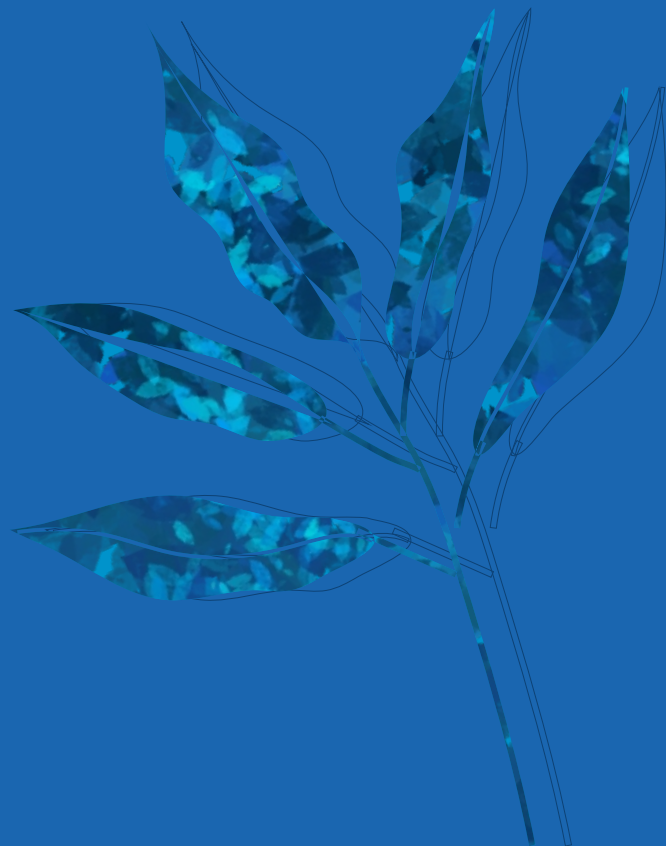
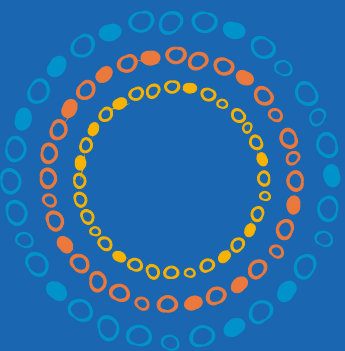


Welcome to Comms Hub  
2023 impact highlights

– A year to  
build our  
**foundation!**



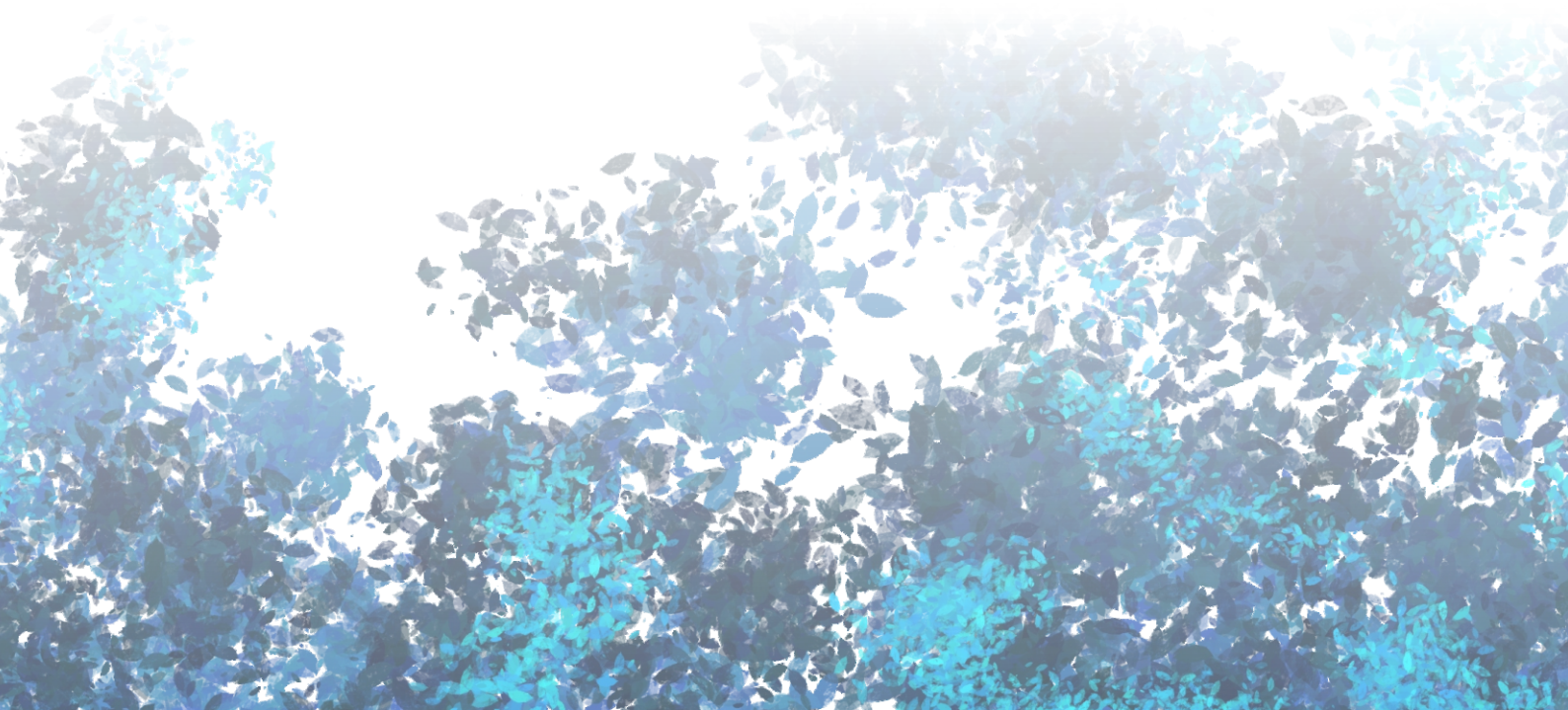
Our first full year at Comms Hub has been a year of shaping our identity, mission, and strategy. Comms Hub was officially born in October 2022, and in the months that followed, we embarked on a journey that would see us working together with our global network of strategic communications groups and social justice organizations.

**Together, we share a common commitment to harness the power of data-driven communications to shape and shift public discourse through data-driven communications strategies.**

In this end-of-year impact report, we share with you not only the highlights of our year but also the deeper insights we have gained in key areas of our work. As we stand on the cusp of a new year, we are more committed than ever to building a world where democracy and social justice flourish, where public discourse is shaped by compassion, data, and the voices of those who strive for change.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us!

*With unwavering dedication,  
Comms Hub team*



# Our Highlights of 2023

In 2023, we've made significant strides in addressing critical social issues, building our foundation, and fostering collaborations that resonate with our commitment to building more inclusive and democratic societies.

## > Social issues we worked on,



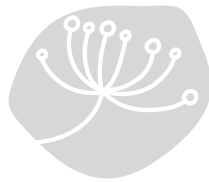
Climate  
justice



LGBTI  
rights



Sexual and  
reproductive  
health



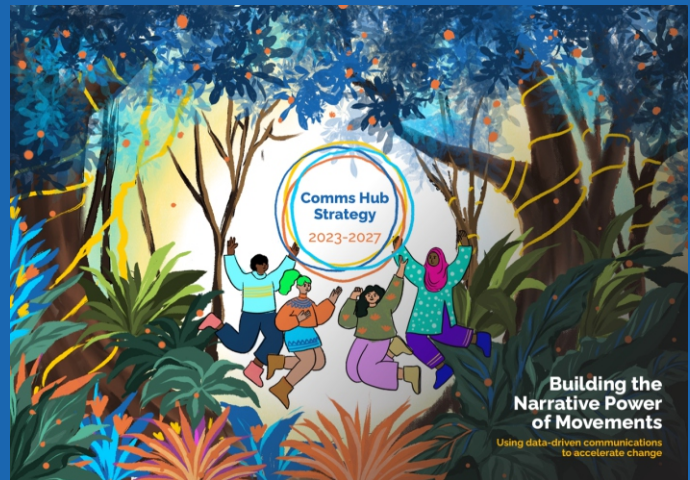
Gender-based  
violence



Democracy

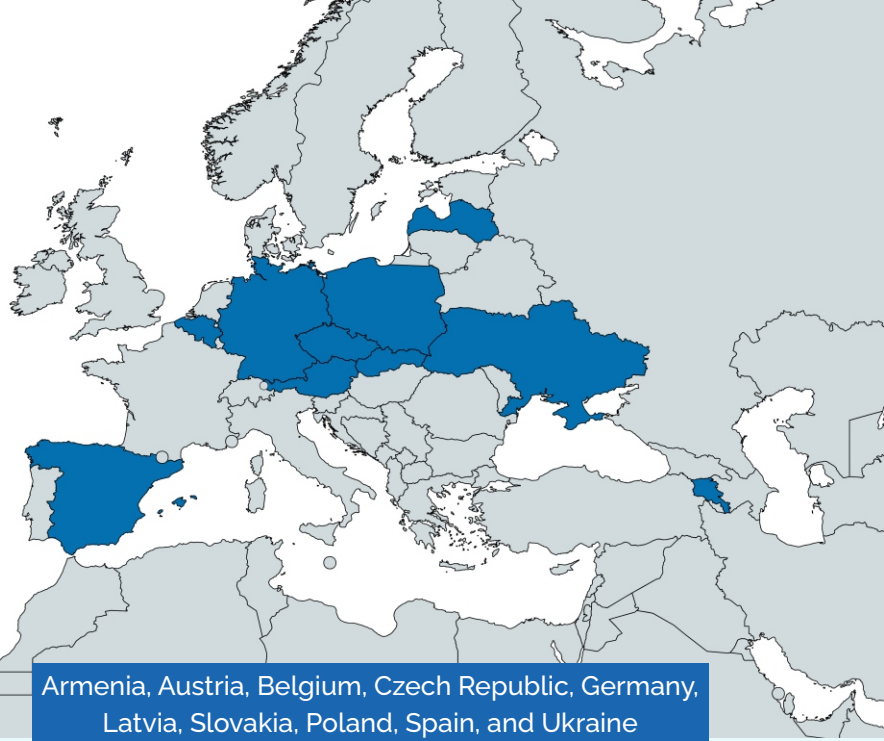
## > Launched our Strategy (2023 to 2027)

Within the Strategy, you will witness our roadmap toward this vision. We'll leverage our guiding values, extensive network, data-driven collective communications model, and three strategic pillars to shape our journey in the coming years.



[Download \(EN\)](#)

[Download \(ES\)](#)



Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, and Ukraine

## > Global collaboration

Worked with Member Hubs and Key Partners in 10 countries across Europe and Eurasia.

### > Coalition building

Formed **two** new coalitions, uniting **25+** grassroots organizations

### > Learning

Hosted **three peer learning events** for civil society stakeholders

### > Public opinion research

Conducted **six focus groups** in **Armenia, Germany, and Poland** to identify actionable insights

### > Digital research

Produced **nine digital research reports** and initiated seven more on climate justice and gender-based violence

### > Mentorship

Provided **capacity building** and **mentorship** to organizations in **ten countries**

### > Campaigns

Launched **two collective campaigns** in **Armenia and Germany**

### > Content creation

Published **seven articles, four videos, two case studies, and five reports**



# Country Projects

In 2023, our journey took us across various geographies, where we partnered with our Member Hubs and Key Partners to spearhead data-driven, collective communications projects. Across Europe and Eurasia, each initiative reflects our commitment to fostering change through strategic and data-driven communications. Dive into our country-specific projects that not only addressed key social issues but also strengthened civil societies at the grassroots level.



## > Poland

# Successful campaigning through data-driven communications for national elections 2023

In collaboration with the Liberté! Foundation, we undertook a significant project that combined digital and public opinion research with the goal of activating civil society supporters and boosting voter turnout during the national elections. Our research targeted Polish citizens who consistently support democratic values, focusing on a demographic that is predominantly young, educated, and engaged in social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

## The mood among civil society supporters, as revealed by our focus groups, was one of concern and urgency.

Many expressed deep dissatisfaction with the government, citing its divisive politics, corruption, and perceived regression from Western democratic values. The results of our digital research were equally telling. Topics such as abortion rights, migration, and environmental sustainability dominated social media discussions, with platforms like Facebook and Instagram serving as significant arenas for debate and advocacy. Our findings also highlighted the polarized nature of the political discourse on Twitter, the centrality of Instagram in promoting pro-choice narratives, and the cross-platform support for Ukrainian refugees, reflecting a complex but predominantly positive attitude towards migration.

The topic of reforming Poland's strict abortion law was met with strong support from progressive audiences, reaching the largest number of reactions among the 15 topics analyzed through digital and social media listening research. The role of the NGO sector and women, in general, was outstanding, especially on Instagram, where the nature of the demographics of the platform made it particularly significant (there is a notable portion of users falling within the 18 to 34 age range and a slightly higher percentage of female users).

Liberté! Foundation used our research insights to design and run a successful campaign focusing on empowerment and the critical role of each vote in shaping Poland's future. As the recent national elections in Poland have unfolded, the impact of our joint work has become evident. Our collaborative efforts have contributed to a more informed and engaged electorate, ready to tackle the challenges ahead with a renewed sense of purpose.

**This campaign has not only underscored the power of collective action but has also set a precedent for how data-driven communication strategies can effectively mobilize civil society in pursuit of a more just and democratic society.**



> Armenia

## Sustained campaigns and capacity sharing with civil society groups in Armenia for brand building of the Armenian civil society

This year, Comms Hub, in collaboration with the Democracy Development Foundation, worked with nine civil society groups to enhance public awareness and understanding of civil society's crucial role in Armenia. These organizations, working on various issues, including police reforms, youth participation in decision-making in their communities, supporting displaced women, domestic violence, and corruption (especially nepotism) in military and preschool education, came together to build a Civil Society 4 You collective platform. In this significant endeavor, we employed a full spectrum of our data-driven collective communication model.

**We deployed a multifaceted approach: rigorous polling to identify our target audience, insightful focus groups for deeper understanding of issues, and a thorough digital landscape analysis to tailor our strategies effectively.**

These foundational activities informed our capacity-building, where Platform members were not only trained on strategic communications principles and hope-based communications but were also provided ongoing support throughout their campaign initiatives. As a result of these concerted efforts, Platform members significantly honed their expertise in hope-



based communication. With this approach, they ran seven data-driven campaigns, striking an essential balance, intertwining a sense of optimism with a grounded acknowledgement of the challenges at hand. The skills imparted have not only improved their engagement with diverse audiences but have also enabled them to craft messages that resonate on various levels—from educational to motivational, from calls to action to introspective reflections.

Our collaboration with the Democracy Development Foundation and the Platform Members represents a pivotal step toward bringing key Armenian civil society actors together and conveying their messages collectively with a focus on data-driven communications, ultimately strengthening the connection between civil society and the Armenian public.



> Spain

## Shaping trans narratives collectively

La Intersección, our Member Hub in Spain, partnered with LGBTI+ groups to run a collective, evidence-based campaign to foster new narratives for the trans communities in Spain. It concluded at the end of 2022, and this year La Intersección has been engaged in sharing our learnings from this campaign. The campaign's dual focus on enhancing online communication and strengthening the capacity of NGOs aimed to catalyze a shift in the cultural conversation around trans rights and representation.

Employing a meticulous blend of digital research and focus groups (conducted by Comms Hub), the campaign dissected and understood the prevailing narratives surrounding the trans community in Spain. Despite a generally positive outlook towards LGBTI+ individuals, there remained entrenched issues such as bullying, rejection, and discrimination that needed to be addressed. By analyzing the digital ecosystem on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and through various news outlets, the campaign identified key areas where strategic communication could make a significant impact.

**The collective campaign, named Proyecto Hortensia, was a concerted effort to create empathy for trans individuals through storytelling that showcased gratitude.**

It deliberately engaged with unconventional messengers to broaden its reach and impact, resonating with a wider audience. This multifaceted campaign resulted in remarkable engagement, with over 5500 website visits, significant newsletter and Telegram activity, and substantial social media interactions. Notably, the content reached 15K in social engagement and garnered over 312K impressions.

The collective campaign demonstrated the power of evidence-based, strategic communication in shifting public narratives. In February 2023, the Spanish parliament passed a new trans and LGBTI+ law allowing anyone over 16 to change their registered gender, prohibiting conversion therapies, and advancing other rights for LGBTIQ people. The partnership's ability to blend digital savvy with heartfelt storytelling has not only spread awareness but has also equipped NGOs with better tools to combat transphobia. The campaign's success is a testament to the impact that collaborative, well-researched, and empathetically driven initiatives can have in promoting social justice and equality.





> Ukraine

## Strengthening pro-democracy narratives for Ukrainians in Germany

In the face of ongoing challenges in Ukraine, Comms Hub, alongside our Ukrainian Member Hub, Common Sense Communication (CSC), has made significant strides in amplifying the voices and priorities of Ukrainian civil society within Ukraine and Germany. Throughout 2023, our collaborative efforts have been pivotal in establishing CSC as a legally recognized entity, solidifying the foundation to drive its mission of working with Ukrainian civil society organizations and activists to strengthen their impact through strategic communications.

**In 2023, Comms Hub and CSC teams worked together to bolster public support for Ukraine in Germany by developing a nuanced advocacy and collective communication campaign targeting civil society audience in Germany.**

This strategy, formed through expert consultations and research, is honed to highlight the humanitarian crisis of Ukrainian civilians detained in Russia, focusing on compelling narratives that can resonate with the German public and policymakers. By targeting democracy supporters in Germany who empathize with Ukraine, CSC aims to strengthen their resolve and transform doubt into dedicated support through informed

engagement.

For this campaign, a coalition of key Ukrainian civil society organizations working in Germany was formed to implement the campaign and build connections with German civil society. Through a series of strategic sessions, CSC has brought together 29 organizations and groups, creating a dynamic forum for dialogue and collaboration. We organized training on hope-based communications, equipping our partners with the tools to engage effectively with their audiences.

The focus groups conducted for this campaign revealed a German public sympathetic to Ukraine's plight but feeling uncertain about how to help. By crafting messages that offer clear, actionable steps, we are working to transform this sentiment into meaningful support. The evidence gathered is shaping a communication campaign that emphasizes solidarity, highlights individual stories of Ukrainian captives, and provides the German public with tangible ways to advocate for their release and well-being.

In the first phase of the campaign, we have been able to garner over 500k impressions and 72.5k engagements on social media. Currently, CSC is preparing for the second phase of the campaign.

# Voices

from the  
Comms Hub  
team

From blending data with humanity to tackling the challenges of modern democracy and leveraging digital research for social change, our team's reflections offer a behind-the-scenes look at how we're shifting and shaping narratives through data-driven communications.

Blending data  
and humanity:  
**Comms  
Hub's year of  
collective  
narrative  
building**

**Disha Arora**  
**Global Campaigns Lead,**  
**Comms Hub**



At Comms Hub, our data-driven, collective communications model comes together in the form of a compelling illustration included in our strategy document. However, applying that model has been a journey of deep reflections, challenges, adaptations and, of course, an endless stream of conversations and emails.

My wonderful and talented colleagues produce insightful reports based on the rigorous research they do on digital conversations, polling, and public opinion. My role is to take those insights, work closely with our Member Hubs and Key Partners on the ground and transform those findings into impactful campaigns. And, staying true to the economies of scale, we do it in collaboration with coalitions of other civil society organizations (CSOs) and relevant groups and individuals.

Reflecting on our work in the past year or so, there are many clear learnings.

### *The puzzle of collective communications*

Bringing people and groups together for a common cause (or a collective campaign) is like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle. It's not easy, and sometimes the pieces don't seem to fit. But the trick is to keep looking for common values among the coalition members, to keep listening to what CSOs and groups need, and to keep our eye on the bigger picture. We recommend early engagement with coalitions to identify a common goal or call to action and keep shared values front and centre.

Each place has its own beat, its own rhythm. Common Sense Communications (CSC), our Ukrainian Member Hub, had to change their approach quite a bit when they started working with Ukrainian CSOs working in Germany. Earlier they had only been engaging with organizations and groups working within Ukraine. CSC's team was flexible and adapted their strategies while running the campaign to keep the coalition engaged.

## Data to Stories to Narrative Change

Moving from cold, hard data to warm, engaging insights and transforming them into stories is more art than science. We at Comms Hub like to call it our superpower (applying research to collective communications).

And it needs to happen in a timely manner. In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, we need to embrace the fluid nature of data and its implications.

We work hand-in-hand with our network to ensure that together, we weave insights into stories that are customized for the contexts, communities, and geographies. Like in Spain, La Interseccion, our Member Hub, beautifully weaved the value of 'gratitude' into their collective campaign of transforming anti-trans narratives. It was amazing to see how this important value (identified through focus groups) communicated by unusual messengers (grandparents and teachers) could turn our message into something that really resonated with people.

## Not all insights have takers

In our engagement and work, we also had a few experiences where the CSOs in the coalitions didn't agree with what we found out through our research, and we had long discussions with them. On such occasions, we tried to find a middle ground between what CSOs believe in and what our findings are telling us. These weren't easy conversations, but they were necessary. They pushed us to reflect on what we could do better.

**Context is the most important ingredient of the work we do. But, at times, it also takes courage for actors working in social justice and pro-democracy movements to acknowledge that the approach they might have been taking is not appealing to the communities and moving in sync with them.**

## ...but Courage Needs Resources

One of the significant challenges we face in our work is the lack of human resources. As keen as CSOs are to adopt the model of data-driven, collective communications, more often than not, it's just one person managing the entire communications portfolio of the organization. We at Comms Hub try to provide as much hands-on support and mentorship as possible; however, to scale this model, we need more people.

## Be Ready to Pivot

Being flexible and open to revising strategies is essential in our work. It's about embracing the iterative process of planning, action, and revision. Each discussion, each meeting, no matter how small, contributes to the bigger picture of our goals.

**At times, flexibility may look like a pause. Several regions we work in are affected by ongoing conflicts. In those cases, balancing the drive for change with the need for team care is particularly valuable. Holding spaces for sharing is a good starting point. It's a process that demands not just professional commitment but also personal compassion and understanding.**

## Small Wins and the Long Road to Change

Despite being a young organization, Comms Hub has had a few high points this year, like the results of the elections in Poland and the landmark legislation in

Spain. However, for me, the most rewarding win was when I learned that the coalition members we're working with in Armenia have started to use the language of data-driven communications. They keep going back to the findings of public opinion and digital research in their discussions and meetings. To quote one of my favourite film dialogues, it feels like "the beginning of a beautiful friendship". We know that narrative change is a marathon, not a sprint. This journey from data to narrative change isn't just about strategies and analytics; it's about connecting, listening, understanding, and working together towards a shared vision.

**Watching our network begin to embrace data-driven communication approaches for narrative change is a testament to this gradual but important transformation.**



# The time bomb ticking away at the heart of democracy

**Matthew MacWilliams**  
Global Public Opinion  
Strategist,  
Comms Hub



*Consider this: What happens if democracy is not reborn every generation?*

If consistent support for democracy is actually falling among youth in Europe and the United States and is already lower than their parents and grandparents, what are the odds democracy will continue into the future?

What does the future hold for democratic governance? If democracy is not reborn with each new generation, democracy will be hollowed out or die off in the next few decades, no matter the outcomes of the 2024 elections in Europe and the United States. The clear, present, and immediate threats to democracy around the globe, growing since Francis Fukuyama prematurely declared that democracy was triumphant in 1992, have finally been recognized.

Political and other elites who flaunt the guardrails of democracy are dismantling them without concern and without consequence. The endless river of disinformation floods public discourse until the truth is obscured and facts are uncertain. The unfettered polarization divides citizens into warring, tribal teams.

Additionally, a tide of authoritarianism and obedience to majoritarian norms is gaining momentum, appealing to those who favor decisive rule over the democratic ideals of compromise and shared responsibility. These are the immediate, pressing challenges confronting democracies across the globe. For better or worse, the next battle in this confrontation between democracy and autocracy will play out in the 2024 elections across the world. But these episodic elections are one of two threats challenging the future of democracy globally. And the second threat, unrecognized and corrosive, is neither episodic nor transitory. It is structural, systemic, and dangerous. It is the growing inconsistency of support for democracy that is exacerbated by demographic succession.

*Democracy never last long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.*

**John Quincy Adams, 1814**

## The Youth Perspective on Democracy

In America today, just 41% of those 18 years of age and older are consistent supporters of democracy. The rest of Americans – a 59% majority – are inconsistent supporters of democracy. Some of them think that a strong leader who does not heed election results or accept Congressional power is acceptable. Others say a non-democratic government can be preferable to real democracy. Some assert that democracy is a bad way of governing the United States. And a few agree with more than one of

these three notions that indicates inconsistent support for democracy.

Inconsistent support for democracy is not a problem confined to the United States. From national surveys conducted in 2022 by the European Movement International as part of its work with Comms Hub, we know that consistency of support among citizens 18+ is less than a majority in all nine European countries surveyed. Consistent support for democracy in these countries ranges from an average high of 48% in Finland to a low of 22% in Romania.

Critically, we also know that in seven of these nine countries – Romania, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Greece, France, and Finland – support for democracy is statistically lower among younger citizens (18–29-year-olds), than older citizens. This mirrors the quantitative findings from the United States.

## How big a problem is this? Consider the data from America.

Only one in four Americans between 18 and 39 years old is a consistent supporter of democracy – a full sixteen percentage points below the mean support score for all citizens of voting age. By comparison, 65% of America's septuagenarians and their Greatest and Silent Generation brethren support democracy consistently.

**Think about this data.** If approximately three-quarters of Americans 18-39 years of age do not consistently support fundamental democratic tenets, what are the odds, as these younger citizens age and replace their more supportive parents, of democracy surviving?



Because if these 18-39 Americans remain inconsistent supporters of democracy as they age, and the generation that follows them into adulthood is as sceptical about democracy's merits as they are, then, over time, the base of consistent supporters for democracy in the United States will inevitably decline. This demographic succession, where more consistent supporters of democracy are replaced by those who are less consistent, is a demographic time bomb ticking away next to the heart of American democracy. Surveys show that the same demographic dynamics are also present in Europe.

Now, it is possible that as younger Americans and Europeans age, they will become more supportive of democracy. But, with political polarization at a zenith and trust in institutions a nadir, how likely is that possibility?

And what about Gen Alpha and younger Gen Z? With public education in civics in America more mirage than reality and civic life more toxic than inspiring, how likely are younger people on both sides of the Atlantic, as they reach voting age, to be more consistent supporters of democracy than today's 18-39-year-olds?

Hypothetically, younger Gen Z and Gen Alpha Americans will add to the crisis of waning public support for democracy in the United States and Europe in the next ten years as they reach voting age. Yet, in the United States, we lack basic data and information on the scope and shape of this potential problem with 10-17-year-olds to know if it is real or a chimaera. And in Europe, information about the

inconsistency of support for democracy among younger Europeans, as well as citizens of voting age, is even more lacking.

*Demographic succession is a hypothesis for now. The ticking time bomb it could produce is not.*

It is a simple insight which concludes that the farther the consistent base of support for democracy falls in the United States and Europe, the greater the likelihood that democracy can be further hollowed out by demagogues seeking power unconstrained by democratic rules and norms.

Demography need not be destiny, but without understanding and intervention based on learning, it is a very probable outcome of the low levels of support for democracy extant today in the American and European public.

*At Comms Hub, we recognize the urgency of reversing this trend.*

Understanding the scope of this problem and the why behind it, and from this learning, developing real solutions to reverse it, is not a luxury, it is an essential component of rebuilding democracy. It is one of the central problems we are working to understand and solve at Comms Hub. Our work is focused on understanding the complexities behind these attitudes and developing data-driven communication strategies that resonate with both young and old. We aim to cultivate an informed, engaged public that values and defends democratic principles.

# Case Study - Shaping democracy by leveraging digital research

**Wanda Sanchez**  
Global Digital  
Research Lead,  
Comms Hub



## Introduction

In the digital era, social media and online platforms significantly influence politics and democracy. They offer new ways for public engagement in politics but also pose challenges by spreading propaganda and misinformation, threatening democratic values. This case study highlights the importance of digital research in defending democracy and countering disinformation. As the Digital Lead Researcher, I worked closely with a team member from the Liberté! Foundation in Poland. We explored how digital research can underpin successful campaigns to protect democratic values.

## How it began and the big questions

In February 2023, Comms Hub joined forces with the Liberté! Foundation, a pro-democracy think tank in Poland, with a clear goal in mind: to identify digital patterns that would empower the Liberté! Foundation to design an effective digital campaign for the upcoming Parliamentary Elections in Poland. The overarching objective was to mobilize democracy advocates to vote and effect change in the government.

**One of the primary challenges faced by the Liberté! Foundation was identifying which key topics would resonate most strongly with the audience and evoke strong emotions.** It was not merely about identifying these topics. It also involved selecting those that were well-received by the audience and whose narratives proved effective.

## The topics that emerged

Our research with Liberté! began with a quest to identify the issues and topics that concerned Polish citizens the most and that they actively engaged with on social media. We translated emotions into reactions, and out of the 15 topics given by Liberté!, Abortion, Immigration and refugees, Green Energy, Mortgage loans, public funds for the church, and euro adoption were the critical topics for Polish citizens with a solid potential to mobilize voters.

## Key insights from the digital landscape research

**Progressive audiences' topics:** Abortion was a top-ranking issue among progressive audiences, led by women and CSOs, indicating a strong desire for legal change. Similarly, support for a secular state and no public funds for the church was well-supported. Inflation emerged as a key driver of topics such as the adoption of the Euro and Mortgage loans. This information was sent to Liberté! who run a referendum campaign including these topics.

**Common grounds detection:** Mapping several topics, encompassing economic and social issues, identified shared needs among diverse audiences. For instance, in Poland, despite differences, middle and progressive groups expressed a call for reform, aligning with the Euro adoption.

**Broader topic mapping:** Rather than specific laws, mapping broader

conversations was key to capturing formal, informal, and oppositional stances. For instance, we explored housing crises instead of focusing solely on mortgage loans. Instead of mapping the abortion law, we mapped all conversations mentioning abortion (whether mentioning the law or not).

### Platform selection in digital campaigns:

The importance of selecting the right digital platforms for specific topics was underscored through the research. For instance, Instagram's success in driving social issue debates, like those for abortion reform among youth and women, is notable. Meanwhile, Facebook and Twitter are more effective for economic discourse. This distinction underlines the varied digital terrain in Poland, demonstrating the need to tailor platform choices to campaign goals. Moreover, due to data privacy policies, each platform, regardless of the number of users and activity, brings unique data points that are crucial for analysing and understanding the digital ecosystem.

## Knowledge transfer and building sustainable capacity

We strengthened capacity by providing three months of training to a key member of Liberté! Foundation. Our hands-on mentorship approach focused on practical skills in critically approaching data, questioning its nuances, and effectively applying it to communication strategies.

Our goal extended beyond the creation and delivery of a report; we aimed to cultivate sustainable capacity, enabling the team to generate similar insights in the future using analytical tools independently. While the term 'social listening' may sound technically complex, most of the tools we employ are designed for social scientists.

**Comms Hub's role in mentoring and transferring knowledge to a Liberté! Foundation member underscores the importance of empowering organizations for independent digital research. Local analysts play a vital role in providing contextual understanding for effective research.**

### *A resounding success*

Data-driven research and strategic campaign crafting contributed to the campaign's success. The success of the campaign is highlighted by a significant increase in voter participation, particularly among young people and women. Despite the Law and Justice (PiS) party's victory, the results opened possibilities for a coalition between progressive and centrist forces, showcasing the campaign's influence on the political landscape.



# Comms Hub 2023 impact highlights



Join the Comms Hub community and stay informed on our data-driven strategic communications initiatives.

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To know more about our work or partner with us, write to [team@comms-hub.org](mailto:team@comms-hub.org)