What are Opinions? Integrating Theory and Methods for Automatically Analyzing Opinionated Communication (OPINION)

MINUTES OF THE INAUGURAL WORKING GROUP MEETING

COST ACTION CA21129 OPINION, 27 January 2023, Vrije University Amsterdam

Compiled by Christian Baden, Agnieszka Stepinska, Damian Trilling, Marina Popescu and Carlos Arcila Calderon, with the help of numerous other members

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ACTION Status
- CSO approval: 27/05/2022
- Start date: 22/09/2022

1 ATTENDANCE

WG Members:

Carlos Arcila Calderón (ES), Christian Baden (IL), Magdalena Bielenia-Grajewska (PL), Madalina Botan (RO), Maria Brown (MT), Paul Buitelaar (IE), Anita Ciunova-Shuleska (MK), Nicoleta Corbu (RO), Carlos Cunha (PT), Constantinos Djouvas (CY), Emese Domahidi (DE), Louis Escouflaire (BE), Valmora Gogo (AL), Edlira Gugu (AL), Gal Harpaz (IL), Agnieszka Hess (PL), Marios Koniaris (GR), Tamara Kunić (HR), Fabienne Lind (AT), Michaela Maier (DE), Eetu Mäkelä (FI), Boris Mance (SI), Jaromir Mazak (CZ), Besjana Mema (AL), Dimitra Milioni (CY), Judith Möller (NL), Anela Mulahmetović Ibrišimović (BH), Gokhan Ozkan (TR), Şule Yüksel Özmen (TR), Nikolina Palamidovska-Sterjadovska (MK), Marina Popescu (RO), Susana Salgado (PT), Martijn Schoonvelde (IE), Helle Sjøvaag (NO), Nina Springer (DE), Agnieszka Stepinska (PL), Carlo Strapparava (IT), Gabriella Szabó (HU), Ilija Tomanic Trivundza (SI), Samia Touileb (NO), Damian Trilling (NL), Aleksandra Urman (CH), Andrius Utka (LT), Hilde van den Bulck (BE), Leon van der Torre (LU), Mariken van der Velden (NL), Susan Vermeer (NL), Lenka Vochocova (CZ), Kasper Welbers (NL), Moran Yarchi (IL), Bruno Yun (UK), Asta Zelenkauskaite (LT)

28 COST countries represented:

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, UK.

Additional Attendance via Live Stream:

Janet Aver Adikpo (TR), Simon Chauchard (ES), Dren Gerguri (KV), Dana Guy (IE), Felicia Loecherbach (NL), Kristina Milic (RS), Ana Milojevic (RS), Eike Mark Rinke (UK), Christina Viehmann (DE)

2 OBJECTIVES

The Objectives of the WG I.1 meeting are:

- Define OPINION's strategy to address WG-specific challenges
- Commence interdisciplinary dialogue among WG members
- Build a tentative shared understanding of core dimensions of opinions that structure and link the work across WGs
- Taking stock of existing efforts and resources relevant to the WGs' challenges and objectives

3 AGENDA

08:30-09:00 *Arrival & Coffee (outside Plenary Room)*

09:00-10:30 **Opening Plenary** *(Chair: Christian Baden)*

Room: 01A33 (level 01, wing A, room 33)

- **Welcome** – *Christian Baden, Helle Sjøvaag, & Kasper Welbers*
- **OPINION in a Nutshell** – *Christian Baden*
- **Practical issues** – *Kasper Welbers*
- **Mobility** – *Nina Springer*
- **Outreach** – *Ana Milojevic*
- **Working Group Introductions** – *Agnieszka Stepinska, Damian Trilling, Marina Popescu, & Carlos Arcila Calderon*
- **Making an impact** – *Helle Sjøvaag*

10:30-11:00 *Coffee (outside WG Meeting Rooms)*

11:00-12:30 **Working Group Sessions I: Getting to Terms** *(parallel sessions)*

Theory	**Tools**	**Data & Application**	**Dissemination & Inclusion**
Room: 01A33	Room: 05A24	Room: 07A16	Room: 05A24
▪ WG Objectives ▪ Introductions ▪ Mapping Key Concepts	▪ WG Objectives ▪ Introductions ▪ Mapping Key Tools	▪ WG Objectives ▪ Introductions ▪ Mapping Key Applications	▪ WG Objectives ▪ Introductions ▪ Mapping Key Needs
Chair: Agnieszka Stepinska	*Chair: Damian Trilling*	*Chair: Marina Popescu*	*Chair: Carlos Arcila Calderon*

12:30-13:15 *Lunch (VU Cafeteria)*

13:15-16:30 Working Group Sessions II: Planning the Action *(parallel sessions)*

	Theory	Tools	Data & Application	Dissemination & Inclusion
	Room: 01A33	Room: 02A24	Room: 02A36	Room: 02A37
	▪ Mapping Key Concepts ▪ Defining Annual Objectives ▪ WG Strategy ▪ Vice Chair Elections	▪ Mapping Key Tools ▪ Defining Annual Objectives ▪ WG Strategy ▪ Vice Chair Elections	▪ Mapping Key Applications ▪ Defining Annual Objectives ▪ WG Strategy ▪ Vice Chair Elections	▪ Mapping Key Needs ▪ Defining Annual Objectives ▪ WG Strategy ▪ Vice Chair Elections
	Chair: Agnieszka Stepinska	*Chair: Damian Trilling*	*Chair: Marina Popescu*	*Chair: Carlos Arcila Calderon*

16:30-17:00 Coffee (outside Plenary Room)

17:00-18:30 Closing Plenary *(Chair: Helle Sjøvaag)*

Room: 01A33

- **Working Group Session Reports** – *Agnieszka Stepinska, Damian Trilling, Marina Popescu, & Carlos Arcila Calderon*
- **Discussion** – *Chair: Helle Sjøvaag*
- **Involving relevant stakeholders along the way** – *Helle Sjøvaag*
- **Where do we stand, where do we go from here** – *Christian Baden*
- **Closing Remarks** – *Christian Baden, Helle Sjøvaag, & Kasper Welbers*

4 MORNING PLENARY SESSION

OPINION in a Nutshell

Christian Baden, Chair

- Origin of the OPINION network, which has been in the making since 2016 and went through four unsuccessful proposals and finally one successful round
- Brief introduction of the Core Group:
  Christian Baden (Chair)
  Helle Sjøvaag (Vice Chair)
  Kasper Welbers (Grant Holder Scientific Representative)
  Wouter van Atteveldt (Grant Holder Vice Representative)
  Nina Springer (Grant Coordination Officer)
  Ana Milojevic (Science Communication Officer)
  Agnieszka Stepinska (Chair of WG1 Theory)
  Damian Trilling (Chair of WG2 Tools)
  Marina Popescu (Chair of WG3 Data & Applications)
  Carlos Arcila Calderon (Chair of WG4 Inclusion & Dissemination)
- The network has at this point 142 members from 39 countries, roughly half of these from Inclusion Target Countries, almost two thirds female, more than 40% Early Career Scholars (defined by COST as less than 8 years after obtaining a PhD). Of these, 57 were invited to attend the Amsterdam Working Group Meeting, representing a total of 29 countries, and 53 were actually present.
- **Brief summary of OPINION's mission:**
  Digital text is everywhere, and it is full of opinions; almost all research that is interested in social processes studies and therefore needs to measure opinions.
  Yet, conceptual and methodological foundations are weak and fragmented, especially for computational measurements. There are numerous problematic practices, such as strategies that lack conceptual foundation, think one-dimensionally about evaluations, substitute far proxies for opinions, assume authors' endorsement of evaluative claims, ignore what an opinion is about, focus solely on English, validate crudely (if at all), rely on black-boxed tools in a field dominated by big tech.

  OPINION aims to overcome fragmentation by networking researchers.
  OPINION aims to offer conceptual foundations, develop conceptually grounded tools, collate resources for applying and validating measures, and train researchers within and beyond academic research.
  OPINION aims to complement the English-dominated state of the field with a multilingual European perspective, and is committed to open source, free and shareable research.

To do so, OPINION needs to bridge across very different disciplinary perspectives, bodies of knowledge, and vocabularies; it needs to bring together junior and experienced researchers from resource-rich and resource-poor institutions both inside academia and in the industries; and do so all across Europe, with all of its diverse research cultures, and beyond.
It also needs to take an inclusive stance that respects that different disciplines and applications have different needs in their measurement of opinions, and that opinions are voiced in different ways depending on the kind of discourse, discussed objects, linguistic and cultural setting.

To enable this effort, participants are asked to be patient with one another, translate their own insights and concerns in ways that reach across these divides, and listen and take seriously what others know and need. OPINION should be a place to both explain yourself, and to learn from and with others, where everybody feels welcome to contribute, and everyone's perspective can be integrated into the discussion.
One key objective in this process is for members to find common ground and collaborate, be that in the context of the Working Groups as wholes, or in smaller, more flexible settings.

OPINION's four Working Groups build upon one another in manifold ways. Seen in an inductive perspective, WG4's capacity at fostering the inclusion of researchers and practitioners enables a stock-taking of practices and experiences led by WG3, which can inform a discourse on operational needs and strategies in WG2, and conceptual synthesis in WG1. In a deductive perspective, WG1's efforts at conceptualizing opinions can likewise inform the design and development of tools in WG2, which must be validated against applied needs and practices in WG3, and rendered available to others via WG4's training and dissemination efforts.
Much of this work will take place at the primary network meetings, and to some extent also in the training schools. Beside these, the network has resources to enable various forms of mobility, and facilitate outreach. The key work of the network, however, happens by connecting the existing research interests and activities of network members, resulting in the joint work of the four WGs, and hopefully an entire ecosystem of smaller collaborations around these.

- **A quick primer on COST**
  COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is an Intergovernmental Organization comprised of at present 40 member states, which receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe program and hands it on to networks of researchers, such as ourselves.
  COST networks combine an emphasis on both academic excellence and real-world impact with a dedication to inclusiveness: There is technically no limit on who can join a COST network – any number of researchers from COST member countries, Near Neighbor Countries, or (almost) any other country can join, with the only limitation that only the former two groups can be reimbursed. COST

networks are committed to maintaining diversity in terms of their composition across disciplinary backgrounds, seniority, gender, and origin.

COST only funds networking activities (i.e., it does not fund the research work itself, which is expected to arise from members' existing activities).
For the first year, all new COST networks get the same, rather limited budget (€125,000), which we decided to spend essentially on two big Working Group meetings – the present one, and one more in summer. A small amount of money is reserved for mobility activities, and other that, we essentially pay a person to manage the grant (notably, who handles everybody's reimbursements), and a few tiny scraps for other expenses.
From the second year onwards, our budget is expected to adjust based on network size and activity, so we hope to have a notably more generous budget then.

While the actual work of OPINION takes place in the Working Groups, the governing body is the Management Committee, wherein every COST member country is represented by up to two people. The Core Group (introduced above) is a committee mandated by the Management Committee that takes care of the day-to-day management of the network.

Practical Issues

Kasper Welbers, Local Host & Grant Holder Scientific Representative

- The OPINION grant is practically administered by the Vrije University Amsterdam, under the supervision of the Management Committee. Your key contact persons are *Kasper Welbers* and *Wouter van Atteveldt* as scientific representatives, as well as *Aysen Simsek* (and temporarily, until she takes up her work in February, *Ruud van Ooijen*) as grant manager (notably, for any concerns regarding reimbursements or practical matters).
- COST reimburses long-distance travel and expenses for obtaining visa at the stated cost, while all other expenses are included in a flat daily allowance. For full rules, please consult the annotated COST rules.
- To be reimbursed, participants need to maintain their e-COST profile, be invited via e-COST and marked as eligible for reimbursement, they need to confirm their participation and sign the attendance list at the event itself, and they need to submit their reimbursement requests within 15 days after the event.

Mobility

Nina Springer, Grant Coordination Officer

- OPINION has five tools to support mobility – four grants (for Short Term Scientific Missions STSMs, Virtual Mobility, Virtual Networking Support, and Conference attendance) as well as training schools.
- There will be a call for applications soon, albeit with limited budget for the 1st year.
- Applications will be evaluated based on their quality and contribution to OPINION's objectives, giving priority to Early Career Scholars and mobility that involves Inclusion Target Countries (as either sending or receiving institution).

Outreach

Ana Milojevic, Science Communication Officer

- OPINION needs to involve not only academics, but also practitioners in industry and policy making, and where relevant the general public itself.
- To do so, it will be important that each WG identifies contents that may be of relevance for dissemination, and also events that may be suitable for doing so. It should be one task for the WG Vice Chairs to liaise with the Science Communication Officer about these matters.

Introduction of Working Group 1 Theory

Agnieszka Stepinska, Chair of WG1 Theory

- WG1 will address the current lack of shared conceptualizations concerning the nature of opinions and their expression. We will bring together the necessary theoretical perspectives to foster the exchange of knowledge and develop a common understanding of opinions and their expressions in digital information environments, including journalism studies, discourse studies, media policy, political communication and information science. Building and disseminating an integrated terminology of opinion research and measurement and establishing the study of opinionated text as a vibrant field of research, we aim to enable inter-disciplinary research on opinions in the digital age.
- WG1 aims to take an interdisciplinary approach to defining and conceptualizing opinions. Coordinating the work of the group's many participants, it aims to create a knowledge hub of existing works, build an integrative understanding of relevant theoretical traditions, terminologies and operational needs, and collate a book to present its work.
- Key outcomes include a conceptualization of opinions, organized around a shared core as well as key dimensions and aspects; a common vocabulary; a mapping of important controversies and open questions

Introduction of Working Group 2 Tools

Damian Trilling, Chair of WG2 Tools

- WG2 will address the limited scope and accessibility of most existing computational tools for the analysis of opinionated text. We will take stock of presently available tools, many of which are developed for (and evaluated on) very specific tasks and kinds of (typically, English) texts, and respond to the pressing needs for adaptation, documentation, validation, and integration to better tailor available tools to common research uses and demands. Establishing a common methodological research agenda, we will identify key focus areas to coordinate collaborative and comparative empirical research on opinions in online settings, aiming to enable inter-disciplinary research on opinions in the digital age.
- WG2 aims to offer recommendations and develop strategies for opinion measurement that connect methods to theory. Respecting the different needs of different fields and contexts, its ambition is to find the sweet spot that combines valid measurement with widespread useability.
- Key outcomes include a commented database of available tools; a shortlist of recommended tools and approaches; documentation of tools' strengths and limitations; research agenda for future development

Introduction of Working Group 3 Data & Application

Marina Popescu, Chair of WG3 Data & Application

- WG3 will address the persistent lack of cumulative experience and gold standards in data management, analysis and validation practices for research on opinionated text. We will establish a virtual Computational Communication Lab to render available key data sets for cross-lingual and comparative validation and benchmarking, develop critical gold standards for data handling and validation, and provide targeted guidance for the integration and tailored application of tools and resources. Facilitating the evidence-based selection, adaptation and user-friendly application of tools, we aim to enable inter-disciplinary research on opinions in the digital age.
- WG3 aims to collate resources needed to inform and guide the study of opinions across a wide range of practical applications. Part of this exercise will be a hub of existing applications, data, and experiences; other parts will involve identifying best practices, issuing recommendations, and offering benchmarks applicable to different research applications
- Key outcomes include a curated inventory of best practices and applied experiences; validation standards and data sets; recommendations for how to best study opinions in specific disciplinary contexts, kinds of texts, contexts, etc.

Introduction of Working Group 4 Inclusion & Dissemination

Carlos Arcila Calderon, Chair of WG4 Inclusion & Dissemination

- WG4 will address the need for computational skillsets to analyze large amounts of opinionated text. We will set up a dedicated training mission to facilitate the inclusion of early career researchers and scholars from less well-resourced countries and institutions. Organizing summer schools, workshops and short-term scientific missions, we will advance the sustained exchange of knowledge, skills across ages, genders, languages and disciplines, including stakeholders in other scientific networks, politics, regulatory authorities, and industry. Democratizing access to skills, tools and resources, we aim to enable inter-disciplinary research on opinions in the digital age.
- WG4 aims to identify and address the key needs in terms of training and skills that can help advance the study of opinions. It will develop a training mission, including both materials and actual training events, that are relevant to both social science/humanities researchers and computational scholars, to create an inclusive community of opinion researchers.
- Key outcomes include an analysis of needs for training and dissemination; training schools; training materials and tutorials; building a stakeholder network; building a pan-European community of opinion researchers

Making an Impact

Helle Sjøvaag, Vice Chair

- OPINION is intended to make a real impact on the field, creating awareness of issues, affecting practices, and shaping the future of studying opinions.
- It addresses researchers and practitioners in academia, industry, and policy, but also the public itself.
- Accordingly, OPINION needs to sustain a wide range of outreach activities, including not only science communication, but also training activities, and our own involvement in all those domains where opinions are studied.

5 WG SESSIONS: WG1 THEORY

Attendance

Christian Baden, Magdalena Bielenia-Grajewska, Madalina Botan, Anita Ciunova-Shuleska, Nicoleta Corbu, Carlos Cunha, Valmora Gogo, Gal Harpaz, Tamara Kunic, Dimitra Milioni, Judith Möller, Sule Yüksel Özmen, Nikolina Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Susana Salgado, Agnieszka Stepinska, Gabriella Szabo, Hilde van den Bulck, Leon van der Torre, Lenka Vochocova, Bruno Yun, Asta Zelenkauskaite

Morning Session

Introduction by the Chair of WG1, *Agnieszka Stepinska*

- interdisciplinary approach
- how we can benefit from the group expertise
- desk research: map out the field, learn from previous studies, integrate the fragmented knowledge on opinion
- how to manage WG? – sub groups withing the WG would be useful.
- expected outcomes: knowledge hub, connect different traditions, integrate terminology, provide operationalization, publication plan: book proposal (special issue proposal)
- advance theory in many ways: shared understanding of opinion, being culturally sensitive, being aware of the impact of cultural, multilingual, attention to nuances, acknowledging the disciplinary differences
- cross-case, cross country comparison

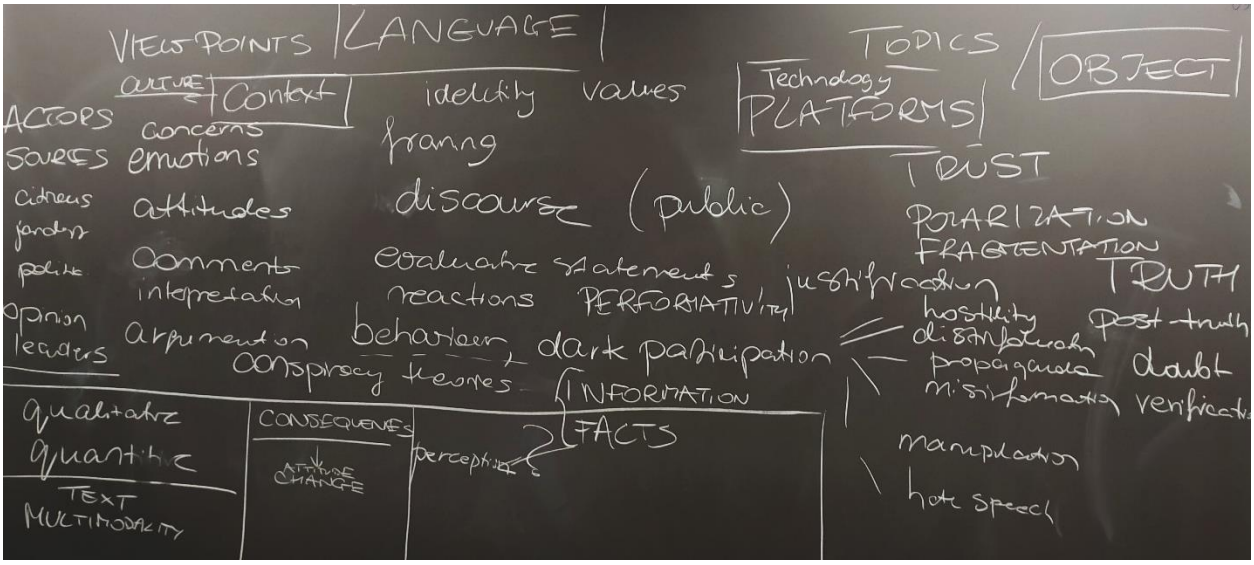
Brief introduction of the participants

Expertise: computer science, AI, normative reasoning, computer-based argumentation, social psychology, journalist/journalism, opinion press, mass communication, media studies, audience studies, media literacy, methodology, linguistics, user-generated content analysis, denial, economics, neuroscience, communication studies, psycholinguistics, humanities, popular culture/celebrity studies, conspiracy theory, propaganda, gender studies, intersectionality, social exclusion, political communication, public opinion, hate speech, marketing, public relations, consumer attitude analysis, mental health communication, environmental communication, gamification, internet studies, critical data studies, platform studies, cultural studies, comparative politics.

Afternoon session

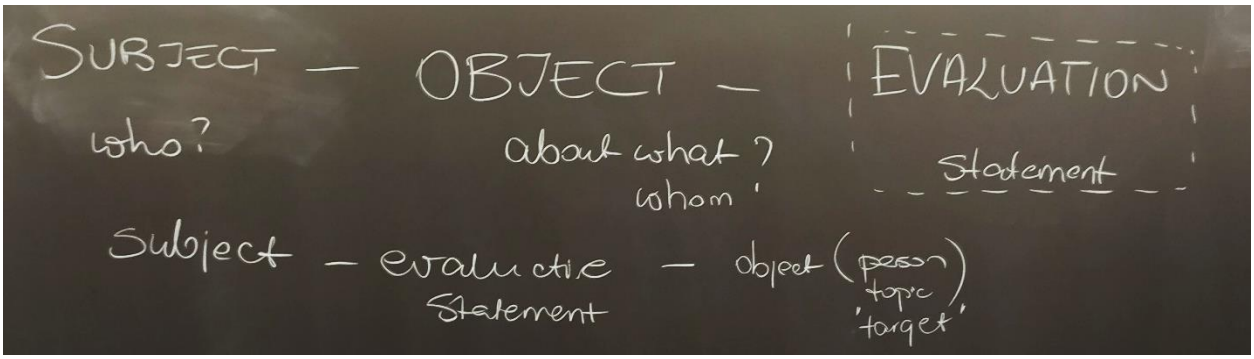
Brainstorming

Key words and related concepts: emotions, attitudes, argumentation, justification, reasoning, judgment, evaluation, agreement/disagreement, sentiment, incivility, hate speech, framing, expressivity, manipulation, viewpoints, subjectivity, communicative act, dark participation, propaganda, disinformation, hostility, conspiracy theories, interpretation, trust, polarization, identity, values, ideologies, platform, technology, truth, verification, perception. behavior, (public) discourse, evaluating statements, justification, disinformation, misinformation, truth, verification, comments, journalists, politicians, language – translations, fragmentation, argumentation, platforms, viewpoints, topics, objects, methods (quantitative-qualitative), semantic distance, coherence, technology, context, facts, information, models, text multi-modality, performativity



Broad definition of opinion: An agent's publicly shared view or judgment formed about something not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.

Model: Three key elements: Subject – Evaluative statement – Object

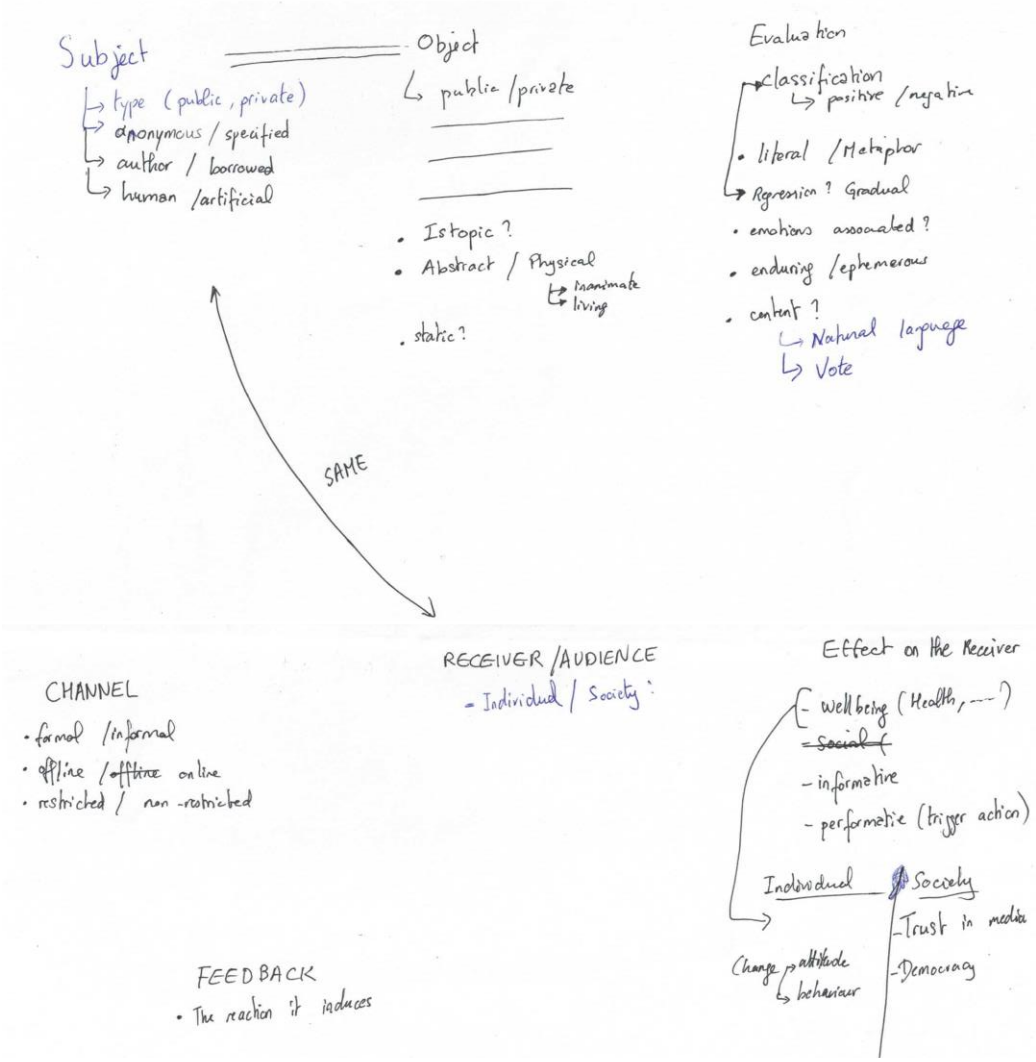


No need for a very solid and elaborated concept, main controversies should be pointed out

5 subgroups were randomly created to talk about OPINION and its elements

Subgroup presentations:

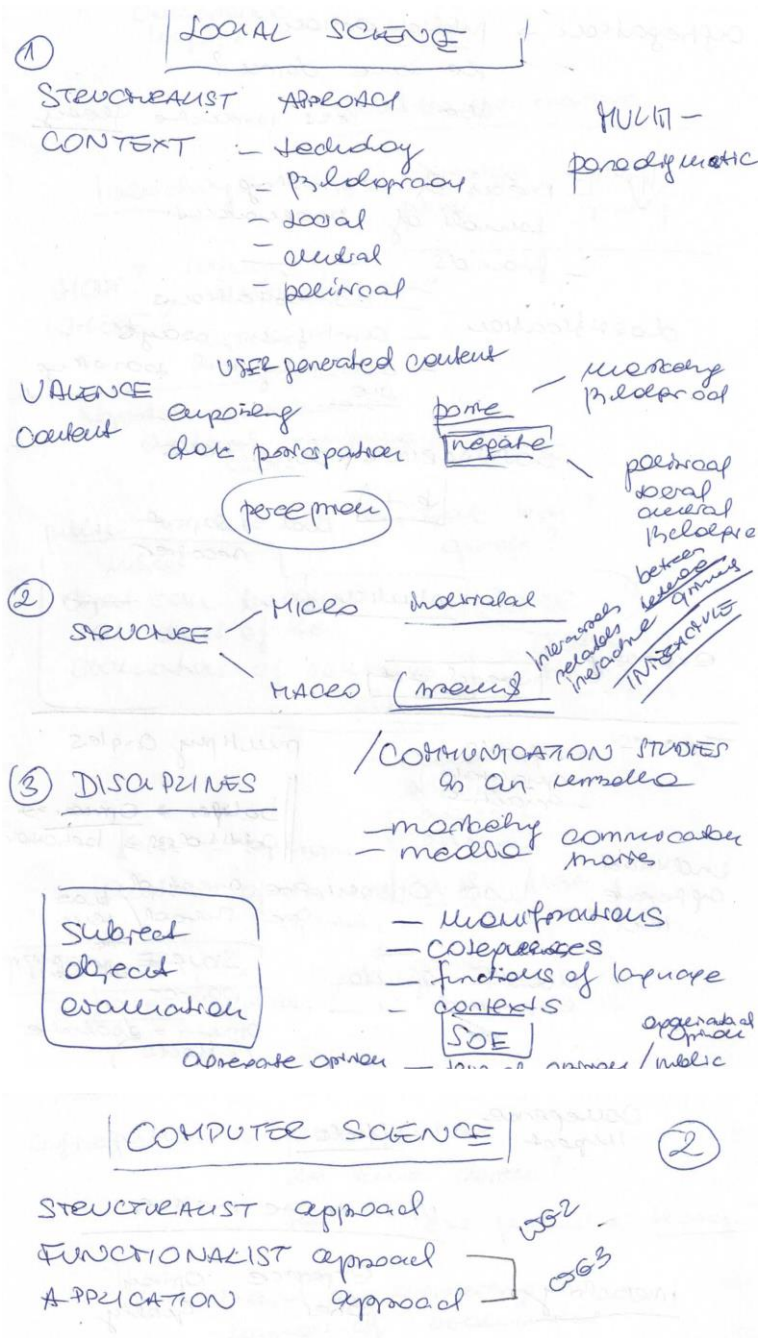
Group 1:



- Subject – Evaluative statement – Object + Channel – Receiver – Effects – Feedback
  Subject: source incl.; public/private, individual/group
  Object: topic, abstracts,
  Evaluation: very important; dummy or spectrum / concrete or fuzzy / ephemeral or durable
  Receiver
  Channel: formal vs. informal
  effect (individual effect, collective)

- Criteria to classify each element: e.g., public vs. private; specified vs. anonymous; human vs. machine; micro-macro (individual-society), etc.

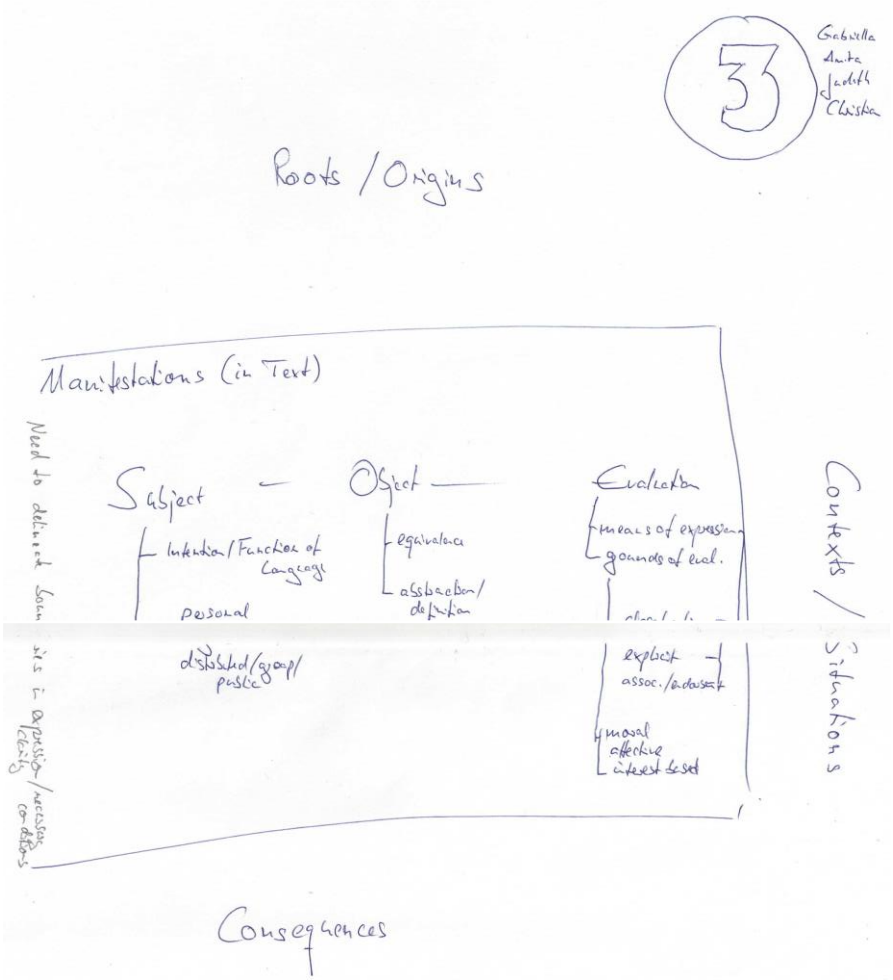
Group2:



- Considering disciplinary perspectives: communication vs. communication vs. computer science
- Functionalist approach versus structuralist approach

- Social science: context matters
- Multi-paradigmatic approach
- Valence should be taken into considerations: positive opinion, negative opinion
- Micro vs macro levels: systemic vs. individual level
- Single vs. multiple opinions in interaction

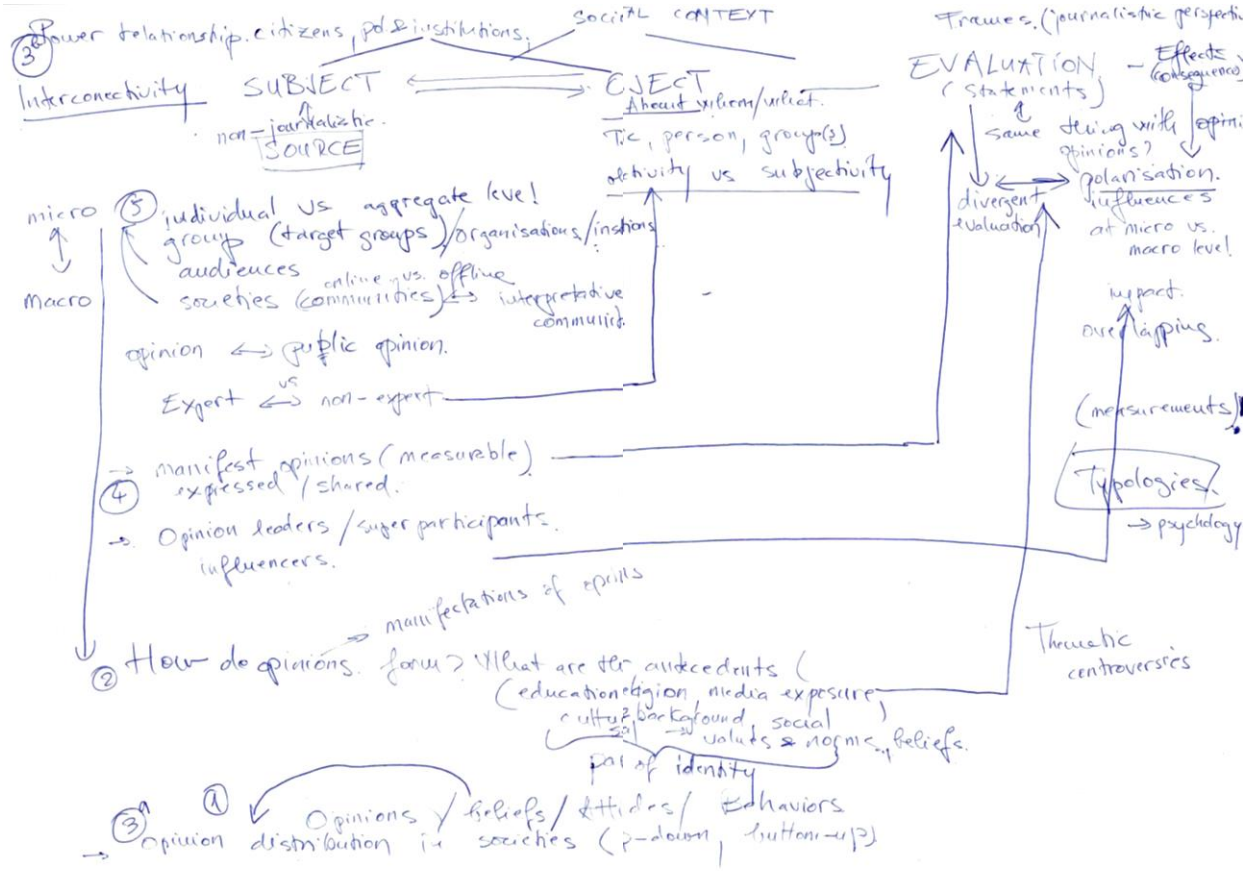
Group3:



- Roots vs. Manifestations vs. Consequences of opinion: We should focus on manifestations
- Context matters
- What counts as opinion? What are necessary conditions to assess a communication as evaluation?
- Process of opinion formation: Institutions play a role
- Individual vs. organizational vs. aggregate opinion/public opinion
- Object: fuzzy (hard to define, and anything could be an object); for aggregations, important whether the same object is evaluated

- Evaluation: means of the expression (directly, ambiguous, associations, etc.) vs. grounds of evaluation (e.g., moral, emotive, interest-based, ...).
- should dig deeper in linguistic theories such as functions of languages (see Jacobson, Bühler) and speech act theory.

Group 4:



- Journalists, Media scholars have different perspectives
- Beliefs/attitudes – opinion manifestations – behavior
- Environment matters: media exposure, cultural background, interpretative communities, demographics
- Power relationship: opinion leadership and social inclusion
- Focus on manifested and measurable opinion
- Effects: e.g., divergence, polarization
- Qualities of opinions
- Micro-Macro levels
- Individual – Group – Audiences – Society
- Evaluation statement vs. frames // divergent evaluation
- Distribution in society (how opinions are distributed in society)

Group 5:

- How opinions are expressed (language, visuals, emojis, etc.) vs. where (context)
- Subjects: individual, corporations, society, AI (bots); subject vs. distributor (e.g., in computational propaganda; sharing, role of bots)
- Power: authority, structural or financial
- Object: everything could be an object, even subjects can become object
- Controversy vs. Agreement
- Evaluation: objective, subjective, how to distinguish between facts and opinions (how facts are connected to evaluation – present something as fact/opinion).
- Evaluative statement: emotions, cultural, difference of various points of view (could one person's facts be someone else's opinions?)
- We focus on text, but today's communication is multimodal

Other considerations:

- Opinions are not necessarily marked as such in text
- Professionally vs. personally generated content
- How to separate fact from opinion

WG strategy for Year 1:

- Mapping out the controversies
- Topic review
- Living documents on different elements of opinions, collection of important references
- Intellectual match making platform: e.g., to joint panel proposals, SI proposals, coordinated actions
- Interactive server, e.g., Discord
- Work in smaller groups, based on research interest
- Apply to grants
- Platforms of communication: email, website, interactive platforms
- Present various projects that the members are involved in + calls, etc.
- Communicate closely especially with WP2 (to see who needs what from whom)

6 WG SESSIONS: WG2 TOOLS

Attendance

Paul Buitelaar, Constantinos Djouvas, Louis Escouflaire, Agnieszka Hess, Fabienne Lind, Michaela Maier, Boris Mance, Martijn Schoonvelde, Carlo Strapparava, Ilija Tomanic Triundza, Samia Touileb, Damian Trilling, Aleksandra Urman, Susan Vermeer, Kasper Welbers, Bruno Yun

Morning session

- Introduction of substantive goals of WP2, as well as procedural goals for the present meeting
- Round of introductions
- Related projects:
  - *Fabienne Lind* introduces METEOR (https://meteor.opted.eu/), an inventory of media news sources, media organizations, datasets, corpora, which has been created as an output of the OPTED project(https://opted.eu/) and discusses potential synergies with OPINION
  - *Paul Buitelaar* introduces PANDEM-2 (https://pandem-2.eu/), a social media analysis project to support pandemic surveillance & communication
- Q&A on the project presentations:
  - To what extent is the approach of PANDEM-2 generalizable beyond Covid-19 tweets?
    This is indeed one of the objectives of the project
  - Are there any issues regarding data privacy?
    The examples in the presentation are based on existing datasets and dehydrated tweets
  - Does it work with other languages and other types of textual data from other platforms?
    Multilingualism is still a work in progress. Other platforms may have different users and this may have implications for the performance of the classifiers involved in the project.

Afternoon session

- Introduction of the session
- **Departure from/added value relative to existing work**
  Various existing projects are similar to OPINION's objectives related to opinion extraction.

Sometimes using lexicons does not work adequately, and off-the shelf tools may be unsuitable for processing certain kinds of text (e.g., editorial, journalistic texts, reviews).

- **How are opinions defined?**
  There are many definitions of opinions. WG1 is discussing 20-30 different aspects that could be related to opinions.
  Instead of waiting for WG1's output, it might be worthwhile to turn the strategy around by first defining what is feasible and seeing then which definition fits.
  Might be suitable to identify the opinion constructs that tools are targeting.
  Is hate speech opinion?
  While WG1 is looking at definitions of opinions, we should look at how they were operationalized in the approaches.
  Is it important to only focus on the definitions of WG1? Or can we create our own, narrower definition?
  Start from a bottom-up strategy to prioritize, look what tools are out there and see what they do/focus on.
  It is difficult to get media scholars to agree on what a gold standard for opinions.
  Limited utility of relying on human coders unless there is a ground-truth to constrain different interpretations.

- **How should WG2 proceed?**
  What corpora can be used?
  A tool can perform perfectly on a dataset based on metrics, but very poorly when it comes to usability. There is a need to consider a range of datasets for extraction and look at them.
  Are we limiting our range of opinion detection tools, or try to as broad as possible when it comes to language?
  It is important to keep in mind the cultural aspects of the language when processing (multilingual) text.
  Should we focus on one language or extend to other languages? Start with English and see how/if these tools can be expanded to other languages?
  Methods dealing with metaphors are important.
  Opinions may come in different levels of granularity, where tool extract only some of the opinions.
  Differences strategies exist for coding/annotating datasets. Instructions for annotations can have an effect on the outcome of the annotations.
  Also emojis can also be used to utter opinions.
  Are we only focusing on text? Everything can be used to express an opinion, not only text (includes gif, emojis, pictures, ...).
  What happens when we have the tools? We evaluate them, on a broad range of texts and using different approaches.

Need to evaluate both measurement quality, but also where disagreements derive from.
Maybe we should try out each other's tools?
What aspects do members want to focus on?
Need to consider the timeline. Do we need to do everything serially, or can we do things in parallel?

- **What should be the outcome of WG2's work?**
  A publication? A database? We promised both. So we need to do both.
  What is a tool?
  There is a need to find a way to give recommendations on approaches/tools for opinion analysis in text.
  Possible contribution: Error analysis to discuss the limitations of the existing tools
  Ease of use of tools can be part of a standardized way to evaluate tools.
  Might be useful to identify the top 5 tools that fit best for a task, and give recommendations
  Need to not only highlight what exists, but also what does not exist.
  Possibility to add a tag for OPINION in Meteor.
  Add more than just a tag, but build a taxonomy to create a hierarchical description.
  Emphasis on open-source and free tools.

- **Practical considerations**
  Problems with data sharing, GDPR, and other issues.

- **Work plan**
  Damian Trilling, *Samia Touileb*, *Louis Escouflaire*, *Johannes Gruber*, *Aleksandra Urman* and *Omnia* Zayed start with conducting error analyses and evaluations of existing tools.
  Aleksandra Urman, *Agnieszka Hess*, *Michaela Maier* and *Samia Touileb* review operationalization of opinions.
  Fabienne Lind and *Susan Vermeer* will share the definitions of rules on which things appear on Meteor.
  Paul Buitelaar, *Boris Mance*, and *Ilija Tomanic Triunza* will collaborate on a Slovenian dataset.

- **Further meetings in 2023**
  One meeting will take place at the next joint WG meeting in summer.
  Another one will take place in autumn.
  Meetings will be planned on doodle.
- In September 2024, ECREA will be in Ljubljana, which might be an opportunity to have a joint OPINION meeting there?

- **Plans for further communication and collaboration**
  Need to use data sharing facilities, and set up some cloud services to share data between us.
  Create a Google Drive folder for sharing documents.
  Slack for discussions.
  Zotero for tracing reference/bibliography.

7 WG SESSIONS: WG3 DATA & APPLICATION

Attendance:

Constantinos Djouvas, Emese Domahidi, Marios Koniaris, Jaromir Mazak, Anela Mulahmetovic Ibrisimovic, Marina Popescu, Nina Springer, Carlo Strapparava Andrius Utka, Moran Yarchi

Morning session

Round of Introductions

There is an impressive amount of common ground in the group about how data should be handled and shared, while there is such a diversity of backgrounds.

- need for recognition of data collection to create incentives for sharing; look at how other types of data collection/collation efforts became or are being pushed to be more recognized (e.g. election studies, public opinion & elite surveys, curated macro data in various fields);
- essential for good research to be able to access the widest/best possible datasets for a research question, while avoiding waste of time and resources that occurs with duplication of collection-collation processes
- WG task is both to reach widely and to select a few key datasets to be used in WG2 & 4 (obviously in relation with WG1) as well as as standard/ examples of the process of their creation, collation, sharing)
- need to consider *good practice FAIR principles* of database sharing, i.e., that data should be findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable and shared a relevant video.
- need to create a *shared space* for the group members to interact.

Discussion goals:

- standards, examples of how datasets should look and be shared
- strategy for approaching others to get them on-side to share data
- potential collaborations
- mapping key applications
- vice chair elections

Initial Priorities:

- defining what should be included in the repository – and agreeing on criteria for this
- who reaches out to whom, related to what datasets – and setting criteria for this as well

Discussion

- tools and other materials
- an online repository design will also have to consider what other non-database material it will hold.
- Some tools will probably be collected by WG4; while it is important to think about the full product, it is also important to define first what WG3 might like to collect and how the task should be structured.
- The amount of required work might create the need to fundraise.
- Importance of defining the "boundaries" of the repository's goals, meaning what kinds of things will be collected and what will not, in parallel with the work of the concepts working group.

Afternoon session

Building a repository:

- Will we try to *upload new datasets or just put together existing datasets*?
- The task seems to be to put together (or collate) existing datasets, which in some cases (e.g. the same kind of data from multiple countries) will generate a new dataset.
- Would it be better to start with datasets that focus on one country or ones that are multi-country?
- Perhaps the *dataset should be organized according to research topics* or questions that it can address.
- The work should *start from something that everyone shares* - emphasized the importance to understand the range of differences – e.g., even when it comes to *define what is understood by "a dataset"*
- discussion of what is a dataset in the various disciplines
- what kind of data can be shared publicly and how – e.g., media content can be shared publicly (e.g., article URLs and instructions on how to use URLs to access full text) and how - challenges with public data-sharing and meeting the demands of funding organizations while respecting legal restrictions
- try to find solutions (ethical, legal, technical, etc.)
- Perhaps the repository could map the problems with the collection of this data as well (e.g., the difficulties with recreating certain steps because *APIs change*).

The participants worked together to put down ideas and criteria for kinds of data and datasets collected in a joint document, going through a few ideas on criteria for inclusion and ways of categorizing it.

They also discussed the qualities and limitations of data collection platforms and tools, such as Media Cloud.

First directions were collated in an **online spreadsheet**:

The first worksheet sketches dimensions of variation across corpora that may be relevant for deciding what we include in the inventory and what not. E.g. relevant data differ with respect to:

- Actors, i.e. whose speech acts they cover (also who are the subject of the speech acts/ attitude objects);
- Platforms, i.e. where/ what kind of media the corpus appeared on;
- Modality, i.e. what kind of data structure the opinion expression covered by the data was expressed in (independently of the kind of data that was generated about it);
- Tasks, i.e. what kind of text analysis objective or technique the data is/ could be useable;
- Languages, i.e. the original language of the corpus;
- Shared as, i.e. what kind of data was generated about the observed phenomena;/ format in which the corpus is currently stored;
- Content, i.e. what kind of topics are covered in the corpus. There are many dimensions of differentiation here, from whose opinion is covered through conventional newspaper sections where the item would fit to policy domain, and we will need to do further work in what dimensions are worth distinguishing and use as selection criteria;
- Availability, i.e. whether and where the data are available from;
- Date collected, i.e. the period in which the observed corpus or the data collection about it occurred.

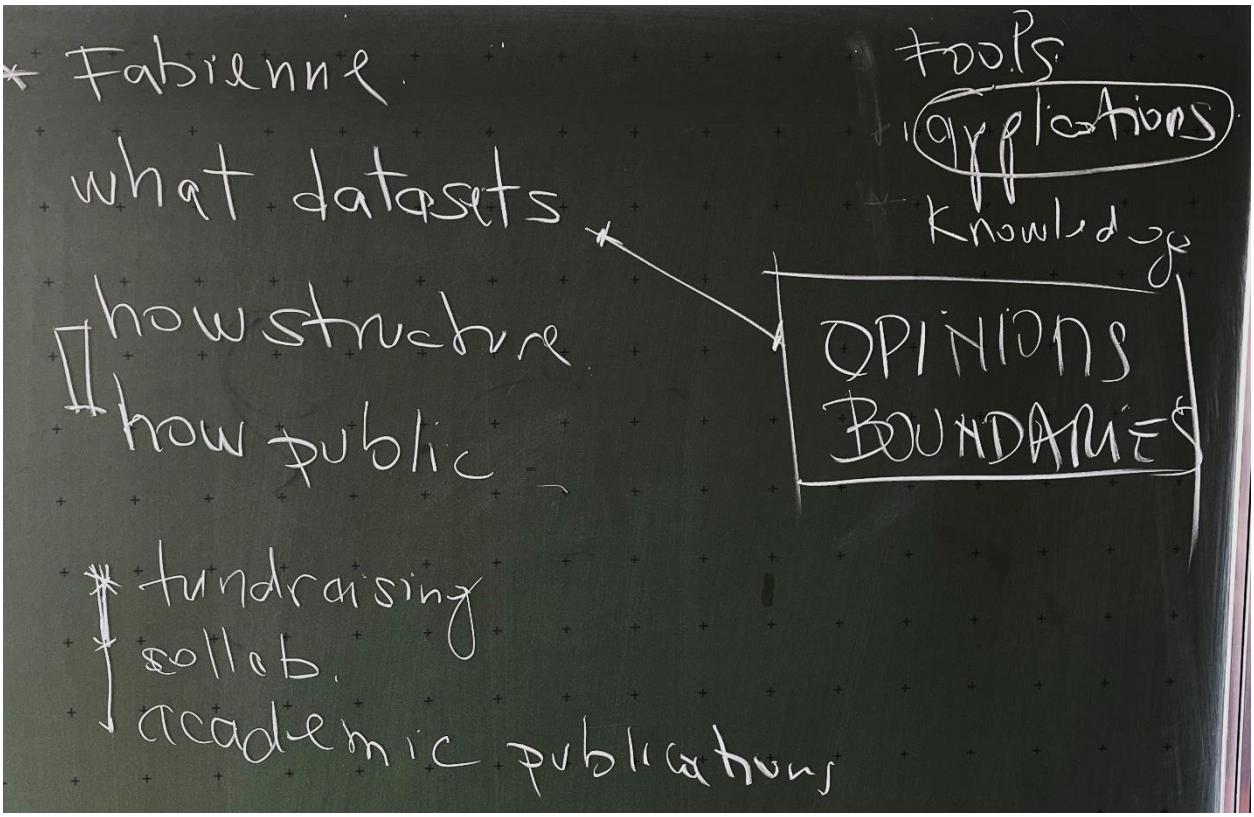
Note: All the categories and their definitions need to be reviewed, discussed, clarified, cleaned, but also more information on what people in the group/project think might be worth considering can/should be collected further.

In **the second worksheet** we started listing potentially relevant data sources that we should review during the search for candidates to be included in the inventory.
Note: This information we considered useful given the multidisciplinary character of the WG (linguists are not familiar with the data that are common frames of reference for political scientists and vice versa). Therefore, more such examples of data/ corpus should be added before evaluating their relevance for potential inclusion.

In **the third worksheet** we started listing existing inventories and repositories of relevant data that we could think of at that time.

Presentation about OPTED & Meteor (see https://meteor.opted.eu/) and some of its components relevant for WG3 by *Fabienne Lind*

- discussion about commonalities and differences
- what we want to do is what Meteor doesn't do
- further curation
- explanation of standards of inclusion/collation.
- How can we collaborate for common goals while relying on what they have done?



Meeting wrap-up

Elections of WG Vice Chairs were postponed to an online meeting in a month.

Priority tasks for the next 3 months:

- cleaning up the table in the Excel document that was worked on;
- filling in further thoughts, data sets etc in the relevant worksheets;
- keeping up communication with other WGs and projects..

Discussion of ways to communicate, possible platforms and apps especially given the limitations of Slack for non-paying users. It was eventually agreed to continue communicating on Slack and to share files on Gdrive for now.

8 WG SESSIONS: WG4 INCLUSION & DISSEMINATION

Attendance

Carlos Arcila Calderon, Maria Brown, Besjana Mesma Tosuni, Gokhan Ozkan, Helle Sjøvaag, Carlo Strapparava, Mariken van der Velden

Morning Session

- **Opening & Objective**
  Mapping key needs
  To achieve dissemination & inclusion, we need good training schools.
  This year, there is no training school, gives us time to plan & decide what we want.
  To determine needs, we should survey the field & combine findings with the survey conducted by OPTED's WP6 to think about stakeholders.
  Important to attract scholars who are of interest in next WG meeting in addition to knowing who teaches already at summer/winter schools; especially those who are not yet well connected.

- **How to target the training schools**
  raise awareness at conferences
  have a survey within the workgroup to identify main training schools in discipline (*Carlos Arcila Calderon*, *Mariken van der Velden*)
  stakeholders list as a target group to disseminate information too as well as to invite to schools (*Helle Sjøvaag*)
  Create self-sustaining list of sources for training (make sure there is something "in it" for the person creating training materials) (*Carlos Arcila Calderon*)
  Use Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)
  Assess training capabilities

- **Mapping**
  Both content and target groups need to be mapped
  Think about bringing different groups together. Maybe roundtables are a good way to get this overview?

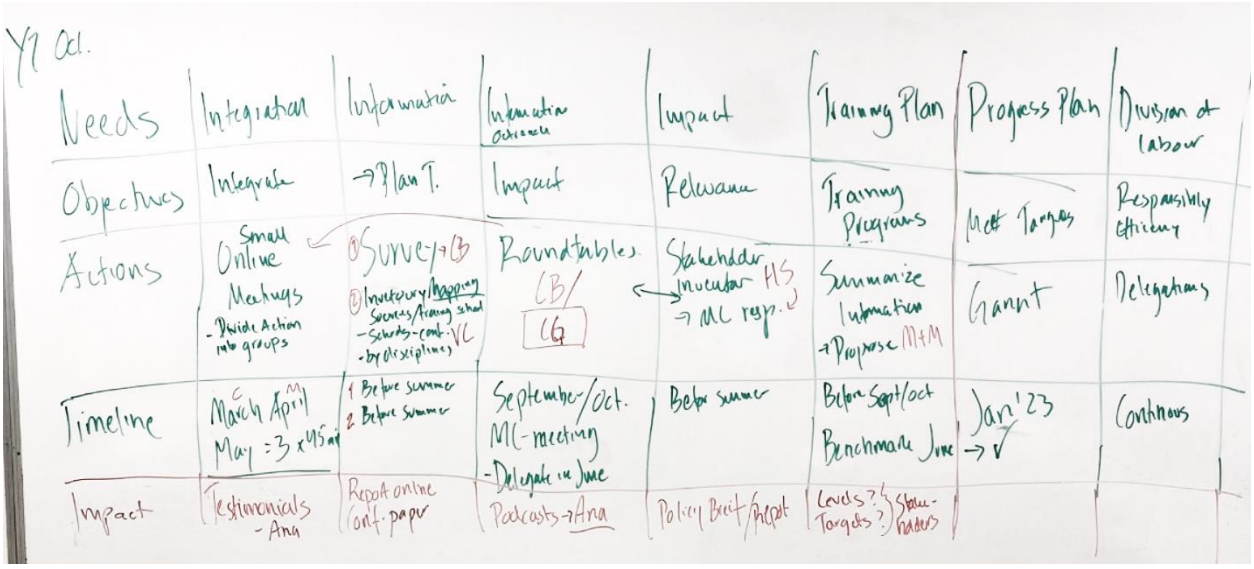
- **Objective/USP**
  Do we want to have our own brand?
  Maybe interaction with stakeholders in summer school as new thing? This opens collaborative perspectives or job/career perspectives

- **Outputs**
  Inclusion as research objective in surveys
  Evidenced based research into including stakeholders into research
  Look at "from COST to Horizon" opportunities for funding

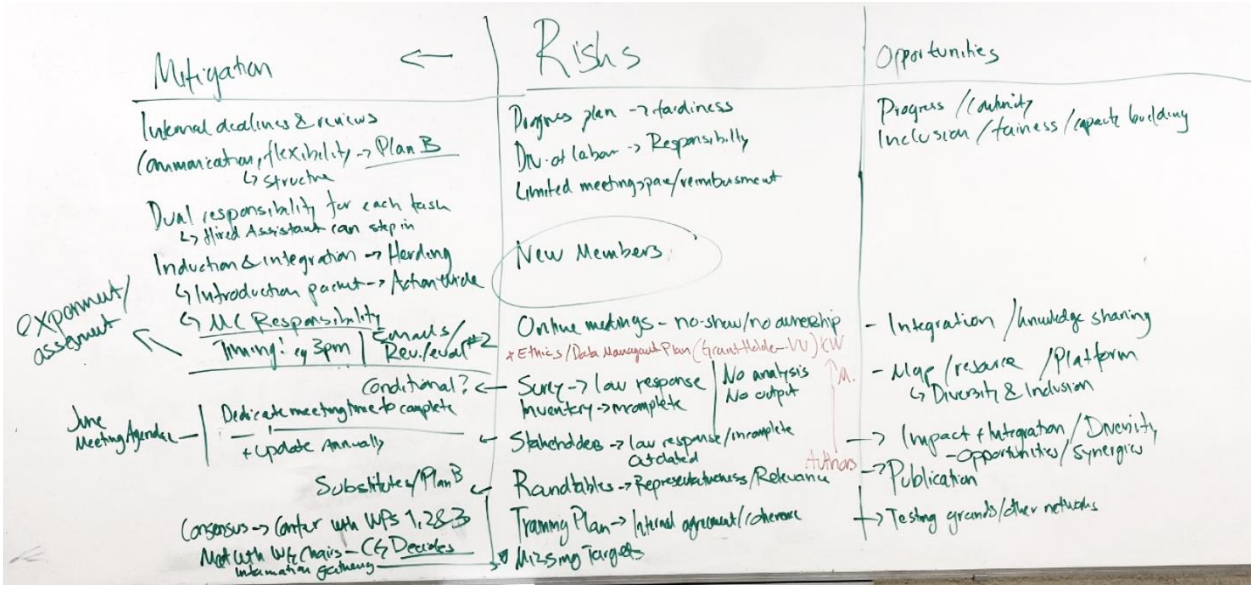
Afternoon Session

- **Getting to know each other**
  How to make sure we all know each other? Integrate knowledge and social integration
  Maybe session in next meeting, potentially roundtable
  Form focus groups based on interest of network
  Free invitations, based on preferred time slots
  Give roles to other people in the WGs: People from different WGs but similar in interest bringing together
  Split up WG into smaller group based on interest?

- **Collection of Needs**



- **Collection of risk & opportunities**



9 ELECTIONS: WORKING GROUP VICE CHAIRS

WG1 Theory

Candidates:

Prof. Carlos Cunha, Lisbon University Institute

Prof. Nicoleta Corbu, National University of Political Studies & Public Administration

*The WG unanimously elects **Carlos Cunha** and **Nicoleta Corbu** as WG Vice Chairs*

WG2 Theory

Candidates:

Dr. Srdjan Vesic, Computer Science Research Institute of Lens

*The WG unanimously elects **Srdjan Vesic** as WG Vice Chair.*

The second WG Vice Chair position remains vacant.

WG3 Data & Application

Both WG Vice Chair positions remain vacant.

WG4 Inclusion & Dissemination

WG Vice Chair ex officio:

Ana Milojevic, University of Belgrade (Science Communication Officer)

Candidate:

Prof. Mariken van der Velden, Vrije University Amsterdam

*The WG unanimously elects **Mariken van der Velden** as WG Vice Chair.*

10 AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION

Reports from the Working Groups

Agnieszka Stepinska, *Damian Trilling*, *Marina Popescu* and *Carlos Arcila Calderon* summarize the working groups' discussions, as presented above.

Moving Forward

Christian Baden, Chair

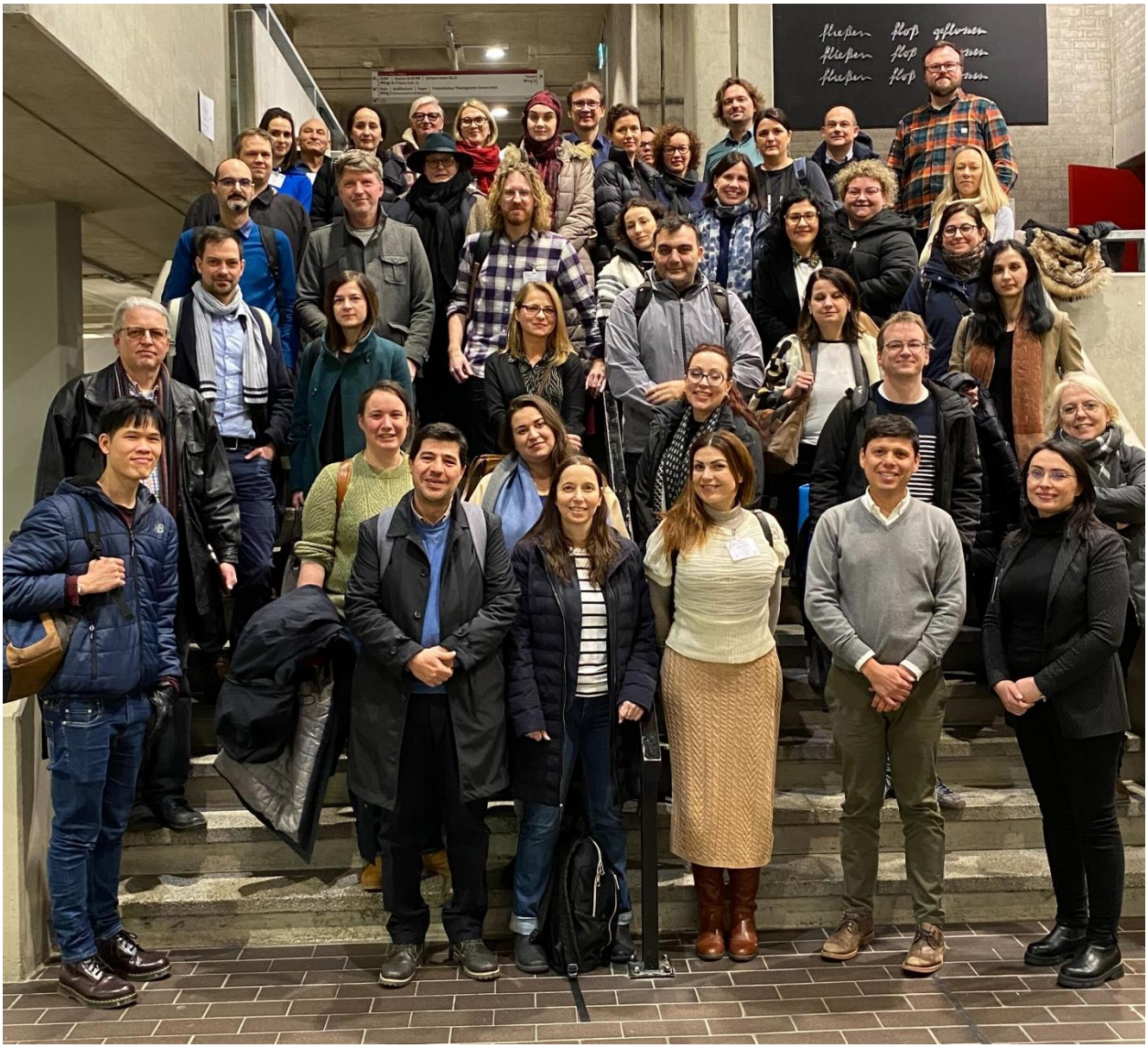
- The discussions show how rich and complex our endeavor is. A key challenge is to focus our attention on the core issues and common grounds, so as to not get lost in complexity.
- All WGs need one another, but there is no point in waiting for one another; each WG can get going, while the Core Group, and Christian Baden and Helle Sjøvaag in particular, will make sure that each group is aware of relevant developments elsewhere in the network.
- Guiding questions at present can be:
  What has already been done: what knowledges and experiences exist?
  What can already be done: what is possible based on the present state?
  What should be done: in what ways do we need to go beyond this state?
  What can be done: where can OPINION make its best impact?
- To do this, we need to (tentatively) define our focus (to be occasionally revisited) and delimit our priorities. Where we identify common grounds, we can drill down together. Where we identify key controversies, we can engage the debate together. In this effort, we don't need to do everything jointly, but we can divide based on specific needs and interests, so long as we don't lose touch with the overall mission.
- It will be helpful to get one another better, both at physical and online meetings, and through our work. We will administer a survey of ourselves, and prepare communication tools that should help, notably:
  - Minutes of all WG activities
  - Virtual meetings
  - Interactive communication platform that supports differentiation (e.g., Slack)
  - Living, collaborative document to capture common ground (e.g., Google Docs)
  - Market-style platform to exchange haves and needs
- There are some initiatives already for collaborating toward grand opportunities. Anyone interested in joining a potential bid toward Horizon Europe call CL2-2024-DEMOCRACY-01-08 on "Culture, the arts, and cultural spaces for democratic participation and political expression, online and offline", please contact *Gal Harpaz*.

- OPINION is planning to hold its summer joint Working Group meeting in Central Eastern Europe, preferably adjacent to a conference that is already attended by some members. Current favorites are between/around CEECOM Brno and the OPTED Vienna conference (end June/early July), or between/around ECREA Berlin and ECPR Prague (end August/early September).
  Are there any additional conferences of relevance? Please let us know.

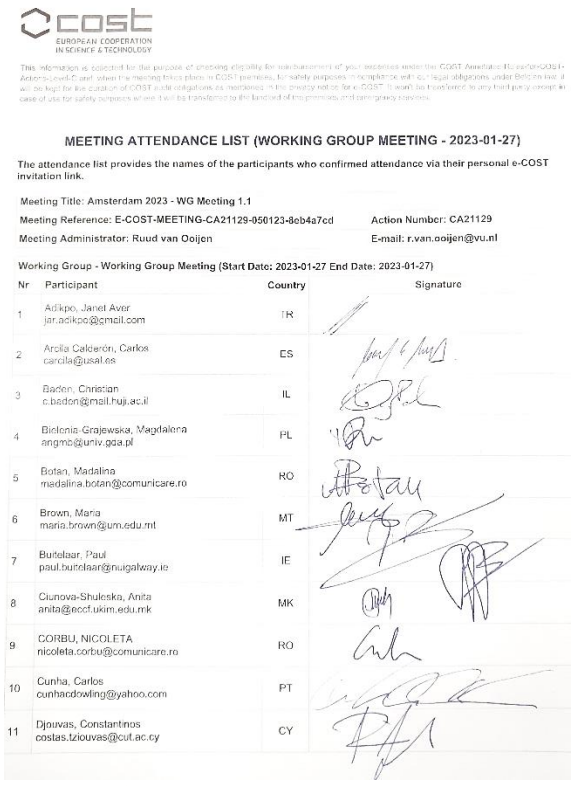
11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There is no other business.

Group picture of all participants



ANNEX A: SIGNED ATTENDANCE LIST



MEETING ATTENDANCE LIST (WORKING GROUP MEETING - 2023-01-27)

The attendance list provides the names of the participants who confirmed attendance via their personal e-COST invitation link.

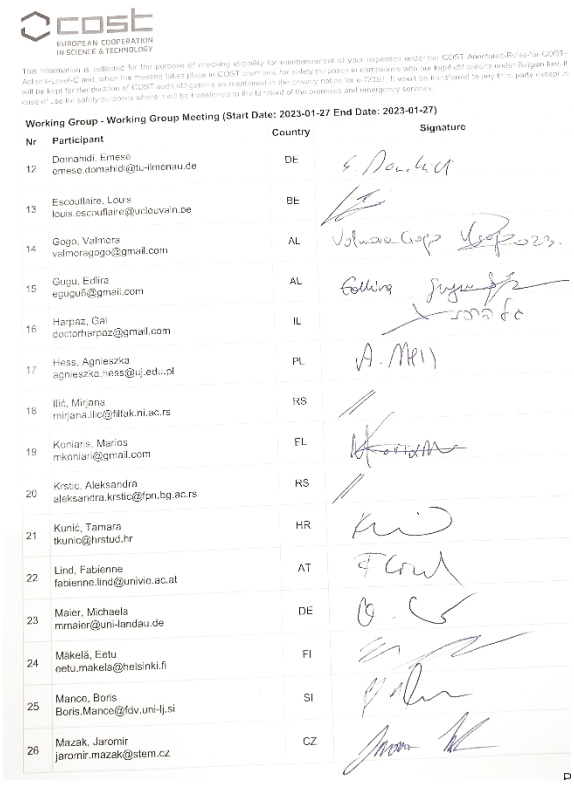
Meeting Title: Amsterdam 2023 - WG Meeting 1.1

Meeting Reference: E-COST-MEETING-CA21129-050123-8eb4a7cd — Action Number: CA21129

Meeting Administrator: Ruud van Ooijen — E-mail: r.van.ooijen@vu.nl

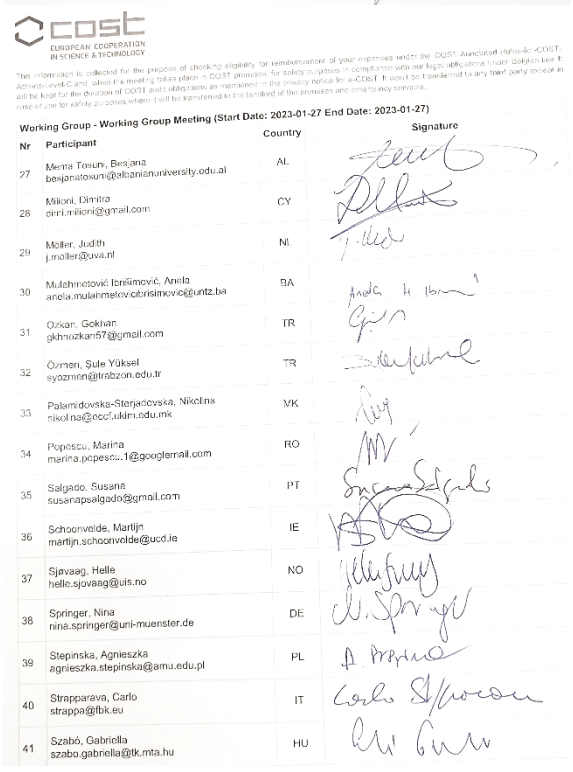
Working Group - Working Group Meeting (Start Date: 2023-01-27 End Date: 2023-01-27)

Nr	Participant	Country	Signature
1	Adikpo, Janet Aver jar.adikpo@gmail.com	TR	
2	Arcila Calderón, Carlos carcila@usal.es	ES	
3	Baden, Christian c.baden@mail.huji.ac.il	IL	
4	Bielonia-Grajewska, Magdalena angmb@univ.gda.pl	PL	
5	Botan, Madalina madalina.botan@comunicare.ro	RO	
6	Brown, Maria maria.brown@um.edu.mt	MT	
7	Burtelaar, Paul paul.burtelaar@nuigalway.ie	IE	
8	Ciunova-Shuleska, Anita anita@eccf.ukim.edu.mk	MK	
9	CORBU, NICOLETA nicoleta.corbu@comunicare.ro	RO	
10	Cunha, Carlos cunhacdowling@yahoo.com	PT	
11	Djouvas, Constantinos costas.tziouvas@cut.ac.cy	CY	



Working Group - Working Group Meeting (Start Date: 2023-01-27 End Date: 2023-01-27)

Nr	Participant	Country	Signature
12	Domahidi, Emese emese.domahidi@tu-ilmenau.de	DE	
13	Escoufaire, Louis louis.escoufaire@uclouvain.be	BE	
14	Gogo, Valmora valmoragogo3@gmail.com	AL	
15	Gugu, Erdira egugu6@gmail.com	AL	
16	Harpaz, Gal doctorharpaz@gmail.com	IL	
17	Hess, Agnieszka agnieszka.hess@uj.edu.pl	PL	
18	Ilić, Mirjana mirjana.ilic@filfak.ni.ac.rs	RS	
19	Konlaris, Marios mkonlari@gmail.com	EL	
20	Krstic, Aleksandra aleksandra.krstic@fpn.bg.ac.rs	RS	
21	Kunić, Tamara tkunic@hrstud.hr	HR	
22	Lind, Fabienne fabienne.lind@univie.ac.at	AT	
23	Maier, Michaela mmaier@uni-landau.de	DE	
24	Mäkelä, Eetu eetu.makela@helsinki.fi	FI	
25	Mance, Boris Boris.Mance@fdv.uni-lj.si	SI	
26	Mazak, Jaromir jaromir.mazak@stem.cz	CZ	



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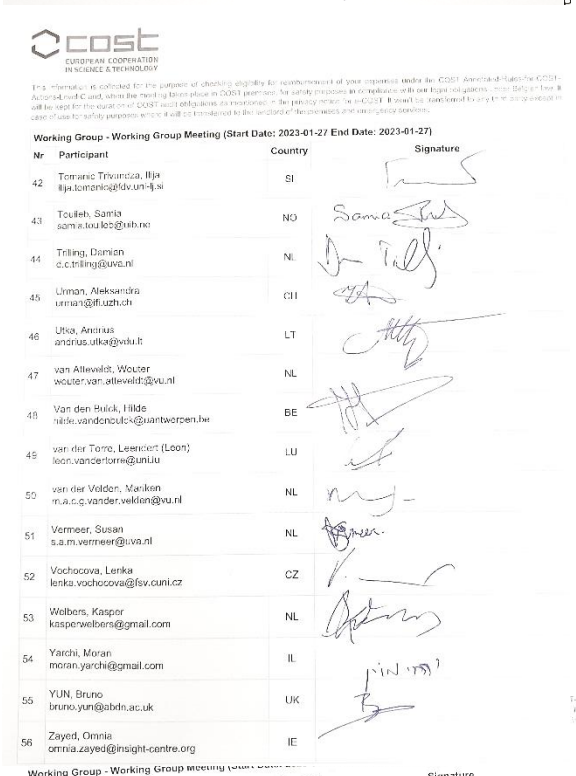
Nr	Participant	Country	Signature
27	Mema Tosuni, Besjana besjanatosuni@albanianuniversity.edu.al	AL	
28	Milioni, Dimitra dimi.milioni@gmail.com	CY	
29	Möller, Judith j.moller@uva.nl	NL	
30	Mulahmetović Ibrišimović, Anela anela.mulahmetovicibrisimovic@untz.ba	BA	
31	Ozkan, Gokhan gkhnozkan57@gmail.com	TR	
32	Özmen, Sule Yüksel syozmen@trabzon.edu.tr	TR	
33	Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Nikolina nikolina@eccf.ukim.edu.mk	MK	
34	Popescu, Marina marina.popescu...1@googlemail.com	RO	
35	Salgado, Susana susanapsalgado@gmail.com	PT	
36	Schoonvelde, Martijn martijn.schoonvelde@ucd.ie	IE	
37	Sjovaag, Helle helle.sjovaag@uis.no	NO	
38	Springer, Nina nina.springer@uni-muenster.de	DE	
39	Stepinska, Agnieszka agnieszka.stepinska@amu.edu.pl	PL	
40	Strapparava, Carlo strappa@fbk.eu	IT	
41	Szabó, Gabriella szabo.gabriella@tk.mta.hu	HU	



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Nr	Participant	Country	Signature
42	Tomanic Trivundza, Ilija ilija.tomanic@fdv.uni-lj.si	SI	
43	Touileb, Samia samia.touileb@uib.no	NO	
44	Trilling, Damian d.c.trilling@uva.nl	NL	
45	Urman, Aleksandra urman@ifi.uzh.ch	CH	
46	Utka, Andrius andrius.utka@vdu.lt	LT	
47	van Atteveldt, Wouter wouter.van.atteveldt@vu.nl	NL	
48	Van den Bulck, Hilde hilde.vandenbulck@uantwerpen.be	BE	
49	van der Torre, Leendert (Leon) leon.vandertorre@uni.lu	LU	
50	van der Velden, Mariken m.a.c.g.vander.velden@vu.nl	NL	
51	Vermeer, Susan s.a.m.vermeer@uva.nl	NL	
52	Vochocova, Lenka lenka.vochocova@fsv.cuni.cz	CZ	
53	Welbers, Kasper kasperwelbers@gmail.com	NL	
54	Yarchi, Moran moran.yarchi@gmail.com	IL	
55	YUN, Bruno bruno.yun@abdn.ac.uk	UK	
56	Zayed, Omnia omnia.zayed@insight-centre.org	IE	

Working Group - Working Group Meeting (Start Date: 2023-01-27 End Date: 2023-01-27)

Nr	Participant	Country	Signature
57	Zelenkauskaitė, Asta az358@drexel.edu	LT	