

Call for Papers

Networks, Algorithms, citizenship: Toward the Post-Digital European Public Sphere Special Issue De Europa 2026

Editor

Marinella Belluati (Università di Torino)

De Europa
Special Issue 2026

ISBN to be assigned

Theme and rationale

The idea of a European public sphere—understood as a shared space for democratic debate and the formation of transnational public opinion—has been central to academic and institutional debates for decades. In a geopolitical, social and technological context marked by constant transformation, it is crucial to revisit the conditions for the existence and sustainability of the public sphere, as articulated by Habermas in the twentieth century and to reinterpret them in light of contemporary principles of democratic participation and the pervasive digitalization of society. Today, two dynamics are profoundly reshaping the nature and functioning of the European public sphere. On one hand, the radical digitalization of public space has multiplied channels of expression and information, while also producing asymmetries in access, fragmentation of discursive communities and increased vulnerability to disinformation. On the other hand, artificial intelligence is more than a neutral tool; it serves as an epistemic and communicative infrastructure that influences cognitive, decision-making and deliberative processes—core elements of democratic citizenship—thus moving beyond a simple enhancement of digital communication. These developments raise the following pressing questions:

- How are relationships among citizens, media and institutions being reconfigured within a digitalized European public sphere?
- In what ways do selection and profiling algorithms influence public opinion and political representation in Europe and how do they affect electoral processes?
- Which models of democratic governance are compatible with the growing automation of public interactions and institutional communication?
- Do genuinely European digital spaces for participation exist—spaces capable of transcending linguistic, cultural and technological barriers?
- How is generative artificial intelligence transforming the media in a post-media era and what are the implications for the European public sphere?
- How do new digital technologies and artificial intelligence reshape contemporary public space and what role do disinformation regulations and policies promoting high-quality public debate play?

This special issue of *De Europa* seeks to take stock of these issues from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective, fostering dialogue among scholars in the social sciences, communication, political philosophy and law, as well as professionals in public and institutional communication, policymakers and practitioners within European and international institutions. The aim is to critically reflect on the future of the European public sphere in an age when digital technologies actively shape the conditions for democratic participation, information flows, public trust and collective identity. Artificial intelligence, in particular, raises ethical, legal and political challenges concerning source transparency, algorithmic accountability, informational pluralism and the safeguarding of fundamental rights. In this rapidly evolving landscape, academic research plays a vital role in offering conceptual, analytical and normative frameworks to understand and guide these transformations—supporting the development of a European digital civic culture rooted in innovation, inclusion and democratic values.

Call for contributions

For this special issue, we welcome theoretical, empirical, comparative and methodological contributions, as well as rigorously developed case studies, that engage with public sphere literature and research on media, artificial intelligence and democracy. We particularly encourage submissions addressing, among others, the following thematic strands:

- Redefining the European public sphere in the digital age: changing boundaries, modes of participation and scales of interaction (local, national, supranational);
- Public algorithms, AI and social mediation: news filtering, personalized timelines and information bubbles.
- Disinformation, algorithmic manipulation and digital campaigns: challenges for public knowledge and trust in European institutions.
- Digital access and inequalities: the digital divide across regions, generations and social groups —and its political impacts.
- Governance and regulation of European digital communication: AI, algorithmic transparency, the right to be forgotten and digital rights.
- Digital technologies and European institutional communication: the use of chatbots, AI and platforms by the European Commission, Parliament and agencies.
- Spaces of European digital deliberation: online public spheres, transnational civic platforms and public digital media.
- Artificial intelligence and political pluralism: risks and opportunities for polarization, pluralism and supranational deliberation.
- European elections in the digital era: participation, online campaigning, foreign interference and the safeguarding of electoral integrity.

Types of contributions

Please refer to the guidelines for authors below and consult the attached document for full formatting instructions. Guidelines are as follows:

- The article must be original and unpublished, approximately 5,000–8,000 words, including notes and references.
- Each article must be accompanied by an abstract of about 200–300 words with 5–6 keywords, submitted in a separate file, in English and in the language of the article.
- Articles should be written to facilitate anonymous evaluation (e.g., avoid expressions such as “as I have argued,” “building on my recent work,” etc.);
- Notes must appear as footnotes, numbered consecutively and must not consist solely of bibliographic references.
- Headings (I) and subheadings (I.1) should be short and clear; bold is for headings only; any introduction should be distinct from the abstract submitted.
- For quotations up to 25 words: place the quotation in quotation marks (“quoted text”); use italics for quotations in a language different from the article’s language (“quoted text in a foreign language”);
- For quotations longer than 25 words: do not use quotation marks; start a new paragraph.
- Use italics for foreign words, not for emphasis.
- Figures, tables and graphs must have short, descriptive titles; their placement in the text should be clearly indicated.
- In-text references should be inserted as follows: (Wodak 2015: 23);
- References should be gathered in a titled section at the end of the article; authors should be listed in alphabetical order as follows:

Books:

- Belluati, Marinella and Paolo Caraffini (eds.) (2015). *L'Unione Europea tra istituzioni e opinione pubblica*. Rome: Carocci.
- Wodak, Ruth (2015). *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. New York: SAGE.

Journal articles:

- Luccetti, Nicholas (2013). “Eritrea 1947–1950. La comunità italiana e il destino della regione”. *Contemporanea*, XVI/2, 239–260.

Book chapters:

- Morelli, Umberto (2015). "Il Parlamento europeo nella storia del processo di integrazione dell'Europa comunitaria". In: Marinella Belluati, Paolo Caraffini (eds.), *L'Unione Europea tra istituzioni e opinione pubblica*. Rome: Carocci, 33–55.

If needed, include a Webliography after the References section, in alphabetical order, as follows (remember to remove the hyperlink and indicate the consultation date in a footnote).

Webliography

European Union Database – IATE

<http://iate.europa.eu/>

Please note

A brief biographical note must accompany the article file, including the author's full name, institutional affiliation and email address. The author's name must not appear in the uploaded article file nor in its metadata. For further details, consult the journal's website:

https://www.deeuropa.unito.it/content/Submit_an_article.

Accepted languages

Articles are accepted in Italian, English, French. We recommend providing the abstract in English regardless of the article's language.

Updated timeline

Deadlines:

- Abstract submission (300–500 words): December 20, 2025;
- Notification of abstract outcome: February 1, 2026;
- Submission of full manuscripts: June 30, 2026;
- Communication of revisions: by August 1, 2026;
- Submission of revised versions: October 15, 2026.