

When our telescope was targeted by conspiracy theorists...

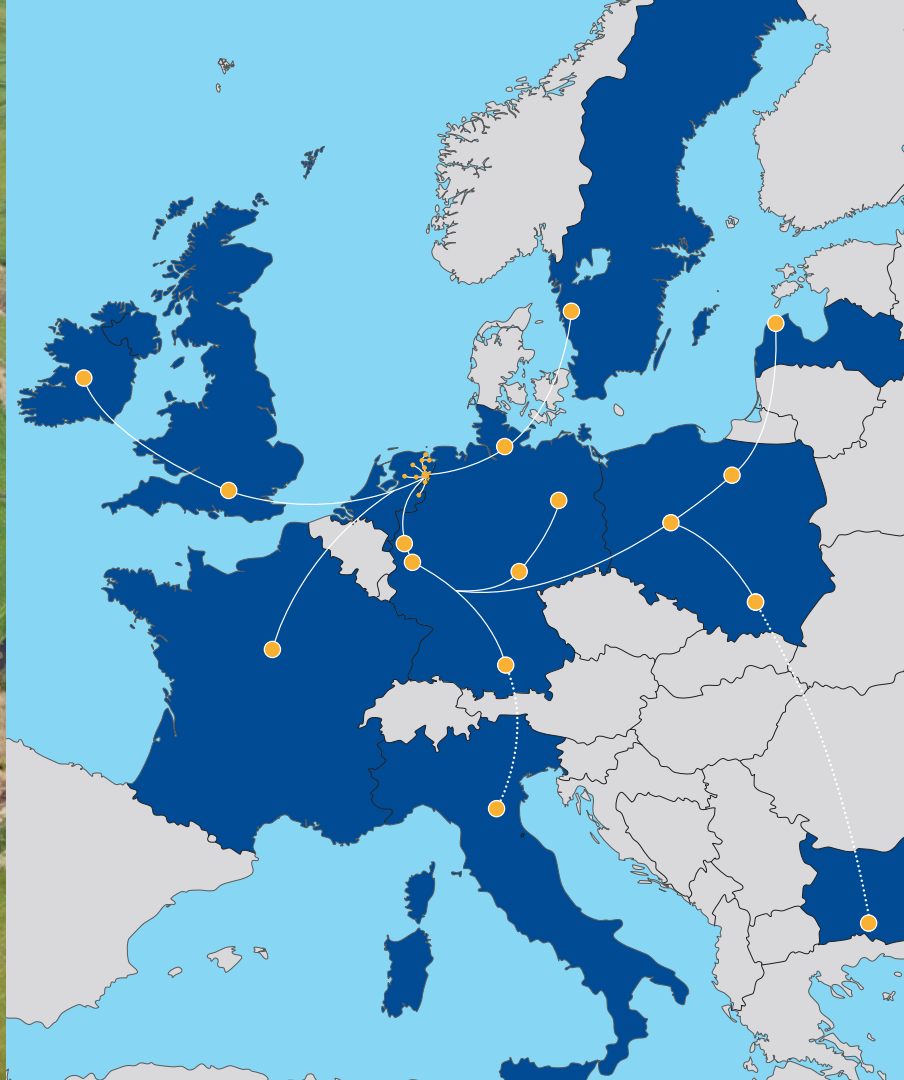
Frank Nuijens

Head of Communications



PAERI'24

Public Awareness and Engagement
with Research Infrastructures



Social noise

- YouTube
 - LOFAR core
 - Talked to ASTRON maintenance engineer
 - Views: 11K
-



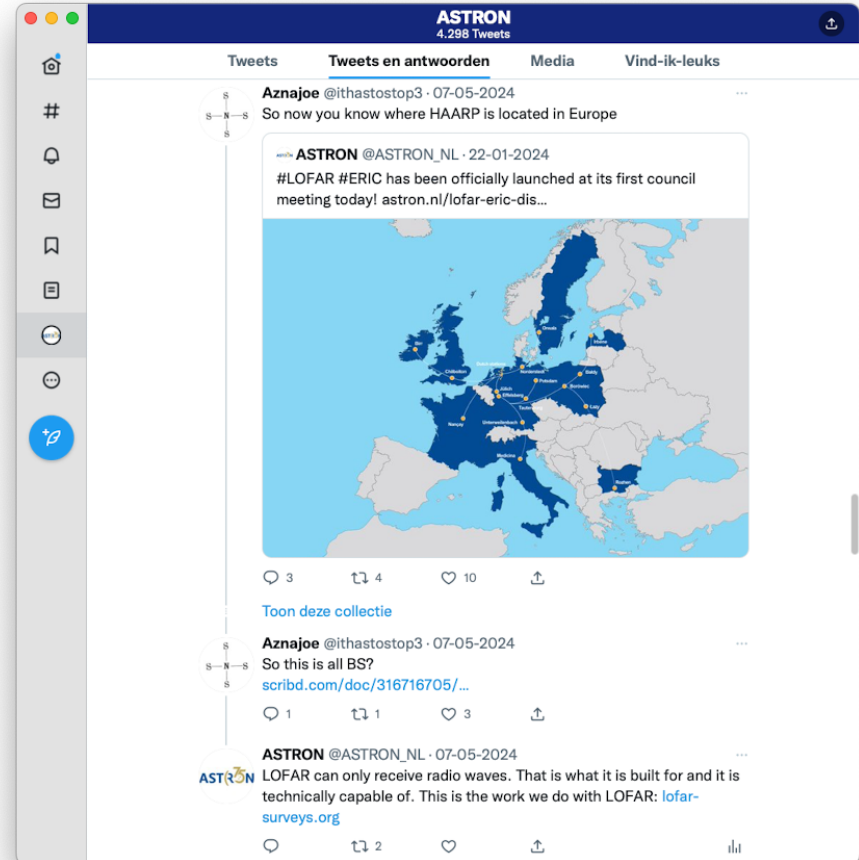
Social noise

- YouTube
 - LOFAR core
 - Talked to ASTRON maintenance engineer
 - Views: 11K
 - WSRT (views: 1.3K)
 - Head office (views: 1K)



Social noise

- Twitter/X
 - Linking LOFAR to conspiracy theory about HAARP





Social noise

- Twitter/X
 - Linking LOFAR to conspiracy theory about HAARP
 - Selling data to third parties

Low Frequency Array
697 Tweets

Tweets **Tweets en antwoorden** Media Vind-ik-leuks

 **Yorien vdH** @Yorienvdh · 08-05-2024 ...
@LOFAR hi there, could you please tell me if this rumour is true: do you sell (or make available) your large data collections from the Lofar Telescope to third parties?
1 1 1 1

 **Low Frequency Array** @LOFAR · 08-05-2024 ...
We do not sell data, because it is publicly available for free. Observations of the universe are collected for astronomers who submitted observing proposals. They get the data to analyse it and write a scientific paper. After that the data is publicly available for anyone to use.
1 2 2 1

Social noise

- Our initial reaction was twofold:
 - Invite them over
 - Factually correct tweets

Low Frequency Array

697 Tweets

Tweets

Tweets en antwoorden

Media

Vind-ik-leuks



Yorien vdH @Yorienvdh · 08-05-2024

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Low Frequency Array @LOFAR · 08-05-2024

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2



2



Prof. Jan-Willem van Prooijen

*Endowed Professor of Radicalization, Extremism, and Conspiracy Thinking
VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands*



- Invite them over? **No use** when they're this radicalised.
- For extremists, **responding with facts** will not help.
- Worry about vandalism or threats? Is a worst case scenario, **not very likely**.
- Most conspiracy theories **die on the vine**.
- Instead of debunking, invest in **prebunking**.

