

ERNA URICSKA

Social networking sites for accident prevention – The representation of mobile phone use while driving on law enforcement profiles in the European Union

Introduction

Distracted driving is one of the leading causes of road traffic accidents.¹ According to the definition of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration “distracted driving is any activity that takes the attention away from the task of safe driving, including talking on a phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in the vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment or navigation system”.² According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there are three main types of distraction³:

- Visual: when the drivers take the eyes off the road;
- Manual: when the drivers take hands off the wheel;
- Cognitive: when the drivers take mind off driving.

¹ Papadimitriou, E., Argyropoulou, A., Tselentis, D.I. & Yannis, G. (2019): Analysis of driver behaviour through smartphone data: The case of mobile phone use while driving. *Safety Science*, 119: 91–97

² NHTSA (n.d.): Distracted Driving.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/Wcxa>

Accessed 12.10.2023

³ CDC (n. d.): Distracted Driving.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/Wcxv>

Accessed 12.10.2023

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2010). Overview of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Driver Distraction Program (DOT HS 811 299) [PDF – 36 pages]. U.S. Department of Transportation, Washington, DC.

Accessed 12.10.2023

Mobile phone use while driving is a subtype of distracted driving, and belongs to all three types. The number of road accidents caused by texting while driving has increased sharply in the last 10 years, especially among young drivers.⁴ ROADPOL Operation Focus on the Road is a coordinated pan-European enforcement action carried out by Traffic Police Officers from each ROADPOL member country and takes place on Europe's roads in addition to the daily national Traffic Police enforcement activities to combat distraction in road traffic.⁵ Mobile phone use while driving is also a subject to increased controls across Europe. The operation was announced for the third time in September 2022, and Hungary was also among the participating countries.⁶ In addition to this initiative, the Vision Zero approach, a global framework can be mentioned that aims to reduce road fatalities to zero. The goal of the law enforcement units is to convince and involve citizens in the accident and crime prevention. Social networking

⁴Edgar Snyder & Associates. 2022 Texting and Driving Accident Statistics.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcAc>

Accessed: 12. 10. 2023.

Jannusch, T., Finnbar, M & Mullins, M. (2020): A new version of the Behaviour of Young Novice Drivers Scale (BYNDS). Insights from a randomised sample of 700 German young novice drivers. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 145: 105622.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2020.105622>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Jannusch, T., Darren, S. Völler, M. Finnbar, M. & Mullins, M. (2021): Smartphone Use While Driving: An Investigation of Young Novice Driver (YND) Behaviour. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*, 77: 209–220

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trf.2020.12.013>

Accessed 12.10.2023

⁵ ROADPOL. European Roads Policing Network. ROADPOL Operation Focus on the Road.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcAh>

Accessed 12.10.2023

⁶ Magyar Rendőrség [Hungarian Police]. ROADPOL Safety Days “Focus on the Road.”

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcBe>

Accessed: 12. 10. 2023

sites are appropriate for this framework as possible actors of enhancing accident prevention and creating public safety as they can contribute to the development of the sense of public safety through their adaptation into the digital external organisational communication.

Visual communication and accident prevention

Visual content such as images, videos, paintings, films, drawings, graphs and diagrams are effective tools for communication,⁷ as they present and explain phenomena in a complex way that cannot be expressed by simply words. Their most important feature is that they convey complex information, thus enabling them to be more convincing within a shorter period of time.⁸

The choice of the visual content is based on two aspects, firstly, a proper visual form has to be chosen that communicates the desired message, and secondly, a communication channel has to be selected that reaches the desired target audience in a way that the message can be understood and received by the members or the followers.

With the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and nowadays BeReal, visual content has come to the fore.⁹ They are becoming increasingly important and relevant not only for individuals but also for organisations. Public administration organisations also have the opportunity to achieve their communication goals through visual content, and social campaigns can be supported by well-planned visual strategies.

⁷ Simon, T. & Kárpáti, A. (2018): Vizuális kommunikáció a tudományközvetítésben [Visual communication in science mediation]. Jel-Kép: KOMMUNIKÁCIÓ, KÖZVÉLEMÉNY, MÉDIA, 4: 87–96

⁸ Kuttner, Á., Kristóf, A. & Kárpáti, A. (2021): Instagram közösségi média használata a kiállítási kommunikációban – iskolai kísérlet bemutatása [Using Instagram social media for exhibition communication – a school experiment] Jel-Kép: Kommunikáció Közvélemény, MÉDIA, 4: 19–29

Simon, T. & Kárpáti, A. (2018): Ibid.

⁹ Russmann, U. & Svensson, J. (2017): Introduction to Visual Communication in the Age of Social Media: Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodological Challenges. Media and Communication, 5 (4): 1–5

Communication skills are particularly important for law enforcement personnel to achieve high level of professionalism, to formulate their opinions, and to assert them. Due to their tasks and activities, police professionals communicate almost constantly with citizens, whether it is one-way, two-way, offline or online communication.¹⁰ Their communication is primarily a social communication, and often has an additional goal, namely relationship building. Police communication often achieves its goal through its quality, but it is often forgotten that one of the final aims of communication is actually to influence and alter the attitudes and behaviour of the members of the society. In the 21st century, with the advent of internet and social media, communication processes have two main components: a human and a technical one.

The appropriate use of social media can encourage organisations, public administration organisations as well as non-governmental organisations to react to the emerging problems responsibly and effectively in order to achieve mutual cooperation.¹¹ As a consequence, it can be of vital importance for analysing how new media channels are used in everyday practices to improve the quality of external organisational communication.

Both on a national and international level, there is a growing number of research on how the emergence of social media affects the number of crimes committed, how social media can be used for gathering information

¹⁰ Tajudeen, F. P., Noor, I. J., & Ainin, S. (2017): Understanding the impact of social media usage among organizations. *Information @ Management* 55(3): 308–21; Fielding, N. G. (2021): Police communications and social media. *European Journal of Criminology*, 1–19

Source: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370821998969>
Accessed 23.10.2023.

¹¹ Papadimitriou, E., Argyropoulou, A., Tselentis, D.I. & Yannis, G. (2019): Analysis of driver behaviour through smartphone data: The case of mobile phone use while driving. *Safety Science*, 119: 91–97; Dekker, R., van den Brink, P. & Meijer, A. (2020): Social media adoption in the police: Barriers and strategies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37 (2): 1–9

in law enforcement,¹² and how social media can be integrated into external organisational communication to enhance police–public relations and dialogue, and promote the social role and responsibility of law enforcement units.¹³ Police forces as organisations can also reach citizens and engage them in prevention activities.

Digital visual strategy can include the representation of a campaign against a social problem on social media for which the most appropriate and convincing content has to be created both quantitatively and qualitatively to support the campaign's aim. Visual representation is a kind of a reflection of the real world,¹⁴ the signs can represent a special social problem.

In the field of law enforcement, the strategic use of images and videos on social networking sites in external organizational communication and the representation of social problems are in their introductory phase, and according to Dekker and co-authors (2020), the main obstacles are the lack of appropriate professionals and a strategic approach.¹⁵ This study aims to present the research results whether the above-mentioned offline initiatives are represented on social media platforms in the online sphere.

Research sample

The research examines a subfield of digital law enforcement communication, the representation of a campaign against distracted driving and mobile phone use while on the Facebook pages and Instagram profiles operated by

¹² Gyarakai, R. (2021): A közösségi média hatása a kiberbűncselekmények elkövetésére. [The impact of social media on the commission of cybercrimes], *Magyar Rendészet*, 21(2): 67–82

¹³ Dekker, R., van den Brink, P. & Meijer, A. (2020): Social media adoption in the police: Barriers and strategies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(2) 1–9

¹⁴ Ioannidis, Y. (2009): Representation. In: Liu, L. & Özsu, M. T. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Database Systems*, 3405–3410. Boston, MA: Springer.
Source: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-39940-9_449
Accessed 24.10.2023

¹⁵ Dekker, R., van den Brink, P. & Meijer, A. 2020.

law enforcement agencies in the 27 Member States of the European Union. The sampling was implemented twice for a month-long period. The first sampling was conducted between 01 September 2022 and 30 September 2022, when ROADPOL Safety Days Focus on the Road operation was implemented, and then the sampling process was repeated in an average month between 01 December 2022 and 31 December 2022.

Hypotheses

Based on the offline campaign, it was assumed that

- 1) mobile phone use while driving was a highlighted theme in the content observed;
- 2) distracted driving was a highlighted theme during the operation in September 2022;
- 3) mobile phone use while driving was a highlighted theme during the operation in September 2022.

Research sample: Instagram and Facebook

Before the present research, pilot research was conducted to select those social networking sites that are appropriate from professional, qualitative and quantitative viewpoints for this current research.¹⁶ Social media platforms that are used for conversations (e.g. Facebook Messenger), and professional or business purposes (e.g. LinkedIn) were excluded out of the top ten platforms.¹⁷ It was planned that the official websites, Facebook pages,

¹⁶ Uricska, E. & Fekete, L., Vinczéné (2022, February 4). Educating the public, in service of crime prevention: Factors influencing persuasiveness of social advertising videos [Paper presentation]. Taní-tani online conference. Miskolc, Hungary: Faculty of Humanities Teacher Training Institute.

¹⁷ Lyons, K. Semrush Blog. (1.11.2022.): 28 Top Social Media Platforms Worldwide. Source: <https://bitly.ws/yFaq>
Accessed 12.10.2023

Instagram profiles, TikTok profiles and YouTube channels operated by national law enforcement units in the Member States of the European Union would be included in the research sample.

If YouTube is compared to other platforms, it is obvious that watching a YouTube video is not a random act, like in the news feed of Facebook or Instagram, but it is a conscious and deliberate action. The user sits down and watches a video on accident prevention. For this reason, the YouTube channel was excluded from the research sample.

In the middle of the first sampling period, it became evident that law enforcement units of the countries observed were hardly present on TikTok, and as a consequence of it, that there were only few entries. The platform was not used for external organisational communication purposes, and regular content sharing was not part of the external law enforcement communication. The videos posted on TikTok were often shared in the form of private content of police officers, aimed at increasing personal popularity and building individual brands. The videos were constructed in a special style that differed significantly from the official police communication (e.g. arrests under an Eminem song, dancing police officers). On this account, TikTok was not included in the platforms analysed.

The official websites were also excluded from the sample as the number and content consumption habits of the followers and the visitors cannot be observed by an external researcher. Furthermore, social networking sites are becoming important research areas for social communication due to their growing popularity. For the reasons listed above, the verbal and visual content of the two most popular platforms, Facebook and Instagram were analysed. In particular, Instagram profiles are followed by the members of Generation Z in large numbers where the number of accidents caused by distracted driving is particularly high.¹⁸

¹⁸ Hernandez-de-Menendez, M., Carlos A. E.D. & Morales-Menendez, R. (2020): Educational experiences with Generation Z. *International Journal on Interactive Design and Manufacturing*, 14(3) 847–859

Source: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12008-020-00674-9>

Accessed 12.10.2023

In the starting phase of the research, it was unexpectedly complicated to find the official Facebook and Instagram profiles, as there are (were) more law enforcement pages and profiles with similar, and at the same time misleading names, so the official profiles of police forces in EU Member States were selected from the followers of a personally well-known, official law enforcement profile.

The Facebook and Instagram profiles of law enforcement units at a local or provincial level in EU Member States were not included in the sample, as not all law enforcement units of the provinces were represented on the social media platforms, e.g. in Germany. In addition, not only the police forces of provinces but also the police stations of cities appeared on Instagram on a weekly basis, e.g. in Sweden. They were indicated by the “new” tag on the interface at the time of compiling the manuscript (July 2023).

The method of the research

Visual content analysis was employed as a research method as it is “a systematic observation method that can be used to test hypotheses about how the media portray people, events, and situations”¹⁹ on the social media profiles. During the sampling periods, the communication channels, the communication content, the messages (the concept of *ROADPOL* and the visual representation of mobile phone use while driving), their content frequency were observed in the forms of images and videos created on Facebook and Instagram, and analysed respectively.

The main objective of the quantitative nature of the research was to quantify the data that allows a partial generalisation and conclusion whether the social problem was present on social media platform. The qualitative variables were also identified (language use: foreign and mother tongue, formal and informal).

¹⁹ Bell, Ph. (2001): Content Analysis of Visual Images. In: Van Leeuwen, T. & Jewitt, C. (eds.): *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 10–34
Source: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020062.n2>
Accessed 12.10.2023

Research results

Instagram as a platform observed

Contrary to expectations, the topics of ROADPOL and mobile phone use while driving were not highlighted issues on law enforcement profiles between 1 and 30 September 2022, and they were not represented in 22 out of 27 law enforcement profiles in the Member States of the European Union. At the time of the sampling, the police forces of two countries, Cyprus Police (Cyprus) and Poliisi (Finland) did not have official Instagram profiles. The official website of the Cyprus police does not contain an Instagram presence icon signaling that the organisation is not present on the platform, and the Instagram icon on the official website of Finland's police "only" directs the visitor to the profile of the capital, Helsinki. Germany's police created the last content on the platform on 12 February 2016,²⁰ however the majority of the German municipalities has separate Instagram accounts, and they can be accessed from the official website (POLIZEI)²¹. On Instagram, in the first sampling period, the topic of mobile phone use while driving was represented by only the police forces of Malta and Slovenia, while the Focus on the Road operation by the police forces of Belgium and the Czech Republic.

On 15 September 2022, the day before the launch of the operation, the Belgian Federal Police shared the ROADPOL Safety Days campaign video twice on the platform, once in Flemish²² (Figure 1) and at the same day in

²⁰ Instagram. Immer bereit.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJy>

Accessed 12.10.2023

²¹ POLIZEI. Offizielles Portal der deutschen Polizei.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJB>

Accessed 12.10.2023

²² Instagram. Roadpol Safety days.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJD>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Erna Uricska: Social networking sites for accident prevention – The representation of mobile phone use while driving on law enforcement profiles in the European Union

French²³ (Figure 2). Flemish and French are two of the three official languages of the country, but the campaign video was not displayed in German, the third official language of the country.



Figure 1 and Figure 2
The campaign video in Flemish and in French
(Source: Instagram. Belgian Federal Police)

Similarly to the Belgian police, the Czech police (Policie Ceske) shared the ROADPOL Safety Days campaign video in Czech, the official language of the country.²⁴

The Malta Police Force shared three ROADPOL operation-related posts presenting prevention messages in relation to mobile phone use while driving (Figure 3), drunk driving (Figure 4) and speeding (Figure 5).

²³ Instagram. Roadpol Safety days.

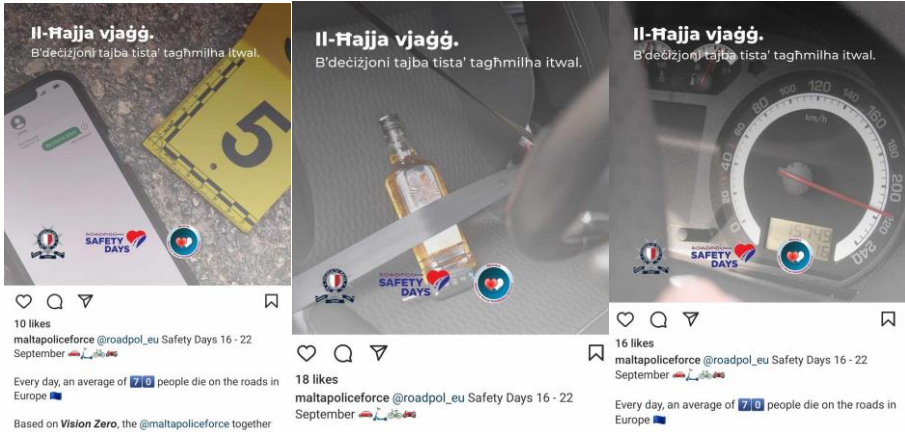
Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJH>

Accessed 12.10.2023

²⁴ Instagram. Startuji Roadpol Safety Days 2022.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJM>

Accessed 12.10.2023



Roadpol Safety Days against:

Figure 3: Mobile phone use while driving, Figure 4: Drunk driving and Figure 5: Speeding
(Source: Instagram. Malta Police Force)

According to Eurobarometer, the police force of Malta presented the citizens' feedback as the organisation reached 69% level of trust among the population.²⁵ It is supposed that the cooperation and acceptance between the community and the organisation are particularly important.

In the case of Police Slovenia, the *ROADPOL* operation-related campaign video was also shared,²⁶ and the use of a mobile phone while driving was shown in an image where the image and the text can be understood together as they complete each other. A long verbal description about the offence of mobile phone while driving was explained in a detailed and cyn-

²⁵ Instagram. Community Engagement Session.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJP>

Accessed 12.10.2023

²⁶ Instagram. police_slovenia. Roadpol Safety Days 2022.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/ZaTx>

Accessed 12.10.2023

ical manner. According to Wood and McGovern (2021), humour and cynicism are also tools for engaging²⁷ and warning the public like in this case, because the driver was fined.²⁸

'I'm on the road , my boss is calling and I don't have hands-free in my car or haven't set it up yet... what should I do ?

1 answer the phone with my right hand and hold the steering wheel with my left

2 answer and hold the phone with my left hand, steering with my right

3 don't answer the phone and I text quickly

4 answer and use the speaker on my phone

5 don't answer, stop safely at the first convenient point and make a call there [...]

HOW THE DRIVER IN THE PICTURE TOOK IT ?

The driver in the picture chose Option 1 and received a fine of €250 and 3 penalty points ... 

During the second sampling period on Instagram (between 1 and 31 December 2022), none of law enforcement units from the 27 Member States of the European Union created verbal or visual content on the topic of mobile phone use while driving.

²⁷Wood, M.A. & Mc Govern, A (2021): Memetic copaganda: Understanding the humorous turn in police image work. *Crime Media Culture*, 17(3) 305–326

Source: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659020953452>

Accessed 12.10.2023

²⁸ Instagram. *police_slovenia*.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJR>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Facebook as a platform observed

The issue of mobile phone use while driving did not appear in 23 countries in the first sampling period, and there is no official Facebook page operated by the German police. Only the police forces of Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia shared content on the topics observed.

Latvia's (Valsts policija) police created content about the ROADPOL operation in four cases in September 2022, including also mobile phone use while driving. The operation was mentioned as part of short news reports in two cases, and the campaign video was also shared.²⁹ Finally, the operation was presented only in an image. The post contained a call-to-action form, and encouraged citizens to take part in the action against mobile phone use while driving (Figure 6).³⁰

²⁹ Facebook. ROADPOL Drošības dienas.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcJX>

Accessed 12.10.2023

³⁰ Facebook. Roadpol Drošības dienas.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcK4>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Erna Uricska: Social networking sites for accident prevention – The representation of mobile phone use while driving on law enforcement profiles in the European Union

SAFETY DAYS
Stay alive and save lives

16. – 22. septembris 2022

**MANA ROADPOL DROŠĪBAS DIENU
APNĒMŠANĀS**

Es, _____, apsolu, ka:

(vārds)

- * būšu uzmanīgs un ievērošu noteikumus, kad pārvietosies satiksmē;
- * ievērošu noteiktas braukšanas ātruma ierobežojumus;
- * izmantotā drošības jostu vai ķiveri, arī kā pasažieris;
- * pilnībā izvairīšos no alkoholiķa dzērienu vai apreibinošu vielu lietošanas, kad piedalos satiksmē;
- * pievēršot pilnu uzmanību ceļu satiksmē notiekošajam un citiem satiksmes dalībniekiem un neizmantošu telefonu braukšanas laikā.

_____ paraksts _____ datums

*Ja TU pārvietosies droši, MĒS no savas puses
apsolām rūpīties par Tavu drošību, ar norunu,
ka VIŠI ievēros šos noteikumus.*

#roadpolsafetydays

Ir viegli būt dzīvības glābējam ■ ■ ■ ■

Figure 6
Roadpol - European Roads Policing Network #roadpolsafetydays
(Source: Facebook. Valsts Policija)

Although the Lithuanian Police (Lietuvos policija) did not create any visual content on mobile phone use while driving, however the ROADPOL Safety Days operation was presented once, where the organisation informed the public about the increased police checks as preventive measures.

As an outstanding practice, the Police Force of Malta created the same content in relation to the ROADPOL Safety Days operation on Facebook as well as on Instagram. During the sampling period, there was no other law enforcement unit where the administrators of the organisations shared the same content. Feedback from the members of the public is also particularly important to the police force, and they try to build a relationship between the two parties. There was also a post highlighting the importance of public-police relationship on Instagram.³¹

³¹ Facebook. Public Trust.
Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcK9>

A positive example, a “model” can be found on the Facebook page of the Slovenian police. The ROADPOL Safety Days were presented in four posts, they presented the operation as a process from the beginning of the campaign to its closure. The first post contained a detailed description with three photos about the operation (Figure 7, Figure 8, and Figure 9),³² and the same day, the organisation also published the campaign video of the operation.³³



Figure 7: The logo of the Roadpol Safety Days operation, Figure 8: A road check and

**Figure 9: A scene from the campaign video
(Source: Facebook. Slovenska policija)**

The practical application of the campaign was presented as it shows the penalty for using a mobile phone while driving.³⁴ Finally, the organisation

Accessed 12.10.2023

³² Facebook. Roadpol Safety Days.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKh>

Accessed 12.10.2023

³³ Facebook. Roadpolovi dnevi prometne varnosti.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKm>,

Accessed 12.10.2023

³⁴ Facebook. Road check.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKp>

shared a post on the closing phase of the operation³⁵ and a report with two images in which they gave feedback for their followers and declared the successful implementation of the operation (Figure 10 and 11).³⁶

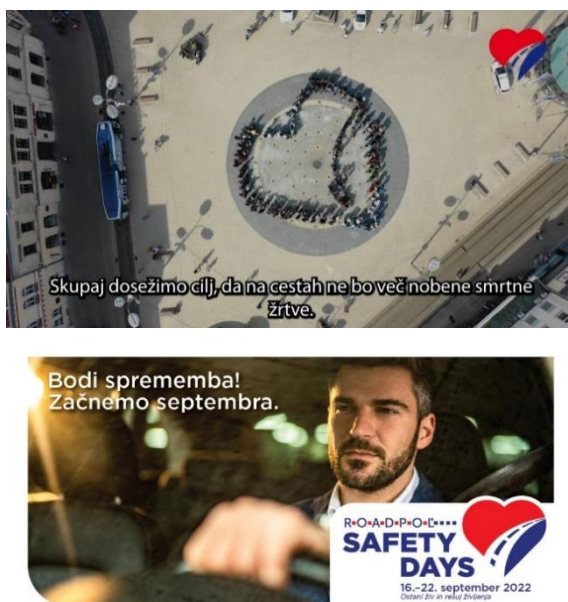


Figure 10 and Figure 11:
The successful implementation of the operation
(Source: Facebook. Slovenska policija)

Accessed 12.10.2023

³⁵ Facebook. Roadpol Safety Days.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKs>

Accessed 12.10.2023

³⁶ Facebook. Akcija uspela!

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKx>

Accessed 12.10.2023

“The campaign is a success! No fatalities on Slovenian roads again on 21 September.

☞ 23 countries took part in the international campaign; twelve reached the target, including Slovenia!

☞ 5,410 road traffic offences detected in Slovenia during the week-long Focus on the Road campaign.

Last week, police officers joined international activities aimed at one goal - zero road deaths, at least for one day - with a number of reinforced checks on Slovenian roads.”

Analysing and creating a series of posts in the teaching and learning process both in English and Hungarian (digital organisational communication) can be an example how a campaign that takes place offline can be presented or created in the online sphere.³⁷

In the second sampling period on Facebook, the topic of mobile phone use while driving did not appear in 24 countries out of the 27 Member States of the European Union only in three countries, Romania, Spain and Slovakia. The Romanian police (Politia Romana) displayed mobile phone use while driving twice.³⁸ By both images, users were warned in an informal way: ‘You lose focus. You lose control. Stay focused. Drive carefully!’ (Figure 12) and ‘Stop to answer your messages!’ (Figure 13).

³⁷ Uricska, E. & Suták, M. (2022): Közösségi oldalak rendészeti profiljain található bejegyzések alkalmazása szaknyelvoktatás során. [Applying posts of law enforcement profiles on social network sites in teaching of law enforcement technical language] Magyar Rendészet, 22(1) 107-119

³⁸ Facebook. #PierziAtenția#PierziControlul.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKz>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Facebook. #PierziControlul#PierziControlul.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKF>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Erna Uricska: Social networking sites for accident prevention – The representation of mobile phone use while driving on law enforcement profiles in the European Union



Figure 12: Stay focused!
Figure 13: Stop to answer your messages!
(Source: Facebook. Poliția Română)

The Spanish police (Policia Nacional) shared content on mobile phone use while driving twice with the same content (same message and image), at first on 21 December,³⁹ and then on 28 December (Figure 14).⁴⁰



Figure 14:
Do not use your mobile while driving!
(Source: Facebook. Policía Nacional)

³⁹ Facebook. Al volante no uses el móvil.
Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcKL>
Accessed 12.10.2023

⁴⁰ Facebook. Al volante no uses el móvil.
Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcME>
Accessed 12.10.2023

The Police of the Slovak Republic (Polícia Slovenskej republiky) provided only data in the annual accident statistics in relation to mobile phone use while driving on Facebook in December, despite the significant number of pictures shared (229 images). The force informed its followers that mobile use while driving was detected in 752 cases as part of the Operation SITO ('Akcie SITO').⁴¹

The practical implementation of the research was significantly complicated by two organisations (Italy: Polizia di Stato; Slovakia: Polícia Slovenskej republiky) as they did not apply a time period filter on Facebook. An interesting fact that illustrates the changing importance of social media interfaces is that both organisations already applied a time period filter at the time of writing the manuscript (July 2023). It may indicate the integration of Facebook into external organisational communication, and also the user-friendly development of the site.

Conclusion

The research results suggest that the use of Instagram and Facebook is a new practice regarding conscious content creation of a campaign in the external police communication. 18 law enforcement units in Member States of the European Union did not create any entry on mobile phone use while driving or ROADPOL operation in the sampling periods. The visual representation of the campaign and mobile phone use while driving on the two social media platforms were comparatively low. Only 21 visuals were created altogether, such as the campaign video that appeared in 6 cases and translated into different languages, the ROADPOL operation in 14 cases, 5 images and statistics once.

⁴¹ Facebook. Akcie SITO.

Source: <https://bitly.ws/WcMJ>

Accessed 12.10.2023

Even Facebook, the most popular platform with the largest number of users has a lot of opportunities to be explored for accident prevention purposes. The police forces of Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia created positive examples on Facebook, and only Latvia, Romania, Spain, Slovakia posted any content regarding ROADPOL or mobile use while driving in one of the sampling periods.

The social networking site Instagram was launched in 2010, albeit it can also be considered a new channel for prevention purposes in digital police communication. Police forces of 4 countries, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Malta and Slovenia created any post in relation to the topic under observation in the sampling periods.

The research hypothesis that mobile phone use while driving would be a highlighted theme on social networking sites was not confirmed. The research hypotheses that distracted driving and mobile phone use while driving would be a highlighted theme during the ROADPOL Safety Days project Focus on the Road in September were not confirmed. The content sharing practices in the online sphere did not harmonise with the road safety campaign and initiation carried out in the offline environment in September 2022.

The content management of social networking sites and the measurement of their impact on accident prevention among citizens are new fields to be developed, and they may become priority issues. The conscious use of the sites is a possible future direction in order to improve the relation between the two parties, and enhance digital organisational communication for prevention purposes.