

# **The Digital and Social Media Revolution in Public Affairs:**

Where we are and  
where we're going

Reports from Brussels and  
Washington, D.C.

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For further information, please contact:

Leonardo Sforza, tel. +32 (02) 737 92 00  
**[leonardo.sforza@mslgroup.com](mailto:leonardo.sforza@mslgroup.com)**

Stan Collender, tel. +1 (202) 683 31 31  
**[stan.collender@qorvismsl.com](mailto:stan.collender@qorvismsl.com)**

# Foreword

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*We hope this research will inform communication and advocacy strategies to strengthen dialogues between stakeholders and policymakers.*

Unlike political campaigns, which were early adopters, the public policy arena has been one of the last bastions to fully embrace digital tools and social networks. The candidates' ongoing campaigns for US presidential nomination, Barack Obama's two elections to the U.S. presidency in 2008 and 2012 are prime examples of how to use social media to target and reach voters. More recently, Justin Trudeau's election to prime minister of Canada successfully employed a winning social media strategy.

To gauge the integration and perceived impact of digital tools and how constituents and interest groups interact with EU and U.S. policymakers, MSLGROUP surveyed a large, diverse and active group of corporations, trade associations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local public bodies and think tanks in and around Brussels and Washington, D.C. in 2015.

The results of our study show that Europe is ahead of the U.S. in the use of social and digital media for public policy purposes. For most members of the European Parliament, European Commissioners, EU ministers and stakeholders, the role of digital and social media in public affairs is not up for debate. The final rejection by the European Parliament of the multilateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) was an emblematic case of digital power generated by a grassroots social media campaign. A similar strategy is now being used against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement (TTIP), a major priority of EU and U.S. policy and business leaders.

Our study also shows that influencers in the United States are not yet completely comfortable with using social and digital communications to connect with policymakers. Some are doing so and many others said they planned to increase the use of these tools in the future. For now, however, they still see personal contacts with elected officials as being most important.

In other words, our study shows quite clearly that there are tremendous opportunities to expand and enhance the use of social and digital communications in policymaking.

We hope this research will inform communication and advocacy strategies to strengthen dialogues between stakeholders and policymakers.

I am grateful to Peter Steere, Julien Landfried, Dimitri Granger, Roman Abreu, Ole Wulff and Romain Seignovert of the MSLGROUP European team, and to Stan Collender, Ronald Faucheux and Andrew Rugg of the U.S. team, for their contributions and support of this project.

**Leonardo Sforza**  
Project Leader

# Introduction

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Social media influence has spread from consumer marketing to business to politics and even policymaking. Yet, effectively using social and digital communications to influence change in public policy is not yet a universal practice; there are still substantial opportunities to expand its use.

This inspired MSLGROUP, a world leader in strategic communications and engagement, to conduct a research study in Brussels, Belgium, and Washington, D.C. In these important world capitals, the use of digital and social media to influence public policy is still in its infancy.

However, the undeniable conclusions of an MSLGROUP-conducted research study in Brussels and Washington, D.C. is that, although the use of digital and social media to influence public policy is still in its infancy, their use and importance will expand significantly.

The findings from MSLGROUP's study are astounding and reveal tremendous opportunities for public affairs, political, legal and economic professionals to use social media strategies to get their voices heard in the public policy arena.

The first step is to better understand policymakers' and stakeholders' current social media practices and then to bridge the communications gap between elected officials and rule makers and the constituencies who want to reach them.

This is where MSLGROUP comes in. We help businesses and governments interact, and communication is at the heart of these relationships. Our job is to encourage and facilitate dialogue among all parties, and we believe digital and social media is a critical part of the toolkit. Guiding clients to improve the relevance, reach and trust of their public policy narratives is worthwhile work. It helps policymakers better understand the issues, raises their awareness of potential solutions for more informed positions and enables them to make sound decisions with full understanding of the consequences.

The intent of our research was to help government affairs, public relations, public affairs and communication professionals move from advocacy campaigns to a more contemporary narrative, and from intrusion to engagement on public interest issues. Our multidisciplinary teams already support many organizations on both sides of the Atlantic to make these kinds of communications campaigns successful.

We are grateful to all who participated in our survey and offered their perspectives on how to improve the effectiveness of current and future public affairs campaigns.



# Communicating with Policymakers in the Digital Age

# Communicating with Policymakers in the Digital Age

## Public Affairs on the Threshold of Change

### Europe Ahead of US in Social Media Usage for Public Policy

- ▶ MSLGROUP's survey shows that digital and social media are more used and appreciated as a way to communicate with policymakers in Brussels than in Washington D.C.
- ▶ In the U.S., personal contacts, television and radio advertising are still considered the best ways to influence policymakers. However, half of EU respondents plan to increase their use of digital tools in advocacy campaigns.

### The Social Media Generation Gap between the US and EU

The U.S. current preference for traditional media may be a generational issue. The majority of members of Congress and U.S. influencers surveyed are over 50 years old while their European counterparts are largely under 40. This strongly suggests that the use of digital and social media by U.S. influencers will increase as younger, more digitally savvy generations grow in responsibility.

While U.S. public affairs professionals were divided over the usefulness of current digital communications by federal government agencies, Europeans were generally quite positive about how their policymakers use digital channels. More resources, out-of-the-box thinking and better metrics to measure the impact of communication and advocacy campaigns were the needs most often expressed by EU stakeholders. U.S. respondents said personal recognition, social media expertise, technical support and board empowerment were most in demand.

### Substantial New Social Media Opportunities for Public Affairs

The survey results point to several key points:

- ▶ What's happening in the EU related to digital and social media is a more realistic take on the communications landscape. The U.S. results underestimate the emerging power of social media in the space.
- ▶ There will be movement toward shared interests, opinions and concerns of communities affected by policy decisions. This decision-making model, already common in Europe, works only if there are accessible channels through which stakeholders can make their voices heard. Digital and social media have already proven to be such platforms.
- ▶ When asked what their organizations are doing too little of, the top responses of DC influencers are personal recognition (22%), social media expertise (13%), technical support (12%), and board empowerment (12%).

## Signs Point to Big Increases in Social Media Use

- ▶ The survey definitively points to tremendous opportunities for interest groups in the U.S. to use digital and social media to communicate with elected policymakers. There are three reasons this will happen.
- ▶ First, Millennials are more comfortable and experienced using digital and social media and, as they move into increasingly influential roles in corporations, associations and NGOs, they will bring their media comfort and experience with them.
- ▶ Second, younger generations will soon assume increasingly important roles as legislators and executive branch officials. The recent ascendancy of 45-year-old Paul D. Ryan as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives shows this is already happening.
- ▶ Third, digital and social media are increasingly used in the opposite direction, that is, by policymakers who want or need to communicate with groups and individual voters. Indeed, the use of these communications methods by President Barack Obama when he successfully ran for election in 2008 and for re-election in 2012 clearly demonstrates their value. The U.S. political system hasn't been the same since, even if the policymaking process is a bit behind.

## A Role for Listening Strategies

A key opportunity may be for policymakers to establish platforms and processes to invite social responses from constituents, to drive and assess social media listening and distill that listening data into learning, opinion and insights. It's a relatively modern way to keep a minute-to-minute pulse on shifting public attitudes and opinions. Listening for other entities such as businesses and organizations helps build understanding of emerging shifts in opinion or concerns in real time, specific points of concern by geography and demographics and points to the most powerful advocates or detractors on all sides of the conversation.

Social media can certainly serve as a modern form of staying in touch with constituents just as visits back home and letters did for policymakers generations back.

What's also presents interesting opportunities is that social media is a very public process. This means that policymakers have the opportunity to not only listen, assess and observe their own connections with their constituents, but also that of their colleagues, competitors and many others they consider important. This transparent knowledge is easily accessible, and can the data can be sorted to deliver critical 360-degree insights.



*Social media is a very public process...policymakers have the opportunity to not only listen, assess and observe their own connections with their constituents, but also that of their colleagues, competitors and many others they consider important.*



# EU Findings

The most regarded EU institutions, top policy issues and social media use.

*EU institutions' work is judged positively by a large majority of public affairs stakeholders.*

*The European Commission (72%), followed by the European Central Bank (68%) and the European Parliament (66%), top the ranking. Most negative opinion is reserved for the work of national governments, considered "poor" or "very poor" by 50% of respondents.*



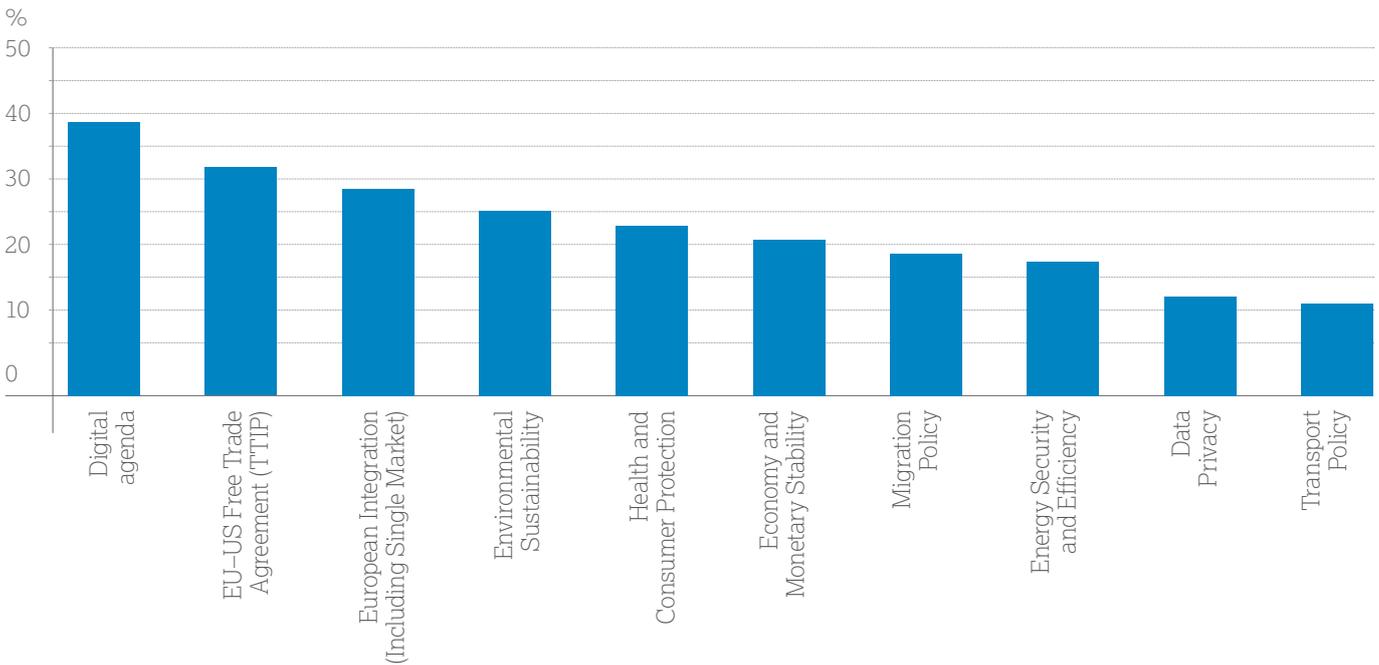
1

Stakeholders' opinion on the work of EU Institutions and National Government

The Digital Single Market Agenda, which aims to better exploit the potential of information and communication technologies to foster innovation, economic growth and progress, is the most important priority to be tackled by EU policymakers. Next are the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement (TTIP) and issues related to European integration.

2

Top ten issues to be tackled by EU policy makers



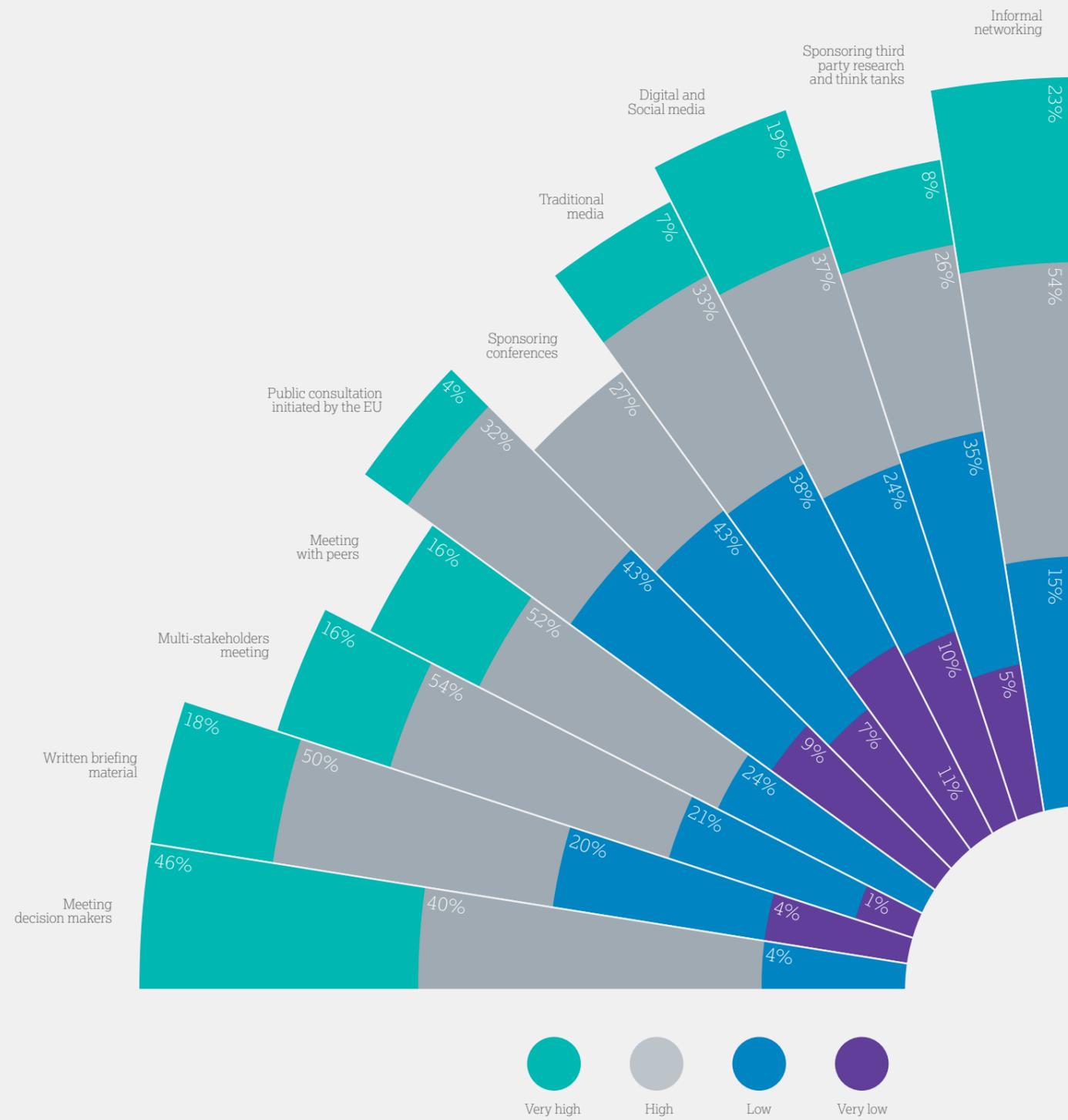
Respondents are generally positive about the use of digital and social media by decision makers. In particular, the European Commission tops the ranking with 80% positive opinion, followed by European Parliament institutions (74%) and individual members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (66%). The European Central Bank and the European Court of Justice are the least monitored institutions in this context.



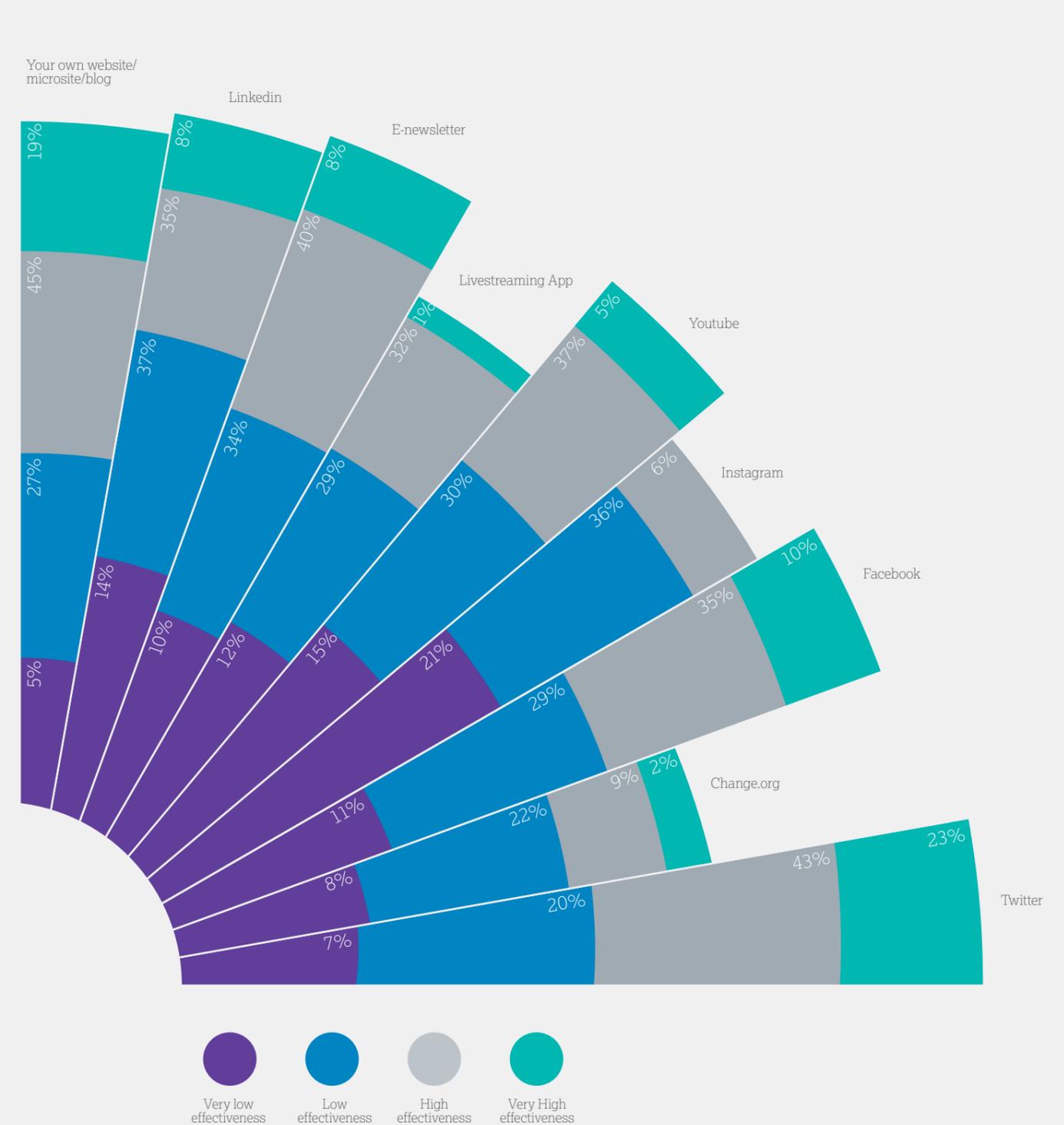
Effectiveness of communication and advocacy activities in EU Public Affairs.

**The most effective EU communication and advocacy activities and the role of social media**

The most impactful communication channels in EU-related public affairs activities are traditional personal and direct meetings, followed by digital and social media. Formal public consultation and sponsoring third-party conferences and research are perceived as having lower impact.



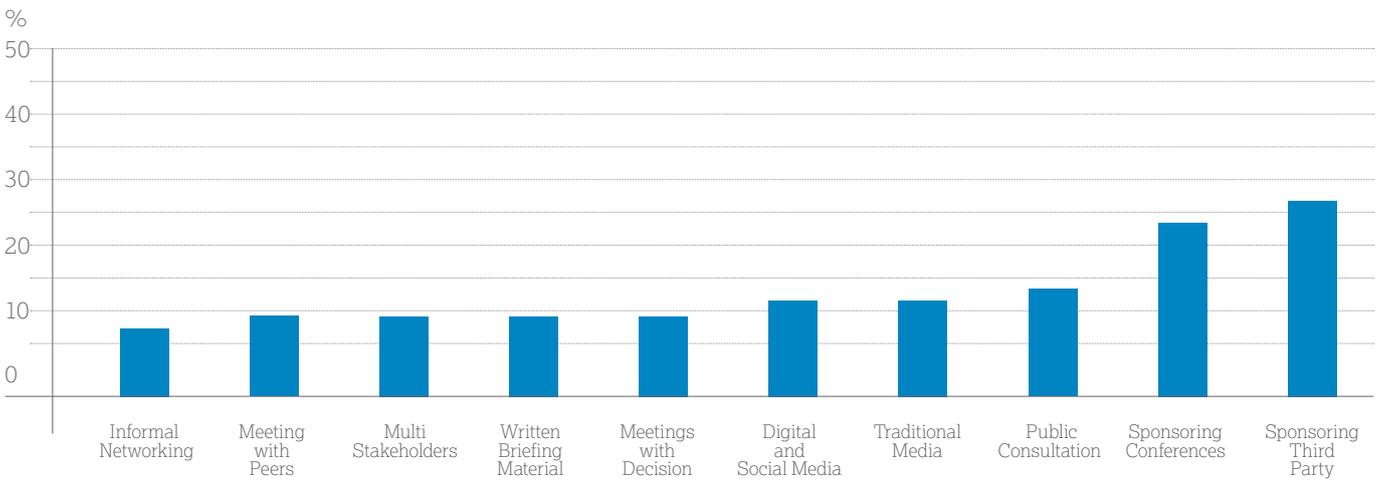
Impact of Digital and Social Media Tools used for EU Advocacy



Nine of 10 respondents use digital and social media for EU-related public affairs campaigns, with the majority considering them more impactful than traditional media. Twitter is perceived to have the greatest impact. Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube are often considered impactful too, but here, respondents are much more divided. Sixty-four percent consider their own organization's websites and blogs particularly impactful. Instagram is considered the least impactful.

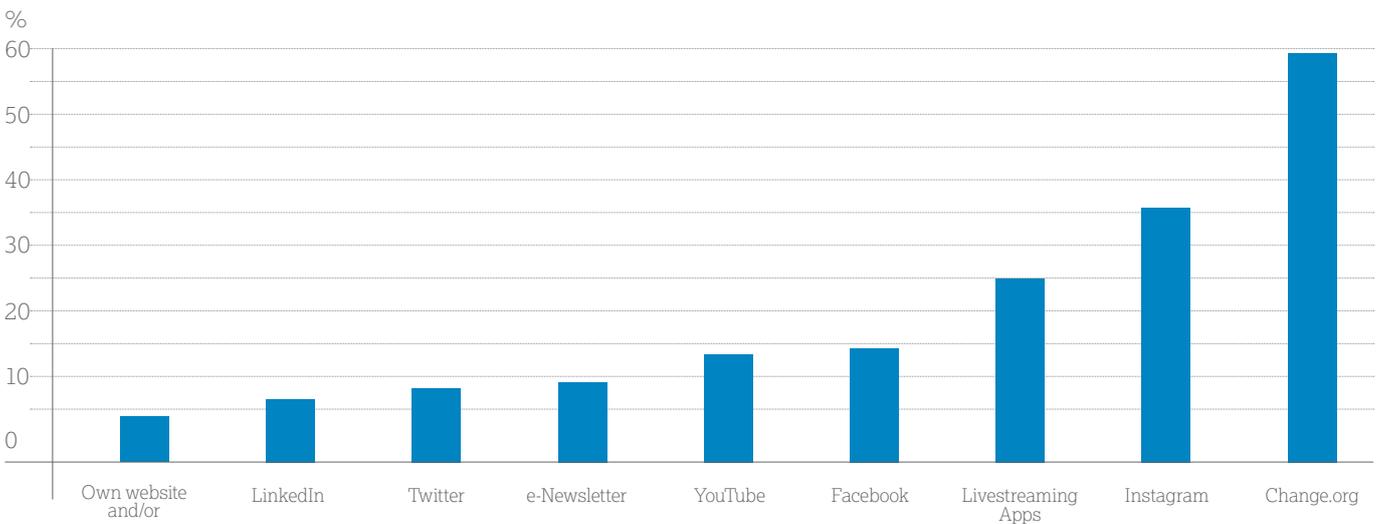
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Least Used Tool in EU Communications and Advocacy Activities



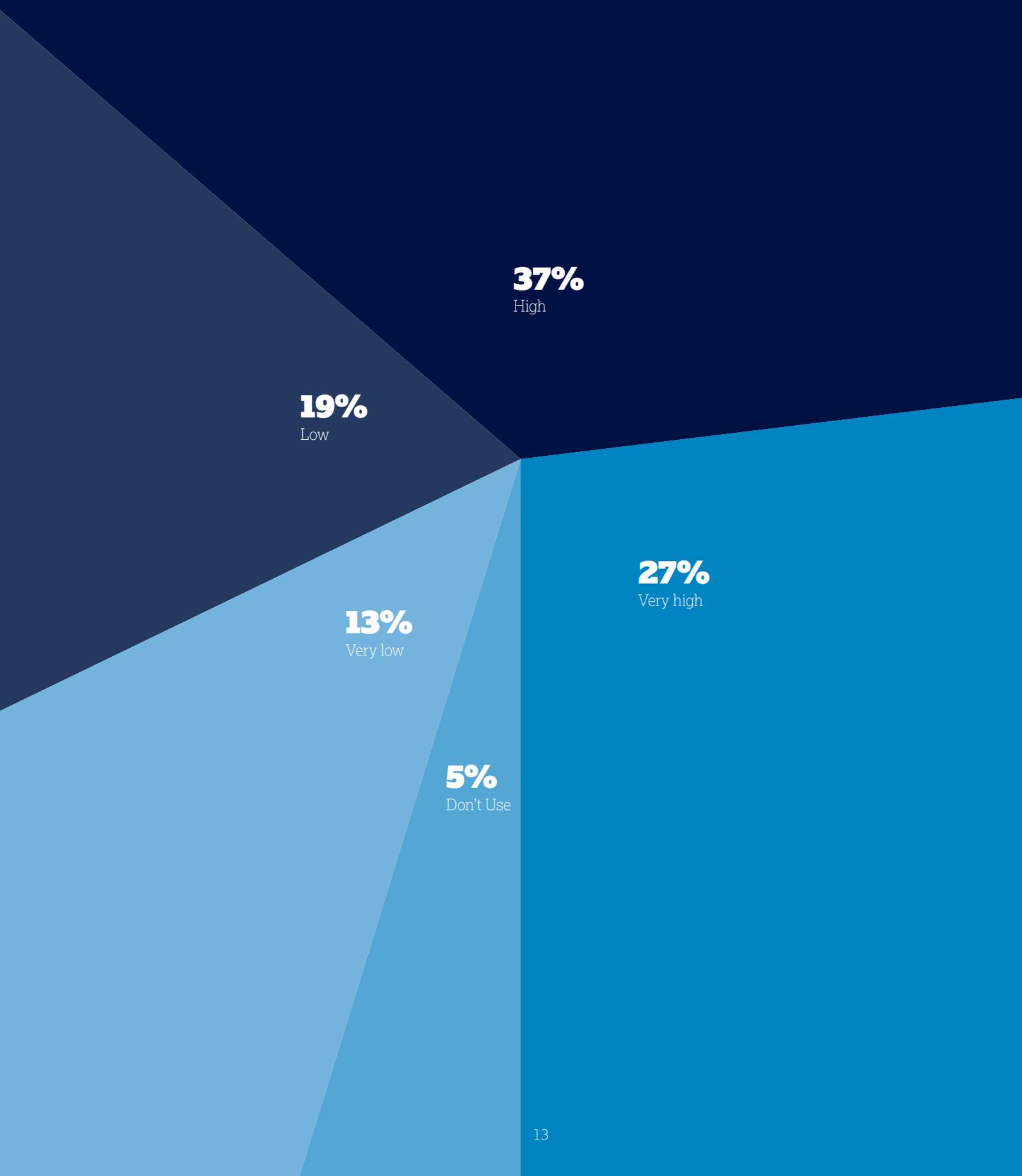
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Least Used Digital and Social Media Tools in EU Advocacy



Use of Digital and Social Media  
for Communications about  
EU Developments Within the  
Organization.

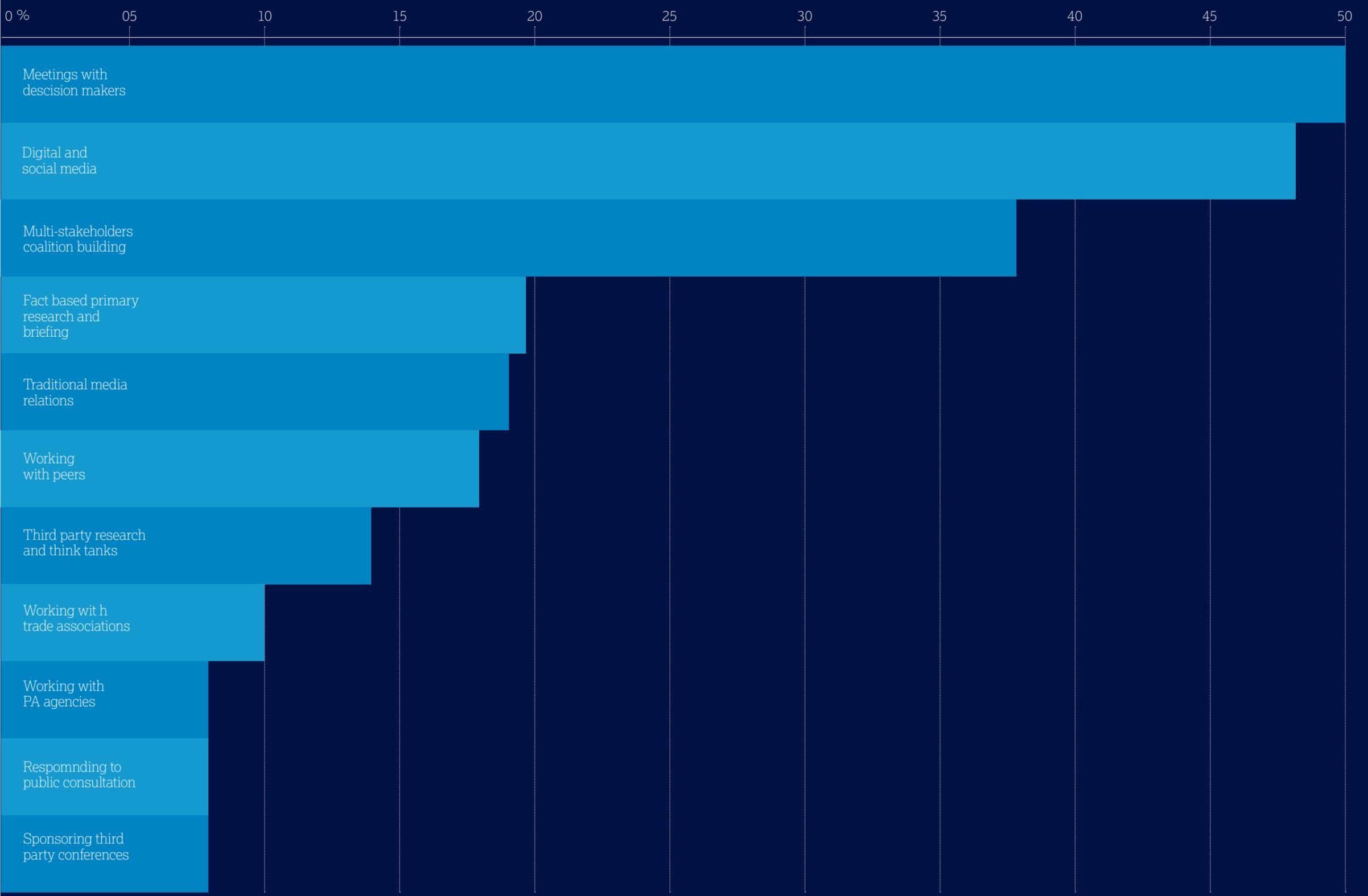
Digital and social media are widely used for internal communication, with 95% of respondents using them to relay EU developments within their organizations.



### Changes planned in EU public affairs communication strategy and practices

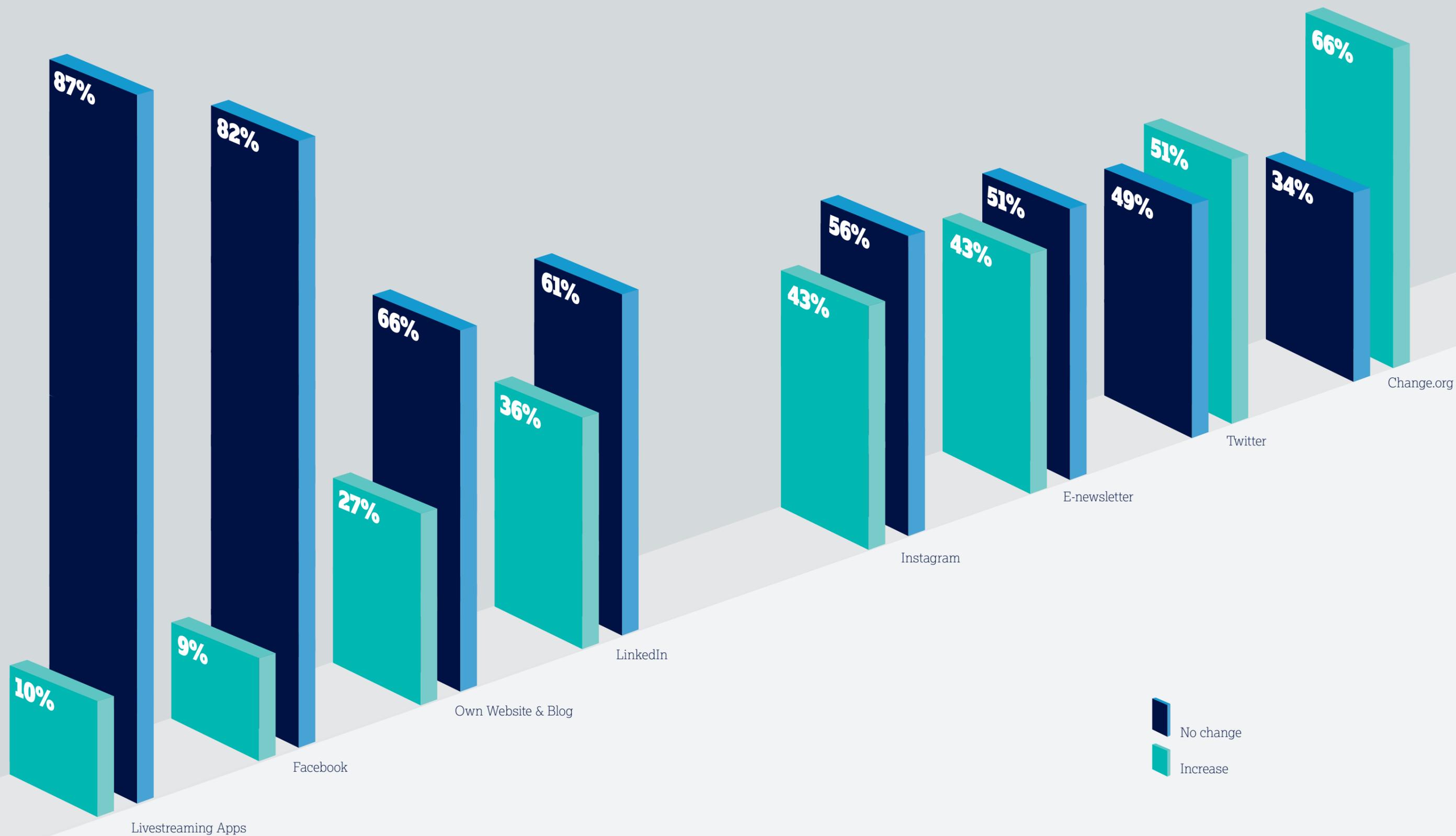
#### Future plans and needs in EU public affairs communication strategy and practices

Half of respondents plan to increase focus and resources for direct outreach to policymakers and for digital and social media. Two other activities most often mentioned for change were multi-stakeholder coalition building and fact-based research and briefing papers.



## Change of Focus Planned for Social Media Activity in European Public Affairs.

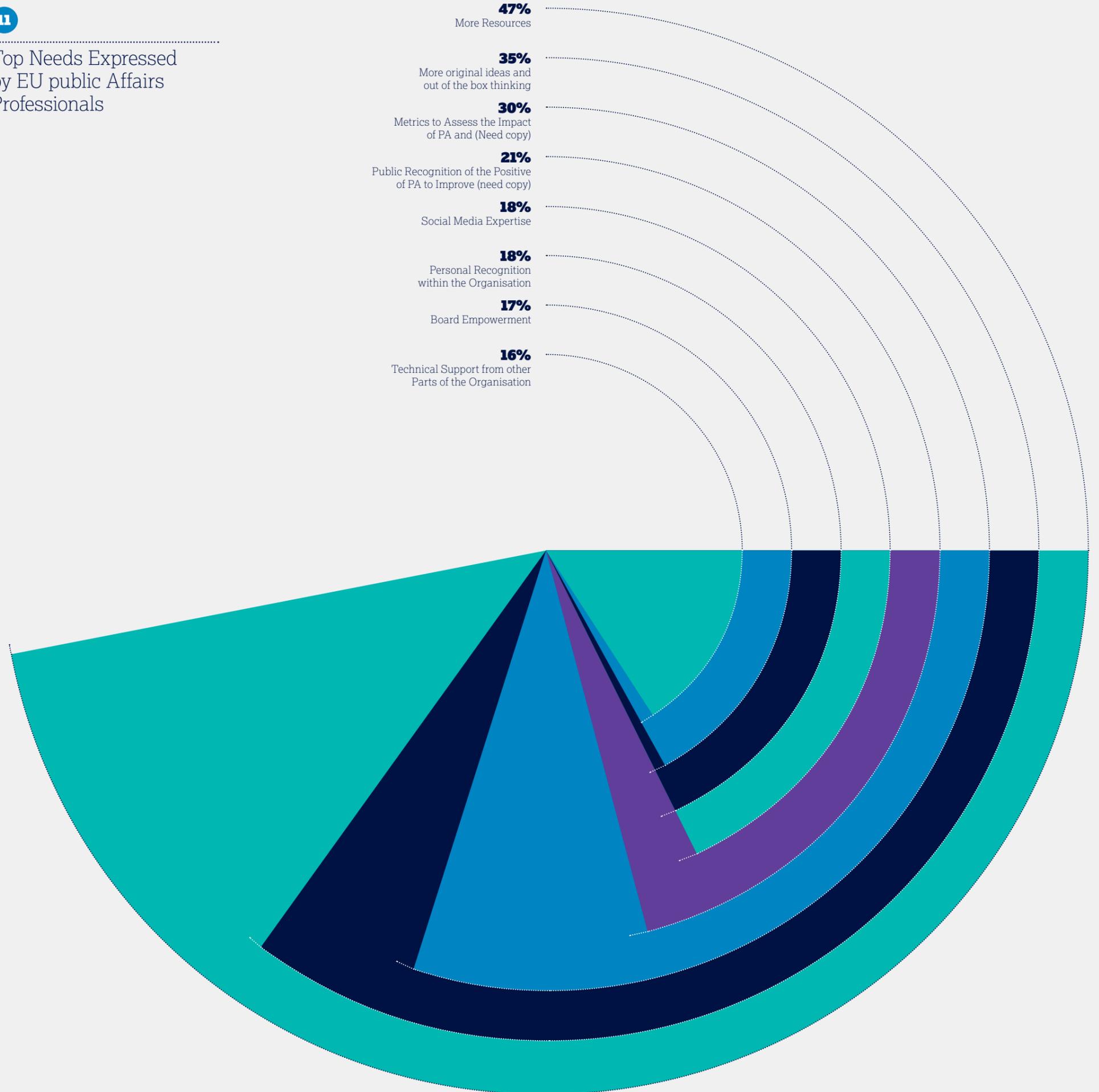
The majority of respondents planned to increase digital and social media activities on the advocacy channel, change.org, and on Twitter, confirming the attractiveness of this tool for public affairs campaigns. Most organizations will not increase resources dedicated to Facebook and other platforms.



EU public affairs professionals' top work needs include more resources, original ideas and out-of-the-box thinking, and metrics to assess the impact of public affairs and communication campaigns.

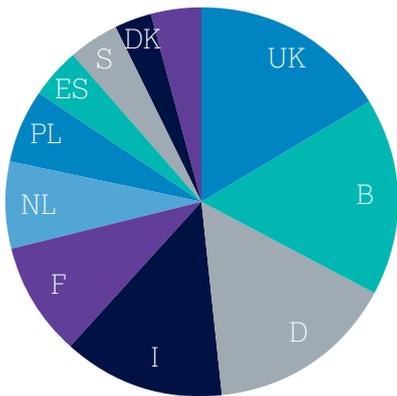
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### Top Needs Expressed by EU public Affairs Professionals



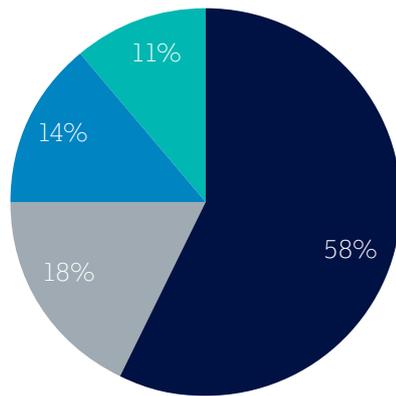
## Demography of European Respondents. Typology and Demography of Respondents

Nationality



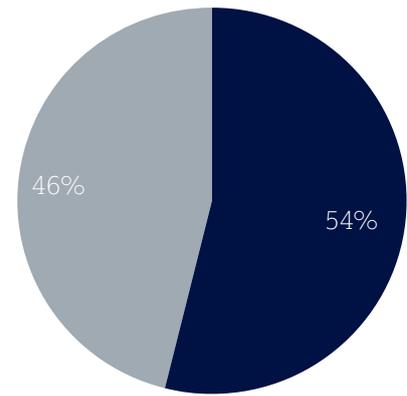
UK-16%  
 Belgium-16%  
 Germany-15%  
 Italy-13%  
 France-9%  
 Netherlands-7%  
 Poland-6%  
 Spain-4%  
 Sweden-4%  
 Denmark-3%  
 Other-4%

Age



▲ <40  
 ▲ 41-50  
 ▲ 51-55  
 ▲ >55

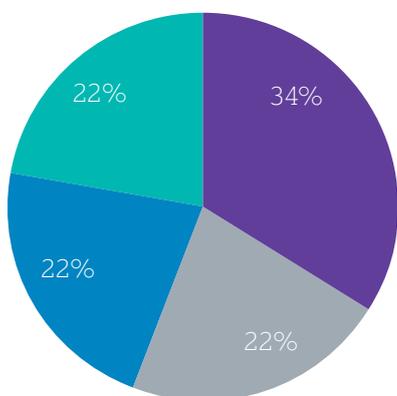
Gender



▲ Male  
 ▲ Female

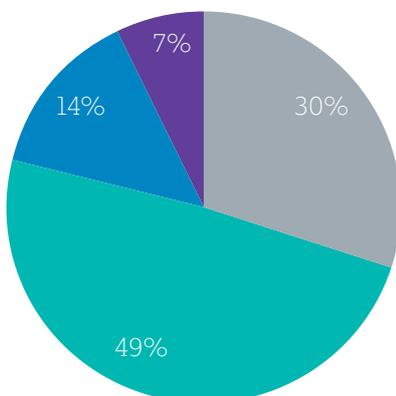
## Position and Experience of Respondents

Position



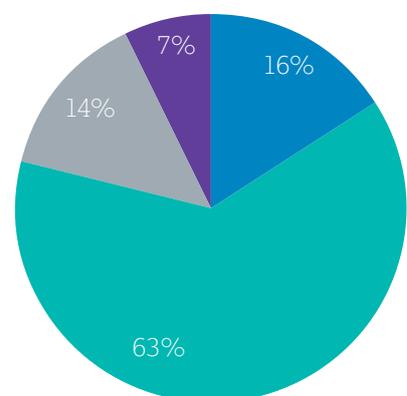
▲ Director  
 ▲ Manager  
 ▲ Head of office  
 ▲ Other

Years of experience



▲ > 20  
 ▲ 15-20  
 ▲ 11-15  
 ▲ < 11

Years with current organisation



▲ > 10  
 ▲ 6-10  
 ▲ 4-6  
 ▲ 1-3

## Type of organisation



# Viewpoints from Europe

## The view from Germany Is the internet disrupting public affairs?

Disruption has been on everybody's lips in the communications sector since the internet starting overturning most of the established industry rules, and making transparency the order of the day.

But how does disruption also affect public affairs, often seen as a nebulous back-room discipline that lacks any kind of transparency? Is public affairs spared from the triumphal precession of the internet? Absolutely not! "Digital Public Affairs" is the buzzword, describing a major trend in political communications that is not going to just disappear after a short period of hype. And there is nothing to suggest that this only true in Germany. It goes without saying that political hubs like Brussels and Washington D.C are also having to adapt to the new normal.

Let's take stock and see where we are with regard to #DigitalPA:

► Trend 1: Public affairs managers still cold-shoulder social media channels. A public affairs survey conducted by MSL Germany in 2015 found that only 34 per cent of Germany's public affairs professionals use social media for their work. And, although the number is increasing, the vast majority still make no use of the internet as a powerful instrument to maintain political contacts and gather information.

► Trend 2: Politicians are a step ahead. When you look at politicians, however, the picture is different: Almost all members of the German Parliament have social media accounts, even if not all of them are a gushing spring of information. Peter Altmaier, chief of Angela Merkel's Chancellery, has even said that, "for politicians, Twitter is as important as access to water and electricity". To reach their target audience, public affairs professionals will have to take the plunge and follow politicians onto the internet.

► Trend 3: Young politicians are the spearhead of #DigitalPA. It's a bit of a truism that a younger generation is moving up into the important posts. But they will undoubtedly bring with them their ways of communicating and ultimately change the parameters of public affairs (although early adopters from older age groups are also codetermining this trend). This is not a good sign for those who were hoping that #DigitalPA would just be a passing craze.

► Trend 4: The internet demands more transparency from public affairs. Undisturbed back-room lobbyism is being challenged today. Even though face-to-face meetings with politicians remain the most important means of maintaining political contacts (according to MSL Germany's latest public affairs survey), public affairs is becoming more public. NGOs and other interest groups meticulously observe politicians and lobbyists and give them a rap on the knuckles whenever they suspect non-transparent agreements.

► Trend 5: Issues grow exponentially on the internet. Many interest groups now understand the power of the internet to grow support for their interests via social media or e-petitions. On the internet, it is not only easier and cheaper to develop an interest into a movement that politicians simply cannot ignore. If you fail to keep tabs on what your stakeholders are doing on the internet, you risk a rude awakening if and when opposing interest groups force politicians to confront an issue through real-time political campaigning.

► Trend 6: You get fantastic information from the internet! The good news is: the internet opens up fantastic opportunities to professionalize public affairs. It is a great way to network and interact with your target audience, to observe political debates and to find the driving forces behind political developments. And it opens great new ways for political campaigning.

So, will the internet disrupt public affairs? #DigitalPA will prevail in the political landscape and become an inherent part of public affairs, but will not replace the established tool box of public affairs in the foreseeable future.

**Axel Wallrabenstein**  
Chairman MSL Germany

**Ole Wulff**  
Account Director MSL Germany

# Viewpoints from Europe

## **A London perspective** **The impact of social media in public policy**

It is easy for lazy commentators to point to obvious examples of the impact of social media on politics and public life.

David Cameron has just short of 1 million likes on Facebook. The recent Labour leadership election debates were carried on with some vigour and rancour on Twitter and the numbers of followers for each candidate reflected the strengths of the various leadership campaigns with Jeremy Corbyn's social media impact substantially more effective than his opponents'. And last year's Scottish referendum came alive on social media both in a positive sense of stimulating excitement but also a negative one reflected in trolling by some of their opponents.

But has the existence of social media changed outcomes? Without it, the results of the Scottish referendum, the UK general election and the Labour leadership would have been exactly the same. But that is not to say that social media has no impact. I would suggest that it has changed things in three ways.

► First social media amplifies campaigns. The recent campaign to ban Donald Trump from the UK because of his views on Islam came about through social media campaigning. In the old days of Parliamentary petitions, it is highly unlikely that supporters of the ban would have been able to achieve over half a million signatures in such a short period of time or secure the levels of media interest.

► Second, social media speeds up the political and media cycles. George Osborne's disastrous budget of 2012 which quickly became known as the omnishambles budget was disintegrating on Twitter even as the Chancellor was speaking in the Commons. By the time he sat down, the commentators and the activists had already delivered their verdict.

► Third, Twitter in particular is changing political parties. Social media is making it easier to communicate with activists rather than voters. It can give air to candidates or causes helping them to get off the ground more quickly and substantially than would have been previously possible. Social media helped to recruit a large number of left wing activists into the Labour party to vote for Jeremy Corbyn in a way that would have been far more difficult in pre-Twitter days. Twitter and Facebook suit activism.

Social media has probably also contributed to increased paranoia among politicians. In the pre-Twitter days, an MP receiving 20 letters on a particular subject might cause him or her concern. In these social media days a politician can easily receive 1000 emails or tweets on a particular subject. Elected representatives now need steelier nerves to cut through some of the nonsense that is produced by social media.

But it works both ways: MPs – as well as ministers, civil servants and parliamentary committees – are becoming more adept at using social media themselves to influence debate. All the select committees now have very active Twitter feeds that provide live commentary on hearings. George Osborne is quite calculated in his use of Twitter around set piece events like the Budget and the spending review. And we see on consumer issues like the performance of trains that backbench MPs are quite happy to direct comments at companies in a public way.

This use of social media as a tool for activism is also affecting the private sector. Companies have been very effective at using social media for consumer campaigns but they find it much more difficult to respond to hostile corporate campaigns. Social media is immediate, companies not so much. Responses have to be cleared and approved by lawyers as well as corporate comms professionals and that usually cannot be done in the Twitter timeframe.

It is easy to overstate the impact of social media on politics but it is dangerous to understate it. For professionals both in-house and in consultancies, the trick is to understand its effectiveness and impact to promote positive messages but also to exercise informed, hard-nosed realism when dealing with the negatives.

### **Mike Craven**

Partner, Lexington Communications

# Viewpoints from Europe

## Views from the Nordics Moving towards full digitalization, what is changing?

There are two competing views on the significance of social media for Public Affairs in the Nordic countries.

First: nothing has essentially changed. Machiavelli's *The Prince* is no less relevant today than it was before the digitalisation age. There's nothing new on the political battle field.

Alternatively, you can say that nearly everything has changed. Virtually all politicians are using Twitter and Facebook – their main channels to voters. (Instagram is also used but is not “mandatory”.) All political news is first commented on in social media. Digitalisation has upped the tempo and reduced the cost of running campaigns.

There has been a fundamental change to the public dialogue and to encounters with power-holders. All advocacy campaigns include a digital strategy. Social media changes the way the debate is conducted and who the listeners are. But some things remain unchanged: major public debates are still initiated in the traditional media. Social media then takes over the conversation – but why is this? After all, many political issues and social problems are highly complex and need more than 140 characters to problematise.

► The face-to-face meeting – the most basic component in human communication and advocacy – has not been replaced by social media, and probably never will be. Face-to-face meetings are unmatched when it comes to explaining complex reasoning or building deep trust. While all lobbying strategies now include a digital strategy, they also always include elements of face-to-face meetings.

► Twitter and Facebook are the two social media channels that have changed political campaigns in Nordic countries. Twitter is an arena for politicians, opinion leaders and people who want to be opinion leaders. The elite class of opinion leaders talks to each other on Twitter.

► Facebook is a must for politicians to reach their voters. With its popularity and breadth, it has an unparalleled impact among all constituencies.

Many companies could make better use of Twitter and Facebook, taking a more personal approach and using personalised content adapted for each medium. Companies currently use

Twitter as a sort of extended customer service and Facebook as an alternative website to post the same content. Most Twitter users want to interact with a person, not with a company.

One would think that the explosive increase in the amount of information and opinions available online has made us more broad-minded, but the question is whether the trend hasn't headed in the opposite direction. One example: the likelihood of finding a spa for your poodle is much greater in New York than in a rural area – the greater the market, the more specialisation. The same applies to the range of media and opinion. When you are suddenly able to establish contact with other libertarians, radical feminists or nationalists, the chance of persuasion is greater if you tend to share such opinions. In social media you can go through life in a relatively small comfort zone, whereas you previously had to read the same material as the rest of the population. In practical terms, then, the question is whether digitalisation brings diversity.

News in social media is also customised to suit you. This may serve to further reduce actual diversity and to cement opinions, creating different clusters in society that do not listen to each other – quite a big change for the previously homogeneous Nordic countries. The trend is developing rapidly and is controlled by social media, which increasingly chooses what will be shown, and by political parties and opinion leaders, who utilise these opportunities to get the most bang for the buck. As a result, Public Affairs today are managed differently than they have been in the past.

While social media bears great responsibility in terms of what lobbying will look like in future, this responsibility is shared by the users of social media.

### Per Ola Bosson

Partner and Head Public Affairs JKL

# EU Conclusions and Recommendations

Outlined below are MSLGROUP's key takeaways from the survey and the corresponding implications and recommended actions to stay ahead of the curve.

## Conclusions

Social and digital media are widely used in Brussels, but need to better demonstrate their full added value to public affairs professionals. One-third of public affairs professionals are not yet completely convinced of the effectiveness and impact of social and digital media for their campaigns.

EU public affairs professionals, particularly those who were previously reluctant to do so, plan to expand the use of digital and social media in their campaigns. They are just now starting to make them a full part of their public affairs strategies.

The need for more original ideas and out-of-the-box thinking is most in demand among EU public affairs professionals.

It is surprising to see how little attention, commitment and trust are granted to European Commission consultation, third-party independent research and think tank work related to EU policy and regulatory developments. By minimizing the role of evidence-based research and the new place taken by EU consultation and impact assessment analysis before defining new policy direction and legislative proposals, EU public affairs professionals risk missing the opportunity to be more relevant to the EU decision-making process and impactful in terms of policy outcome that reflects their experiences on the ground.

## Recommendations

Digital and social media emerge as complementary tools because the wide range of situations and policy issues often require more traditional communication's strategies, especially personal contacts. There are very basic but fundamental action steps, too often neglected or poorly executed in practice, which remain essential for successful communication and public affairs operations.

### 1 Assess and align your public affairs and digital capabilities.

- Update your internal due diligence and SWOT analysis of functional PA capabilities, allocated resources and accountabilities.
- Empower a digital and social media PA "champion" within the organization ensuring monitoring, coherence and timeliness of message deployment.

### 2 Build a broad and dynamic "arena map" to understand how the scale, interdependence and policy-making context change.

- Broaden the analysis of decision makers, opinion leaders and stakeholders directly or indirectly impacted by the policy issue at stake.
- Assess their individual or group positions by attitude, ability to influence policy outcome and communication tools used.
- Regularly update the arena map taking into account personnel changes, the evolution of the position taken, and adapt outreach tactics accordingly.

Digital and social media are tools for innovative campaigns but must be part of a holistic analysis and bespoke approach. Each campaign must have the right mix of instruments that mirrors business goals, corporate culture and policy issues at stake. Innovation should not come only from the tool used, but reflect a new way for organizations to engage policymakers, stakeholders, public opinion leaders and media.

### 3 Contextualize your campaign toolbox.

- Be agnostic about tools and match them with strategic campaign objectives.
- Contextualize your toolbox for each campaign and integrate relevant digital tools taking into account the target audience, expected outcome, timing and resources.
- Widen and complement engagement tools without being afraid to explore new paths and tones of communication.

# EU Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

Digital and social media have the power to bring the “public” back to the centre of public policy debate and reduce the gap between institutions and citizens, consumers, employees, business leaders and entrepreneurs.

Despite the widespread use of digital and social media in Brussels’ policy arena and internal communications, there is a need to improve governance of communication and public affairs campaigns and break down silos that can jeopardize their effectiveness from conception to deployment on the ground.

Many public affairs professionals struggle with metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that would help them assess the impact of their campaigns. This is an area deserving more attention than is currently the case.

## Recommendations

### 4 Fill the knowledge gap.

- Identify and address knowledge gaps in areas under policy review which require more factual evidence to ensure more balanced decisions by policy makers.
- Inspire or sponsor original research by trusted people and organizations to develop new thoughtful analysis contributing to more informed decisions by policy makers.
- Contribute directly and indirectly to formal and informal public consultations and inform policy makers and stakeholders about your direct experience on the ground.

### 5 Promote citizenship engagement.

- Explore the opportunity to mobilize and engage your business partners and suppliers in your campaigns by leveraging social and digital media toward inclusive and direct dialogue with policymakers and stakeholders.
- Create “passion portals” to connect like-minded individuals and drive narratives on policy issues.
- Use social listening tools to track conversations and sentiment to inform and adjust messages to policymakers.
- Use low-tech vehicles to communicate to policymakers their constituents’ sentiments gathered through digital and social media.
- Ensure that the practice of stakeholder relationship is in line with corporate governance principles.

### 6 Improve internal governance.

- Identify and engage with relevant stakeholders within your organization in the early stages of the campaign briefing.
- Set up a communication campaign steering team involving multi-disciplinary and multicultural experts from different parts of your organization and independent advisors to help design and implement the campaign.

### 7 Set realistic targets and measure outcomes.

- Define what success means before campaign launch taking into account the policy and social context.
- Determine measurable and realistic indicators of performance that connect output to success for each action and range of activities and consider the potential risk and implication of inaction.
- Regularly assess cost effectiveness of each action and adapt accordingly.

**Leonardo Sforza**

Managing Director MSLGROUP Brussels



# U.S. Findings

The most regarded U.S. institutions, top policy issues and social media use.

*Most U.S. institutions are judged positively by a majority of D.C. influencers. The Federal Reserve (69%) and the U.S. Department of Treasury (63%) top the ranking.*

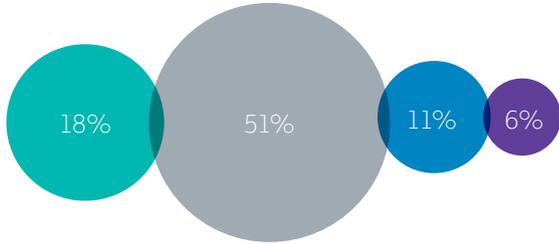
*Congress received the most negative assessment, with 77% rating it “poor” or “very poor.”*

1

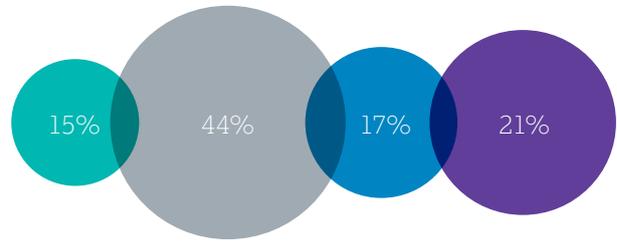
## Rating government institutions

▲ Very good  
 ▲ Good  
 ▲ Poor  
 ▲ Very poor

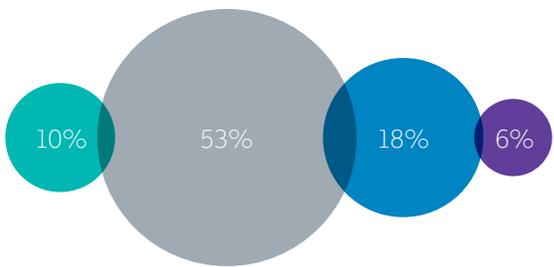
The Federal Reserve



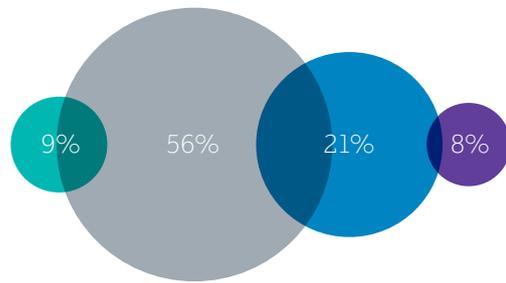
The U.S. Supreme Court



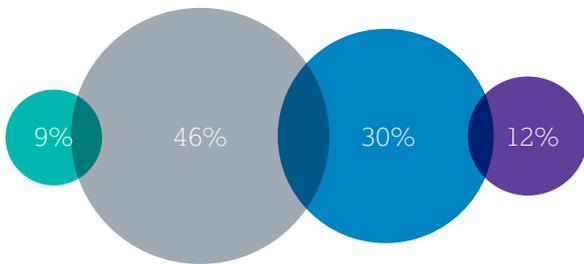
The White House



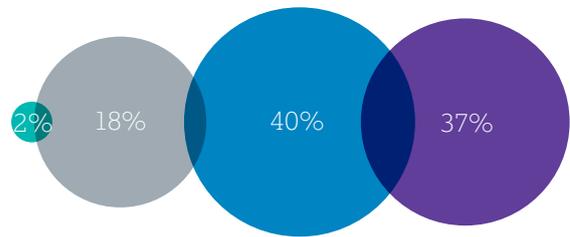
The U.S. federal government



The U.S. Department of the Treasury



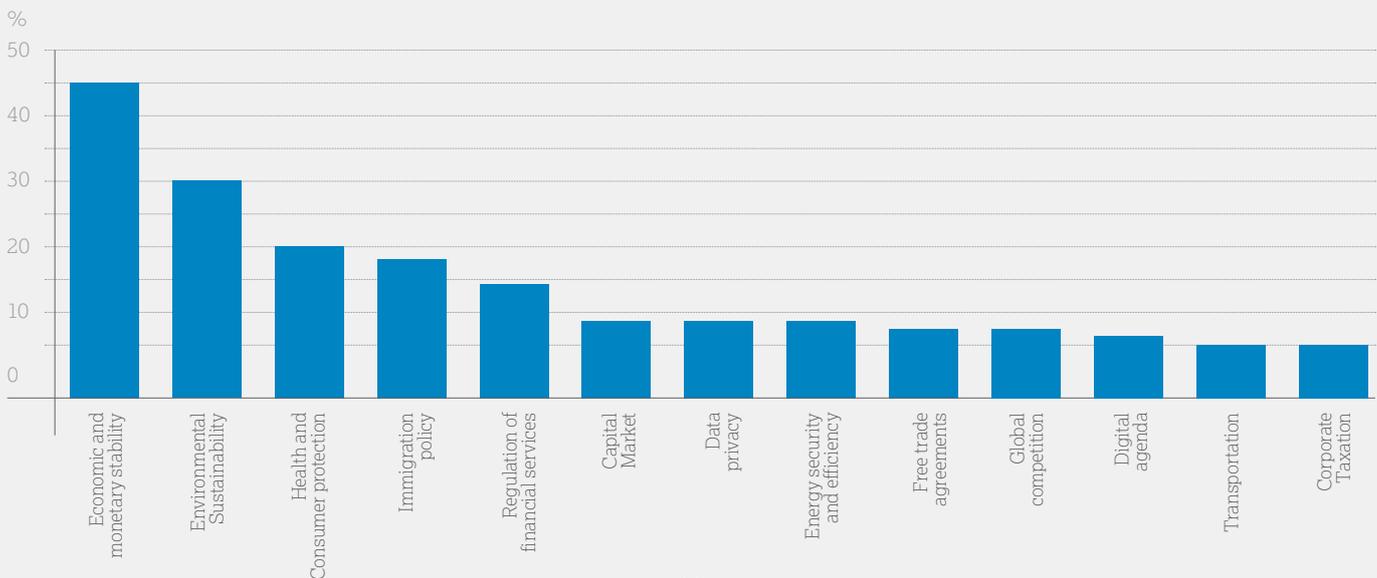
Congress



2

## Top policy issues to be tackled at the Federal Level

Economic and monetary stability (45%) and environmental sustainability (30%) were the issues most important to respondents' organizations.

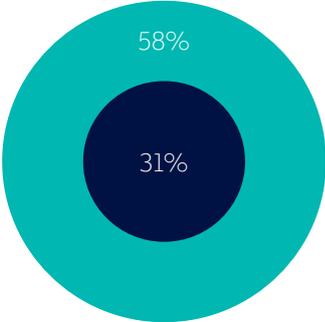


3

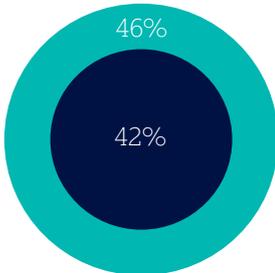
### Helpfulness of digital and social media communications provided by policymakers

Respondents had mixed feelings about the helpfulness of digital and social media communications provided by major government institutions. Of six institutions tested, executive branch agencies and departments (58%) were the only institutions where a majority found such communications helpful. Only 33% found communications from Congress helpful.

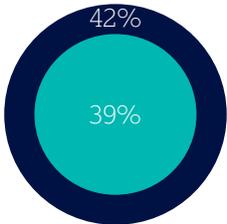
The U.S. federal government



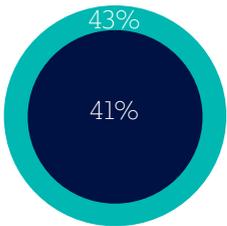
The White House



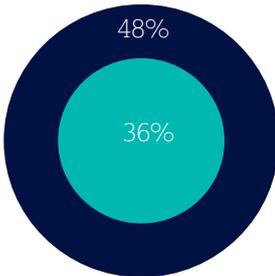
The Federal Reserve



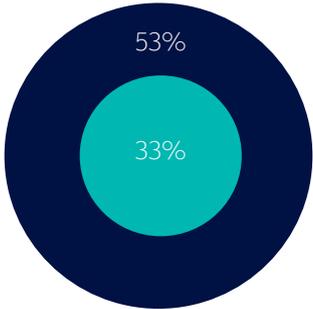
The U.S. Department of the Treasury



The U.S. Supreme Court



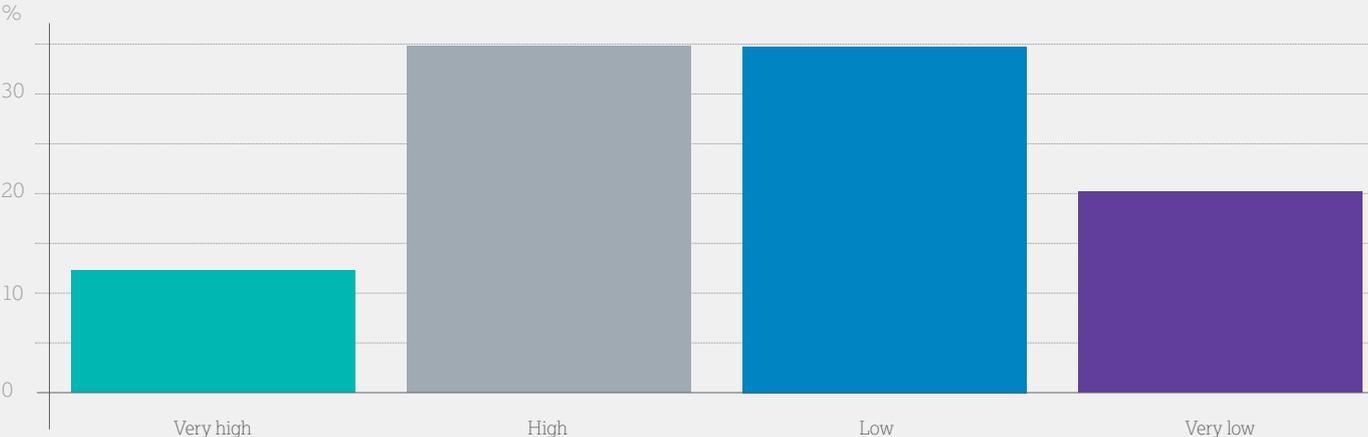
Congress



▲ Helpful  
▲ Not helpful

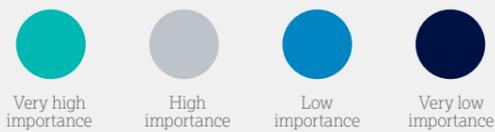
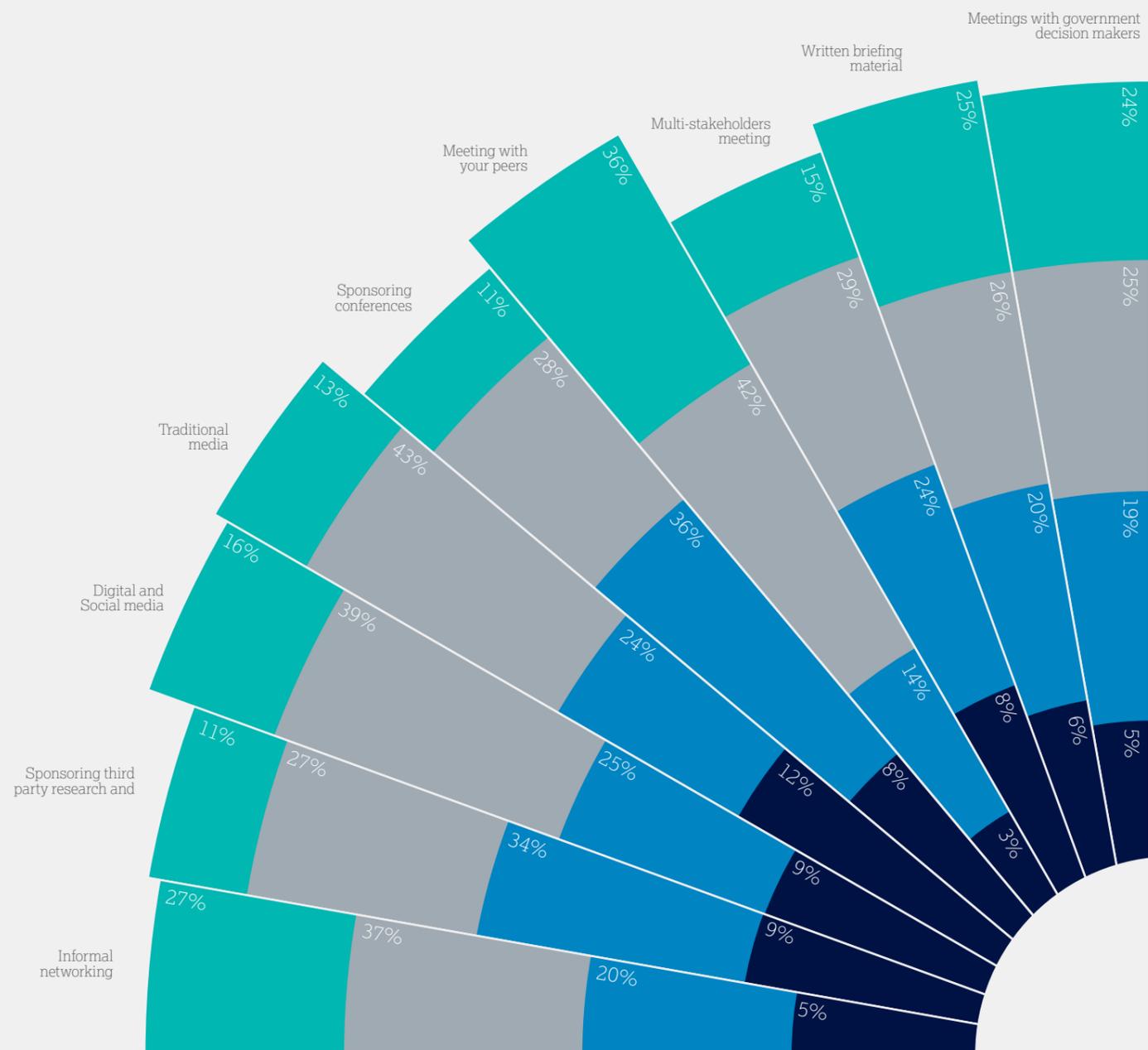
4

### Effectiveness of digital and social media that come from federal government



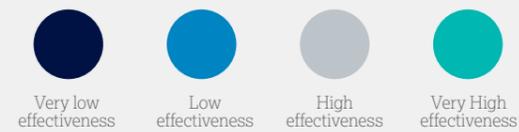
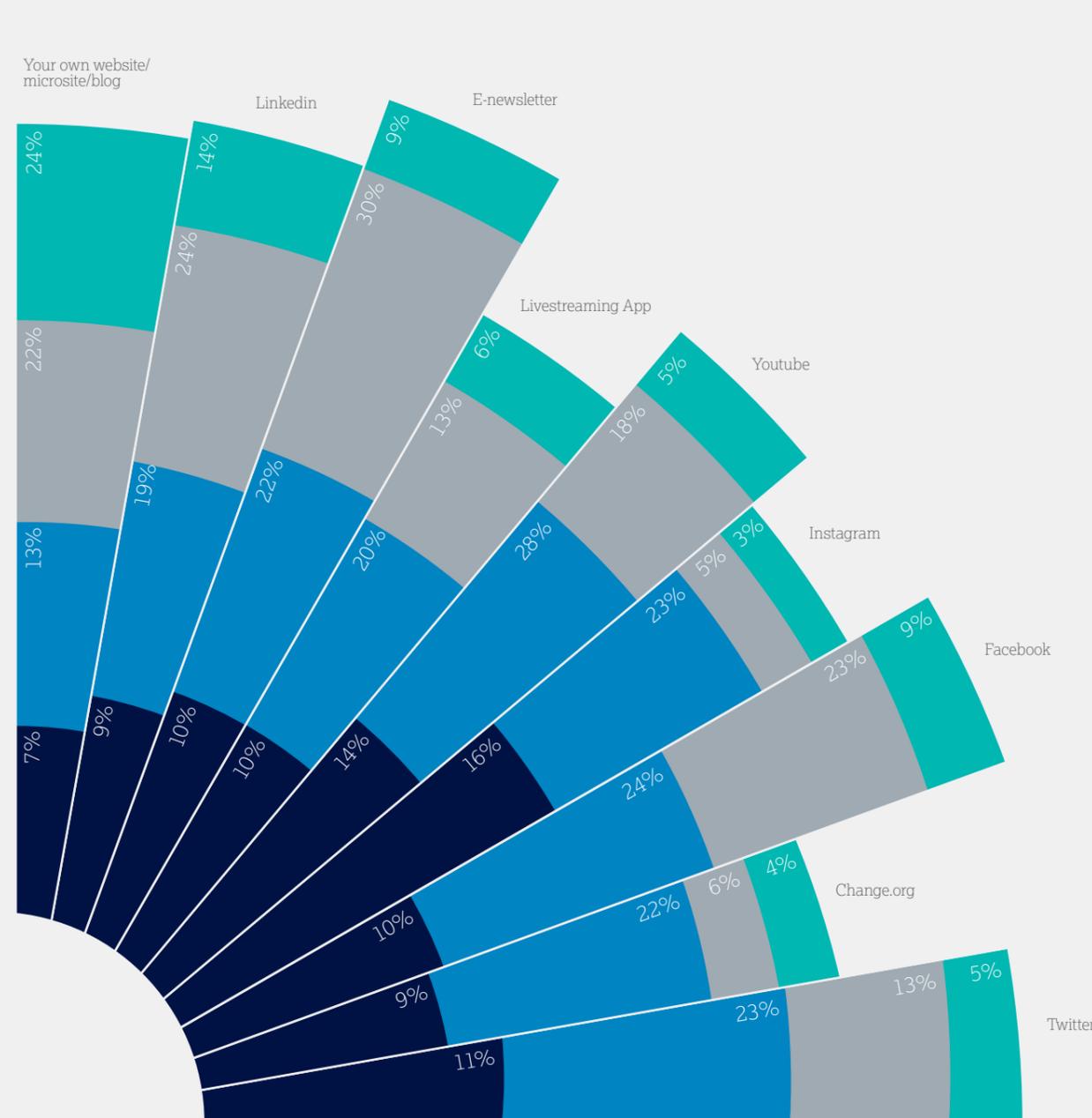
### Importance of various tools to DC Influencers

Personal meetings with peers (78%) and informal networking (64%) were considered the most important communication tools for D.C. influencers. Fifty-five percent considered digital and social media important. Traditional media was considered important by 56% of respondents, placing it alongside digital and social media.



### Effectiveness of Digital and Social Media Tools Used for DC Influencers

Influencers found their own websites or blogs (46%), e-newsletters (39%) and LinkedIn (38%) the most effective digital and social media tools.

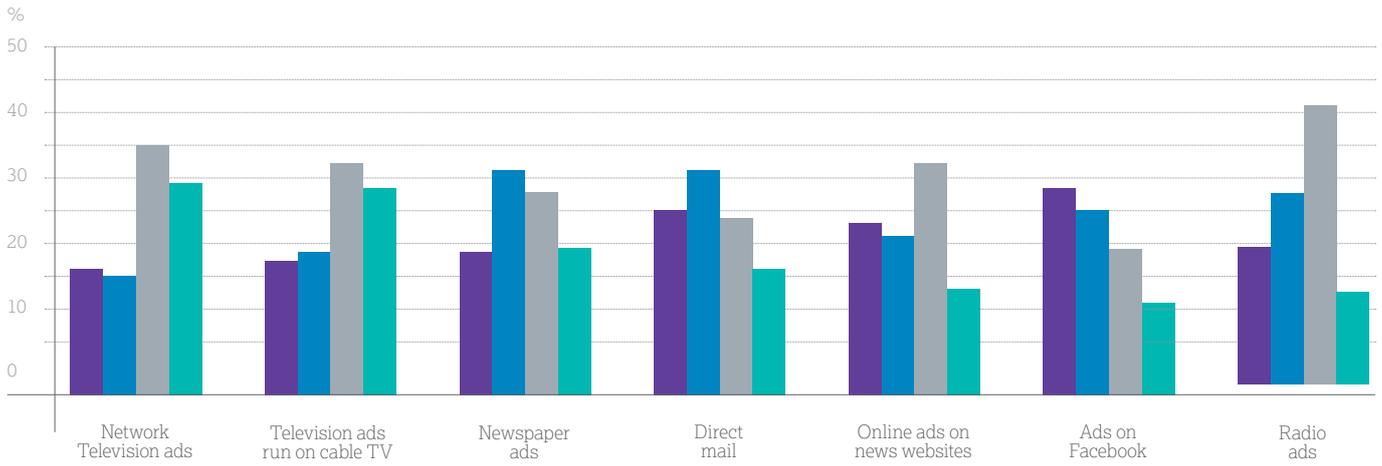


Respondents said television ads were the most effective vehicles for public office election campaigns. Forty-five percent said online ads on news websites were effective, and 30% said Facebook ads were effective.

7

Effectiveness of campaign tools for political campaigns for public office

- Very effective
- Fairly effective
- Not very effective
- Not effective at all

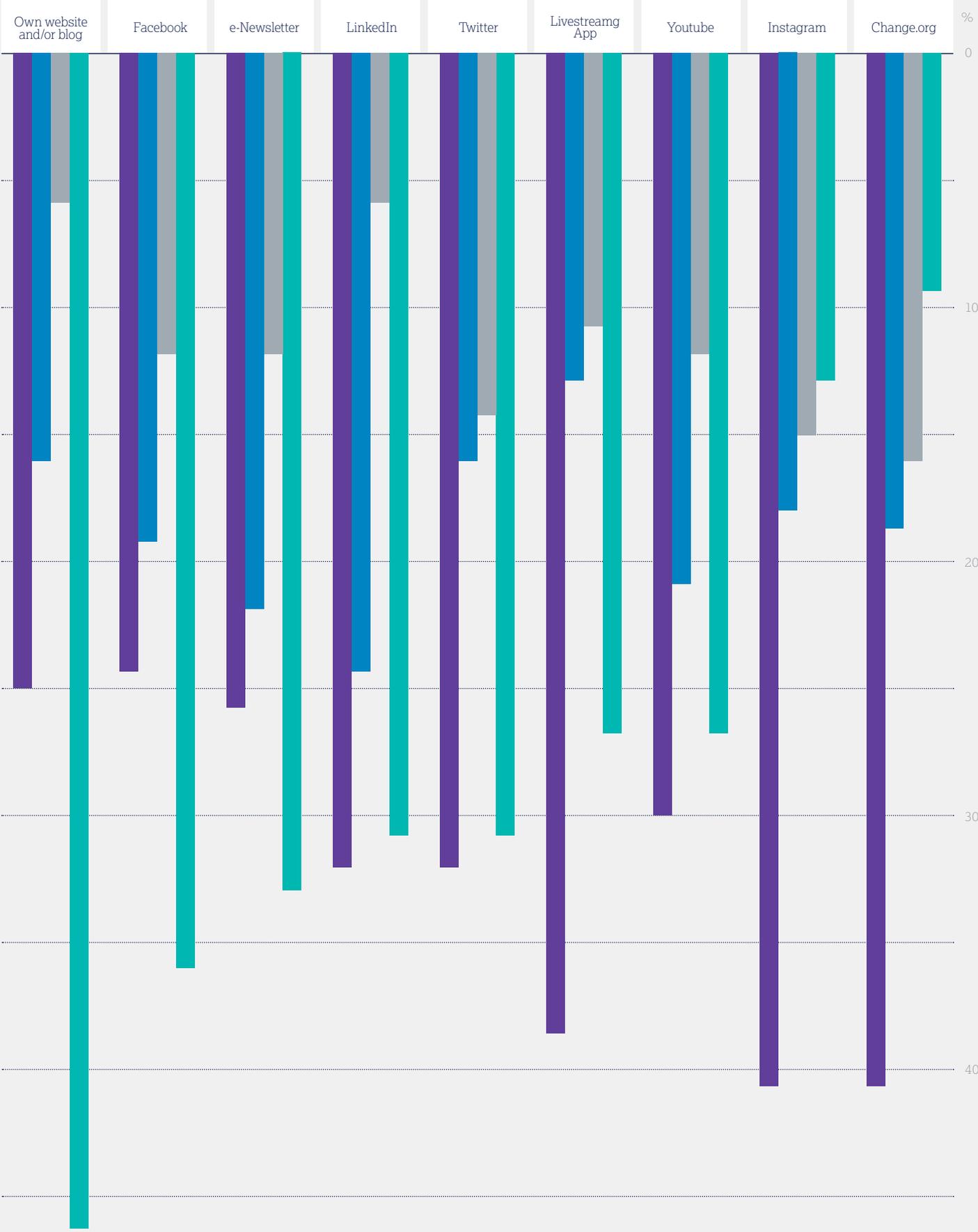


## Changes planned in digital and social media tools

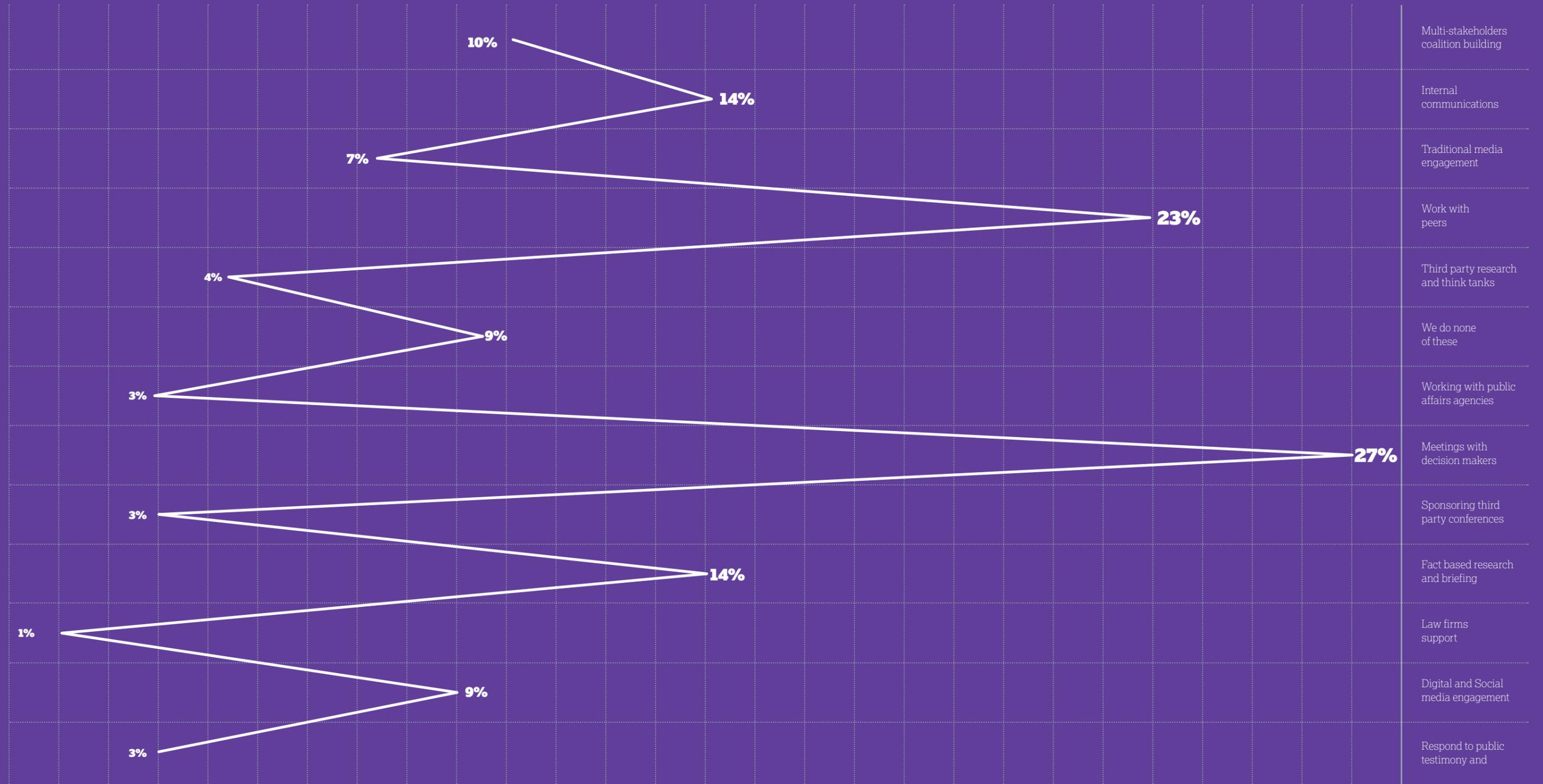
### Future plans and needs in D.C. influencer communication strategy and practices

When asked if they plan to increase use of digital and social media tools in the future, top responses were for influencers' own websites or blogs (47%), Facebook (36%) and e-newsletters (33%).

- ▲ Don't use
- ▲ Keep the same
- ▲ Decrease
- ▲ Increase



Outreach and communications efforts that will change the most during the next year



Top needs expressed by US influencers



When asked what their organizations were doing too little of, respondents said personal recognition (22%), social media expertise (13%), technical support (12%) and board empowerment (12%).

6%  
Public recognition

8%  
More original ideas

8%  
Metrics to assess the impact of..

9%  
Resources

12%  
Board empowerment

12%  
Adequate external consulting

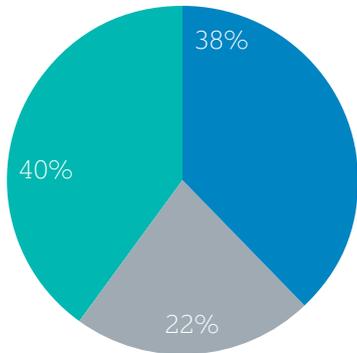
12%  
Technical support

13%  
Social media expertise

22%  
Personal recognition

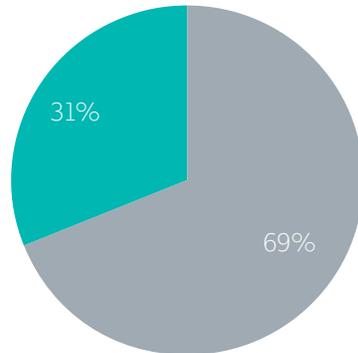
# Typology and Demography of Respondents

Position



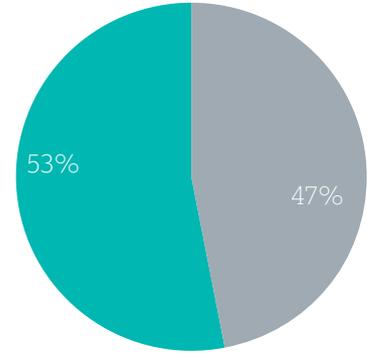
- ▲ Head of office
- ▲ Director
- ▲ Other

Age



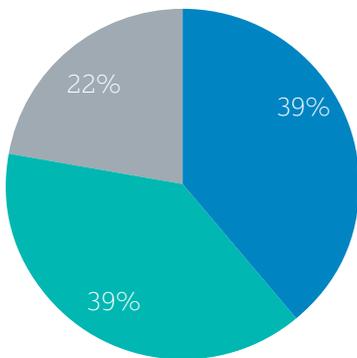
- ▲ < 50
- ▲ 50+

Gender



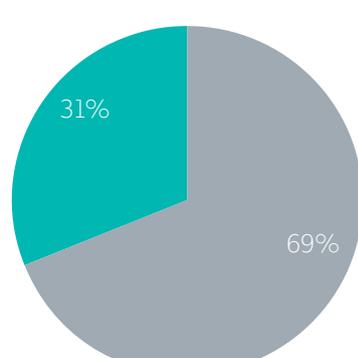
- ▲ Male
- ▲ Female

Type of organisation



- ▲ Corporate
- ▲ Professional association
- ▲ Other

Years of Experience



- ▲ < 20
- ▲ 20+

# U.S. Conclusions and Recommendations

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The results of the MSLGROUP public affairs survey in the U.S. raises red flags on the sector's point of view on social and digital media as a communication strategy with policymakers. Our insights and recommendations on how to mobilize social and digital media in an evolving environment are outlined below.

## Conclusions

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Digital and social media are not yet seen as substitutes for personal influence in Washington, D.C.

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U.S. policymakers are not yet thought of as effective users of digital or social media. This may be because of the low esteem with which most U.S. policymakers are held by influencers. The U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve are considered to be the most effective users of digital and social media and both use them only to provide information rather than policy positions. U.S. influencers do not appear to trust or rely on congressional or White House use of social media, or expect policymakers to rely on their digital communications.

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Digital and social media efforts in Europe are perceived to be far more effective in reaching policymakers than in the U.S.

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Influencers in the U.S. do not plan to increase their use of digital communications as much as their European counterparts.

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Perhaps because of language, cultural differences and context given by the presidential candidate selection process, U.S. influencers reported seeing television and radio as more effective ways to communicate with policymakers than their European counterparts.

## Recommendations

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For now, personal contacts with policymakers with information and validation to support the company's position remain strong preferences for policy advocacy.

Companies, associations and stakeholders need to accelerate their use of social and digital media as policymakers become savvier in this area and accustomed to communicating in this manner.

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Those wanting or needing to use social and digital communications to contact policymakers will need to be convinced of their effectiveness. This will likely change rapidly. In the meantime, however, policy initiatives will need to be a mix of traditional and digital techniques.

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Organizations with effective digital communications strategies in Europe cannot assume they will be as effective in the U.S. as the research shows that these markets differ.

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Stakeholders who prefer digital communications will need to make their preferences known to U.S. policymakers and suggest channels and formats for this kind of communication.

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Digital and social communications techniques should not be used in a vacuum. They should be seen as a supplement to rather than as a substitute for television, radio and print, as well as one-on-one contacts.

## Stan Collender

Executive Vice President, Qorvis MSLGROUP Washington, D.C.

MSLGROUP is Publicis Groupe's strategic communications and engagement group, advisors in all aspects of communication strategy; from consumer PR to financial communications, from public affairs to reputation management and from crisis communications to experiential marketing and events. With more than 3,000 people across 100 offices worldwide, MSLGROUP is also the largest PR network in Europe, fast-growing China and India. The group offers strategic planning and counsel, insight-guided thinking and big, compelling ideas - followed by thorough execution. Write to us to start a conversation on how we can help you distill actionable insights and foresights from conversations and communities.

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