mores

MORAL EMOTIONS IN POLITICS
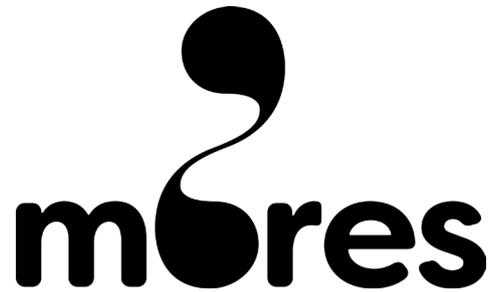
Pride and Hubris in European Parliament Campaigns

mores

MORAL EMOTIONS IN POLITICS: HOW THEY UNITE, HOW THEY DIVIDE

Paper title: Pride and Hubris in European Parliament Campaigns. The cases of Germany, Hungary, and Poland in 2019 and 2024

Authors: Gabriella Szabó[1], Orsolya Ring[2], Timm Beichelt[3], and Artur Lipiński[4]

Contact: contact@mores-horizon.eu

Information: MORES Working Paper Series, 4

1   ELTE Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest.
2   ELTE Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest.
3   European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder).
4   Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

Table of Contents

Abstract

This paper examines how pride operates as a strategic emotional resource in political communication during the 2019 and 2024 European Parliament election campaigns in Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Drawing on the MO-RES project's analytical framework, it investigates how political actors deploy pride to mobilise supporters, affirm group identity, and shape public discourse within increasingly polarised political environments. Using a fine-tuned XLM-RoBERTa model, the Emotions9 Babel Machine https://emotions9babel.poltextlab.com/, trained on expert-labelled and GPT-generated data, the study identifies sentence-level pride expressions in Facebook posts published by parties and politicians ten weeks prior to each election. The pride classifier achieved over 70% accuracy across three languages, enabling a robust cross-national comparison.

The findings reveal sharp contextual contrasts. In Hungary, pride-driven posts consistently generated higher audience engagement, indicating that positive moral-emotional appeals resonate strongly within an affectively polarised public sphere. In Germany, by contrast, neutral informational posts elicited more engagement than pride expressions, suggesting a political communication culture that rewards rational clarity over emotionalisation. Poland occupies an intermediate position: pride expressions were moderate in frequency yet produced stable engagement, reflecting a more pluralistic but emotionally calibrated campaign environment.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that pride is widely used but functions differently across political systems. While it can strengthen collective identity and sustain mobilisation, pride may also shade into hubris, reinforcing perceptions of moral superiority and sharpening political antagonism. The study highlights the need for further qualitative research to distinguish authentic pride from hubristic communication and to understand how emotional narratives travel across diverse European political contexts.

1. Introduction

MORES has created and refined XLM-RoBER-Ta models to indentify pride, a mobilising and identity-forming moral emotion, in European Parliament elections

This paper examines how pride is used in political messaging during the election campaigns for the European Parliament in 2019 and 2024. The study presents how pride influences public conversation in the face of widening political and societal divides, using the MORES project's framework as a guide. It analyses how pride is expressed in Germany, Hungary, and Poland using AI-assisted Facebook communication analysis, emphasising how this emotion serves as mobilising and identity-forming instruments.

To do so, the MORES project makes use of developments in large language models (LLMs) and natural language processing (NLP). It has created and refined XLM-RoBERTa models that can identify pride in political communication at the sentence level; it combines expert-labelled data with artificial samples produced by OpenAI's GPT-4-turbo. The pride model is available at: https://emotions9babel.poltext-lab.com/.

To ensure our models accurately detect pride with at least 70% accuracy, expert validation was essential to guaranteeing the precision and dependability of these models. As an empirical test, the research looked into Facebook posts made by German, Hungarian, and Polish politicians during the European Parliamentary elections both in 2019 and 2024.

Pride expressions during the European Parliament elections did not always correspond with incumbency or ideological inclinations

Whenever politicians and parties openly celebrate accomplishments that are in line with socially accepted objectives, pride is potentially manifested as a crucial moral feeling in political communication. Genuine pride emphasises competence and shared achievement while fostering supporters' motivation, credibility, and sense of group identity. Hubristic pride, however, is a sign of conceit and moral superiority and frequently results in contentious discourse. To increase message memorability and engagement, political leaders intentionally express pride in campaigns. Individual pride emphasises individual successes, while communal pride highlights group accomplishments. But it can be difficult to tell the difference between genuine and

hubristic pride, particularly when it's connected with moral rage.

Pride expressions during the EP elections did not always correspond with incumbency or ideological inclinations, according to an analysis of Facebook campaigns. The cross-national comparison reveals remarkable differences: in Hungary, pride-driven posts generated higher engagement, whereas in Germany, neutral posts performed better. In Poland, pride expressions, though moderate in frequency, generated steady engagement, suggesting that Polish political communication relies on a more balanced emotional repertoire. This makes Poland a revealing hybrid case situated between Germany's restrained rationality and Hungary's affective polarisation, where emotions still serve mobilising functions but within a contested and pluralistic public sphere. These findings suggest that the emotional tone of political communication varies significantly across countries and contexts.

" Moral pride functions as a powerful emotional resource in political discourse, shaping how individuals perceive questions of right and wrong "

Gabriella Szabó
MORES Deputy Investigator, ELTE
Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest

2. Moral Emotions in Electoral Campaigns

This research combines AI tools with human collaboration in text mining; focus is placed on countries with distinct yet interrelated political landscapes

Across Europe, political communication is becoming increasingly affect-driven (Kriesi, 2020). Emotions are no longer peripheral to political messaging; they have become central instruments through which political actors mobilise supporters, frame conflicts, legitimise power, and shape perceptions of belonging (Shah, 2022). Among these emotions, we should pay attention to pride because it holds a unique position: it can bind communities together through shared achievement, but it can also slide into hubris, which reinforces the perception of moral superiority over members of the outgroup, erode pluralism, and fuel antagonism between political actors (Miceli et al, 2017). Pride manifestations contribute to the simplification of the stakes in political conflicts: complex policy issues or structural problems are reframed as a clear-cut moral battle between those who "do it right" and

Pride inspires followers and fosters moral-emotional communication, which enables politics to sustain a sense of effectiveness and group identity

"achieve", and those who "fail" and "underperform". This mindset reduces nuanced debates to emotionally charged binaries, and may distort citizens' understanding of social and political events.

Despite significant contributions from moral framing research (Domke et al., 2000) and moral foundations theory (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010), there remains a gap in understanding the dynamics and emotional dimensions of public moralisation (Capelos & Demertzis, 2022; Kiss, 2021; Sullivan, 2021; Szabó, 2024). In the MORES project, research is aimed at addressing this gap through an AI-assisted quantitative analysis of moral-emotional messages in political campaigns on Facebook.

While existing research has explored the emotional dimensions of so-

cio-political tensions (Demertzis, 2013; Slaby & von Scheve, 2019), studies examining moral emotions in the context of European Parliamentary election campaigns are limited. Although pride is one of the most frequently analysed emotions in the literature, comparative research on messages in social media communication remains relatively scarce. This research seeks to address this gap by presenting preliminary findings on the political use of pride in political campaigns using German, Hungarian, and Polish language data.

Our study combines AI tools with human collaboration in text mining to explore emotional messaging in Facebook communications during European Parliament election campaigns, providing a foundation for comparative research. We focus on countries with distinct yet interrelated political landscapes. Germany, as the EU's largest country in terms of population, economic weight, and political influence, represents the heart of mainstream European political discourse, with its multiparty system and well-established communication structures. Hungary, by contrast, has undergone substantial liberal democratic erosion, with the Fidesz government employing populist and Eurosceptic rhetoric that fuels polarisation and undermines institutional trust. Poland occupies an intermediate and dynamic position between these two poles: while its governments have followed an illiberal trajectory similar to Hungary's since 2015, Poland has also witnessed strong civic resistance and a more pluralistic, yet heavily politicised media environment. These internal tensions make Poland a revealing case for understanding how expressions of collective self-confidence become both a tool of mobilisation and a marker of democratic contestation.

Importantly, the political trajectories of Germany, Poland, and Hungary are not only contrasting but also mutually interconnected through European party politics, regional security dynamics, and the evolving ideological conflict over the future of the EU. Germany serves as a normative and institutional reference point: its positions on migration, rule of law, or European integration shape the strategic choices and rhetorical responses of both Poland and Hungary. Poland and Hungary, in turn, have collaborated in EU-level conflicts (most notably in rule-of-law disputes and veto threats) and have jointly influenced the discursive space of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly through the Visegrád framework. At the same time, Poland's domestic political shifts—especially after 2023—reconfigured this regional alignment, generating new contrasts with Hungary but sustaining shared patterns of emotional mobilisation grounded in national identity, threat perception, and collective grievance. Germany's party-political landscape also indirectly affects Polish and Hungarian politics, as far-right actors in both countries draw inspiration from discourse used by German counterparts (e.g., AfD), and mainstream parties articulate their identity in reaction to German positions on EU policy, energy, and migration.

The three countries also differ in their levels of Euroscepticism and trust in EU institutions. Germany remains a strong advocate for European integration, Poland oscillates between critical engagement and strategic alignment, and Hungary stands out as an open challenger to the EU mainstream. Yet these divergences interact: Hungarian and Polish leaders frequently position

" Cross-national comparisons reveal remarkable differences: in Hungary, pride-driven posts generated higher engagement, whereas in Germany, neutral posts performed better "

Orsolya Ring
MORES researcher, ELTE
Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest

themselves against "Brussels"—often implicitly understood as German-led Europe—while German actors increasingly frame Central European illiberalism as a key challenge for the Union. These reciprocal discursive dynamics create a shared emotional and rhetorical space in which pride, grievance, sovereignty, and identity are continuously negotiated across borders.

By analysing Facebook communication in these varied but interconnected contexts, our study shed lights on how pride-driven messages shape campaign discourse across diverse political settings: from a pro-EU, institutionalised democracy (Germany), to a conflicted hybrid environment balancing illiberal tendencies and civic resistance (Poland), to a regime that explicitly contests the foundations of liberal Europe (Hungary). This comparative lens allows us to trace how emotional narratives—embedded with pride—travel, transform, and acquire different political functions across the European political landscape.

Moral pride functions as a powerful emotional resource in political discourse, shaping how individuals perceive questions of right and wrong. It is typically evoked when people or groups are portrayed as upholding, defending, or advancing valued moral principles. In practice, politicians and parties often move strategically between different emotional registers; they, for example, foreground anger-related emotions, such as outrage, frustration, or resentment, to highlight perceived injustices and mobilise moral indignation (see Osnabrügge et al., 2021). Having activated this sense of moral threat, they then pivot toward pride by emphasising achievements, affirming their role as a morally upright and resilient community, and presenting themselves as defenders of the public good. This alternation between

Politicians alternate anger and pride to dramatise conflict while simultaneously offering audiences a positive emotional anchor rooted in collective identity

anger and pride enables political actors to dramatise conflict while simultaneously offering audiences a positive emotional anchor rooted in collective identity and moral self-regard.

This equilibrium keeps followers emotionally involved and avoids unstable or unmanageable anger. National pride serves to bolster the legitimacy of the right-leaning party or movement, while anger is frequently aimed against elites or outside forces in right-wing populist discourse (see Kazlauskaitė & Salmela, 2021). Progressive political campaigns, however, may attach pride to group accomplishments in social change and use moral rage toward structural injustices.

We propose that pride inspires followers and fosters moral-emotional communication, which enables politics to sustain a sense of effectiveness and group identity.

3. Methodological Notes

Expert validation is essential to ensuring the accuracy and reliability of LLM-generated outputs; under our approach, accuracy rates exceeded 70% for 'pride,' a complex moral emotion

By building on recent advancements in natural language processing (NLP) and large language models (LLMs), MORES addresses the shortage of effective emotion analysis tools for underrepresented languages. The project has developed a customised, fine-tuned XLM-RoBERTa model that can detect pride at the sentence level in texts. Its training process combined manually labelled data, created through an expert coding system, with synthetic samples generated by OpenAI's GPT-4-turbo to ensure balanced representation of less common emotions.

One challenge was the limited and imbalanced training data available. In this case, we started with the previously used dataset, which included data for the emotional manifestation of pride. In addition to that, we gained access to expert-annotated data in Hungarian; that data was translated into German and Polish, and then integrated into the original dataset. We experimented with different ratios of original and synthetic labels by training models with various combinations and subsequently fine-tuned these models on data optimally balanced for the German, Hungarian, and Polish languages.

Expert validation is crucial to ensure that outputs generated by LLMs are accurate and reliable. The MORES project researchers carefully reviewed these outputs, identified any inaccuracies, and offered necessary corrections or clarifications, thereby improving the overall reliability of the information supplied. We performed multiple rounds of validation to confirm the moresRo-BERTa's performance. Although we established a 70% accuracy benchmark for pride, the overall approach we took led to superior results: the analyses in this study showed accuracy rates of over 70% for this complex emotion.

4. Data and Sampling

Politicians' Facebook posts were merged with
their parties' posts

    This analysis focuses on three countries: Germany, Hungary, and Poland and samples German, Hungarian, and Polish politicians' and parties' Facebook messages and user engagement metrics. Our sample comes from a large MORES social media database, which is available upon request at https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/643/. We included all Facebook posts from 10 weeks prior to the 2019 and 2024 European Parliament elections, specifically for parties that ultimately secured seats in the European Parliament after the elections. These parties are listed in the table below. For simplicity, the Facebook posts of various politicians were merged with their parties' Facebook posts, and we only indicate the political parties in the analysis (because data include the politicians affiliated with the parties).

Table 1 – List of sampled parties

COUNTRY	YEAR	PARTIES
Gemany	2019	AfD; CDU/CSU; Die Grünen; Die Linke; Die PARTEI; Familien-Partei Deutschlands; FDP; Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei; PARTEI MENSCH UMWELT TIERSCHUTZ; Piratenpartei Deutschland; SPD; Volt Deutschland
Germany	2024	AfD; Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht; Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei; Die PARTEI; Die Linke; PARTEI MENSCH UMWELT TIERSCHUTZ; FDP; CSU; SPD; CDU; Volt Deutschland; Familien-Partei Deutschlands
Hungary	2019	DK; Fidesz; Jobbik; KDNP; Momentum; MSZP; Párbeszéd
Hungary	2024	DK; Fidesz; KDNP; Mi Hazánk; MSZP; Párbeszéd; Tisza Párt
Poland	2019	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość; Koalicja Europejska; Wiosna
Poland	2024	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość; Koalicja Obywatelska; Konfederacja; Trzecia Droga; Lewica

5. Pride and Hubris in Campaign Messages

The relationship between incumbency status and pride expression reveals variation across national contexts

Pride, a complex yet fundamental moral emotion, plays a significant role in political communication. Pride comes into existence when individuals or groups achieve noteworthy accomplishments, aligning their actions with socially recognised goals (SRGs) (Lewis, 2008) and publicly expressing and sharing these accomplishments. Pride is connected to identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement of our own or that of a group with whom we identify (Lazarus, 1991). In politics, expressions of pride can enhance credibility, motivate engagement, and foster collective identity among supporters. Pride is rooted in personal or collective achievements and can be expressed through both verbal and nonverbal means (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012). This research focuses on textual modality.

Beyond individual accomplishments, group-based pride emerges when individuals feel responsible for or contribute to a collective success (Delvaux et al., 2016). This form of pride is evident in political discourse when leaders emphasise the positive affective components in the joint efforts of a nation, party, or movement. A closely related variant is vicarious pride, where communicators seek to align themselves with others' successes for personal or political gain (Williams & Davies, 2017; Salmela & Sullivan, 2022).

Pride serves several key functions in political engagement: it encourages status-seeking behaviours, reinforces such behaviours to maintain an enhanced status, signals accomplishments and desirable traits to the public, and fosters perseverance in politically challenging tasks (Tracy et al., 2010). By displaying pride, political leaders highlight their successes and encourage supporters to internalise these achievements as shared victories (Tracy & Robins, 2007).

Using pride-elevating language during election campaigns is tactical, as it helps recall messages and strengthens engagement with rhetoric. Pride-related expressions also help create a cycle where social norms, personal

evaluations, political preferences, behaviours, emotions, and identity all interact and reinforce one another (Wawrzyński, 2022). Beyond boosting motivation, pride appeals can also reduce stress, fostering a sense of unity and resilience. Promoting the positive emotional aspects of collective action helps counteract feeling attacked and vulnerable to out-group hostility and political tension (Sandi & Haller, 2015). Political leaders therefore strategically rely on emotional expressions to create a sense of collective success or triumph, bonded with voters by positive emotions, aiming to energise people and keep them motivated despite all the hardships and obstacles.

Expressions of pride in political communication can be categorised into individual-focused and collective-focused statements.

Individual Pride:

- "I was the one who started the reform processes that modernised the country."

- "Under my leadership, our party achieved a historic success in the elections."

- "Thanks to my bold decision, we prevented economic collapse."

Using pride-elevating language in elections helps recall messages and strengthens engagement with rhetoric. It can also reduce stress and promote a sense of resilience

Collective Pride:

- "Through the perseverance and diligence of the Hungarian people, we overcame difficult times."

- "We are proud that our country is a leader in green energy in Europe."

- "Our shared determination helped strengthen our country economically."

Theoretically, it is crucial to distinct authentic pride from hubristic pride. Hubris is characterised by an inflated sense of self-importance and a lack of self-reflection. In political contexts, hubris manifests when leaders present themselves as morally or intellectually superior without acknowledging potential flaws or limitations (Sullivan, 2014). Unlike authentic pride, which conveys competence and achievement, hubristic pride is often perceived as arrogance and overconfidence (Salmela & Sullivan, 2022).

Hubristic pride has been associated with negative leadership behaviours, including misjudgment, unethical decision-making, and abuse of power (Owen & Davidson, 2009). Whenever political figures express hubris, they frequently employ the first-person singular pronoun "I", a marker of self-centred discourse (Magyari et al., 2022).

Beyond individual hubris, group-based hubris can be relevant in political discourse. It emerges when political factions and leaders overestimate their capabilities and communicate their moral superiority, use grandiose self-praising language while degrading opposing groups to reinforce their

supporters' confidence (Sullivan & Hollway, 2014). Political actors simultaneously weaponise this emotional sequence by accusing opponents of hubris (claiming they are excessively self-confident, morally arrogant, or detached from ordinary people) which further sharpens the contrast between righteous pride and illegitimate self-aggrandisement (Szabó & Kiss, 2023).

Examples of Hubristic Pride:

- "We see hundreds of wandering tribes disappear in history, yet we, Hungarians, have persevered, proving our superiority."

- "Despite the hardships caused by sanctions and war, Hungary remained successful in 2022, proving our unmatched resilience."

- "If the EU doesn't change its arrogant attitude, we will lose its global influence, just as we lost the UK."

Authentic pride unites people around common causes; hubristic pride makes political discourse more confrontational and compromise negotiations

Moral pride and hubris may be closely intertwined with anger in political messages: indignation manifests when politicians frame an issue or an event as violations of deeply held values, and this anger often emerges alongside a sense of collective pride as groups unite in defence of their shared identity or cause. The manifestation of moral anger can also accompany pride expressions when politicians frame political struggles as battles for collective dignity and recognition. Political leaders and activists frequently present their cause not just as necessary but also as honourable and righteous, which makes politics less an interest-based activity and instead an identity-related matter.

While authentic pride can unite people around a cause, hubristic pride messages make political discourse more confrontational, identity-bound and less favourable for negotiations and cross-party compromises (Kazlauskaitė & Salmela, 2021; Kiss, 2024; Szabó, 2024). The claim of moral superiority inherent in anger and resistance to perceived mistreatment often goes hand in hand with expressions of hubris. Hubristic pride frequently emerges as an attempt to restore dignity following experiences of shaming or guilt-inducing blaming. In group-based and collective contexts, such pride can take on hubristic forms, becoming excessive, insensitive, or even antagonistic toward perceived opponents (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017; Sullivan & Day, 2019; Szabó & Kiss, 2023). These complex interactions between pride, hubris, and anger can be particularly evident in the rhetorical strategies political actors employ during election campaigns.

While the difference between authentic pride and hubris is clear in theory, identifying them in political campaigns is much more complicated. Both manifest confidence, assertiveness, and a sense of achievement, and emphasise hard work, perseverance, and competence. They also frequently go hand in hand with moral anger—when politicians link pride to perceived injus-

tices or grievances, it becomes harder to tell the difference between justified confidence and outright superiority. Politicians constantly walk a fine line between the two, and even when they present their pride as grounded in real accomplishments, traces of hubris, such as dismissing critics or boasting about personal greatness, can still slip through.

Although the moresRoBERTa model cannot differentiate between authentic pride and hubris, it effectively identifies the accumulation of pride-related expressions in campaign messages across large text corpora. We interpret this accumulation as a communicative cue for excessive pride and the speaker's self-portrayal of infallibility. Excessive pride conveys the following message: if all achievements are praiseworthy, then the entire identity remains beyond criticism.

To provide exploratory observations about pride-evoking language in politics, we investigate two key assumptions. The first examines whether incumbent parties are more likely to express pride on Facebook, postulating that governing parties tend to reinforce their achievements and cultivate a sense of accomplishment among supporters. The second explores whether party ideology matters, testing whether pride expressions are more frequent among right-leaning parties that often emphasise national achievements, tradition, and cultural pride compared to left-leaning parties. We examined pride expression patterns across political parties in Hungary, Germany, and Poland during the 2019 and 2024 campaign periods.

The relationship between incumbency status and pride expression reveals patterns that largely contradict the initial hypothesis, with substantial variation across national contexts. In Hungary, the 2019 data shows the governing party KDNP among the highest pride expressers alongside the newcomer Momentum and the opposition party Párbeszéd, all at approximately similar levels. However, Fidesz, the senior governing coalition partner, expressed pride at notably lower rates than these parties. By 2024, the pattern shifted dramatically, with the governing parties expressing among the lowest pride levels across all parties. Fidesz was absent from visible pride expression, while KDNP showed very low levels. Instead, opposition and smaller parties like the Greens, MSZP, Párbeszéd, and Baloldal dominated pride expression. Most strikingly, the newcomer Tisza Party, which had shown exceptionally high anger expression, displayed the lowest pride levels of all parties examined. This finding suggests that, in the Hungarian context, incumbency does not translate into elevated pride expression, and opposition parties rely more heavily on pride-based messaging.

Germany presents the clearest alignment with the incumbency hypothesis in 2019, when the governing parties CDU, CSU, and their coalition partners showed the highest pride expression levels across all parties. This pattern suggests that German governing parties did emphasise achievements and cultivate accomplishment narratives during this period. However, by 2024, the picture became more complex. While established parties like the CDU and SPD maintained relatively high pride expression, the most striking finding was the exceptionally high pride level displayed by Bündnis Deutschland, which far exceeded all other parties. The Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance,

" Our moresRoBERTa model cannot differentiate between authentic pride and hubris. However, it effectively identifies the accumulation of pride-related expressions in campaign messages across large text corpora "

Orsolya Ring
MORES researcher at
ELTE CSS

a newcomer, showed moderate pride levels comparable to some established parties. This evolution suggests that while German governing parties may have initially followed predicted patterns, the relationship between incumbency and pride expression became less clear over time, with newcomer and opposition parties also deploying pride-based messaging extensively.

Poland presents the most compressed distribution of pride expression. In 2019, both the newcomer Wiosna and the established coalition displayed nearly identical moderate pride levels, providing no support for the incumbency hypothesis. By 2024, the left-leaning parties Lewica and the newcomer Konfederacja showed the highest pride expression, while the established Koalicja Obywatelska displayed remarkably low pride levels. This pattern directly contradicts the incumbency hypothesis, with established parties showing minimal pride expression while opposition and newcomer parties dominated pride-based messaging. Poland's overall lower pride levels com-
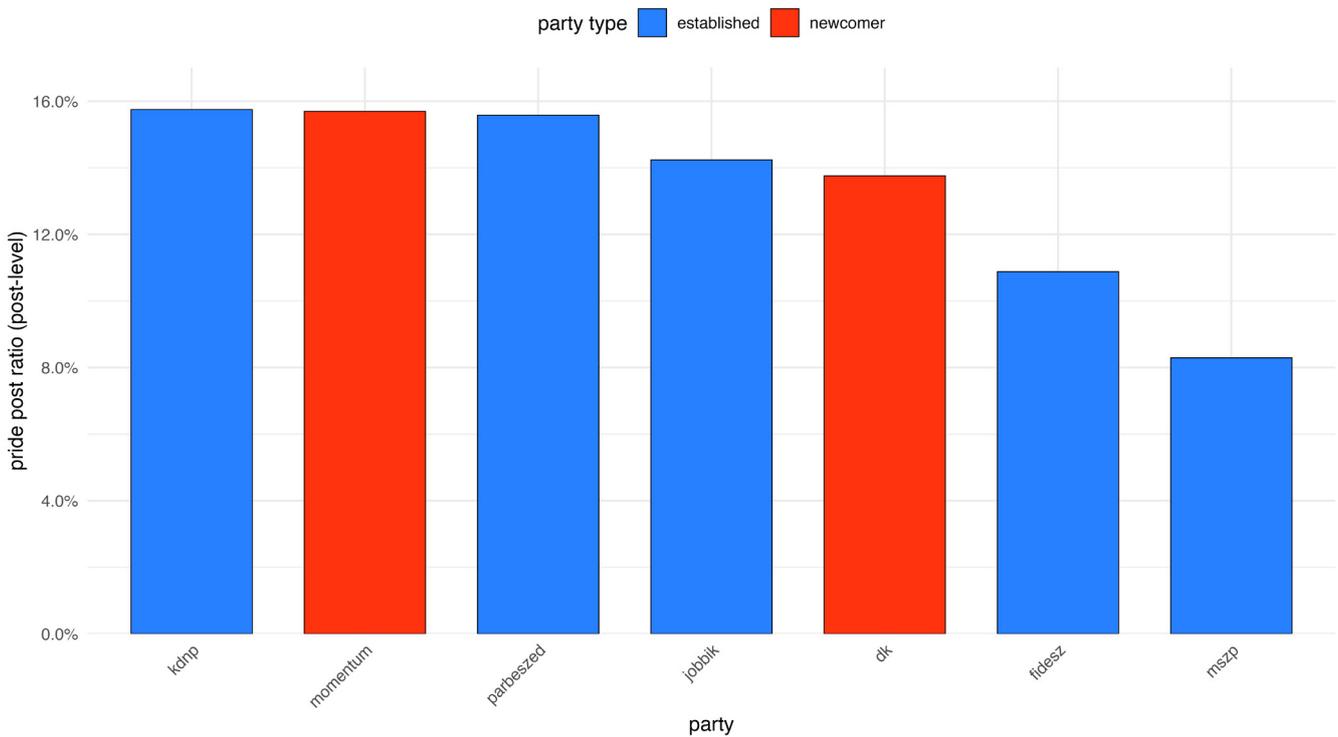

Figure 1. Posts labelled "pride" in Facebook messages in Hungary in 2019 by parties.
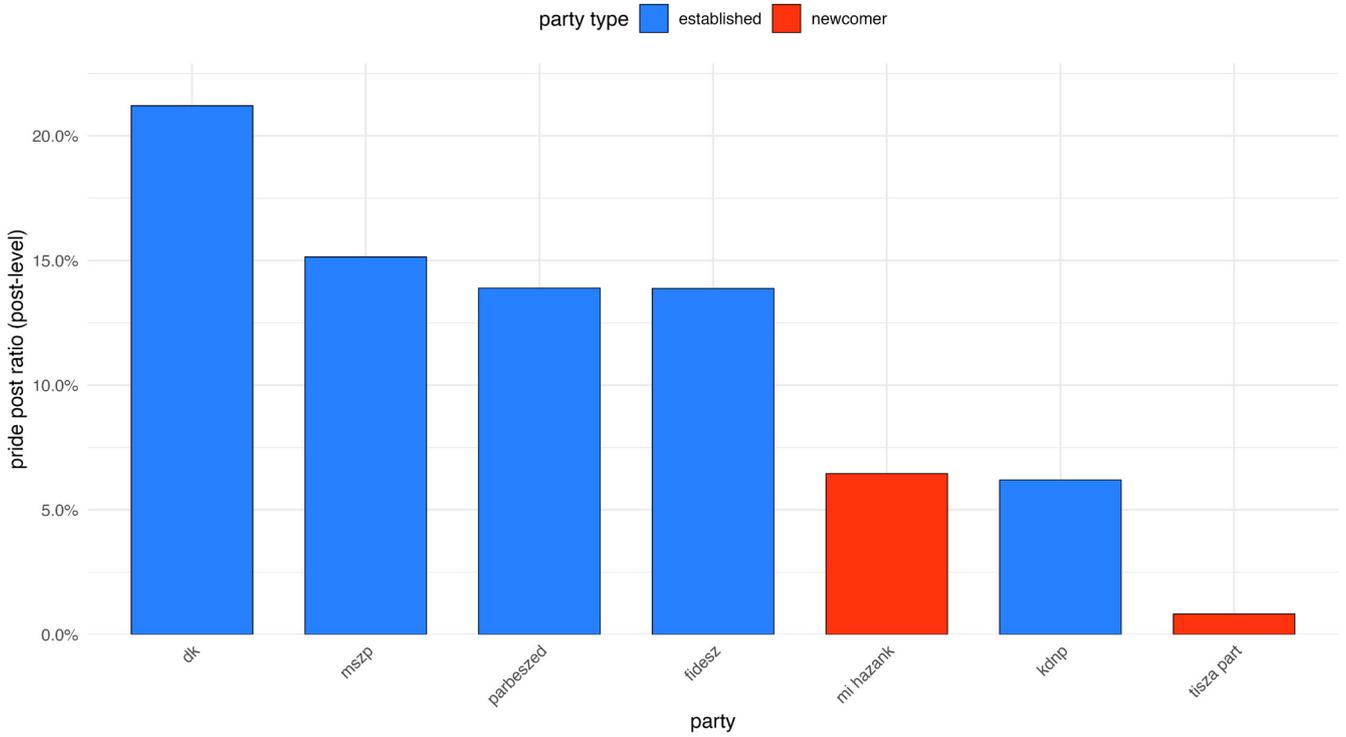
Figure 2. Post labelled "pride" in Facebook messages in Hungary in 2024 by parties.
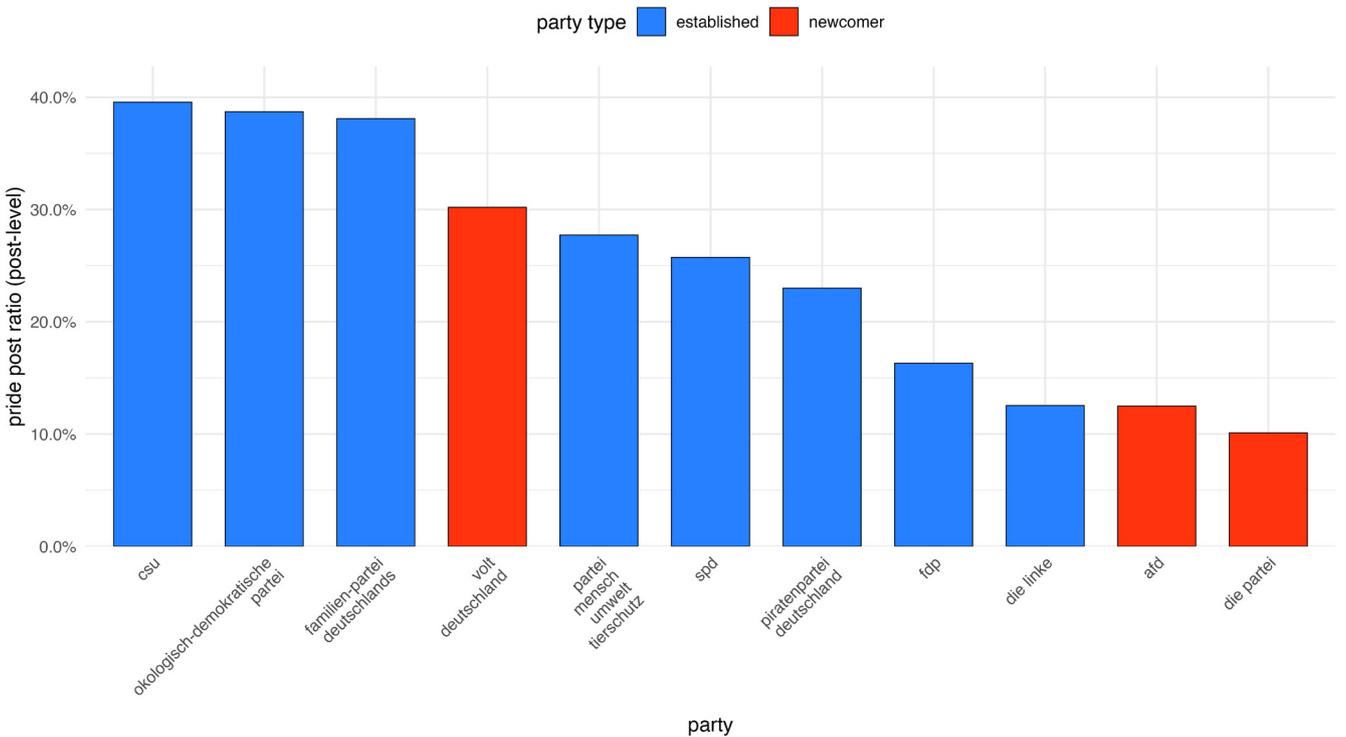

Figure 3. Post labelled "pride" in Facebook messages in Germany in 2019 by parties.
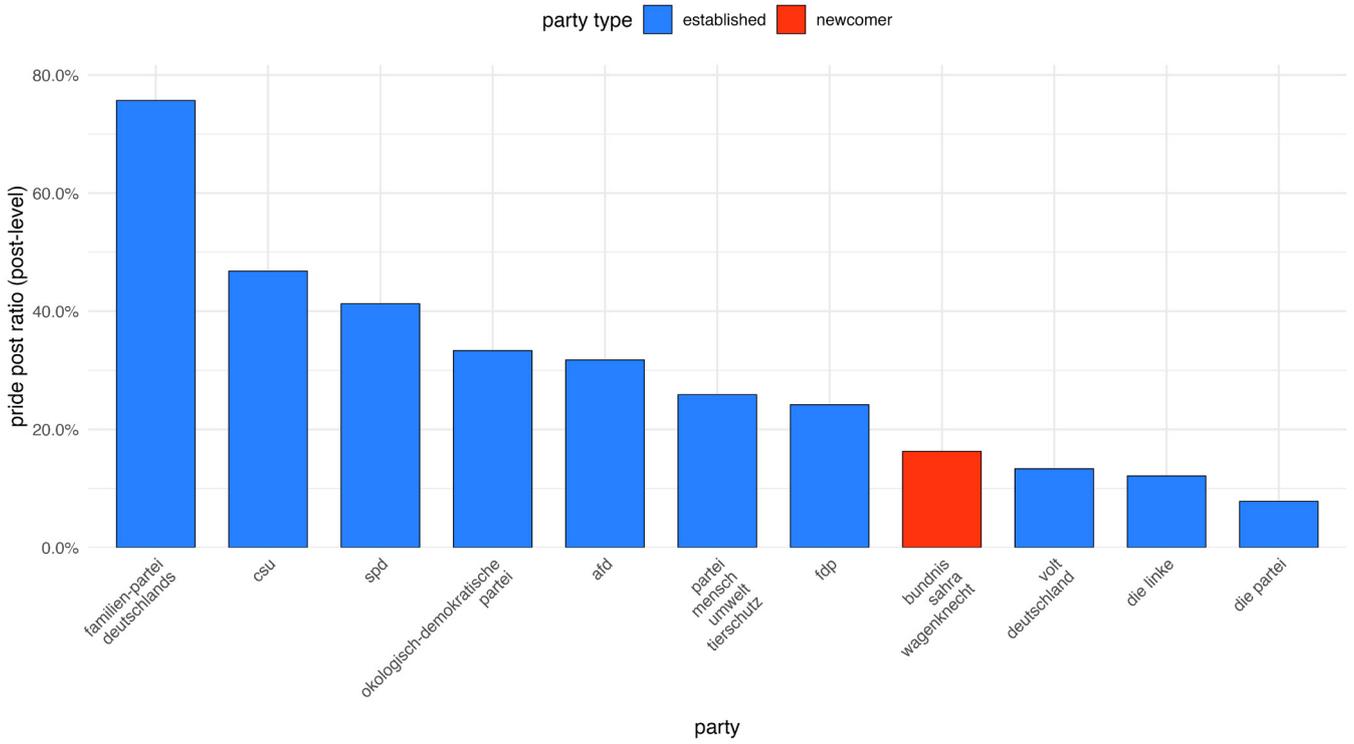
Figure 4. Post labelled "pride" in Facebook messages in Germany in 2024 by parties.
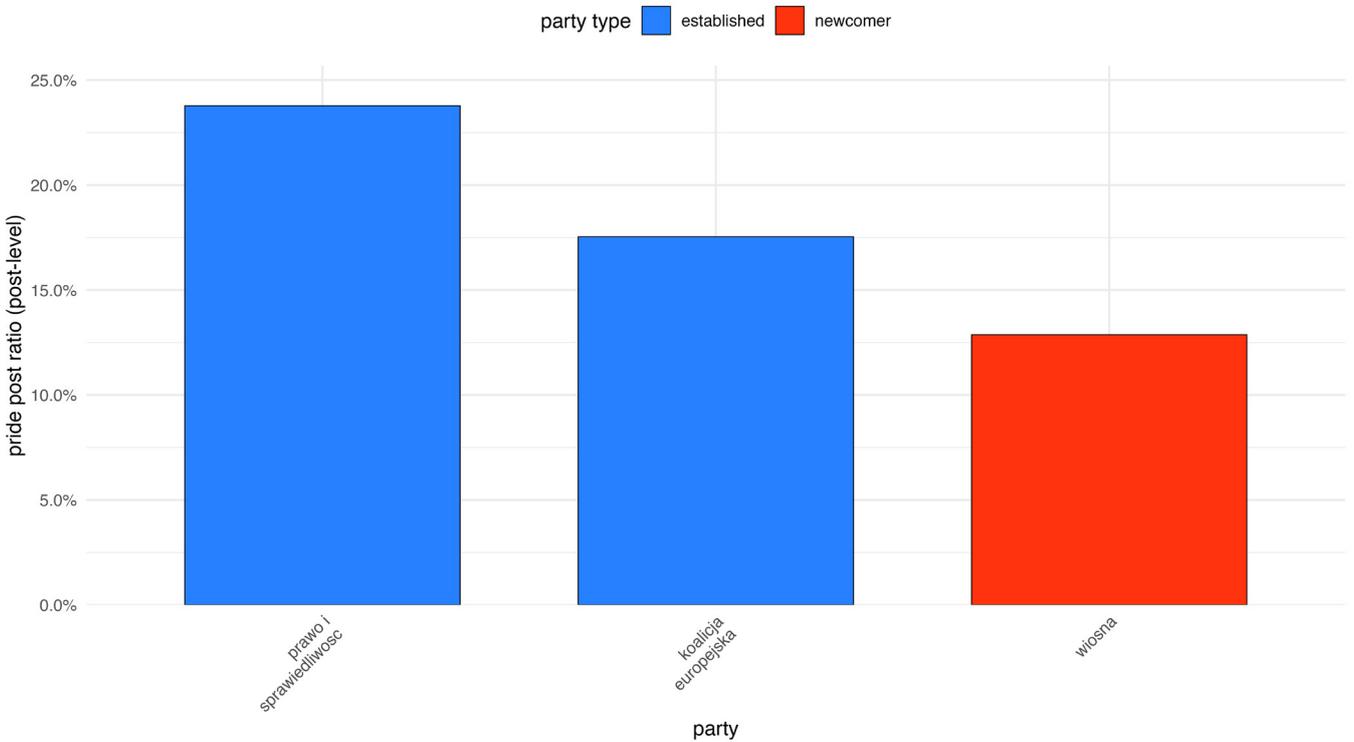

Figure 5. Post labelled "pride" in Facebook messages in Poland in 2019 by parties.
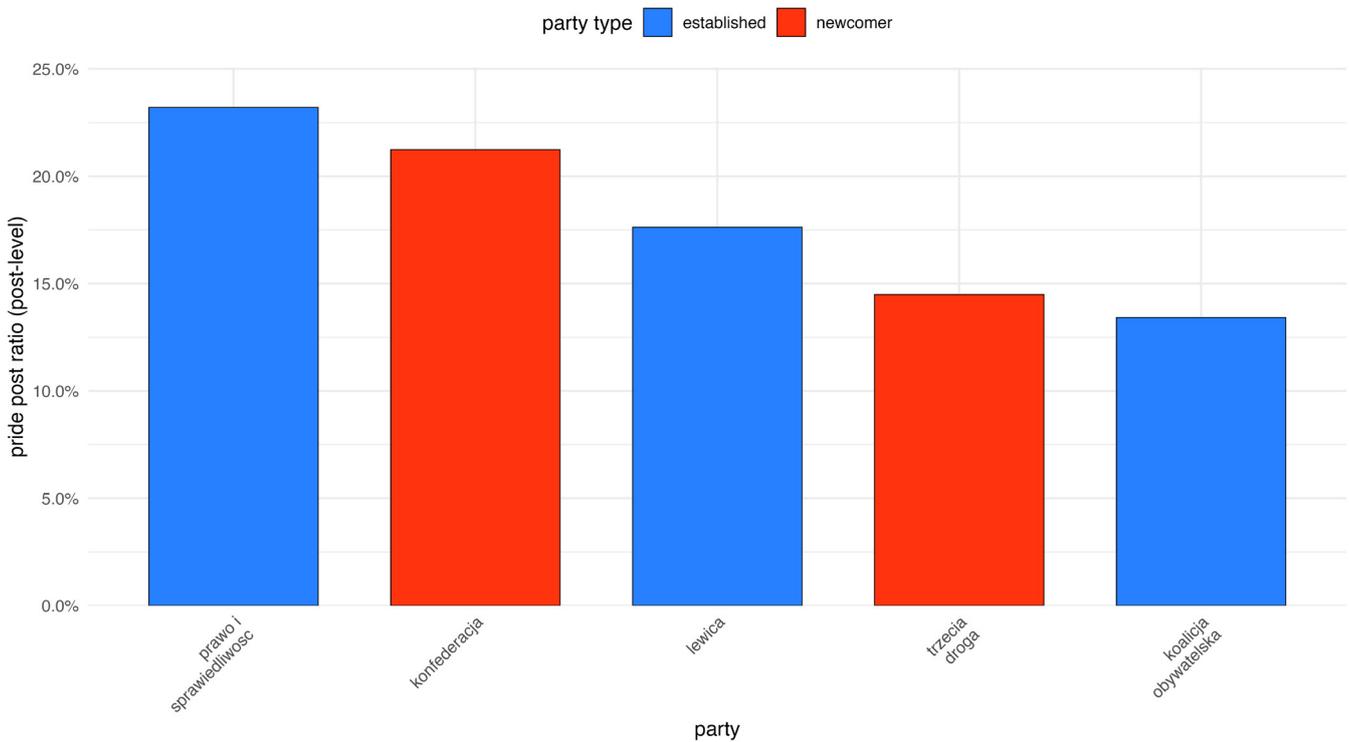
Figure 6. Posts labelled "pride" in Facebook messages in Poland in 2024 by parties.

pared to the other countries suggest that pride may play a less central role in Polish political communication across the board.

Our third exploratory question examines whether posts that include pride expressions generate higher levels of user engagement (such as likes, shares, and comments) compared to neutral or purely informational posts, as such expressions may resonate with voters' emotions and boost group identity. To test this hypothesis, we aggregated total interactions (likes, shares, and comments) across all parties and politicians in each country, comparing engagement levels between pride-expressing posts and neutral posts during the 2019 and 2024 campaign periods.

The analysis reveals strikingly divergent patterns across the three countries, with pride expression showing opposite effects on audience engagement depending on national context.

In Hungary, pride-expressing posts consistently generated higher engagement than neutral posts across both campaign periods, providing support for the hypothesis. During the 2019 campaign, posts containing pride expressions received notably higher average interactions compared to neutral posts, representing a substantial engagement advantage. This pattern persisted into 2024, though the difference became more modest. Pride-expressing posts generated slightly higher engagement compared to neutral posts, with the gap narrowing considerably but still favouring pride expression. The consistent positive relationship between pride and engagement in Hungary suggests that emotional appeals resonate with Hungarian audiences and successfully mobilise interaction, though the diminishing gap by 2024 may indicate some normalisation or saturation of pride-based messaging.

Germany presents a dramatically different pattern that directly contra-

dicts the hypothesis. In 2019, neutral posts substantially outperformed pride-expressing posts in generating engagement, with neutral posts receiving considerably higher interactions compared to pride posts. This relationship persisted into 2024, where neutral and pride posts showed more similar engagement levels, but with neutral posts maintaining a slight edge. The German pattern suggests that pride expression does not enhance engagement and may actually diminish it, at least relative to neutral informational content. This finding indicates that German audiences may respond less favourably to explicit emotional appeals, or that pride-based messaging fails to resonate as effectively as other communication strategies in the German political context.

Poland shows traits that are in the middle of those found in Hungary and Germany. In 2019, pride-expressing posts generated modestly higher engagement compared to neutral posts, offering some support for the hypothesis. By 2024, this pattern remained relatively stable, with pride posts continuing to show slightly higher engagement than neutral posts. The Polish results suggest that pride expression provides a consistent but modest engagement advantage, neither as pronounced as the 2019 Hungarian effect nor as reversed as in Germany in both elections. This moderate positive relationship shows that pride resonates with Polish audiences but may not be as potent a mobilisation tool as in some other contexts.

Average Engagement by Pride vs Neutral — Hungary

Mean total_interactions per post (± SE), post-level (pride if any sentence has pride==1)
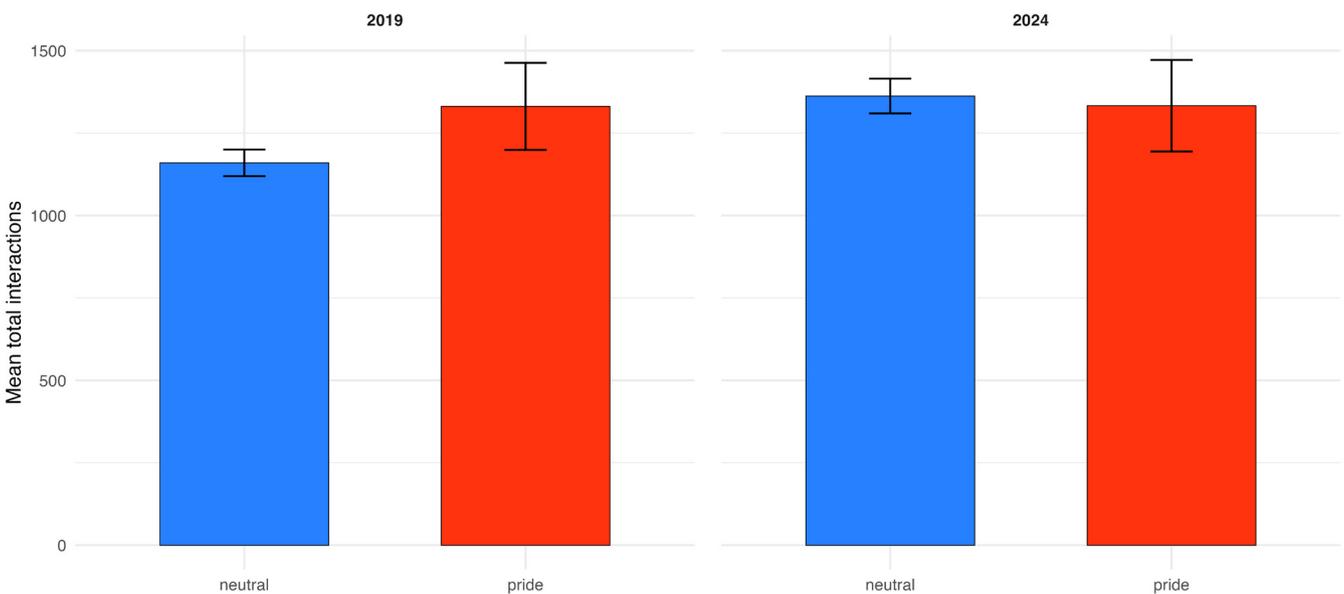

Figure 7. Average user engagement in the case of posts labelled "pride" and "non-pride" on Facebook in Hungary in 2019 and 2024.

Average Engagement by Pride vs Neutral — Germany

Mean total_interactions per post (± SE), post-level (pride if any sentence has pride==1)
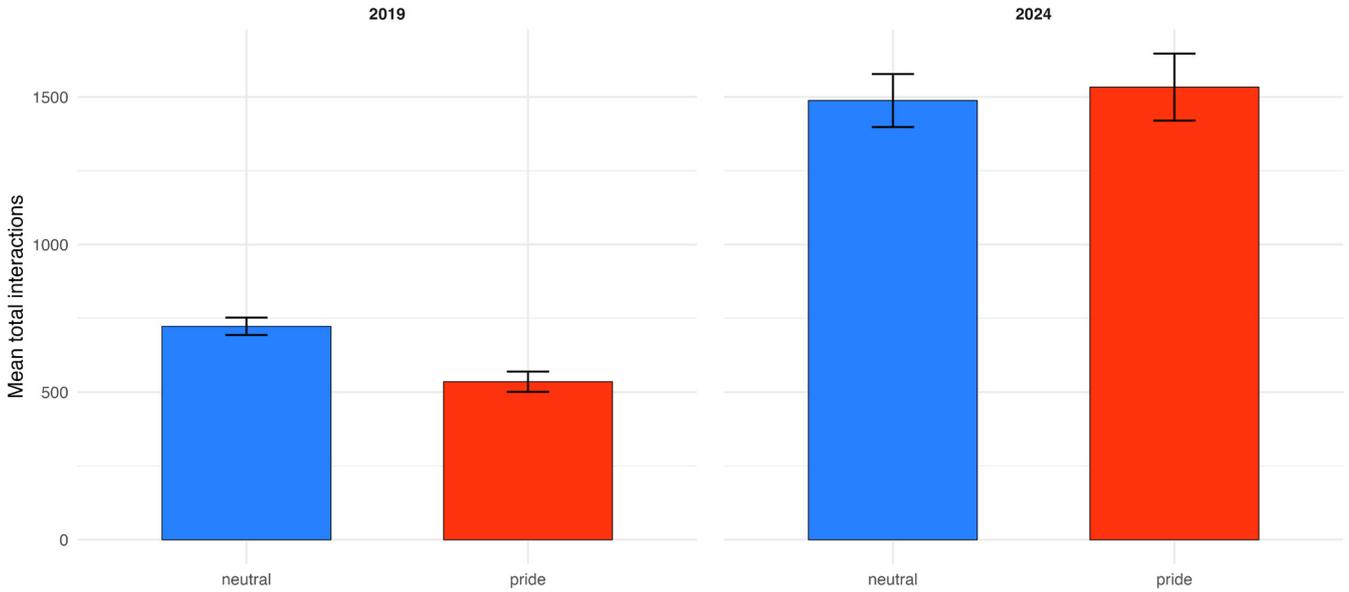

Figure 8. Average user engagement in the case of posts labelled "pride" and "non-pride" on Facebook in Germany in 2019 and 2024.

Average Engagement by Pride vs Neutral — Poland

Mean total_interactions per post (± SE), post-level (pride if any sentence has pride==1)
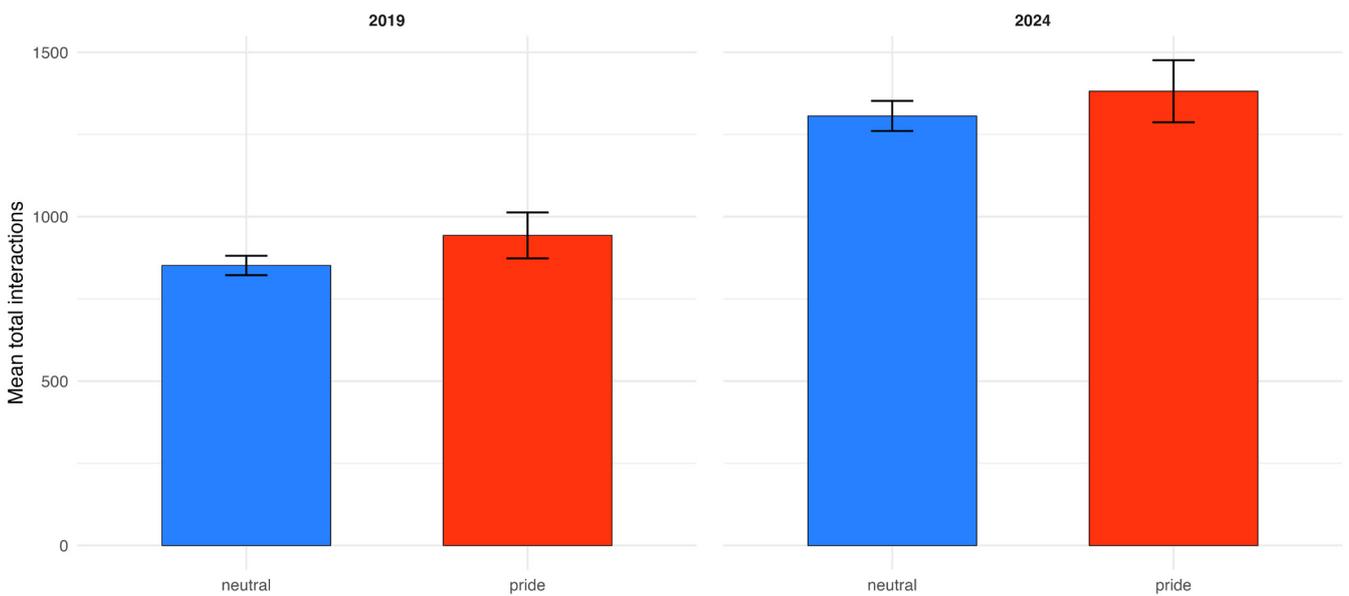

Figure 9. Average user engagement in the case of posts labelled "pride" and "non-pride" on Facebook in Poland in 2019 and 2024.

6. Conclusion

In Hungary, pride-driven posts consistently generate higher engagement. In Germany, by contrast, neutral posts fare better. Poland is in between: pride generates modest but stable engagement

This study examined how pride is strategically employed in political messaging during the 2019 and 2024 European Parliament election campaigns in Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Theoretically, pride can enhance credibility in political messaging, strengthen group identity, and sustain political engagement, yet its expression may also border on hubristic communication, marked by overconfidence and moral superiority. Distinguishing authentic pride from hubristic pride remains methodologically challenging, underscoring the need for further qualitative work.

Using the MORES project's analytical framework, this study explored how pride contributes to public discourse in a period of deepening societal and political divides. The analysis relied on AI-assisted examination of Facebook posts, using refined XLM-Ro-BERTa models trained on expert-labelled and GPT-4-turbo-generated data. The pride model achieved over 70% accuracy across German, Hungarian, and Polish languages, allowing for robust large-scale comparison.

Our results highlight both the diffusion of emotionalised campaigning across Europe and the contextual limits of its effectiveness

Empirically, the findings reveal substantial cross-national variation. In Hungary, pride-driven posts consistently generated higher engagement, suggesting that positive emotional appeals remain effective within an affectively polarised environment. In Germany, by contrast, neutral posts received more engagement, indicating that emotionalisation, especially pride, resonates less in a political culture valuing modest language. Poland exhibits an intermediate pattern: pride expressions generate modest but stable engagement, reflecting a political communication environment where emotional appeals remain relevant but might have lost their exceptional mobilising force.

Overall, Poland emerges as a bridge case between affectively charged political communication (as in Hungary) and more emotionally restrained styles (as in Germany). These results highlight both the diffusion of emotionalised campaigning across Europe and the contextual limits of its effectiveness. Pride continues to serve as a tool for constructing collective identity, but its impact varies significant-

ly across political cultures, which are shaped by national histories, party systems, and voters' emotional expectations.

Future research should disentangle the boundary between authentic pride and hubristic pride, a distinction that remains difficult to capture with automated text analysis. Qualitative and multimodal approaches—such as close readings, rhetorical analysis, and video-based emotion coding—could help reveal how gestures, tone, humour, and visual cues signal shifts from legitimate self-affirmation to moralised superiority. In addition, expanding the analysis beyond Facebook to platforms that rely more heavily on visual performance (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts) would provide a more comprehensive understanding of pride expressions in contemporary campaigning. Comparative longitudinal studies could also examine how emotional repertoires evolve outside election periods and whether pride works differently in moments of crisis, policy debate, or coalition formation. Finally, future work should consider including fringe parties, citizen-initiated content and transnational interactions to capture the broader ecosystem in which pride-based narratives circulate across Europe. Together, these extensions would deepen our understanding of how pride shapes political communication and public engagement in increasingly polarised public spaces.

" Future work should disentangle the boundary between authentic pride and hubristic pride, something which is hard to capture with automated text analysis "

Gabriella Szabó
MORES Deputy Investigator,
ELTE CSS

References

Capelos, T., & Demertzis, N. (2022). Sour grapes: ressentiment as the affective response of grievance politics. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 35*(1), 107–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2021.2023005

Delvaux, E., Meeussen, L., & Mesquita, B. (2016). Emotions are not always contagious: Longitudinal spreading of self-pride and group pride in homogeneous and status-differentiated groups. *Cognition and Emotion, 30*(1), 101-116.

Demertzis, N. (2013). *Emotions in politics*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Domke, D., Shah, D. V., & Wackman, D. B. (2000). Rights and morals, issues, and candidate integrity: Insights into the role of the news media. *Political Psychology, 21*(4), 641-665.

Haidt, J., & Kesebir, S. (2010). Morality. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed., pp. 797–832). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470561119.socpsy002022

Hart, D., & Matsuba, M. K. (2007). The development of pride and moral life. *The self-conscious emotions: Theory and research*, 114-133.

Kazlauskaitė, R., & Salmela, M. (2021). Mediated emotions: shame and pride in Polish right-wing media coverage of the 2019 European Parliament elections. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 35*(1), 130–149.

Kiss, B. (2024). Policy to Experience. Pride and Hubris in Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Campaign Communication. In: Szabó, G. (eds) *Managing Moral Emotions in Divided Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Kriesi, H. (2020). Political communication today. The perspective of a political scientist who studies public opinion and electoral behavior. *Comunicazione politica, 21*(1), 21-34.

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. Oxford University Press.

Lewis, M. 2008. "Self-conscious Emotions: Embarrassment, Pride, Shame, and Guilt." In *Handbook of Emotions: Third Edition*, edited by M. Lewis, J. M. Haviland-Jones, and L. F. Barrett, 742–756. New York: Guilford Press.

Magyari, L., Pléh, Cs., & Forgács, B. (2022). The Hungarian hubris syndrome. *PloS one, 17*(8), e0273226.

Matsumoto, D., & Hwang, H. S. (2012). Evidence for a nonverbal expression of triumph. *Evolution and Human Behavior, 33*(5), 520-529.

Miceli, M., Castelfranchi, C., & Pocobello, R. (2017). The ambiguity of pride. *Theory & Psychology, 27*(4), 550-572.

Osnabrügge, M., Hobolt, S. B., & Rodon, T. (2021). Playing to the gallery: Emotive rhetoric in parliaments. *American Political Science Review, 115*(3), 885-899.

Owen, D., & Davidson, J. (2009). Hubris syndrome: An acquired personal-

REFERENCES

ity disorder? A study of US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers over the last 100 years. *Brain, 132*(5), 1396-1406.

Salmela, M., & Sullivan, G. B. (2022). The rational appropriateness of group-based pride. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 848644.

Sandi, C., & Haller, J. (2015). Stress and the social brain: behavioural effects and neurobiological mechanisms. *Nature reviews neuroscience, 16*(5), 290-304.

Schnakenberg, K. E., & Wayne, C. N. (2024). Anger and political conflict dynamics. *American Political Science Review*, 1-16.

Shah, T. M. (2022). Emotions in politics: A review of contemporary perspectives and trends. *International Political Science Abstracts, 74*(1), 1-14.

Slaby, J., & Von Scheve, C. (2019). Introduction: Affective societies–key concepts. In *Affective societies* (pp. 1-24). Routledge.

Sullivan, G. B. (2014). *Understanding collective pride and group identity*. New York: Routledge.

Sullivan, G. B., and Hollway, J. (2014). "Collective pride and collective hubris in organisations," in *Understanding Collective Pride and Group Identity. New Directions in Emotion Theory, Research and Practice*, ed. G. Sullivan (London: Routledge), 80–91. doi: 10.4324/9781315767680-7

Szabó, G. (2024). Towards a Moral Emotional Antagonism in Political Rhetoric? Our Conclusion. In: Szabó, G. (eds) *Managing Moral Emotions in Divided Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Szabó, G., & Kiss, B. (2023). Unpacking shame management in politics: strategies for evoking and steps to mitigate the feeling of shame. *Political Research Exchange, 5*(1), 2221733.

Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2007). The psychological structure of pride: a tale of two facets. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 92*(3), 506.

Tracy, J. L., Shariff, A. F., & Cheng, J. T. (2010). A naturalist's view of pride. *Emotion Review, 2*(2), 163-177.

Wawrzyński, P. (2022). Pride and compassion: How emotional strategies target audiences in political communication? *Central European Journal of Communication, 15*(3), 416–432

Williams, L. A., & Davies, J. (2017). Beyond the self: Pride felt in relation to others. In J. A. Carter & E. C. Gordon (Eds.), *The moral psychology of pride* (pp. 43–68). Rowman & Littlefield.