Retrospective Review

Twitter and the 2019 European Elections

July 2019

Table of Contents

Foreword

In May, millions of citizens from across the European Union's Member States made their voices heard on the future political complexion of the European Parliament. This was the second largest democratic exercise of its kind in the world this year and will set the EU political stage for the next five years.

The public conversation occurring on Twitter is never more important than during elections. Our service shows the world what is happening, democratises access to information and — at its best — provides people around the globe with insights into a diversity of perspectives on critical election issues. The hashtag #EUElections2019 highlighted live and real-time conversations taking place on Twitter between candidates, citizens, journalists, political parties and groups, and civil society. Individuals Tweeted side-by-side, in real-time, and in their own languages and elections hashtags. Working with our partners, we identified ways to leverage Twitter to support civic participation and democratic discourse.

This year's EU elections had the highest voter turnout in 25 years. Offline participation was a reflection of online participation, where we saw a 273% increase in Tweet volume compared with the EU elections in 2014. More than 6.2 million election-related Tweets discussed key issues such as climate change and Brexit, alongside key candidates in the lead up to the elections.

Following the EU elections we remain committed to making Twitter accessible and a valuable tool for research, building out more transparency, such as through our Ads Transparency Center, and educating, empowering, and collaborating, to continue to promote healthy conversations and healthy elections. Potential challenges leading up to any EU election require societal and inclusive approaches, involving extensive partnerships and collaboration with government institutions, research and civil society experts, candidates, industry peers, and media and broadcasting organisations. This EU election highlighted the importance and impact of empowering EU citizens and users to engage in constructive participation in healthy conversations around democracy online and offline.

Twitter continues to build on the knowledge and expertise gained from national, and in the case of the EU, regional elections around the world.

Karen White
Director, Public Policy, Twitter

Executive Summary

Twitter's singular purpose is to improve the health of the public conversation, particularly around election cycles. We want to encourage more healthy, open political debate, and to strengthen civic participation by providing a platform for people to engage in conversations that impact their everyday lives.

In February, we committed to working diligently to ensure Twitter would be the world's window into the EU election conversation. Our approach to the EU elections focused on three strategic pillars of delivery - Service Improvements, Outreach, and Civic Participation. To help achieve this, we established a cross-functional, internal elections group in February to lead our election integrity work across the region. Comprised of engineers, legal experts, data scientists, and policy analysts, the group worked to proactively protect the integrity of regional trends, support partner escalations, and identify potential threats from malicious actors.

1. Service Improvements

To protect and support the EU election conversation, we took a number of proactive steps over the course of the campaign to strengthen product, policy, and operational aspects of the service.

Learning from previous elections and tactics used by malicious actors, we engaged in intensive efforts to identify and combat attempts to undermine and abuse our service. Months before EU elections we took a number of actions including:

- Establishing a new political campaign ads policy to provide users across the EU with more transparency into electioneering ads appearing on the service.
- Rolling out a new election integrity policy in April and enforcing recently expanded Twitter policies on fake accounts and hacked materials; and
- Introducing a new tool which allowed citizens to report deliberately misleading election-related content to us.

Key figures:

- At the end of the campaigning period, there were 21 EU certified political campaigning accounts running ads for the EU elections on Twitter. These accounts contributed to 23,253,153 impressions on Twitter.
- Since January 2019, our internal, proactive tools challenged 76,674,110 accounts globally for engaging in suspected spammy behaviour, including those engaging in suspected platform manipulation[1].
- We received 49,945 user reports through our election-related misinformation reporting feature for the EU.

2. Policy Outreach

Our Public Policy team also ramped up its engagement across Europe with political parties and the EU's local Member State offices to arrange Twitter trainings, distribute media literacy resources, amplify campaigns that

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[1] Platform manipulation refers to the use of Twitter to mislead others and/or disrupt their experience by engaging in bulk, aggressive, or deceptive activity. This activity includes, but is not limited to, spam, malicious automation (malicious use of bots), and inauthentic account abuse (fake accounts).

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encouraged voter participation such as #ThisTimeImVoting, and launch a special election emoji to encourage engagement and conversation.

During the election cycle, a key focus of the Twitter Europe Policy Team involved expediting our response to reports from people and organisations active in the election arena. These included election support organisations, EU-based research organisations, universities and academics who study the spread of misinformation in the media, and key EU and national political parties and institutions. We identified partners to enroll in Twitter's Partner Support Portal (PSP) and election candidates for verification.

Key figures:
- 80 election partners across the EU were onboarded to the PSP prior to Election Day.
- No reports from our partners across the EU enrolled in the Partner Support Portal throughout the election period.

3. Civic participation

To encourage conversation across all official EU languages, we launched two special emojis to drive engagement and unite citizens around common themes and issues. These emojis activated by variations of the hashtags #EUElections2019, #EP2019, and #ThisTimeImVoting. Between selfies at count centres, breaking news alerts, and the intense back-and-forth of EU Commission Presidential debates, the conversation was dynamic, extraordinarily varied — and most importantly — created an open platform for conversation and dialogue for voters with respect to important civic issues.

Key figures:
- 2.1 million Tweets were posted over the election weekend relating to EU election-related conversations.
- 273% increase in Tweet volume compared with the EU elections in 2014.
- Over 6.2 million election-related Tweets discussed key issues such as climate change and Brexit, alongside key candidates in the lead up to the elections.
- Approximately 2.5 million people watched the live stream of the #TellEurope EBU presidential debate from the Parliament's @Europarl_EN account.

Conclusion

Serving and protecting the health of the public conversation continues to be Twitter's key priority. We'll continue working to protect conversations on the service, particularly around election cycles, by investing in technology, developing new policies, and building meaningful partnerships to further our understanding of the political and social context within which Twitter operates.

Our global cross-functional teams worked proactively to protect the integrity of regional trends, support partner escalations, and identify potential threats from malicious actors. Our teams continue to review and assess potential malicious or automated activity by bad actors, either foreign or domestic, and when and where we identify evidence of state-backed information operations on Twitter, we routinely publish archives of Tweets and media associated with those operations. We do so to encourage researchers to conduct their own investigations, and to share their insights and independent analysis with the world.

From a user perspective, the EU election conversation was healthy, open, and highly-engaged — a trend which translated offline with the highest voter turnout registered for a European election in 25 years. We continue our efforts to foster an environment conducive to healthy, meaningful conversations on our service. This work is essential. We will continue to update the public through @TwitterGov, @Policy, and @TwitterSafety.

Proactive Improvements to Twitter for the 2019 European Parliament Election

To ensure the EU election conversation was healthy, civil, and open, we took a number of proactive measures across policy, product, and operations to protect the security and integrity of the elections. These steps aimed to combat abuse, surface credible information, and provide additional transparency on the type of content users were seeing on the service throughout the election cycle.

Combating Malicious Automation and Protecting Conversation Health

Twitter fights spam and malicious automation strategically and at scale. Our focus is increasingly on proactively identifying problematic accounts and behaviour rather than waiting until we receive a report. Our primary goal on this front is to identify and challenge accounts engaging in spammy or manipulative behaviour before users are exposed to misleading or inauthentic content.

Spam or platform manipulation can take many forms and our rules are intended to address a wide range of prohibited behaviour, some examples include:
- commercially-motivated spam, that typically aims to drive traffic or attention from a conversation on Twitter to accounts, websites, products, services, or initiatives;
- inauthentic engagements, that attempt to make accounts or content appear more popular or active than they are; and
- coordinated activity, that attempts to artificially influence conversations through the use of multiple accounts, fake accounts, automation, and/or scripting.

We enforce our policies depending on the severity of the violation as well as any previous history of violations. Our action is also informed by the type of spammy activity that we have identified. The actions we take may include Tweet deletion and temporary account locks, permanent suspension, and anti-spam challenges.

We challenge accounts when we detect suspicious levels of activity, leading to accounts being locked and prompted to provide additional information (e.g., a phone number), or to solve a reCAPTCHA.

Since January 2019, and throughout the EU election period, our internal, proactive detection of suspected spam and fake accounts, including those engaging in suspected platform manipulation[2], included 76,674,110 accounts challenged platform-wide. Twitter actions approximately 75% of accounts challenged.[3]

Since announcing last year that building a Twitter free of abuse, spam, and other behaviours that distract from the public conversation is our top priority, we've made strides in creating a healthier service. In April, we shared an update on our progress and previewed some changes that can be anticipated in the coming months. There will always be more to do, but we've made meaningful progress that is important to share.

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[2] Platform manipulation refers to the use of Twitter to mislead others and/or disrupt their experience by engaging in bulk, aggressive, or deceptive activity. This activity includes, but is not limited to, spam, malicious automation (malicious use of bots), and inauthentic account abuse (fake accounts).

[3] It is important to note that this is preliminary data which we are sharing as part of our commitment to provide transparency about our actions in the lead-up to the EU elections. These figures will be subject to change as they are reviewed for regular publication in our Transparency Report.

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Here is a summary of progress we've made:

- 38% of abusive content that enforcement action is taken against is surfaced proactively to our teams for review instead of relying on reports.
- 16% fewer abuse reports after an interaction from an account the reporter doesn't follow.
- 100,000 accounts suspended for creating new accounts after a suspension during January — March 2019, a 45% increase from the same time last year.
- 60% faster response to appeals requests with our new in-app appeal process.
- 3 times more abusive accounts suspended within 24 hours after a report compared to the same time last year.
- 2.5 times more private information removed with a new, easier reporting process.

High-level Internal Elections Group

We formed a high-level internal elections group to lead our electoral integrity work in the EU. Using our proprietary-built internal tools, the team worked proactively to protect the integrity of regional trends, support partner reports and escalations, and identify potential threats from malicious actors.

Cross-functional by design, the team consisted of several of the company's top trust and safety experts, as well as members of our site integrity, legal, engineering, data science, and our public policy teams in Europe and the US. This blend of perspectives, expertise, and backgrounds was absolutely critical.

This cross-functional, international approach was also deployed during other recent EU elections such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Spain, and Belgium. As we move forward to support the integrity of other elections, we will continue to use this model and leverage the learnings we garner along the way to augment our approach.

Transparency Around Political Advertising

To increase transparency around political advertising during elections, we made a number of updates to our service in February 2019. This included expanding our political campaigning ads policy across the European Union, establishing a certification process for any advertisers wishing to take out political ads, and expanding Twitter's Ads Transparency Center to include a repository of all political campaigning ads taken out by certified political advertisers for the European parliamentary elections.

The political ads campaign policy required that advertisers who wanted to promote political campaigning content for the European Parliament elections go through a strict certification process to ensure that advertisers were based within the EU and complied with local campaigning laws.

To provide users with more insight into who was advertising European political campaign content on Twitter, we also included a visual label and disclaimer information on promoted content from certified accounts. This allowed users to easily identify political campaign ads and to know who paid for them, as well as online campaign details such as billing information, ad spend, impressions data per Tweet, and targeting data for the ads being served.

The ads, which exist indefinitely within the Twitter ads transparency center, can be accessed by anyone regardless of whether you have a Twitter account or not.

Twitter received a total of 70 applications from across the EU to be certified as a political campaign account. At the end of the campaigning period, there were 27 certified EU political campaign accounts, with 21 certified political campaigning accounts running ads for the EU elections on Twitter. All political campaign accounts contributed to 23,253,153 impressions on Twitter.

Updates to Twitter Rules

In order to provide users more tools when they encounter potentially spammy or inauthentic accounts, we have updated our spam reporting tools so that users can now specify the type of spam they are seeing when they report, including fake accounts.

We have significantly improved the way users can report the exposure of personal information on Twitter, to ensure quicker and more accurate actions are taken. This will help strengthen our approach to providing greater support for candidates through their campaigns around the EU elections.

Updates to Twitter Reporting Features

We have also made updates to spam and fake account reporting options. In order to provide users more tools when they encounter potentially spammy or inauthentic accounts, we have updated our spam reporting tools so that users can now specify the type of spam they are seeing when they report, including fake accounts.
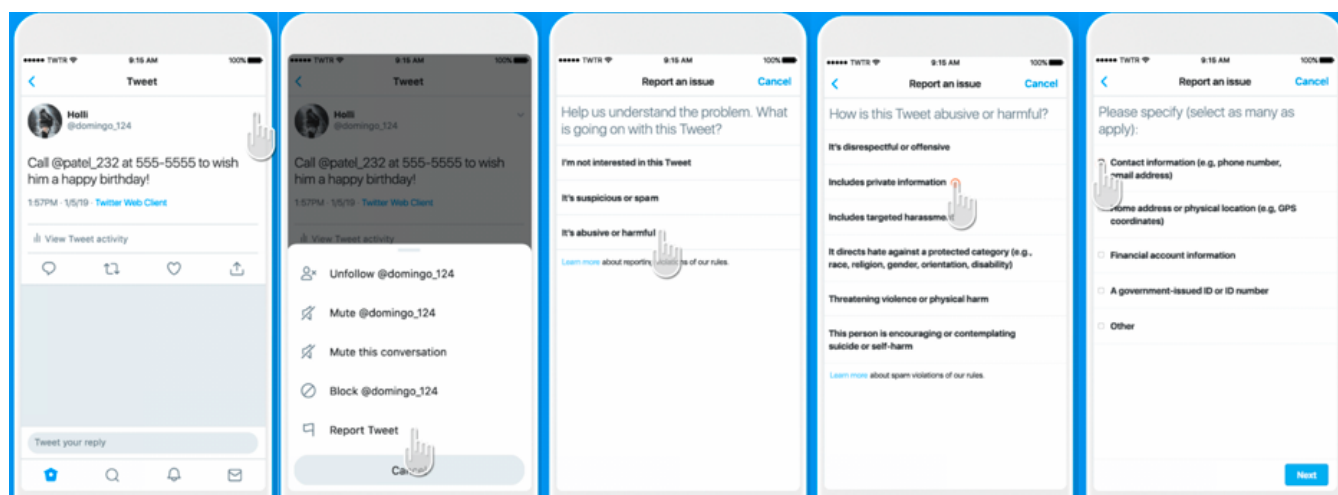
We have significantly improved the way users can report the exposure of personal information on Twitter, to ensure quicker and more accurate actions are taken. This will help strengthen our approach to providing greater support for candidates through their campaigns around the EU elections.

Strengthening our Approach to Deliberate Attempts to Mislead Voters

Further to the development of the election integrity policy, we launched a dedicated reporting tool which enables EU citizens to easily report intentionally misleading election related information to us.

Content which would violate this policy includes but is not limited to:
- Misleading information about how to vote or register to vote (for example, that you can vote by Tweet, text message, email, or phone call);
- Misleading information about requirements for voting, including identification requirements; and
- Misleading statements or information about the official, announced date or time of an election.

Fully functional in the EU as of 29 April 2019, this allowed EU users to more easily report this content to us. This is in addition to our existing proactive approach to tackling malicious automation and other forms of platform manipulation on the service.

We started with the EU and Indian elections and plan to roll out to other elections globally throughout the rest of the year. Throughout the EU we received 49,945 reports from the end of April until the elections in May, highlighting the utility of the reporting tool for citizens in the lead up to the elections.

Some representative examples below of violating Tweets.

Example 1:

UserName @username
Breaking News!
Due to the overcrowding at the polling station and nasty
remonaers polling stations are opened tomorrow just for
UKIP and BrexitParty voters Stay safe stay home and
vote tomorrow for Brexit   UKIP and BrexitParty
URGENTLY RT FOR EVERYONE

Example 2:

UserName @username
Infatti non cascateci amici segnate la scheda della Lega
con due cerchi e un ellisse e scrivete Capitano

English translation:
"Don't let them fool you, put two circles and an ellipse on the electoral ballot of Lega and write "Capitano""

Example 3:

Username @Username
Ganz wichtig für alle Sachsen. In Sachsen findet die
Europawahl aus organisatorischen Gründen erst am
27.05.19 statt. Anderslautende Daten auf den
Wahlbenachrichtigungen können ignoriert werden.
Bitte weitersagen #Europawahl2019

English Translation:
"Very important for all Saxons. In Saxony, for organisational reasons the European elections will take place on 27.05.19 only. Other dates on the election notification can be ignored.
Please pass on #Europawahl2019"

Access to Twitter Data for Researchers

Public API

Since 2006, Twitter's APIs have given researchers and developers the opportunity to tap into what's happening in the world. Twitter firmly believes in open data access to study, analyse, and contribute to the public conversation; which is why we continue to maintain a broad public API. Researchers use Twitter data to provide valuable feedback on how the online conversations and interactions evolve on and off Twitter, which is essential around elections. We continue to provide more accessible ways to make data and information publicly available to researchers.

State-backed Information Operations

We are committed to understanding how bad-faith actors use our services. We will continue to proactively combat nefarious attempts to undermine the integrity of Twitter, while partnering with civil society, government, our industry peers, and researchers to improve our collective understanding of coordinated attempts to interfere in the public conversation. Our dedicated site integrity team, in partnership with a diverse range of committed organisations and personnel across the company, continue to invest heavily in this area. We are constantly seeking to improve our own ability to detect, understand, and neutralise these campaigns as quickly and robustly as technically possible.

Working with law enforcement and the authorities will always be our first priority. Additionally, we believe independent analysis of this activity by researchers is a key step toward promoting shared understanding of these threats. this level of transparency can enhance the health of the public conversation on the internet. This is our singular mission. To learn more about what is included and how researchers can download the datasets, visit our dedicated Elections Integrity Hub.

This year, we expanded on our archive of potential foreign information operations to help improve the public understanding of potentially state-backed information operations on our service. A unique dataset, the largest of its kind available, we have made available more than 30 million Tweets and over 1 terabyte of media. This will enable users to better discern the origin and intent of various types of content, and is crucial to our work and the work of researchers, around the EU elections. Currently, we have disclosures covering Russia, Iran, Venezuela, Bangladesh, and Spain.

As outlined in our most recent set of disclosures which were announced this month, earlier this year, we suspended 130 fake accounts originating in Spain. These accounts were directly associated with the Catalan independence movement, specifically Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya. They were primarily engaged in spreading content about the Catalan Referendum. The network includes fake accounts which appear to have been created in an attempt to inorganically influence the conversation. Setting up fake accounts is a violation of the Twitter Rules.

Data sets accessed by Member State
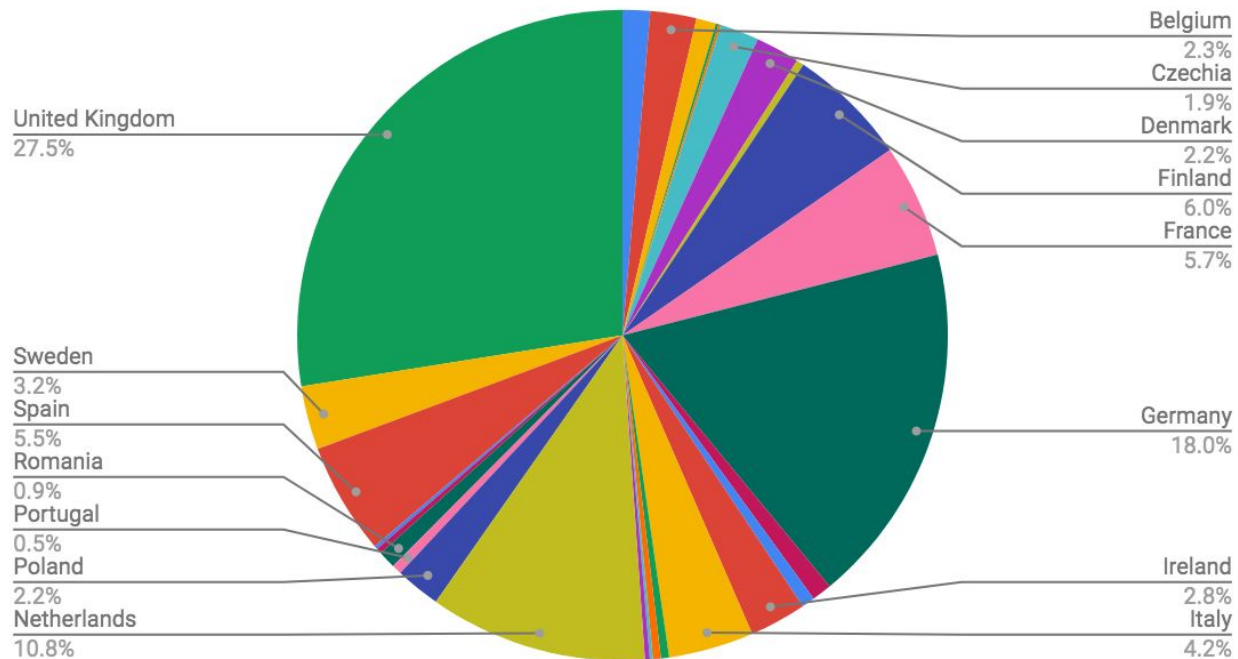
The datasets have proved significant to researchers within the EU, and were accessed over 16 thousand times by independent as well as institution-affiliated researchers across the EU. For example, recently the Demos institute in the UK released a report using the Twitter data sets to highlight that much of the information shared during suspected foreign information operations is not "fake", rather the selective amplification of reputable, mainstream media stories.

Engagement with Key Stakeholders

Government Engagement Across the EU

In the months preceding the elections, we engaged with government and EU institutional bodies to highlight our ongoing efforts, gather feedback, and discuss challenges. This included meetings with the EU Commissioners leading on election integrity efforts ahead of the EU elections.

> **Andrus Ansip** ✔
> @Ansip_EU
>
> A constructive meeting with #Facebook, #Twitter & #Google today. Good to see progress and steps by platforms to tackle #disinformation and implement #CodeofPractice ahead of #EUelections2019 🗳 but there's still room for improvement. Need to keep up efforts. Trust has to be earned.
>
> 👤 European Commission 🇪🇺 and 9 others
>
> 6:57 pm · 19 Mar 2019 · Twitter Web Client

> **Věra Jourová** ✔
> @VeraJourova
>
> We need all hands on deck to mitigate the risks regarding #Euelections2019 🗳. I was glad IT platforms feel their share of responsibility but I expect they will fully roll out their transparency measures. I am ready to help facilitating the dialogue between MS and the platforms.
>
> 👤 Snap Inc. and 7 others
>
> 7:17 PM · Mar 4, 2019 · Twitter Web Client
>
> 13 Retweets   37 Likes

The EU elections are both regional and national, and we worked closely with the European External Action Service (EEAS), following the creation of the EU Rapid Alert System (RAS) to improve coordination on external threats with member states around elections. We engaged at national level with a number of government agencies and ministries on security and election integrity efforts, including working closely with EU Computer Emergency Response Teams across the EU.

We provided training to the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), the body tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, on the Twitter ads transparency center, ads policy, and the certification process for political advertisers.

We offered and provided trainings across the EU on safety, security, campaigning, and best practises for candidates and local and pan-European political parties and groups. Some examples below:

In Sweden, we held a training for Swedish government agencies facilitated by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, highlighting Twitter's work to protect the integrity of the EU elections and sharing safety best practices for government communicators.

In Ireland, we hosted and livestreamed an event at our headquarters in Dublin where we gave a training on campaigning best practices for political parties and candidates. This training also included safety and account security information, along with an update on our proactive efforts around platform health and election integrity.

In Germany, we joined the "integrity and security initiative" hosted by the national cyber security authority, the Federal Office for Information Security (Bundesamt für Informationssicherheit). This initiative aims to protect the integrity of elections and to tackle information operations by creating a better and more comprehensive understanding of interference into elections through knowledge sharing between participating stakeholders.

> **Twitter Dublin** ✔
> @TwitterDublin
>
> Today at Twitter Dublin, we're hosting Irish political parties and presenting a Twitter Campaigning best practice training live to @Europarl_EN offices around Europe. #EP2019 🗳
>
> 11:31 AM · Apr 17, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

EU Code of Practice on Disinformation & Monthly Reports

Following our participation in the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, we became a signatory to the European Commission Code of Practice on Disinformation in September 2018 and made commitments in the areas of improving transparency of political advertising, scrutiny of ad placements, empowering consumers and the research community, and strengthening the integrity of service. This was the first code of practice of its kind globally and highlights Twitter's approach to a collaborative approach to addressing societal challenges.

Alongside the Code of Practice on Disinformation, Twitter also committed to providing monthly progress reports preceding the election, which detailed our ongoing efforts across the service including EU elections related policy updates, information and data on enforcement actions, updates on our political ads transparency, Twitter's efforts to support digital literacy initiatives across the EU, and our ongoing efforts to ensure access for researchers to data and information. All reports are publicly available on the European Commission's website and included below for ease of reference.

- Twitter Progress Report
- January 2019 update
- February 2019 update
- March 2019 update
- April 2019 update
- May 2019 update

Civil Society

Throughout the months leading up to the EU elections, our teams were engaged in real-time discussions with civil society organisations working on issues specific to building constructive and healthy conversations on Twitter around elections, election integrity, digital literacy, and voter engagement across the EU. Partnerships with civil society organisations are invaluable in developing our understanding of shared societal challenges and opportunities, enabling us to quickly respond to any activity requiring action. Some examples below:

On Twitter, we supported a number of organisations across the EU through the #WeDeserveBetter campaign, and facilitated a workshop at our headquarters in Dublin which brought together civil society organisations, government, and industry partners from across the EU to coordinate on efforts to tackle hateful conduct online and promote more constructive public debate around elections.

CEJI ✔
@cejioffice

When it comes to political debates & public discourse, #WeDeserveBetter: less hate speech, better arguments, more facts. Join the EU-wide NGO campaign for healthy discussions launching soon! #WeDeserveBetter #EUElections2019 🇪🇺 ceji.org/launch-of-the-...

#WeDeserveBetter
Take hate out of the conversation

👤 Facing Facts and 2 others

10:01 AM · Apr 16, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

In the UK, we have awarded Ads for Good grants to some of our closest nonprofit partners. Shout Out UK runs political and media literacy programmes in schools and colleges and amplified their Media Minded content with this Twitter campaign. Bite The Ballot reached out to young people on the service and surveyed them on their civic literacy. We also ran a Tea, Toast, and Tweeting session on digital literacy to support users over the age of 50 in their use of Twitter.

Friends of BCL
@FriendsBCL

@katyminshall Katy Minshall - Twitter Head of Government, Public Policy & Philanthropy; leads a teach-in. #NGOs #charity #local
Belsize Community Library. Let us know which events you would like to see? #community #Twitter 👏🏼👏🏼👏🏼
Thank you Katy! 😃⭐️🎇💐

2:51 AM · Mar 21, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

On Twitter, we supported Alliance of Democracies (@AoDemocracies) to promote their "Pledge for Election Integrity" (https://electionpledge.org/). The pledge states that "Political parties and their candidates are on the front lines of democracy and election integrity" and the pledge called on "all democratic parties as well as candidates themselves, to commit to take no action to aid and abet those who seek to undermine our democracies."

Alliance of Democracies
@AoDemocracies

Voting in the European Elections today? Take a moment to see which of your candidates pledged to oppose foreign election interference: electionpledge.eu #vote #ThisTimeImVoting 💙 #Elections2019

Tweet übersetzen

The Pledge for Election Integrity
Over 350 million EU citizens will go to the polls in May to cast their vote in the European elections, but foreign actors…
🔗 electionpledge.org

5:23 vorm. · 26. Mai 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

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In Ireland, we supported the #BeMediaSmart campaign from @MediaLitIreland, an initiative of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. We amplified the reach of this campaign by supporting nonprofit partners with Ads for Good grants. Partners included the National Youth Council of Ireland, the National Adult Literacy Agency, and Webwise. We also hosted secondary school students from across Dublin who participated in the School Digital Champions programme, an initiative of the Department of Communications, Climate Action, and Environment. We talked to them about digital citizenship and the increasing importance of media literacy skills.
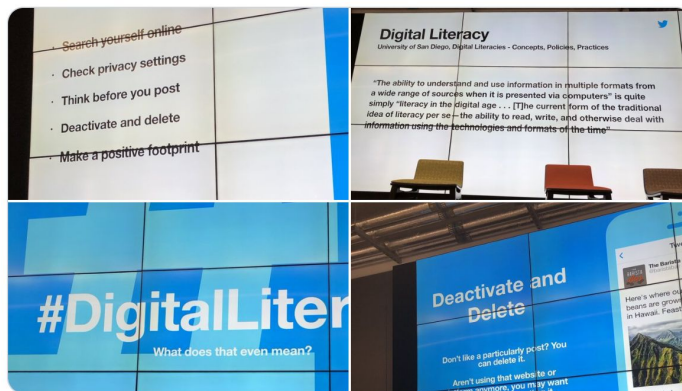
We also engaged in a number of events and debates and supported initiatives focusing on promoting the positive engagement around voting and the EU. One such event was the Democracy Alive festival, the first EU festival dedicated to bringing citizens together to discuss the future of Europe and the importance of having all voices heard through voting.

Twitter Verification

Twitter serves the public conversation by promoting healthy conversations and earning the trust of the people who use our service. We cannot succeed unless EU citizens have confidence in the integrity of the information found on the service, especially with respect to information relevant to the EU elections and the democratic process. To promote transparency and assist our stakeholders in identifying messages from elected officials and those who are running for office, we made a concerted effort to verify candidates running in the EU elections. Through verification — a blue badge that appears next to a person's Twitter handle throughout the service — we let people know that accounts of public interest are the authentic accounts.

Partner Support Portal (PSP)

In the lead up to the EU elections, we updated the Partner Support Portal, a tool for allowing partners to rapidly report suspected violations of the Twitter Rules. This improvement facilitates easier reporting from outside partners and further promotes information sharing by tapping into the experience and expertise of active stakeholders.

Our goal is to expedite our response to reports from people and organisations active in the election arena. Prior to Election Day, we onboarded to the Partner Support Portal more than 80 partners across the EU. This included election support organisations, EU based research organisations, universities and academics who study the spread of misinformation in the media, and key EU and national political parties and institutions. During the election period, we did not receive any reports from our partners across the EU.

Activity on the Service

Voter Engagement

To augment the conversation on Twitter, we collaborated with the European Parliament and a number of non-governmental organisations to promote voter engagement, registration, civic engagement, and media literacy.

In coordination with the European Parliament, we developed an emoji to capture and encourage the #ThisTimeImVoting campaign. The emoji and other resources developed around it, such as the conversation card pictured here, were intended to get voters talking about how they planned to vote and why voting in these elections was important to them. We also directed users to the official #ThisTimeImVoting website where they could find information about the voting process in their Member State.
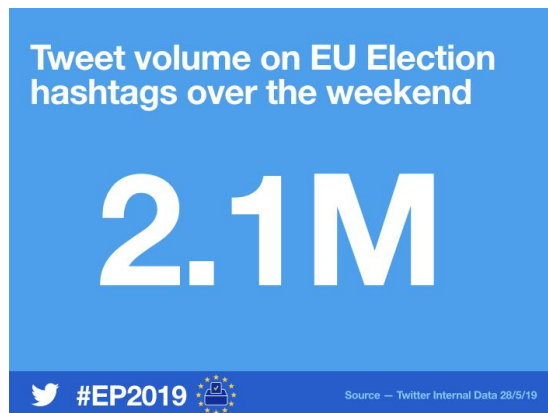
Election Conversation

To encourage conversation across the EU, we launched a special emoji for the occasion — activated by the hashtags #EP2019 and #EUElections2019. These hashtags were translated into the 24 official languages languages of the EU to ensure that citizens could add their voice to the discussion. From Thursday to Sunday — when voters from 28 Member States went to the polls — EU election-related conversations generated 2.1 million Tweets collectively, including those using #EP2019, #EUElections2019. The large volume of discussion on Twitter around the elections reflects the offline reality, with the highest voter turnout in 25 years!
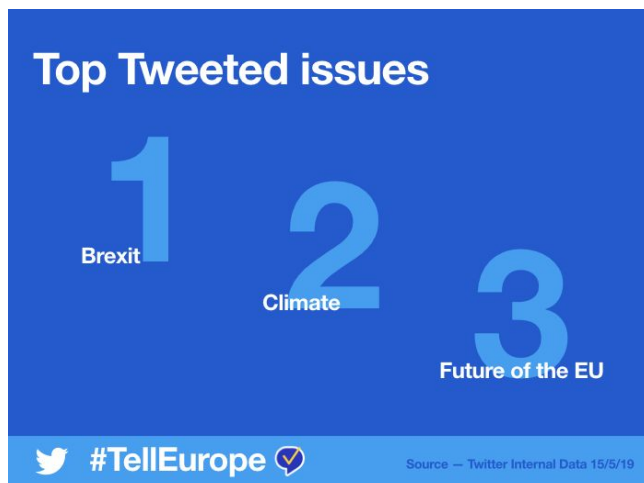
Since the campaign officially began in February, there have been 6.2 million election-related Tweets, marking a 273% increase in volume on the previous EU elections.

Twitter was where citizens went to express themselves in their own languages on the issues that matter most to them. Based on our view of the election conversation, voters recognised that certain issues, such as climate change and the future of Europe, will likely require a regional, as much as national discussion. For example, the rise in Twitter conversation involving the @europeangreens is reflective of the #GreenWave across Europe in terms of voting patterns.

Tweet volume on EU Election hashtags over the weekend

2.1M

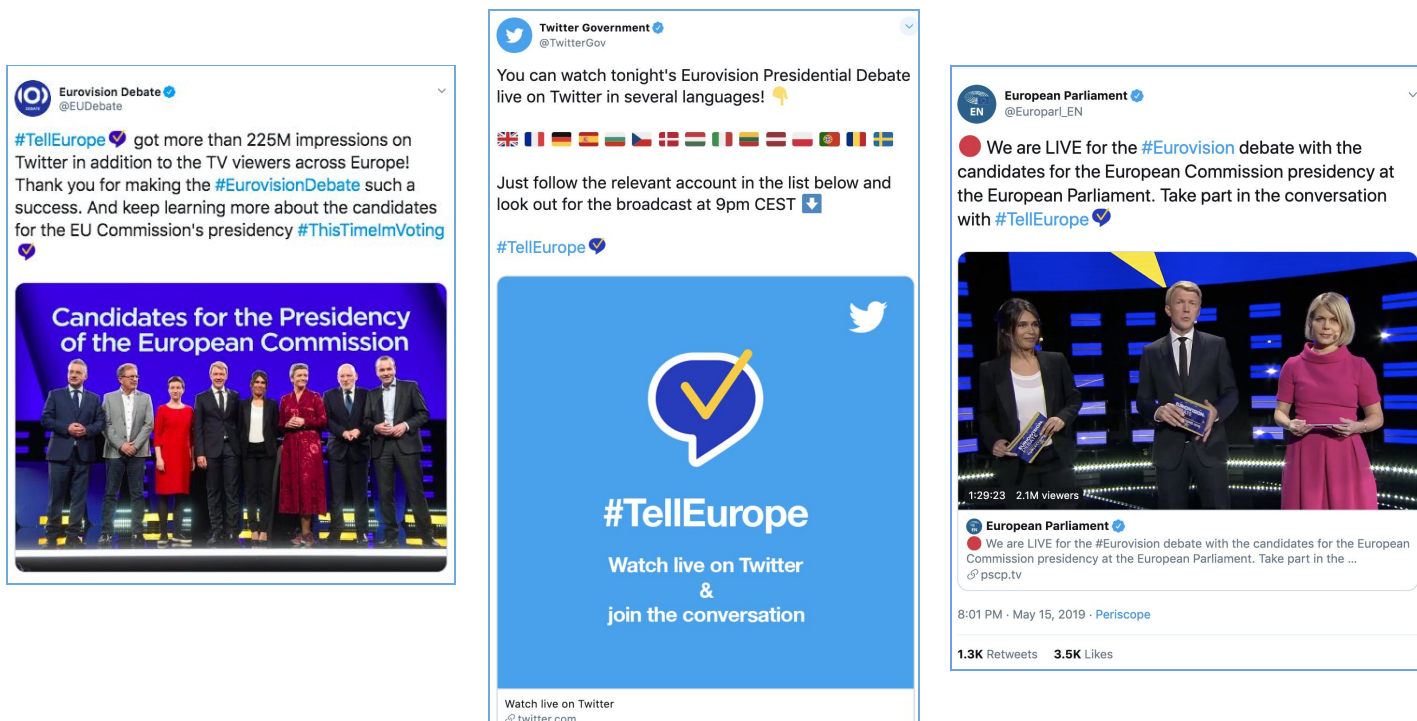🐦 #EP2019   Source — Twitter Internal Data 28/5/19

Unsurprisingly, Brexit-related issues also attracted a huge volume of conversation and debate, with over 1.5 million Tweets on the topic over the election weekend. The most mentioned candidates during the election weekend were Ska Keller (@SkaKeller), Frans Timmermans (@TimmermansEU), and ManFred Weber (@ManfredWeber), with the most frequently mentioned political parties being; European Green Party (@europeangreens); European People's Party (@EPP) and the Party of European Socialists (@PES_PSE).

Top Tweeted issues

1 Brexit

2 Climate

3 Future of the EU

🐦 #TellEurope ✔   Source — Twitter Internal Data 15/5/19

Most mentioned European Parties

1 European Greens
@europeangreens

2 European People's Party
@EPP

3 Party of European Socialists
@PES_PSE

🐦 #EP2019   Source — Twitter Internal Data 28/5/19

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News Partnerships

We worked closely with news partners to broadcast key EU candidate debates live on Twitter. This included leveraging the #ThisTimeImVoting emoji design for the EBU (@EUDebate) #TellEurope debate, and setting up a Twitter event page to collate news and commentary. The live stream of the debate was viewed over 2.5 million times from the Parliament's @Europarl_EN account.

Conclusion

Serving and protecting the health of the public conversation continues to be Twitter's key priority. We'll continue working to protect conversations on the service, particularly around election cycles, by investing in technology, developing new policies, and building meaningful partnerships to further our understanding of the political and social context within which Twitter operates.

Our global cross-functional teams worked proactively to protect the integrity of regional trends, support partner escalations, and identify potential threats from malicious actors. Our teams continue to review and assess potential malicious or automated activity by bad actors, either foreign or domestic, and when and where we identify evidence of state-backed information operations on Twitter, we routinely publish archives of Tweets and media associated with those operations. We do so to encourage researchers to conduct their own investigations, and to share their insights and independent analysis with the world.

From a user perspective, the EU election conversation was healthy, open, and highly-engaged — a trend which translated offline with the highest voter turnout registered for a European election in 25 years. We continue our efforts to foster an environment conducive to healthy, meaningful conversations on our service. This work is essential. We will continue to update the public through @TwitterGov, @Policy, and @TwitterSafety.

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