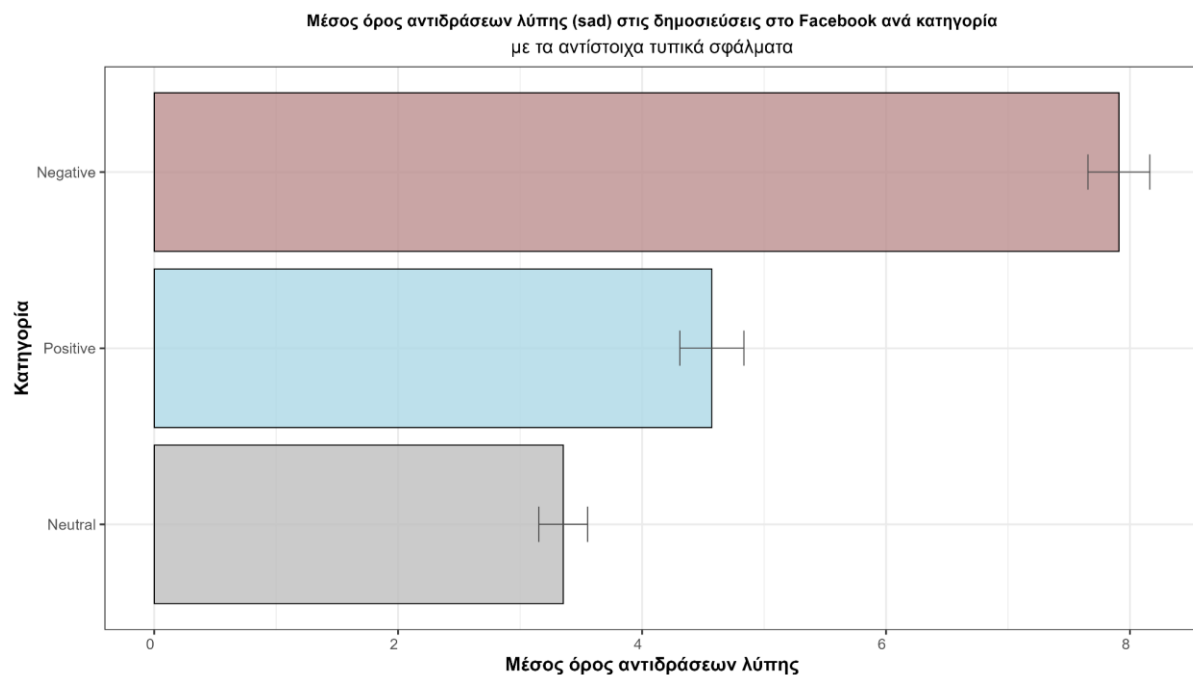


10. Mean Likes of Facebook Posts by Sentiment

Sad Reactions by Sentiment

Figure 11 presents the mean number of sad reactions per Facebook post across sentiment categories (positive, neutral, negative), with error bars indicating the corresponding standard errors. The results show that negatively coded posts attract the highest average level of sad reactions, approximately 8 reactions, followed by positively coded posts, approximately 4,5 reactions, while neutral posts receive the fewest reactions on average, approximately 3,2 reactions.

These results also align with the bibliography, which argues that negative emotions can operate as a “call to action,” motivating users to react and amplify content by drawing attention to information perceived as harmful, alarming, or threatening. In this view, heightened sadness, particularly in response to negatively framed posts, may reflect users’ tendency to publicly signal concern and to increase the visibility of such messages within their networks.



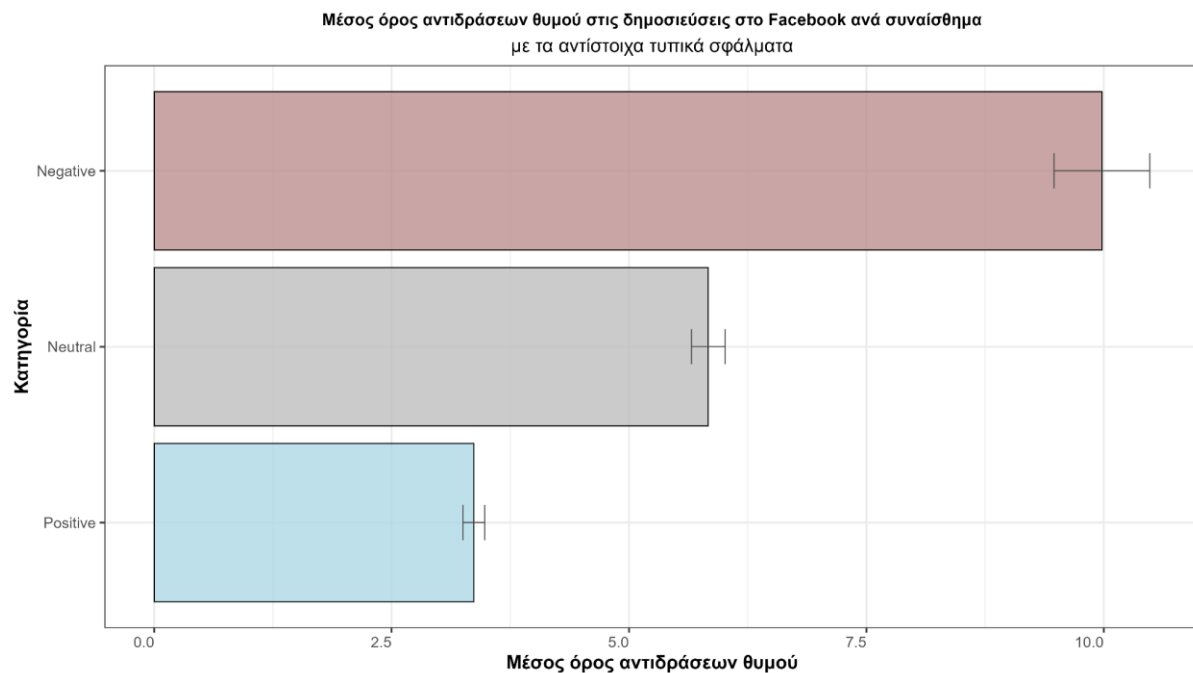
11. Mean Sad Reactions of Facebook Posts by Sentiment

Angry Reactions by Sentiment

Figure 12 presents the mean number of angry reactions per Facebook post across sentiment categories (positive, neutral, negative), with error bars indicating the corresponding standard errors. The results show that negatively coded posts attract the highest average level of angry reactions, approximately 10 reactions, followed by neutral posts, approximately 6 reactions, while positively coded posts receive the fewest reactions on average, approximately 3 reactions.

Importantly, these findings align with the existing bibliography on sentiment-driven reactions. In line with Eberl et al. (2020), the observed association between negative tone and increased “Angry” reactions only is consistent with evidence that negativity tends to activate stronger emotionally charged responses in online political communication. Moreover, the literature emphasizes that the sentiment–reaction relationship is often moderated by issue salience: when posts concern highly salient policy fields (e.g., immigration in the European context), salience itself can amplify angry reactions, sometimes independently of whether the post is framed positively or negatively, because the topic activates entrenched and defensive attitudes (Eberl et al., 2020). This provides a plausible interpretive lens for understanding why angry reactions

concentrate most heavily around negatively coded posts and may also remain elevated for posts discussing salient issues even when their tone is not explicitly negative. This theoretical framework provides a plausible explanation for why there is no dramatic difference in "likes" between negative and positive posts.



12. Mean Angry Reactions of Facebook Posts by Sentiment

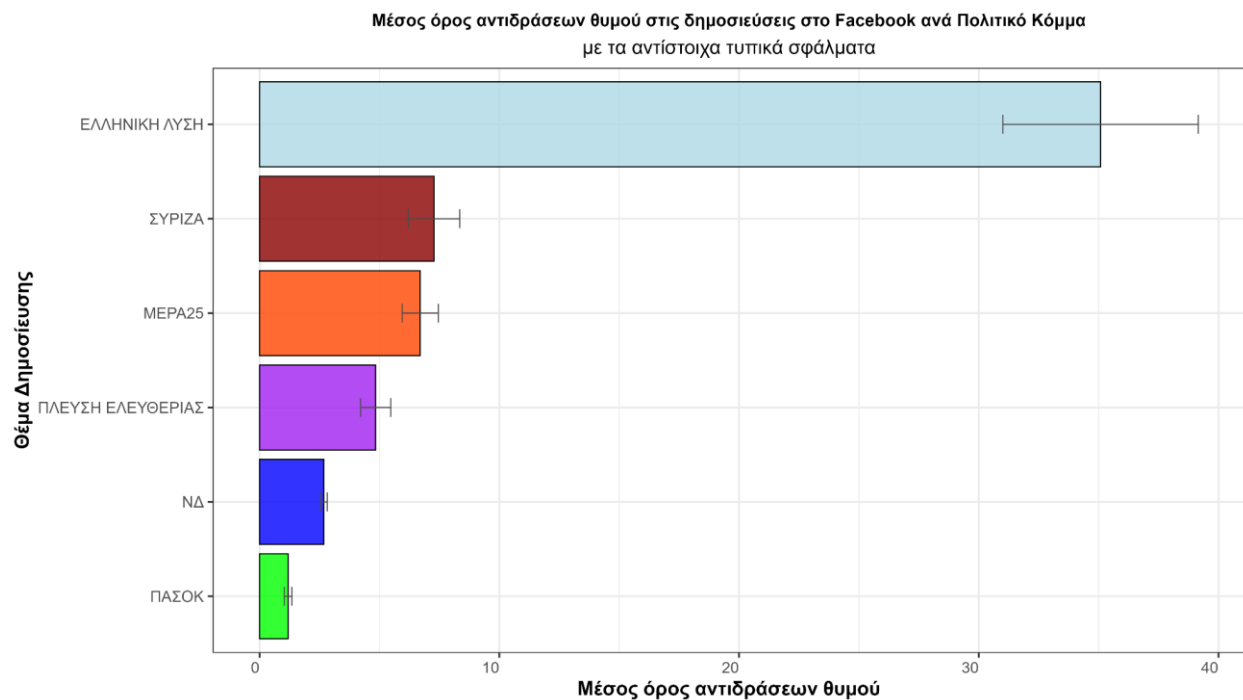
Angry Reactions by Political Party

Figure 13 presents the mean number of angry reactions per Facebook for the Greek Political Parties: New Democracy, SYRIZA, PASOK, Greek Solution, MERA25 and Pleafi Eleftherias with error bars indicating the corresponding standard errors. The results show that Greek Solution attracts the highest average level of angry reactions, approximately 35 reactions, followed by SYRIZA with approximately 7 reactions, MERA25 with 6 reactions while New Democracy and PASOK posts receive the fewest angry reactions on average, approximately 3 reactions and 1 reaction.

These findings align with the existing bibliography. The phenomenon of "angry sharing" is particularly potent in the realm of populist and hyperpartisan news. Posts from populist actors and alternative media outlets consistently elicit elevated levels of "Angry" reactions, often utilizing exclusionary or anti-elitist language (Samuel-Azran et al., 2017).

At this point, it is worth noting that when **Greek Solution** politicians post about immigration, the number of "angry" reactions triples. Given the significance of these reactions on Facebook, a deeper analysis is warranted. While Figure 6 shows that posts regarding "**Courts**" (often involving scandals and calls for justice) generate the highest average engagement—with

approximately 8 angry reactions per post—immigration remains a potent trigger for user frustration.



13. Mean Angry Reactions of Facebook Posts by Political Party

This is particularly evident in posts detailing alleged hardships or "disasters" suffered by Greeks at the hands of immigrants. Such content often garners dozens or even hundreds of angry reactions. The historical peak occurred in an older post involving a livestock farmer in Mytilene, who claimed to have had "8 animals slaughtered by immigrants... with the protection of NGOs." This single post amassed over 800 angry reactions (Figure 9).

Κυριάκος Βελόπουλος's Post



February 22, 2021 · 🌐

ΚΡΑΥΓΗ ΑΓΩΝΙΑΣ κτηνοτρόφου στη Μυτιλήνη!!! Του έσφαξαν 8 ζώα (πάνω από 100 κιλά κρέας) και τα εξαφάνισαν στη δομή με την προστασία των ΜΚΟ!



👍👎😡 2K

278 comments 615 shares 51K views

14.FB post with over 800 angry reactions

However, despite the intense emotions these posts provoke, overall engagement with immigration remains low; it ranks 15th out of 18 topics, according to Figure 1. Furthermore, recent data indicates that references to immigration by Greek Solution executives have decreased significantly compared to previous periods.

Conclusions

The findings of this report point to a comprehensive and internally coherent picture of how political communication, emotional engagement, and agenda-setting interact on social media in the Greek political context.

At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that emotions, particularly anger, are not incidental outcomes of political messaging but are often actively cultivated. Certain political actors appear to prioritize topics that are known to generate frustration, outrage, or indignation among citizens. Posts related to courts, immigration, education reforms, labor rights, and financial institutions repeatedly trigger elevated levels of angry reactions, comments, and shares. This indicates a strategic orientation toward emotionally charged communication, where provoking strong affective responses becomes a means of increasing visibility and mobilization. In an

algorithmically driven environment, anger functions as a powerful amplifier, pushing content into wider circulation and reinforcing polarizing narratives.

Nevertheless, a central and unifying conclusion of the report is that political actors do not fully control the digital agenda. While politicians can initiate discussion by selecting themes and framing them in particular ways, their ability to determine which issues ultimately dominate public attention is limited. Citizens play an active and decisive role in reshaping the agenda through their engagement practices. Actions such as sharing, commenting, and reacting do not merely reflect interest; they actively reorder the hierarchy of issues by signaling relevance and urgency to platform algorithms. Consequently, themes with relatively low posting frequency can achieve disproportionate visibility when they resonate strongly with public concerns, while heavily promoted topics may remain comparatively marginal in terms of reach and impact.

This dynamic reveals a negotiated model of agenda-setting, where influence is distributed between political elites and voters. Politicians attempt to guide attention and frame debate, but citizens effectively “vote” on issue importance through their digital behavior. The resulting agenda is therefore neither fully elite-driven nor purely grassroots, but the product of continuous interaction between the two. This helps explain the observed gaps between topic prevalence and engagement, as well as the prominence of certain institutional or crisis-related issues that gain traction despite limited elite emphasis. Although politicians cannot fully control the public agenda, our analysis indicates that populist politicians may still shape attitudes by strategically mobilizing negative sentiment and anger, especially among individuals who are already predisposed to respond to such cues. In particular, exposure to populist rhetoric framed in negative terms appears capable of influencing these audiences’ attitudes toward immigrants, a relationship that will be examined and empirically substantiated in Deliverable D4.5.

In broader terms, these findings carry significant implications for social inclusiveness and democratic discourse in Greece. When political actors rely heavily on emotionally polarizing topics, particularly those linked to institutional trust or social boundaries, the risk of exclusionary narratives and entrenched divisions increases. At the same time, the capacity of citizens to elevate alternative issues through engagement suggests that digital platforms also provide space for bottom-up influence and accountability. Ultimately, the quality of online political discourse, and its contribution to inclusion or polarization, depends not only on what politicians choose to talk about, but on how citizens collectively respond, amplify, or resist those choices within the digital public sphere.

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