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# European Union's Digital Diplomacy During the war in Ukraine

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# Abstract

The war in Ukraine has changed the geopolitical landscape and the political decisions. European leaders have actively supported, advocated, and pushed for political support toward Ukraine. The research is focused on the extent to which the war in Ukraine has changed the EU's public diplomacy and what this can mean for the future of European decision-making. In order to support the arguments of the research, Twitter will be mainly used as the source of information.





# Introduction

- On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- This was the first time that war outburst on European soil, after the 1990s and Yugoslav wars.
- EU from the first day of the war until today attempt to take a clear and strong stance on supporting the independence of Ukraine and promote peace and EU values at once.
- European leaders used basically public diplomacy and especially social media to provide awareness and promote their messaging and actions towards European citizens and the world.



# Methodology

- Analyze the stance of the EU towards the war in Ukraine and how this has been presented over Twitter
- 3 representatives of EU institutions
- 3 milestones for the war
- Analyze the number of tweets, the tone, the use of specific wording or framing, and the audiences that they referred to.



# Public Diplomacy

- Communicating with the citizens of other states and shaping public opinion are a key component of diplomacy.
- The practices of “public diplomacy”, “nation branding” and “digital diplomacy” gain attention as practices of communication and information sharing.
- Governments, politicians, organizations, and think tanks have a new form of communication and engagement with the public.
- The audience by using the new technological tools can actively and easily participate and shape the discussion.

# EU Public Diplomacy

- Direct communication with voters/ citizens,
- Participation of the political discussion and decision/making,
- Enhancement of the legitimacy,
- Up-to-date and immediate information.

All these elements can actively help and promote a **common European understanding and identity** for various topics.



# Case Study I: Ursula von der Leyen

 **Ursula von der Leyen**   
@vonderleyen

We strongly condemn Russia's unjustified attack on Ukraine.



In these dark hours, our thoughts are with Ukraine and the innocent women, men and children as they face this unprovoked attack and fear for their lives.

We will hold the Kremlin accountable.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)

6:55 π.μ. · 24 Φεβ 2022

3.732 Retweet 469 Παραθέσεις 14,1 χιλ. Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"

 **Ursula von der Leyen**   
@vonderleyen


Desperately needed assistance has to reach Ukraine.

So humanitarian corridors must be opened. Humanitarian convoys need safe passage.

Civilians must be allowed to leave besieged cities safely.

Russia must let our humanitarian partners deliver aid in the war zone.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)



 **Ursula von der Leyen**   
@vonderleyen

Putin's war exerts brutal military and economic pressure on the brave people of Ukraine. Europe stands firmly by their side.

Today we disbursed €300 million in emergency Macro-Financial Assistance to 

This is the 1st payment of a €1.2 billion package. So more will come.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)



12:48 μ.μ. · 11 Μαρ 2022

795 Retweet 86 Παραθέσεις 3.473 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"

 **Ursula von der Leyen**   
@vonderleyen

In addition to our unwavering support for Ukraine we are responding with strong sanctions against Russia.

Our aim is to reduce the Kremlin's capacity to wage war on its neighbour.



This invasion has to stop.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)



3:36 μ.μ. · 3 Μαρ 2022

683 Retweet 65 Παραθέσεις 4.111 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει" 9 Σελιδοδείκτες


 **Ursula von der Leyen**   
@vonderleyen

And finally, we will work to prohibit Russian oligarchs from using their financial assets on our markets.

Putin embarked on a path aiming to destroy Ukraine.

But what he is also doing, in fact, is destroying the future of his own country.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)



12:15 π.μ. · 27 Φεβ 2022

5.171 Retweet 398 Παραθέσεις 24,9 χιλ. Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"



# Case Study I: Ursula von der Leyen



Bucha Massacre, Visit of Ursula von der Leyen April 8, 2022.  
//Michael Fischer/Picture-Alliance via AP

- 43 tweets related to Ukraine and the war (20 days of war)
- The hashtag that has been mostly used was #Ukraine.
- Main purposes:
  - inform and comment on the latest developments on the war in Ukraine.
  - present and promote the decision of the EU Commission regarding the war.
- Tone: simple, with easy language and clear messaging.



# Case Study II: Roberta Metsola

**Roberta Metsola** @EP\_President

We strongly condemn Russia's unjustified attack on #Ukraine.

In these dark hours, our thoughts are with Ukraine and the innocent women, men and children as they face this unprovoked attack and fear for their lives.

We will hold the Kremlin accountable.

Μετάφραση Tweet

7:04 π.μ. · 24 Φεβ 2022


382 Retweet 48 Παραθέσεις 1.261 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει" 8 Σελιδοδείκτες

**Roberta Metsola** @EP\_President

This is Europe's whatever it takes moment. Mr President, we stand with you. When you look to the @Europarl\_EN you will find an ally and always, always a friend.

Watch my speech with Ukraine President @ZelenskyyUa during today's #EPlenary on Russian aggression against #Ukraine.

Μετάφραση Tweet



An outrageous invasion of a sovereign, independent State.

9:38 148,7 χιλ. προβολές

Speech at the Plenary Session on Russian aggression against Ukraine  
European Parliament President Roberta Metsola's speech during the extraordinary Plenary Session on the Russian aggression against Ukraine.


3:34 μ.μ. · 1 Μαρ 2022

778 Retweet 139 Παραθέσεις 3.596 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"

**Roberta Metsola** @EP\_President

Brave and courageous Ukrainians, you have inspired the world. Your strength of purpose, your defiance, your values have lit a spark across the globe.

Long live Ukraine 🇺🇦  
Long live Europe 🇪🇺  
Slava Ukraini!  
#StandWithUkraine  
@Europarl\_EN  
Μετάφραση Tweet



Roberta Metsola και European Parliament

5:28 μ.μ. · 1 Μαρ 2022 στο Brussel, België

425 Retweet 25 Παραθέσεις 1.994 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει"

**Roberta Metsola** @EP\_President

The @Europarl\_EN calls:

- 1 on Putin to immediately stop the aggression.
- 2 for new, swift and severe sanctions.
- 3 for increased assistance to #Ukraine and European readiness to absorb humanitarian suffering.

Watch 📺

Μετάφραση Tweet



While we hoped and worked to promote a process of de-escalation

1:51 20,9 χιλ. προβολές

11:12 μ.μ. · 24 Φεβ 2022

74 Retweet 6 Παραθέσεις 281 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει" 1 Σελιδοδείκτης

# Case Study II: Roberta Metsola



[https://twitter.com/EP\\_President/status/1623647483317329920](https://twitter.com/EP_President/status/1623647483317329920)

- 40 tweets related to Ukraine and the war (20 days of war)
- #Ukraine, #standwithukraine, and #EPlenary
- Main purposes:
  - Commitment to European values
  - Promote the work of EP
  - Focus on gender related issues and the war
- Tone: strict, decisive, and predicative wording



# Case Study III: Charles Michel



**Charles Michel** @eucopresident

We strongly condemn Russia's unjustified attack on [#Ukraine](#).

In these dark hours, our thoughts are with Ukraine and the innocent women, men and children as they face this unprovoked attack and fear for their lives.

We will hold the Kremlin accountable.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)

6:56 π.μ. · 24 Φεβ 2022

563 Retweet 58 Παραθέσεις 2.048 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει!"



**Charles Michel** @eucopresident

Today we see the devastating reality of full-scale war in Europe.

Russia alone is to blame. It will pay a heavy price.

EU leaders responded with a massive package of sanctions, including in the financial, energy and transport sectors.

[#EUCO](#) [#Ukraine](#)  
[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)



EU Council

3:47 π.μ. · 25 Φεβ 2022



**Charles Michel** @eucopresident

President [@ZelenskyUa](#) addressed the members of the European Council tonight.

We commend the determination and the courage of the people of [#Ukraine](#)

The EU is united in its solidarity with Ukraine.

[Μετάφραση Tweet](#)



10:50 μ.μ. · 24 Φεβ 2022

428 Retweet 60 Παραθέσεις 2.211 Επισημάνσεις "Μου αρέσει!"



**Charles Michel** @eucopresident · Mar 4, 2022  
Further call with President [@ZelenskyUa](#) to discuss humanitarian situation including Russia's attack against [#Zaporizhzhya](#) power plant.

Imperative to ensure the safety and security of all [#Ukraine](#)'s nuclear installations.



227 93 358



**Charles Michel** @eucopresident · Mar 2, 2022  
War is first and foremost a human tragedy.

We feel the pain of families torn apart, seeking shelter and fearing for their lives in [#Ukraine](#)

The EU ensures safe passage and welcomes you in solidarity and dignity.

We support the people of Poland and [@MorawieckiM](#) in their help.



304 372 1,308

# Case Study III: Charles Michel



<https://www.pubaffairsbruxelles.eu/eu-institution-news/address-by-president-charles-michel-at-the-un-security-council-on-peace-and-security-in-ukraine/>

- 71 tweets during the first 20 days of the war.
- #Ukraine, #StandWithUkraine, #EUCO, and #EU
- Main purposes:
  - Promote the diplomatic actions of the EU
  - Present the interaction with international partners
  - Promote EU as global actor over the crisis
- Tone: simple, clear, with short sentences and decisive wording.



# EU Public Diplomacy over the War in Ukraine

- We can identify unresolved issues of the EU.
- EU had decisive and rapid response towards the outburst of the war.
- They made clear EU stance from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the war.
- Soft power: EU leaders used digital diplomacy to promote EU values and create a common and united stance.
- They achieved to engage the EU public and acquire legitimacy.
- They did not leave space for fake news and propaganda.



“Thank you very much for  
your attention!  
Слава Україні!”

Eleni Siapikoudi

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