

Database of parliamentarians' tweets opens new research opportunities

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Researchers have compiled a new database of tweets from parliament members from 26 European countries and illustrated how this resource could help address challenges in the burgeoning field of Twitter

research. Livia van Vliet of the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, and colleagues present the new database and findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on September 16, 2020.

In recent years, numerous studies have drawn on Twitter data to investigate a broad variety of social processes, including Twitter communication by politicians. However, most studies of Twitter use by politicians are "one-offs" that often focus on just one or a few countries at a time and use different methodologies, thus limiting opportunities to compare findings and surface new insights.

As part of research conducted for the ODYCCEUS project in an effort to improve research on [politician](#) Twitter research, van Vliet and colleagues have drawn on multiple sources to build a new [database](#) of tweets by parliament members in 26 European countries and the European parliament. Data sources include Twitter's streaming API and a number of existing sources of information on parliaments and political parties. The new database includes tweet IDs from as early as May 2017 through the present.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this new database of parliamentarians on Twitter is the most comprehensive of its kind, and it could open up new opportunities for analyses of Twitter use by politicians. In particular, it could address a lack of data availability that has previously limited cross-border research.

To illustrate the advantages of the new database, the researchers applied it to explore a variety of questions, such as how parliamentarians from different countries differ in their use of Twitter "retweets" and "mentions." They also examined how the use of hashtags differs between political parties and how parliamentarians from different countries interact with each other on Twitter.

This initial exploration suggests that the new database could help enable a more standardized approach to future research on parliamentarians' use of Twitter, both within countries and across borders.

The authors add: "The Twitter Politician Database provides a starting point for studying politician communication, cooperation and contention both within countries and across borders for cross-country comparative and transnational research. As far as we are aware, the database is the most comprehensive database of parliamentarians on Twitter that is currently available."

More information: van Vliet L, Törnberg P, Uitermark J (2020) The Twitter parliamentarian database: Analyzing Twitter politics across 26 countries. *PLoS ONE* 15(9): e0237073.
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