



How do **Politicians in Europe** use **Social Media** in their everyday work?

Digital Democracy Study
Ketchum Pleon

Summary of Results

Only few politicians in Europe use Social Media to actively address their voters ...

- Only 20% of participating MP used blogs/ Twitter in their last campaign
- 30% of participating MP spend up to 3h per week on social media

... however,

the Internet is one of the most important sources of information for their political work.

- More than 30% of participating MP use blogs and online forums as a source of information
- More than 50% of participating MP use electronic newsletters and web pages as a source of information
- More than 75% of participating MP use online media as a source of information

Consequence for politicians:

Rethink your campaign portfolios – social media might be the right opportunity to engage with voters.

Consequence for corporate communications:

Rethink your communication with political influencers – to date, social media is only rarely used to address politicians in a structured way.



About the Digital Democracy Study

Set-up

The “**Digital Democracy Study – How Parliamentarians in Europe use Digital Media in Political Communications**” is a pilot study, coordinated and supervised by Prof. Dr. Joachim Klewes, Heinrich-Heine-University of Duesseldorf/Germany, and executed in cooperation with Ketchum Pleon, the leading European communications consultancy.

Sample

All members of national parliaments in the EU as well as members of the **European Parliament** were invited to fill in this study in **one of 18 different languages**. More than six per cent of all politicians or their offices (N = 476) participated in the study in summer 2010 – an acceptable response rate for a high-level target group like this.

However, this sample is not fully representative of the MP in Europe. **68% males and 32% females participated**. 33% participants from Western Europe, 28% from Northern Europe, 21% from Eastern Europe and 18% from Southern Europe were registered*. The majority (46%) of all participants are aged between 31- 50 years, 26% between 51-60 years, 17% between 21-30 years, less than 12% over 60 years. Of all participants, 28% belong to one of the parties of the popular spectrum (European Parliament**: 36% EPP), 30% to a Socialist party (EP: 25% S&D), 16% to a Liberal party (EP: 12% ALDE), 9% to a Green party (EP: 7% Green/ EFA), 6% to a Left-wing party (EP: 5% GUE/ NLA), 4% to a Right-wing party (EP: 4% EFD).

* UN definition of geographical regions, see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#europe>

** Distribution of parties in European Parliament, see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/expert/groupAndCountry.do?language=de>

Contact

For further information please contact:

Dr. Rene Mono,
Ketchum Pleon Public Affairs:

Rene.Mono@ketchumpleon.com

Gianni Catalfamo,
Ketchum Pleon Digital:

Gianni.Catalfamo@pleon.com

Ketchum Pleon GmbH
European Headquarters

Bahnstrasse 2

D 40212 Duesseldorf / Germany

The Ketchum Pleon GmbH is officially registered in the Commercial Register of Duesseldorf District Court (HRB 26544).



Which advice do experts give?

A Public Affairs expert

Rene Mono, Member of the Board, Director European Business Development, Ketchum Pleon, Berlin

“Just because many European politicians don’t use social media for their campaigning as much as their US colleagues yet, that doesn’t mean that they don’t use them as a source of information. It’s fascinating, how rapidly this trend is developing. For companies who want to get in touch with political influencers, this is a vast new field that clearly shows a great amount of unused potential. I can only give this advice – carefully reassess your portfolio of political communications on a regular basis and know where your target group is heading.”

A Digital expert

Gianni Catalfamo, Partner and President Pleon Italy, Milan

“Consumers are way ahead of their politicians in social media usage: the average European spends 4-6h per week on social media. However, politicians also spend time online as private individuals. They adapt what seems state of the art online – a webpage or a twitter account. And they use new ways to get an impression of what’s going on. Social media is no longer the preserve of digital geeks, its was discovered by the average person quite a while ago – no matter whether voter or politician.”



Rene.Mono@ketchumpleon.com

Phone: +49-30-726139-857

Ketchum Pleon’s Public Affairs network helps clients manage the dialogue between society and politics from the local to the international level. We bring together political expertise, economic understanding and communications competencies.



Gianni.Catalfamo@pleon.com

Phone: +39-02-006629-420

Ketchum Pleon Digital offers a wide range of digital services to enterprises and institutions. The Ketchum Digital Spectrum ranges from topical social media monitoring to complex programs with multiple target audience touch points.



What channels do parliamentarians use to get informed?

The average participating European MP

Still trusts traditional media sources more than social media for his own information. However, Green party members in particular as well as Southern and Northern Europeans view social media as almost as important.

Political orientation

Compared to Conservative and Socialist MP, Green and Liberal participants value social media significantly higher as a channel for getting information for their political work.

Geographical region

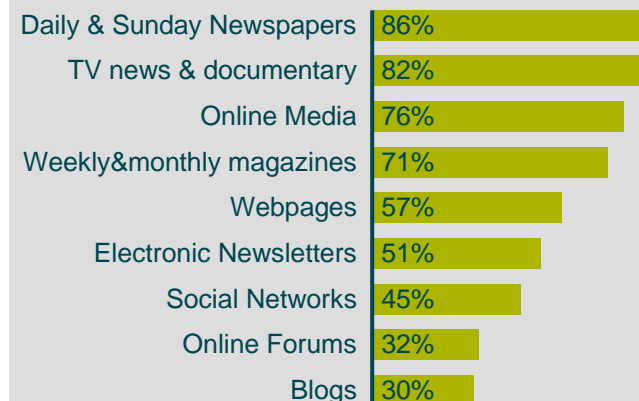
MP from Southern and Northern Europe appreciate social networks as a source of information significantly more than their colleagues from Western and Eastern countries.

Favorite social networks

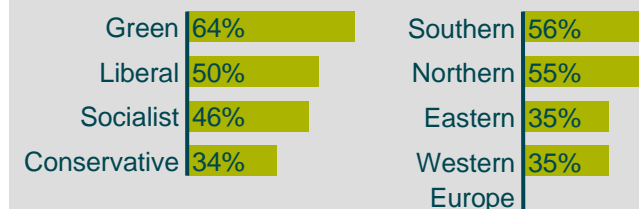
Facebook is the most popular social network amongst the participants. Southern European participants like electronic newsletters as an information source significantly better than their counterparts from other regions in Europe. Participating MP between the ages of 31-40 years most appreciate social networks as an information source, even more than the 21-30 year old age group; this holds true regarding appreciation of YouTube as well.

For gathering information, online web pages from think tanks, NGOs, companies and other organizations were better liked by Eastern and Southern European participants than by MP from Western and Northern Europe.

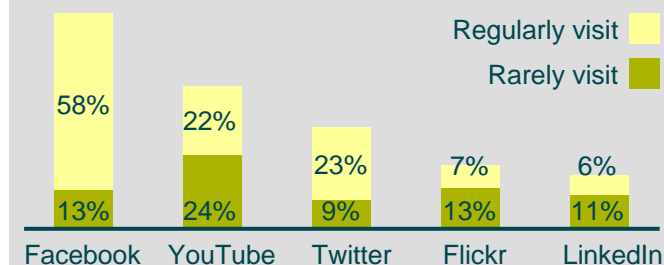
Information channels MP use



Importance of social networks as an information channel ... by political party ... by EU region



Familiarity with social media products: Accounts and their Frequency of use



What types of parliamentarians make use of Social Media?

The average participating European MP

Spends more than twelve hours online per week, and uses social media up to three hours per week. The average European consumer uses social media two to three times more* than the average participating MP. Age rather than experience is what counts, but the simple rule “the younger, the more social media” does not hold true. The group of 31-40 years old MP uses social media more than their peers including the 21-30 year olds.

Political orientation

Left-wing participating politicians consult social media more often than participants from Liberal or Conservative parties. Significantly more participants from Green or Socialist parties have a personal blog.

Do they want to prove that the progressive direction, which they claim for their policies is reflected by a more extensive usage of new media? Or do they just expect their voters to be more active in social media?

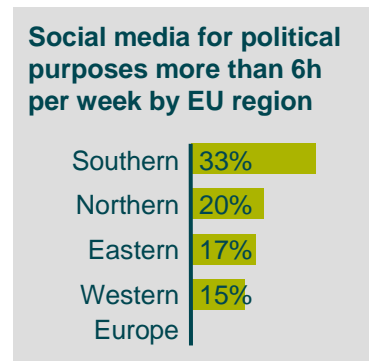
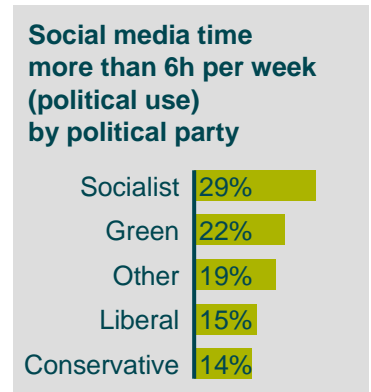
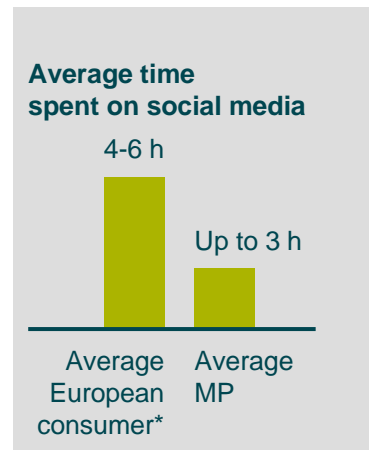
Geographical region

Participants from Southern Europe use social media significantly more for political purposes than politicians from other areas of Europe. Participants from Western Europe use social media the least. This also holds true for the political use of social media, irrespective of age. With regard to the private use of social media, Eastern European MP are cutting edge.

Personal blogs are used most by Northern European participants, while Western European participants make strong use of personal websites. Southern European participants lag behind in web pages.

Do MP from Southern Europe hope to benefit from the interactive and discursive potential of social media in order to overcome the problem that their citizens feel less satisfied with democracy and are less interested in politics? Do MP from Western and Northern Europe, on the other hand, feel more accepted in their profession and thus dare to express their opinion more forcefully by using blogs or personal web pages?

*Numerous research (i.e. Nielsen, Jupiter, EIAA) indicate that European users spend between 4 and 6 hours online, and the same amount on the mobile web.



What channels do parliamentarians use to actively communicate?

The average participating European MP

Still prefers face-to-face contacts, media relations and rallies to personal websites and social networking when it comes to their own campaigning portfolio. There is no evidence that this pattern will fundamentally change in the next year.

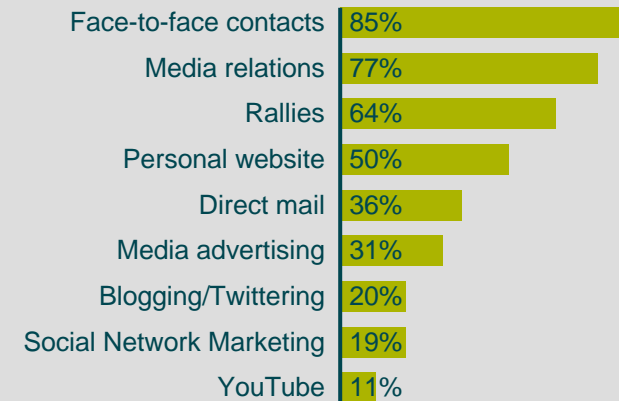
Political orientation

Left-wing participating MP, especially Greens, use blogs/ Twitter significantly more for communication with their constituency than Conservatives and Liberals. In particular, the gap between Greens and Conservatives will continue to broaden since a vast majority of Green participants say that blogs/ Twitter will be important communication tools for their next campaigns whereas only a minority of Conservatives have similar plans. This is irrespective of age.

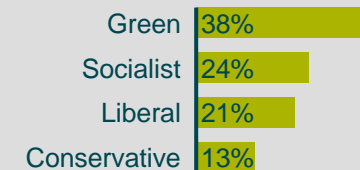
Geographical region

Participants from Northern and Southern Europe dislike personal web pages for campaigning significantly more than their counterparts from Western and especially Eastern Europe. Southern Europeans much prefer social networking as a communication tool. In the future, we predict a social media divide throughout Europe – MP from Southern Europe plan to dedicate more time for social networking and YouTube marketing, MP from Northern, Western and Eastern Europe will significantly lag behind and stick to more traditional channels such as personal web pages (particularly liked by Eastern and Western European MP) and media advertising (preferred by Eastern European MP).

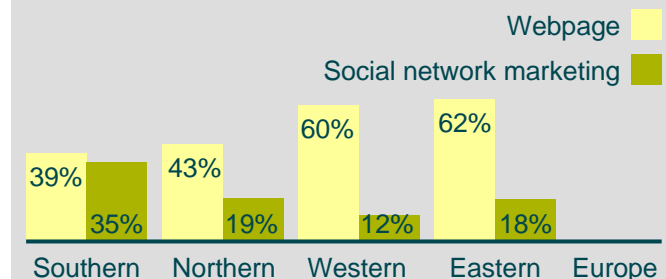
Preferred channels for last election campaign



Blogging / Twittering by political party last campaign



Webpage and Social network marketing in last campaign by EU region



What effect does social media have on democracy?

The average participating European MP

Views social media as positive for democracy. However, most participants also see a negative impact on their own daily political work and politics in general. While many participants believe they will become more approachable to their voters, even more politicians fear social media will reduce political communications to a superficial level.

Political orientation

All political groups predict social media will increase the level of political information reaching the average person, but Conservatives see this significantly less than other political orientations.

Geographical considerations

The majority of participants foresee an increase in the level of political information reaching the average person. However, Western Europeans are most skeptical.

Impact of length of tenure in office

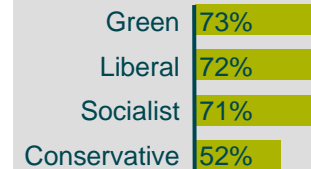
Experienced participating politicians are more skeptical about the positive effects of social media than the others, irrespective of their age.

Need for regulation

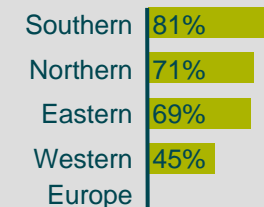
Most Green and Liberal participants don't want regulation for social media whereas Conservative and Socialists believe that social media should be regulated for private, commercial or political use.

The majority of Northern European participants (54%) believe that no regulation is needed whereas only 28% of Southern Europeans would agree to that.

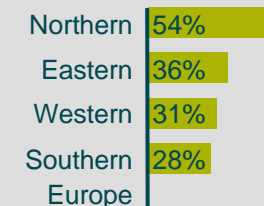
Increase level of political information by political party



Increase level of political information by EU region



No need for regulation by EU region



What does this mean for your Public Affairs program?

See social media as one of many channels within a holistic PA communications portfolio

European MP see social media as an established channel for political communication and have a very professional and pragmatic (rather than idealistic) relation to it. Generally they like social media, but since they weigh the advantages and disadvantages, they will use it very selectively, both in their role as information seeker and as an active communicator. PA professionals should respond with an equally selective social media approach that is aligned with other PA channels.

Know who is particularly reachable with PA communications through social media

Some MP are more open to receiving messages through social media than others. If left-wing MP are your target group and you are addressing an issue with most relevance for Southern European countries, you are best advised to see social media as a first-choice communications channel. On the other hand, if Conservative MP are more important to you and your position matters most for Western European countries, social media should play only a minor role in your PA program.

Implement social media into your PA programme on a pragmatic basis

Every PA professional knows that political decision makers appreciate those information channels that they can use for their own political communication. Data shows that MP are not radically changing their communications practices – social media is just one of many relevant channels MP use and is by no means in a privileged position. Good PA communications will therefore include information which is optimized for social media usage in terms of form and content.

Make MP more familiar with social media.

If you have yet to make the business case for social media in your company and you fear there may be increasing regulation in this area, you should start an educational program offering social media literacy to politicians as soon as possible. Our research shows that the better MP understand social media, the lower is the risk of increasing regulations.

For further information please contact:

Dr. Rene Mono, Ketchum Pleon Public Affairs:

Rene.Mono
@ketchumpleon.com

Gianni Catalfamo,
Ketchum Pleon Digital:

Gianni.Catalfamo
@pleon.com

This document is solely for presentation purposes.
Ketchum Pleon GmbH holds the copyright.

The passing on of this document to third parties or use of it in whole or in part requires the explicit consent of Ketchum Pleon GmbH.

© Ketchum Pleon 2010

