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1. Introduction

The main objective of this report is to identify actions, practices, and recommendations for engaging civil society in RTD through social media (Task 4.7). Based on the activities carried out as part of WP4—creating a platform to stimulate participation and discussion of civil society and stakeholders on research and innovation (AgoraMedSpring), this report first outlines the results obtained in the first three years of the MedSpring project (Section 2 and 3).

Second, it focuses the discussion on the activities carried out during the third year of the project in order to comply with some of the recommendations drawn in *Report for suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1)*, 2014 (Section 4 and 5). The fourth and final year of the MedSpring project becomes particularly important in order to: a) consolidate the results obtained so far; b) making the necessary investments to guarantee an eventual transition towards a sustainable platform. In light of this, the report finally reiterates some of the existing recommendations and proposes new ones as the guiding strategy for the last years of the project.

2. AgoraMedSpring: a growing social community

2.1 An overview: objectives

In order to create a social community around the topics of the project, the communication activities carried out during the MedSpring project have a twofold objective: the first objective is essentially to *effectively communicate*, as the design of effective communication and understanding is vital in order to support action. An effective communication strategy takes into account its audiences and it expresses a *content*, that is an information comprehensible to the target audiences and a *meaning*, that is an assessment of how that content affect the targeted audience. Too often, initiatives at the European level find it difficult to reach people not used to their way of communicate. The second objective is to favor the *co-production of content and meaning* with our audiences: the project's partners represent one interlocutor who confronts with others to produce significant knowledge around how to experience and address the societal challenges.

The following audiences and communities are central for the success of the MedSpring project. For each of these audiences and communities we have paid particular attention to those experiences that have a regional Mediterranean approach:

- Research organisations and researchers (academic and scientific audiences);
- Policy organisations and policy makers (at the regional, European and national level);
- Entrepreneurial organisations and entrepreneurs;
- Civil society organisation and active citizens;
- Representatives or coordinators of existing projects/initiative at the European level

(i.e.: ongoing ERAWIDE projects).

The report for suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1), 2014 outlined the steps undertaken to identify, map, and engage these audiences. In particular, S-COM communication and engagement strategy has been structured in three phases: 1) a preliminary phase (infrastructure and virtual identity); 2) a mapping and listening phase and; 3) an engagement phase.¹

2.2 AgoraMedSpring Community in numbers

Table 1. AgoraMedSpring social media: key numbers

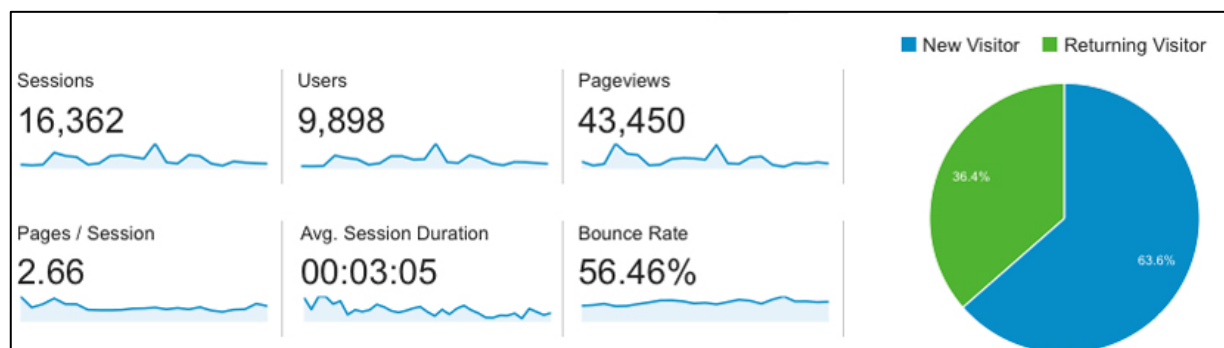
Social Media channel/project's month	M20	M32
Twitter followers	751	1244
LinkedIn connection	252	305
Facebook followers	898	1184

As the above table shows, AgoraMedSpring has exponentially increased the number of its users over the duration of the project. In addition, AgoraMedSpring has been also enlisted in 106 Twitter lists (compared to 40 list as of month 20) related to the three themes addressed by the project (for the complete list, see: <https://twitter.com/AgoraMedSpring/memberships>).

The AgoraMedSpring webpage and its social media channels are successfully placed at the centre of a network of exchange of contents and information. This network serves as a powerful avenue for both content sharing and content reproduction in the specialised fields of resource efficiency (particularly Water), high quality affordable food, energy, and their nexus.

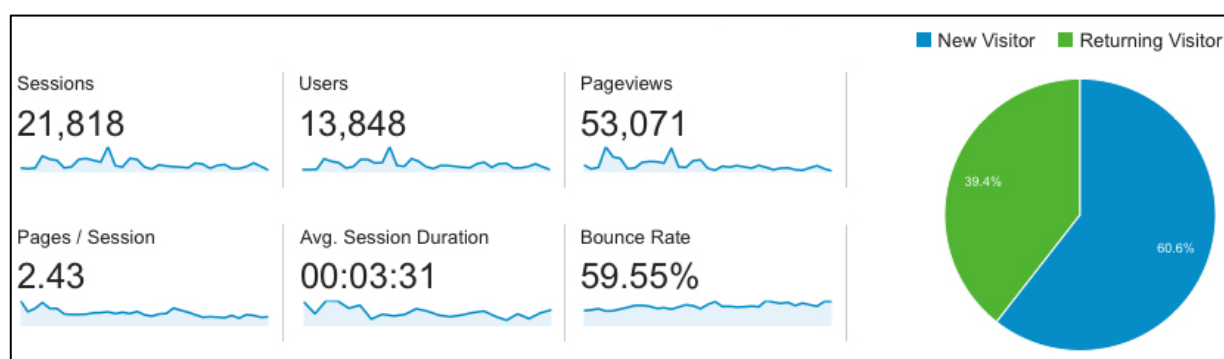
¹ A detailed discussion of the three phases is offered in the Deliverable 4.5 (phase 1): Report for suggested actions, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1), available at: http://www.medspring.eu/sites/default/files/D4.5%20-%20Report%20on%20suggested%20actions_M20.pdf

Table 2. AgoraMedSpring website: key numbers M20



(Source: Google Analytics)

Table 3. AgoraMedSpring website: key numbers M32



(Source: Google Analytics)

Overall, the tables above shows that in the constant flux of visitors on the AgoraMedSpring webpage, there has been an increase in the number of “Returning visitors” (from 36 per cent to 39 per cent) and an increase in the “Average Session Duration” (from 03:05" to 03:32").

3. Activities

Throughout the first three years of the project, S-COM has paid particular attention to diversify its communications strategy by exploiting different multimedia formats and balancing content coming from within and outside the project.

The four main good practices that we identified and described in more details in *The report on suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1) 2014* are reproduced in Table 2 below.

Table 4. Identifying Best Practices

	Internal	External
Diachronic Communication	Interviews with EMEG experts on relevant thematic and cross-sectoral issues; storytelling or info-graphics on the project's activities	Interviews with civil society and stakeholders on existing experiences of innovation around the Mediterranean region
Synchronic Communication	Live-streaming of project's event	Fast-track brokerage event on Partnership Building

Diachronic communication focused on the project's activities continued during year three of the MedSpring project. Among the materials produced to communicate the project's activities, here is a brief selection:

From Cairo to Berlin: the 2nd Brokerage event 12 February 2015

<http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/cairo-berlin-2nd-brokerage-event>

The Brokerage event in Berlin: storify 26 February 2015

<http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/brokerage-event-berlin-storify>

Idea-carriers | Interview 1 5 May 2015

<http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/idea-carriers-interviews-1>

Idea-carriers | Interview 2 5 May 2015

<http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/idea-carriers-interviews-berlin-2>

Similarly, **diachronic communication focused on activities outside the MedSpring project** has continued through the publication of interviews. An example is:

Open data and agriculture | Interview with Vassilis Protonotarios 2015-08-05

<http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/open-data-and-agriculture-interview-vassilis->

protonatarius

As part of the **Synchronic communication focused on the project's activities**, S-COM consolidated the practice of live-streaming and live-dissemination of major project's events. It has managed the live-streaming and live-dissemination of the following events:

- The Brokerage Event in Berlin: Livestreaming (25-26 February 2015)
- 1st MedSpring ScienceCafé "Cultural Heritage contribution to Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation" (16 June 2015)
- 3rd EMEG meeting: A frame for a comprehensive understanding of water-energy-food nexus (30-2 October 2015)
- 2nd MedSpring ScienceCafe (30 October 2015)

Among the **Synchronic communication focused on activities outside the MedSpring project** S-COM has engaged with the live-tweeting and live-streaming of events organized outside the project's activities.

4. Strengthening participation

The report for suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1) drew four main recommendation:

- Expanding the project's audience by adapting the communication strategy to different audiences.
- Aggregating best practices by giving visibility to existing experiencing and valuing their innovative approaches.
- Favouring exchange and replicability by ensuring high standard of openness and transparency.
- Adapting ICT technologies to engage civil society and stakeholders in RTD.

During the third year of the project S-COM has dedicated part of its work on achieving better results in relation to the first recommendation. With reference to the **expanding the project's audience by adapting the communication strategy to different audiences** recommendation of "", S-COM has explored ways in which the expansion of the project's audience could be achieved in parallel to improve the degree of participation of the users.

To this end, S-COM has also strengthened the collaboration with some partners of the consortium in order to explore other channel of collaboration and activities. A successful

example is the collaboration with UNIMED, which resulted in the elaboration of an e-book with contributions from young researchers from southern Mediterranean countries, which can be accessed at the following link: <http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/nexus-papers-ebook>.

Another example is the collaboration with MHESR and LVIA for the coordination of the scientific café held respectively in Cairo and Rome realization on the theme "The role of Local Innovation in Sustainable Development" (accessible at: <http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/2nd-medspring-sciencecafe>).

5. Aggregating best practices

In relation to the second recommendation - **aggregating best practices by giving visibility to existing experiencing and valuing their innovative approaches** – S-COM has realized and launched a crowdsourcing map to collect collecting good practices on the project themes: Resource Efficiency (particularly Water), High Quality Affordable Food and Energy.

Good practices and European Project Map | Call for Good Practices

<http://agora.medspring.eu/en/content/call-good-practices>

The initiative focuses on research, policies, technologies, know-how, services and products related to the above themes. The call welcomes experiences from civil society organisations, the private sector, research institutions and universities, and policy-makers. It is addressed specifically to experiences in and around the Mediterranean region, though other experiences will be also considered.

The collected good practices will populate a crowd-sourcing map designed to improve the dissemination and sharing of experiences across the Mediterranean region and beyond. All submissions will be assessed and approved by MedSpring.

The initiative has been launched in November 2015 and its results will be discussed in the forthcoming *Report for suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 3)*.

6. Recommendation

With the MedSpring project entering its fourth and last year, S-COM identified three main dimensions upon which to capitalize for planning activities and intervention:

- The network of connections developed in the previous years constitutes an important asset in human capital;
- The degree of visibility of AgoraMedSpring obtained through its social media channels

has positioned the platform at the center of a vibrant, yet often un-structure debate on resource efficiency (particularly Water), high quality affordable food, energy, and their nexus.

- The absence of similar platforms dedicated to strengthening research and cooperation in the Mediterranean region bringing together different audiences, including civil society, the private sector, the research community, and policy makers.

Based upon these elements, we propose orient the activities of the last year of the MedSpring project towards a consolidation of the results obtained. To this end, we reiterate the recommendations proposed in the *Report for suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1)*:

1. **Expanding the Project's audience by adapting the communication strategy to different audiences.** The publication of multi-media content serve the purpose of approaching users and people not accustomed to the language and structure of EU-funded projects. Thus, it expands the capacity of the MedSpring project to broader its social basis and reach a critical mass of citizens.
2. **Aggregating best practices by giving visibility to existing experiencing and valuing their innovative approaches.** By giving visibility to existing experiences of civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean region outside the project's activities, AgoraMedSpring is playing a key role as a social hub aggregating best practices coming from the region. .
3. **Favouring exchange and replicability by ensuring high standard of openness and transparency.** Live-streaming and live-dissemination favour a dissemination of the activities based on openness and transparency. This together with the publication of materials and documents used during the events strengthen the capacity of the project to favour exchange and replicability of information.
4. **Adapting ICT technologies to engage civil society and stakeholders in RTD.** ICT technologies can have an important impact on civil society engagement in RTD as they tend to increase the number of potential participants and reduce implementation costs.

In addition, we identify a further and complementary recommendation:

5. **Building synergies with existing projects (EU and others) to favour the continuation of the AgoraMedSpring activities beyond the project's duration.** Concentrating some of the AgoraMedSpring activities on parallel projects on the themes of the project is expected to contribute to nest the AgoraMedSpring within a broader effort to strengthen research and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

7. Conclusion

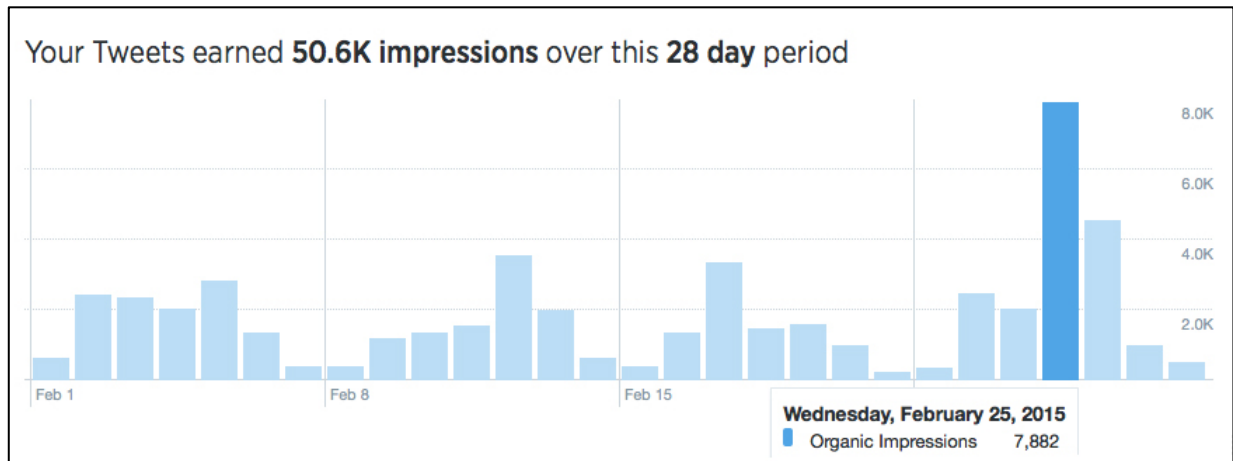
During the first three years of project and based on the activities carried out as part of the WP4 this report has reiterated the four major recommendations for engaging civil society in RDT through social media already identified in the *Report for suggested action, practices and recommendation for STI policies (Phase 1)*.

- Expanding the Project's audience by adapting the communication strategy to different audiences
- Aggregating best practices by giving visibility to existing experiencing and valuing their innovative approaches.
- Favouring exchange and replicability by ensuring high standard of openness and transparency.
- Adapting ICT technologies to engage civil society and stakeholders in RTD.

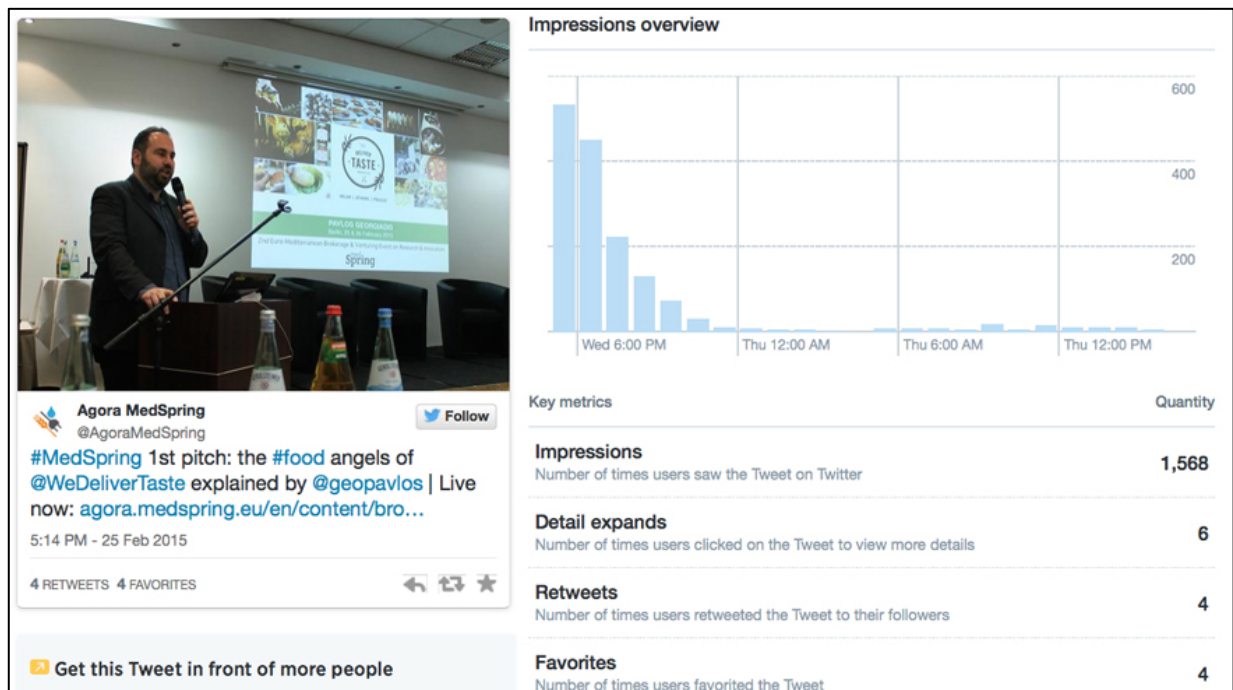
The report identified an additional recommendation, which is meant to complement the previous ones in guiding the activities of AgoraMedSpring in the last year of the medSpring project:

- **Building synergies with existing projects (EU and others) to favour the continuation of the AgoraMedSpring activities beyond the project's duration.**

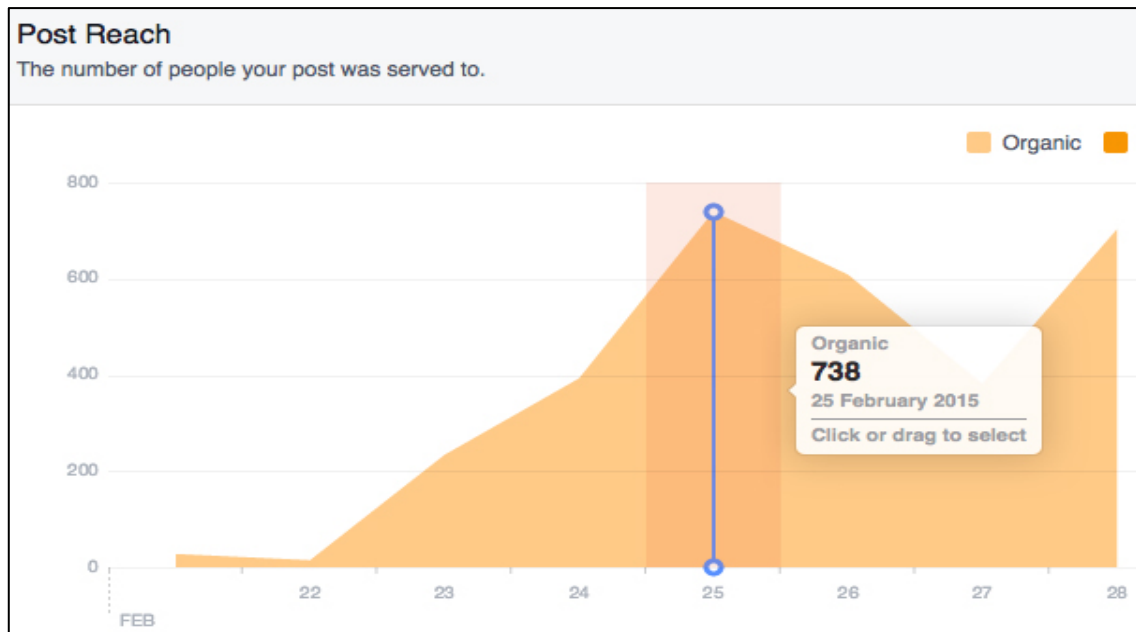
Appendix A: Berlin Brokerage Event in Berlin (25-26 February 2015). Social dissemination statistics.



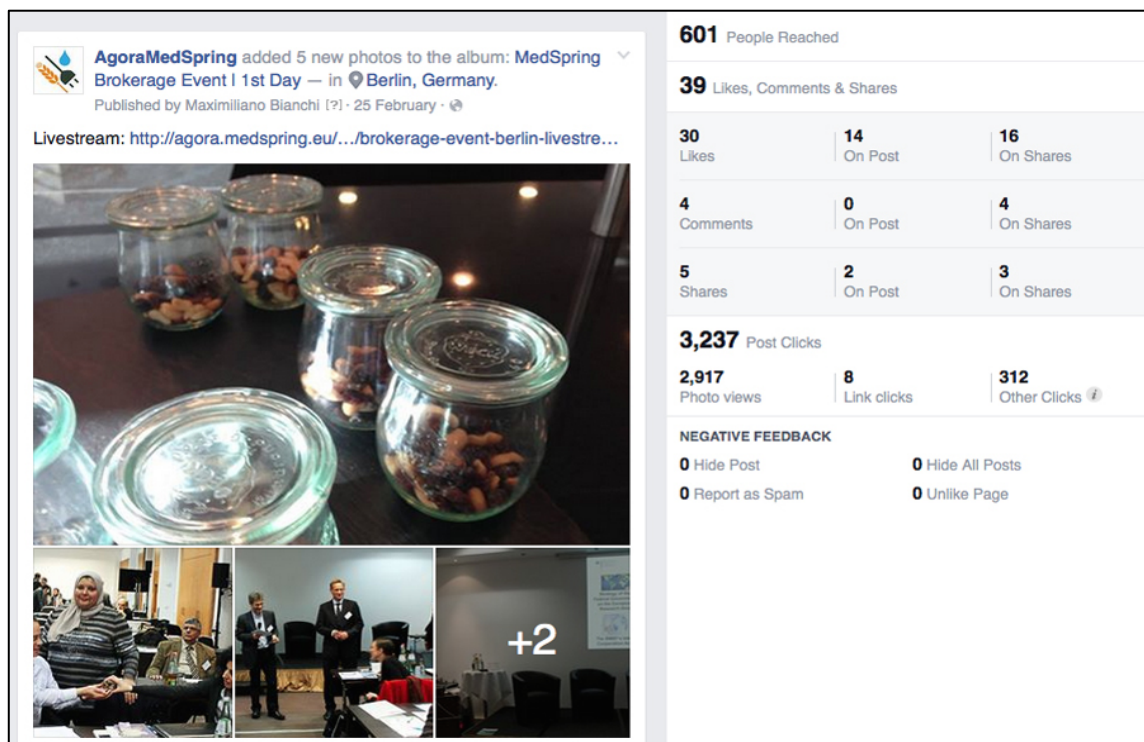
25 February 2015: 7882 impressions / 1800 average impressions per day in February.



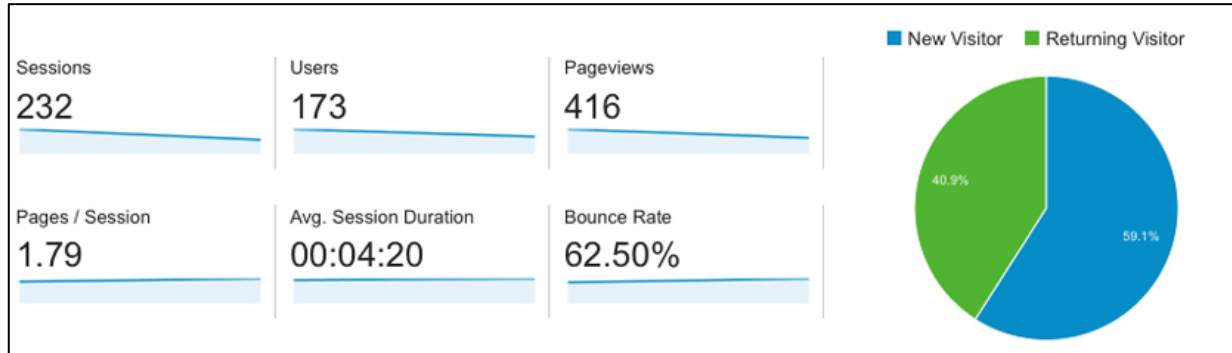
25 February 2015 best tweet: 1568 impressions.



25 February 2015 Post Reach: 738 people reached.



5 February 2015 Best post: 601 people reached – 3237 post clicks.



25th February 2015: 223 viewers /416 page views

AgoraMedSpring Twitter channel: the number of impressions generated by the Brokerage Event is by far greater than the number of impressions generated daily during the month of February (7800 vs. 1.800 impression per day in the month of February). This is indicative of the capacity of live-tweeting activities to increase the engagement of users and provide a rapid and effective mean of dissemination.

AgoraMedSpring Facebook channel: the total number of people reached on the 25th February 2015 has significantly increased during the following days (the total number of people reached on the 25th February was 738; 600 people were reached by a single post in the following days). The strategy based on the collection of materials and book-marking on Facebook has thus proved successful as a form of live-blogging.

AgoraMedSpring website: Among the users on the AgoraMedSpring page, the data shows an increase in the number "Returning visitors" (above 40 per cent) and the "Average Session Duration" (04':20").