

# What are Opinions? Integrating Theory and Methods for Automatically Analyzing Opinionated Communication (OPINION)



## Final Conference

COST ACTION CA21129 OPINION, 24-25 August 2026

VERN' University Zagreb

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## 2 PROGRAM

**Monday, 24 August 2026**

**09:00-09:30** *Arrival & Coffee*

**09:30-09:45** **Opening**

- **Welcome** – *Christian Baden, Chair*
- **Practical issues** – *Tamara Kunic, Local Host*

**09:45-11:15** **OPINION Works I: Novel Insights from OPINION Research**

*Chair: Agnieszka Stępińska, Adam Mickiewicz U Poznań, Poland*

***Cringe culture in politics: Exploring humor, vulnerability, and ridicule in the digital age***

*Lenka Vochocová, Charles U Prague, Czechia*

***Cringe as an instrument of modern propaganda***

*Edlira Gugu, U of Elbasan Aleksandër Xhuvani, Albania*

***When “irrelevant” comments turn out to matter: Rethinking the operationalisation of relevance in research on hostile online discussions***

*Jūratė Ruzaitė, Vytautas Magnus U, Lithuania*

***Amplifying disinformation: Threats to public opinion in Kosovo’s digital space***

*Alban Zeneli, U of Prishtina, Kosovo*

***Trusting the news in the age of artificial intelligence: A comparative study of the United Kingdom, Slovakia, and Hong Kong***

*Barbora Badurova, Matej Bel U, Slovakia*

*Yuen Sze Celia Tsui, U of Leeds, United Kingdom*

**11:15-11:45** *Coffee Break*

**11:45-13:15** **OPINION Works II: Advancing Methods for OPINION Research**

*Chair: Srdjan Vesic, CRIL, France*

***Beyond evaluative text: Towards a multimodal opinion framework for urban experience research***

*Serap Durmuş Öztürk, Karadeniz Technical U, Turkiye*

*Melis Yazıcı, Artvin Çoruh U, Turkiye*

***Opinion diversity in the media and how to measure it: the case of immigration policy***

*Peter Maurer, Karlstad U, Sweden*

***Simulating citizens, amplifying stereotypes: A multilingual study of persona effects in large language models***

*Ana Jovancevic, U of Limerick, Ireland*

***Gender representation in large language models: A cross-linguistic and cross-model analysis***

Aleksandra Urman, *U of Zurich, Switzerland*

***When algorithms change their mind: Structured instability in large language models across languages and domains***

Olga Zagovora, *RPTU, Germany*

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**13:15-15:00** *Lunch*

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**15:00-16:00** **Your OPINION Counts: Looking back at 4 years of OPINION**

*Chair: Jelena Gledic, U of Belgrade, Serbia*

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**16:00-16:30** *Coffee Break*

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**16:30-17:30** **OPINION Continues: Initiatives for Future Work**

*Chair: Hajo Boomgaarden, U of Vienna, Austria*

***Nostalgia as generational and cultural opinion expression: Inferring age-related patterns in multilingual digital text***

*Kemal Gunay, U of Trento, Italy*

**[TBA]**

[TBA]

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**20:00** **Joint Dinner** (*voluntary, self-paid*)

[TBA]

**Tuesday, 25 May 2026**

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**09:00-09:30** *Arrival & Coffee*

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**09:30-11:00** **OPINION Matters: Practical Insights from OPINION Research**

*Chair: Nina Springer, U of Münster, Germany*

***Shock and adaptation in opinion research: Incivility, disinformation and the authenticity challenge in synthetic generative AI content***

*Asta Zelenkauskaitė, Drexel U, United States of America*

***From silence to influence: How populist parties' communication captured the young vote***

*Michaela Maier, RPTU, Germany*

*Mariken van der Velden, VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

***Multilingual opinion-making through humor: Framing, stance-taking and audience perceptions in Albanian and Moldovan contexts***

*Ema Kristo, U of Tirana, Albania*

*Larisa Mistrean, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, Moldova*

***Emotional appeals in political campaigns on social media: Strategic use and audience engagement***

*Edlira Palloshi-Disha, South East European U, North Macedonia*

***Exploring the role of emojis in online interaction***

*Anna Bączkowska, U of Gdańsk, Poland*

*Damian Guzek, U of Silesia in Katowice, Poland*

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**11:00-11:30** *Coffee Break*

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**11:30-12:45** **Weaponized opinions: Dealing with toxicity in digital discourse (Roundtable Talk)**

Djordje Pavicevic, *ZLF, Serbia*

Ivan Buča, *24sata, Croatia*

*[TBA]*

Jūratė Ruzaitė, *Vytautas Magnus U, Lithuania*

Lenka Vochocová, *Charles U Prague, Czechia*

Carlos Arcila Calderón, *U of Salamanca, Spain*

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**12:45-14:30** *Lunch*

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**14:30-15:45** **Public opinion in the digital age: Participation, polarization, & pressure politics (Roundtable Talk)**

Gábor Polyák, *Mérték Media Monitor, Hungary*

*[TBA]*

Helle Sjøvaag, *U of Stavanger, Norway*

Peter Maurer, *Karlstad U, Sweden*

Christian Baden, *The Hebrew U of Jerusalem, Israel*

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**15:45-16:15** *Coffee Break*

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**16:15-17:45** **OPINION Recommends: Shaping Future OPINON Research**

*Chair: Christian Baden, The Hebrew U of Jerusalem, Israel*

***Studying public opinion in the digital era: Challenges and recommendations***

Elena Negrea Busuioc, *Nat. U of Political St. & Public Admin., Romania*  
***Dictionaries, machine learning, transformers or generative LLMs? A framework for deciding which approach to use for computational opinion mining***

Damian Trilling, *Vrije U Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

***Are we closing the future? Towards CERN for AI and societal AI alignment benchmark***

Ljubiša Bojić, *U of Belgrade, Serbia*

***Towards a shared OPINION data pipeline: Findability, storage, and responsible reuse.***

Hajo Boomgaarden, *U of Vienna, Austria*

***Ethical challenges in the use of LLMs in multi-lingual text analysis***

Dana Guy, *U College Dublin, Ireland*

Dren Gërguri, *U of Prishtina, Albania*

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**17:45-18:00** **Closing**

**Thanks & Farewell** – *Christian Baden, Chair*

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### 3 PRACTICAL INFORMATION: Before the meeting

#### *Travel*

Participants are required to make their own travel arrangements, the costs for which will be reimbursed afterwards, subject to the rules detailed below.

VERN' University is located just next to Zagreb's Central Station, in the city center. There are direct trains to Zagreb from Vienna, Budapest, Ljubljana, Munich, and Belgrade.

The closest major airport is Zagreb Franjo Tuđman International Airport (ZAG), which offers direct connections to major European hubs, as well as regional destinations across Southeast Europe.

There is a Shuttle Bus (Pleso Prijevoz), which runs every 30 minutes between ZAG and Zagreb's Central Bus Station (€ 9, the transfer takes about 35 minutes).

The Zagreb Bus Station (Autobusni Kolodvor) also is the main hub for many international bus routes, which are often the most affordable option for traveling across the Balkans and Central Europe.

A taxi to Zagreb's downtown should cost you approximately € 25-30. Also popular ridesharing apps (Bolt, Uber) are widely available.

#### *Local Transportation*

Zagreb has an extensive public transport network of trams and buses operated by Zagrebački Električni Tramvaj (ZET). Trams are the most convenient way to travel within the city centre

Tickets can be purchased at kiosks (e.g. Tisak and iNovine), through the Moj ZET mobile app, at ZET sales points, or directly from the driver. Tickets must be validated upon boarding. For route planning and real-time schedules, we recommend using Google Maps or the official [ZET website](#). Tickets are priced by time (€ 0.53 for 30 minutes, € 0.93 for 60, € 1.33 for 90, or € 3.98 for 24 hours).

You can also use Taxis or rideshare apps (Bolt, Uber), which tend to be cheaper than taxis.

The historic center (Ban Jelačić Square, Upper Town, Lower Town) is compact and very walkable; and for bike enthusiasts, Zagreb also has a growing network of bike lanes and several rental options.

## ***Accommodation***

Participants need to arrange their own accommodation, the costs for which will be reimbursed afterwards, subject to the rules detailed below.

For participants who require accommodation in Zagreb, we recommend staying at one of the following hotels, which offer good quality at reasonable cost (all listed hotels are about 5 minutes on foot from VERN' University). For two of them, the team at VERN' has negotiated special rates for us, which you can get by using the links below. However, if you choose something different, that is up to you:

- **Sheraton Zagreb Hotel** ([Link](#)): from € 90  
to book at the *discounted rate*, please use [this](#) link (*active until August 12*); +385-52808895.
- **Best Western Premier Hotel Astoria** ([Link](#)): € 100-110  
to book: <https://hotelastoria.hr/en/>; [sales@hotelastoria.hr](mailto:sales@hotelastoria.hr); +385-14808900
- **Canopy by Hilton Zagreb City Centre** ([Link](#)): from € 127  
to book at the *discounted rate*, please use [this](#) link (*active until August 18*); +385-14559505.

## 4 PRACTICAL INFORMATION: During the meeting

### *Attendance Lists*

For those eligible (OPINION Members, invited speakers), to receive reimbursements for your expenses, you are required confirm your participation via e-COST prior to the event, and to document your participation by signing the attendance list. If you do not sign the attendance list, we will not be able to reimburse you. Please note that separate attendance lists will be available for each day the program, so if you attend the entire duration of the meeting, you will need to sign multiple times.

### *Wifi*

For the duration of the Final Conference, you will be able to connect to the Wifi network of VERN' University.

### *Hybrid Participation / Streaming*

All plenary sessions of the OPINION Final Conference Zagreb will be streamed. To access the stream for the first conference day, please use this link [TBA]. For the second day, please use this link [TBA].

### *Coffee*

Coffee, tea, juice and water, snacks and biscuits will be offered during breaks.

### *Lunch*

We recommend three restaurants for lunch, where we will make a reservation:

- **Gostionica Purger**, *Petrinjska ulica 33* (ca. 8 min walk)
- **SOL Tapas Na Hrvatski**, *Petrinjska ulica 2* (ca. 12 min walk)
- **Batak Grill Restaurant**, *Bogovićeva ulica 5* (ca. 20 min or a quick Uber ride)

There are several other nearby options that you are welcome to choose from.

### *Dinner*

We will organize a joint dinner on Monday evening, split over two venues [TBA]. We will inform you about the options shortly and ask you to put your name down if you wish to join one or the other group.

The joint dinner is voluntary and self-paid, as the costs for dinner are included in the daily allowance.

## 5 PRACTICAL INFORMATION: After the meeting

### *Reimbursement*

According to COST rules, all reimbursements will be processed after the meeting.

We can reimburse only participants who:

- a) were invited to physically attend the meeting, eligible to be reimbursed;
- b) confirmed their attendance via the eCOST system prior to the meeting;
- c) actually attended the network meeting, as documented by signing the attendance lists available at each session;
- d) submitted their reimbursement claims within 14 days after the meeting, via the eCOST system (you will receive an email once the meeting has ended).

Any long-distance travel costs (>100km) will be reimbursed at the value stated on presented tickets, up to a maximum of € 1,500. Participants are expected to book well in time, as soon as you have received your formal invitation (so please avoid last minute bookings) and use economic connections (within reason, nobody expects you to take a train in the middle of the night or fly with three layovers), and book well in time to avoid unnecessary costs. You may include a cancellation insurance, the costs for which will be refunded as part of the ticket. If you use a private car for part of the way, costs are covered at € 0.35 per km, up to 2000 km; however, if you come by car, make sure to keep evidence of the timeline of this part of the trip (e.g., parking tickets), as COST requires this documentation.

You can also claim expenses for visa processing fees if you needed to obtain a visa specifically for attending the network meeting. Such costs will be reimbursed at the value stated on presented receipts or documentation. This does not include any costs related to visa obtained for purposes beyond the network meeting.

All (!) other costs (i.e., accommodation, local transportation <100km, food etc.) are covered by a flat daily allowance, which for Croatia amounts to € 201 per full day. The daily allowance takes into account your actual travel time from and to your place of origin, not only the day of the event itself. For instance, if you travel to Zagreb on Sunday afternoon and return on Tuesday night, you will be eligible for roughly two and a half days' worth of daily allowance, or three if you arrive at home only in the next morning.

Please note that we will not disburse daily allowances for the time that you spent traveling for reasons unrelated to the network meeting: If you put in additional days in Croatia or elsewhere for your own reasons, that's up to you, but we will then only consider the time that you would have spent traveling without such intermissions toward your daily allowance.

Please note also that, if you arrive from or continue to a destination other than your home institution, we will ask you to explain that in your reimbursement claim. If you

travel to multiple destinations, we will only refund your travel costs from the preceding and to the next destination, and assume that any other legs of your trip are motivated by other purposes and covered otherwise. You are required to avoid double funding. Claiming reimbursement for expenses that are covered by other sources will be considered a violation of COST rules.

For the full COST rules on travel reimbursements, please consult this document: [https://www.cost.eu/travel\\_reimbursement\\_rules](https://www.cost.eu/travel_reimbursement_rules)

Also note that it is your responsibility to keep your bank contact data in your COST profile up to date, and to submit your receipts and refund claims within two weeks after the meeting.

### ***Claiming your Reimbursement: Updated Procedure!***

Following a reorganization of the processing of reimbursement claims at the VU Amsterdam, our grant holding organization, **you will need to fill in not one, but two forms:**

- 1) the **e-COST form**, to file your claim and calculate what you are eligible to receive
- 2) a **VU payment form**, which will be sent to you by our Grant Manager, Aysen Simsek.

Until you fill in the second form, please **hold on to all receipts and documents** from your travel, not only those you need for the e-COST form, just in case.

#### **This is the process:**

**Please fill in the e-COST form first, within 14 days at most after the meeting.** Once you have digitally signed your claim (you receive an email from the system, please keep that email), you can download a PDF confirmation of your claim, which you need to keep. You will later need to attach this PDF to your VU form, and you can use it to copy the correct data for into that form later.

Importantly, **don't delete your documentation after filling in the e-COST form, you will need it again for the second form!** We also recommend to create one PDF file right away with all the documentation that you just uploaded to e-COST.

Your claims will then be checked first by us and then by COST (this typically takes two, three weeks, although things may take longer if there are questions or issues).

**Once we hand over the checked and COST-approved claims to the VU, our grant manager will contact you with a VU Reference Number (starting R/...) and the link to their payments form.** In the form, you then need to fill in:

- 1) your **personal details** (everything marked \*; please make sure your email is correct, so the VU can contact you if necessary)

- 2) your **bank details** (IBAN and SWIFT/BIC if possible, you can find your IBAN here: <https://ibancalculator.com>; if your SWIFT/BIC is shorter than 11 digits, fill up with XX on the right; you should be able to copy this from the confirmation PDF that e-COST sent you when you submitted that form. If needed, you should be able to find your account information also on your bank's website)
- 3) your **expense details** (everything marked \*; you can copy most of this from the PDF that you downloaded when submitting the e-COST form), which include:
  - a. The VU reference number mentioned above
  - b. a short (<25 characters) and a longer description (the short one can be "travel costs to Zagreb" or similar, the longer might be something like "travel costs to OPINION meeting in Zagreb, as calculated by e-COST: flight [wherever you are] - Zagreb and back, 3 days Daily Allowance")
  - c. Select "Travel and Expenses" as Description, and "Travel and Expenses abroad" as type of expense.
  - d. Please select EUR as currency code, and enter the exact same amount that was calculated by the e-COST portal as amount.
- 4) your **expenses documentation**. For this, please attach the same documents that you uploaded to e-COST, merged into a single PDF file. The total file size should not exceed 3MB (so if the merged file gets too big, try to reduce the resolution in the PDF settings).
- 5) Please also attach a **copy of the confirmation email** that you received **and the PDF** that you downloaded upon submitting your claims via e-COST.

If you have any questions, please contact the Financial Service Center at the VU under +31(0)20-5983478 or [servicedesk.fsc@vu.nl](mailto:servicedesk.fsc@vu.nl).

We apologize for the extra work; the good thing is that with this form, the VU should be able to actually pay out your reimbursement within ~2 weeks after you submit this second form, which would be faster than what we had in the past.

### ***Minutes & Recordings***

All minutes and recordings of the Working Group meeting, concerning both the plenary sessions and the Working Group sessions, will be made available to all members, including those who did not participate in person, within two weeks after the meeting.

**OPINION is funded by the European Union as COST Action No. CA21129 (23.09.2022 - 22.09.2026).**

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.