



#CAMBRETALKSDIGITAL

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATIONS DIGITAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION.

Covid-19 has had a tremendous impact on European communications and advocacy. Digital platforms are enabling us to remain connected and engaged online as cutting-edge technology is booming. The crisis has also accelerated the need for authentic, science-based communication that is human, relatable and optimistic all at the same time.

Society is demanding solutions to end the pandemic and reverse climate change, calling for a green economic recovery and more diversity and inclusion. Expectations for industry to pursue a more purpose-driven agenda is mounting.

Such pressures, alongside the challenges of transitioning to a virtual world, are pushing organisations to expand their creative boundaries for their own survival online and offline.

As a result, many European associations are re-inventing themselves, stepping up their climate communications, most notably around the EU Green Deal, and positioning themselves as solution-providers in tackling Europe's most pressing challenges, putting digital at the heart of their communications and advocacy efforts. Yet, others have been slower to respond.

In this 5th edition of the European Associations Digital Report, we look at how European associations are leveraging the enormous opportunities presented by digital media to communicate effectively online and ensure they are digitally fit for this new age.

METHODOLOGY.

The findings of the European Associations Digital Report are based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the social media channels of Brussels-based industry associations from 1 January 2019 until October 2020.

The quantitative assessment is based on the social media monitoring of 575 European industry associations representing a wide range of sectors, from energy to technology, pharmaceutical to agriculture, and more.

Informed by the quantitative findings, the report further investigates the digital performance of Brussels' top 30 associations, identifying digital champions, innovative practices and emerging trends.

The top 10 digital trends in the report are presented in no particular order.

Non-European and international trade associations, NGOs and other non-industry bodies were excluded from this report.

Cambre Associates has carried out an analysis of the digital presence of European Associations since 2015, building on previously gathered in-house data to provide comparisons and insights.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

European associations are accelerating their digital footprint and with the lockdowns and social distancing as a result of Covid-19, digital media is likely to remain the frontier of communication and EU advocacy for years to come.

To understand how European associations are leveraging digital media to engage with key audiences, influence conversations and shape opinions online, Cambre Associates, a Brussels-based Public Affairs and Public Relations consultancy, with a dedicated association management practice, analysed the digital channels of 575 European industry associations, deep-diving into the top 30. We sought to understand how the use of digital media has evolved since 2018, but also to identify emerging trends, best practices and those at the forefront of digital communications.

It is not surprising that the digital landscape has been greatly impacted by the external environment. We have seen new policy and regulatory developments since the new European Commission took office in November 2019, particularly with the launch of the EU Green Deal which, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called “Europe’s man on the Moon moment”. The Covid-19 pandemic also disrupted the digital space by bringing about a triple health, economic and social crisis, the rise of climate activism, and calls for more diversity

and inclusion as the world witnessed seismic movements like the ‘Black Lives Matter’ and the ‘*Gilets Jaunes*’, to name a few. These mega events have disrupted the status quo and are demanding fresh thinking, a novel approach and a new kind of leadership.

European associations have taken notice. They are stepping up their digital communications and enhancing their digital readiness. Consequently, we observe ten key digital trends emerging – climate communications, Covid-19 response, virtual events, new partnerships, digital campaigns, fact-based communications in the era of fake news, the rise of podcasts as audiences seek alternative content that can be consumed everywhere, and purpose-driven communication with a focus on diversity and inclusion, youth engagement and leadership.

But despite the broad trend to make digital communications mainstream and elevate digital capabilities, important differences across associations exist. Digital readiness varies significantly from one association to another and even from one sector to another. It is perhaps no surprise that some of the top digital performers represent the energy, tech, transport, chemical, food and agriculture, pharmaceutical and healthcare industries.

Differences are also apparent on the choice of digital platforms, which are evolving over time. LinkedIn and Twitter are clearly at the forefront, being used by nearly 70% of associations examined. Facebook, once a favourite platform, is lagging behind, with Instagram emerging as the next big thing. YouTube remains stable, confirming that video content is here to stay.

While few associations adapt their content per channel, Twitter is the number one choice for engaging with audiences online that are looking for quick, snappy news and real-time engagement. LinkedIn remains the platform *par excellence* for longer-format content and thought leadership. A large majority of associations are using both.

We also notice that certain sectors seem to perform significantly better on some platforms in terms of their audience size. On Twitter and LinkedIn, the energy sector represents roughly 21% of the whole pool of followers of all EU associations combined. However, on Facebook, 20% of the audience goes to construction and manufacturing. As for Instagram, the lion's share of the audience (41%) goes to the health and wellbeing.

Digital media is an increasingly important part of European associations' communications and advocacy strategies. The ability to fully harness the power of digital channels – through a creative content strategy that resonates with audiences online and offline – will set associations apart and determine which ones will survive in the new digital era.

The Cambre Digital Team

10 DIGITAL TRENDS in 2020



01. CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

01

HIGHLIGHTS



INTRO

The “green wave” reached the European associations as they stepped up communication around the EU Green Deal. We look at the industries and associations that are at the forefront of climate communications.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a recent [*Eurobarometer*](#) survey, 94% of EU citizens say that protecting the environment is important to them and 83% believe that European legislation is necessary to achieve this.

03

CHAMPIONS

Cefic - The European Chemical Industry Council, CES - Silicones Europe, FuelsEurope, Fertilizers Europe, ETNO - The European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association and UNIFE - The Association of the European Rail Supply Industry.

01. CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

Climate, climate, climate

Whether it is in the general public sphere with figures such as Greta Thunberg, or at the heart of political agendas, discussions around climate have now taken centre stage.

For European associations, this has translated into a clear trend to proactively position themselves – online and offline – around the EU Green Deal and increasingly so since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, focusing on a Green Recovery. **Cefic** – the European Chemical Industry Council and **ETNO** – The European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association, are positioning themselves strongly also around other EU Green Deal milestones - eg. the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, the Digital Services Act or the Renovation Wave.

The development of new materials specifically around the EU Green Deal have taken Twitter and LinkedIn by storm. From videos to infographics, animations to quote cards, the likes of **CES - Silicones Europe**, **UNIFE** or **Fertilizers Europe** seized the opportunity to explain their roles in digital-friendly formats.

Some associations have taken robust steps to communicate their climate neutrality roadmap by building fully integrated communication campaigns based on peer-reviewed scientific studies, such as **FuelsEurope**, the EU refining industry association. Its 'Clean Fuels for All' communication has a dedicated website and continues to resonate online and offline through campaigns on traditional and digital media.

Naturally, most European associations target the usual suspects within the EU stakeholder landscape. Yet, many – resource permitting – may want to consider expanding their scope to a wider consumer-based audience, who are increasingly pushing for a greener agenda and bolder climate action.

Looking beyond Europe

The EU is the clear focus of the digital communication of associations. Yet, some are also trying to position themselves on a global scale, like **GSMA**, the association representing the interests of mobile operators worldwide. They have been consistently communicating around the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the inspirations behind the EU Green Deal.

Top Hashtags in Europe

#EUGreenDeal / #climatechange / #climateaction
#noplanetb / #circulareconomy



02. COVID RESPONSE



HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

2020 has been a year of many changes with potentially long-lasting impact on the EU communications and advocacy landscape. Not all EU associations have responded in the same way, but one thing is clear – the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated digital advocacy and purpose-driven communications.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

In our new world of social distancing, Zoom, Teams, Webex, GoToMeeting and other video conferencing systems have become a lifeline to maintain social contact with friends, family, co-workers and more! The Covid crisis has sent these platforms skyrocketing with a projected global market spike of over 110% in 2020. (Source: [Report Linker](#)).

03

CHAMPIONS

The European Travel Commission, EFPIA - The European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, ACEA - The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, DigitalEurope, European Broadcasting Union, Invest Europe, Fertilizers Europe, and FoodDrinkEurope,

02. COVID RESPONSE

The COVID effect

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the way organisations communicate. Not surprisingly, it has split European associations into two categories: those in heavily affected sectors such as healthcare or tourism have been communicating more than ever, while others decided to put the brakes on their “normal” activities, at least initially, to avoid seeming opportunistic or tone-deaf. However, as the crisis showed no sign of slowing down, European associations took their “business as usual” activities online in September 2020.

The **European Travel Commission** has been proactively sharing industry policy recommendations for economic recovery. It has also hosted and publicised many virtual events and leveraged spokespeople to call for a unified European travel policy. **EFPIA** shared curated and timely content addressing key questions around Covid, while also positioning the industry as united and committed to finding a vaccine swiftly by actively promoting its R&D investments.

Other organisations moved quickly to educate audiences on the devastating impact that the pandemic was having on their industries, while others suggested pathways to kickstart economic recovery.

At the start of the pandemic, **ACEA** published data on the impact of Covid in its sector and shared recommendations for economic recovery as well as free online courses for workers. Similarly, **DigitalEurope** conducted a pan-European survey on the impact of Covid on the digital industry in collaboration with 14 national trade associations. Finally, the **European Broadcasting Union** launched a video series on “lessons from lockdown”.

In a welcome move, some associations decided to spread hope and optimism. **Invest Europe**, for example, launched its #GoodNews series to share positive examples of companies contributing to the fight to improve lives in the face of Covid. Both **FertilizersEurope** and **FoodDrinkEurope** participated in the #FoodHeroes initiative, focusing on and celebrating essential workers in the agricultural industry.

What has been made clear from the pandemic is that digital advocacy is now front and centre. With an increasing list of urgent priorities and teleworking becoming the norm, EU industry associations have a unique opportunity to step up digital engagement. The battleground of ideas is now almost entirely online.

EUROPEAN
TRAVEL
COMMISSION

efpia
European Federation of Pharmaceutical
Industries and Associations

EBU
OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

DIGITALEUROPE

ACEA
European
Automobile
Manufacturers
Association

INVEST
EUROPE

fertilizers
europe

FOODDRINK
EUROPE

03. VIRTUAL EVENTS

HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

Virtual events have taken the world by storm. From the classic webinar to the integration of AI and VR, a whole market has opened up for us to connect online and find the best way to recreate or reinvent the experience of a “real-life” event.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the web and video conferencing market increased by 500% (source: [TrustRadius](#)). And while 87% of remote workers feel more connected to their teams thanks to video conferencing (source: [Gigaom](#)), “Zoom fatigue” has emerged as a new phenomenon.

03

CHAMPIONS

Wind Europe, SolarPower Europe, and Euroseeds.

03. VIRTUAL EVENTS

'You're on mute'

Lockdown and remote work have not stopped events from taking place in 2020. Most organisations have maintained some level of “business as usual”, having made a successful transition to virtual formats. Congresses, exhibitions and networking events, even hospitals – like UZ Leuven, for instance - have now shifted online, supported by the emergence of innovative online event platforms.

The first trend is the sharp rise in the number of virtual events since March 2020. Virtually every association in Europe has organised or taken part in a webinar over the last year. **Wind Europe**, for example, organised a series of innovative “Sofa Talks” on the main issues facing wind energy today.

Some organisations are excelling at promoting online events... online! **SolarPower Europe**, for instance, created an impressive amount of content in the lead up to its SolarPower Summit: think video teaser on policy topics, speaker announcements, quotes, and of course live coverage of the event and follow-up quotes and pictures.

The transition to digital has also made some associations test out new technologies in an attempt to fight event fatigue or to replicate larger-scale events.

Euroseeds organised its 2020 Congress online, which included a virtual exhibition with stands, one-on-one sessions and the possibility to interact in a way that resembles a “real-life” event.

Whether it is a live, hybrid or virtual event, innovation and creativity are essential to create pleasant virtual experiences for your audiences and fight online fatigue.



04. MEMBERS & PARTNERSHIPS

HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

To expand their visibility, associations can count on their members and partners. In a period marked by social distancing, there is an undeniable need for human communication and digital partnerships.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

In a digital world, leaders are the best digital ambassadors. However, the Connected Leadership Survey found that only 48% of CEOs use social media, while employees would prefer to work for a connected CEO by a ratio of two to one.

03

CHAMPIONS

FEFCO - The European Federation of Corrugated Board, ETNO - The European Telecommunications Network Operators Association, SolarPower Europe and Cepi - The Confederation of European Paper Industries.

04. MEMBERS & PARTNERSHIP

Come together (right now)

To quote the Beatles, we all get by with a little help from our friends. So, who are the friends helping to spread the message of associations?

Members are a great resource for associations, although very few proactively showcase them. While this can be a tricky balancing act, we found some inventive ways to leverage, engage and give visibility to members.

For example, **FEFCO** created a series of short videos showcasing their members. This gives further incentive for members to become amplifiers of the association's messages as they gain more visibility for themselves.

That said, members are not the only friends an association can have. Strong partnerships are another great way to expand visibility and reach.

One of the more straightforward options is through media partnerships.

Partnerships can also be the opportunity to think outside the box, as exemplified by **ETNO** who joined forces to promote events with POLITICO.

Endorsement from third parties is also very valuable. In that sense, MEPs are a popular choice, as shown by **SolarPower Europe**, which has filmed various MEPs endorsing and sharing their message on social media.

Partnering with or joining other organisations is another way of expanding reach organically. For example, **Cepi** joined forces with two sister organizations (EPIS & Pro Carton) to increase awareness about the role of forest-based industries and forest-based products to achieve climate neutrality in 2050, as laid out by the EU Green Deal.

So when it comes to spreading the word, a smart way of amplifying visibility is to ask friends for help!



05. DATA-DRIVEN COMMUNICATIONS



HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

Amidst the overload of digital information, the rise of fake news and the complexity of their content, European associations face an uphill battle when it comes to getting their message out there and making sure their audiences get the right information.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

Making information digestible has become ever so important: formats like infographics or listicles break down complex information into easily understandable content. And of course, video is still king, estimated to account for 80% of all web traffic in 2020. (source: [Digital Marketing Institute](#))

03

CHAMPIONS

ACEA - The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, Plastics Recyclers Europe, and EBF - The European Banking Federation.

05. DATA-DRIVEN COMMUNICATIONS

Promoting “authentic” news

In the era of disinformation and fake news, science and facts matter.

Many European associations are hubs for sound and reliable information, sharing figures, statistics and data relevant to their industry. For example, **ACEA** has become a data hub in the automotive world by sharing a wealth of pertinent figures and graphs around production, economic growth and environmental issues.

Other organisations have transformed complex issues and processes into simple, easy-to-understand formats. This is the case of **Plastics Recyclers Europe**, which has created a series of short animations to explain the intricacies of the plastic recycling process.

But the fight against fake news is not only about sharing reliable information: some organisations have decided to actively inform users about online risks. Take the **EBF**: it shares videos and animations to educate consumers on how to avoid online scams, data theft or fraudulent transactions.

Whatever the approach, when it comes to promoting “authentic” news, the best in class use multiple formats to inform, educate and engage with their audiences to ensure their information is easy to digest and share!

Fun facts

- Over two-thirds of Europeans encounter fake news at least once a week.
- News heard via the radio is the most trusted source in Europe.
- Online social networks are considered among the most untrustworthy sources for news and information.
- Almost 50% of Europeans revealed that they check facts themselves.
- Just under a third said they try to avoid consuming fake news by reading content on a trusted platform.

Source: *Statista*



06. DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

European associations are embracing digital campaigns to engage with their key audiences in a targeted way. Cambre has compiled some best-in-class examples of the most effective and innovative campaigns in the European associations landscape.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

The three most important elements of a successful campaign are:

1. Defining a clear target audience.
2. Conveying ONE key message per campaign.
3. Identifying the right platform.

03

CHAMPIONS

CropLife Europe, COPA COGECA, FoodDrinkEurope, Invest Europe and FEFCO – The European Federation of Corrugated Board Manufacturers.

06. DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

Keep on campaigning

European associations are stepping up their digital campaigns, as part of their broader communications and advocacy efforts. While not all campaigns get traction online, some stand out within the broader EU policy debate, notably around climate and sustainability.

The food and agricultural sector has been particularly active in this space. **CropLife Europe** (previously known as ECPA - European Crop Protection Association) launched its #MoreWithLess campaign, creating the hashtag and recognisable visuals to highlight its shift to greener farming techniques.

In contrast, **COPA COGECA** activated a video series named "Targets not solutions", putting forward farmers and highlighting how the European Commission's current targets are not adequate for the sector. **FoodDrinkEurope** also created content around the hashtag #SustainableFoodEU, which gained traction thanks to the active involvement of its members.

Naturally, 2020 saw many campaigns that focused on the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, a few built uplifting content.

Invest Europe, for example, launched its #GoodNews series to share the positive initiatives by private equity and venture capital-backed companies to help individuals and communities tackle the health threats and economic challenges posed by the virus across the continent. **FEFCO** took a similar approach with its "More than ever" series. It went a step further with the #DeliverOn campaign to showcase the importance of its industry in terms of innovation, safety, logistics and more.

The world needs a little love right now, and this is what these campaigns have delivered – optimism and hope for the future of the planet.



07. PODCASTS



HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

As European associations increasingly invest in rich multi-format content to reach their audiences online, we look at how the podcast scene is evolving in the EU bubble and who the early adopters are.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

It comes as no surprise that 65% of podcast listeners are most likely to listen to episodes on a mobile device. ([Edison Research](#)) Some countries are more podcast-friendly than others. Spain for instance is the number one podcast market in Europe, with 40% of the population tuning in every month. Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland are also top podcast consumers. ([Statista](#))

03

CHAMPIONS

EFPIA – The European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, European Broadcasting Union and SolarPower Europe.

07. PODCASTS

The rise of podcasts

On average, close to 28 percent of European adults tune in to a podcast every month (Statista). This is no surprise given that podcasts allow us to deep-dive into any topic in a short, convenient and mobile-friendly format.

With a steadily growing podcasting scene in Europe, it is only natural that this new medium has piqued the curiosity of some European associations. **SolarPower Europe**, for instance started its “Shine On” podcast, which has already published several mini-series on such topics as “Solar in the time of Covid-19” and “100% renewable Europe”.

Taking a more educational tone, in fall 2020 **EFPIA** launched a podcast called “19 conversations”, with each episode answering a question on the healthcare industry. This mini-series model creates anticipation and sustains momentum with a new episode launched every two weeks.

Casting a wider net for its audience is the **European Broadcasting Union**, which launched its “Eurovision Sport Radio podcast”. Bringing together several sport journalists, it created engaging content, with each episode focusing on a specific issue.

While statistics on the listener demographics in Europe are still limited, the general consensus is that the average podcast consumer is young (think millennial or younger), has higher levels of education and income, and is technologically savvy and favourable to the media. There is therefore real potential for growth for podcasts in the European sphere.

Top tips if you want to launch your own podcast:

- **Get a good host or a good guest...** or both! Ultimately, a good podcast is based on great content, so make sure the people we are listening to are great on audio.
- **Create anticipation.** Maintain a steady rhythm of output, whether weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, make your audience anticipate the next episode.
- **Keep it short and sweet.** The ideal length of a podcast is anywhere between 10 to 30 minutes.
- **Host your podcast on multiple platforms.** While Spotify is an obvious way to go, don't hesitate to upload your podcast on other platforms to increase your reach (your website, Apple podcasts, Google Play, Google podcasts....)

- **Consider language.** English seems a natural go-to for the European sphere, but if you are aiming local, make sure you are literally speaking their language!
- **Invest in promotion.** Just making a podcast will not make it a success. Pushing your message out to the right target audience will be essential.



08. DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

As the world battles with a triple health, economic and social crisis triggered by Covid-19, we take a look at how European associations are leading with purpose and how they are responding to society's expectations for more diversity and inclusion.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

A *global study* published in July 2020 revealed that consumers are four to six times more likely to buy from, trust, champion and defend companies with a strong sense of purpose. Although consumers are not the primary focus of European associations, they are an increasingly important stakeholder group as civic engagement and consumer pressure on European leaders, particularly around sustainability and climate action, are mounting.

03

CHAMPIONS

UITP – the international association for public transport, EBAA – The European Business Aviation Association and DigitalEurope.

08. DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

A need for purpose

Various movements demanding more diversity and inclusion in all layers of society are taking the world by storm. Many EU leaders have shown their support, most notably Ursula von der Leyen as the first European Commission President to create a Task Force on Equality.

And while this is a trend that is clearly seen among corporations and private organisations, the European association world has had a more timid start in endorsing these principles publicly. A few however deserve credit.

The most advanced type of endorsement is focused on gender equality. **DigitalEurope**, for example, has publicly committed to promote gender equality and has partnered with Women4IT to expand its reach. Similarly, **EBAA** has been proactively promoting women in business aviation.

Other organisations serve as platforms for women, such as **UITP** which has given a voice to women through the global series on #WomenWhoMoveNations which addresses issues of inclusion, mobility, education and networking through the voice of female leaders.

There is no doubt these are all very important initiatives. However, diversity is much more than gender equality. At a time when the fight for equal rights, #BlackLivesMatter and a general need for purpose are in the spotlight, much still remains to be done. This is a space that is being increasingly populated, but one where European associations are yet to make their voices heard.

Key figures

- Over 40% of the members of the LGBTQ+ community feel left out at work.
- 28% of employees consistently feel anxious in their jobs because of their ethnicity.
- 25% of people feel that age can limit their chances of progressing in their career in their company.

Source: [Kantar Inclusion Index](#)

Countries included in the study: Canada, United States of America, Germany, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Brazil, United Kingdom, France, Poland, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Mexico

DIGITALEUROPE 



09. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

Several associations are already engaging today with tomorrow's generation, for instance through mentoring programmes or online challenges.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

A majority of the 18- to 29-year-olds in the EU use social media for news daily. Younger adults in Italy and Denmark are the most likely to use social media for news, with nearly three-quarters getting news this way every day (74% and 75%, respectively). ([*Pew Research Center*](#))

03

CHAMPIONS

European Broadcasting Union, European Plasticisers, DigitalEurope, Wind Europe, and EBAA – European Business Aviation Association.

09. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Forever young!

“Young people” - aged 15 to 29 - currently represent 17% of Europe’s population and are an increasingly important stakeholder group. This is especially true on topics such as climate, environment, public health and employment where younger representatives are becoming more vocal and active (witness the Brexit vote!). And while EU industry associations tend to focus most on policy stakeholders, many have started engaging directly with younger demographics.

Some organisations start with the very young: this is the case of **DigitalEurope** which organised a video for BBC News on one of its members (IT-Branchen) initiative: to deliver coding classes to young children. The European Broadcasting Union also reached out to young populations by launching the #SayHi campaign against bullying among school kids, organised alongside the **EBU** Kids International Friendship Initiative.

WindEurope even published a children’s book to raise awareness from a young age on renewable energy sources!

That said, many organisations focus on young adults, particularly university students through educational programmes and incentives. **Cefic** for example, organises yearly awards for young researchers, encouraging young minds to pursue

science. **European Plasticisers** has also started a programme of call for papers for young researchers in its field.

To close the age bracket, associations are also investing in young professionals. **EBAA** nominates a young professional from the business aviation industry to represent them during the One Young World summit.

We have all heard the trope that “youth is the future”, and some associations are taking that to heart! It all starts with education, doesn’t it?

DIGITALEUROPE 

EBU
OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

Wind
EUROPE

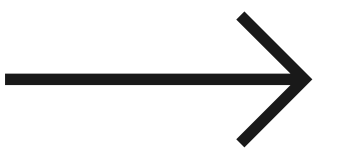
 **cefic**

 **european plasticisers**

EBAA
EUROPEAN BUSINESS
AVIATION ASSOCIATION 

10. LEADERSHIP

HIGHLIGHTS



01

INTRO

We live in a world of information overload at a time when attention span online is a mere eight seconds. We look at how European associations are leveraging their leaders to make digital communications more meaningful. We look at this also in the context of the Covid-19 crisis, which has exacerbated the need for more effective leadership online and offline.

02

DID YOU KNOW?

Senior leadership is increasingly embracing social media, not only in the EU association landscape, but also in the corporate world. About 10% of Fortune 500 CEOs were personally engaged in social media pre-crisis. It is probably safe to assume an upward trend will soon emerge in the new virtual reality.

03

CHAMPIONS

Cefic – the European Chemical Industry Council, DigitalEurope, UITP – The international association for public transport and European Aluminium.

10. LEADERSHIP

Leading the way

Every organisation needs a spokesperson to create visibility and credibility. Who the spokesperson is and how they are leveraged can be a determining factor in success.

Many European associations count on their leaders to help spread their message, ensuring the voice of their industry is heard. **Cefic** has successfully been leveraging Director General Marco Mensink as a speaker at high-level conferences and on EU platforms on topics relevant to the chemicals sector. **DigitalEurope's** Director General, Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl, understands the power of media as a multiplier, frequently penning articles, giving interviews and participating in or moderating panels.

Beyond being a resource, leaders are also amplifiers when they have their own established digital networks. Take the Secretary General of **UITP**, Mohamed Mezghani, an active and popular Twitter user, who frequently shares the organisation's content, expanding reach and driving further engagement.

Lastly, we noticed that association leaders are increasingly using their digital channels to communicate with more creativity. UITP deployed its leadership to shoot a video for the launch of its new website. "Humanising" its annual activity report, **European Aluminium** – put Chairman Emilio Braghi in front of a camera to explain it with a video.

From the essential to the mundane, the humanisation of associations is a definite trend. And leadership has become exactly that: a role where leaders are required to lead, not just "manage". This increasingly means lending your face to your organisation.



FACTS & FIGURES.

In 2015, 42% of European associations had no social media accounts at all. Five years later, 19% are still without a social media presence.

MOST USED PLATFORMS

Twitter remains the most used platform by European associations at 69%. However, the gap has narrowed sharply, with LinkedIn registering record 9% growth since 2018, bringing it up to 68% of EU associations with an official LinkedIn page.

YouTube registered the same 9% growth rate, with the percentage of associations with a YouTube account doubling between 2015 and 2020. A clear sign that video content has gained momentum in the EU bubble.

Facebook, once in the Top 3, is now lagging behind as growth has been stagnating since 2018. Despite a rise in the use of **Instagram** among EU associations, the visual platform has seen growth of just 6% since 2015. Currently, only 6% use Instagram for official business.

MOST USED PLATFORMS

On Twitter, over the last two years, **WindEurope** has maintained its position as the

association with most followers, still followed very closely by Invest Europe. **Invest Europe** is an outlier with more than 42,000 followers, whereas the median number for a European association is 1,054.

On LinkedIn, **WindEurope** has risen remarkably since 2018 from fifth spot to number one and is now the only organisation inching close to 43,000 followers. It is worth mentioning that the median number of followers on LinkedIn is 598 and 1,054 for Twitter.

On Facebook, **CropLife Europe** is a clear frontrunner with around 90,000 followers.

Interestingly, a number of European associations have set up specific Facebook pages such as Visit Europe by the **European Travel Commission** that reaches close to 140,000 followers.

On Instagram, the **European Broadcasting Union** leads with over 5,800 followers. Since 2015, there has been a steady average of around 2,000 new videos per year, now reaching well over 12,500 videos published.

SECTORS PER PLATFORM

Interestingly enough, certain sectors seem to perform significantly better on some platforms in terms of their audience size.

On Twitter and LinkedIn, the energy sector represents roughly 21% of the whole pool of followers of all EU associations combined. However, on Facebook, 20% of the audience goes to construction and manufacturing.

As for Instagram, the lion's share of the audience (41%) goes to the health and wellbeing.



OUR DIGITAL OFFER.

Our approach is simple: listen, strategise, execute, measure, analyse and evolve. We develop smart data-driven digital strategies to turn complex issues into compelling campaigns that shape opinions, drive advocacy and earn influence.



GET IN TOUCH.

We'd love to hear from you.
Let's connect!

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