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Communicating borders

Informing migrants and
potential asylum seekers
through social media

Audun Beyer, Jan-Paul Brekke, and Kjersti Thorbjørnsrud

Institute for Social Research
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seekers through social media**

Audun Beyer, Jan-Paul Brekke, and Kjersti
Thorbjørnsrud



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Norwegian summary

Forfatter	Audun Beyer, Jan-Paul Brekke, and Kjersti Thorbjørnsrud
Tittel	Communicating borders Informing migrants and potential asylum seekers through social media
Sammendrag	<p>Hvordan benytter norske innvandringsmyndigheter sosiale medier i kommunikasjonen med migranter som ennå ikke har kommet til Norge? I denne studien beskriver og analyserer vi den Facebook-baserte kampanjen «Stricter asylum regulations in Norway». Den ble startet av Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet i en periode med høye ankomsttall for asylsøkere høsten 2015. I tillegg til den norske kampanjen undersøker vi lignende nettbaserte informasjonskampanjer i andre europeiske land.</p> <p>Studien viser at Facebook-kampanjen gjorde det mulig for norske myndigheter å henvende seg til grupper man ellers ikke ville nådd. Dette ble blant annet mulig ved at myndighetene betalte for spredning av innhold på Facebook, slik at tilpasset informasjon ble vist på Facebook-sidene til utvalgte målgrupper.</p> <p>Undersøkelsen av lignende europeiske og internasjonale kampanjer viser at bruken av sosiale medier i myndigheters strategiske kommunikasjon fortsatt er i en eksperimentell fase. Analysen av den norske kampanjen viser slik behovet for formelle retningslinjer for offentlig institusjoners bruk av sosiale medier. I tillegg peker rapporten på usikkerheten rundt effekten av denne typen kampanjer og behovet for forskning som undersøker hvordan migranter oppfatter slik informasjon, og om det påvirker deres valg om å emigrere og hvor de reiser.</p> <p>Myndighetenes bruk av sosiale medier reiser en rekke spørsmål knyttet til avsender-identitet og åpenhet, mulighet for dialog, utforming av budskap og bruk av retoriske virkemidler. Når myndighetene retter informasjon mot migranter i potensielt sårbare situasjoner, blir disse spørsmålene spesielt viktige å ta stilling til.</p>
Emneord	Migrasjon, asylsøkere, kommunikasjon, sosiale medier, myndigheter

English summary

Author	Audun Beyer, Jan-Paul Brekke, and Kjersti Thorbjørnsrud
Title	Communicating borders Informing migrants and potential asylum seekers through social media
Summary	<p>How do Norwegian immigration authorities use social media in their communication with migrants with Norway as destination? In this study, we analyze the Norwegian Facebook campaign titled “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway.” The campaign was launched by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security in a period when asylum arrivals to Norway peaked in the fall of 2015. In addition to the Norwegian campaign, we examine similar internet based information campaigns in a range of other European countries.</p> <p>The study demonstrates that the social media campaign allowed Norwegian authorities to reach migrants that they would not have reached through conventional means of information. This was accomplished through the use of paid content on Facebook, and the targeting of specific groups who received the information from the Norwegian Government in their personal Facebook feed.</p> <p>The study of similar European and international campaigns confirmed that strategic government communication with migrants through social media is still in an experimental phase. The analysis of the Norwegian campaign demonstrates the need for a set of general guidelines for government communication on social media. The report also notes that we have limited knowledge about the effects of these campaigns. Further research should study how migrants perceive this information and how it influences their decision to migrate.</p> <p>Government communication on social media raises questions related to transparency, communication format and rhetoric, norms of dialogue and target group identification. When communicating with migrants in potentially vulnerable situations, these are questions that clearly needs focus.</p>
Index terms	Migration, communication, government, social media, asylum seekers

1. Communicating migration in times of crisis

“Norway Launches Social Media Campaign to Discourage Refugees from Entering”. This headline appeared in Newsweek referring to statements made by the Norwegian State Secretary Jøran Kallmyr.¹

Kallmyr’s statement caused a stir in his Ministry of Justice. The Facebook campaign he referred to had not yet been launched. In fact, in the weeks leading up to the statement, civil servants in the Ministry had pointed to the challenges of using Facebook and social media to communicate immigration regulations to migrants.

This was in the midst of the 2015 refugee crisis, and the Norwegian government was eager to find ways to manage the record high number of asylum seekers. They saw communicating with potential migrants through social media as one such way.

The story in Newsweek led civil servants to scramble behind the scenes in the hours and days that followed. Now they had to decide on the final design and content in a hurry. Following hectic activity, a Facebook page was launched two days later. The title read: “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway.” The campaign reached out to migrants and asylum seekers on the move, potentially on their way to Norway.

In this report, we use the story of the Norwegian campaign to highlight what we believe are general features of government campaigns using social media. These include both opportunities and challenges.

Crisis can spur innovation. In this case, the crisis gave rise to a novel use of technologies and collaboration initiatives across traditional organizational divides. As such, the Norwegian campaign is a good case to study the instrumental role that social media can play for public institutions.

The campaign also revealed challenges regarding government campaigns using social media. These include the design of the webpage (including message,

¹ Announced to Newsweek during the first week of November 2015.

format, and effects), meeting governmental norms of neutral and comprehensive information, the division of communication work within the Ministry (political leadership, communication staff, and civil servants), the ethical aspects of communicating stricter policies to potential migrants, and the difficulties connected with evaluating effects of social media campaigns.

Lately many government agencies have felt compelled to “be there” (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). Their use of social media and new media platforms is likely to increase in the years ahead, making it even more important to study what can be learned from the Norwegian campaign directed at potential migrants.

This report summarizes the experiences of the Norwegian government and civil servants running the campaign during and after the 2015 refugee management crisis. It includes an analysis of similar campaigns in Europe and campaigns organized by NGOs. Most of these campaigns used social media, often in combination with more traditional methods. All of them intended to influence the decisions of migrants on their way to Europe.

The Norwegian Facebook campaign should be understood in the context of the high number of arrivals and the political situation during the fall of 2015. By October 2015, an unprecedented number of asylum seekers were arriving in the country. The Russian–Norwegian border was permeated, bringing weekly numbers above 2,500. The Government was accused of having lost control.² During the most hectic period, the sentiment within the responsible Ministry of Justice and Public Security, was, as one informant put it, that “Something had to be done” (Civil servant).

As 2015 drew to a close, arrivals through Russia had stopped, and national borders had been temporarily re-established along the route through Europe. Along with national restrictions, this led to dwindling numbers in Norway. Still, at year’s end, more than 31,000 asylum seekers had been registered in Norway.

During the same period, record numbers were also noted in many European countries. During 2015 more than 1.3 million asylum seekers were registered in Europe.

At the height of the arrivals, a list of restrictive measures was drafted by Norwegian politicians. Party lines were crossed, and all but two political parties signed a common policy document outlining a set of restrictions.³

2 <http://www.dagsavisen.no/oslo/mener-solberg-har-mistet-styringen-1.434398>

3 Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Prop. 90 L (2015–2016) (Innstramminger II).

As governments, NGOs, and the European Union seek to increase predictability in their migration management, the use of information and campaigns will most likely increase in the years to come. Although migrants' and asylum seekers' use of social media has been documented for years, the 2015 migration crisis in Europe brought new attention to the pivotal role of smart phones and social media for people on the move.

At the same time, however, the dissemination of smart phones and internet in some countries of origin is hampered either by conflict, poverty, or government control. This was the case in the home countries of two of the nationalities targeted in the Norwegian Facebook campaign: Afghanistan and Eritrea.

Research questions

The overarching research question we ask in this study is: What practical, moral, and communication lessons can be learned from campaigns that seek to manage migration through social media?

In more detail, we will describe, analyze, and comment on the following:

1. **The story** behind the Norwegian Facebook campaign – how the process developed and how it was experienced by the main actors.
2. The **roles** of the key government actors involved in strategic communication on migration: The Ministry of Justice and Public Security (political leadership, the Department of Communication, and expert civil servants) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. **The design** of the Facebook campaign (and similar campaigns), including the message, format (means of communication), and perceived recipients. This includes the premises entailed in the particular media platforms – the media's affordances.
4. **Ethical aspects**, including the government actors' experiences of and the balancing acts of combining official norms for Government Communication with the formats and affordances of the logic of social media.
5. **The effects** of strategic communication on migration through social media. Facebook provides numbers on the reach of campaigns, but how should these numbers be interpreted? And, even when the message

reaches the target groups – that is, migrants on the move – how should we reflect on the impact of the information on migration behavior?

A pilot study – methodology and data

A review of the academic literature on government communication through social media revealed the potential trailblazer role of this modest study. The scope is very limited, and the project should be regarded as a pilot being followed by more comprehensive research, including a thorough analysis of how the migrants themselves perceive, interpret, and use information from campaigns on social media.

Three main sources of data form the basis of our analysis in this study: interviews, a European comparative study, and a web-based campaign review.

To be able to answer the research questions in this study, we interviewed civil servants in the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, in the Directorate of Immigration, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and civil servants involved in the launching of the Facebook campaign. During these standard, qualitative, open interviews, we used an explorative approach. This meant that we could add new topics of interest to our list of questions as they appeared during the interviews. All interviews were conducted face to face by two researchers. This dual presence secured that full attention was given to the informant during the interview in addition to useful debriefs and later joint analysis of the material.

The second data source consisted of a so-called ad-hoc query among nine European Migration Network (EMN) member states. This gave us the opportunity to quickly gather comparative material on the proficiency of campaigns directed at potential third country nationals (TCN) – migrants in countries outside Europe. Focusing on the use of social media in such campaigns, the results were limited. They will be duly described and discussed in Chapter 3. The EMN queries are answered by civil servants, something that may give a certain country-positive bias. However, given the topic of this study, and our possibility to visit the webpages and social media used in the campaigns, this bias should be limited.

A third source of data consists of webpages and social media campaigns visited and analyzed by our research team. In addition to the ones mentioned by the EMN respondents, we analyzed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) campaign "Telling the Real Story" and the Italy initiated

and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented “Aware Migrants” campaign.

This study brings together a complementary interdisciplinary team, representing the areas of political science, sociology, and media science.

Social media in Government communication

Today, social media platforms are part of the communication strategies of most Norwegian public agencies. While social media were introduced piecemeal by scattered enthusiasts in selected agencies a decade ago, the use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are now widespread, both in central administration and at the municipal level (DIFI, 2010, 2014). Like in many other countries, the adoption of these new communication platforms has been surrounded by great optimism about their potential to spur more democratic and innovative policy processes (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011; DIFI, 2010; Mergel, 2013). A main argument for the inclusion of social media in public communication strategies, moreover, is that in a time when the audience moves from traditional media to social media platforms, governments have no choice but to reach out to citizens where they are through the formats they use.⁴

Social media platforms, also known as social network sites or network communities, change continuously, but a key characteristic is that they allow users to create and share content and connect with each other (Ellison, 2007; Kalsnes, 2016). The *interactive* qualities of social media make them qualitatively different from traditional mass communication where messages are produced and broadcasted from one to many. Digital and social media allow both open and closed mass communication (i.e., broadcasting to a huge, global audience), group communication (i.e., members of a Facebook group), and interpersonal communication (i.e., chatting person to person) as well as non-verbal and image-based communication (i.e., through devices such as emoticons, likes, shares, retweets, and video uploads). The user-generated and sharing of content on social media blurs the line between producer and consumer. Social networking sites hence function both as media for publishing and as networks for social relations (Enjolras, Karlsen, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebæk, 2013).

4 See, e.g., https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/FAD/Vedlegg/IKT-politikk/Nye_netffenomener.pdf and https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/FAD/Vedlegg/IKT-politikk/Nye_netffenomener.pdf (accessed 08.03.2017) about the imperative of social media for government communication.

More recent research on social media has moved from focusing on the interactive qualities of social media as such to how different platforms through their design allow for, restrict, or encourage *certain types* of interactions and responses, such as commenting, sharing, or “liking” a post. This meeting point between technological design and use is called the *affordances* of social media (Bucher & Helmond, 2016). One example of how such affordances restrict and encourage responses is the “like” buttons in the Facebook interface. A “dislike” button has never existed, while in 2016 the functionality was expanded with five additional reaction emojis: “love”, “haha”, “wow”, “sad”, and “angry”. To evaluate a post negatively is hence restricted, while certain emotional responses are encouraged. For organizations/stakeholders on social media platforms, the ultimate goal is to reach and engage people, and formats that trigger emotions such as hope, surprise, or anger tend to rise in popularity and reach. While the functionality of sharing and liking are visible to any user of social media, other aspects are buried in the design and technology of these services. These are algorithms and measurement functionalities that track and analyze enormous amounts of data and decide how flows of information are spread and targeted to individual users (Bucher, 2012; Van Dijck, 2013). The central social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, are commercial enterprises. They change their algorithms frequently and keep them secret to protect their business model (Langlois & Elmer, 2013). These expanding platforms started up as seemingly idealistic projects to connect people but have gradually introduced sponsored content and commercials. Today they offer customers finely targeted advertising and detailed information about target groups. Social media have become big business (Langlois & Elmer, 2013; Van Dijck, 2013).

The research on how public agencies use social media and combine them with other types of digital information sites is still limited. The central conclusions, predominantly based on American studies, are, however, that the adoption of social media to a large degree are based on the belief that these services will enhance government transparency, citizen participation, innovation, and inter-governmental and cross-sector collaboration (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012; Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011; Linders, 2012). Moreover, studies find that social media have been adopted in the wake of visionary political initiatives, often in a decentralized and experimental manner, and without thorough consideration of existing policies and laws, let alone the development of specific regulation for social media (Brainard & McNutt, 2010; Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016; Mergel, 2013).

Despite the emphasis on the potential for citizen involvement, coproduction, and more democratic procedures, many studies indeed find that government

agencies in practice have difficulties with the interactive component including continuous feedback between citizens and agencies. Rather than entering processes of dialogue, government communication on social media tend to be dominated by one-way information (Zavattaro & Sementelli, 2014). Whereas most studies are critical of this reluctance to fully adapt to the affordances of social media, others point to real challenges and limitations related to privacy concerns, record management, and communication platforms controlled by a third party (Bertot et al., 2012; Mergel, 2012). Furthermore, some point to the lack of evaluation of efficiency and costs of the use of social media (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011; Mergel, 2013)

No studies exist on the existence and scope of governments' use of paid content and targeted advertising on social media. Some studies analyze how social media are used by governments in times of crisis (Chatfield, Scholl, & Brajawidagda, 2013), but there is a total lack of knowledge about how governments employ social media to reach people of foreign nationalities. Furthermore, while many studies measure the degree of interactivity or lack thereof, studies on how or to what degree government communication is adapted to the jargon of social media in the form of personalized or emotional messaging based on combinations of pictures, videos, and written texts are lacking.

In the next chapter, we tell the story of the Norwegian Facebook campaign "Stricter asylum regulations in Norway." There are two parallel narratives: The first depicts pioneering civil servants designing and running a campaign that contributed to a drastic reduction in asylum arrivals. The other tells the story of the challenges experienced by a group of civil servants that come in direct contact with migration management, striving to find a balance between effective social media communication and the Ministry's traditional role as neutral informer.

2. “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway”

“We were a bit reluctant to using social media. We really wanted to do it but were aware of the risks involved.” (Civil servant)

The communication staff in the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Safety entered uncharted waters when they launched their Facebook campaign during the height of asylum arrivals in 2015. The days and weeks that followed highlighted what we believe are general dilemmas facing public bodies using social media in strategic communication.

This chapter is based on interviews with the civil servants that were directly involved with the campaign and other staff with knowledge of the Norwegian government’s communication efforts directed at potential migrants. We present a brief version of how the campaign was prepared, launched, and followed up and discuss issues of roles, design, ethics, and effects.

So first, let’s get back to the story: The communication staff was uncertain of what to expect when they launched the Facebook page in November 2015. They were anxious over what could happen. As it turned out, they were right to be.

The launch

The Facebook campaign was launched on the Friday of the first week in November 2015. The launch followed consecutive weeks with more than 2,000 registered asylum arrivals, an unprecedented level in Norway. The next day, State Secretary Kallmyr announced the campaign on national TV (NRK, Dagsrevyen (November 7th, 2015).

The idea for the campaign had come from the political leadership in the Ministry of Justice, including Kallmyr, a few weeks earlier. They had instructed the communications department to get on Facebook “in order to warn potential asylum seekers without need for protection not to come” (Civil servant). As part of standard procedure, the communications department wrote a memo on possible risks – that is, a list of “everything that could go wrong.” The list included how to handle comments from other Facebook users, a tricky point. Facebook is

a social medium. It is created as a two- and multi-way communication platform. Comments were to be expected.

The before-the-fact announcement by State Secretary Kallmyr in *Newsweek*⁵ on Monday, November 2nd, 2015, spurred hectic action in the communications department in the Ministry of Justice. Staff had four days to get the already-announced Facebook page up and running. As described in many studies of how public agencies adopt social media strategies, the process was based on improvisation rather than long terms planning (e.g. Mergel, 2013). As one civil servant and social media expert put it, “It was a ‘jump and see where you land’ type of process.”

Technically, it is easy to make a Facebook page, but there was a list of decisions to be made, including finding a title for the campaign and deciding on an initial layout. When the page was launched on Friday the 6th, the title of the page and the profile picture, the Norwegian Lion, a part of the Norwegian Coat of Arms, was in place.



The page was open to the public, open for comments, for sharing, and for “liking.” The first posting on the new Facebook page was an announcement of a list of restrictive measures meant “to stem the flow of asylum seekers to Norway.”⁶

5 <http://europe.newsweek.com/norway-launches-social-media-campaign-discourage-refugees-entering-335842>

6 See Appendix 1.

Among the suggested changes in policies were a reduction of benefits in reception centers, temporary residency, a focus on return, and limitations to family reunion. The restrictive character of the announced policy changes was not to be misunderstood. The content was in English, while the background page layout would follow the default setting of the platform.

The reactions

The day of the launch, Friday the 6th of November, passed quietly. No comments were posted on the campaign page. Before leaving for the weekend, as a precaution, the communication team in the Ministry liaised with the around-the-clock support team for all ministries.

This turned out to be a wise decision. After Kallmyr's announcement on national television the next day, comments started being posted. The crisis team moderated the comments, deleting some.

On Sunday the 8th, the Facebook page was shared, liked, and commented on initially by what is believed to be people sympathizing with the governing Progress Party, to which Kallmyr and the Minister of Justice at the time, Anders Anundsen, both belong. Later more people joined in. The crisis team edited comments that were "unwanted" according to criteria set up by the communication team. Then the comments increased in number. The wording became increasingly negative toward immigration, immigrants, and asylum seekers.

Then a storm hit us. What had started quietly on Sunday just increased. Monday was crazy. Some early commentators posted hate speech and serious threats. (Civil servant)

The number of comments became overwhelming for the communication staff trying to moderate the incoming profanities. One of the challenges was that when one inappropriate comment was deleted, others appeared elsewhere in the threads. The civil servants spent their full working capacity monitoring the Facebook page. Despite this, they quickly lost control.

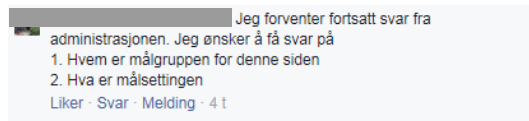
There was a storm of racist comments. We didn't have any experience as editors of a Facebook page. We had criteria, but these quickly became difficult to follow. (Civil servant)

The communication team wanted to keep the page open for comments and not sensor everything, in line with "netiquette." The mantra being that if you have a Facebook page, people should be allowed to comment. They posted disclaimers

and encouraged commentators to show decency, to no avail. The comments kept pouring in.

Suddenly, hateful comments were posted, saying “fuck Islam” and the like. Others angrily answered back. And this happened on a page under the Ministry’s control! (Civil servant)

Most reactions were hateful of refugees and highly critical of the refugee regulation regimes of European receiving countries. Strong words were used, and there were even photos of wounded children. There was also a post aimed directly at the page administrators in the Ministry. It contained a clear message⁷:



The situation was clearly unsatisfactory. Norwegian media were made aware of what was going on and commented on the reactions to the Norwegian campaign. The communication staff in the Ministry of Justice felt the heat.

Then the Prime Minister’s Office took action and told us to delete everything, all comments. They said that: “Delete everything.” And then the support team did just that. (Civil servant)

All comments were deleted, and a banner was put on top of the page with the message: “All comments will be deleted.”



There was a clear need for a filtering device. Facebook does not allow for direct blockage of all comments. The Ministry contacted a commercial company, Fanbooster, which had the perfect remedy for this type of situation: a filter that filtered out most words used in comments. In practice, this functioned as a wall,

7 "I am still waiting for an answer from the administration. I would like to know: 1. Who is the target group for this page, and 2. What is the page's purpose?"

blocking all comments. It was labeled “Troll-control” by the communication team. They could breathe a bit easier.

We did not want to be visible to the Norwegian audience. Not to any of the sides of the debate. Not to the people critical of immigration, nor to those on the other side. (Civil servant)

When the weekend of the launch was over, the ministry had survived the crash course on how to use social media in government communication on a sensitive topic. The original warnings of the communication department were more than confirmed. They had underestimated the potency, the intensity and volume of the social, the interactive element of the media – *social* media.

We wanted to have a fact-based page. We really didn’t expect the comments to play an important role. Good old fashioned one-way-communication. That’s what we expected, except with the added value of people being able to “like” and “share.” (Civil servant)

After the comments had been blocked, the communication team had the time to go back to focusing on target groups, content, and format.

A new start – inter-ministerial cooperation

It became clear that the “Stricter-campaign” necessitated a new type of cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The mandates of these ministries are overlapping in the field of migration and migration management, but different in many others. While the first has international relations as its main focus, the latter primarily tends to national matters. Finding common strategies and achieving close cooperation in the area of migration can therefore sometimes necessitate extra effort from both parties.

In the case of the Stricter-campaign, communication officers from the two ministries found such common ground and formed a close-knit team. One civil servant from the communication team in the Ministry of Justice was put in charge of the process of developing the campaign. In addition, one expert from the communication team in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was dedicated to the campaign in the middle of the launch weekend. Partly because of the reactions and turmoil, a third social media expert also joined the campaign team. The “Stricter-team” now comprised three near full-time members.

I have never heard about a cross-ministerial team like ours. It worked very well, and we are still in close cooperation. The cooperation-model has been used again in a recent campaign where the MFA is involved.

We learned a lot from the Stricter-campaign, knowledge that is now being used elsewhere. (Civil servant,)

With the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on board, Norwegian embassies participated in the Facebook-campaign by linking to it on their webpages. The Ministry’s stations in countries of origin and transit also participated by other means, such as meetings with diaspora in transit countries, NGOs in transit, posters at train stations and points of transit, and handing out flyers. Add paper advertisements in countries of origin and Google ads to the list, and it is clear that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ stations were key in disseminating the information on the Norwegian migration regulations.

The team member from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs engaged the Ministry’s network of embassies in sending and transit countries. They were all consulted and asked to contribute to the dissemination of the message. There were reactions. It turned out that spreading the message of “stricter asylum regulations in Norway” through the regular Facebook pages of the embassies was not a success at first.

We saw that the message reached the wrong audience. There was a lot of noise, because those pages are usually used to give information about culture. It was completely wrong that the embassies should have to carry the burden of spreading such a restrictive message. (Civil servant)

By linking to the designated “Stricter-page,” however, the embassies could avoid the dual role of providing a positive image of Norway to some groups while simultaneously deterring others.

Target group(s)

Still, the stated goal of the Facebook campaign was to target “potential asylum seekers and other migrants.” They were to be presented with factual knowledge about the immigration regulations in Norway and take this into account when deciding whether to move across borders and, if already on the move, to not choose Norway as their destination. Facebook offers customers the possibility to pay for the placement of posts in the news streams of specified groups of users. Moreover, they provide detailed data on the reach of these posts. This option did, in other words, offer the possibility to target exactly the groups of (potential) migrants the ministry wanted to reach. Hence, even if unusual and controversial, it was decided to sponsor the posts on social media to the target individuals of the campaign.

After having conferred with migration experts within the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussing travelling routes and migration patterns, two target groups were selected: young men from Afghanistan and from Eritrea. Afghans were targeted at the outset of the campaign. After the launch, the Stricter-team turned to the possibilities included in the Facebook platform to pinpoint specific target groups among Facebook users.

Arrivals from Afghanistan were seen as particularly important to reach. They had limited chances of having their asylum applications approved. Second only to Syrians, this made the Afghans a key group to target. In the beginning of November 2015, Afghan asylum seekers comprised the second largest group crossing into Norway across the southern border with Sweden and the northern border with Russia.

Even before Facebook target groups were selected for paid advertisements/posts, Afghan potential asylum seekers were targeted by flat posts on the Stricter-page.



The Afghan group was to be reached with two messages posted on Day 1 of the launch, Friday November 6th. They were posted in English and later repeated in Dari and Pashto.

Parallel to the Facebook campaign, the same message was disseminated through other media and on other digital platforms. These efforts included, for example,

half-page advertisements in three major Afghan newspapers and continuous communication on the webpages of Norwegian embassies. We will comment briefly on the media mix used in the overall campaign.

Facebook allowed the Norwegian authorities to reach out to select target groups. These were formulated by the Stricter-team and then translated into the options available on the Facebook platform (see illustration of the “personas”).⁸

Personas



Afghansk mann.
Alder 18-40 år
På vei fra Afghanistan til Europa/Norge, ofte med lengere opphold underveis
Språk: Dari, pashto og engelsk
Land: Afghanistan, Russland, På reise i Europa
Flykter på grunn av: Usikre forhold.
Interesser: Norway, asylum, cricket, religion, moske.
Ikke travel-through. Kommer inn i Norge både i sør og nord.



Eritreisk/ Etiopisk mann. Alder 18-45 år
På vei fra Sudan, Eritrea, Etiopia til Europa
Land: Sudan, Etiopia,
Språk: (engelsk), tigrai,
Flykter på grunn av: Lang militærtjeneste (5-15 år), de slipper ikke ut når de først er innrullert. Utsatt for forfølgelse- ulovlig ut, så vil de få straff når de kommer tilbake.

Facebook allows any user to promote content to groups of users according to traits and geographical location, interests, and more. The campaign could therefore select which Facebook feeds their messages would appear in. They selected two specific target groups: Men originally from Afghanistan and Eritrea/ Ethiopia, of specific ages, who were outside of their home countries and for whom there was reason to believe they would be migrants with Norway as a potential destination.

The Stricter-team used Fanbooster as a tool when specifying the target groups. The goal was to reach potential migrants on the move. The choice of target groups meant that other groups, such as women, were not targets of the

⁸ **Afghan** man: Age 18-40, underway from Afghanistan to Europe/Norway, often with longer stops in transit. Languages: Dari, Pashto, and English. Countries: Afghanistan, Russia, in Europe. Fleeing because of insecurity. Interests: Norway, asylum, cricket, religion, mosques. Not travel through. Entering Norway across Southern and Northern borders (our translation).
Eritrean/Ethiopian man. Age: 18-45, Underway from Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia to Europe. Countries: Sudan and Ethiopia. Languages: (English), Tigrai. Fleeing because of: Long military service (5-15 years), without an end date. Subject to persecution, if they leave the country irregularly, they will be prosecuted upon return.

campaign. In our interviews, the informants were mixed in their opinions on whether refugees – groups that have a right to asylum if an application was forwarded in Norway – would be fully excluded from the target groups. This was clearly a sensitive issue, related to the legitimacy of the campaign and the experience of the civil servants involved. “The campaign was not directed toward Syrians, or others with claim to asylum,” one civil servant pointed out. On the other hand, they realized that even Afghan men, who were included in the target group, may be qualified for asylum.

A second target group, Ethiopian/Eritrean men, was considered but not promoted through Facebook. The persona specified by the communication team and approved by the Department of Immigration within the Ministry of Justice would clearly have challenged the principle of the campaign not reaching out to persons with claim to asylum in Norway. Over the past 10 years, Eritreans have been a group with a 90%-plus approval rate in Norway. Targeting them specifically would mean the campaign was directed at stemming all arrivals, regardless of probability of approval were they to arrive in Norway.

As seen in the personas created by the Stricter-team (above), the reasons for fleeing Eritrea are clearly stated:

They seek refuge because of long military service (5–15 years), they are not free to move once they are enrolled, and they are subject to persecution. If they leave the country in an irregular manner, they will be punished upon return. (Our translation)

These reasons are directly related to Eritrea and do not match the reasons for Ethiopians leaving Ethiopia, thus indicating that Eritreans were included in the intended targets at this stage.

However, the launch of the campaign was at the height of the crisis; the main goal of the government was to regain control over Norway’s borders.⁹ This would entail considering also including clear-cut refugee groups who appear to be in line with the political consensus at the time. In the set of concerted restrictive measures suggested by the government in November 2015, no distinction is made between asylum seekers with assumed unfounded claims (“grunnløse asylsøkere”) and other applicants. In the later refined version of the list, which

9 “The goal is to reduce the number of asylum seekers coming to Norway [...],” in the context of the reasons behind the introduction of stricter regulations of family reunification (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Prop 90 L [2015-2016]:8).

reached a broad political consensus in Norway, the pronounced goal was explicitly this: To secure control over and hinder a high number of asylum seekers.¹⁰

The message

The mantra for the Stricter-campaign was to present factual information about the immigration regulations in Norway. In a separate banner on the right-hand side of the page, this is made explicit:

This page is managed by The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security to present factual information about Norwegian asylum policy.
(from the Facebook page “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway”)

Our informants quickly encountered the challenges of untangling and demarking what was factual information. They also experienced the challenges of presenting factual information efficiently through social media while adapting to the chosen medium and its requirements.

The Stricter-team started out by simply quoting the current regulations and expected changes. The first posts included the list of suggested restrictive changes (Appendix 1), the post directly referring to Afghan migrants, and the point that not all asylum seekers qualify according to the UN Refugee Convention:

People whose applications are denied must return to their country of habitual residence. If you do not leave voluntarily, you will be returned by force. (Post November 6, 2015, Facebook “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway”)

After the comment option was withdrawn, messages in languages other than Norwegian and English dominated. All posts directed the reader to further information at the main government web-platform, regjeringen.no.



In hindsight, the underlying message of the campaign in these hectic first weeks was clear to one of our informants:

In the beginning, we only had one message: Don’t come here! (Civil servant)


By the end of November, the number of weekly arrivals was falling rapidly, and the messages on the Stricter-page had become more specific. They included

¹⁰ “A majority of the parties in Parliament agreed on a list of restrictive measures in immigration policy that may contribute to Norway receiving fewer asylum seekers” (op. cit. p. 14).

information on increased border control and new practices on the Russian border:

 **Stricter asylum regulations in Norway** 26. november 2015 · 

Are you entitled to asylum in Norway?
Planning to go via Russia?
Se oversettelse



Norway is now rejecting applications from asylum seekers after having resided in Russia
Rejected applicants will be rapidly returned to Russia.

GOVERNMENT.NO Finn ut mer

Some posts quoted international news media's reports. These were included when they were in line with the overall message of the campaign.

 **Stricter asylum regulations in Norway** har delt en lenke. 12. januar 2016 · 



Unhappy in Europe, some Iraqis return home
Many are voluntarily returning, but aid agencies warn that others are struggling to have their cases heard.

WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM Finn ut mer

The Washington Post story of an Iraqi asylum seeker returning (voluntarily) to Iraq after being disappointed with the reception conditions in Sweden fits well with the purpose of the page. The illustration added by the Stricter-team, including a red arrow indicating the direction of the return migration, stresses the point that not all who come are allowed to stay. The person interviewed for the article returned voluntarily and before being rejected, but the point was still valid: Travelling to Europe (and Norway) may not be such a good idea after all.

By March 2016, a record few asylum seekers were coming to Norway, following the EU-Turkey deal on migration management and the closing of national borders en route to Norway. Yet, the number of future arrivals was still uncertain and the campaign continued.

The three-person Stricter-team was partly dissolved, with the external members returning to duties outside the Ministry of Justice. However, they stayed in touch, and messages were still posted, including on the revocation of permits:

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security has instructed the immigration authorities that refugee status and residence permits may be withdrawn once there is no longer need for protection. (“Stricter asylum regulations in Norway,” Facebook post April 7, 2016)

The communication team within the Ministry of Justice was informed of campaigns in other countries, including those pushed by NGOs that used what was perceived as possibly more efficient communication tools. These included videos, stronger/more direct language – such as Australia’s “No Way” campaign¹¹ – and direct testimonials.

We would have liked to use more of the stories showing individuals saying how “disappointed we are” and linked them to the Facebook-page. However, we cannot use identifiable persons in our communication. (Civil servant)

While continuing to post on the Stricter Facebook page, the team therefore explored how the Stricter-campaign could be developed further. They wanted to be more effective in their communication. By moving away from a more neutral delivery of information, they experienced having to balance effectiveness with nuance and factuality.

We had a fact-based message. We know there are messages that would be more effective, that would hit you in the stomach and heart, but we cannot use those. Like Australia did in the No Way campaign [...]. We cannot do that, given the mandate of our Ministry. (Civil servant)

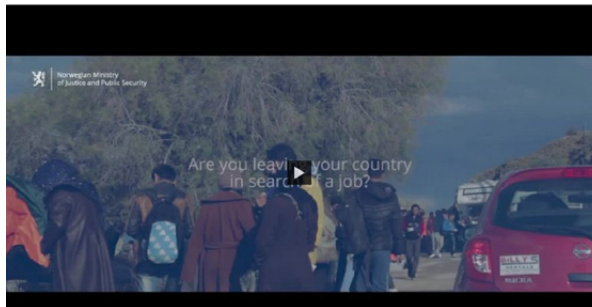
11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rT12WH4a92w>

This informant pointed to the direct tone used in the Australian campaign, a personal tone, an “I am talking to you” approach. This was seen as more efficient from a communication standpoint.

Stricter-campaign 2.0

The Norwegian team did not want to copy the Australian campaign but still used some of the tools associated with it when they developed a Stricter-campaign 2.0. During the second half of 2016, they established a new webpage, separated from the government’s main hub by its unique design, but still part of the “regjeringen.no” universe.¹² They linked the new hub to the Facebook page.

 Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security



Why risk your life?

Are you leaving your country to seek a better economic future?
Are you leaving your country in search of a job?
These are not valid reasons for granting adults asylum in Norway.
In fact, you have to return home.
Many have lost their lives or have been abused on their journey to Europe.
Since 2014, over ten thousand people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean.
Why risk your life and use your savings to pay smugglers when you will not get permission to stay?

The main content on the new page entailed two videos. Along with the accompanying text, these were directed at the individual migrant. They were titled: “Why risk *your* life?” and “*You* risk being returned” (our emphasis).

A lot of considerations had gone into making the two videos.

Film makes any message stronger. If you write in the genre of a press release, then add video images, music, and voice-over, then it becomes pretty harsh. (Civil servant)

¹² <https://nettsteder.regjeringen.no/asylumregulations/en/stricter-asylum-regulations-in-norway/>

In addition to the direct address to the individual migrant, the videos included music, voice-over, and strong images underscoring the risks of abuse and death. The communications department in the Ministry of Justice recognized the balance and the power of these tools:

... it just becomes so much stronger, and we were set to make videos that would survive a change of political leadership within the Ministry. They should be political, obviously, but should be usable both to our current and potential new minister. (Civil servant)

Given the strong new context for the messages, there were reactions from both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Immigration within the Ministry of Justice. This resulted in a few changes to the wording. For example, the text had to be precise in that children were not targeted, to be in line with Norwegian Asylum policies and directives. The following text from the first video was explicitly directed at adult asylum seekers:

Are you leaving your country to seek a better economic future? Are you leaving your country in search of a job? These are not valid reasons for granting adults asylum in Norway.¹³

The political leadership in the Ministry of Justice also gave input to the message, wording, and the context given in the videos. The communications department also had to take these into account while adhering to the criteria that all information should be correct and not have an expiration date.

The effects of the campaign

Our informants were certain that the Facebook campaign had secured the dissemination of the message of “stricter asylum regulations.” The message was spread directly through generic traffic and pushed messaging.

I see the campaign as a success. We have substantiated that we have reached people where we wanted to reach them. (Civil servant)

The Facebook page also played an important role in redirecting traffic to the main webpage, Regjeringen.no.

Without Facebook, they would not have been exposed to the information on the webpage (Regjeringen.no). Ninety percent of the non-Norwegian speakers that visit the webpage have been redirected from the Facebook page. (Civil servant)

13 <https://nettsteder.regjeringen.no/asylumregulations/en/stricter-asylum-regulations-in-norway/>

The informants were more in doubt when discussing the effect on changing attitudes among the target populations. A later reception study may reveal how the campaign was perceived by different groups of (potential) migrants and to what extent it impacted their actions.

What we know, is that the Facebook page reached a lot of people. But we do not know whether we thereby influenced their actions. (Civil servant)

One informant noted that smugglers and others spread information about traveling routes and the prosperity in Europe. This information had to be countered.

We know that smugglers actively spread their message encouraging migration. There is reason to believe that our messages are mixed into that information flow. But of course, it is difficult to know what goes on inside the heads of the migrants. (Civil servant)

Others pointed to effects not directly related to the migrants themselves.

The campaign has had a substantial effect in Norway. The current political leadership in the Ministry values direct communication and clear messages. The campaign fits that bill. When the asylum numbers drop, they can point to the campaign. (Civil servant)

In sum, the list of potential effects of the campaign is long. It includes the dissemination of information to potential migrants possibly influencing their choice of destination, effects on voters, effects of the cooperation between ministries, and valuable experiences for future government-led campaigns using social media.

Polyphonic communication?

Migration is always a sensitive political topic, and more so at times with a high influx of asylum seekers.

The stricter asylum campaign was unconventional both in form and content. It was meant to represent Norwegian asylum policies and was premised on civil service norms of information but was launched based on a political initiative to take and show quick action.

The communications department and the Stricter-team worked on the one hand in close cooperation with political leaders whose aim was to communicate the vigor and instant effects of their policies to the voters. On the other hand they should secure ministerial long-term communication with a range of different stakeholders both within and outside Norway.

A new minister was announced just as the campaign started, bringing an additional communication strategy into the building.

When Sylvi Listhaug, a clear-voiced Progress party member, became Minister of Immigration and Integration in December 2015, the Facebook campaign was well underway and fewer asylum seekers were coming to Norway. This was the first time Norway had a designated Minister responsible for the migration area.

Supported by her political staff, she communicated actively using a webpage/blog¹⁴ and Facebook.¹⁵ The topics covered included asylum and immigration, but also gender issues, relations with the media, and more. Her messages focused on many of the same issues as the official Facebook campaign, but she used a more personal tone and mixed factual information with her political and moral judgements in a way that attracted large audiences but also received critique in the media, contending that she blended her role as Minister with that of being a party politician.

On paper, the relation between the communications department and the political leadership is straightforward: All political communication related to party politics is to be formulated and handled by the Minister, state secretary and political advisors – in other words, the political leadership. The communications department is to handle all communications on behalf of the Ministry, including communications and information regarding government policy.

The picture quickly becomes blurry, however, once we ask what are party politics and what are government policies?

Another question is whether the public understands the differences between the different sources of information – in our case, between the Minister’s party’s political webpage/blog/Facebook page on one hand and the official webpage (Regjeringen.no) and Facebook page¹⁶ of the Ministry of Justice on the other.

The actors involved in the Stricter-campaign referred to a set of guidelines on government use of social media. The list went under the name “The red-yellow-green list.” The guidelines listed examples of when it was okay to use social media for government institutions and when it was acceptable to pay for paid placement advertisements in Facebook postings. For example, promoting political messages was a “red category” activity, while posting job advertisements were “green.”

14 <https://sylvi-listhaug.com/>

15 <https://www.facebook.com/listhaugfrp/>

16 <https://www.facebook.com/asylumregulations/posts/1731509427072071>

During the hectic first weeks of the campaign, with all the pressure to get “the message out there,” one informant reflected on how to categorize the messages on the campaign Facebook page.

Increasingly, the messages became more informative, as in “in order to cross the border at Storskog, you need a visa.” That is a piece of information, although maybe even that is political? (Civil servant)

After things calmed down going into 2016, the Stricter-team found it unproblematic to distinguish between the different senders of information:

Sylvi’s (Listhaug, Minister) channels are administered solely by the politicians in the political leadership. She may use numbers and facts from the Ministry, but they are not produced by us for this purpose. She does not have us do the fact-checking. (Civil servant)

The Department of Immigration within the Ministry of Justice was the third party. Working off a separate budget, they had been working with campaigns in third countries since 2011. Their work was traditionally more long-term, using local partners in countries of origin to inform potential migrants. This meant adhering to local standards and NGO norms:

When the communications department oversees a campaign, their message is very clear. In our campaigns, we must take into account the mandates of our local NGO partners. Therefore, the message is a sensitive issue. (Civil servant)

In the campaigns administered by the Department of Immigration, they gave general information about the dangers of migration in general, to all countries.

What we do in our campaigns is not the same at the communications department is doing. We do not deliver a message of “don’t come to Norway” or state that Norway is a particularly difficult destination to get to. What we do is deliver realistic information about the risks of migration. (Civil servant)

The stated goal of the Stricter-campaign was exactly this, to deliver factual information about the asylum regulations in Norway. However, at the same time, the campaign had a clear focus on potential arrivals to *Norway*. Migrants moving to other destinations were of no concern to the Stricter-campaign. Such migrants would, however, be part of the target group of the campaigns administered by the Department of Immigration.

Ethical perspectives

During our interviews, questions relating to ethics were raised. These reflected the gut feeling of the civil servants relating to the message and format of the Stricter-campaign. The task of communicating restrictive messages to target groups in unknown situations made them reflect on their role as government employees. When considering different tools and formats of the Stricter-campaign, the informants sought to strike a balance between being effective and being “inside the norm”¹⁷ – “it had to feel right.”

We thought: Is it worthwhile working with this? We ask people to think twice. That we can defend. The message of the new videos is: Consider this... (Civil servant)

Those that were involved with the campaign, but who were new to the task of communicating restrictive policies, felt the ethical pressure that accompanies the mandate of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security:

This is an area where we cannot bracket off our personal feelings when communicating. (Civil servant)

For some of the civil servants involved, running the campaign took its toll. We asked the informants about how it felt to aim at steering the decisions of migrants still in their home countries or under way. They had all reflected on this issue. One answered, “Yes, because the message is really strong, we did consider that angle” (Civil servant).

The discussions in this chapter will be picked up in the final chapter of the report. There we will discuss the normative ambiguities and difficult choices involved in the balancing act of employing effective and up-to-date communication tools while respecting civil service norms of correct and comprehensive information.

In the next chapter, we look at the results from the comparative query sent to nine members of the European Migration network about their use of social media in government migration communications. We also discuss two NGO-driven campaigns where social media is a key element.

17 Norwegian: «det må være innafor».

3 Communication campaigns based in Europe

The Norwegian Facebook campaign described and analyzed in the previous chapter must be understood in the context of other European countries' information initiatives toward migrants and refugees over the past few years. These initiatives are very heterogeneous, in both their scope and their use of a multitude of information channels, ranging from face-to-face communication, to theater performances, broadcasting and social media efforts. Here, we limit our discussion to campaigns that in some way or another incorporate the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In the following, we refer to such sites collectively as *social media* (see Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) for a discussion of definitions of social media).

To gain insights into the use of social media by European governments concerning information campaigns targeting potential migrants, we sent a limited survey to nine countries in December 2016 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway). These were all members of the European Migration Network (EMN) that had mentioned the use of social media in campaigns in previous surveys. Six countries (BE, NO, DE, FI, IT, and NL) confirmed that they had carried out campaigns involving social media over the last few years. These campaigns were quite different, both concerning the scope (regions within country vs. larger regions like West Africa) and the use of different communication tools.

In the EMN query, the countries replied to a set of questions that were formulated by the researchers of this project and sent out by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The questions included information about 1) links to social media accounts that were used; 2) whether and how the campaigns were viewed as successful; 3) whether the effects of the campaigns were measured in any way; 4) whether there was any information about how the campaigns were received by the target groups; and finally, 5) what the responsible actors would do differently if they were to repeat or develop the campaigns further in any way. We discuss and analyze these data in the first section of this chapter. This analysis will give us key information about whether, and how, social media are incorporated into information campaigns targeting migrants.

In the second part of the chapter, we look closer at some particular campaigns, discussing both their organization and the content. These campaigns were selected on the basis of the answers to the EMN survey.

Campaigns using social media

European countries have experimented with the incorporation of social media in information campaigns for some time already. This means that even though the refugee crisis in 2015 certainly gave momentum to the further use of social media, it did not start there.

The first comment concerning campaigns in general (regardless of the communication channels used) is that the countries report having performed between one to four such campaigns, except for Belgium, who report 24 campaigns, mostly directed toward single countries in Africa. The Belgian campaigns are rather small when it comes to budget and employ social media to a limited degree, if at all. Most of the countries refer to one or two campaigns where social media played a role, again the exception was Belgium who report nine campaigns that to some degree incorporated the use of social media.

No countries (aside from Norway) report campaigns that are built around one or several social network sites as the main platform of communication. Rather, the use of social media seems to play a role that can best be characterized as a supporting communication channel for the other campaigns. In most of the EMN countries social media served mainly to gain attention from users. They were designed to either lead users to a main webpage or to inform them about activities. Based on our data, the campaign “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway” is one of the few (or maybe the only) campaigns reported to have a social media platform as its main communication channel. In the following, we go into more detail regarding the campaigns reported by the EMN countries (i.e. campaigns mentioning the use of social media).

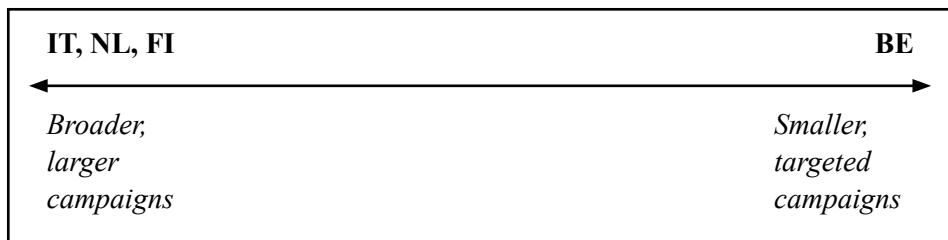
Looking at these campaigns, we see a clear distinction between larger, unified campaigns, and smaller, more targeted campaigns. The larger campaigns are directed toward larger groups, such as entire countries or regions in Asia or Africa.

One example of such a broad campaign would be the “Aware Migrants” campaign, originating in Italy (see below). This campaign consisted of a professionally made website and an accompanying Facebook page. Italy (Dep. of the Inte-

rior) funded the Aware Migrants campaign, which was implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM Italy) with support from IOM in Egypt, Niger, and Tunisia as well as an Italian media agency, Horace. In the EMN-survey, the Italian authorities reported that although the campaign uses “traditional outreach tools,” it has been innovative in the way it has promoted use of the webpage (awaremigrants.org) via Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram.

When we analyze the content in the campaign more closely, we see that the Aware Migrants campaign uses standardized stories of migrants from Africa to Europe and some facts about 7–8 countries as to how to legally apply for residence (including Norway). It also refers to a survey where the main point is that 85% of migrants said they did not know the dangers that awaited them. There is little available information on evaluation.

In addition, the campaign reported by the Netherlands (“Surprising Europe”) and the anti-smuggling campaign from Finland were prime examples of these kinds of information efforts. On the other side of this dimension, many of the campaigns reported by Belgium are relatively much smaller and targeted toward particular groups, for instance particular villages or regions within specific countries. These campaigns have small budgets and use several different communication channels as well as employing Facebook pages by local partners. The campaigns thus had a much more limited scope than the larger campaigns of Italy and the Netherlands.



One such small, targeted campaign was conducted in Cameroon in 2012–2013 and again in 2014–2015 (*Campagne de sensibilisation contre l’immigration irrégulière au Cameroun, 2012–2013*). The campaign was aimed at youth aged 18–35 and was implemented by a local NGO (*SMIC – Solutions aux Migrations Clandestines*). The campaign employed a variety of communication channels according to the Belgian EMN rapporteurs. It used press conferences, traditional media, and Facebook, though it says nothing about how (there is merely a link to the Facebook page of the local partner, see image below). The campaign has not been evaluated, a destiny it shares with the greater share of such campaigns



across countries, but was perceived as successful. Belgian authorities claim that illegal immigration has clearly decreased after the campaign, but do not make any clear causal claim regarding the campaign's effects.

This is a good example of the Belgian style of campaigns, targeting specific populations, for a limited period, with local participation, for instance, smaller NGOs. As can be seen from the image below, the cooperation with local NGOs, incorporating their content into the campaign, may pose some dilemmas concerning the use of strong images – images that may not have been used by governments themselves.



A similar example from the Belgian list of campaigns is apparent in another information effort in Afghanistan in 2016–2017 (“Preventive Actions Against Irregular Migration”, 2016–2017, Afghanistan). Here, there is a link to a Twitter account with an unclear sender, which poses similar ethical dilemmas regarding the strong and emotional imagery that is employed. One could perhaps expect that a Facebook page operated by a ministry or public institution would be reluctant to posting photos with such content.

The two main types of campaigns (broad vs. targeted) are somewhat challenged by the Norwegian approach, which shares characteristics with both types. On one hand, the Norwegian campaign resembled a unified, larger approach, being clearly under government control, where no third parties could influence the communication. On the other hand, it resembled a targeted approach but distinctly different from the more local Belgian approach. Instead, the Norwegian campaign used some of the affordances offered by the Facebook platform – the possibility of targeting those receiving the content. No other countries mention having made use of this in their EMN replies, and informal queries made at a meeting where all countries were present did not provide more insight into the question of Facebook targeting. In future research, we need to shed more light on the possible use of targeting specific groups with Facebook content, as our knowledge of this is quite limited at present.

To sum up¹⁸, EMN countries’ use of social media in information campaigns aimed toward migrants and refugees is still in its early days. No single country seems to have arrived at something that could be called best practice. Rather, governments and ministries are still trying to find out how to incorporate social media into communication strategies.

The analysis demonstrates that there are several strategies for incorporating social media when governments are trying to get through to potential migrants. The main difference between larger campaigns and smaller, more targeted campaigns is one such dimension. The role and combination of different platforms is another. For instance, in smaller campaigns, like many of the Belgian campaigns, there is a great variety of communication channels. In larger campaigns, like those of the Italian or the Dutch, we observe two main channels, the main website and the Facebook page, the latter of which is usually a dedicated Facebook page established with the purpose of serving as a main information channel in the campaign. In contrast, the Belgian approach employs already-existing local media infrastructure, be they TV channels, Twitter accounts, or

18 A complete list of all campaigns that report the use of social media can be found in Appendix 1.

the Facebook page of some local NGO partner. Other countries, like Finland and Germany, still rely on already-existing structures within the government apparatus like the Facebook pages of embassies and ministries. Finally, there is the Norwegian case, in which a dedicated Facebook page constructed and ran under government control. However, this page did not channel users to a dedicated website. Rather, it displayed news-like posts mostly concerning how difficult it had become to come to Norway as a migrant. Of course, these posts all led to webpages administered by the government but not a single website, as was the case with the Aware Migrants or Surprising Europe campaigns.

We will proceed with this line of reasoning as we now move to a more detailed account of the organization and contents of some specific campaigns.

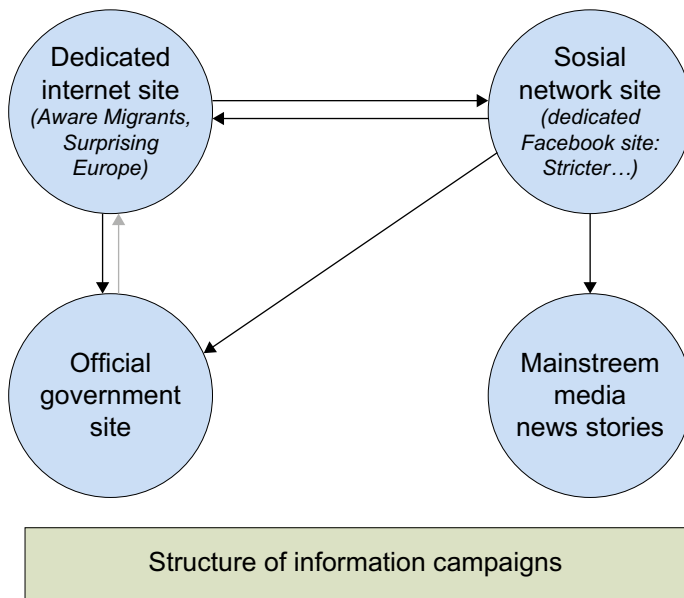
Contents of the campaigns

In this section, we analyze some of the campaigns that were brought to our attention through the survey reported in the previous section. We focus on the content provided both on webpages and on Facebook pages regarding six campaigns/information efforts. The campaigns were the Norwegian Facebook campaign from the Ministry of Justice (Stricter asylum regulations in Norway), the Italy-based campaign Aware Migrants, the UNHCR effort Refugee Stories/Telling the Real Story, the Dutch campaign Surprising Europe, the Finnish Stop Human Smuggling, and finally, the more recent Norwegian website, also from the Ministry of Justice and also concerning stricter asylum regulations (videos and facts text).

These campaigns all used social media, but did so in different ways. In the following, we examine the presentation of the content in these various campaigns according to a number of key dimensions, including the *purpose* of the information, the *sender*, the *platform*, the *textual/visual means* used, the clarity of who the *target group(s)* was/were, and to what degree *factual information* was used. These dimensions presented themselves as key in our analysis of the campaigns reported in the EMN-survey.

First, however, we present a model that describes the links between the communication channels within the campaigns – the structure of information campaigns, if you will. Different platforms can relate to each other in various ways. For some of the campaigns, all these links are active, while for others, only some of them are employed, and for all of them, the frequency of how often the links are used may vary. For instance, the Dutch and Italian campaigns (Surprising Europe, Aware Migrants) both rely heavily on a dual structure. They

both have a dedicated internet site where campaign materials are located, and they have a dedicated social network site (Facebook) that both steers traffic toward the website hub but also links to mainstream media news stories.



However, as far as we have been able to observe, there are no clear links to official government sources apart from a link to a Dutch ministry that financially supports the campaign Surprising Europe. The UNHCR initiative, Telling the Real Story, also relies on such a dual structure, with a dedicated website as well as a dedicated Facebook page. This campaign also links from the Facebook page to both the internet site and mainstream media news stories. However, in addition, it links to official UNHCR pages other places in what can be interpreted as official government sites.

In contrast, the original Norwegian Stricter-campaign has a distinct structure. Here, there is only a dedicated social network site (Facebook) and thus no accompanying internet hub site. Rather, the campaign relies on how the Facebook page posts link to the official government site and, to a more limited degree, mainstream media news stories. This makes the Norwegian campaign more bound to the formal structures of already existing government information infrastructure.

The Finnish campaign that deals with awareness concerning human smuggling and trafficking has a simpler structure in that it solely relies on a dedicated website. Despite hashtags being mentioned on the page (#stopsmugglers; #stop-

traffickers) and a link to the Finnish ministry for Foreign affairs, this is basically a stand-alone website, with no links to other platforms. Similarly, the recent Norwegian campaign (“Stricter 2.0.”) which contains two videos and some information on a single website is a single page that is linked to the Stricter Facebook page.

As we can see, governments can choose between several ways of organizing a campaign online, from simple websites to more complex structures that employ affordances of social media. Specifically, one way this is done is by employing a dual structure of a website and a Facebook page that to some degree mirror each other and where the purpose of the social media site can be to guide traffic and audiences toward the materials in the web hub page. On the other hand, as is the case with the Norwegian campaign, the dual structure may be abandoned, thus creating a campaign that relies solely on a Facebook page. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Norwegian campaign also employed another of the affordances of Facebook – the possibility of targeting specific groups of users. This resembles the organization of some of the Belgian campaigns discussed in the previous section dealing with the EMN survey responses, even though the Belgian approach did not, as far as we know, employ Facebook targeting. Rather, the Belgian approach had a local perspective in the first place, targeting specific communities in certain African countries.

However, as we mentioned in the previous section, there is a lack of quality assessments and evaluations of the campaigns. Thus, it is unclear whether one approach makes more sense than the other in terms of having clear effects on the life choices of migrants. We recommend that such evaluations, together with studies of the reception of the campaigns, be undertaken before concluding how to proceed with such campaigns in the future. We also have a clear recommendation that not only internal evaluations are made, but also research on the actual effects of such campaigns.

In the following, we continue our analyses by looking closer at various aspects of the content of the campaigns. A summary of the findings can also be found in Appendix 2 at the end of the report.

Clarity of purpose

The clarity of purpose is concerned with the degree to which the information given on a specific webpage or Facebook page describes or gives an account of why the information is put forward. For instance, the Norwegian Facebook page has this text at the top of the page:

“This page is managed by The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security to present factual information about Norwegian asylum policy.”

This kind of information gives the audience an idea about the purpose of the information, even if in very general terms. For instance, there is no way for receivers of the information to know that the Ministry of Justice also had a secondary purpose other than merely providing facts – i.e., to limit the number of (potentially) unfounded asylum seekers. Similarly, people visiting the page would not know that the information was targeted at specific groups of migrants (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of the personas targeted).

Across the different campaigns analyzed here, there is some variation regarding how clearly the purpose of the information is given. Only the Norwegian Facebook page has a clearly stated purpose. In the other campaigns, the purpose is ambiguous or non-existent. The purpose for the three larger campaigns (Aware Migrants, Surprising Europe, Telling the Real Story), the purpose is said to create awareness and give voice to migrants telling their stories. Neither the Finnish campaign nor the recent Norwegian one has any clearly stated purpose.

However, some interesting features emerge when we inspect the differences between the website hubs and Facebook pages of the three dual-structure campaigns. At least for the Italian and the Dutch campaigns, the clarity of purpose is more clearly stated on their Facebook pages than on their websites. This may very well be because of the default structure of Facebook pages, where information must be included in the “About” section. Thus, being present on Facebook provides pressure on the campaign managers to formulate a clearer purpose.

There is, however, another side to this, as we shall see in the discussion of the clarity of senders later. The default structure of the Facebook pages, label both the Aware Migrants campaign and the Surprising Europe campaign, as NGOs when they in fact are quite heavily dependent on government financing and initiative. This seems to be a particularly relevant critique of the Italian campaign, where for instance Norway, along with several other countries, has contributed financially to the campaign.

Sender

Information concerning who is responsible for the page and the material there is closely linked to the clarity of purpose described above. For instance, in the Norwegian example, the sender is mentioned in the information that also describes the purpose. However, campaigns can have unclear purposes and clear

senders or vice versa. A clear sender is defined as a written statement clearly stating who the sender is (cf. the example from the Norwegian campaign above). Less clear senders could be the presence of logos or presentation of the sender in small font at the bottom of a page or via some more-or-less hard-to-find link.

Along the same lines as the clarity of purpose, we also observe some variation when it comes to how clear the sender of the information is. The two Norwegian Facebook pages are among the campaigns with the clearest information regarding the sender. For the Finnish, the Italian, and the Dutch initiatives, the sender is either not clearly stated or somewhat difficult to see at first sight.

It is unclear whether the presence of a clear sender has any effect when it comes to how the information is perceived by receiving parties. Some countries report that some migrants do not trust information from formal agencies in receiving countries. Thus, the inclusion of a clear sender might be of less importance. However, from an ethical perspective, when a government agency, or an organization acting on behalf of such an agency, puts forward information regarding a country's laws, the sender of that information ought to be clear and present. The interesting part here is that the campaigns where purpose and senders are less clear are campaigns that do not necessarily have facts-based information as their main goal. Rather, some of these campaigns state that they want to create awareness among and give voice to migrants. Nevertheless, as stated, the failure to include a clear sender and purpose does pose ethical dilemmas when a government is paying for and even commissions such campaigns. As mentioned above, there is also a discrepancy between the websites and the Facebook pages when it comes to how clear the senders are presented in the dual structure campaigns of Italy and the Netherlands. Finally, the UNHCR sites all have a clear and explicit sender.

Platform/technology

This category is concerned with descriptions of the means of publication on the page. Here, we describe the pages with respect to whether and how the different campaigns make use of text, video, graphic material, sound, comments, etc.

The Norwegian, Italian, Dutch, and UNHCR campaigns use social media as a substantial part of the campaign. These four sites differ in several dimensions. The Norwegian site is not updated very often and links to its own material, with the exception of a few links to external sources (BBC, Washington Post), while the three other campaigns seem to be updated more frequently, providing exten-

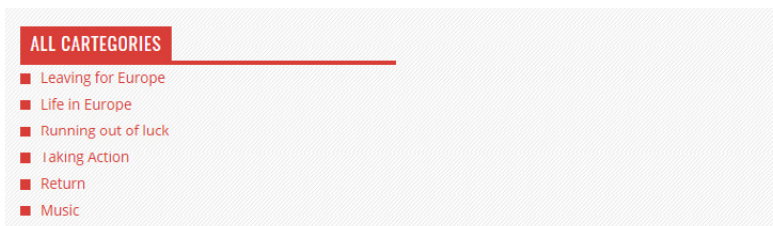
sive links to external sources as well as their own main websites. There seems to be very little activity from users on the Facebook sites of the Norwegian, Italian, and Dutch campaigns, both in terms of comments (almost non-existent) and likes (one should, however, note that the Norwegian page was effectively blocking comments after the initial phase, see ch. 2). For instance, several of the posts on the Facebook page for Surprising Europe seem to have only one like. In contrast, there is more activity on the UNHCR social media presence but only for certain posts. Many posts have very few likes, but others have some hundred likes or other emoticon reactions. There are also occasionally comments on the UNHCR Facebook site. Still, the main impression is that there is little user or audience activity in relation to these campaign sites on Facebook.

Two of the campaigns are solely website-based. The Finnish campaign uses video, text, and graphic novel elements in its narrative structure concerning trafficking. The Norwegian site has only two videos and text in bullet points at the bottom of the page.

Textual/visual means

This dimension deals with the qualitative elements concerning the representations. For instance, are texts and videos dramatic, based on emotions and telling case examples or on statistical information? Are textual strategies promoting deterrence?

Across the different campaigns there are some common features regarding the expressive elements of the content. First, we observe several campaigns that are based around the specific cases, or rather the experiences, of particular migrants. The Italian, Dutch, and UNHCR campaigns are all constructed around this mode of presentation, particularly on their websites. On the other hand, we observe posts that link to international mainstream news media on the active Facebook sites of the Italian, Dutch, and Norwegian campaigns. As a general remark, however, the case/experience examples clearly outweigh the more generalized, statistical information.



Secondly, all of the campaigns in some way or another clearly emphasize deterrence as a strategy. Some do this more clearly than others do. For instance, the Dutch campaign shows a number of different stories told by real migrants. Viewed one by one, they may not be interpreted as a clear message of deterrence, but when we analyze the narrative structure of the site (see figure above), a clear pattern emerges. Stories that deal with travelling to Europe, arriving in Europe, and staying in Europe all give weight to the negative aspects to a large degree. When we move into categories that deal with the possibility of returning home, however, we see a more positive perspective emerge, highlighting the possibilities and opportunities in Africa. In addition, inherent in the narrative structure of the website itself, the message of deterrence clearly emerges (see picture below).

A similar perspective is clear on one of the websites of the UNHCR campaigns (Telling the Real Story). Here we also hear testimonies from migrants, but they are quite different from the stories on the “Aware” campaign’s site. The stories on the UNHCR site are more heterogeneous and less based on a common template. Thus, it gives more of an impression of the migrants’ own perspectives. There is also a clear message in the top left corner. We see a photo with migrants in life jackets. A single face is visible, that of a child, looking directly in the camera. The picture is accompanied by a clear textual message (see below).



Thirdly, some of the campaigns, especially the Finnish and more recent Norwegian campaign, use elements and perspectives from the documentary genre, especially in the video material. These dramatizations clearly adopt visual

strategies employed in documentaries. Finally, we also observe interview-based accounts, but as stated both above and in the analyses below, the way these accounts are structured within the websites tells a clear story of the dangers of leaving and the possible positive opportunities of returning back home.

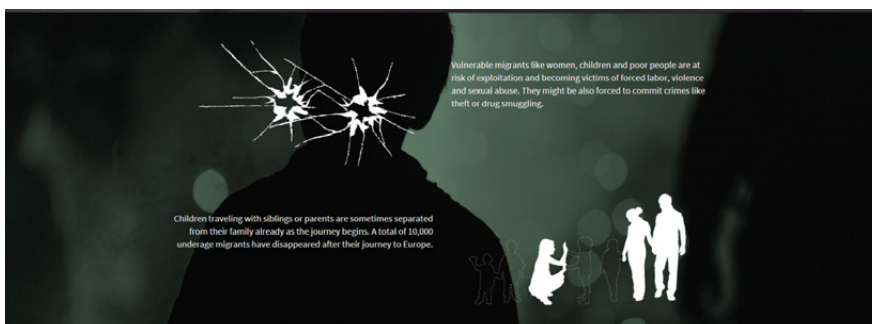
Clarity of target group

This is the equivalent to the sender category, but here we want to know more about whether, and how, the target group(s) of the information is made explicit, implicit, or not at all. An explicit account would state that the information is directed toward individuals that are in the process of leaving their current country of residence for another country.

The clearest target group statements can be found in the Norwegian cases and on the Italian Facebook site. Other places the target group is either not explicit or very broadly formulated and thus unclear. However, as was shown in the previous chapter, the Norwegian government did in fact *have* clear target groups for their communication efforts on Facebook, and these were not reflected in the formal presentation of the campaign itself.

Again, the most explicit target groups can be found on Facebook sites. Both the Italian and the Norwegian Facebook sites provide a clear statement regarding the target groups. The UNHCR Facebook site also provides a statement concerning the target group of the information: first, to ensure that people who are thinking about leaving are fully informed and secondly, that “everyone that is willing to listen” may hear the real accounts of Eritrean and Somali migrants.

The Surprising Europe campaign seems to be more about creating general awareness in the broader public about the issue, while the Finnish campaign has no clear statement. Viewing the page, however, it becomes quite clear that there is a strong message of deterrence. The target groups therefore clearly include potential migrants (see picture below).



The recent Norwegian campaign also has an implicit target group, while there is no clear statement addressing any target group in particular (see picture).

Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security

Choose language ▾

Why risk your life?

Are you leaving your country to seek a better economic future?
 Are you leaving your country in search of a job?
 These are not valid reasons for granting adults asylum in Norway.
 In fact, you have to return home.
 Many have lost their lives or have been abused on their journey to Europe.
 Since 2014, over ten thousand people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean.
 Why risk your life and use your savings to pay smugglers when you will not get permission to stay?

Many have lost their lives on their journey to Europe. Or have been abused on their journey to Europe.

Factual information

From the EMN survey material, we learned that countries state a need to provide information about immigration regimes in their respective countries so that potential migrants, migrants on the move, or even asylum seekers with denied applications should have adequate information when making up their minds about future actions. In this section, we explore how this translates into the actual campaigns. How prominent is the factual information that is put forward? Is there a tendency for factual information to be biased in some way so that more negative aspects (difficulties for asylum seekers, dangers concerned with migration) outweigh more positive aspects (seeking asylum as a right, the asylum institution, a substantial number of migrants actually are allowed to stay, information about how to apply, etc.).

As stated in earlier categories in this content analysis, there is a clear bias toward deterrence in much of the information put forward by governments and institutions when they are informing migrants. This bias is clearly negative in the sense that the information tends to put weight on the dangers of travelling, the difficulties in getting asylum, and in the perils that many migrants might face if they reach Europe at all. There is very little explicit information concerning how to get to Europe legally in these campaigns apart from the Aware Migrants website, where migrants can also find information on legal channels to enter various countries (see image below).



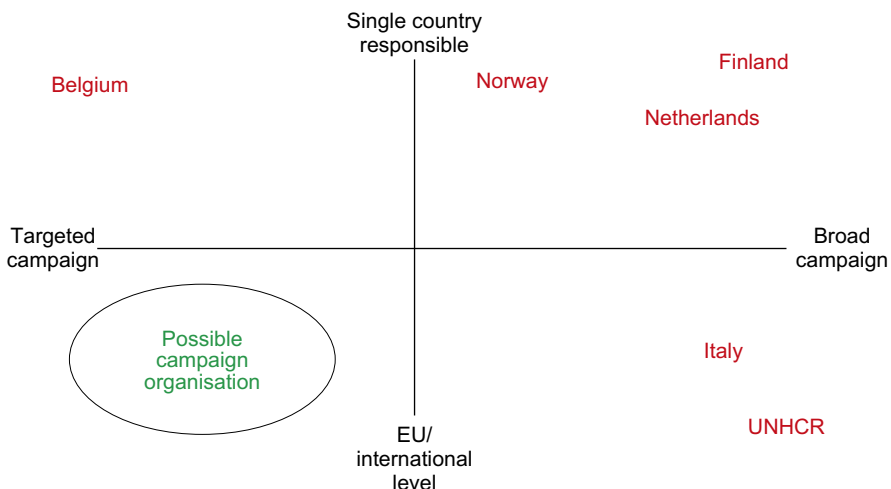
Of course, migrants can find information regarding legal channels to enter countries on government sites. These may be more balanced. Generally, on the campaign sites, however, and throughout the material presented here, negative aspects dominate. Thus, one could speculate that one of the reasons why migrants do not trust information from governments is the fact that campaign information is so clearly biased toward deterrence. Of course, there are also a multitude of other reasons why individuals do not to trust information from governments trying to make them think twice before migrating. For instance, we know that migrants may often have negative experiences with government information from their home countries. And, other sources of information, sources that may have less interest in whether they migrate or not, may be perceived as more legit. These sources may include family members, friends and extended networks.

Early stages of migration campaigns

We should stress that the analyses of the content of information campaigns toward migrants from European governments to a large degree are based on readings of content presented on standard websites. Thus, the use of social media still does not play a main role in the way governments communicate.

However, we see clear signs that governments and ministries are trying to include social media and especially Facebook in their communication strategies. The way they have done this, however, does not seem to take clear advantage of the particular affordances of the platforms. For instance, comments on Facebook seem to either have been dropped altogether, or the campaigns may not have engaged users at all. As was clear from the Norwegian case analyzed in Chapter 2, the inclusion of comments proved very difficult and problematic for the Norwegian communicators. They even stated that in the end, they did not wish to engage audiences through their Facebook page, but rather wanted “get the material out there.” What the Norwegian government did use, however, was another affordance of the Facebook platform: the possibility of ability to target the information so that it reached exactly the groups they wanted to reach.

Based on our evaluation of both the EMN survey responses as well as some selected campaigns, it is possible to place the organization of campaigns in a two-dimensional space. On the horizontal level, we distinguish between campaigns that are quite general and broad in their conceptualizations of the proposed audience and campaigns that are more targeted. On the vertical dimension, we distinguish between campaigns that are organized clearly on the national level, and campaigns that are more international, either by countries combining efforts (Aware Migrants) or by an international organizational body (UNHCR). Interestingly, we see no campaigns in the lower left corner and ask ourselves whether there is room for future campaigns that are organized at the EU level but target smaller groups.



4. Discussion and recommendations

This pilot report has researched how the Norwegian Government, with the refugee crisis in the fall of 2015 as the catalyst, made use of new media platforms to communicate restrictive immigration regulations to potential immigrants. A Facebook campaign was launched, involving targeted advertising to selected groups based on their nationality (Afghanistan, Eritrea), age, and gender. The initiative involved new types of government messages adapted to the formats and premises of social media as well as pioneering inter-governmental cooperation.

The campaign demonstrates the vital, complex, and also controversial role of communication in modern government. The need to communicate effectively, that is, to reach out and convince target groups, might collide with the ground-rules of providing civil service information to the public. In the following we discuss some challenges raised using social media in government (migration) communication related to the *formats and focus* of messages, *institutional roles*, and evaluation of *impact*. We then compare the Norwegian case to other campaigns. Finally, we provide a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Focus and format

The status of knowledge tells us that it is a difficult task for state actors to reach potential migrants with information which they trust (Brekke and Aarset 2009). Recent trends, however, indicate that new media technology plays a vital role as providers of information for people considering migrating and individuals in transit, on their way to destination countries. Devices like smart phones and new personalized social media platforms have accelerated the speed of information circuits and increased the access to different sources of information enormously for many (but not all) migrants).

Against this background, it seems wise for governmental immigration ministries to establish profiles on social media platforms and to post information to targeted groups that they cannot track through conventional means of communication. To restrict information strategies to traditional forums and platforms, in a form and language that fits the norms of formal and precise bureaucratic

language might feel safe and comfortable but is certainly of little use if the addressees can neither access it, nor understand it. Hence, especially in times of crises, where the need to reach out to people is acute, to change communication strategies and make use of new and potentially efficient media technology in one perspective present itself as the obvious choice.

However, the premises – or affordances – inherent in social media platforms like Facebook pose, as described in Chapter 2, a range of challenges and dilemmas for government communication in general and communication directed at migrants in particular. These dilemmas are linked to principles of dialogue, transparency, comprehensiveness, and correctness, as outlined in the norms for government communication to citizens (Rayner, Rayner, Williams, Lawton, & Allinson, 2011; Thorbjørnsrud, 2014), in the Norwegian case outlined in the official codes for state communication (AAD, 2009).

Governments follow a general norm of dialogue with citizens. It remains an open question whether social media – that is, privately owned, commercial companies – present viable forums for democratic dialogue. How is the government norm of dialogue with citizens challenged when the premises of such communication are designed and controlled by commercial third partners?

As described in Chapter 2, the requirement of dialogue, even if cherished as the true “soul” of social media, poses challenges to government communication (e.g., Kavanaugh et al., 2012; Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013). When a government agency runs a Facebook page, it becomes associated with, and responsible for, the content of comments and posts. Any types of insults or hateful speech are certainly off limits. Discussions related to immigration require instant monitoring and editing and hence substantial resources. When controversial issues are discussed, agencies often end up stopping the discussions completely (Lundby & Thorbjørnsrud, 2012). The solution found by the Norwegian Ministry in this case was to make use of filters that, in practice, hinder all user-generated activity on the page.

A central function of a social media platform like Facebook, is the structural preference for messages that spur emotional reactions based on immediate gut feelings, often activated through pictures and in particular videos (Hermida, 2014). A government agency that enters social media will naturally wish to spread its messages through “likes” and “shares” by other users. The incentive to create a type of emotional and captivating message is strong. As touched upon by the civil servants involved in the Stricter-campaign (see Chapter 2), the balancing act of adapting to this “netiquette” while at the same time respecting

basic civil service norms of correctness and precision is demanding. It created a constant internal discussion of how to keep the message acceptable, or “innafor,” often guided by gut feelings of appropriateness and inappropriateness among the officers working with the campaign.

Our informants stressed the importance of making sure that all information transmitted in the campaign was formally correct. However, the informants were well aware that the campaign did not promote a complete package of information. It focused on the barriers to migrants gaining residency in Norway. It did not mention the other side of the coin – that is, the rights of those that qualify for asylum. This information was available on government webpages but not pushed on the Facebook platform.

Therefore, the campaign could be criticized for discarding the principle that the state should give comprehensive information to the public, providing information about both rights and duties, eligibility and illegibility (AAD, 2009). Moreover, experiments with a more direct language, combined with dramatic effects in videos, especially pronounced in the 2.0 campaign, undoubtedly speak to feelings, in particular fear, rather than to reflexive and rational faculties. Again, where to draw the line between appropriate public information and speculative persuasion is not straightforward in these campaigns. This is new territory, and a pertinent question is whether other norms should be applied to state communication directed at foreign nationals than those applying to Norwegian citizens. Is there a separate set of norms for government communication with foreign nationals?

Another principle of government communication is the norm of transparency. Social media profiles in the name of governments can involve an unclear identity and thereby challenge the norm of accountability. It is a basic requirement that government communication is easily recognizable and that the public can identify its status as official information provided by a given ministry or public agency. In Chapter 3, we pointed out that transparency in social media campaigns relates to the clarity of who the sender is, what the message/purpose is, and who the intended targets are (AAD, 2009). Even if the Norwegian Facebook campaigns were clearly marked by the official symbol of the Norwegian Government, we do not know how Facebook users perceived the posted messages or understood the purpose of the campaign. And given that the pushed posts appeared in the target groups’ Facebook feeds, did they understand that the posts originated from the Norwegian Government? Still, the Norwegian campaigns may have been an example of good practice in this regard. As we saw in Chapter 3, it was difficult to detect the sponsors behind both the Aware

Migrants campaign (Italy, IOM, and others) and “Telling the Real Story” (UNHCR and others). They both involved a mix of national sponsors and NGOs. It remains an open question as to how an explicit link to a national government, as in the Stricter case, influences the credibility of the information in the eyes of the target groups.

Social media platforms offer the possibility to pay for to push messages to certain users. This is another sensitive area for governments wanting to promote their information on social media. As discussed in Chapter 2, the paid posts can appear in people’s feeds or in the sidebar. In the first case, the sender identity can be less clear. The status of ads showing up in people’s news feeds will often be intentionally toned down, making them appear similar to others’ posts in the feed, thereby increasing their effectiveness.

Institutional roles

What lessons can be learned from the institutional set up of the Norwegian Facebook campaign? Two aspects of the involved government actors will be described here. Firstly, the campaign highlighted the need for coordination between the political leadership, the communications department, and the immigration department. They play different roles and have different mandates and logics of operation and yet have to agree on a common process, campaign format, and message.

Secondly, a campaign with an international scope will also involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The network of embassies and the MFA’s country of origin expertise were important contributions to the Norwegian campaign. Yet the mandates of the two ministries have different foci: The Ministry of Justice primarily tends to national matters, while the MFA tends to Norway’s international relations.

The structural set-up of the Norwegian ministries puts the communications department in a central position but also in a role where they must strike a balance between the short-term interests of the political leadership on one hand and the long-term ministerial communications to stakeholders on the other. The Stricter-campaign highlighted in several ways these potentially conflicting interests.

In Norway the communications department is part of the permanent civil service staff, and their work is regulated by both freedom of information and public

administration laws (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). They are placed directly under the Minister, cutting through the traditional bureaucratic bureaucracy, and work very closely with the political leadership. Research shows that their role within the ministry has become more central, as communication and media work in general is prioritized, and media strategies often focus on the image of the Minister (Sanders & Canel, 2013). This key role is, however, not explicitly defined in their formal mandate, which points to advising political leaders and expert departments. In our case, the communications team clearly related to these two masters. They should serve the Minister and his/her interests, but all topical communication, such as on migration, had to be checked and approved by the Department of Immigration.

The Stricter-campaign was run by the communications department within the Ministry of Justice. All informants were clear on this point. However, the messaging had to be approved by both the political leadership and the Department of Immigration. And who had the final say? On facts and contents, the Department of Immigration had the final word; on the overall message to be sent, the political leadership; and on the wrapping, design, and format, the communications department.

Several dimensions highlighted the differences in mandates of the three involved actors within the Ministry of Justice, including time, primary targets, and the balance between emotional means of communication and factual information (see table below).

Campaign goals and logics for actors within the Ministry of Justice and Public Security

	Political leadership	Department of Communications	Department of Immigration
Time: Long term vs. short term	Short term (show responsiveness, control, influence migrants' decisions)	Short term (influence migrants' decisions)	Long term (change attitudes in home country)
Primary targets	Voters and migrants	Migrants, voters	Migrants
Facts vs. emotions	Emotions, facts (move voters, display control, secure public trust)	Facts, emotions	Facts

The effects of the campaign

Did the campaign have an effect? There are several answers to that question.

Firstly, no reception study has been made, so the actual impact on the target groups' reception or behavior is unknown. To understand such impact, there is a need to uncover, for example, which groups had access to the technology needed, how the messages were received in the recipients' Facebook feeds, whether the message was shared by Facebook friends or similar, and in what pattern the messages were liked, shared, and commented on. Were the posts understood? And how were they interpreted? Did the branding influence the interpretation of the information, the credibility of the sender, and how the information was seen relative to other available online and offline information? Then there is a need to understand the leap that would occur between a person seeing the information and this information influencing that person's decision to migrate or not, or that person deciding to go somewhere other than Norway.

Secondly, we know that both the campaign pages and the messages posted reached many people. It is, however, difficult to establish exactly how many, and in what way, the messages were disseminated. The statistics provided by Facebook reported millions of hits and thousands of likes. We do not know how these were distributed across the various target groups. The data provided by Facebook reveals the need for in-depth analyses of how the messages were spread among Facebook users.

Thirdly, the campaign had a series of unintended positive consequences, such as the testing of new forms of cross-ministerial cooperation, lessons learned about the potential of paid targeting on Facebook, and experience gained about the limits of using emotive communication tools (music, video) to secure effectiveness.

International and European campaigns

The Norwegian campaign was atypical compared to the international and European campaigns discussed in this report. It appeared to be the only campaign that used a Facebook page as the communication device. The Norwegian initiative also stood out by using paid Facebook posts to reach specific and narrowly defined target groups.

At the same time, European campaigns shared a list of common features. Governments and NGOs wanting to influence migrants' decision-making by

using social media faced similar challenges, including how to organize the campaigns (single country campaign or concerted efforts), the choice of target groups (narrow or broad), ethics (target all migrants or avoid to target people in need of protection), the norm of dialogue (allow for comments?), and the balance between neutral information versus being effective communication (facts or emotions).

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the material and discussions presented in this report, including interviews with key informants and participation in an international experts' meeting, we present the following conclusions and recommendations:

Conclusions

1. The Norwegian Facebook campaign “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway” reached target groups that would be difficult to reach through other media.
2. Different types of media are relevant and useful for reaching different types of migrants – from different countries and at different stages of their journeys. Social media may be effective for disseminating certain messages to specific target groups at certain points in time. Other groups may be better targeted through other means, such as in-person contact, open meetings, and traditional media. Matching target group, message, and medium is essential for effective communications.
3. Strategic government communication with migrants through social media is still at an early stage. We see this, for example, in the variety of solutions regarding how social media and web-platforms are combined in the campaigns led by European countries and international organizations.
4. These campaigns also differ with regard to the size of their target groups. Belgium has the highest number of small targeted campaigns, often targeting regions and specific sub-national groups.
5. Larger, more concerted migration campaigns, often a result of NGOs and countries cooperating, have broader targets – for example, the Aware Migrants campaign described in this report targeting migrants from West Africa.

Recommendations

1. The Norwegian campaign elicited new forms of cross-ministerial cooperation. This experience should be documented and could serve as model for future operations.
2. The Norwegian Government should develop central guidelines for government communication on social media. These should be anchored in the existing general communication guidelines (Central Government Communication Policy) and civil service norms.
3. These guidelines should include rules for paid targeting. There should be transparency regarding those who are targeted by government-sponsored posts on Facebook.
4. All information efforts within the Ministry of Justice and Public Security should be coordinated. As it stands now, the Facebook campaign is administered by the communications department, while long-term campaigns based in countries of origin are administered by expert departments.
5. To secure effective cooperation and coherent communication, a representative from relevant expert departments should supplement the communication-driven operative campaign team in future campaigns.
6. We recommend that concerted international communication campaigns consider including smaller target groups. By doing so, communications could be made relevant and local. Norway supports several of these, including UNCHR's Telling the Real Story and Italy/IOM's Aware Migrants.
7. We do not know the effect of the Norwegian campaign nor of similar European campaigns. We therefore suggest the following:
 - a. An internally based mapping of existing knowledge on the effects of similar campaigns.
 - b. A thorough reception study, including migrants' perceptions of government-sponsored information on social media and its effects on migration-related decisions.


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Appendix 1

First “Stricter” post

**Stricter asylum regulations in Norway**
6. november 2015 · 🌐

The Norwegian government has announced a tightening of its asylum and family immigration policy

The government is going to reduce benefits for asylum seekers and introduce tighter rules for asylum and family immigration," says Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen (Progress Party – FrP).

To stem the flow of asylum seekers to Norway, the government is going to:

1. reduce benefits for people living in reception centres by 20%; benefits for families with children will be reduced by 10%.
2. change the period of residence to become eligible for permanent residence from 3 to 5 years.
3. issue temporary residence permits and facilitate return if the situation in the country of habitual residence changes.
4. use integration criteria for the granting of applications for permanent residence.
5. limit family reunification and family establishment rights for refugees:
 - maintain the subsistence requirement in applications for renewal of a permit in cases where the initial permit included a subsistence requirement
 - introduce subsistence requirements for refugees in cases where exceptions are currently made, but where family life can be exercised in a country other than Norway
 - establish criteria for family reunification in cases where the family has residence in another safe area
 - introduce stricter rules for family reunification for parents of unaccompanied minors who can return to their country of habitual residence
6. conduct dialogue with the Eritrean authorities to get diplomatic assurances from the Eritrean authorities that enable return.
7. collaborate with the Iraqi authorities to establish structures for return to safe areas of Iraq, so that Iraqis and internal refugees in Iraq who have been ordered to leave Norway can be referred for internal flight.

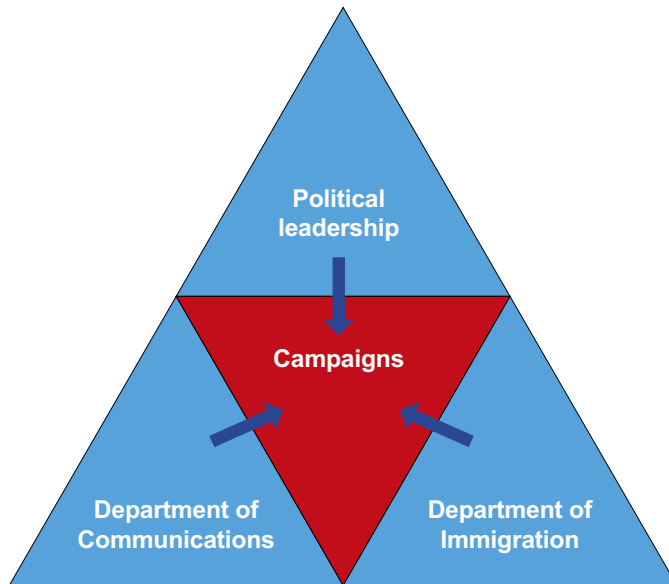
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Appendix 2

Model of campaign administration



Appendix 3

Summary of EMN responses

Finland

Finland had two types of information initiatives that make use of social media. The first initiative consists of a collection of “promoted news items” concerning information about the country’s asylum policy, the matter of return, family reunion, etc. This initiative was a cooperation between the Finnish Foreign Ministry, Interior Ministry, and Immigration Service. Target groups were identified as potential asylum seekers between 15 and 45 from a number of countries, mainly the Middle East and Africa and Russia. The goal of these news initiatives was to provide potential asylum seekers with information on the country’s policies and human smuggling. The Finnish authorities used the websites of embassies in addition to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. They stated to have reached six million users, with a click rate of 5% (approximately 300,000 clicks). Concerning social media, they mostly used official accounts belonging to the Foreign Ministry. Evaluation is based on clicks, relationships, and reactions. The evaluation is, however, too limited to say anything conclusive about the effects. Based on the responses, it appears that the perceptions of the messages were marked by distrust of information, skepticism toward sources, anger, and resentment. Some even made fun of someone else’s misfortune and opening up about one’s own distress and asking for help. These campaigns lasted for 1–2 weeks at a time and are ongoing.

The second initiative is a more clear-cut campaign against human trafficking: Stop Human Smuggling (www.stoptraffickers.info July to October 2016), conducted by the Foreign Ministry, a commercial company, local IOM offices, and the Somali diaspora. The content highlights that smuggling is a criminal offense, smugglers earn big money, migration involves risks, smugglers are responsible for death, and families are breaking up as a consequence of smuggling. Focus has been on campaign sites and promotion through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Google ads. For both campaigns, the Finnish authorities believe that in the future there should be international campaigns, at least against smuggling.

Germany

The information about the German campaigns using social media is limited. However, a general Facebook page is mentioned and the Facebook page “Germany in Afghanistan” as well as various sites in different languages relevant to asylum applicants considering Germany as destination. Germany has also used Facebook ads in several countries ([facebook.com/bamf.socialmedia](https://www.facebook.com/bamf.socialmedia)). These were in German. The site appears to be aimed at asylum seekers and refugees. The German rapporteurs report that the campaigns were perceived positively in Afghanistan, because they created a dialogue about the difficulties relating to leaving the country. They refer to millions of users and followers who clicked on relevant sites via social media as well as testimonies from Afghan refugees. There is no other evaluation apart from these high numbers. The response from Afghans was mixed. Some appreciated the clear information, while others responded by describing why they were forced to leave the country. Campaigns in the Western Balkans elicited negative Facebook comments.

Italy

The Ministry of the Interior in Italy funded the Aware Migrants campaign. This was implemented by IOM in Italy, which is the coordinating office for the Mediterranean, with support from IOM in Egypt, Niger, and Tunisia. An Italian media agency, Horace, was in charge of design and functionality (see Chapter 3). Italian authorities reported that although the campaign uses “traditional outreach tools,” it is innovative in using Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram to promote the webpage (awaremigrants.org). The campaign is largely based on standardized stories of migrants from Africa to Europe. It also includes facts on how to legally apply for residence in eight countries (including Norway). It also referred to a survey where the main point is that 85% of migrants said they did not know the dangers that awaited them. Little information is available concerning evaluation.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands has a long-lasting campaign titled Surprising Europe (dating back to 2011). This is available on different platforms and has film and text on migrants’ experiences of the journey and life as a migrant in Europe. The target group is said to be potential migrants, migrants that potentially could return, rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants, and labor migrants. The project used radio, television, and mobile cinemas in villages. Social media (Facebook and Twitter) are used to promote the campaign and to build an audience. In

addition, web-TV channels have been used to secure dissemination. The Dutch authorities are satisfied with the reach of the campaign but see that it is difficult to assess the effects of the campaign on irregular migration. They assume these to be small. Social media was important in mobilizing the public and in spreading information about events. Still, the main focus of the campaign was the webpage.

Belgium

Belgium stands out from the other EMN countries participating in our survey. They report a long list of campaigns (73 in total). These were often smaller campaigns aimed at individual countries, with smaller budgets. Nine of the campaigns explicitly used social media as part of their communication tool package.

1. **Campagne de sensibilisation contre l'immigration irrégulière au Cameroun (2012–2013).** Local NGOs served as partners for this campaign aimed at youth aged 18–35 (*SMIC – Solutions aux Migrations Clandestines*). They used press conferences, traditional media, and Facebook. This campaign was not evaluated but was perceived as successful. Illegal immigration has decreased clearly after the campaign (www.facebook.com/ong.smic?fref=ts). The campaign was repeated in 2014–2015.
2. **Prevention Campaign Morocco.** This campaign was started but then put on hold because of an election in Morocco. A dedicated Facebook page was made along with visits to schools, radio jingles, etc. Targets were potential migrants and students who were considering going to Europe. Since the campaign has not finished, it has not been evaluated.
3. **Preventing Irregular Migration from Armenia to the Kingdom of Belgium by Raising Awareness of Potential Migrants (2012–2013).** This campaign does not explicitly mention social media, but three YouTube videos were used. The organizers want to use social media if the campaign is repeated.
4. **Public Information Campaign in Armenia on the risks of illegal migration (2013–2014).** This campaign appears to have been in cooperation with the French OFFI, with Belgium as the lead. It was aimed at potential migrants, diaspora, and people who have returned. The aim was to increase awareness of the dangers of irregular migration. Among the many communication channels (television, meetings with journalists, print) we find a website (www.migrationcompass.am) and social

media. The campaign was not evaluated, but the authorities note that the number of Armenian migrants did decrease.

5. **Information Campaign in Georgia for the Prevention Of Irregular Migration** (2016). The target groups for this campaign were potential migrants and returnees and mostly young men aged 18–35. Many channels were used, including social media (IOM Georgia’s Facebook page; IOM Georgia’s Migration Channel YouTube). There is no link to web-pages, but reference is made to the Campaign’s Facebook page, “Stop Irregular Migration.” No evaluation was made, but numbers were found to decrease.
6. **Public Awareness About the Risks of Irregular Migration and the Potential Benefits of Regular Migration** (in the framework of the EU Twinning Project). This campaign, targeting young people (18–35) in Kosovo, has not yet been launched. A list of media is presented, including print, TV/radio, social media (Facebook, digital banners), and meetings.
7. **Promoting Responsible Migration Decisions Among Ethnic Minorities and Youth Outreach and Education** (Two campaigns, in Macedonia and Kosovo [2011–2012]). Among the communication channels (bus tour, concert, and documentary) was also a Facebook page with a “total reach of 122,793 people.” There was no evaluation, but the numbers of migrants decreased. There was a link to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Twitter was found to not be effective.
8. **Prevention of Irregular Migration from Albania to Belgium** (2015). This campaign targeted young people in specific regions in Albania. It used printed materials along with meetings and Facebook. The campaign was formally evaluated, but this did not include experience from using social media. It was linked to IOM’s Facebook page and YouTube. The numbers fell but rose again after a while.
9. **Preventive Actions Against Irregular Migration from Afghanistan** (2016–2017). This campaign is ongoing. Social media is not explicitly mentioned, but the campaign involves links to Twitter and Facebook.

Appendix 4

Summary of content analyses

Clarity of purpose

Stricter asylum regulations in Norway

- A clear purpose is formulated to audiences (see below). This information is present both at the main page and under the “Above section“ (default section on Facebook pages).
- *This page is managed by The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security to present factual information about Norwegian asylum policy.*

Aware migrants

- No clear purpose apparent on the front of the webpage. On the Facebook page, however, information can be found both on the front page and under the About section:
- *Aware Migrants is a project addressing migrants in transit and potential migrants in their countries of origin that aims to raise awareness on migration.*

Refugee stories/Telling the real story

- No clear purpose on either of the front pages (Facebook-tellingthereal-story; Stories-UNHCR Web; tellingtherealstory.org). However, on tellingtherealstory.org there is an About section that lists a purpose for the information put forward:
- *The purpose of the Telling the Real Story platform is to allow Eritreans and Somalis who have made the journey to Europe to share their stories about the journey and the situation in destination countries. Telling the Real Story does not attempt to address the reasons for people’s departure from their country of origin, but instead focuses on their experiences along the journey and in Europe.*

Surprising Europe

- Semi-clear purpose on both web and Facebook page:
- Web: *Surprising Europe is a non-profit project to document migration experiences of legal and illegal immigrants from Africa.*

- Facebook: *Surprising Europe is an international cross-media project contributing to the debate about migration to Europe and creating awareness about the real life of migrants in Europe.*

Stop Human Smuggling

- No clear purpose stated on the webpage stoptraffickers.info

Recent Norwegian campaign (video)

- Purpose is not clearly stated. However, the texts on the webpage are quite direct in the manner in which they construe the intended recipient/reader:
- “Why risk your life?”
 - *Are you leaving your country to seek a better economic future?*
 - *Are you leaving your country in search of a job?*
 - *These are not valid reasons for granting adults asylum in Norway.*
 - *In fact, you have to return home.*
 - *Many have lost their lives or have been abused on their journey to Europe.*
 - *Since 2014, over ten thousand people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean.*
 - *Why risk your life and use your savings to pay smugglers when you will not get permission to stay?*

Sender

Stricter asylum regulations in Norway

- Sender is clearly stated, cf. statement concerning the purpose.

Aware migrants

- More unclear sender. However, it is possible to get some sense of who is responsible for the material by clicking a link concerning the project on the website. On Facebook, it is more unclear, as Aware migrants is presented as an ideal organization, presumably some sort of NGO. So on Facebook there is no clear link to the Italian government or IOM.
- Text from web site: *Aware Migrants is a project realized by the International Organization for Migration – IOM, with the technical and creative support of Horace communication agency and financed by the Italian Ministry of Interior, Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration.*

Refugee stories/Telling the real story

- Sender is clearly stated by logo in upper, left corner. UNHCR is also presented at the bottom of the page:
- *UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, protects and assists people fleeing conflict or violence. In the past 60 years we have helped tens of millions of vulnerable people find refuge. With your support we can help many more.*

Surprising Europe

- Sender's status is unclear, but mentioned on the web site (see below). On Facebook page it appears as a NGO, with no direct link to the Government. Among the partners listed are IOM, the European Return Fund, and the Dutch ministry of current affairs
- Text from web site: *Surprising Europe is a non-profit project to document migration experiences of legal and illegal immigrants from Africa.*
- *The Project is an initiative by Witfilm Amsterdam and Ssuuna Golooba and kindly sponsored by the partners listed below.*

Stop Human Smuggling

- Rather unclear sender, but logo and text from the Foreign Ministry of Finland is present at the bottom of the webpage.

Recent Norwegian campaign

- Clear sender, both in text and logo it refers to the Norwegian ministry of justice and public security.

Platform/technology

Stricter asylum regulations in Norway

- Facebook-based. Posts that link to news items on the Norwegian government web site, some posts to external news sources. After the launch, the comments section was blocked by using a strict filter (provided by Fanbooster, see chapter 2).

Aware migrants

- The web site consists of stories in text and video, and some information pages. Standard web site. The Facebook page posts various news items from external sources as well as references to the Aware migrants web site. The Facebook page is updated very often.

Refugee stories/Telling the real story

- The web site links to various stories, in text, videos and images. The Facebook page *tellingtherealstory* is regularly updated, and links to the main web hub, some international mainstream media, and posts video materials.

Surprising Europe

- Quite similar to the Aware set-up. More content on the web site than Aware. The Facebook posts are both references to the main site, posting of external content, and more simple Facebook updates, with no link (see example):
- *Sweden accepted 35,000 unaccompanied child refugees aged nine to 17 last year.*

Stop Human Smuggling

- No social media site, only web site, with reference to hashtags. The website is a scrollable page with some video material (a la documentary); some text, and some graphics (a la comic book/graphic novel)

Recent Norwegian campaign

- Web site, no dedicated social media site. Two videos, available in several languages, small fact sheet at bottom of page.

Textual/visual means

Stricter asylum regulations in Norway

- All content resembles news, but with a clear bias towards the title of the page itself, a clear focus on the stricter policies of Norway in particular. Posts mainly deal with news that could be interpreted as deterrence, focusing on how migrants are deported, how policies need to be stricter, etc. All of the posts thus seem to very much “on message,” leaving little room for other perspectives, or information concerning how a migrant actually can get a residence permit in Norway.

Aware migrants

- Very different from the Norwegian content, the content on the Aware website mainly deals with experiences by actual migrants. That said, there seems to be a clear bias towards negative experiences, with very strong messages concerning the possibility of death, trafficking, losing friends and family, rape/prostitution, etc. In addition, the content on the Facebook page that links to external sources has a clear bias towards the plight of

immigrants. The sub-text of the Aware-campaign must be interpreted as one of deterrence, raising awareness of migrants that are thinking about taking the journey to Europe. On the web site, there is also some balancing information on how to come to Europe legally, but also what the possibilities are if a person decides on staying in Africa. Thus, on the surface it seems as the campaign provides information for migrants to make up their minds, but as noted the information is clearly biased in the sense that positive information is concerned with staying in Africa, highlighting the opportunities there, while negative information is concerned with the migration experience when leaving for Europe.

Refugee stories/Telling the real story

- Again, a different approach than the other campaigns. Here we also hear testimonies from migrants, but quite different from the stories on the Aware-campaign. The stories on the UNHCR site are more heterogeneous, and less based on a common template. Thus, it gives more an impression of the migrants' own perspectives. Having said that, there is also a clear message at the top left corner. A picture where we see migrants in life jackets, and where the only face visible is that of a child, looking directly in the camera. The picture is accompanied by a clear textual message.

Surprising Europe

- The outline of the campaign resembles the Aware campaign, but is more complex. Here, we also see strong, telling stories, told from actual migrants own perspectives, in video, images and text. Further, the stories are organized in categories, that provide a very telling narrative structure to the migrant experience, clearly telling a story of how difficult it is to travel to Europe, and that many should choose to go back. The categories are organized as follows:
 - *Leaving for Europe*
 - *Life in Europe*
 - *Running out of luck*
 - *Taking action*
 - *Return*
- It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed account of the many different stories here, but the three first categories are preoccupied with stories of the plight, difficulties and dangers faced by migrants on the way to Europe, and in Europe. Stories include dangers on the road, and falling prey to prostitution. The two latter categories provide more positive

stories, especially in the final category we can read stories about *Home, sweet home*, and *High hopes in Europe, real opportunities back home*.

- The Facebook page of this campaign provides much of the same, but is more dynamic as it posts clear messages on current events, and provide links to external sources. However, the reach of the page is questionable, as less than 3000 users follow the page, and, as mentioned before, there is hardly any user activity in the form of likes and/or comments.

Stop Human Smuggling

- A clear message of deterrence, don't use smugglers. Highlighting the dangers on the journey, and the difficulties of actually getting a residence permit in Finland. The message seems to be both about awareness concerning smuggling, and to deter people from going to Finland. The webpage reads as a narrative structure from top to bottom of the page, consisting of different modes of expression (see previous section). There is no social media presence apart from hash tags.

Recent NO campaign

- This is basically just one very simple webpage, with two major elements; the two videos, shot documentary style, with a clear message in the voice-over of how difficult it is to get a residence permit in Norway. Clearly targeting people with no clear need for protection, people on the look-out for better jobs and to improve their financial situation. The voice-over, and text is accompanied by strong visual elements, including death and danger. While the videos are quite strong emotionally, they also convey a very simple and facts-based narrative in the voice-over. One could say that the way the text and the images work together, create a very strong, emotional narrative and message. On the bottom of the page one can find a fact sheet, highlighting the same information in bullet points, stressing the fact that Norway has stricter regulations than before, and that people can be expelled for lying, etc.
- There is no social media presence, but the page is linked to from the Stricter campaign Facebook page.

Clarity of target group

Stricter asylum regulations in Norway

- Clearly stated in the About section on the Facebook site:
- *This Facebook page is primarily aimed at potential asylum seekers from countries that do not have a basis for residence in Norway and are*

therefore likely to receive a negative response to their application for asylum.

Aware migrants

- Not explicitly stated, however, in the news category section of the web site there is a list of the West African countries featured in the campaign. On the Facebook page there is a clear statement:
- *Aware Migrants is a project addressing migrants in transit and potential migrants in their countries of origin that aims to raise awareness on migration*

Refugee stories/Telling the real story

- No clear statement of target group. The Facebook page of *Telling the real story* has this text in the About section (target groups highlighted by us):
- *Telling the Real Story platform provides a collection of authentic stories, told by the refugees and migrants themselves. They speak to their own communities and share their experiences, good and bad. Through these testimonies, those who choose to embark on the journey are informed of the full scope and perils they may encounter in order to help them make an informed decision and prepare them for their future movements.*
- *Through the platform, UNHCR is supporting brave Eritrean and Somali survivors to tell their stories in their own words and to everyone that is willing to listen.*

Surprising Europe

- No clear statement on web site. On Facebook, the About section has a sentence that is quite broad and rather unclear:
- *a virtual meeting place for migrants and anyone who is interested in migration issues*

Stop Human Smuggling

- No clear statement of target group

Recent Norwegian campaign

- No clear statement, but the former Facebook page states the target group. In addition, the web site clearly targets people who come to Norway or are thinking about coming do not have the necessary status

Communicating borders

Informing migrants and potential asylum seekers through social media

At the height of the 2015 refugee crisis, the Norwegian Government launched a Facebook campaign titled “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway.” Their aim was to deter potential asylum seekers from coming to Norway.

It was not a straightforward task to combine norms for government communication with the formats of social media. The Norwegian cross-ministerial team that administered the campaign was faced with a range of dilemmas. These included the paid targeting of potentially vulnerable individuals, moderating and controlling an open Facebook page, and balancing correct information with the direct and emotional language of social media.

The report includes examples of similar European and international campaigns. The Norwegian campaign stood out with its solid base in social media, and demonstrated both the potential and dilemmas involved in government communication on new media platforms.