

# **COUNTRY-LEVEL REPORT ON DRIVERS OF SELF-RADICALISATION AND DIGITAL SOCIABILITY**

**Greece**



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**DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality**

## **Country level report on drivers of self-radicalisation and digital sociability**

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## Executive Summary:

This report examines the drivers of self-radicalisation and digital sociability of the extreme-right in Greece. In the Greek case, the report covers only the extreme right, since the pilot phase of the study demonstrated that there was insufficient data on the Islamist strand to make analysis meaningful (see general Introduction to the report). Thus, this report presents a timely, empirical study of self-radicalisation online and on how supporters of the extreme right interact on Twitter. It draws on ethnographic and automatised analyses of data from Greek female and male Twitter user accounts.

Key findings from the analyses of the extreme right on Twitter in Greece:

- Online activity amongst the extreme right is monolingual (Greek) with limited use of English.
- Women are active online in social media.
- There are only few connections with foreign accounts (mainly UK, France, Belgium and The Netherlands).
- Radical views are expressed in texts, symbols, posters and images in many of the online self-presentations, amongst some of the influencers, and also in conversations on Twitter.
- Offline events are very important and have a direct impact on the online milieu formation and content.
- Twitter plays a role in the lives of extreme right-wingers, and the Greek data sample can be considered as a dense digital milieu, with very limited interaction with accounts outside the milieu.
- The extreme right in the data sample is mainly nationalist, expressing strong nationalistic views and, in some cases, they are supporters of Golden Dawn and dictatorial regimes.
- The themes that generate engagement amongst extreme-right participants are: national issues like the 'Macedonian issue'; relations with neighbouring countries (Albania, Turkey, North Macedonia); economic and political issues; anti-left ideology; and anti-immigrant/anti-Islam attitudes.
- Reference to extreme-right or right-wing populist leaders is also found (e.g. V. Orbán, M. Salvini, M. Le Pen and D. Trump).
- Messages express radical positions but mainly indirect support for violence.
- The results support the need for an action plan against nationalist hate speech in the Greek digital sphere.

The study cannot provide concrete conclusions on drivers of self-radicalisation since it is not known for certain whether themes that create engagement or the videos and the texts shared on Twitter serve as drivers of self-radicalisation. However, the study has identified the following potential drivers of self-radicalisation amongst the extreme right on Twitter in Greece that merit further investigation:

- Discussions and conversations about primarily national issues and national identity, Islam and Muslims, immigration and left wing politics, sentiments and grievances produced by those discussions.
- Influencers, videos, images and texts promoting hate speech against those who are considered as enemies of the Greek nation and national identity.
- The staging and framing of radical online identities in relation to offline events and developments.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The role of the Internet in self-radicalisation in Greece

Before discussing the role of the Internet in self-radicalisation in Greece it is important to set this in the context of the overall picture of Internet and social media use in Greece, since this could be relevant in terms of trust and use of social media. First of all, it is important to mention that during the last years the use of the Internet and social media has faced a significant rise, from 49 per cent to 66 per cent of the general population between 2012 and 2017, although Greece is the only advanced economy where fewer than seven-in-ten (65 and 66 per cent according to two different surveys) report using the Internet (Reuters 2017:72; Pew 2018: 10). In addition, Greece has the largest generational divide in Internet use (47-point gap) among advanced economies with 99 per cent of those aged from 18 to 36 years old using it (Pew 2018:11). Furthermore, the gap in smartphone ownership between those with more and less education is 40 percentage points or more in 12 of the countries, but only one of these is an advanced economy and this is Greece (40-point gap) (Pew 2018: 15). This suggests that those who use the Internet and social media are primarily young educated people; this is an important factor to consider in the study of the extreme-right and social media in Greece.

It is also important to consider levels of trust in news encountered in mainstream media and social media. The proportion of the national population saying they trust the news (mainstream and is social media) is lowest in Greece and South Korea (23 per cent) (Reuters 2017:9). Typically, people's trust in news from mainstream media is almost double that of social media in all countries, however, in Greece more people trust social media as a source of news (28 per cent) compared to the mainstream media (19 per cent), although this has more to do with the low opinion of the news media in general than the quality of information in their news feeds (Reuters 2017:21). Facebook remains the most widely used platform for news in Greece (62 per cent use it), while 32 per cent of Greeks use YouTube for news content (Reuters 2017:72). Overall and not only for news, Greeks use the following social media (Reuters 2017:73).

- Facebook 81%
- You Tube 77%
- Facebook Messenger 51%
- Viber 40%
- Twitter 25%

The older extreme-right parties in Greece used to be interested in exploiting the mainstream media, such as television, radio and newspapers (Ellinas 2010: 125-166; Psarras 2010). The the electoral breakthrough of the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn in 2012 (Psarras 2012; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015) demonstrated that the Internet and social media could play a more significant role. Golden Dawn's involvement with social media and the Internet capitalises on the low trust of Greek people in mainstream media; on its earlier website, the party ran a slogan stating 'turn off your TV, you can find us on the Internet'. Golden Dawn criticises the mainstream media for excluding the party's MPs and representatives from the media political arena and preventing their attempts to express their views and ideas. To a certain extent this is true; the majority of TV channels, radios and newspapers try not to give Golden Dawn members the opportunity to present their ideology to the general public. Of course, there are many exceptions to this stance on the part of the media. The Internet, in contrast, is a hospitable space for the reproduction of fascist, neo-Nazi and racist speech and the propagation of such ideologies. It is also a tool that is used by the vast majority of young people in their everyday lives. Golden Dawn is aware of that and this is the reason why the party focuses on the Internet and the social media, targeting, mainly, young people in the age group of 15 to 35 years old (Sakellariou 2015; Koronaïou, Lagos, Sakellariou 2015; Koronaïou et al. 2015). Golden Dawn is referred to here because it is the most important political party and actor in the extreme-right field and is thus the presence and influence of Golden Dawn on Twitter is of particular interest

in this study not least since, due to violations of the community's regulations, the official Golden Dawn accounts on FB and Twitter were closed down in 2019 and 2018 respectively, as well as some accounts of the party members.

The role of the Internet and social media in violent extremism has been a burning issue since Al-Qaeda started actively spreading their propaganda online (Rogan 2006), but particularly after the rise and expansion of the so-called Islamic State (von Behr et al 2013; Conway 2012; Pearson 2015; Klausen 2015; Alava, Frau-Meigs and Hassan 2017, Conway 2017; al-Rawi 2017; Awan 2017; Meleagrou-Hitchens and Kaderbhai 2017). Internet, and social media in particular, usage has also been of concern in considering the rise of the extreme-right in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. the U.S. and Latin America) (Neudert, Kollanyi, Howard 2017; Medina-Serrano et al 2018) and its potential role in the self-radicalisation process (Koehler 2014).

As yet this issue has not been subject to academic study in Greece, however. Research to date has been limited to reports of the presence of fascist groups on the Internet as part of larger research studies and sporadic, relatively descriptive and brief.<sup>1</sup> One exception is the SMARTETHIC (Social media and resurgent ethno-nationalism in Greece)'project<sup>2</sup>, which examines, at the macro level, the way that Greek media and public debates have formed negative emotions and perceptions on how democracy works, and to decode the mechanism through which such emotions might have functioned to create a political opportunity for extremists in the context of the economic crisis. At a micro level, it aimed to profile the repertoire of emotions of Greek right-wing extremists through the new social media, and to establish whether and how this interactive communication has favoured Golden Dawn. In addition to studying the mainstream media, the project collected three large Twitter message data sets (12.5 million tweets in total). In order to capture variation over time and between periods of different political intensity, two 3-month periods of political campaigns and different kinds of elections, and one period of routinised politics were selected.

The only available outcome of this research makes a comparison between the extreme-right and extreme-left, but also discusses Twitter activity among other parties as well. In line with findings, which show that individuals and groupings which sit at the extreme ends of the ideological scale are particularly likely to form echo chambers, the project expected to find strong levels of cohesion on the edges of the political network (confirming the echo chamber hypothesis). The right-wing extremist party (Golden Dawn) is the one which mostly resembles an echo chamber, followed by the communist party (KKE). At first sight, the shape of the networks on the extreme-right and the extreme-left is fragmented, whereas connectivity seems homogeneously distributed for the political centre. On the far-right, the right-wing extremist component (Golden Dawn) seems hardly connected to the populist (Independent Greeks - ANEL), and this only via a few users bridges (Agathangelou et al. 2017).

Two other studies on the Internet and social media which are of interest to the current study, have been conducted and published recently. The first is a study from the Mediterranean Institute for Investigative Reporting (MIIR 2019) which analysed political propaganda and robots on Twitter. The report studied, among others, Golden Dawn Twitter accounts and mentions that some of those based on their everyday activity and name are robots. Another interesting though not unexpected finding was that the extreme-right network as analysed is very close and interacts more frequently than any other party with the network of the conservative right-wing party of New Democracy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for example:

[https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/themes/bricktheme/pdfs/The\\_Extreme\\_Right\\_on\\_Facebook\\_Appendices.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/themes/bricktheme/pdfs/The_Extreme_Right_on_Facebook_Appendices.pdf) (last access 19 May 2019).

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/188069/factsheet/en> (last accessed 19 May 2019). Publicly available data or publications from this project are limited.

<sup>3</sup> For more details see: <https://miir.gr/el/erevnes/titivismata-sti-skoteini-plevra-toy-diadiktuoy/> (last accessed 2 July 2019).



A second study was focused on the attitudes of Greeks expressed in news posts and Twitter and Instagram regarding the issue of immigration (Friedrich Ebert 2019). This is relevant for this study as one of the main themes identified in the extreme-right accounts is directly related to immigration and the refugee issue. The main findings of the abovementioned report is that security is the dominant discourse, with humanity coming second, expressing anxieties and echoing a sentiment that views immigration as a policing issue, mirrored by a strong streak of humanitarianism and solidarity that is present in Greece. Images within the demographic narrative reflect anxieties that soon there will be no Greece to speak of. Poor economic conditions leading to an abandoned aging population are blamed for this, while the Greek economy is unable to bear the burden of integrating immigrants. Because of this situation, conspiracy theories about ‘replacement population theory’ spread easily. On the other side a strong discourse can be found about the perceived threat to European and Greek identity posed by immigration, a story primarily told through conspiracy theories that answer to economic woes. The most influential images in the security narrative indicate two key issues. On the one hand, they reflect a wider European trend of immigrants treated mainly as a security threat that require policing, showcasing figures such as V. Orbán or news about rioting immigrants. On the other hand, popular images illuminate local issues on the Turkish-Greek border.<sup>4</sup>

This general lack of research with regard to social media, especially Twitter, and the extreme-right makes the current study particularly timely and important. At the same time, given the lack of existing knowledge to date in this field, there is no obvious touchstone from which to intervene in the debate and thus a picture is painted from scratch.

## 1.2 Methodological choices

It was originally intended that both anti-Islamist (extreme-right) and Islamist social media would be studied in the Greek context. This was based on the assumption that the necessary number of accounts would be found for both strands of research given the existence of a large Muslim community in Greece and the rise in numbers of immigrants and refugees arriving from the summer of 2015. However, the developments with regard to the presence of ISIS online (e.g. moderation from Twitter and Facebook, surveillance from state authorities, transfer of communication to other, more private, platforms) and subsequent scandals related to Facebook (e.g. The Cambridge Analytica manipulation) had a severe impact. In addition, accounts that were previously open and public, and thus available for selection in our sample, were either closed down or became private. As a result, there remained only a very limited number of accounts available on Facebook and the decision was reached that a full analysis on both Facebook and Twitter was not possible. Moreover, the Twitter accounts found during a pre-pilot and pilot phase were exclusively private. Table 1 below shows that on the Islamist stream the few selected pages on Facebook were at the same time not so active and in reality not so radical and they are categorised in the first class contrary to the extreme-right, which are more active. Further to that, although, the initial target, as described in the DoA, was to search for and collect primarily anti-Islamist accounts, it became apparent that such mono-thematic accounts were not available, or there were very few. It was rather the case that the existing accounts and the social media network were basically of extreme-right background, content and ideology. As it is going to be clear from the analysis, anti-immigrant and anti-Islam themes are being discussed within the extreme-right milieu, however, it would be misleading to call the whole network as anti-Islam(ist), since other nationalist topics dominate the milieu quite explicitly. This is why, in this report, it was decided to refer to the milieu and/or network as extreme-right rather than as an anti-Islam(ist) one.

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<sup>4</sup> For more info see: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/15374-20190510.pdf> (last accessed 2 July 2019).

## SAMPLE CLUSTERING - POSTS FREQUENCY

Classes	Frequency	Relative Frequency
0 - 191	4	67
192 - 383	1	17
768 - 959	1	17

1 - 3

*Table 1: Sample clustering-posts frequency<sup>5</sup>*

Given the nature of the Twitter accounts, i.e. personal pages, this report primarily focuses on the data gathered on Twitter to best highlight individual level type data. As mentioned in the general introduction, the DARE study targets personal accounts of random citizens as opposed to those of opinion leaders or political organisations. This choice was made in order to capture bottom-up perspectives. Rather than examining how radicalisation is constructed at the level of political communication from organisations, this approach provides information on what strengthens radicalisation at the individual and social levels and their interpersonal communication.

The choice to focus on Twitter rather than Facebook data in this report is also a heuristic one, since it is impossible to exploit FB and Twitter data as a single dataset given the different nature of the platforms and data retrieved, except in the case of the lexical content. With regard to the methodological steps followed, a three month pilot study,<sup>6</sup> conducted from September to December 2018 (Month 17 to Month 19), served to select a Greek sample of 89 Twitter (TW) accounts and 32 Facebook (FB) pages for the extreme-right strand of radicalisation and 8 FB pages for the Islamist strand. Due to suspension and deletion of accounts during the three-month scraping campaign (from Month 19 to Month 21) that followed the pilot study, only 51 Twitter accounts could be retrieved amongst the 89 Twitter accounts initially identified and a final number of 9 FB pages (Table 2). Further to that, as mentioned above, due to the lack of Islamist accounts this strand was not included in the final analysis.

GREECE							
RW				IS			
Personal	Forum	Total		Personal	Forum	Total	
W	M			W	M		

<sup>5</sup> The numbers of the table mean that for example 67 per cent of the accounts have very few posts (from 0 to 191), which make the available material poor for analysis. Frequency means the actual number of accounts, relative frequency the percentage of the accounts and classes means the categories of the posts within the accounts found and selected. On the left hand side, clusters of accounts have been generated by the means of the statistic Yule's law. It is a table of clusters with their corresponding frequency and relative frequency. Frequency represents the number of accounts in a given cluster; relative frequency expresses the same information in % -x% of the users' tweets.

<sup>6</sup> During the pilot phase and in parts of this report the following members of the PUA team have contributed through the collection of accounts, online observation and commenting on the content: Alexandra Koronaiou, Evangelos Lagos, Evangelos Deligiannidis, Aris Gavrielatos, Grigoris Serbis and Takis Malanos.



Pilot study	19	30	32	89	-	-	8	8
Final sample	18	24	9	51	-	-	7	7

*Table 2: Greek sample*

As detailed in the general introduction, the type of pages selected on Twitter and Facebook are of a different nature. Twitter accounts can be considered as ‘personal’ profiles whereas Facebook accounts are ‘pages’, that is to say they are public accounts rarely developed as personal accounts, and if so, they are personal accounts of public figures. Since the focus of work package 5 (WP5) is on the mass of random citizens rather than political leaders or organisations, analysis will solely be conducted on the basis of data and observations from Twitter. Facebook pages were scraped over a two-year period, from January 2015 to November 2018. For technical reasons, it was not possible to scrape further back in time. Twitter pages, on the other hand, were scraped as far back as possible, collecting posts back to January 2012 and up until February 2019 in Greek case.

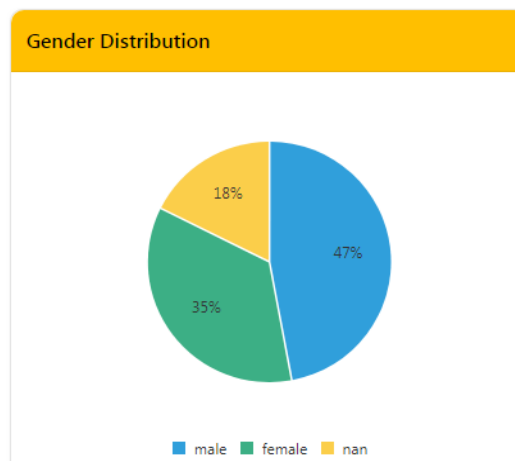
## 2. Sample characteristics

### 2.1 Distribution and representativity of samples

This section is dedicated to providing an overall description of the sample that will be used throughout this report to investigate self-radicalisation in Greece. By detailing the characteristics of the sample, preliminary elements concerning the population, the distribution of the sample and the time-frame of the study will be covered. Following this introductory information, the level of connectivity and the degree of engagement will be considered. In light of these discussions, it will be determined whether the Greek extreme-right sample can be understood as an online milieu or whether users follow unrelated individual patterns of behaviour. Overall, and as already stated, the three month pilot study, conducted from September to December 2018 resulted in a sample for Greece of 51 Twitter (54 were initially considered) and nine FB pages on the extreme-right, while no Twitter accounts and seven Facebook (FB) pages on the Islamist were selected. However, as explained in the General Introduction, only the Twitter accounts were used for the analysis.

#### 2.1.1 Representativity of gender

Of the 51 accounts in the available sample, 24 (47 per cent) were identified as male, 18 (35 per cent) as female and nine were unidentified (18 per cent) (see Figure 1). As even this is based on the users’ self-identification, it is not possible to be sure if gender identified, based on the name and sometimes the accompanying photo, is the actual one.



*Figure 1: Gender distribution*

Contrary to expectation, female accounts belonging to the extreme-right strand were not difficult to find. Although a full gender balance in the sample was not achieved, the number of accounts identified is significant given levels of female participation and activism.

### 2.1.2 Representativity of radical ideologies

For the reasons mentioned in the introduction, the Greek sample consisted of exclusively extreme-right wing accounts.

### 2.1.3 Language distribution

In terms of the language used in accounts, Figure 2 indicates that the vast majority are primarily Greek speaking; 36 of them (71 per cent), while 15 declare their main language English (29 per cent).

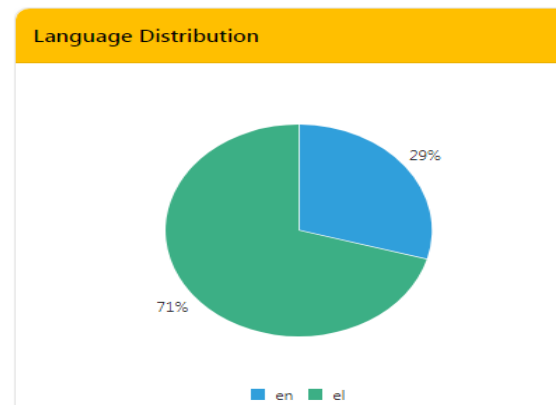


Figure 2: Language distribution

It should be underlined that despite the official declaration of the account language, Greek speaking accounts could also use English and vice versa, however overall English is not used so much. Given that among the Greek extreme-right milieu, the Greek language is considered a crucial factor for someone to be identified as genuinely Greek, the presence of even 15 English speaking accounts is surprising. However, on closer interrogation and in depth analysis of the content, it would appear that Greek is the almost exclusively used language in these accounts. Thus, in reality, all the 51 accounts are Greek majority speaking.<sup>7</sup> This is supported by the fact that a qualitative study of those accounts that mention a place of residence, reveals that none are situated outside Greece and thus warrant an English-speaking account.

## 2.2 Time periods of participation

### 2.1.1 Longevity of participation

Twitter was created in 2006 but it started to gain popularity much later in Greece. Despite this gradual acceptance and rise of Twitter among the Greek social media users Facebook was, and to a great extent still is, the preferred choice of social media within the Greek population. Among this sample, the first tweet selected is from January 1, 2012 and the last from February 22, 2019. Hence the sample covers a period of seven years (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). This period includes the rise of the extreme-right in Greece through the astonishing success and entrance into the Greek Parliament of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, in the successive May and June 2012 elections. As it could be expected, a

<sup>7</sup> The fact English is selected by users as a primary language is possibly because it affects the timeline and the algorithm; it allows users to see broader content than if they only select Greek.

small rise of Twitter use was recorded during the European elections of 2014, the July 2015 Referendum<sup>8</sup> and the two national elections in January and September 2015.

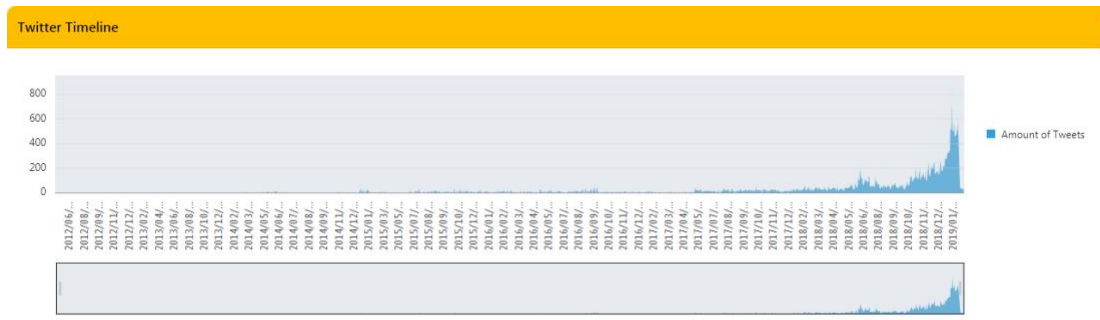


Figure 3: Same Twitter Timeline of activity for the whole sample zooming out to include the full period of time the sample covers



Figure 4: Timeline of the right-wing twitter activity from 2012 to 2019

### 2.2.2 Focus on the present-day phenomenon

The pilot phase of data collection and analysis revealed many new Twitter accounts were established and a huge rise of use was recorded (as depicted in Figure 5) during the phase of political negotiations and final agreement between Greece and North Macedonia in the 2018-2019 period, particularly May-June 2018 and January-February 2019. These talks resulted in an historical agreement between Greece and the neighbouring country in the North, known until recently as the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).<sup>9</sup> After around 25 years of disagreement, or full lack of

<sup>8</sup> This referendum was to decide whether Greece should accept the bailout conditions in the country's government-debt crisis proposed jointly by the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB) on 25 June 2015 took place on 5 July 2015. The referendum was announced by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in the early morning of 27 June 2015 and ratified the following day by the Parliament and the President. It was the first referendum to be held since the republic referendum of 1974.

<sup>9</sup> The use of the name Macedonia was disputed between Greece and North Macedonia. Pertinent to its background is an early 20th-century multifaceted dispute and armed conflict that formed part of the background to the Balkan Wars. The specific naming dispute, although an existing issue in Yugoslav-Greek relations since World War II, was reignited after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the newly gained independence of the former Socialist Republic of Macedonia in 1991. It has since been an ongoing issue in bilateral and international relations until it was settled with the Prespa agreement in June 2018, the subsequent ratification by the Macedonian and Greek parliaments in late 2018 and early 2019, and the official renaming of Macedonia to North Macedonia in

communication between the two states, the conflict over the name of FYROM was resolved through this convention. This was considered an ‘act of war’ from a large part of the Greek right, the Orthodox Church of Greece and of course the extreme-right, which accused the Greek government of treason. These reactions are very clearly observed in the Greek sample in terms of the volume of use over time.

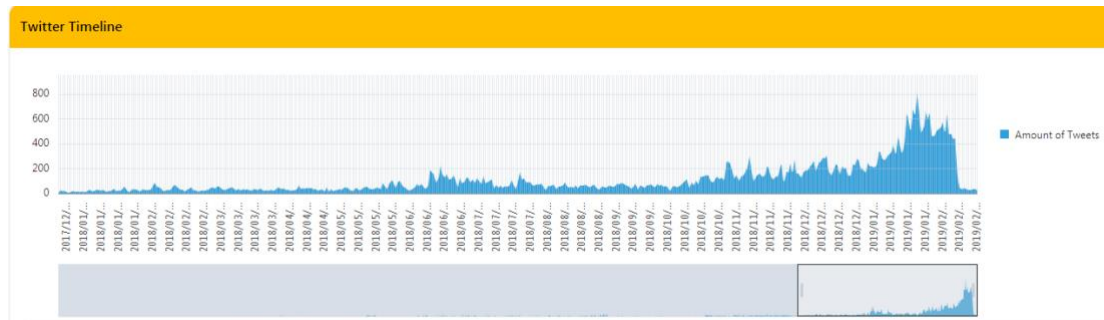


Figure 5: Twitter Timeline of activity for the whole sample with a focus on most recent years

These periods include the first bilateral meetings and discussions between the two states, the final agreement on 12 June, 2018, the convention’s approval by the Greek Parliament on 25 January, 2019 and the subsequent acceptance of North Macedonia in NATO. During that period - from January 2018 until January 2019 - at least six large rallies were organised in Athens, Thessaloniki and other Greek cities which also influenced the content of the Twitter sample.

## 2.3 Volume of activity and patterns of participation

In order to understand the accounts used to conduct further analysis, the volume of activity of the selected sample has also been considered. Below, the levels of engagement will be highlighted as well as the homogeneity of the online behaviours.

### 2.3.1 Volume of tweets and retweets and levels of engagement

The material collected from the 51 Twitter accounts of the Greek sample includes a total number of 34,504 tweets and 38,371 retweets for the extreme-right strand (see Figure 6). Tweets can be defined as original messages originating from a user of the sample, while retweets are tweets created by another user outside the sample, but shared by a user or a series of users from the sample.

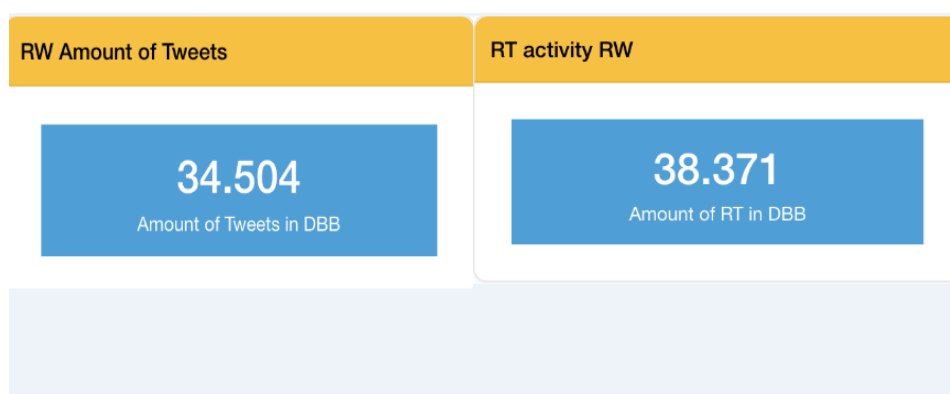


Figure 6: Number of tweets and retweets

February 2019. See <https://www.mfa.gr/en/the-question-of-the-name-of-the-republic-of-north/>, last accessed 17 February 2020.

From these data, it is evident that the users in the extreme-right sample tend to produce authentic material through the creation of tweets. Although the number of retweets is a little bit higher, the number does not suggest that only secondary messages are reproduced within the sample.

### 2.3.2 Homogenous vs scattered patterns of participation

Although the Greek sample is monothematic and comparisons with IS activity cannot be made, the table below provides some useful insights on the extreme-right material. As mentioned already in the introduction, the extreme-right seems to be very active, or at the very least, have produced a rather large amount of tweets; 50 per cent of the total amount of tweets between 1,197 and 2,647 tweets. However, there is variation in the sample since many accounts seem to tweet less, between 289.5 and 1,197 tweets. Thus, based on the data, it would seem that a large part of the sample has a very active behaviour online, but this is not homogeneous, but rather scattered (see Figure 7).<sup>10</sup>

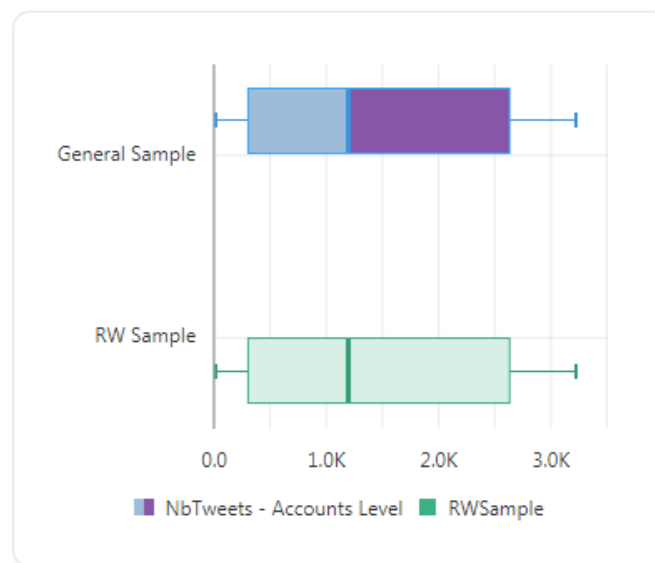


Figure 7: Sample behaviour

The extreme-right boxplot is spread apart and it must be noted that the more the surface of the rectangle is spread out, more the dispersion of values is important. Also, the more the rectangle is left-skewed, the smaller the activity and vice versa. In the case at hand, the extreme-right boxplot tends to be left-skewed, but not to such a degree to claim that there is not much activity. Simply put, contributors within the extreme-right sample do not use Twitter in a similar way.

### 2.4 Modalities of participation and levels of integration

Having described the general pattern behaviour of the extreme-right sample, the next step of this analysis is to explore the modalities of participation in order to find out how people are taking part in this online environment. This is explored through asking: are users expressing original content (a tweet), sharing an idea (retweet), or simply publicly approving of someone else's contribution (like) or disseminating content (share)? Understanding how users contribute within this field will help to improve the understanding of the levels of engagement and ultimately confirm whether we are dealing with online milieus or individual patterns of behaviour. Further to that, it should be noted that modalities of participation, in terms of tweeting or retweeting, is a way to apprehend levels of

<sup>10</sup> This figure, commonly known as a box-and-whisker box plot, represents the distribution and the dispersion of a full dataset. It provides information on how the overall sample is composed with regard to the lowest and the highest number of posts for a single account within the whole sample; what is the median level of posts; how dispersed or homogenous the material is; and whether accounts respond to a similar pattern or not.

engagement. By retweeting rather than tweeting, people are less exposed and more disengaged (Cha et al. 2010).

#### 2.4.1 Statistical distribution of tweets and retweets and levels of integration

Extreme-right users do more re-tweeting than tweeting. Although the difference is not huge (tweets: 34,504; and retweets: 38,371) this nonetheless suggests they are connected. The boxplots below show the statistical distribution of tweets and retweets, with on the left-hand side, a picture of the tweet activity (Figure 8), and on the right-hand side, a snapshot of the retweet activity (Figure 9).



*Figures 8 and 9: Box plots of the distribution of tweets and retweets for the right-wing extremist sample*

However, if we put these results back into the context of typical Twitter use patterns, re-publishing content rather than generating original content is a normal pattern of behaviour for users on this platform. The fact that extreme right-wingers retweet more than they tweet does not tell us much about the levels of engagement. This could be related to a low level of integration into a digital milieu, although it would still need to study this claim more. By 'retweeting', it is meant that users in the extreme-right sample tend not to produce first hand content through the publication of their own tweets, but are mainly using their account to retweet the material of other accounts. That said, they are indeed active online, but without producing original messages. At this point another finding that tends to demonstrate the not so strong level of integration of our sample, and by extension the lack of influence of the online scene on individual users could be mentioned.

#### 2.4.2 'Likes' and levels of integration

The overall volume of likes for samples illustrates another form of media participation. Liking content initially created by other users is even less engaging than retweeting, but it still shows a manner in which participants can actively contribute to the existence of digital milieus. Such participation is depicted in the distribution of user's likes (Figure 10) and the statistical distribution of users (Figure 11).



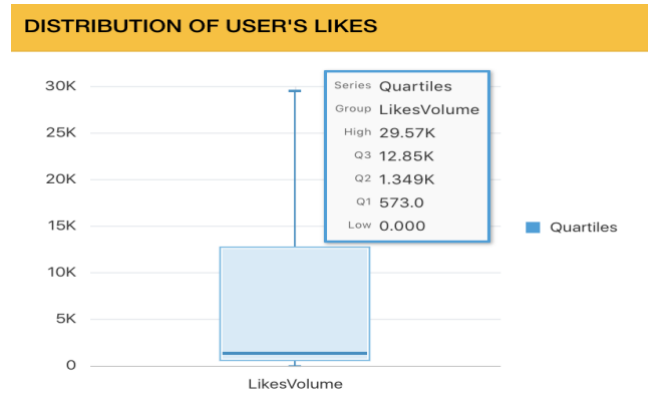


Figure 10

**STATISTIC DISTRIBUTION OF USER'S LIKES**

Classes	Frequency	Relative Frequency
0 - 22988	40	78
22989 - 45976	3	6
45977 - 68965	4	8
68966 - 91953	2	4
114943 - 137931	1	2
137932 - 160919	1	2

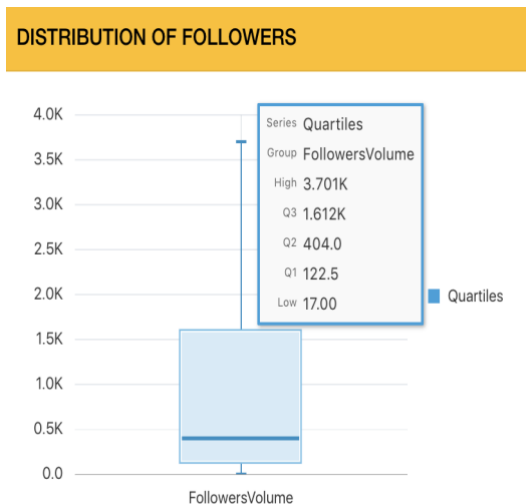
1 - 6

Figure 11: Distribution of user's likes

As the figures above show, in the extreme-right sample, 50 percent of users like between 573 and 12,850 tweets which is a very wide range, with an average of 1,349. However, as Figure 11 shows the vast majority of accounts (40 or 78 percent) are placed at the lower class with regard to likes. Although such numbers are not very high, at the same time it is not accurate to argue that the extreme-right activity is mainly output, i.e. internet users primarily directed at a general audience, rather than interactive meaningful exchange or building reciprocal relationships with others. Overall, the inflow of information is relatively low for the Greek extreme-right sample, but this does not lead to the conclusion that the influence from online participation is highly unlikely.

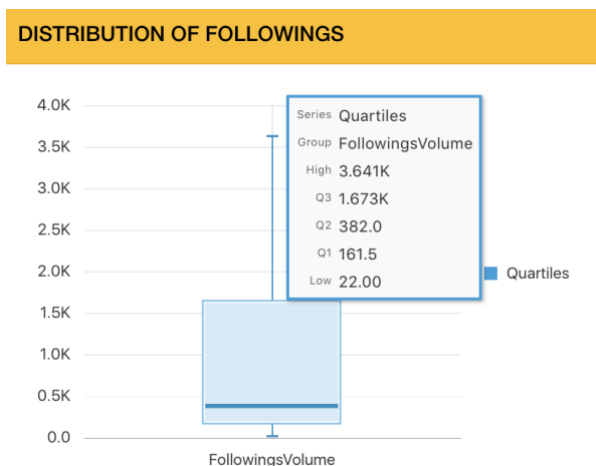
### 2.4.3 Followers/followings and levels of integration

Another dimension of participation that helps evaluate online engagement is the number of followers and followings of the extreme-right sample. For the extreme-right sample the distribution of followers is between 122.5 and 1,612 with an average of 404.0 (Figure 12).



*Figure 12: Box plot of the distribution of followers for the right-wing extremists*

On the other hand, with regard to the followings there is a variation between 161.5 and 1,673 with an average of 382.0 (Figure 13).



*Figure 13: Box plot of the distribution of followings for the right-wing extremists*

Both these indicators - followers and followings - are very helpful in order to learn if people have any echo when they post or if they are well-connected. It can also help pinpoint strategies of communication. For example, are users trying to get their message out there, monitoring domains of interest or are they failing to use the connectivity potential of the platform? Without going into great detail on who exactly people are following, what can be noted for the Greek extreme-right sample is that, although less compared to other extreme-right samples, users demonstrate their online engagement by publishing new content and using Twitter to participate in an existing online radical milieu or contribute to the formation of a new online radical milieu. It is clear from the pilot phase that what is published has visibility. As Boyd (2010) has argued, publicity is not visibility, meaning that publishing online does not mean that anyone is reading or seeing the material a user is sharing. As a consequence, the critical question is if the Greek extreme-right sample is actually a milieu, based on the connectivity and relationships developed within it. Having the above in mind, it seems that the extreme-right sample, although not exactly echoing its messages strongly, has a kind of connectivity with a relatively high level of participation. That said, it could be argued that an online extreme-right milieu is actually present from the moment strong activity of liking other people's tweets, following

one another, spreading content. These are all elements that stress the fact that the sample of the extreme-right users solidifies the idea that these contributors are engaged in sharing flows of information and reactive to online content viewed and received. Although the lack of the IS sample means there is no opportunity for comparisons, useful conclusions can be made for the extreme-right sample alone. The most important conclusion is that the extreme-right sample is active, however this is limited and that Twitter users are participating but on a low/average level. These first conclusions on the extreme-right sample will be illuminated through the network analysis that will follow in the relevant sections of this report. Finally, comparisons with the other extreme-right/ anti-Islamist samples in the DARE study will be very interesting in terms of active/ not-active participation.

### 3. Staging and framing identities

Although it was impossible to collect extensive personal data pertaining to people's age, level of education, or specifics of their geographic location, it was still possible to recover the information, relative to a general 'style', that people display on their Twitter accounts to characterise and present themselves to their audiences. A style offers an understanding of how people perceive themselves as well as how they wish to be perceived by others. Further to this, it serves to express to other users an alternative to dominant representations of a phenomenon, in this case the extreme-right online.

This section considers if and how a group identity is constituted through a style. Furthermore, milieu rituals and labelling processes, pertaining to a specific ideology, in the Greek case that of the extreme-right, are also examined. So far, different approaches to examining and understanding group identity have been used. For example, close examination of the pattern of participation showed where samples were using Twitter in a similar manner. In this section, the main focus will be on the symbolic expressions of the sample. Signs of belonging through a specific style, the recourse to ritual practices, the establishment of codes whose meaning can only be understood by an inner-circle of members, in addition to the performativity of formulas such as 'we are' or 'in this community', are a number of elements that co-produce a group identity. When relevant, it will be shown how users configure signs of self-recognition and how, by doing so, a social group distinguishes the contours of an autonomous identity. Thus, it is mainly in this section, that the fashion in which the groups stage their identity as radicals or extremists is explored.

As discussed in the general introduction, these endogenous labelling processes are assorted to exogenous labelling processes or in other words, portraying oneself is just as important as how others qualify him/her. As Howard Becker demonstrated, no behaviour is deviant in nature, no ideology is intrinsically radical (1963). It is only through the formulation of laws and social norms and the enforcement of those prescriptions by which radicality is established. This approach to radicalisation reminds us that radical ideologies are not a set of characteristics, but a process of interaction between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements, strongly dependent on the context and the situation of the symbolic productions.

Studying how users stage their identities on the Internet as well as how their media uses are framed by outsiders is important considering that the Internet has profoundly impacted the political landscape. The advent of 2.0 digital technologies, given their participative nature where content is user-generated, has redefined the boundaries of the public sphere. In this setting, creating an online profile conveys both ideological and political representations. Access to political representation through media arenas, namely websites like Twitter, facilitates the legitimisation or modification of interpretative frameworks. The rise of participatory media and the use of social media have reconfigured the recourse to the legitimacy that certain actors could claim, so much so, that new forms of resistance or dissent are taking shape on the web. Indeed, the Internet has magnified the availability of radical ideas (Dean et al., 2012; Torok, 2013). Understanding processes of radicalisation

on the Internet thereby entails contemplating whether contributors participate on Twitter through specific self-presentations and if so, how these are framed. It supposes detailing how users stage their identities through general self-presentations to ensure their affiliation to a style recognisable by others as part of an extremist movement.

### 3.1 Expressing political and religious opinions

This section analyses the main forms of media participation encountered during the ethnographic phase of the study. Within the frame of social movement theories, a format of participation can be understood as a repertoire of contention (Tilly, 2004), a mode of action (Castells, 2012; Earl and Kimport, 2011) or a repertoire of action (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Tilly defined repertoire of contention as an action carried out in common on the basis of shared interest. To be heard on a certain issue or achieve visibility for a cause, activists have a set of various collective protest-related tools and actions that they perceive as legitimate to pursue in order to achieve their goals of visibility. Traditionally, these actions may include negotiations, petitions, poster collages, boycotts, demonstrations, sit-ins, riots, hostage-taking, sabotage, destruction, etc. Applied to the web, the notion of format of participation refers to the fashion in which one uses a social media account to engage in the public sphere to defend a cause by conforming to a collective style (Theocharis et al. 2015). Exploring formats of participation thus extends studies that have shown how digital resources and social media websites have become modes of action (Castells, 2012; Earl and Kimport, 2011) allowing random citizens, social movements, activists or grassroots organisations to politically participate online, for example, by organising and coordinating protests more efficiently through social media tools (Bennett, 2003). Studies show that interactions on Twitter become a political tool that can be used to several ends: taking part in political communication, mobilising people to participate, and organising the actual actions of the social movement (Theocharis et al., 2015).

Looking at extremism specifically, it is a well-known fact that that extreme-right organisations use platforms to rally their audiences, engage new members and build a larger political movement (Conway, 2019). More importantly, digital tools allow collective action rationales to emerge and random citizens to take matters into their own hands by providing means to engage in political action (Norris, 2002). Yet, it is less clear how bottom up movements take shape through individual actions and engage in politically collective action, taking a stand to defend radical ideologies through specific formats of participation, without particular incentive or direction from political organisations in a hierarchical descendant fashion. Therefore, this subsection of the report questions whether radicals employ a specific format of participation, and if so, details the characteristics of the format. By analysing the material retrieved through digital ethnography and paying attention to the content of tweets, interactions between users, as well as the 'about' section of accounts, the format of participation used is examined.

Considering participation formats in this section has the added value of highlighting bringing forward the reasons for selecting the sample. One criterion for selecting the sample was the direct or indirect call for violence found in the accounts. In the case of the extreme-right, it was easy to find a large amount of accounts that fit the criteria, or at the very least shared explicitly or implicitly violent content targeting minorities or immigrants. For example, while browsing through accounts, it was easy to spot the following type of imagery and texts that openly stigmatise immigrants and/or expressed radical opinions in terms of how to treat immigrants and Muslims in particular (plates 1-4). There has been a strong Islamophobic trend on Greek social media during the last decade or so (Huseyinoglu and Sakellariou 2018: 298-299; Sakellariou 2017: 248-249;) and it is related to a series of issues, the most important being the construction of the first purpose-build mosque in Athens, as well as the increase in immigration flow, particularly the refugee crises from 2015 onwards, and of course the violence perpetrated by Islamist terrorist groups in different Western countries.



Plates 1-4

Although not to the same extent, homophobic messages were also visible in some accounts targeting homosexuals, as well as messages in support of police violence against leftists and communists and praising of the military dictatorship of 1967-1974, which was a violent and openly anti-leftist and anti-communist regime (plate 5).



Plate 5

Finally, since the sample is openly extreme-right, messages regarding the civil war of 1946-1949 between on the one hand the right and extreme-right wing, supported by the English and US forces, and communists, supported by the Soviet forces, on the other were also found. Such messages were supportive of the atrocities perpetrated on the part of right-wing forces including slaughtering communists on the battlefield.



What was also interesting, in terms of content, was to look into the links used in Twitter accounts. Looking into the main links used by Twitter accounts in the Greek extreme-right sample one could draw the conclusion that three groups of domains are found (Table 3). The first group consists of the mainstream right-wing news outlets like [protothema.gr](http://protothema.gr), [kathimerini.gr](http://kathimerini.gr), [iefimerida.gr](http://iefimerida.gr), [skai.gr](http://skai.gr), [liberal.gr](http://liberal.gr), [eleftherostypos.gr](http://eleftherostypos.gr), [in.gr](http://in.gr) being the most well-known ones. All these news outlets are of right-wing and, in some cases, neo-liberal ideology and background. They are supportive of the current conservative right-wing government and, at the time of the sample collection, they were openly against the then left-wing government and of course against the agreement between Greece and North Macedonia on the so called 'Macedonian issue', resolved after almost 30 years. From this perspective the presence of these domains is easily explained.

The second group of domains that are found are those of alternative right-wing or religious news outlets. Among those, one can find the European [voiceofeurope.com](http://voiceofeurope.com), as well as Greek domains such as [pentapostagma.gr](http://pentapostagma.gr), [mknews.eu](http://mknews.eu) and [national-pride.org](http://national-pride.org). While these domains could potentially also be assigned to the group below (extreme-right), since they are not so openly extremist, they are retained as a separate group. It is very interesting that the [voiceofeurope.com](http://voiceofeurope.com) domain was also found to be one of the top domains used by the alt-right twitter users in a recent study (Berger 2018: 34-36). These news outlets were also mainly focused and involved in the 'Macedonian issue' during the sample collection time, but they are more general in content. The first of the Greek domains ([pentapostagma.gr](http://pentapostagma.gr)) is also religiously orientated, but this is also explained by the fact that the Greek Orthodox Church was among those who reacted vigorously against the agreement on the 'Macedonian issue' and even organised and participated in the large rallies that took place in Athens, in Thessaloniki and other Greek cities.

Finally, the third group of domains are clearly extreme-right like the website of the Golden Dawn party [xryshaygh.com](http://xryshaygh.com) and other extreme-right news outlets [ethnikismos.net](http://ethnikismos.net), [koinonikosethnikismos.wordpress.com](http://koinonikosethnikismos.wordpress.com), [xryshaygh-blog.blogspot.com](http://xryshaygh-blog.blogspot.com), [stoxos.gr](http://stoxos.gr), [eirhnika.wordpress.com](http://eirhnika.wordpress.com) and some others. As mentioned already, the party of Golden Dawn and other extreme-right groups have played a central and crucial role in the reactions against the agreement on the 'Macedonian issue' and were among the key supporters and participants in all the demonstrations about this issue. As a consequence, their presence among the main domains is also reasonably explained.



Domain	NbLinks
twitter.com	9517
macedonianancestry.wordpress.com	3263
fb.me	2484
www.xryshaygh.com	2290
youtu.be	1489
www.protothema.gr	903
ethnikismos.net	889
voiceofeurope.com	668
shar.es	660
www.youtube.com	592
infognomonpolitics.blogspot.com	574
xryshaygh.blogspot.com	526
eirhinika.wordpress.com	440
xryshaygh.blogspot.gr	412
www.iefimerida.gr	375
www.pronews.gr	329
koinonikoseethnikismos.wordpress.com	306
wp.me	296
www.facebook.com	282
www.pentapostagma.gr	243
meaculpa.gr	237
empresnews.wordpress.com	182
www.epilekta.com	174
www.kathimerini.gr	163
www.liberal.gr	157
www.pontos-news.gr	143
europost.gr	126

ift.tt	120
www.eleftherostypus.gr	115
www.stoxos.gr	113
www.thepresident.gr	110
www.freepen.gr	108
bankingnews.gr	108
www.parapolitika.gr	97
www.enikos.gr	89
www.paraxeno.com	86
www.newsbomb.gr	80
www.skai.gr	75
www.news247.gr	75
xryshaygh-blog.blogspot.gr	70
www.in.gr	64
hellasjournal.com	61
veteranos.gr	61
mknews.eu	60
www.protagon.gr	59
national-pride.org	58
hellas-now.com	58
www.lykavitos.gr	58
xryshaygh-blog.blogspot.com	57
attikanea.blogspot.com	56

*Table 3: Main domains used in sample*

This suggests that users in the Greek sample are primarily informed by news outlets of the right, the alternative right or the extreme right and in some cases of a religious nature. Since the ‘Macedonian issue’ was the key theme of that period it comes as no surprise that it influenced the domains found in the sample. This also explains why such a monothematic domain as macedonianancestry.wordpress.com was found on the list of domains in second place only after twitter.com.

Another aspect worth mentioning relates to hashtags. Hashtags are even more important to consider given our approach centres around online groups that seem to be stable and formed over time. More

specifically, when it comes to hashtags the table below verifies what has been argued throughout this report i.e. that the issue of ‘Macedonia’ and the agreement between Greece and North Macedonia has been at the centre of the debates and reactions. In this sense a crucial political off-line issue has clearly and directly influenced twitter accounts and discussions. The main hashtags (Table 4) appearing in various forms (e.g. in Greek and in English) are Macedonia, Greece, Demonstration, Traitors and SYRIZA, i.e. the left coalition ruling party that was considered responsible for the ‘treason’ together with the Prime Minister at that time, A.Tsipras.

Hashtags	NbCitation
Μακεδονία	765
syriza_xeftiles	592
vouli	410
Μακεδονια	380
ΣΥΡΙΖΑ	289
Συλλαλητηριο	277
Greece	254
Macedonia	245
Ελλάδα	216
Ελλάδα	188
ΠΡΟΔΟΤΕΣ	161
Συμφωνια_Πρεσπων	148
ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ	136
Πρεσπες	133
bastardokratia	130
Πυρκαγια	126
Τσίπρας	119
Συνταγμα	117
ΕΛΛΑΣ	110
Τσίπρας	105
Σκοπιανο	104
ΝΔ	100
Καμμένος	96
Συμφωνια_των_Πρεσπων	93
ΑΝΕΛ	91
syriza_prodotes	84
Σκοπιανό	81
Ματι	80

Βουλή	79
Βουλη	79
MacedoniaIsGreek	75
Συλλαλητήριο	73
Greek	71
λαθρομετανάστες	67
βουλη	65
Hellas	63
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ	62
Κατσίφας	60
Πρέσπες	58
syrizanel_xeftiles	57
Κατσιφας	57
Βορεια_Μακεδονια	56
εθνικισμός_τώρα	55
συριζοπανα	53
προδοτες	52
Μετρο_Θεσσαλονικης	51
συλλαλητήριο	50
anel_xeftiles	49
Καμμενος	48
ΤσιπροΚαμμενοι_εφιαλτες	47

*Table 4: Main hashtags found in the sample*

There are also other hashtags referring to the incident in South Albania when a Greek person (K.Katsifas) was killed by the Albanian police, to the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1941), to anti-left content and to anti-immigrant orientation. However, as the graphs below clearly show, the Macedonian issue dominated the milieu.

In terms of the Twitter texts, the main opinions that dominate the sample are around the ‘Macedonian issue’ and especially the demonstrations against the agreement together with anti-government and anti-left attitudes. From this perspective the content follows the above-mentioned hashtags.

ΨΟΦΟ ΣΤΑ ΔΟΥΛΙΚΑ [Death to all the ass-kissers]

Απίστευτα συναισθήματα σήμερα στο Σύνταγμα πάνω από 15 εκατ. Έλληνες ενωμένοι στο συλλαλητήριο - αντίσταση για τη Μακεδονία μας που τα ΝΑΙ ΣΕ ΟΛΑ μισελληνικά πορνίδια του κυνοβουλίου έχουν εντολές να ξεπουλήσουν. [Incredible sentiments today in Syntagma Square. 15 million Greeks united in the demonstration – resistance for our Macedonia that those ‘YES MEN’ slappers of the Parliament {dog house} who hate Greece have orders to sell off].

Η Προδοτική κυβέρνηση...[The treasonous government...]

ολα τα αρχιδια μαζεμενα.....θα ερθει η ωρα σας αλητες [all the fuckers {i.e. left wing politicians} together...your time will come punks]

## 3.2 Staging identities

Although it was not possible to collect extensive personal data regarding people's age, level of education, or profession, it was still possible to recover information pertaining to social identity. In modern societies, traditional institutions of socialisation have become less important, leading to a tendency towards individualisation (Dobrowsky, 2012: 92). Individualisation means a process of weakening of traditional forms of socialisation and the loss of knowledge about traditional norms of social action. When it comes to social media, individuals' profiles on social networks are manifest social interactions. The profiles invite others to engage with them, and with the individual's construction of identity realised on these profiles, and to react to them. From this perspective social network sites are considered as spaces enabling constructions of identity and it is no surprise that social networks have flourished enormously in modern societies characterised by weakening or for some scholars a lack of institutions of socialisation (Dobrowsky, 2012: 94). Online interactions are shaped by these identity performances (Turkle, 1995; Markham, 1998; Sunden, 2003; Thomas, 2004), allowing us to seize these social markers to characterise each sample's social identity. When we refer to social identity, we mean that people, consciously or not, stage their identities to present themselves to their audience in their everyday lives (Goffman, 1959). They display signs that enable others to situate them on the social scene, for example through a choice of clothing or sharing a cultural taste of some sort. Moreover, identity is viewed as a lifelong process that is never finished and is in a constant flux (Dobrowsky, 2012: 95).

Regarding the analysis of these social identities, the semiotic analysis of social media has been an important area of research recently, since not only discourse but also images or other visual means play a central role in social media communication, especially when it comes to expressing sentiments (Chauhan and Sutaria 2018). This is related to the crucial question on how one produces an authentic self on social media (Shane 2018:1), a question not only for politicians using social media, but for everyday users as well. Existing semiotic research on social media has been focused on various texts and practices such as selfie photography (Zappavigna 2016; Zhao and Zappavigna 2018; Veum, Victoria, and Undrum 2018), the expression and negotiation of identity (Bouvier 2012; Adami 2014) and the linguistic and multimodal representations of people and places (Buscemi 2017).

On Twitter, identities are expressed through emoticons, systematic vocabulary, expressions or hashtags in the 'about' section; they take on the appearance of profile pictures and profile banners on their page; they are related to the handle names and usernames. In that sense, McLuhan seems to be right when he notes that, 'the content of any medium is always another medium' (McLuhan 1994: xii). The analysis below is based on this information from users' self-representations through their Twitter accounts. The goal of this first subsection is to determine how the Twitter self-representations of the sample exemplify singular but also collective identities. A particular interest for common signifiers will be stressed, i.e. the use of the same qualifiers, whether they are symbols, icons, verbal expressions or hashtags. These common signifiers show how people unite online and how they co-produce a collective identity providing a sense of togetherness. In turn, findings help further the understanding of online milieus and individual activities, and further the understanding of whether – and if so, how - digital identities contribute to the processes of radicalisation.

### 3.2.1. Extreme-right presentations: Open support for radical ideologies in profiles

The self-presentations of the Greek extreme-right sample openly express support for radical ideologies from the extreme right-wing. This does not come as a surprise since accounts expressing support for radical ideologies were targeted and this was among the criteria for selection. To better

understand exactly how individuals are representing themselves, what they are sharing with their audiences and to what extent their self-presentation support processes of radicalisation, the main findings have been summarised in the following table (table 5). The main aspects included in this table are: 1) Twitter handles/ names used by users<sup>11</sup>, 2) Information derived from the 'about' section of each account and 3) Pictures, banners and other symbols used.

It should be noted that, in order to protect anonymity, Twitter handles/names are not given in the original Greek but only in English approximations and have been altered slightly if necessary to ensure original accounts cannot be traced. In the case of profile pictures and banners, only generic images are reproduced or images that no longer appear in the account users' profiles.

Twitter handles/ names
<p><b>1. References to Greece</b></p> <p>e.g. ❤️❤️❤️, Greek fighter; the name of Greece together with the name of a football club from Northern Greece, Macedonia; the user's name together with the name of Greece; the slogan 'Macedonia is only Greek. NICOS THE GREEK, i.e. with the first name, Greek, Greek Nationalist, using also the ancient Greek symbol of meander now used by Golden Dawn, GREEK SHE-WOLF.</p> <p><b>2. References to the word nation and its derivatives</b></p> <p>e.g. NATIONAL RESISTANCE, NATIONALIST REVOLUTION, National Fighter</p> <p><b>3. References to Macedonia</b></p> <p>e.g. MacedonianAncestry</p> <p><b>4. Historical references/ figures</b></p> <p>e.g. Reference to a Greek figure of the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Turks in 1821, reference to ancient Sparta the prototype of Golden Dawn and all the extreme-rightists, reference to the Greek dictator of 1936-1941, Ioannis Metaxas</p> <p><b>5. Political parties</b></p> <p>e.g. ΧΡΥΣΗ ΑΥΓΗ [GOLDEN DAWN]</p>

<sup>11</sup> The terms Twitter handle, username and name are sometimes used interchangeably. The Twitter handle and username are the same thing; they appear in the URL bar and come after the '@' sign in the about section of each user's profile. It is unique to the account and no two people can have the same one because a Twitter handle/username links one's account to an online domain of sorts. On the other hand, the name of an account does not have to be unique and can be used by a wide range of users. More importantly it can be changed throughout the lifespan of the account and therefore is not as committing and irreversible as handle/username. A lot of Twitter handles and/or names are made-up names to fit the intended uses of the account. If the accuracy and authenticity of the names and usernames is dependent on the person behind the account and the way they intend on using their account, it is also highly related to the website itself. Social media networks are exploited in different manners and there is a spectrum of authenticity, from the most made-up accounts to most authentic profiles, depending on websites. LinkedIn, for example, at one end of the spectrum is a place where people provide accurate information about themselves. A place like Twitter is in the middle of this spectrum since people can very well decide to make-up names and handle name with any ill intent, simply to reflect personal stances or areas of interest. It is important to keep in mind that, fake identities and made-up handle names takes nothing away from the authenticity of the person's media participation. As already mentioned, self-presentations - and this goes for every way people name themselves - are a reflection of how people wish to appear in society, and as such are messages that should be taken seriously in any social media network analysis.



## 'About' section<sup>12</sup>

### 1. Location

Mostly Greece and Macedonia, in Greek, in English or even in French

e.g. Κεντρική Μακεδονία, Ελλάς; ΕΛΛΑΣ; Macédoine Centrale, Grèce; Thessalonique, Grèce; Macedonia, Greece; Katerini, Greece

### 2. Emoticons

Symbols of the name of Greece GRGRGRGRGR, hearts for love ♥, or swastika ☸

### 3. Expressions

#### *Nationalism, patriotism*

- Φανατική Ελληνίδα Μακεδονισσα από την μία και μοναδική ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ!!! [Fanatic Greek Macedonian from the one and only MACEDONIA]
- Ελληνίδα εθνικιστρια [Greek Nationalist]
- Θέλουμε Και Θα Παρουμε Την ΕΛΛΑΔΑ Πισω [We want GREECE back and we will get her]
- Είμαι Ελληνίδα από τη Μακεδονία!!!! I'm Greek from Macedonia!!!!
- ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ Η ΣΤΑ ΣΥΡΙΖΑΪΙΚΑ "ΕΘΝΙΚΙ" [GREEK NATIONALIST]
- Ακομματιστος Πατριωτης,Ορθοδοξος.ΖΗΤΩ Η ΕΛΛΑΣ.ΠΑΤΡΙΣ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ [Patriot beyond political parties, Orthodox. LONG LIVE GREECE. HOMELAND RELIGION FAMILY]
- NATIONALIST
- Υπέρ άνω όλων η πατρίς και το Έθνος [Homeland and Nation above all]
- ΑΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΤΙΜΙΩΤΕΡΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΣ. If you want PEACE, prepare for WAR. At my signal, unleash HELL.
- Ελληνίδα.. Σκέτο. Μίξη Ανατ.Θράκη-Μακεδονία. Ακομμάτιστη πια. Αγαπημένο Χρώμα Γαλανόλευκο με Σταυρό [Greek. Pure. Mixture Eastern Thrace-Macedonia. Beyond political parties any more. Favourite Colour Blue and White {the colours of the Greek flag} with the cross]
- ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ - ΗΠΕΙΡΩΤΗΣ. ΧΕΙΜΑΡΙΩΤΗΣ - NATIONALIST . Ο Εθνικισμός είναι το "Ανοσοποιητικό σύστημα" του Έθνους . Σεβασμός & Αυτοσεβασμός. [GREEK NATIONALIST – FROM EPIRUS. CHEIMARA {In Albania}. Nationalism is 'the immune system' of the Nation. Respect & Self-respect]
- ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER]
- ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ ☸ Ζήτω η 4η Αυγούστου 1936 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΝΩ ΟΛΩΝ ! ΖΗΤΩ Η ΝΙΚΗ ☸ ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ☸ ΤΙΜΗ ΜΟΥ Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ! Ζήτω 21η Απριλίου 1967 GR [NATIONALISM Long live the 4th of August 1936, GREECE ABOVE ALL. LONG LIVE THE VICTORY GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS FAITH IS MY HONOUR! Long live the 21st of April 1967]
- Μόνο στους νεκρούς του, σε κανέναν άλλον δεν προσκυνά ο Έλληνας. || Περήφανη εθνικίστρια || [A Greek kneels before his dead and no one else. Proud nationalist]
- ΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΗ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΙΑ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΣΣΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΔΑ...ΑΥΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΠΟΤΑ ΑΛΛΟ [PROUD MACEDONIAN FROM THESSALONIKI GREEK...JUST THAT, NOTHING ELSE]
- Right-Wing Conservative.
- Πάνω απ' όλους και απ' όλα η Ελλάς. [Greece above everyone and everything]

#### *Extremism*

<sup>12</sup> In the about section of a Twitter account - that could also be called the biography section of the page - participants can locate themselves and present themselves and/or their account in a few lines by adding emoticons, hashtags, expressions and other textual material.

- Χρυσή Αυγή για μια Ελλάδα μονο για τους Έλληνες [Golden Dawn for Greece only for the Greeks]
- If you want PEACE, prepare for WAR. At my signal, unleash HELL.
- Ή ΓΡΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΑ... ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ...!!!!!!GR Ή [THERE IS AN IDEAL AND THIS ONLY ONE...GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS]
- Ελλάδα, Ορθοδοξία.Εθνικισμός,Χρυσή Αυγή. [Greece, Orthodoxy, Nationalism, Golden Dawn]
- ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ 🇬🇷 Ζήτω η 4η Αυγούστου 1936 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΝΩ ΟΛΩΝ ! ΖΗΤΩ Η ΝΙΚΗ 🇬🇷 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ✝️ ΤΙΜΗ ΜΟΥ Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ! Ζήτω 21η Απριλίου 1967 GR NATIONALISM Long live the 4th of August 1936, GREECE ABOVE ALL. LONG LIVE THE VICTORY. GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS. FAITH IS MY HONOUR! Long live the 21st of April 1967]

#### **Religion**

- Ή ΓΡΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΑ... ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ...!!!!!!GR Ή [THERE IS AN IDEAL AND THIS ONLY ONE...GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS]
- Ελλάδα, Ορθοδοξία.Εθνικισμός,Χρυσή Αυγή. [Greece, Orthodoxy, Nationalism, Golden Dawn]
- Ακομματιστος Πατριωτης,Ορθόδοξος.ΖΗΤΩ Η ΕΛΛΑΣ.ΠΑΤΡΙΣ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ [Patriot beyond political parties, Orthodox. LONG LIVE GREECE. HOMELAND RELIGION FAMILY]
- Πάτρις -θρησκεία –οικογένεια [Homeland-religion-family]
- Χριστιανός Ορθόδοξος [Orthodox Christian]

#### **Anti-left**

- ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER]
- 17/6/2018 ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΠΡΟΔΟΣΙΑ. Αριστεροί, μια ζωή ΠΡΟΔΟΤΕΣ, ΑΝΘΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ, ΠΟΥΛΗΜΕΝΟΙ. [June 17, 2018 NATIONAL TREASON. Leftists always traitors, against the Greeks, betrayers]

#### **Anti-Semitism**

- ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER]

#### **Racist**

- Ρατσιστρια,με εξαιρεσεις/Μισανθρωπος με ευαισθησιες/Υπερήλιξ/Νομικός/Ιθαγενής/Races are Different Species [Racist with exceptions/Misanthropist with sensitivities/ Old aged/ Lawyer/ Native/ Races are Different Species]

#### **Profile pictures and banners**

## 1. National emblems, nationalism, patriotism



A variation of the Greek flag has been used, the third from the left is accompanied by the symbol of a well-known football club of Thessaloniki-Macedonia (PAOK); the seventh from the left is accompanied by the sun of Vergina, i.e. the symbol of ancient Macedonia and the eighth shows the Greek Macedonia region in the colours of the Greek flag.

## 2. Historical figures/ symbols



A figure from the revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Turks [not identifiable]



Petrobey Mavromichalis, A figure from the revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman

Turks



An ancient Greek helmet



An ancient Greek fighter



Ion Dragoumis, a famous Greek politician, diplomat and writer, of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who organised the Greek communities during the liberation fight against Bulgarians in the Greek Macedonia region and a very well accepted figure among nationalist groups for his ideas on nationalism.

## 3. Golden Dawn symbols



The first one is the official symbol of Golden Dawn; the second includes the meander ancient Greek symbol but also symbol of Golden Dawn in the double-headed eagle, the last one shows a t-shirt with the name of Golden Dawn.

## 4. Extremism/ violence



A photo with a gun user (probably not the account user)

### 5. National-religious symbols



The flag of the Byzantine Empire with the double-headed eagle, and the last one a Christian cross

*Table 5: Twitter self-presentation*

Below, each of these thematic areas from the Twitter accounts are analysed and discussed.

First it is important to note that, regarding *contributors' names*, only a handful of people from the sample publicise their real name. Instead, people use pseudonyms. Although there are a range of pseudonyms, they mainly employ:

1. References to Greece
2. References to the word nation and its derivatives
3. References to Macedonia
4. Historical references/ figures
5. Political parties

The first three tendencies illustrate positive sentiments with people using the name of their country to express their attachment and emphasise their patriotic inclinations, either through the immediate use of the country's name and its derivatives, or using the word 'nation' and its derivatives in the second and of course the word Macedonia in the third case. It is interesting to mention that although the 'Macedonian issue' was at the core of the sample's discussions during that period the names used refer primarily to Greece and/ or the nation and don't get a local formulation. This is different when ones looks into the 'about' sections as will be shown below. In the fourth case, here again, participants proudly showcase their national origins, while insisting more on the historical heritage and origins rather than opening the door to present-day narratives and contemporary manners to frame Greek identity. These historical references are quite interesting because they include ancient Sparta which is considered as an ideal society for nationalists contrary to the Athenian democracy, and a prototype of the National-Socialism implemented in Germany, a reference to the National Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire, a landmark event that resulted in the establishment of the Greek state and finally a reference to the Greek dictator, Ioannis Metaxas, 1936-1941, who is also considered a great leader among the nationalist groups and parties. The final tendency amongst users is to endorse extremist political parties or their leaders, and thus highlight their affiliation or allegiance to these given parties and leaders, however there was only one case which directly referred to Golden Dawn in the self-presentation section.

On Twitter, people can specify a username and a handle name giving them the liberty of choosing separate labels to name themselves. The extreme-right references mostly figure in the handle names

of the account rather in the screen name section of the page. A handle name cannot be changed without giving up the account altogether and are linked to a domain of sorts. The screen name on the other hand, can be changed as often as the user wants, without affecting the overall content of the account and past tweets published. The fact that participants mention their political ideology openly, sometimes also their extreme-right and nationalistic views, in their Twitter handle and not in the screen could imply that users set up their accounts for political purposes or uses. This is not surprising in the Greek case because, as noted above, the time period when most of these Twitter accounts started to be active coincided with widespread debate on the 'Macedonian issue'. It follows that most of the accounts are likely to have been set up for political purposes.

Moving to the *about sections* of pages:

With regard to *locations*, these refer mostly to Greece and Macedonia, in Greek, in English or even in French (e.g. Κεντρική Μακεδονία, Ελλάς; ΕΛΛΑΣ; Macédoine Centrale, Grèce; Thessalonique, Grèce; Macedonia, Greece; Katerini, Greece). This is explained by the time period of the sample selection, which is directly connected to the 'Macedonia issue' and reactions against the bilateral agreement between Greece and North Macedonia. Such references indicate the national(-ist) background of most of the accounts.

With regard to *emoticons*, they are rarely used by the contributors, and only a few of them have been used to frame their identity. The main symbols used by users were related to the name of the country – Greece – using, for example 'GRGRGRGRGR' and sometimes accompanied by heart symbols - ♥ - to indicate love for the country or nation. In one case the swastika (卐) was used. Emoticons are used, therefore, to generate self-presentations structured around national identity issues and political ideology. They provide a means to show one's affiliation, allegiance and cultural background. As in other sections of the Twitter account, emoticons are used to indicate how users perceive Greece and what defines it. However, the section on expressions as well as symbols and banners are those that are the richest in material and important for the analysis in contrast to emoticons which are less used and as a consequence less important.

In the biography section on a user's page, we often find *expressions*, that is, a statement regarding how they intend to use their account or a few words on the posture they adopt in society. Here are the main ways people present themselves in this area of their accounts:

#### Nationalism, patriotism

- [Fanatic Greek Macedonian from the one and only MACEDONIA] Φανατική Ελληνίδα Μακεδονισσα από την μία και μοναδική ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ!!!
- [Greek Nationalist] Ελληνίδα εθνικιστρια
- [We want GREECE back and we will get her] Θελουμε Και Θα Παρουμε Την ΕΛΛΑΔΑ Πισω
- [I'm Greek from Macedonia!!!!] Είμαι Ελληνίδα από τη Μακεδονία!!!!
- [GREEK NATIONALIST] ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ Η ΣΤΑ ΣΥΡΙΖΑΪΙΚΑ "ΕΘΝΙΚΙ"
- [Patriot beyond political parties, Orthodox. LONG LIVE GREECE. HOMELAND RELIGION FAMILY] Ακομματιστος Πατριωτης,Ορθοδοξος.ΖΗΤΩ Η ΕΛΛΑΣ.ΠΑΤΡΙΣ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ
- NATIONALIST
- [Homeland and Nation above all] Υπέρ άνω όλων η πατρίς και το Έθνος
- [HOMEAND IS THE MOST HONOURABLE THING] ΑΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΤΙΜΙΩΤΕΡΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΣ. If you want PEACE, prepare for WAR. At my signal, unleash HELL.
- [Greek. Pure. Mixture Eastern Thrace-Macedonia. Beyond political parties any more. Favourite Colour Blue and White {the colours of the Greek flag} with the cross] Ελληνίδα. Σκέτο. Μίξη Ανατ.Θράκη-Μακεδονία. Ακομμάτιστη πια. Αγαπημένο Χρώμα Γαλανόλευκο με Σταυρό
- ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ - ΗΠΕΙΡΩΤΗΣ. ΧΕΙΜΑΡΙΩΤΗΣ - NATIONALIST . [GREEK NATIONALIST – FROM EPIRUS. CHEIMARA {In Albania}. Nationalism is 'the immune system' of the Nation.

Respect & Self-respect] Ο Εθνικισμός είναι το "Ανοσοποιητικό σύστημα" του Έθνους. Σεβασμός & Αυτοσεβασμός.

- [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER] ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ
- [NATIONALISM Long live the 4th of August 1936, GREECE ABOVE ALL. LONG LIVE THE VICTORY GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS. FAITH IS MY HONOUR! Long live the 21st of April 1967] ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ ✂ Ζήτω η 4η Αυγούστου 1936 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΝΩ ΟΛΩΝ ! ΖΗΤΩ Η ΝΙΚΗ 🇬🇷 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ☹ ΤΙΜΗ ΜΟΥ Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ! Ζήτω 21η Απριλίου 1967 GR
- [A Greek kneels before his dead and no one else. Proud nationalist] Μόνο στους νεκρούς του, σε κανέναν άλλον δεν προσκυνά ο Έλληνας. || Περήφανε εθνικίστρια ||
- [PROUD MACEDONIAN FROM THESSALONIKI GREEK...JUST THAT, NOTHING ELSE] ΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΗ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΙΑ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΣΣΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΔΑ...ΑΥΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΠΟΤΑ ΑΛΛΟ
- Right-Wing Conservative.
- [Greece above everyone and everything] Πάνω απ' όλους και απ' όλα η Ελλάς.

### Extremism

- [Golden Dawn for Greece only for the Greeks] Χρυσή Αυγή για μια Ελλάδα μόνο για τους Έλληνες
- If you want PEACE, prepare for WAR. At my signal, unleash HELL.
- [THERE ONLY ONE IDEAL AND THIS IS ...GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS] ✂ GRΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΑ... ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ...!!!!!!GR ✂
- [Greece, Orthodoxy, Nationalism, Golden Dawn] Ελλάδα, Ορθοδοξία.Εθνικισμός,Χρυσή Αυγή.
- [NATIONALISM Long live the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1936, GREECE ABOVE ALL. LONG LIVE THE VICTORY. GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS. FAITH IS MY HONOUR! Long live the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1967] ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ ✂ Ζήτω η 4η Αυγούστου 1936 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΝΩ ΟΛΩΝ ! ΖΗΤΩ Η ΝΙΚΗ 🇬🇷 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ☹ ΤΙΜΗ ΜΟΥ Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ! Ζήτω 21η Απριλίου 1967 GR

### Religion

- [THERE IS AN IDEAL AND THIS ONLY ONE...GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS] ✂ GRΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΑ... ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ...!!!!!!GR ✂
- [Greece, Orthodoxy, Nationalism, Golden Dawn] Ελλάδα, Ορθοδοξία.Εθνικισμός,Χρυσή Αυγή.
- [Patriot beyond political parties, Orthodox. LONG LIVE GREECE. HOMELAND RELIGION FAMILY] Ακομματιστος Πατριωτης,Ορθοδοξος. ΖΗΤΩ Η ΕΛΛΑΣ.ΠΑΤΡΙΣ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ
- [Homeland-religion-family] Πάτρις -θρησκεία –οικογένεια
- [Orthodox Christian] Χριστιανός Ορθόδοξος

### Anti-left

- [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER] ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ
- [June 17, 2018 NATIONAL TREASON. Leftists always traitors, against the Greeks, betrayers] 17/6/2018 ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΠΡΟΔΟΣΙΑ. Αριστεροί, μια ζωή ΠΡΟΔΟΤΕΣ, ΑΝΘΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ, ΠΟΥΛΗΜΕΝΟΙ.

### Anti-Semitism

- [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER] ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ



### Racist

- [Racist with exceptions/Misanthropist with sensitivities/ Old aged/ Lawyer/ Native/ Races are Different Species] Ρατσιστρια,με εξαίρεσεις/Μισανθρωπος με ευαισθησίες/Υπερήλιξ/Νομικός/Ιθαγενής/

As identified also in previous sections, expressions related to nationalism/patriotism and related topics are those most frequently used. The second most prominent topic relates to extremism and political parties e.g. Golden Dawn. The third most important theme is religion.

The analysis of the expression section in the Greek sample demonstrates users are using both positive and negative descriptions to self-identify themselves. With regard to the negative expressions, statements and overall postures in some categories, users seem to insist on what they are not, rather than what they stand for. The last three, anti-left, anti-Semitism and racist, are the strongest of the categories. However, in the other categories the positive sentiments dominate, especially when it comes to the nation and love for the country or religion.

The most interesting finding within the material introduced in this section is the main themes that people employ to in order to create their digital identities. Drawing on the analysis of all the different sections of the pages, we see that social identities centre around three topics:

1. Nationalism/ patriotism
2. Extremism
3. Religion

These themes basically follow the core themes discussed within the tweets themselves, and in this respect, confirm, more or less, what was found in the lexical analysis (see below).

This could be explained, once again, by the fact that many of the accounts were initiated during a period of social and political turmoil around the 'Macedonian issue'. Nationalism and patriotism include positive emotions for the users' national identity, i.e. Greek as well as of their Macedonian (the Greek region) origin. They express their pride, love, fanaticism and willingness to defend Greece and Macedonia against every internal and external enemy. Grievances and rage are also implied in these expressions, directly related to the issue of the agreement between Greece and North Macedonia and accusing the left-wing government of the time of treason. This also explains the anti-left expressions mentioned although some note that their attitude is not related to political parties, which they reject in favour of the nation and homeland, which they place above everything else.

Extremism is another separate theme because in some cases direct mention of the extreme-right party of Golden Dawn is made. These mentions are accompanied by praise for the two most notorious pro-fascist, military and openly anti-communist regimes of the Greek history, i.e. the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas (an account runs under this name also) (1936-1941) and the military dictatorship of 1967-1974. Finally, the saying 'if you want peace prepare for war' is also of high significance in terms of the will to use violence.

The final theme relates to religion. Religion for Greek society is a crucial and influential element. The Orthodox Church of Greece used to be and, to some extent, remains a powerful institution, which historically, has influenced Greek society and politics in many aspects. After the official establishment of the Greek state in the 19th century, the Orthodox Church became a national Church (1833) and was transformed into the state's ideological apparatus, reproducing the national ideology. It could be argued that the Orthodox Church of Greece is actually a state Church and this is confirmed by the existing legal framework, in which the relations between the two institutions, and the legal status of the Church, are enshrined (Sakellariou, 2013: 157-159). According to Article 3 of the Greek Constitution, 'the prevailing religion in Greece is the religion of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ',

while the Constitution starts with the preamble: ‘In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity’. It should be added also that in the second article of the first chapter of the law (590/1977) - on the function of the Orthodox Church and its relation with the state (590/1977) - it is stated that ‘The Church of Greece cooperates with the state on subjects of common interest, for example, the Christian education of the youth; religious service in the army; the upholding of the institution of marriage and family; [...] the protection of the holy relics and Ecclesiastical and Christian monuments; the establishment of new religious holidays; and asks for the protection of the state whenever our religion is insulted.’. Such a provision also exemplifies the close and privileged relations of the Orthodox Church with the state. These relations became closer and more conspicuous under right-wing, conservative governments, but also during the rule of authoritarian regimes like the three dictatorships of the 20th century (Sakellariou, 2008) or with the extreme right (Sakellariou, 2019). Some famous slogans used during previous times (e.g. during the dictatorships mentioned above) like homeland-religion-family are being reproduced or the identity of the Orthodox Christian is implied with pride. It should be mentioned that some of the expressions are categorised in more than one expression categories, because in the same description one can find nationalist together with religious references or anti-left together with anti-Semitic ones.

If the material circulating online reflects a common cultural background, support for the extreme-right movement goes beyond the borders of Greece with many references to foreign leaders (e.g. D.Trump, M.Salvini, M.Le Pen, V. Orbán, and others) or flags of countries where extreme right-wing parties have been elected. From an individual standpoint, using material that is part of a collective fabric may reinforce subjective autonomy in that participation in an online milieu provides a means of empowerment. People may not find support within their local inner-circles; by turning to online participation however, contributors can find like-minded people with similar areas of interest. From a collective perspective, by sharing common cultural codes related to a certain number of topics, contributors weave a collective fabric, essential to fabricating and upholding a digital milieu and a common social identity.

Finally, with regard to **symbols** these are primarily related to nationalism and patriotism through the use of a variation of the Greek flag as well as of the flag of the Byzantine Empire with the double-headed eagle, and the last one a Christian cross (plates 6-9).



*Plates 6-9*

Some of the flags are accompanied by the sun of Vergina, i.e. the symbol of ancient Macedonia (plate 10).



*Plate 10*

Additionally, and closely related, is the frequent use of historical figures and symbols. These include a figure from the revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Turks [not identifiable] or Petrobey Mavromichalis, a figure from the revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Turks (plate 11), as well as an ancient Greek helmet or an ancient Greek fighter (plate 12).



*Plates 11, 12*

A photo of Ion Dragoumis (plate 13) - a famous Greek politician, diplomat and writer, of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who organised the Greek communities during the liberation fight against the Bulgarian occupation in the Greek Macedonia region and is very well accepted among nationalist groups for his ideas on nationalism - was also used.



*Plate 13*

In relation to extremist movements, Golden Dawn symbols have been used either directly or through photos showing the back of the people wearing a t-shirt under the name of Golden Dawn.



*Plates 14, 15*

Finally, a photo showing someone aiming a gun at the viewer is also used by one Twitter user (plate 16), this is the only case within the sample where a direct reference to extremism/violence was made.



*Plate 16*

### 3.3. Co-production of content through framing

This section examines how material practices and discourses help consolidate the idea of an online milieu on Twitter and co-produce the sense of a threat. To do so, the main focus will be on the labelling processes. Howard Becker (1963) demonstrated that labelling is a two-step process. First, to be able to be part of a group or a category of people, one must acknowledge the label for themselves and by themselves. Secondly, bystanders have to label the person in a similar manner. In other words, being considered as a radical is the result of a double process: an endogenous process involving self-labelling; and an exogenous process involving labelling someone from the outside.

In the previous subsection, the way the extreme-right sample created personal identities that matched given labels and conformed to group identity falling within the spectrum of political extremism or religious fundamentalism was analysed. The next step in understanding how radicalisation is produced, is to consider how radicalisation labelling relies on endogenous indices in addition to exogenous markers. However, and because of the lack of apparent signs of external labelling, the focus in the following parts is only on the internal labelling process and the main question is whether people openly designate themselves as radicals.

### 3.3.1 Embracing the labelling of 'radical'

To identify whether performative speech acts, digital practices and self-recognition of group membership played roles in labelling the Greek sample as radical, the different processes that solidify group boundaries from within, notably self-recognition of otherness, self-labelling as a person with radical ideologies and adopting an oppositional figure will be considered. A closer look at endogenous labelling processes for the extreme-right sample will show that most of the users do claim, directly or indirectly, to share radical ideologies, as seen in the table below (Table 6).

Self-definition as a radical	
<b>Self-recognition of Otherness</b>	
	<p>Φανατική Ελληνίδα Μακεδονισσα από την μία και μοναδική MAKEDONIA!!! [Fanatic Greek Macedonian from the one and only MECEDONIA]</p> <p>Ελληνίδα εθνικιστρια [Greek Nationalist]</p> <p>NATIONALIST</p> <p>Υπέρ άνω όλων η πατρίς και το Έθνος [Homeland and Nation above all]</p> <p>ΑΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΤΙΜΙΩΤΕΡΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΣ. [HOMEAND IS THE MOST HONOURABLE THING] If you want PEACE, prepare for WAR. At my signal, unleash HELL.</p> <p>ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ 🇬🇷 Ζήτω η 4η Αυγούστου 1936 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΝΩ ΟΛΩΝ ! ΖΗΤΩ Η ΝΙΚΗ 🇬🇷 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ⚡ ΤΙΜΗ ΜΟΥ Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ! Ζήτω 21η Απριλίου 1967 GR NATIONALISM Long live the 4th of August 1936, GREECE ABOVE ALL. LONG LIVE THE VICTORY GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS FAITH IS MY HONOUR! Long live the 21st of April 1967]</p> <p>ΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΗ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΙΑ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΣΣΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΔΑ...ΑΥΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΠΟΤΑ ΑΛΛΟ [PROUD MACEDONIAN FROM THESSALONIKI GREEK...JUST THAT, NOTHING ELSE]</p> <p>Πάνω απ' όλους και απ' όλα η Ελλάς. [Greece above everyone and everything]</p>
<b>Self-labelling as an extremist</b>	
	<p>Χρυσή Αυγή για μια Ελλάδα μονο για τους Ελληνες [Golden Dawn for Greece only for the Greeks]</p> <p>If you want PEACE, prepare for WAR. At my signal, unleash HELL.</p> <p>⚡ ΓΡΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΙΔΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΑ... ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ...!!!!!!GR ⚡ [THERE IS AN IDEAL AND THIS ONLY ONE...GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS]</p> <p>Ελλάδα, Ορθοδοξία.Εθνικισμός,Χρυσή Αυγή. [Greece, Orthodoxy, Nationalism, Golden Dawn]</p>

ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ 🇬🇷 Ζήτω η 4η Αυγούστου 1936 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΥΠΕΡΑΝΩ ΟΛΩΝ ! ΖΗΤΩ Η ΝΙΚΗ 🇬🇷 ΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ✝️ ΤΙΜΗ ΜΟΥ Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ! Ζήτω 21η Απριλίου 1967 GR [NATIONALISM Long live the 4th of August 1936, GREECE ABOVE ALL. LONG LIVE THE VICTORY GREECE OF GREEK CHRISTIANS FAITH IS MY HONOUR! Long live the 21st of April 1967]
<b>“us” versus “them”/ Construction of an Oppositional profile</b>
ΕΛΛΗΝ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΗΣ, ΑΝΤΙΣΙΩΝΙΣΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΝΕΟΤΑΞΙΤΗΣ [GREEK NATIONALIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI- ZIONIST AND AGAINST THE NEW ORDER]  17/6/2018 ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΠΡΟΔΟΣΙΑ. Αριστεροί, μια ζωή ΠΡΟΔΟΤΕΣ, ΑΝΘΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ, ΠΟΥΛΗΜΕΝΟΙ. [June 17, 2018 NATIONAL TREASON. Leftists always traitors, against the Greeks, betrayers]
<b>Embracing the label of radicalisation</b>
Ρατσιστρια,με εξαίρεσεις/Μισανθρωπος με ευαισθησίες/Υπερήλιξ/Νομικός/Ιθαγενής/[Racist with exceptions/Misanthropist with sensitivities/ Old aged/ Lawyer/ Native]/ Races are Different Species]

*Table 6: Embracing the label of radical*

The above material coming from the accounts ‘about’ section leads to two main conclusions. First of all, there is indeed a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ on a twofold level. The first one is us, the Greeks and all those who conspire against our country. This first level could also include a sub-level of ‘us’ which consists mainly of those coming from the Greek region of Macedonia and who turn against all those who support the bilateral agreement between the Greek government and North Macedonia. The second level is ‘us’, the Greeks, patriots, nationalists against the leftists, the communists and the internationalists who support the agreement, agreed on the name of North Macedonia and of course are pro-migrants and refugees. The second conclusion is that many accounts of the milieu embrace this division and an extremist self-definition, either through embracing racism or of the support of Golden Dawn or dictatorial regimes of the historical past. In this way, users attempt to present nationalism or even extremism as positive and imply that extremism and fanaticism might be useful tools for a moral cause like the protection of the nation and homeland. Based on the information available from the ‘about’ section, the images used and the tweets, it seems that users have incorporated such labels without fear of any negative connotations. Perhaps this explains the relative absence of exogenous within the sample as well as the positive and proud expression of these radical or even extremist views, opinions and self-presentations.

## 4. Key themes and influencing factors

In this section, the main themes discussed amongst users in the sample as they appear in the Greek context will be outlined, by first describing the corpus as a whole and examining the main conversations, then examining the structure of debates on the web and finally considering possible gender specifics of the themes presented. Findings will highlight how the online extreme-right milieu

is cemented and structured around common themes of discussion and of course how these are influenced by national or international developments and incidents and of course any gender differences found will be additionally described.

## 4.1. Content

### 4.1.1 Themes

The first type of analysis that will be carried out here is a discourse analysis based on a descending hierarchical classification that can be described as a succession of bi-partitions, carried out by the means of a factorial analysis of correspondences. To complete this analysis, the Reinert method (Reinert, 1983; Reinert 1990) is implemented using the free software IRaMuTeQ (Ratinaud & Marchand, 2012; Ratinaud, 2014). This method makes it possible to determine the themes that compose a corpus. The software groups the tweets that tend to contain the same words into separate themes. In this text, these themes can be referred to as lexical clusters, classes of discourse or categories.

For the extreme right sample, analysis was conducted on 34,504 tweets after an analysis based on asking from the Iramuteq software 100 clusters and 40,000 forms analysed. That amounts to 48,667 texts representing 947,644 occurrences (97,686 distinct forms, 58,822 hapax, i.e. 96,372 active forms). The difference between the number of tweets and texts can be explained by two factors: first, all emoticons and ASCII used to convey sentiments were removed from the corpus; secondly, only distinct tweets were accounted for, in such a manner that analysis is conducted on a variety of topics rather than the volume of discussions. As for the high proportion of hapax and unrecognised words, this would suggest that there are a large number of typing errors. This is relatively common for corpora constructed on the basis of social media participation.

The results from the extreme-right sample are presented in the following dendrogram that segments the online conversations into clusters, underlining the main lexical themes of the corpus. It also provides information on the size of each cluster (i.e. percentages and size of the boxes above the branches of words) and the overrepresented lexicon in each cluster (i.e. the more a word is situated at the top of a branch, the more it is overrepresented in a cluster). For the Greek sample, a classification of 19 themes - representing 99.9% of the classified segments – were selected to generate the dendrogram below.



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Katerini, etc.). It is important to note that many Twitter accounts were established when the discussions between the two countries were initiated and the influence of this is often evident in the images selected and the user description (see above, Section 3.2).

The second topic considering national issues is related to relations with Albania and the so-called Northern Epirus issue. South Albania was, and remains, inhabited by a Greek minority. For Greek nationalists this territory should belong to Greece and is called Northern Epirus as a continuation of the Greek region of Epirus. This, of course, is not only part of the extreme-right discourse and ideology but Greeks almost unanimously call this region Northern Epirus and hold sentimental views on this matter. Additionally, at the time of the pilot study and specifically when the sample selected, the Albanian authorities killed Konstantinos Katsifas, a member of the Greek minority. On the 28<sup>th</sup> October, during the celebration of a national holiday in Greece which commemorates the beginning of the war against Fascist Italy, Katsifas fired an automatic rifle in a village of South Albania and was killed during an exchange of shots with the Albanian police force. Later it emerged that he held nationalist views and was related to the party of Golden Dawn. Immediately after his death he became a hero among the Greek extreme-right and Golden Dawn in particular. This was crystallised in the sample in class 3, where he was referred to as having been assassinated by the Albanians and presented in a glorifying and heroic way.

The final topic in this large group was class 5 referring to Turkey. After the Greek-Turkish war of 1922, the treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and the exchange of populations, Greece held around 120,000 Muslims of Turkish origin, of whom most became Greek citizens. Their presence and social exclusion in the following decades have caused long debates about theirs and Turkey's role. Sometimes they were considered as traitors, while, at other times, they were viewed as having been manipulated by Turkey. Turkey is considered by many Greeks and the extreme-right in particular as one of the major and 'eternal' enemies of the Greek nation. In a sense, this is a 'classical' theme among the extreme-right and no specific incident is necessary to rekindle heated debates. However, the continuous offensive attitude of Turkey through energy exploitation activities in Cyprus, its will to question the *status quo* in the Aegean Sea, particularly that some Greek islands belong to Greece, and its intrusion in Greece's internal affairs, e.g. in Thrace, North-East Greece, are among the most important ones. In this class, mentions of Thrace, Cyprus, Turkey's President Erdogan, the Aegean Sea, the role of the United States and Russia were among those most discussed in the sample.

2. The second group is mainly related to anti-government discourses (classes 2, 16, 17 and 18). From these four classes the most obvious anti-government class is number 16. It is important to note that the government at that period was left-wing, composed from the radical left party of SYRIZA with the collaboration of a small populist right-wing party (Independent Greeks - ANEL). The latter was against the suggested solution and agreement regarding the Macedonian issue and thus people's disagreement and rage was targeted against the main ruling party and the Left in general. This group of classes, and class 16, in particular target the government mainly for its policy with regard to the Macedonian issue accusing them of having betrayed Greece and the Greek nation, having sold Macedonia for money. They use slang words against them, and politicians in general, calling them 'assholes', 'useless', 'scumbags', 'frauds', 'stinkers' and 'atheists'. They also suggest that it is they who are the real fascists and the real racists because they hate Greece. This anti-government attitude is not solely down to the Macedonian issue, however, but is the result of a combination of the national issue with the financial situation prevailing in Greek society after a series of austerity measure agreements with the EU over the last nine years of the financial crisis. Class two includes discourses about the austerity measures, the memoranda between the Greek government and the EU, the cuts in wages and pensions, high taxes, etc. Although direct accusations and

slang words are not used in this case against the government, it is clear that the economy and national issues, the Macedonian issue in particular, form the main corpus of this anti-government group.

3. The third group of the dendrogram is the anti-immigrant/anti-Muslim one which includes two classes (11, 12). Class 11 mainly includes discourses about Albanian immigrants probably influenced by the above-mentioned incident with K.Katsifas in South Albania. After the collapse of the communist regime, thousands of Albanian immigrants arrived in Greece in the 1990s and constituted the first strong immigration wave Greek society faced. Until then, Greece was considered a nationally and religiously homogeneous society. The presence of Albanians caused negative reactions from parts of the population – who accused them of being criminals who threatened Greek society – leading to racist attacks against the Albanians. This moral panic was also extensively elaborated by the media. It is interesting that, although during the last decade or so Muslims have been the main target of nationalist groups and extreme-right parties, the perceived inability of Albanians to integrate into Greek society and the threat they pose to the Greek culture retains a central place in people’s imaginary. In addition, discussions in this class were sparked by other incidents that have taken place in Athens during that time period, for example the murder of a young Greek by two Pakistani immigrants in the city centre in order to steal his cell phone, leading to the targeting of immigrants in general. Roma people are also discussed, as are the police and its role in controlling criminality. Class 12 is more focused on immigrants and refugees and of course Islam. Italy, Germany and Salvini also find a place in this class. Germany because of the open borders policy of the previous years and Italy and Salvini as a counter example of closing the borders and a paradigm that the Greek government should follow. However, mentions of illegal immigrants, the Greek islands where thousands of immigrants and refugees arrive, the issue of the construction of a purpose-built mosque in Athens, as well as mentions of Islam, the threat of Islamists and jihadists for Greece and for Europe and the difficulty for all these people to be integrated in Greek society are also discussed. Finally, the role of NGOs working with refugees is also mentioned as a crucial issue by the twitter users.
4. The fourth and final group consists of only one class which is actually the largest one if examined alone (9.8%). This one includes discussions directly or indirectly related to the party of Golden Dawn. As already mentioned, Golden Dawn dominates the extreme right milieu, although in the last elections of July 2019 it failed to gain representation in the parliament by a few votes (gaining 2.94 per cent of the vote when the threshold was 3 per cent). However, at that time Golden Dawn was much stronger and issues such as the Macedonian question, or anti-Islam attitudes were among the party’s primary focus. This class includes discussions and mentions of the most prominent members of the party, e.g. the General Secretary, and founder of Golden Dawn, Nikos Michaloliakos and party MPs (e.g. Ilias Kassidiaris, Giannis Lagos, Ilias Panagiotaros and Christos Pappas). Furthermore, it includes discussions and references to the party’s publications (e.g. official newspaper) or You Tube videos as well as opinion polls which show the party’s electoral influence. From the sample and users’ profiles, it appears that many of them were voters, supporters and perhaps in some cases members of Golden Dawn, reproducing news from the party’s official websites, or retweeting tweets from the MPs’ official twitter accounts.

#### 4.1.2 Lexical proximity and relationship between themes

The analysis presented in this section maps the dendrograms outlined in the section above and can be considered as a similarity analysis or a network of co-occurring words analysis. This is not a cloud of words, but a graphic representation of lexical clusters: words are not selected by the analyst according to what they mean, nor selected at random; they are bound by their co-occurrence and their position in regard to one another. The size of the font is proportional to the importance of the words in the corpus. The colours represent communities identified automatically. This graph is constructed from the lexical clusters that form each of the categories presented in the dendrograms

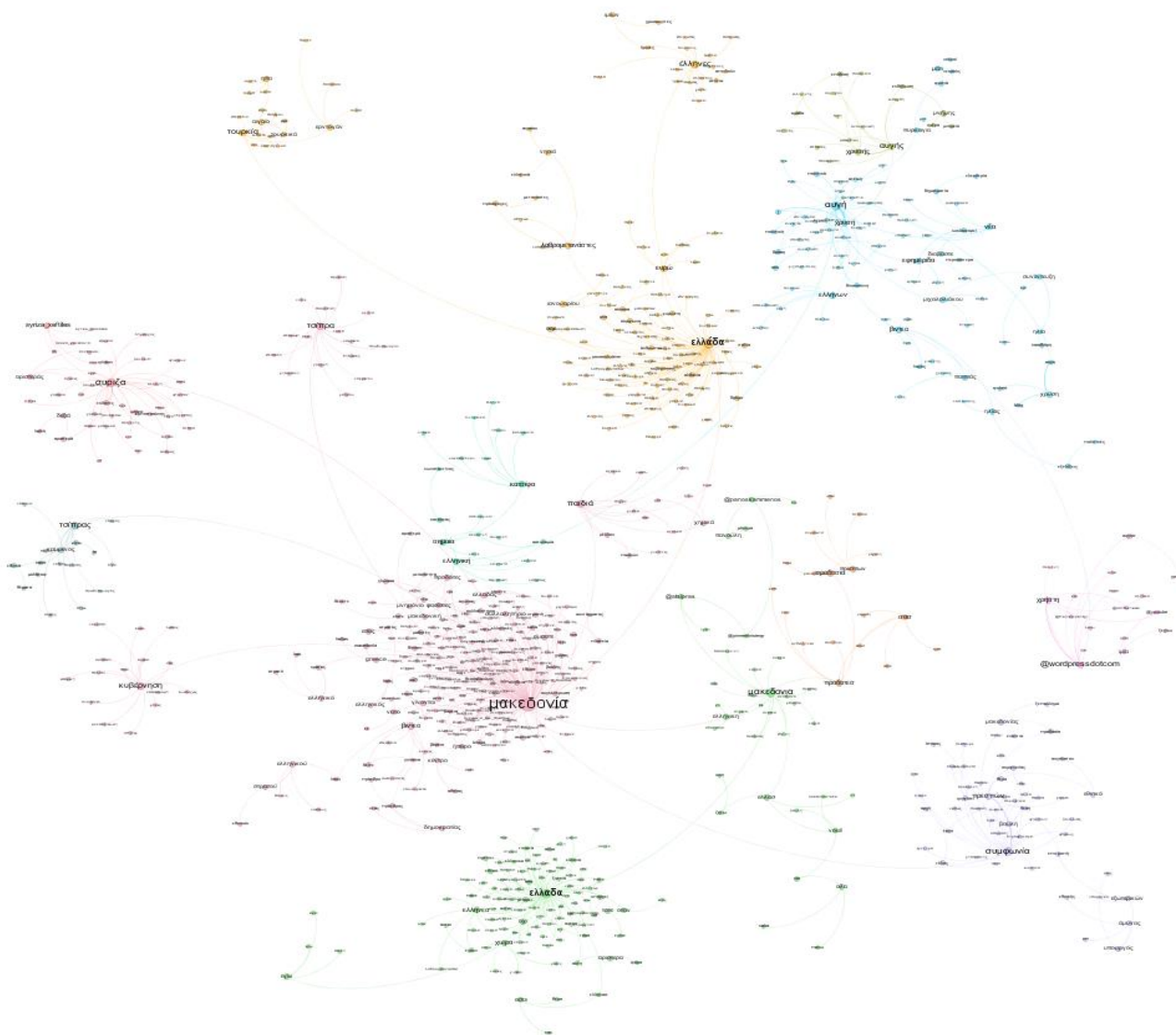
above, so it provides another reading, more focused on lexical proximity and relationships between topics. It constitutes another way of looking at the conversational material collected on Twitter, focusing on how themes are articulated in relation to one another and in relationship to interpretative communities.<sup>13</sup>

To generate this, the 800 words that appear the most in the corpus were selected, keeping only nouns and verbs. The spatialisation layout used is called Fruchterman-Reingold; the algorithm helps emphasise clusters of discussions. The coloured areas of the graph correspond to interpretative communities that were generated by the Louvain algorithm. The Louvain method for community detection is an algorithm for detecting communities in networks. It maximises a modularity score for each community, where the modularity quantifies the quality of an assignment of nodes to communities. This means evaluating how much more densely connected the nodes within a community are, compared to how connected they would be in a random network. The Louvain algorithm is a hierarchical clustering algorithm, that recursively merges communities into a single node and executes the modularity clustering on the condensed graphs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Coming from media studies and journalism interpretative community is a collectivity of people who share strategies for interpreting, using, and engaging in communication about a media text or technology. The strategies are devised with respect to norms and standards that evolve among the community members through innovation and the influence of argument (Lindlof, 2002:64).

<sup>14</sup> <https://neo4j.com/docs/graph-algorithms/current/algorithms/louvain/> (last accessed 20 February 2020)



*Figure 15: Network of co-occurring words: structure of debates*

The network of words confirms what has been argued so far until now; ‘Macedonia’ (the purple cluster below and left of centre) dominates the network together with the theme ‘Greece’ (the yellow cluster above and to the right of centre). This is to be expected given that many of the sample were drawn into the Twitter-sphere in response to the Macedonian issue. At the same time other small themes and groups of words that seem to be important but found on the periphery of the main two are ‘Government’, ‘Tsipras’ i.e. the Prime Minister, and ‘SYRIZA’ the ruling party of that time, are located on the left of the network. This is related to the fact that the left-wing government and PM supported this agreement and brought it to the Greek Parliament to vote for it. As a consequence, another prominent theme was the ‘agreement’ (bottom left of the diagram) and ‘Dawn/Golden Dawn’ up left. The other two smaller themes/groups of words not related with the ‘Macedonian issue’ were ‘Turkey’ and ‘Illegal immigrants’.

#### 4.1.3 Gender oriented discussions

To understand the structure of debates within the right-wing extremist milieu, another interesting variable to consider is gender, not least because evidence to date suggests the extreme-right in Greece, and Golden Dawn in particular, is male dominated (Koronaïou and Sakellariou 2017). The

chart below shows which lexical clusters are discussed more by either men (green bars) or women (red bars). To be specific, links are estimated through a chi2 reflecting the trend to find, in a given cluster, a statistical overrepresentation (a higher proportion) or a statistical underrepresentation (a lower proportion) of tweets produced at each date. The bars going upwards signal an overrepresentation of tweets from one gender over another in the cluster: the bars going downwards underline an underrepresentation.

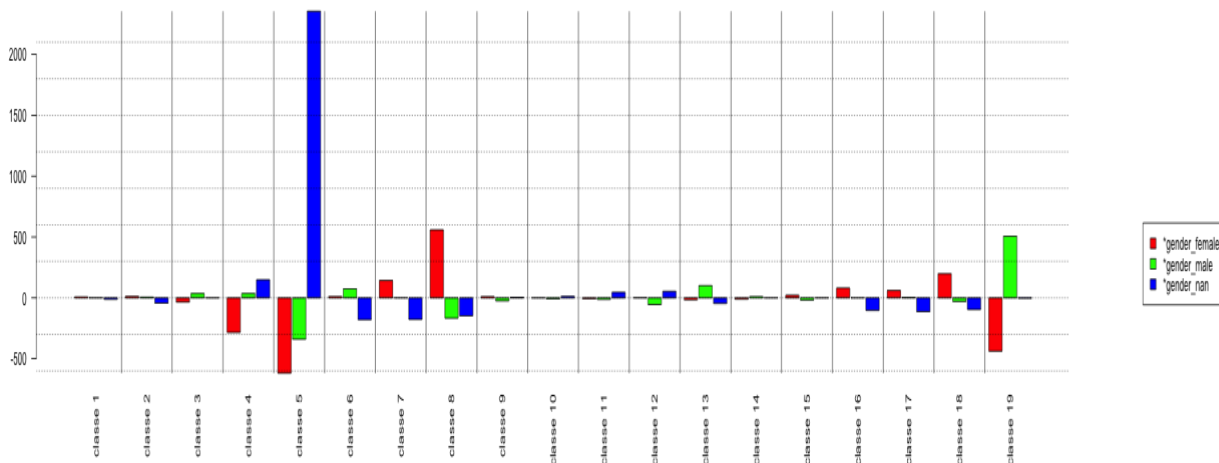


Figure 16: Links between lexical clusters and gender in the Greek sample (Chi2) [red: female, green: male, blue: not known]

Putting aside the 'no gender' category the most obvious male dominated class is that referring to Golden Dawn (class 19). As previously mentioned, Golden Dawn is a male dominated party in terms of MPs, members participating in activities and voters. This is clearly depicted in this class where men are overrepresented and women are, in contrast, very underrepresented. Other classes in which men are over- and women underrepresented are classes 3, 4 and 13. In these classes, the difference is small but those who play a more central role are men. All these classes belong to the national issue group; class 3 refers to the Katsifas case in South Albania while the other two classes refer to the Macedonian issue. This supports the argument that although women became very active during the mobilisation on the Macedonian issue, the nationalist field is basically dominated by men. Of course, there are also cases like those referring to Turkey, the immigration issue and Islam where the 'no gender' category is overrepresented, meaning that firm conclusions cannot be drawn.

The main classes in which women are overrepresented are classes 7, 8, and 16, 17, 18. Although classes 7 and 8 are mainly focused on the Macedonian issue, and are highly critical of politicians and the government with regard to the agreement signed, they are characterised by the use of less offensive language. They also mention the Greek nation, the soul, religion and homeland as crucial concepts; here the expression of sentiments seems to be the main element. Contrary to that, in the other three categories with the anti-government discourses (16, 17 and 18), women are using more offensive language against politicians and the political system. This is an interesting finding on the one hand, because women use hard talking and defamatory discourse against the government as opposed to men in these three categories, and on the other hand because it shows that women express more sentimental discourses on the national issues, with no use of slang words.

It is clear from this analysis that no firm conclusions on the role of gender can be drawn. However, these findings are quite interesting because, with the exception of Golden Dawn where men are clearly dominant, and excluding the 'no gender' category, women are quite active and dynamic in the

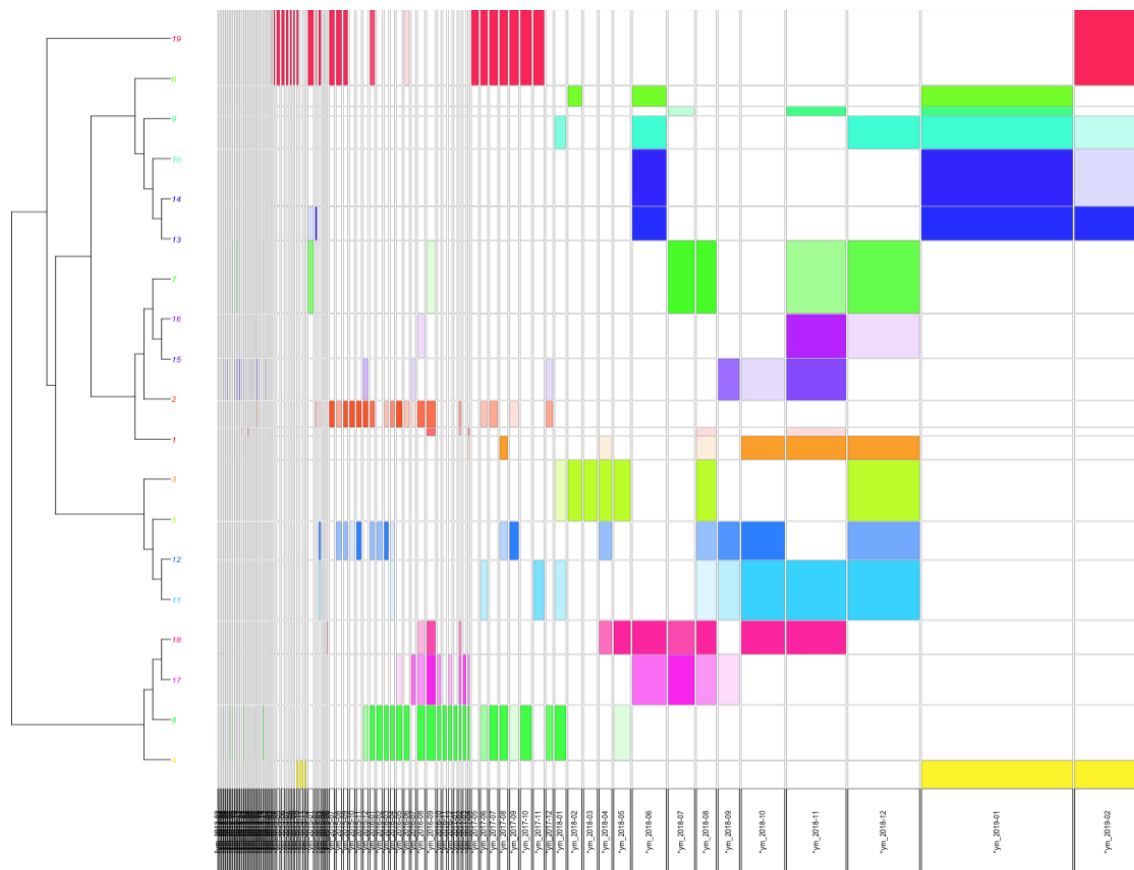
sample. It should also not be forgotten that from the Greek sample, while 47 per cent were men 35 per cent were women.

## 4.2 Events

Online participation and/or self-radicalisation do not take place in a social vacuum or independently of the surrounding society. From this perspective offline social, political and economic developments and incidents have a direct impact on online activity. In the Greek case this could be the rise of immigration flows coming from the Greek-Turkish borders in the North or the Aegean Sea, terrorist attacks in other European countries, the decision of the government to construct the first official, purpose-built mosque in Athens, elections, and of course developments regarding the so-called 'Macedonian issue', mentioned above. Such events or series of events usually spark heated debates and emotional reactions from the Twitter users of the extreme-right sample because they are mainly related to the two main themes of interest, i.e. the immigration issue and national identity. In this section we explore whether users engage in high levels of activity in relation to specific topics and at a given time, and, if so, whether this is related to particular events. In turn, it asks whether these events represent a form of online stimulation for radicalisation.

### 4.2.1 Publications triggered by events

When it comes to the stimulation of radicalisation it seems that particular national events trigger reactions from people within the extreme-right sample.



*Figure 17: Evolution of categories over time as per overrepresentation of classes per month*

The dominance among the sample of discussion of the Macedonian issue, and the subsequent agreement between Greece and North Macedonia over the country's name and constitution, is confirmed by Figure 17, which demonstrates clearly the overrepresentation of classes 13 and 14 in the period of June 2018 when the agreement was signed and in January-February 2019 when the



agreement passed through the Greek Parliament. This is also evident with regard to other classes with a special focus on the Macedonian issue (e.g. classes 4, 6 and 10). It is also interesting that in June 2018 the anti-government classes 17 and 18 were influenced by the signing of the agreement showing a close relation between the classes.

Another clear example of an event that took place during the selection of the sample and had a direct impact on the discussions was the K. Katsifas case in South Albania in October 2018. This event - that led to Katsifas's death at the hands of the Albanian police - stimulated discussion, as depicted in class 3.

Finally, the influence of a series of events indicating a rise in Turkey's aggressive attitude in the Aegean Sea – including questioning of the status of some Greek islands, commencement of activities related to oil and gas excavations in the Eastern Mediterranean region near Cyprus, and constant efforts to perform military manoeuvres in the Aegean Sea – is confirmed. These actions created a conflictual climate, which was escalated in December 2018, and is clearly depicted in the overrepresentation of class 5 in December 2018.

The above examples which of course refer to this particular sample support the argument that discussions on Twitter and the Greek sample are directly influenced by the political and national developments on a series of issues historically important to Greece. All these topics were, and remain, at the core of the Greek extreme-right's interest.

### 4.3 Influencers

The role of influence has long been studied in the fields of sociology, communication, marketing, and political science (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Rogers 1962). More specifically, influence seems to play a crucial role in cases like how fashion spreads (Gladwell 2002) and how people vote (Berry and Keller 2003). Although hard to approach, studying influence patterns can help better understand why certain trends or innovations are adopted faster than others and how this could help advertisers and marketers design more effective campaigns. There have been important theoretical studies on the diffusion of influence, albeit with radically different results. Traditional communication theory states that a minority of users, called influentials, excel in persuading others (Rogers 1962). This theory predicts that by targeting these influentials in the network, one may achieve a large-scale chain-reaction of influence driven by word-of-mouth, with a very small marketing cost (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). A more modern view, in contrast, de-emphasises the role of influentials. Instead, it posits that the key factors determining influence are (i) the interpersonal relationship among ordinary users and (ii) the readiness of a society to adopt an innovation (Domingos and Richardson 2001; Watts and Dodds 2007). These theories, however, are still just theories, because there has been a lack of empirical data that could be used to validate either of them. The recent advent of social networking sites and the data within such sites allow researchers to empirically validate these theories. Moving from theory into practice, it comes out that there are many unanswered questions about how influence diffuses and whether it varies across topics and time (Cha et al. 2010: 10). While there is no reliable way to measure the level of user influence on Twitter, multiple indicators to identify "influential" users can be gathered. The level of connectivity to measure influentiaity will be used in the following analysis, as it can reveal the potential of a given message to spread widely. Connectivity can be considered on the basis of the ratio between in and out degree relationships - typically the number of followers and followings - of a given user (Cha et al. 2010: 12). This approach of influentiaity reveals the directions in which information flows and spreads allowing researchers to pinpoint those who have received the most exposure in relationship to the most replies to their tweets. By defining influencers in this manner, those who have the largest platforms and the highest levels of visibility can be taken into account.



Looking into users whose content spreads the most and reach the highest scores in retweets to better understand the role of influencers must be done at the level of Twitter and not at the level of the Greek sample because of its size, which is very small (51 accounts). This is an insufficient amount of users to properly evaluate influencers at the level of the sample. Instead the main focus will be on the users who are retweeted by the sample and who are the most shared at the level of the Twitter platform as a whole. In such a manner, the users who can be labelled as agents of radicalisation on a global scale could be identified.

#### 4.3.1 Key influencers on Twitter

For the extreme-right sample the influencers who receive this type of attention are major political right-wing extremist leaders from around the world, as the graph shows below. On the left-hand side of the graph, the volume of replies received by a single tweet from a source whose tweet appears in our sample, can be viewed, i.e. tweets shared or commented in our sample even when these tweets are not original tweets generated by our sample.

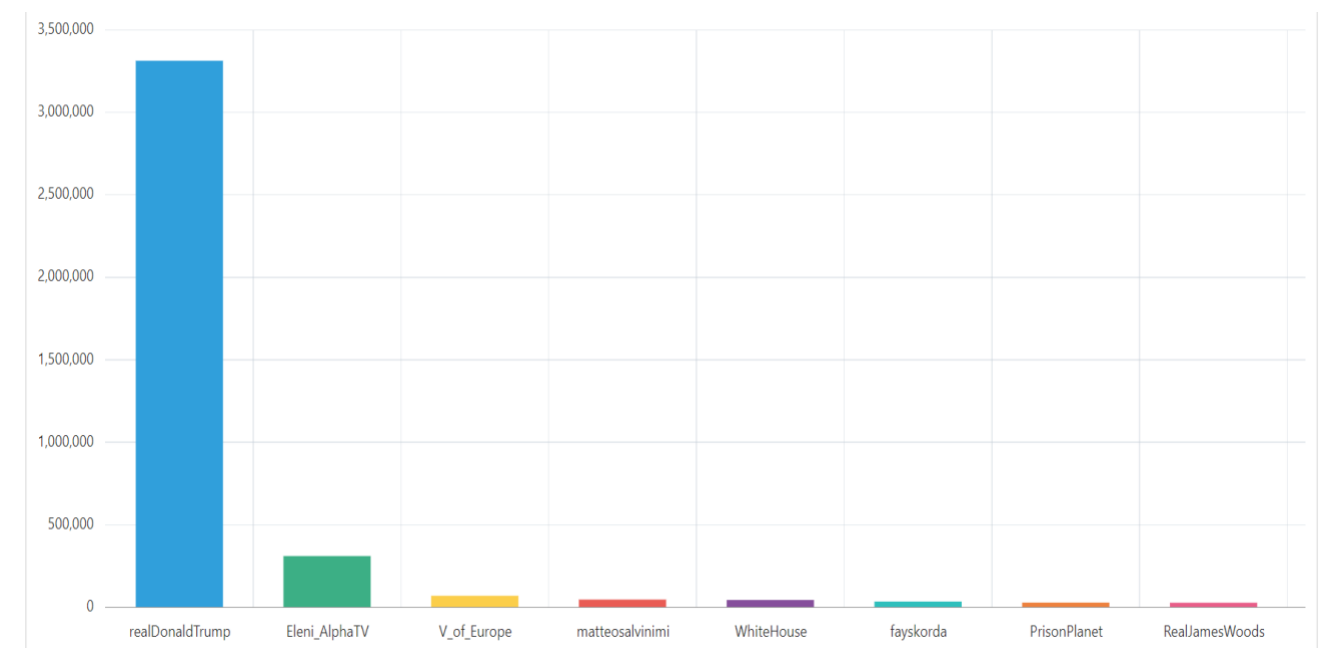


Table 17: Key influencers

Similarly to other countries, the most influential of all is the American President Donald Trump, the Federal Secretary of the right wing extremist Italian party, Lega Nord, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy and Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, the official account of the White House and of President Trump's wife, Melania. These are followed by the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, , as well as the Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu and the British right-wing leader Nigel Farage. Two Greek political figures are also found here. The first is Adonis Georgiadis, an MP of the conservative right-wing party of New Democracy (Nea Dimokratia) who was previously an MP of the extreme-right party of Popular Orthodox Rally (Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos. Georgiadis has been accused in the past of holding anti-Semitic views and for advertising the book of a notorious Holocaust denier and extreme-right winger, as well as for his openly anti-leftist and anti-communist views. The second Greek figure is the MP of the neo-Nazi political party of Golden Dawn and former leader of the party's youth branch, Ilias Kassidiaris, who has been well known for his extremist anti-communist, anti-immigrant, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic views as well as for his national-socialist ideology clearly depicted by his swastika tattoo (tables 18 & 19). It is interesting to mention that among those with

high influence in the sample one can find female TV personalities who hold morning or midday TV shows on Greek TV mainly targeting women.

jairbolsonaro	<a href="https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro">https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro</a>	N	14728
FLOTUS	<a href="https://twitter.com/FLOTUS">https://twitter.com/FLOTUS</a>	N	14387
netanyahu	<a href="https://twitter.com/netanyahu">https://twitter.com/netanyahu</a>	N	13971
RepMattGaetz	<a href="https://twitter.com/RepMattGaetz">https://twitter.com/RepMattGaetz</a>	N	11521
MarkACollett	<a href="https://twitter.com/MarkACollett">https://twitter.com/MarkACollett</a>	N	11372
charliekirk11	<a href="https://twitter.com/charliekirk11">https://twitter.com/charliekirk11</a>	N	10870
FaithGoldy	<a href="https://twitter.com/FaithGoldy">https://twitter.com/FaithGoldy</a>	N	10222
Justice4Pierce	<a href="https://twitter.com/Justice4Pierce">https://twitter.com/Justice4Pierce</a>	N	9233
AdonisGeoraiadi	<a href="https://twitter.com/AdonisGeoraiadi">https://twitter.com/AdonisGeoraiadi</a>	N	8877

*Table 18: Key influencers*

IliasKasidiaris	<a href="https://twitter.com/IliasKasidiaris">https://twitter.com/IliasKasidiaris</a>	N	6017
stavroforos_	<a href="https://twitter.com/stavroforos_">https://twitter.com/stavroforos_</a>	O	5904
bogdanosk	<a href="https://twitter.com/bogdanosk">https://twitter.com/bogdanosk</a>	N	5743
TarekFatah	<a href="https://twitter.com/TarekFatah">https://twitter.com/TarekFatah</a>	N	5334
RyanAFournier	<a href="https://twitter.com/RyanAFournier">https://twitter.com/RyanAFournier</a>	N	4712
xarapandapop	<a href="https://twitter.com/xarapandapop">https://twitter.com/xarapandapop</a>	N	4698
Koksalakn	<a href="https://twitter.com/Koksalakn">https://twitter.com/Koksalakn</a>	N	4620
NIKSOTIROPOYLOS	<a href="https://twitter.com/NIKSOTIROPOYLOS">https://twitter.com/NIKSOTIROPOYLOS</a>	N	4531
tarrott	<a href="https://twitter.com/tarrott">https://twitter.com/tarrott</a>	O	4414
AMike4761	<a href="https://twitter.com/AMike4761">https://twitter.com/AMike4761</a>	N	4242
rahulsetia007	<a href="https://twitter.com/rahulsetia007">https://twitter.com/rahulsetia007</a>	N	3960
_CraigStanley	<a href="https://twitter.com/_CraigStanley">https://twitter.com/_CraigStanley</a>	N	3752
SteveFranssen	<a href="https://twitter.com/SteveFranssen">https://twitter.com/SteveFranssen</a>	N	3716
Nigel_Farage	<a href="https://twitter.com/Nigel_Farage">https://twitter.com/Nigel_Farage</a>	N	3614

*Table 19: Key influencers*

In other words, those identified as potentially contributing to online radicalisation are primarily world leaders, and not obscure organisations, underground influencers or online gurus, as it is sometimes portrayed in the media when discussing the negative effects of media participation and the Internet. These findings also imply that the extreme right scene is built at the level of global conversations rather than being restricted to national considerations.

## 5. Networks: Analysing how people engage

This section of the report considers whether digital milieus of radicalisation exist in the Greek extreme-right context and/or in relationship to Greek users from two perspectives. First, through network

analysis and then through the examination of the types of domains used in tweets. Both approaches further the understanding of the nature of the Greek sample, and highlight whether it is possible and accurate to speak of the existence of an extreme-right digital milieu.

Network analysis reveals how connected people are online, who they are connected with and how conversations are being conducted on the web. People use the Internet in different manners and depending on their uses, their networks inevitably vary. For example, some people use Twitter to bond with close-knit communities and like-minded people, and revolve within a small world, creating a bubble effect. Others enjoy very large audiences of people with whom they share no real-life ties, as their relationships are primarily uni-directional. There are also those who primarily follow key players - from world leaders, high-level business entrepreneurs and celebrities of different sorts - while having few to no followers themselves, and therefore possibly communicating on the web, but without an actual audience. Such variation in Twitter use offers insightful information about how processes of radicalisation might take place online, which influencers these processes can be tied to, and how well people are included into digital networks of people openly supporting radical ideologies.

In order to better understand the existing networks, the Greek extreme-right sample is approached on three levels 1) on the sample level; 2) on the retweet level; and 3) on the mention level. Moreover, a distinction is made between the Greek sample and the 'full scale of the sample'. The former is used when referring solely to users selected by the Greek research team and constituting the sample (51 extreme-right accounts). The latter is used— when we include in the examined sample the followers and followings of the country level sample as well as the samples of the other countries within the DARE study. In this manner, we extend the study beyond the 51 people of the Greek extreme-right sample to the networks of all of the seven country samples with their respective followers and followings.

### 5.1 On the sample level

Exploring the network of the available sample tells us more about who is well-connected and how conversations are structured, and in that respect, gives us a sense of how communication flows. This level of network analysis can provide information on whether there are people who constitute points of passage, or hubs of some sorts, if conversations are constituted around several clusters and thus parallel to one another, or if people are highly connected to one user while others are simply peripheral and isolated. Examining networks from a sample perspective also lends insight into the level of integration of the Greek sample and helps confirm or refute conclusions drawn so far about the existence or not of an online extreme-right milieu.

Analysis of the level of connectivity of the Greek extreme right sample at the full scale of the sample suggests Greece has a relatively low level of connectivity (see Figure 18). The size of the nodes is representative of indegree relationships,<sup>15</sup> which means that the bigger the node, the more that account is followed; or, in other words, that person is being listened to. Colours represent countries. The spatialisation layout is a force directed algorithm (Force Atlas 2) and it helps visualise the level of connectivity of the sample and the people who constitute points of passages, possibly totally isolated from others or at the very heart of the network.

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<sup>15</sup> In order to refine influential analysis, it is also important to have a look at the popularity of users. That is why the last three columns will give you the number of followers, followings and the ratio - called here 'In Out Degree Ratio' - between followers and followings, for each user of the sample. The higher this ratio is, the more people are interested in/pay attention to a given user's updates. The number of followers of a given user is called Indegree, and the number of followings, Outdegree.

<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	GRC	(89.47%)
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	GBR	(7.02%)
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	BEL	(1.75%)
<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	FRA	(1.75%)

Table 20: Synthesis of the extreme-right sample

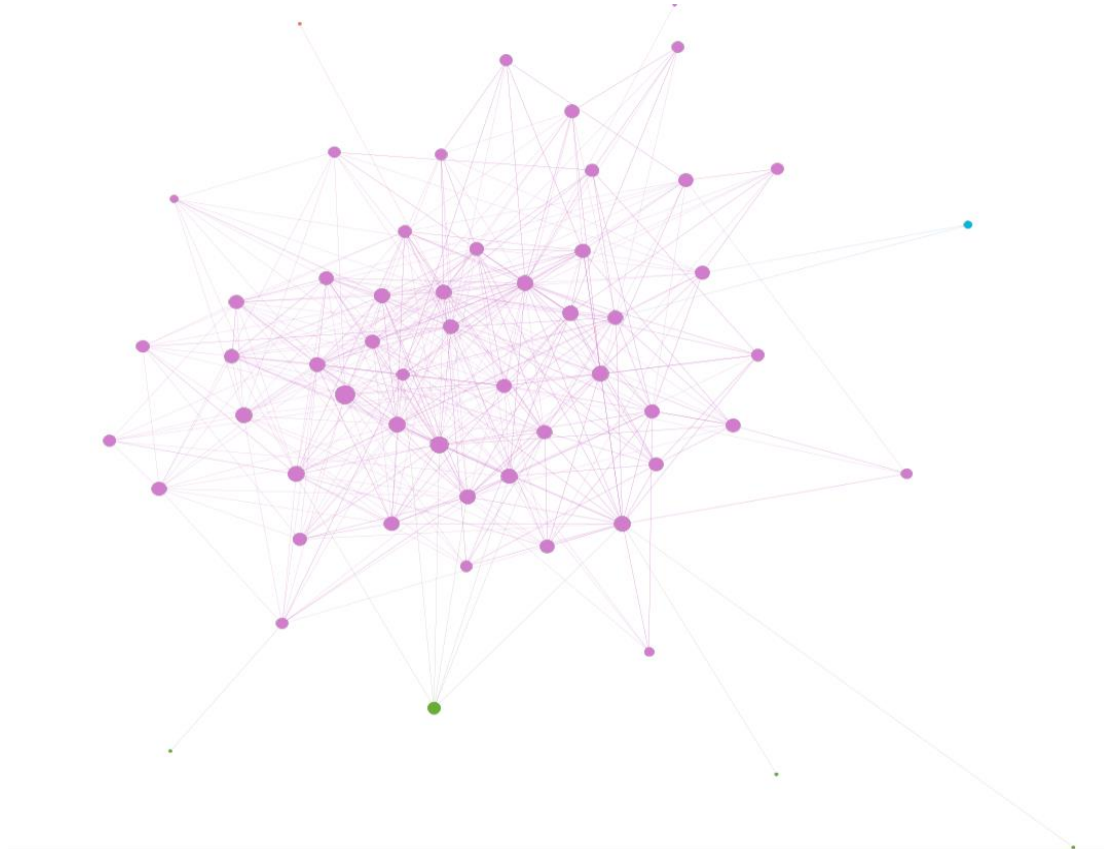


Figure 18: The network of the extreme-right sample

Table 20 demonstrates that the vast majority (almost 90 per cent) of the accounts followed and connected are Greek although the sample seems to be connected with UK, Belgian and French accounts. However, these accounts are found on the periphery of the network, while the most followed accounts are Greek. The sharing of extreme-right ideas with French and UK accounts is not difficult to explain since the Greek extreme-right retains close relations with the extreme-right in those countries. In addition, Golden Dawn, and other extreme-right parties usually praise the Rassemblement National (formerly the Front National) of France and Marine Le Pen personally for her ideas, as well as the EDL and Nigel Farage in the UK. With regard to one account found in the sample which seems to be in the name of Paulina Forslund (<https://twitter.com/paulinaforslund>), of Swedish origin, who is self-described as an NS-activist, Mother of 8, Viking and activist of the Nordic Resistance Movement (<https://nordicresistancemovement.org/>). Her activities and speeches against feminism have been reproduced by extreme-right Greek groups and websites<sup>16</sup> and this explains her significant presence in the sample. The connection with Belgium is less easily explicable, but this connection is as marginal as the French one.

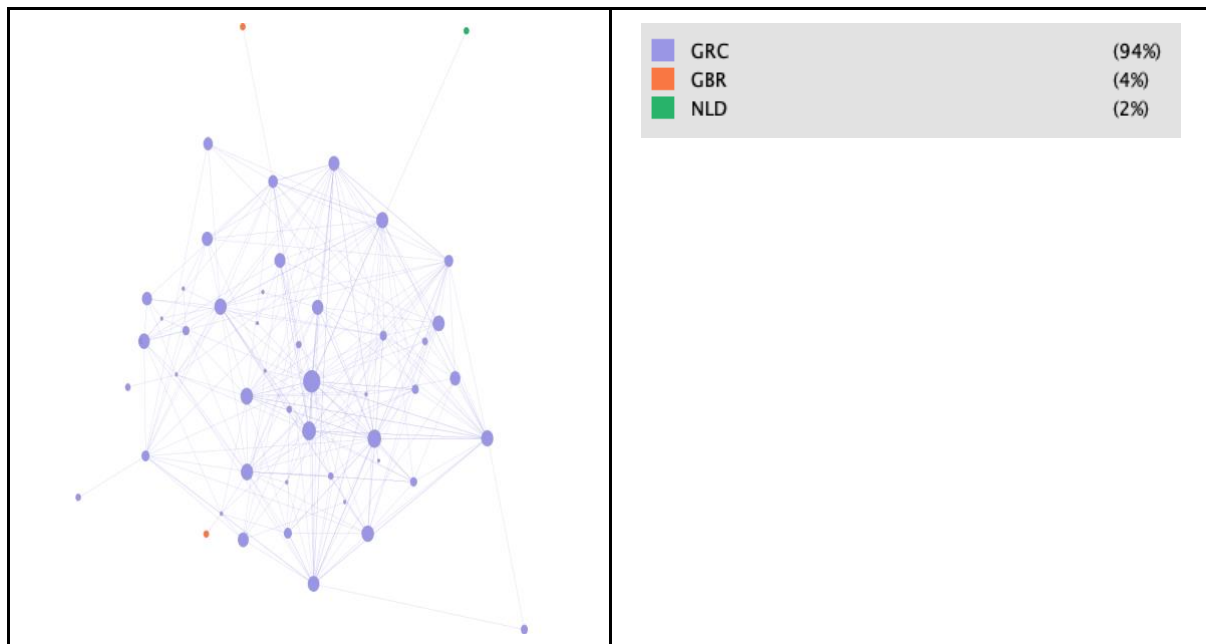
<sup>16</sup> See for example <https://grothia.gr/enimerosi/afypnisi-antistasi/80268/pyrini-omilia-enantia-ston-feminismo-apo-skandinavoy-ethnikosocialistes-toy-nrm/> (last accessed 3 October 2019).

The visualisation the network in Figure 18 demonstrates that the network is centralised and those users most followed are at, or near, the centre of the sample. Finally, it is clear that there is no specific account user who is playing a dominant role in the sample. Moreover, as evident from the pilot phase of the study, most accounts are either from people involved in the so called ‘Macedonian issue’ or from supporters or members of Golden Dawn.

Similarly to other cases within the WP5 samples (e.g. the French sample) it could be argued that figure 18 reveals a ‘small world’ network where the distance between any pair of nodes is relatively small while at the same time the level of transitivity (also known as clustering) is relatively high. In this sense, social ties amongst the Greek extreme-right sample are composed of an ensemble of networks that appear to be closely related to one another. In addition, as can be seen, the graph is relatively dense and connected. There is no great number of intermediaries between two users and as a consequence people are connected to one another directly or with very few intermediaries, showing strong interconnectivity. Likewise, people tend to gather around a number of users, making these users central to the larger network. This way, the Greek sample offers a glimpse into a community of online actors who interact on a regular basis, and at the heart of these interactions are the most connected users around which clusters are formed. The high level of interactivity and connectivity amongst users demonstrates, in a new light, that the Greek sample could be considered as part of a larger extreme-right digital milieu. Finally, the way people are connected also says something about the way conversations flow within the sample. At this stage, the hypothesis is that conversations generally flow between participants and are open-ended rather than the contrary. Although it is not certain whether people retweet original messages, or comment on them, through this level of analysis, it is apparent that people are sufficiently interconnected and integrated to have easy access to what the other knows and shares, and the social network of RW extremists is relatively dense and strong.

## 5.2 On the retweet level

The vast majority of retweets come from Greek users (94 per cent) and only UK and The Netherlands appear in the sample. This is also explained by the existence of extreme-right parties in both countries, the close relations between some of the Greek extreme-right parties and those in the UK and The Netherlands, and finally, by admiration for their ideas and political suggestions on a variety of issues such as immigration, Islam, etc. It seems that the network is dense and gathered around a few user/accounts that are points of passage, suggesting a high level of interactivity, i.e. people who know each other online, provided the size of the knots that are indicative of the level of retweet, a finding that will be also seen when examining mentions. Based on the depicted network, it could be argued that the extreme-right sample in Greece not only constitutes a network, but is close to what could be considered as a radical, i.e. an extreme-right, milieu. This is confirmed in the following sections.



*Figure 19: The extreme-right retweet network*

Figure 19 shows who retweets whom within the Greek sample. There are two criteria for users to appear in this graph: the person who is retweeting must be part of the country level sample; and the person who is retweeted must be part of the full sample (any of the seven countries). The size of the nodes represents the indegree of the node, and thus, the more the account is retweeted, the bigger is the node. Colours represent countries in the sample. The spatialisation layout here too is a Force directed algorithm (Force Atlas 2) and it helps visualise the level connectivity of the sample and the people who constitute points of passage, possibly in and out of the observed online milieu.

Based on the data above 94 per cent of the retweeted material within the Greek extreme-right sample comes from Greek users. This actually lessens the importance of the role of influencers within the Greek sample. When it comes to D. Trump's importance in the corpus this is inflated by the level of retweets, which themselves are possibly inflated by bots. Here again the account of Paulina Forslund is the one most retweeted from the remaining ones, and is also found closer to the centre of the network compared to some Greek accounts and not on its periphery. A second account is that of @LanaLokteff, who is self-presented as Slavic, wife of a Swede, mama, producer of #Nationalist Indi Media for @redicetv @radio3fourteen and fighting Europhobic Lies.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the Dutch account is @hulswood who is self-presented as Dutch, Politics, Democracy, Nature, Culture, Traditions, Against EU and Islam and support of Israel.<sup>18</sup> The last two retweeted accounts are found on the periphery of the network.

In this respect, conversations are predominantly held amongst Greek citizens and topics are shared with fellow Twitter contributors in relationship to the Greek interpretative communities. Likewise,

<sup>17</sup> Her account is related to the news website, TV and radio Red Ice, which is reproducing racist, nationalist and white race ideology and recently some of its videos were banned by You Tube. Apparently she seems to work for this news agency. As mentioned in its website, Red Ice delivers videos, TV Show, online radio programs and news, including Red Ice Radio and Radio 3Fourteen. Founded by Henrik Palmgren in 2003, Red Ice reaches hundreds of thousands of people every month seeking an alternative to the mainstream, covering politics and social issues from a pro-European perspective. It gets over a million views every month on the YouTube channel alone. Red Ice is based in Sweden and North America. For more info see <https://redice.tv/> and for the You Tube ban <https://redice.tv/news/red-ice-videos-banned-from-youtube> (last accessed 3 October 2019).

<sup>18</sup> The account is related to the Dutch news agency <https://hulswood.wordpress.com/> (last accessed 3 October 2019).

even though foreign countries play a small role in the Greek extreme-right scene, the structure of the conversations shows that the core of communications revolves around Greek users almost exclusively. This translates into a graph where we can mainly see Greek users. If one pursues this description, it can be noted that the network is composed of a great number of larger nodes, meaning there are not just a few people spreading content on the web, but a large amount of people resorting to retweeting to communicate information that they find relevant to share with a larger an audience. This implies a high level of interactivity and strong interconnectivity. When specifically considering the Greek retweets, and the overall structure of communications, it confirms the fact that the Greek sample demonstrates a well-integrated extreme-right milieu.

### 5.3 On the mention level

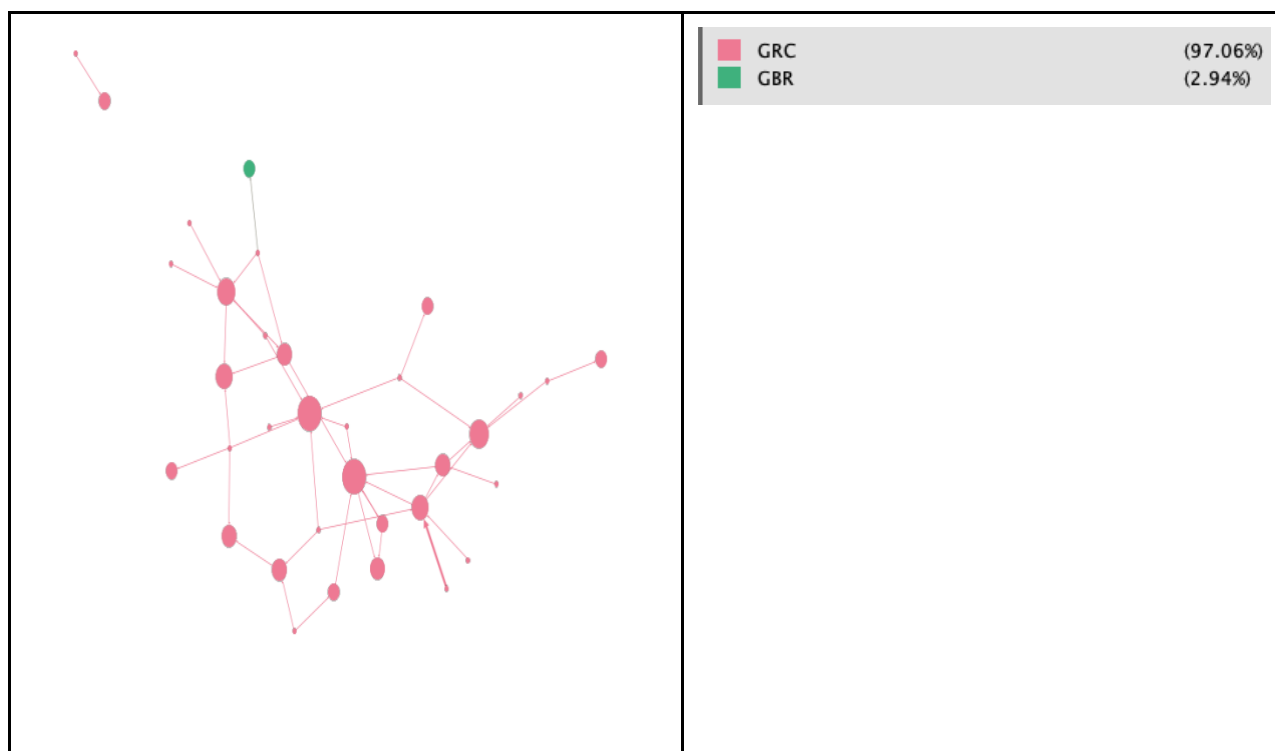
In order, to better understand the networks under examination, ‘relative mentions’ are studied in order to examine the centrality and reputation of the users within the Greek sample. A mention is signified with a special character, @ which serves to notify someone of a post. Studying mentions can also show the homogeneity of a sample, since it can be identified how frequently users name each other. Finally, this approach highlights levels of interaction within the sample. Through this focus on mentions whether people actually acknowledge one another and if so, who is being acknowledged, and thus who is central to the conversation can be understood.

In Figure 21, the size of the knot shows the indegree, meaning the larger the knot, the more the person is mentioned by others. The colour of the knot corresponds to the country of the users, while the thickness of the (edges) line is representative of the number of times people mention one another. The more someone discusses with someone else - i.e. they mention each other – the thicker the line. The layout of the graph, meaning how the graph is distributed in space, is based on the Yifan Hu algorithm.<sup>19</sup> While this is a graph of mentions specific to Greece, the analysis also picks up mentions of other people within the whole DARE sample. In other words, the graph also shows whether the Greek sample directly mentions people from other countries.

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<sup>19</sup> The Yifan Hu Multilevel layout algorithm is an algorithm that brings together the good parts of force-directed algorithms and a multilevel algorithm to reduce algorithm complexity. This is one of the algorithms that works really well with large networks.





*Figure 21: The extreme-right mention network - with only mentions of accounts from the sample*

Mentions have to be understood in two ways: as direct conversations between two or more people; and as a means of tagging someone to challenge them, take a stand against or for them or express a cry for attention directed at this person. Compared to the previous networks this one is much more dispersed, and it should be considered that on Twitter, when one user mentions another one, this is an act of engagement very close to an actual conversation between them. This finding shows that the sample may have a high degree of connectivity, but this sample is still not connected to the point of having closed conversations and/or a high volume of direct interactions and/or citation to draw attention. It is important to bear in mind that mentions are also used to call out someone and capture their attention so it is not always an actual conversation (request). Still the same, and main, users/accounts are central to the whole online extreme-right milieu.

The layout above is the same as the previous one, i.e. Yifan Hu algorithm. The node size represents the PageRank, i.e. an algorithm that outputs a probability distribution used to represent the likelihood that a person randomly mentions one person will arrive at this particular person. The colour of nodes corresponds to the community of a given node, while communities are generated based on the Louvain algorithm (modularity calculation).

The graph represents all the mentions within the Greek corpus. Exploiting every single mention, no longer restricting mentions to someone within the whole DARE sample, nor the Greek sample, offers the opportunity to see which accounts are targeted by the sample, and thus who they are trying to engage in conversations. The PageRank algorithm outputs a probability distribution used to represent the likelihood that a person randomly clicking on the links will arrive at any particular page. Most discussions revolve around institutions, leaders of opinions, news outlets, politicians, etc. implicating legitimate sources of communication and/or information. In other words, this graph exemplifies the fact online discussion is mainly public debates within recognised figures rather than discussions at the level of the people, putting aside institutions. Mainstream media, political leaders and ideological extremist outlets of information are central here. The main mentions found are the following:

Marina2328Ladop	138
gjoko74	118
SteakTatar	117
TheDarkKnightGr	117
t123_chris	112
Leonidas_SPRT	112
Dimitrov_Nikola	110
Aliti_351	110
UMDiaspora	108
Omyros	108
Kostas_Kokkoras	108
VladaMK	107
sophiefotini	106
KSpartiatis	102
kmitsotakis	101
APsilos	96
ThePresidentGr	93
MODERATE_FROMNC	92
saldziev	92
PontosNews	91
RT_com	90
AdonisGeorgiadi	90
hellenicpolice	90
SOROS	86
LouieKennedy9	85
LilaLilyana1	85
mehmeti_leonard	84
klarra0	84

*Table 21: Mentions in the Twitter sample*

Examining the main mentions one can find the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Nikola Dimitrov, who was among the protagonists of the agreement on the ‘Macedonia issue’, the name of the leader of the (at the time) main opposition conservative right-wing party of New Democracy, Konstantinos Mitsotakis, and the name of the vice-President of the abovementioned party, Adonis Georgiadis, a person with an extreme-right, nationalist and xenophobic background since he served as an MP of the extreme-right party of Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS). The last two were among those who rejected the agreement on the ‘Macedonian issue’ as opposed to Greece’s national interests and condemned the government for signing it and for bringing it to Parliament. Other mentions that are of interest are those of the Hellenic Police and of George Soros. The latter is

explained by the fact that among the main extreme-right and religious circles opposed to the agreement, a conspiracy theory circulated that Soros was behind the agreement. Further to this, Soros is a figure who is considered so powerful that he is actually able to manipulate politicians and governments around the world on a variety of issues (e.g. rise of immigration and population replacement, Jewish domination, , etc.).

## 6. Conclusion

What are the main conclusions that can be drawn from the above analysis with regard to the online Greek sample of the extreme-right? First, it is important to note that this analysis cannot be seen as representative and therefore generalisable. It is clear that the sample is small and thus has limitations when it comes to further analyses and generalisations. However, there are some first-level and interesting outcomes that should be taken into consideration and could stimulate further research.

The first is that the findings show similarity between the already known interests among the extreme-right and the sample under examination. Twitter users of the sample reproduce the main discourses and themes as the main extreme-right parties and organisations in Greece, e.g. Golden Dawn. The national issues like relations with North Macedonia, with Albania and Turkey, the immigration and refugee issues, the presence of Islam and Muslims in Greek society, anti-left ideologies and attitudes and of course anti-government sentiments are among the most important. The threat to Greek national identity is, of course, at the core of all these debates and online discussions. It should be added that such narratives - that national identity is threatened - are common among extreme-right circles online (RAN 2019: 5) and this is confirmed by this research.

A second finding is that women, although usually not very visible in the extreme right scene or activist arena in Greece, appear to be quite active on social media. This challenges the view that women are not attracted by nationalism and the extreme-right and suggests they simply prefer other types of activism and participation such as participating online. From this perspective, gender approaches and theories like those applied in Islamist extremism cases (Pearson 2015) could be useful in order to explain male and female differences. Is there a case, for example, that, due to the male dominated extreme-right groups and organisations, women choose to follow a different path instead of being recruited to these? Could this constitute online activism or participation? Further studies on this are necessary before any firm conclusions can be reached since because gender aspects have been under-researched in other studies to date (Alava, Frau-Meigs and Hassan 2017: 44).

In terms of self-presentations, the data collected and analysed confirm the grounds for arguing that an extreme-right milieu exists and includes direct, although mainly indirect, mentions of violence. The majority of the self-representations and symbols used in the sample lead towards this conclusion. More importantly, symbols seem to be used as symbols of communication and orientation at the same time (Elias 2010: 283). Of course, as Elias has argued (2010: 295) all symbols encapsulate relations and this seems to be the case with regard to the symbols used in this extreme-right network. This also confirms the findings of other studies regarding extreme-right symbols used online (Berger 2018: 24-27).

Another important finding is that in terms of the drivers of self-radicalisation it seems that specific events, especially some that involve high level of sentiments and grievances, like the Macedonian issue in Greece, have an impact on this process. The fact that many Twitter accounts were established and became active during the 'Macedonian issue' period could be clear evidence to support this argument. Similarly to the case of the alt-right in the United States (Berger 2018: 28), where many accounts were established in the month of D. Trump's inauguration, many accounts in our sample were created after an offline incident influencing their use and the establishment of a network and

milieu. In addition, and based on the network analysis conducted, although the main focus is an online community and network it seems that this network is directly influenced and perhaps structured around off-line events, as the 'Macedonian issue' has demonstrated. It appears, especially with regard to the 'Macedonian issue', that many of the Twitter users are communicating through Twitter, but at the same time participate in off-line activities, i.e. the large demonstrations against the bilateral agreement, as these details are clearly mentioned in their tweets. It has been argued that social networks are already existing in our environment before they are sought on the Internet (Christakis and Fowler 2010: 282-332) and in that sense it might be more appropriate not to split the online/offline into two different and separate spheres. The Greek analysis tends towards this conclusion since the offline world and context seem to actually motivate and produce the online and we can in no way argue that this is an exclusively online network. As argued in other studies on extreme-right Internet networks (Caiani and Wegemann 2009; Caiani and Parenti 2011), the Internet is certainly an important tool for networking between extreme-right groups but not always the most important one; offline networks may pre-exist and lead to the online or offline events while developments may trigger the online appearance and activity.

The network analysis conducted also highlighted influentality, i.e. the degree of connectivity of participants and the manners in which conversations were being carried out on the web. The second conclusion emerging from the network analysis, therefore, is that the Twitter users of the Greek sample have close connections and communicate with each other. The vast majority of the accounts followed and connected are Greek, although the sample seems to be connected with a very limited number of UK, Belgian and French accounts. However, these accounts are found on the periphery of the network, while the most followed accounts are Greek. These international linkages are also found in the offline world among extreme-right groups (Macklin 2013; Simpson and Druxes 2015), therefore this could be anticipated. From the depiction of the network it appears that it is centralised and those users most followed are at or near the centre of the sample. Finally, there seems to be no specific account user who is playing a role much more central and crucial in the sample compared to all the other ones, in order to dominate the sample. During the pilot phase it became apparent that most accounts belonged to people either involved in the so called 'Macedonian issue' or from supporters or members of Golden Dawn. Finally, with regard to the influencers in the broader field it has to be noted that, due to the small sample under examination, this study cannot confirm the existence of key-players who have a major impact and influence on others. When looking into the general Twitter arena, on the other hand, it is evident that international leaders such as the President of the United States of America, the President of Brazil, the Italian Lega Nord leader and others are people who can influence debates on Twitter.

Overall, and similarly to other cases within the online radicalisation samples (e.g. the French sample), it could be argued that the analysis reveals a 'small world' network, that is to say, the distance between any pair of nodes is relatively small, while at the same time the level of transitivity is relatively high. In this sense, social ties amongst the Greek extreme-right sample are composed of an ensemble of networks that appear to be closely related to one another. In addition, as is evident, the network is dense and clustered. Likewise, people tend to gather around a number of users, making these users central to the larger network. This way, the Greek sample offers a glimpse into a community of online actors who interact on a regular basis, and at the heart of these interactions are the most connected users around which clusters are formed. The high level of interactivity and connectivity amongst users demonstrates, in a new light, the fact the Greek sample can be considered as part of a larger extreme-right digital milieu. Lastly, the way people are connected also says something about the way conversations flow within the sample. Although it is unclear from this level of analysis as to whether people retweet original messages or comment on them, it emerges that people are sufficiently interconnected and integrated to have easy access to what the other knows and shares, and the social network of RW extremists is relatively dense and strong.

As suggested in other studies (Koehler, 2014) the debate on the self-radicalisation process could be supported and enriched by qualitative interviews conducted for ethnographic research. In this way, it could be possible to verify or not the role the Internet has played in people's self-radicalisation and how or to what extent it has influenced them in becoming more active and radical within the extreme-right milieu. It is difficult to prove any exclusive and direct connection between online activism and the perpetration of violent acts. As argued elsewhere, one does not radicalise oneself in cyberspace, any more than one is radicalised by oneself in the 'real world' (Stevens and Neuman 2009: 13; Conway 2012: 13). From this point of view, concepts like 'self-radicalisation' and 'self-recruitment' mostly used in the study of online violent/radical milieus should be used with caution, which is not to underplay the role of the Internet in violent radicalisation processes, but that the role of the Internet should be examined in combination with offline milieus (von Behr et al 2013: 33). Even more specifically with regard to Facebook and Twitter, no empirical evidence was found that Facebook, Twitter and other platforms have a causal impact on the outcomes of violent radicalisation among young people, nor is there evidence to contradict it. In this sense, rather than being initiators or causes of violent behaviours, the Internet (and social media specifically) can be facilitators of radicalisation (Alava, Frau-Meigs and Hassan 2017: 43).

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