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Short Term Scientific Mission - scientific report (COST Action IS1308)

I took part in the Short Term Scientific Mission between 23rd - 27th May 2016 at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium. The main aim of this visit was to extend my research on grassroots populism. I analyzed a the communication in social media after the terrorist attacks in Brussels. I was kindly hosted by Mr Benjamin De Cleen from the Department of Communication Studies at VUB.

During my stay in Brussels I visited the University every day. My goal was to conduct a series of interviews with students, talking to them about their communication in social media after the attacks. All students were very helpful and willingly shared their experience with me. I recorded the interviews with the intention to further analyze them during my doctoral research. The first findings, however, seem to indicate that - at least some - members of generation „Y” in Brussels did not spread populist messages after the attacks, remaining politically correct and being very cautious with words.

A big benefit of my visit to Brussels was the possibility to meet and talk to Mr De Cleen. On the first day we discovered that our understanding of populism has some common grounds. Mr De Cleen was able to recommend and share with me some interesting materials to read as well as introduce me to other people from the Department of Communication Studies with whom I could further discuss my issues. This opened some entirely new research paths ahead of me and helped me to sharpen the operational definition of grassroots populism which I intend to further use in my research.

I have used the opportunity of working in the University’s open-space to talk to other members of the Department of Communication Studies at VUB. This was a great chance to exchange ideas, concepts and literature as well as simply extend our scientific networks. For me it was also a glimpse on how the work of the researchers in other countries looks like.

To me this STSM was a great opportunity to broaden my horizons, meet other young researchers and challenge the direction of my own research. Having done this STSM in a very early stage of my doctoral studies I deeply believe it will impact the whole scientific process ahead of me.

I would like to thank Mr De Cleen and the entire team from the Department of Communication Studies at VUB for a warm welcome and many inspiring discussions. I hope that relations established during this STSM will be beneficial to all of us in the future.

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