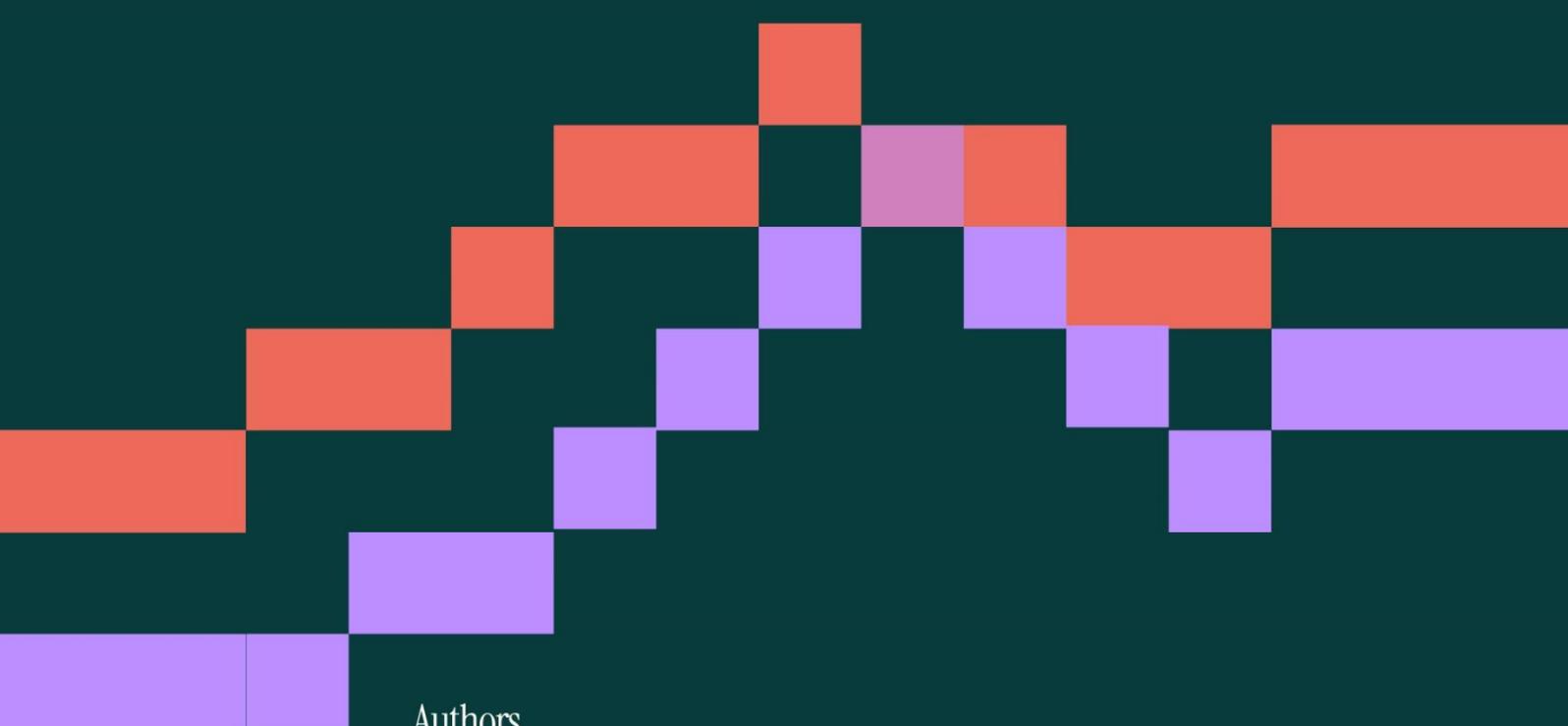


# EU&I 2024 report

Research and communications behind  
the 2024 Voting Advice Application



Authors

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# Research helping citizens and citizens helping research:

## Behind the EU&I project

### Executive summary

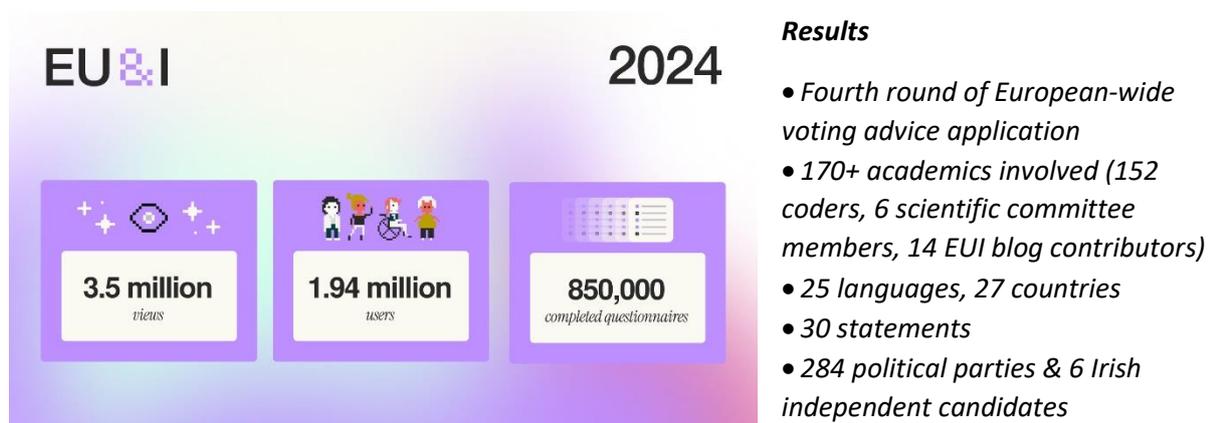
Launched on 9 May 2024, the online application EU&I, was completed by 850,000 users in just 30 days. The [EU&I online questionnaire](#) allowed users to discover their alignment with political parties ahead of the European Parliament elections by answering 30 questions on relevant issues in the current political debate. The research team of more than 170 political scientists, supported by communication colleagues, also offered analysis on topics such as polarisation, migration, security, economics and energy, through the publication of [blogs](#) and [videos](#).

EU&I exists since 2009 and has gone through four rounds of European elections, increasing its reach over time. This time the research team mapped a total of 290 between parties (284) and candidates (6 Irish independents). Since 2019, EU&I has been implemented as a core project of the [European Governance and Politics Programme](#) at the Robert Schuman Centre.

The project is important not only because it offers citizens an evidence-based and neutral tool to support their vote choices, but also because it generates scientific data for researchers and practitioners studying political parties and elections. In this respect, it is a highly relevant resource for political science, fed by citizens filling out the questionnaire and by academics researching electoral manifestos.

The data collected over four election cycles provide scientists with comparable measures of party positions across European party systems. In the coming months, they will be able to analyse and assess the evolution of positions between 2009 and 2024 in EU Member States.

The 2024 edition of EU&I attracted significant media attention, especially in Italy, Greece, Portugal and Estonia. In countries such as France and Spain, the application was supported by content creators on social media, highlighting the project's innovative approach to reach citizens from different generations.



*A more detailed report about the research behind the project and the 2024 communications strategy follows below.*

*Full report*

## **What is EU&I?**

EU&I is a Voting Advice Application (VAA) aimed at helping citizens make an informed choice in the 2024 European Parliament (EP) elections. Available in 25 languages, this online tool invites users to react to 30 policy statements covering a wide range of contemporary policy issues and political values in European politics. Through a matching algorithm, EU&I shows voters which parties best align with their policy preferences, providing a broad view of the European political landscape and how parties – both within countries and across Europe – are positioned within it.

## **What makes us unique**

*A highly qualified international team covering all EU member states*

An EU&I team of **152 experts** was recruited to (1) select the relevant parties in each country, (2) place the parties on the selected statements, and (3) translate all the relevant EU&I materials into the official languages of the respective member states. The selected experts (of different seniority) were part of 27 country teams, each headed by a country team leader with a background in political science and, in most cases, previous experience with VAAs. By reaching out to the extensive network of **EUI academics and alumni**, we brought an international team of experts on board. The recruitment process and the team mirrored the image of EUI itself -- a place welcoming input from academics at different stages of their career from across the EU.

*A balance between continuity and topical issues in EU politics*

The most critical part of the VAA preparation was selecting the policy statements (e.g., ‘Taxation on the wealthiest part of the population should be increased’) on which users and parties are matched. These were chosen based on **relevance and polarisation**, with a balance between new topics (14 statements on issues such as the Ukraine war, pandemics, AI, etc.) and continuity from previous editions (22 statements). By March 2024, a preliminary list of 36 statements was established, with 30 statements presented to users on 9 May after further refinement. [Read more](#) about the selection of statements.

## **What we (at EUI) do best**

*Training, fieldwork, and data input*

All country teams were trained on how to place parties on the list of statements, following an elaborate methodology of party placement, the **iterative method**. This method relies on a mix of party self-placement and expert placement, where the final decision for each position is always taken by the experts and confirmed by the team leader. The teams were provided with Country Team Guidelines and trained during a dedicated session in February. More about party [selection & placement](#) and [methodology](#).

Moreover, to increase party placements' **transparency**, each position had to be justified by a text snippet from party documentation or media sources (e.g., interviews with the party's top politicians), visible to EU&I users on the results page of the application.

By the end of April, all the selected parties were positioned vis-à-vis the 36 (later reduced to 30) policy statements. This resulted in a **substantial volume of data**, including 290 party and candidates' names, 290 logos, 290 justified positions on 36 policy statements and text snippets to validate each position, and translations of all website elements in 25 languages. In only **one week**, the country

team leaders and the EU&I core team managed to input all the data into the EU&I backend and launch the app on 9 May.

### *Longitudinal data collection and cutting-edge research on European politics and polarisation*

In addition to serving as an informative tool aimed at societal impact, EU&I is a research project that produces **high-quality academic outputs**. Since 2009, both party and user data generated by this project have been used to publish in top scientific journals (see reference list below). This data is available on two repositories, GESIS and EUI's Cadmus. In 2020, an integrated trend file of party positions was released, systematically combining all **three waves** (2009, 2014, 2019) available then, while adding several variables such as vote shares and identifiers, bridging the data with other prominent party position datasets to make it easier for the scholarly community to make use of it.

For the first time, in 2024, EU&I represents a step up in the academic research linked to the VAA implementation, embedding **two experiments** in the user flow. The experiments aimed at answering the following research questions:

- a) Does using a VAA reduce *affective polarisation* among voters?
- b) Does using a pan-European VAA increase the interest in transnational voting?

The preliminary findings are promising, especially regarding the first experiment: using EU&I makes people more sympathetic towards their preferred party but also (at a lesser scale) towards other parties. This does not reduce affective polarisation, as measured by standard indexes, but makes voters more agreeable towards the whole party system. An important result shows that 80,000 users have opted to take part in the survey experiment, making this **the largest affective polarisation experiment ever** conducted in political science research.

Finally, the EU&I researchers teamed up with the SOLID project team, which agreed to include the VAA statements in its survey, making it possible to provide a fine-grained measure of the mismatch between a representative sample and a non-representative VAA user sample. They also provided space for a survey experiment to assess whether priming European and democratic identities can reduce affective polarisation.

(Upcoming) research outputs:

- Dataset with the 2024 user and party data as well as the updated, 2009-2024 trend file;
- Data note article accompanying the release of the dataset (similar to Reiljan et al. 2020);
- Working paper with the project description and its implementation (similar to Michel et al. 2019);
- At least three research papers (1) VAAs and affective polarisation; 2) European and democratic priming and affective polarisation; 3) VAAs and transnational voting space attitudes) to be published in top scientific journals. The first drafts of two of the first two research papers were presented at a high-profile workshop ([‘Towards affective depolarisation? Finding remedies to affective polarization in democracies’](#)) organised by the European Governance and Politics Programme and held at the Schuman Centre on 27-28 June.

### **How we built our public image**

Given the low interest in European elections, EU&I's communication strategy aimed to help citizens find the party that best aligns with their views and (more indirectly) raise awareness about voting rights. The target audience included EU-eligible voters unsure of which representatives to choose

and those seeking quick access to party positions. Internally, the project aimed to promote EUI academics' work and engage the Institute's community.

### *Following new trends (after critical evaluation) and experimenting excelled our reach*

1. The **brand positioning** was guided by the project's competitive advantages, i.e., the fact that the tool is science-based, objective, non-political, and helpful. The goal was to create a modern visual identity that 'speaks' to a general audience, has a professional *look and feel*, has a **strong human element**, and is not too heavy on EU symbols and colors (trying to attract non-EU supporters to use it too). The **website design** was based on the academic needs of the project, the questionnaire, and the research experiment crafted by the scientific committee, following the new brand identity. It aimed at creating a user-friendly, unique, positive, and intuitive web journey. The new brand identity and website design differentiated us from competitors and displayed the **trustworthy image and scientific nature** of the project (and EUI) to an audience with low awareness about both the project and EUI.
2. An **external agency** was contracted to provide art direction, visual identity design, keywords and slogans, web design, social media strategy, and video production. The decision to work with an external partner was based on the need 1) for creative ideas that appeal to a broad audience, 2) for a reality check with the world outside EUI, and 3) for efficient workflow in a 'fast-burning' project. The partnership proved highly efficient, and the agency's team gave a **new creative perspective** to the project. Together, we produced the project's brand book & assets, social media strategy and 642 designs, 4 websites (in only 11 weeks): [euandai.eu](https://euandai.eu) (2 launches – before and after the questionnaire); [SpacEU](#); [EuroMPmatch](#), video templates, and [2 demo videos](#).
3. **Influencer marketing** is currently one of the main tools in the marketing and communications mix of many international organisations. After adopting this approach for EU&I, partnerships were signed with 7 influencers in 6 countries – France, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, and the Netherlands. For a total of 11,160 EUR, **the campaign reached 377,680 accounts** and 12,491 clicks on the app in the respective language of the user. Though all partnerships were successful, the most visible effect was seen in France and Spain. In Spain, for example, two influencers brought up the number of completed questionnaires from 5,000 to 52,000 in only a few days. The **additional benefits to direct traffic** included new followers, partnership requests, and users with many followers sharing EU&I content for free.

### *Traditional communication channels and tools proved reliable*

1. Our content strategy aimed at **sourcing knowledge and ideas from EUI academics** on 'hot topics' in the pre-election debate, putting them into an accessible format (blog & video) for a wide audience to bring traffic to EU&I. At the same time, it **promoted current research** across EUI departments and **engaged the community**. Answering the question, 'According to your field of research, what is at stake in the upcoming elections, and what may change after June 2024?' 14 academics from RSC, STG, SPS, and EU&I contributed with 17 blog posts and 14 videos on topics such as migration, sustainability and climate, cost of living, foreign policy, and more. Additionally, we produced blog posts to answer common queries related to EP elections and improve our **Google rating** and **190 organic social media posts** (video/images) in only 90 days to engage the audience and promote the tool. Our top channels were Instagram and LinkedIn.
2. Building **media partnerships across Europe** was the main focus of the work and efforts of the communications team, as it had proven successful and efficient in bringing high numbers

of users in 2019. Starting in late February 2024, after reaching out to more than 400 media outlets and journalists, we established **28 media partnerships in 20 countries**. 17 of them embedded the tool via an iframe on their websites, while the rest covered it in articles and used banners on their websites. Portugal is the country with most (4) media partners, while no partnership was signed in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic, Netherlands, and Luxembourg. In total, the project was **mentioned 166 times** in the media, with the **largest media coverage in Italy and Greece**. The challenges faced by the team in some countries reflect the **changing media landscape** in Europe. Personal contacts (of the team or EUI academics/colleagues) proved the most effective way to establish partnerships; however, in some cases, even if there were personal contacts available, there was no positive response from the media (e.g. Euronews, De Correspondent (NL), Gazeta Wyborcza (PL), Telex (HU), Capital (BG)). Other reasons contributing to these challenges may be existing national competitors or a lack of interest.

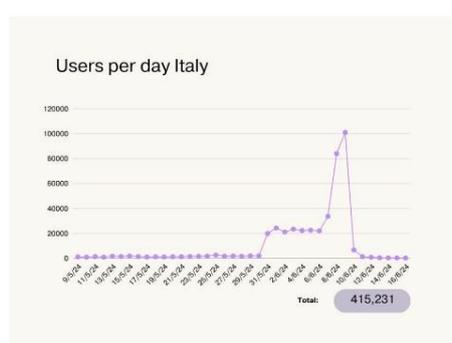
*A more detailed analysis of which approach contributed to gaining the largest number of users can be seen in the graphs in the Annex below.*

- It is important to note that besides the 28 media partners, the project attracted **15 additional partners**, such as local authorities (Europe Direct, Comune di Padova), European NOGs (Lifelong Learning Platform, Are We Europe), and youth organisations (AEGEE and Agenzia per la Promozione dei Giovani). Since the project is recognised both as a **teaching tool on voting rights** and elections and a **civic engagement tool** for a general audience, there is a larger potential for developing partnerships with a diverse set of organisations.

## ANNEX

### EU&I

## User attribution

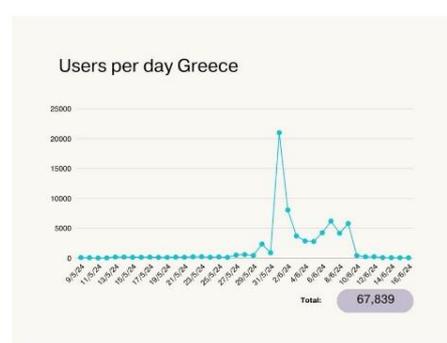


#### Key events

- 25 May: Open Day (from 1660 to 2540)
- 31 May: EU&I launch on *Il Sole 24 Ore*; RaiTV radio interview with Lorenzo; Mediaset reportage from SOU (29 May) (from 2K to 20K)
- 7-8 June: QN article; RaiNews interview with Lorenzo (from 33K to 83K)

#### Partners

- 2 Media partners
- 1 Media distributor (Withub)
- 9 NGO Partners



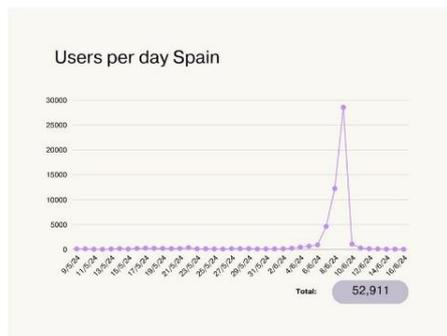
#### Key events

- 1 June: AME MPE (Greek press agency) published an article (from 906 to 21K)

#### Partners

- 2 Media partners (not the press agency)
- 1 Influencer (27,8 K followers)

## User attribution

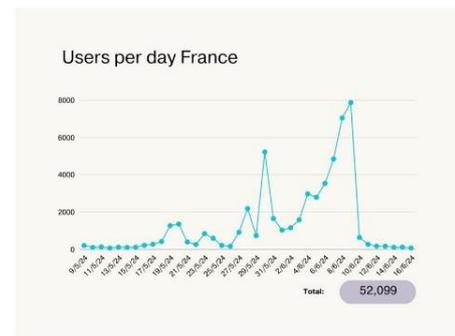


### Key events

- 4 June: **Ferrol360** published article (from 234 to 453)
- 6 June: **Pablo Espana Osborne** (145 K followers) published content on all his channels (from 914 to 4,6K)
- 8 June: **Nacho Gil Conesa (Natcher)** (5,2 M followers) published content on Instagram (from 12K to 28,5K)

### Partners

- 1 Media partner
- 2 Influencers (+ 5M followers)



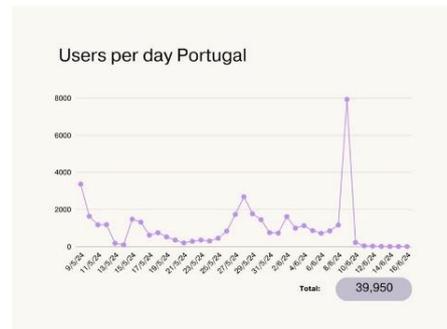
### Key events

- 19-20 May: Traffic from **Twitter, Facebook, direct search** (from 423 to 1,3 K)
- 30 May: **Gaetan Gabriele** (247K followers) published first wave on Instagram (from 738 to 5 K)
- 4 June: **Gaetan Gabriele** (247K followers) published second wave on Instagram (from 1,5K to 2,9 K)

### Partners

- 1 Media partner
- 1 Influencer (247 K followers)

## User attribution

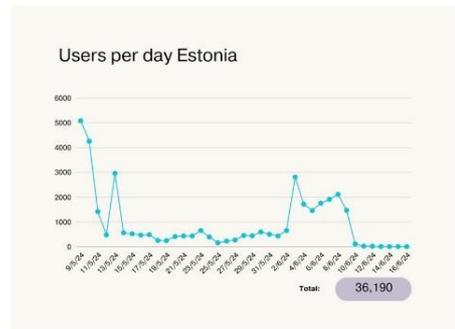


### Key events

- 9 May: Traffic from **Expresso** and **direct search** (starting with 3,3 K)
- 15 May: EU&I launch on **Expresso & Publico** (Expresso with more traffic) (from 101 to 1,4 K)
- 28 May: Traffic from **direct search, Expresso** and **Publico**

### Partners

- 4 Media partners



### Key events

- 9 May: EU&I launch on **ERR** (starting with 5 K)
- 13 May: EU&I launch on **Postimees** (from 475 to 2,9 K)
- 3 June: Traffic coming from **ERR, direct search, Postimees, Tarkvalija.eu** (from 650 to 2,8 K)

### Partners

- 2 Media partners

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