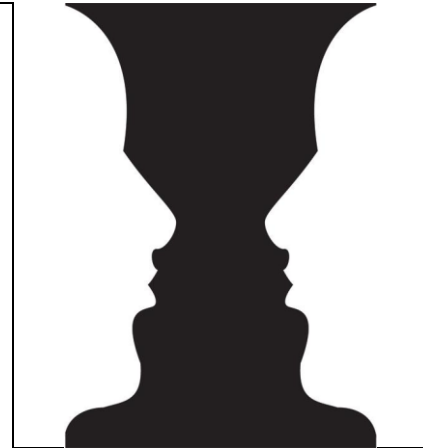

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Enforcing law through government use of social media

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Abstract

Globalization and technological development create challenges for the communication and dissemination of law, which is essential for modifying behavior to suit evolving societal demands. Starting from a mixed theoretical approach, this study explores law socialization via social media, focusing on the Romanian situation. It examines how legislative and governance institutions spread the law and negotiate legal meanings in the new socialization space. The results indicate a slow institutional adaptation to new communication methods and a lack of social media strategies. Institutions use social media mainly to account for transparency and acquire public sympathy rather than to accomplish functional objectives.

Keywords

Law socialization; Institutions; Law enforcement; Online communication; Social media;

Introduction

The proper functioning of a society depends on how effectively we apply the social norms. However, this is closely tied to individuals' ability to understand the deeper meanings of the law and integrate them into their everyday actions. Thus, it is essential for people to become familiar with law and stay updated.

To achieve this, we depend on socialization, understood as a process where information about the concepts building the foundation of society's principles, values, and

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norms is shared, followed by debate and collective agreement on the meanings of these concepts and how the law should be applied.

The socialization process, however, is complex and ongoing. In the initial phase, it involves learning and internalizing the societal and emotional aspects of fundamental concepts that shape individuals' consciousness and identity, leading to the adoption of social norms and conforming behaviors. The second phase emphasizes how institutions respond to societal challenges by introducing new norms and sharing knowledge about them, helping society understand and adopt these norms to encourage their practical application (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This phase also involves the management of social dialogue and debates by institutions to ensure that the individuals understand the meanings of the law and its concepts, thereby facilitating the accurate communication of these meanings and the correct application of norms.

In this context, the greatest challenge in law enforcement today is ensuring that both stages of socialization are effectively carried out where social dialogue takes place. But many social processes have become dependent on social media platforms for the distribution of information as a result of the transition from in-person to virtual contact. Thus, we find ourselves in a situation where the law faces a challenge, with its implementation entirely reliant on how society interprets and debates its implications within this evolving environment of social dialogue.

Fundamentally, law is a tool for ensuring progress and peace by modifying social behavior. However, for it to be recognized as a behavior regulator, society as a whole must be familiar with the rules and values ingrained in it for it to continue existing and serving as a social institution. However, the key question is: to what extent is legislation disseminated in this new socialization space—social media? Additionally, how actively are institutions involved in managing social dialogue on these platforms to ensure the accurate transmission of the law's meanings?

Other social institutions are crucial in shaping, enforcing, disseminating, socializing, and changing the law, because they have gained social validation and earned the trust of society's members for carrying out such actions. But to adjust the law and ensure its application, the legislative and executive branches must adjust to the changing communication environment and use it both to address new social challenges, including those that have shifted to this digital space and to effectively convey the law and its interpretations.

Despite this, Kavanaugh, Fox, Sheets, et al. (2012) demonstrated that governments use social media without understanding the risks involved, without strategies for identifying their constituents, without continuously monitoring online activity, and without understanding the advantages and disadvantages of social media communication.

In this context we may think that the politicians may fill up this communication gap. Yet, Djerf-Pierr and Pierre (2015, p.12) have shown that politicians prefer to be content consumers rather than creators. So, who is responsible for and manages the socialization of law in the new communication environment?

With this in mind, this study aims to investigate the extent to which governance and law-making institutions use social media to disseminate and socialize the law in order to

empower it. It starts from the assumptions that a lack of authority in a social environment can lead to misinterpretation and improper application of the law, or discourage its application altogether. The study also looks into how people respond to posts on law and evaluates how much of a need there is for institutions to get involved in the socialization of law on social media.

Research methods

To assess the extent of governance institutions' utilization of social media for law socialization, particularly Facebook, we employ a case study approach. Through the examination of the Romanian context, we track how governance institutions utilize social media, whether they have formulated a communication strategy, and the specific topics they address.

We focus on the activity of legislative and governance institutions on Facebook from January 1st until September 1st, 2023. To discern the extent of their engagement in disseminating legal information, we employ contextual analysis to identify and categorize the themes found within the posts of these institutions.

Ultimately, to understand the impact of governance institutions on law enforcement through its socialization on social media, we employ observation and comparison methods to identify social reactions to institutional posts and the societal engagement with posts related to law.

Law was established as a social institution responsible for regulating human conduct following the normalization and routinization of certain behaviors. It sought to specify what behaviors were acceptable and commendable under particular conditions as well as to point out inappropriate behavior.

It is represented by everything linked to its existence, namely: "legal language, codes of law, theories of jurisprudence and finally the ultimate legitimations of the institution and its norms in ethical, religious, or mythological system of thought" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p.93).

This social constructionist perspective on law is necessarily complemented with specifications on the role of socialization for formulating, settling and perpetuating law as a tool for regulating social conduct.

All social constructs begin as imaginary concepts. They become real only when the dissemination of ideas underlying them influence people's behavior. In this light, law was defined as an institution, as well as a social construct (Giudice, 2020) that needs communication for formulation, understanding dissemination and application in the society. It is dependent on social dynamics and development, and for this reason, it adapts to the social needs and changes under the influence of economic, political, cultural factors, etc. (Tamanaha, 2017).

Different but not contradictory, institutionalists contend that laws are power structures that present a source of authority and constrain the actions of various social actors, including the state and political parties (Levi, 1990). Laws are powerful simply because they are societally established norms that are upheld as a code of behavior. They

serve as a unique way to guarantee their own continuity because of their strong and self-reliant nature.

Thus, laws as institutions are organizational arrangements, patterns of behavior, rules (Bell, 2002) compliance procedures, operating practices (Hall & Taylor, 1986) and routines that shape the human conduct in different situations (March & Olsen, 1989).

With this in mind, in this paper we see law as a set of rules, procedures, routines and social practices whose institutionalization was possible only with the help of communication and socialization. It aroused from the social negotiation of goals, issues, and trends, and emerged as solutions to problems, as principles guiding improved living, and as protocols fostering a shared social interest.

Given the growing amount of technology that permeates our daily lives and the way that socialization and communication are shifting to social media, it is imperative that social media platforms be used for the distribution, understanding, and enforcement of the law.

Theoretical framework

Defining social media

In 2015 Jonathan Obar and Steven Wildman described social media as “(currently) Web 2.0 Internet-based applications, with user-generated content and user-specific profiles designed and maintained by a social media service, with the intention to facilitate the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and/or groups” (p.746).

Different from this, Howard and Parks (2012) proposed a definition that encompasses social media aspects, functions and tools that allow social media to exist as a space for communication. Among them we have the *informative component* (referring to all the content and information published on social media) and the *identity component*, indicating all the actors on social networks who disseminate and consume information from social media.

In a similar way, Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social media as a “relationship initiation, often between strangers” (p.211), which puts at the disposal of individuals online profiles, groups and friends lists, serving as connection nodes to initiate new relationships.

Yet, Shoemaker, Tankard, and Lasorsa (2003) insist on social media being nothing but a bunch of tools that help us convey meanings; a tool that supports socialization, information exchange and knowledge transfer (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With all this, a question remains: how do we make the difference between social media and social networks?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines social media as “websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or a mobile phone” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). This definition refers to information sharing, categorizing online pages and websites as social media because user communication occurs solely through comments. The problem is however that the dictionary defines the social networks exactly the same.

Different from this, the Oxford Dictionary (2024) linked the concept of social networks to the actors and the connections they build. This draws the difference between social networks and social media at the level of tools and purpose. The purpose of social media is to share content, whereas the purpose of the social networks is to create relationships. In both cases information is shared, but the difference lies in the way communication happens in these environments. The social networks put at the disposal of people more tools for communication in groups and pairs while the social media focuses more on encouraging public sharing of information (posts and comments on posts).

In spite of this, some websites and online pages designed for social networking, like Facebook, serve also as social media platforms, in the sense that they allow sharing content. But since, in this study we analyze the use of Facebook for law dissemination and socialization, we will define social media as a space for communication dependent on internet-based tools (Carr & Hayes, 2015), which allow the virtual actors to interact at any moment either as audience or as content creators.

Law enforcement through social media

Researchers and law enforcement practitioners have drawn a connection between social media and law, and use social media platforms, particularly the social networks, as tools to gather data and investigate crimes. In this direction, in 2015, Mateescu et al. discussed how law enforcement agencies use social media for research and connecting causes, evidence and obtaining a warrant. Because social media creates networks of people, investigators find it easy to locate individuals and find evidence, understand connections, friendships and identify solutions.

This way of using social media for law enforcement has turned out to be efficient. Yet, it punishes non-compliance while preventing legal violations through law dissemination and socialization remains uncovered.

Social media and law dissemination

Law's existence and recognition depend on its widespread dissemination within society. But since the communication environment has migrated from face-to-face to social media, we realize the significance of using social media tools in this sense.

Law enforcement can be carried out using two types of tools: the ones for prevention and the ones for punishing noncompliance. With the aim of enhancing the application of legal principles in society, this study focuses on tools that enable prevention of law breakages. In this light, we follow the potential of social media in law dissemination and negotiation for a better application.

Social media allows social interaction to take place, and unlike speech, its nature diversifies social interaction and provide people with more ways of expression (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020). In this direction, Chen et al. (2011) highlight opinion and preference sharing as two difference types of interaction, each requiring a specific communication strategy and direct socialization in multiple directions for law dissemination in different formats. In this way, social media represents "a new way of communication" (Talpu, 2014)

and is the most preferred method due to its capacity to enable people to connect within networks based on common interests. So, thanks to the online space, law can be discussed, negotiated and understood. It can be transformed into reality “through the socialization of groups based on the principles of jurisprudence” (Harrington Boyd, 1917, 834). But how much is the online helping to apply the law when it disables people’s capacity to learn and comply to it by simply copying the behavior of others?

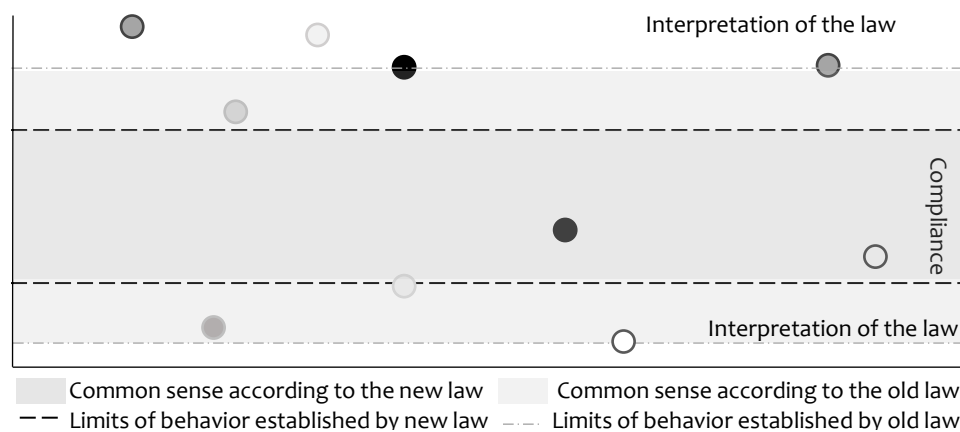
In new environments, the fastest way to adapt is by copying behaviors without questioning. But we lack this ability when socializing online, and this is one of the biggest drawbacks of the online communication. Meanwhile its strongest point is the removal of the distance boundary and making it possible to discuss and negotiate meanings with people from all around the globe supporting law dissemination, understanding and application.

Yet, law is not a stable construct - it changes “due to pressure from the community” (Fine & Trinker, 2020). But, for community pressures to be exerted, law has to be discussed so that the members can adopt a specific common conduct and highlight either the need to change the law, to build new rules, to support their application, or simply for a better understanding. Thus, social media remains a prominent tool for changing the law. But for it to have a positive role in this, it has to be used by the law-making and governance institutions, the ones most entitled to disseminate law and supervise and manage the social dialog for its better understanding.

Law enforcement via national institutions’ social media activity

Law as an institution, and a social construct becomes real through people’s behavior. It exists solely because individuals have learned about it, agreed and complied with it. But for this to be real, law had to be socialized. This is where social media becomes vital for disseminating and enforcing law in nowadays societies. When people adhere to old rules due to insufficient information about new ones or a need for reassurance, a specialized tool is necessary to navigate the new social environment for a better understanding of the world (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. People’s behavior without socializing law



Source: Author’s figure

The lack of communication leaves room for law interpretation, and a further application of the old rules when lacking enough information and being uncertain. The cognitive dissonance² and the cognitive conservatism³ (Miller, Clarck & Jehle, 2015) encourage people to comply to the old rules when the new ones are not discussed, explained and understood good enough.

In this context, we find it essential for governance and law-making institutions to be present in the new socialization environment for providing official information, managing the social dialogue, and presenting legal requirements to the public clearly and straightforwardly.

With this in mind, we turn towards the Romanian case study and focus on the social media activities of governance and law-making institutions. Our goal is to assess how these institutions utilize social media for disseminating normative acts, and observing their efforts and work for creating and managing a space for the socialization and enforcement of the law.

The Romanian case-study

To understand how national institutions utilize social media, assess their communication strategies, and determine if law dissemination and socialization are included, we analyze the Facebook activity of Romanian law-making and governance bodies. We closely examine the activities of the two chambers of the Parliament, the Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Investments and European Projects, the Ministry of Health, and the Competition Council.

We analyze the posts of these institutions from January 1st, 2023, to September 1st, 2023, categorizing them by type and evaluating the extent to which they explain and enforce the law.

At first glance, we notice that Romanian institutions have varying levels of online activity. Some post nearly daily updates, while others do so rarely. This inconsistency impacts users' ability to stay updated with the less frequent posts, given the social media algorithms that prioritize content from accounts with higher engagement and consistent posting patterns.

Then, we focus on the types of posts we find on the institutions' official Facebook pages. For this, we use the content analysis research method, and identify 9 types of posts: events, national holidays, exhibitions, meetings, decisions/information, internship and jobs, delegations/international affairs, interviews/ press declarations, and laws (see Table 1).

² The cognitive dissonance refers to the human being's preference to conform to older thoughts, ideas and principles. This preference comes from the fact that the deviation from the "known" creates unpleasant states and empowers routine and repetitive behavior.

³ The cognitive conservatism is used to explain human behavior in situations of uncertainty and dissonance (moments of disagreement, contradiction with information vital and important to our existence and the perception of ourselves).

Table 1. Romanian institutions' Facebook posts between 01.01.2023-01.09.2023

Institutions	Events	National Holidays	Exhibitions	Meetings	Decisions/ Information	Internship/ jobs	Delegations/ international affairs	interviews/ press declarations	Laws	Total
<i>The Chamber of Deputies</i>	9	19	4	80	56	3	13	29	21	234
<i>The Presidential Administration</i>	10	8	-	5	0	-	31	170	-	224
<i>Ministry of Internal Affairs</i>	24	20	-	1	124	1	1	171	-	342
<i>Ministry of Education</i>	8	25	-	-	182	3	12	121	53	404
<i>Ministry of Investments and European Projects</i>	14	11	-	15	331	2	19	27	4	423
<i>Ministry of Health</i>	5	3	-	-	50	5	3	70	6	142
<i>The Competition Council</i>	-	2	-	-	59	-	5	3	6	75

Source: Author's table

An important aspect we notice is that the second chamber of the Parliament, the Senate, does not have an official Facebook page, as well as the Ministry of Justice. And since these institutions are directly responsible for the formulation and application of the law, their absence in social media creates an informational gap regarding the legislative acts, the decision-making process and the interpretation of the law.

Also, we analyzing the types of posts, we find out that the other institutions do not focus too much on disseminating and discussing law on social media. The majority of posts consist of informative content, whether in the form of basic information, press statements, or declarations. In most cases, social media is used as a tool for increasing institutional transparency and boosting institutional reputation by displaying work results and procedures. Nevertheless, some regulations of public interest can be found in the informative posts. For example, there are videos explaining new traffic rules, posts presenting new regulations and work methodologies in education, national plans and business opportunities for entrepreneurs, etc.

With this in mind, we focus further on each type of post, providing insight into the social preferences regarding the content they view. Based on this foundation, we pinpoint the primary areas of social interest within each post type. Additionally, we assess the extent to which the analyzed institutions initiate and facilitate social dialogue, enabling discussions on various issues and negotiations of meanings, including those related to the law.

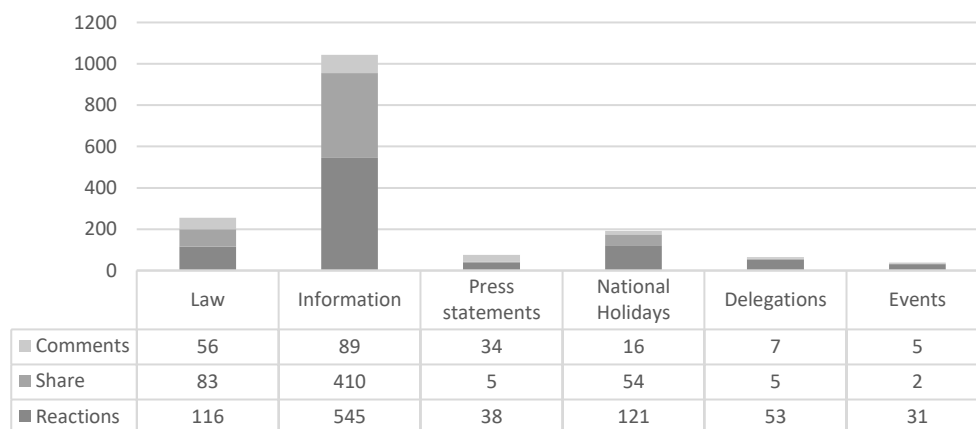
Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education has more posts of an informative and decisional nature. They clarify the changes and news brought by the financing plans and government projects. However, there are also posts oriented to public consultation on the laws, methodologies, and regulations under construction. The Ministry of Education is the second institution, after the Chamber of Deputies, referring 13% of its posts to law, new work procedures,

regulations, how to access national financing plans, the impact on the daily life of new government decisions, methodologies and memorandums.

Also, the Ministry of Education is one of the few institutions that initiates online public consultations regarding new regulations, laws and work methodologies in education. Yet, the number of posts related to law is the third in row following the ones that provide public information about institutional work and press statements on projects, exams, new procedures, guides, etc. (see Table 1). Yet, when focusing on the public reaction to its posts, we found that social preferences are not compatible with the institutional ones (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Ministry of Education types of posts and average reactions



Source: Author's figure

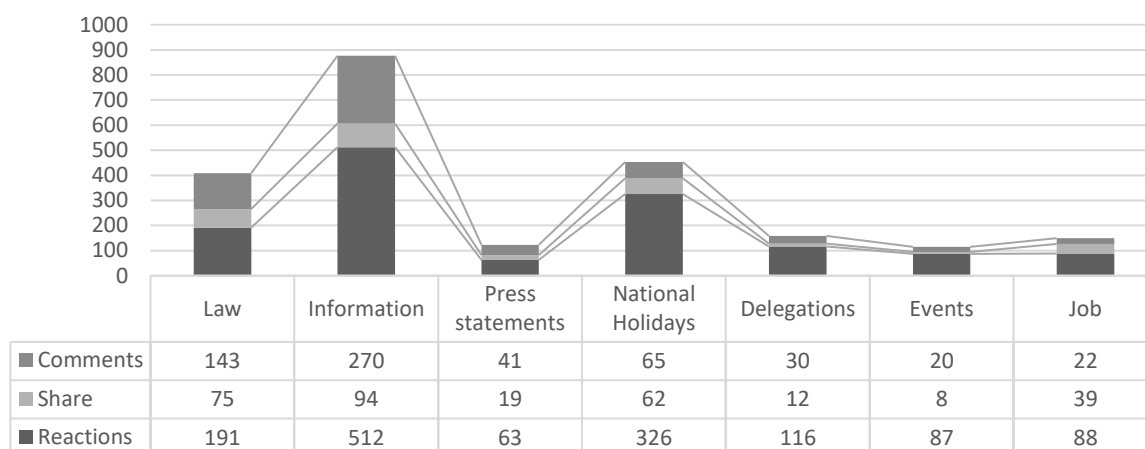
Although the informational posts were appreciated more, we see that the social preference for law exceeds the institutional preferences for press statements, national holidays or other types of posts. Thus, highlighting the social interest in posts related to laws.

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health embraces its domain of work and directs its posts on financing investment objectives, recommendations or regulations and national medical action plans. Its informative posts present the results of investments in health infrastructure and calls to action. In this context, only 4% of the Health Ministry posts are about law (see Table 1).

We find more posts about work results in the health infrastructure, for combating fake news, promoting vaccination and gaining the social trust. But we find that the public informational needs are different than the Ministry's posting preferences (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Ministry of Health types of posts and average reactions



Source: Author's figure

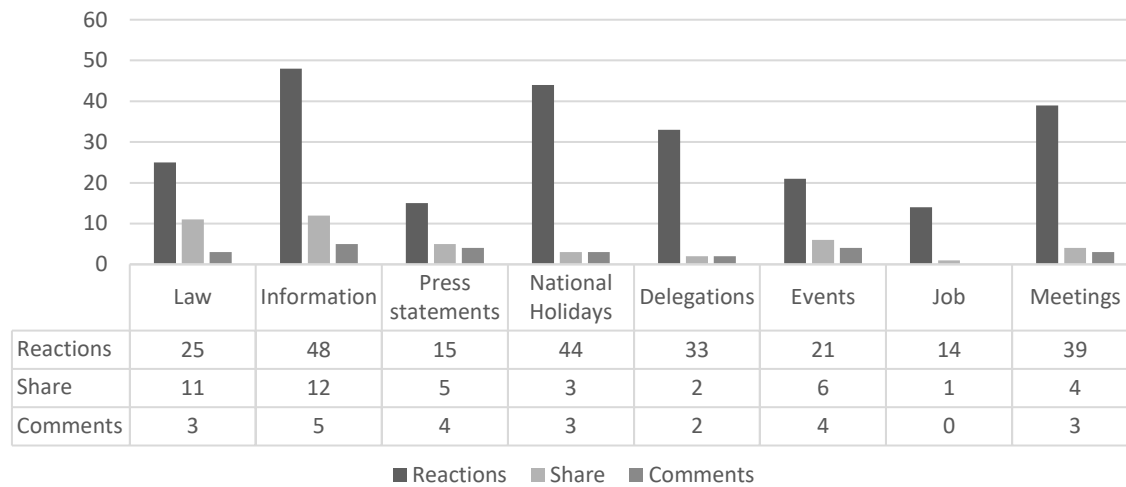
The Ministry of Health prefers informative posts and press statements. Law receives almost the same attention as the national holidays and events. Yet, the social reactions highlight that society is less interested in the press statements than law, and even less than in delegations or job information. The national holidays are a type of posts for empathy, connection and sharing positive thoughts, while the law is next in line for attention after the informative and national holidays ones.

People have shown a great interest in the posts with a direct impact on their life, like the ones related to new financing and construction projects for hospitalization centers and hospital repairs, the purchase of new equipment, projects for professional training and knowledge transfer in the field of medicine. This highlights the institutional effort to gain social trust and sympathy, but it happens the other way around when the society sees so many informative posts without a call for action and involvement in managing the social dialogue.

Thus, social media remains more of a place for information dissemination than a working tool for reaching the public. It is used in a top-down way, instead of being employed as a tool for a two-way communication with the society.

Ministry of Investments and European Projects

This institution has the largest number of posts on information and decisions compared to others presented in this study. Most information is about regional programs, European projects, project financing, and national strategies. It makes reference to law when talking about the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and when there are new legal terms, which the institution explains with the aim of improving the perception and applicability of these words in everyday life (see Table 1). But unlike other institutions, the Ministry of Investments and European Projects posts on subjects the society seems more interested in (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Ministry of Investments and European Projects types of posts and average reactions

Source: Author's figure

The institution constantly publishes information on new projects, funding sources and methods of accessing the funds. And we observe that this kind of statements are of social interest. The society has shown a relatively equal interest in posts related to law, events and delegations, and a high interest in informative posts and those related to national holidays.

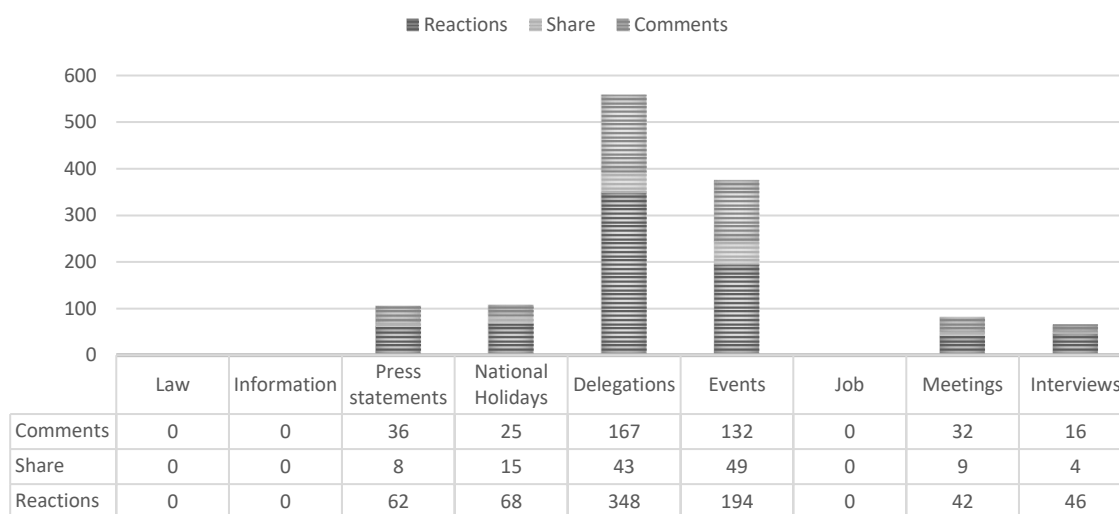
The alignment between social preferences and institutional posts may stem from the 2019 communication campaign, which focused on “The general public’s perception regarding Structural Instruments”, the outcome of which influenced the institutional communication strategy. The TV communication remains the primary tool for communication but the social media gained a special place in the communication strategy due to the preference of the younger audience for information from such platforms (Ministerul Fondurilor Europene, 2021).

The Presidential Administration

We pay special attention to the Presidential Administration, since the president has legislative powers. However, we notice, that there are no posts with reference to law. The page focuses on the other functions of the president, such as those in diplomacy and national representation but the legislative one. Most information and decisions are about delegations and press statements on president’s trips to other countries for bilateral agreements, to the European institutions to carry out his duties, and respectively the reception of various state representatives and delegations (see Table 1).

Given the lack of some subjects on the page, we cannot know the social interest in getting informed and socializing law on the posts of the Presidential Administration. But we got an inside on the other types of posts (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Presidential Administration types of posts and average reactions



Source: Author's figure

Figure 5 highlights that, alike other institutions, the Presidential Administration prefers to publish press statements although the society reacts more to the posts related to delegations and various events.

The Chamber of Deputies

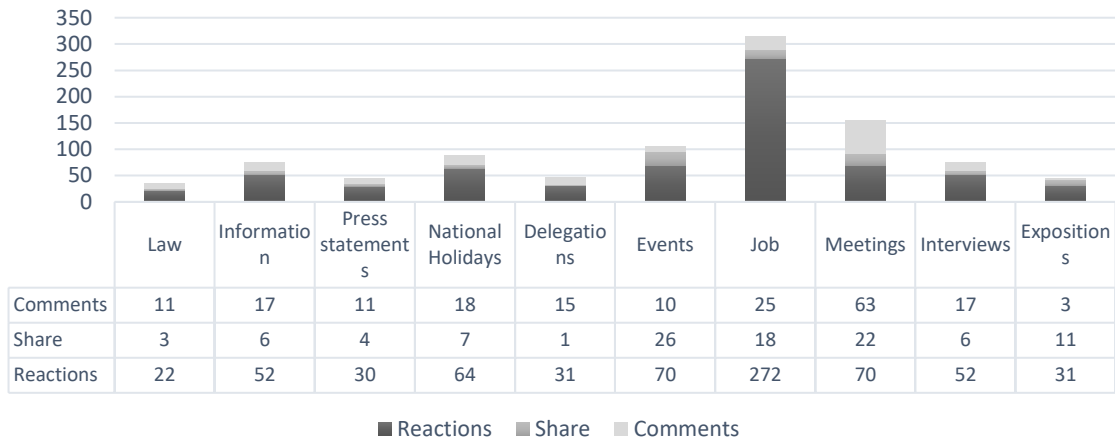
The Chamber of Deputies is one of the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament, which has central decision-making powers alongside the Senate. Although we expected more of its posts to be about law, only 9% refer to it.

In terms of institutional behavior, the Chamber of Deputies seems not to break the institutional pattern identified earlier, in the sense of following the validation of the institution instead of focusing on using social media to reach its functional objectives. It publishes more recordings of its meetings, information about its work, press statements, interviews, and only then on law (see Table 1). But when checking the social reactions to the posts we observe the difference between the institutional and the social preference for the types of posts (see Table 1 and Figure 6).

The social interest is oriented towards other type of posts and not necessarily on the meetings. The meetings that attracted more reactions were those showing the final vote on a legislative proposal or the ones introducing a new law with a direct and immediate impact on the society. Except this, people seem interested in many other aspects like job openings, internship, national holidays, information, etc.

The public of the Chamber of Deputies does not engage in a constructive dialog regarding law or other subjects, as we observed in the case of the Ministry of Education or Health. This is more like a page where the institution posts and where people leave their frustrations. The content analysis highlights that people look at the Chamber of Deputies more like to a political structure and not one with representative and law-making powers.

Figure 6. The Chamber of Deputies types of posts and average reactions



Source: Author's figure

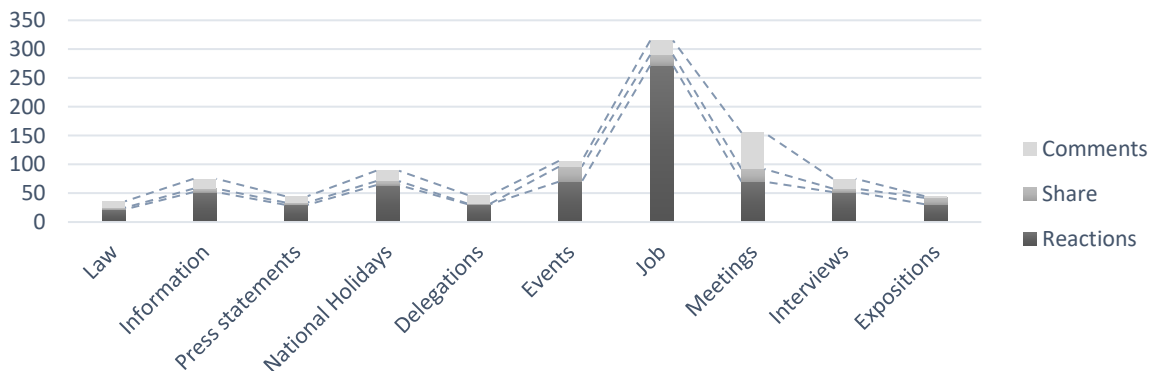
Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Ministry of Internal Affairs prefers to post its work results in form of press release, press statements or simple information. It also posts information with an immediate impact on society, which usually attracts users' attention (see Table 1).

But, contrary to the institutional preferences, we observe an increased reaction of the public to the posts presenting new regulations and laws in traffic. These posts explain traffic rules, fines, and how to avoid law breakages, and were the most appreciated unlike the informative posts or the ones related to national holidays, work results, or others (see Figure 7).

Also, there is an increased reaction of the public to the posts presenting information with a direct impact on daily life like publications about job openings, events with officers and trained dogs, and work procedures (police in action for enforcing law and saving people). There are not too many posts on law, yet the existing were appreciated.

Figure 7. Ministry of Internal Affairs types of posts and average reactions

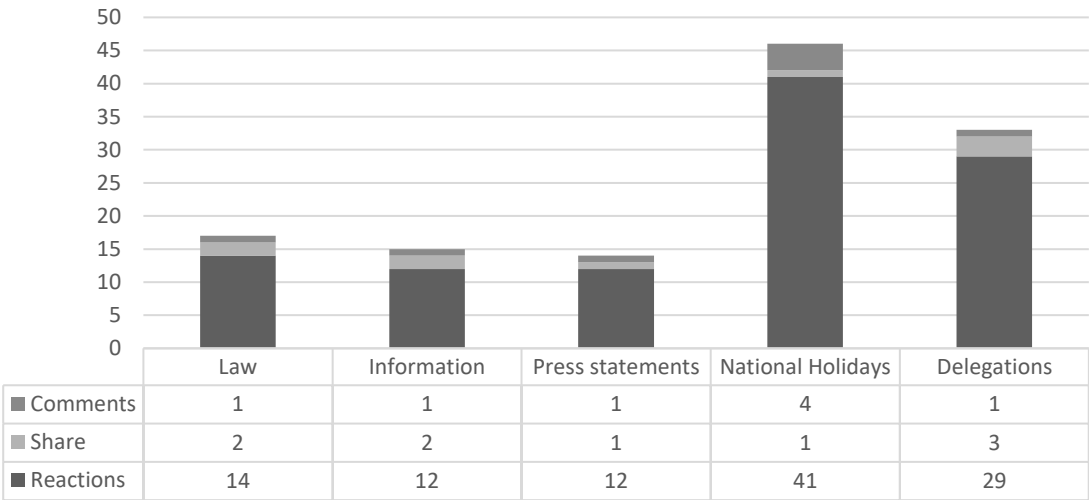


Source: Author's figure

The Competition Council

The Facebook page of the Competition Council is not very active. The institution has very few posts with direct reference to law. Still, it makes regular reference to the competition law for explaining decisions and their impact on the market, competition and especially on consumers. The majority of its posts are about conference announcements, presentation of work reports, completed and new investigations with possible impact on consumers (see Table 1). But then, when we look at the social reactions, we notice a preference for posts on national holidays or delegations and law (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Types of posts and average reactions

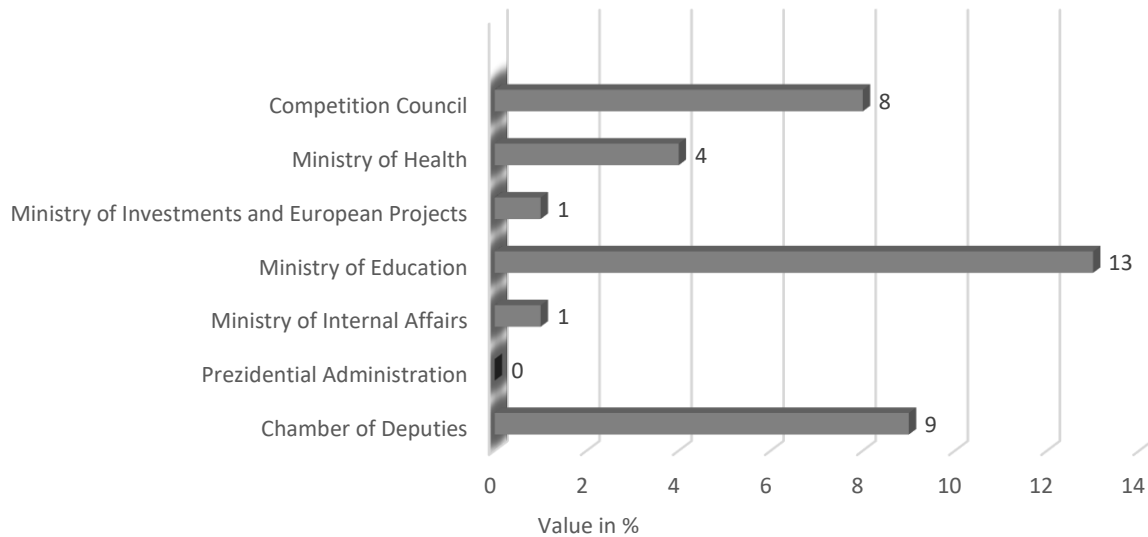


Source: Author’s figure

Like other institutions, the Competition Council has a preference for sharing more information on its work results, upcoming activities and conferences. And this may come from the public reactions to the posts regarding the Council’s work results with a direct impact on consumers, the decisions modifying prices and the activity or market actors. Yet, there is an increased interest of the public in the competition law which must be addressed too.

Findings

To assess the emphasis that each institution places on law in their activity on social media (Facebook), we looked at the average number of their posts referencing this topic. The results show that among all the institutions, the Ministry of Education had the highest number of references to law in its posts, followed by the Chamber of Deputies and the Competition Council (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Institutional posts referring to law

Source: Author's figure

Since the activity of the Ministry of Education is mostly related to disseminating efficiently the new rules and regulations with an impact on the education institutions, the students, pupils and their parents, we find that this institution had the highest number of posts referring to law from all the analyzed institutions. In this case, we see that law dissemination through social media allows people the possibility to discuss the meanings of the new rules for an easy application, and it also provides a space for experience sharing.

In the case of the Chamber of Deputies there are not so many posts presenting the laws compared to other types, yet in some of the recordings of its meetings laws were debated and voted on. The problem is, however, that for a better understanding and application of the law, we lack posts of laws presentation and explanation in their final form instead of debates where drafts are discussed.

Also, we observe that only in the case of the Ministry of European Investments and Projects we find a strategy for communication on social media designed to match the social expectancies and needs, while most institutions prefer to use social media for institutional transparency and do not use social media consistently. The posting appears to lack a coherent strategy, and these institutions do not seem significantly involved in managing social dialogue.

Then, the content analysis shaped the different public of the analyzed institutions, that reacts differently. In the case of the Ministry of Education, the public seems open to dialogue, asking questions, interacting and participating in the public consultations. The public comments are usually based on specific topics, interests, and subjects, often including data, facts, and well-formulated requests. In comparison, we do not find similar communication spaces on other institutions pages. Most posts are informational rather than providing a forum for discussing regulations, important changes, or societal requests.

In some cases, the comments section merely becomes a platform for expressing social frustrations and political discontentment.

When analyzing the institutional involvement in law enforcement through social media, we find that most institutions prefer to focus on presenting more work results for increasing the institutional credibility than presenting laws related to their area of activity. Yet, in most cases, we see that the public finds the law posts more useful than other informative posts without too much impact on everyday life. Only the posts showcasing institutional work with a direct impact on people's lives, as well as those related to national holidays, receive the most reactions and comments.

Also, the online users appreciate and share more the posts that bring them benefits in the real life, like financing projects, work guides, procedures for gaining funds, state aid, posts with weather warnings or events that people can attend for free. Among these, we find the ones referring to the texts of the law, especially those that clearly emphasize the impact on daily life, the procedures that must be followed for compliance with the law to avoid penalties.

The social reactions show that social media can and must be used by institutions as a tool for law enforcement through law dissemination and socialization. The governance and law-making institutions are the only ones capable of disseminating new laws and rules, explaining them and managing a discussion space where people can negotiate the meaning of the law, understand its impact and necessity for a better life, and discuss better ways for applying it in different contexts.

Conclusions

All social structures are dependent on mutual agreement, communication, and the incorporation of meanings into human action. One of these is law, which forms the cornerstone of all societal institutions and organizational frameworks. Since we keep a careful eye on how the socializing environment changes, we may enforce the law by spreading awareness by adapting to emerging communication practices.

Nowadays, when the socialization environment has changed, we wondered how much it is used by the law-making and the governing institutions for disseminating and socializing law. Theoretically speaking, social media is a promising tool for creating an easily accessible space for communication and negotiation of the meanings of law, but also for collecting data for the purpose of reformulating the law.

However, empirically we find that social media is used more for institutional and political interest, and very little for law enforcement. The analyzed institutions have an online activity focused on legitimizing themselves through increased institutional transparency by showing work results and their impact on the citizens.

Only newly established institutions are deviating from the traditional model of functioning and communication, while older institutions remain resistant to change. The communication gap between the institutional activity on social media and users' preferences highlight the necessity for institutions to reformulate their communication strategies to disseminate the law effectively within the new social media environment. This

adaptation is essential to meet social needs and prepare for an era where TV channels are no longer the primary means of communication, as they have been for decades.

Finally, this study revealed that for institutions to achieve their objectives, they must use social media for law enforcement. This approach will help them garner public interest and prevent legal violations. But this requires developing a comprehensive social media strategy that considers the institutional objectives together with the social preferences and needs.

Research Data

The research data used for this study is available at the following link: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.24221149.v5>

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