

Social Media is Serious Business

A view from European Youth



#GenerationDirect





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CEO and Managing Director, Tata Consultancy Services

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Minister, Federal Government of Belgium

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Foreword by N Chandrasekaran

CEO & MD, Tata Consultancy Services

I am very pleased to launch this report, which serves as the largest ever study of how social media is playing a transformational role in enabling Europe's young people. It continues our mission to ensure that the voice of the youth is made available to political, business and academic leaders - and given due consideration as well as importance in their policy setting agendas.

The evolution of social media has certainly had profound consequences for individuals, organisations and governments. However, for digital natives - the generation who have grown up surrounded by the powerful forces of mobile technologies, Big Data, Cloud, Artificial intelligence and Robotics technologies - social media has not just changed their life, it has revolutionised it.

The insights from the report clearly conclude that Europe's young entrepreneurs, students and professionals are extensively using social media to expand their professional opportunities – securing jobs, enhancing their skills and creating economic growth of their businesses. As one example, 70% of young entrepreneurs have indicated that they were able to successfully secure investment for the ventures through social media. Tata Consultancy Services is also working with 200+ schools across Europe to enhance STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. Our volunteers have noticed a trend of young students increasingly using content, particularly video, from social media to enhance their skills and knowledge – a fact that is validated by this report as well. Most crucially, 45% of those polled also indicated that they had used social media to find jobs – perhaps one of the contributors to the EU28 unemployment rate declining to 8.9%, reaching the level it was in 2009 for the first time after 7 years.

These are encouraging indicators that young people are taking direct action to strengthen their own prospects. Digital had undoubtedly become the default for them and this is a revolution that has extensive consequences for society and the economy.

This 'Generation Direct' is the first generation to innately understand the true power of social media. They understand social media allows them to circumvent traditional recruitment channels and talk directly to potential employers. They know that if they want to start a business, they can have direct contact with their customers. If they want to lobby for political change, they realise they can have direct access to those who hold power or forge large scale petitions.

This entrepreneurial energy from our young people has the potential to provide huge economic benefit for employers, businesses and governments that are willing to embrace it. Our young people literally represent our economic future and we must provide them with appropriate platforms, support and policies. I hope the insights from this report will serve as being useful to leaders across Europe looking to better understand what our young people want from us. In enabling them, we enable our own future.

“Generation Direct, the first generation to innately understand the true power of social media”



Foreword by Alexander De Croo

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Development Cooperation,
Digital Agenda, Telecom and Postal Services, Federal Government
of Belgium

The digital revolution is disrupting all sectors of society, including our learning and working environments. Social media is one of the important catalysts in this profound process of change.

Social media has become pervasive in empowering young Europeans in their educational, academic and professional life. Online tutorials are re-shaping the way we teach skills, our labour market and jobs are re-shuffled by increased collaborative working, and jobhunting will never be the same because of online networks better matching demand and supply in the job market.

Studies as these, give us a sharper view on how this transformative process is developing itself. While the pace of technological change is fast and getting faster, policy-makers are still figuring out how to effectively integrate the enhanced possibilities of the digital age in a broader vision to prepare young people for the jobs of tomorrow. Yet, there are important differences how European countries look at these challenges. Some are pioneering as early adopters, while others are lagging behind.

If we really want to unleash the power of the digital revolution to prepare all young and less young Europeans for the jobs of the future, we have to build a strong common European vision that inspires and motivates. This study could be one of the first building blocks of this common European approach.

“Social media has become pervasive in empowering
young Europeans”

INTRODUCING

#GENERATIONDIRECT

For young people, social networks are not just destinations for entertainment and consumption of media. They are essential vehicles that power every aspect of life – a means, not an end. Just as the motorcar delivered freedom of mobility to generations of teenagers in the 1960s, today's social networks offer a new generation a different type of freedom – the freedom to act, to participate and to drive their own professional futures.

“The new research, which surveyed a representative sample of over 5,000 young people from 15 countries, reveals that social media has come of age.”

In its second major report into the attitudes of young Europeans to the digital future and the changing nature of work, Tata Consultancy Services has created the first large-scale pan-European study exploring how young people, aged between 18 and 29, use social media to pursue employment opportunities, develop skills and enhance the productivity of their companies. The new research, which surveyed a representative sample of over 5,000 young people from 15 countries, reveals that social media has helped to create and empower a new breed of employees and citizens across Europe: Generation Direct.

Social media has trained them to think beyond traditional processes and bureaucracies and go direct to achieve their goals. Generation Direct are ambitious, creative and unimpressed by received wisdom.

In the hands of this new generation, even the most socially-orientated networks are being used as practical tools for taking

action in areas such as education, starting new businesses, job seeking, career and skills development, and in participation in public life.

This research demonstrates that Generation Direct, as digital natives raised in a socially-enabled world, do not see social media as discrete channels for networking or entertainment so much as a mode for achieving virtually anything that needs to be done. In traditional media, this change has already been seen in the shift from the 'lean-in' experience of consuming broadcast media towards participating online, with users generating and sharing their own content. This has seen a move away from conventional, formal hierarchies to less predictable, flexible networks. This research makes clear that Generation Direct are carrying this assumption of participation and interactivity even further into their careers and public life than might have been expected.

This represents a major opportunity for Europe. In a crucial period of economic regeneration, the EU's Digital Agenda places the access to digital goods and services, investment in network infrastructure and creation of a knowledge economy at the heart of its strategy to meet the challenges of a digital age. A key pillar of the strategy is the creation of more inclusive societies that improve access to essential digital skills. Yet amongst young people, we are already seeing many of the conditions for inclusivity and knowledge sharing being constructed from the bottom up – with social media powering the transformation. This is encouraging as it confirms that there is strong demand for greater infrastructure investment and that goals of the strategy are well aligned to the needs of young Europeans.

Furthermore, as this research shows, the young European entrepreneurs of today are already confirming that access to digital services - and social media in particular – is having a positive impact on the growth of their companies, while also empowering students to address crucial skills gaps. In enabling these trends, we are seeing a path forged to a more competitive Europe.

An overhead photograph of a meeting table with several people. They are all looking at and interacting with their mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets. The table is made of light-colored wood. The people are dressed in business casual attire. The image is used as a background for the text on the page.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The rise of social media has made the way we communicate, discover information and share ideas **more immediate, more accessible and more democratic than ever before.**
- These changes have helped to shape and empower the generation of young people that have grown up among these technologies, creating a new breed of employees and citizens across Europe: **Generation Direct.**
- **This generation uses social media for productive purposes** and not just for connecting with friends – primarily by expanding networks of business contacts, collaborating with others and improving skills through tutorials.
- Young people are using social media to **bypass traditional structures** and find job opportunities, improve their employment prospects and connect entrepreneurs with talent. Social media is therefore emerging as an important tool to tackle the unemployment challenge in Europe.
- Against the backdrop of a growing skills gap in Europe, **social media is playing a strong role in skills development.** Generation Direct use social channels to learn through tutorials, and believe that skills acquired online make them more marketable.
- Even in formal education, social media is used to get ahead. Students are engaging on social media extensively to improve their skills, but **universities are not always helpful in creating access.**
- **Young entrepreneurs lead in using social media for productivity,** leveraging it heavily to expand their businesses and create economic growth.
- As employees, Generation Direct believe that social media can help boost collaboration in their companies. However, **business leaders are often surprisingly slow to tap into social media** as a tool to engage with young people in their companies.
- **Generation Direct use social media as a force for change,** signing online petitions and joining pressure groups. They feel this enables them to champion their cause.
- Young people use the networks they want in the ways they want. Due to its high uptake, **Facebook emerges as the number one professional medium among young Europeans,** more popular than specialist platforms such as LinkedIn.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA VARIES BY COUNTRY

While there are clear implications for policy makers at an EU level, it's important to note that **young people in different countries are using social media in different ways.** Through the course of this research, a significant geographical divide was observed in both the use and attitudes toward social media: **Southern and Eastern countries were predominantly more active in embracing the benefits of social media, compared with a more conservative approach in the North.**

Young people in Eastern and Southern European countries were noted to be particularly engaged and positive about the applications of social media to address gaps left by the education system or to manage in a challenging jobs market. Meanwhile, **youth in Germany and Nordic countries display different behaviours.** Here, our results show, youth are less likely to engage on social media and less likely to think of it as an enabler for personal or wider improvement.

Cultural differences and divergent views on privacy may contribute to this divide but it can also be explained by the lack of alternative resources. While German and Nordic young people are more guarded about sharing information online, young Southern and Eastern Europeans are more willing to proactively seek innovative ways to create new opportunities. This is perhaps due to a greater need; **young people in countries that are undergoing greater economic challenges seem especially open to social media usage for professional purposes.**





PURSUING EMPLOYMENT



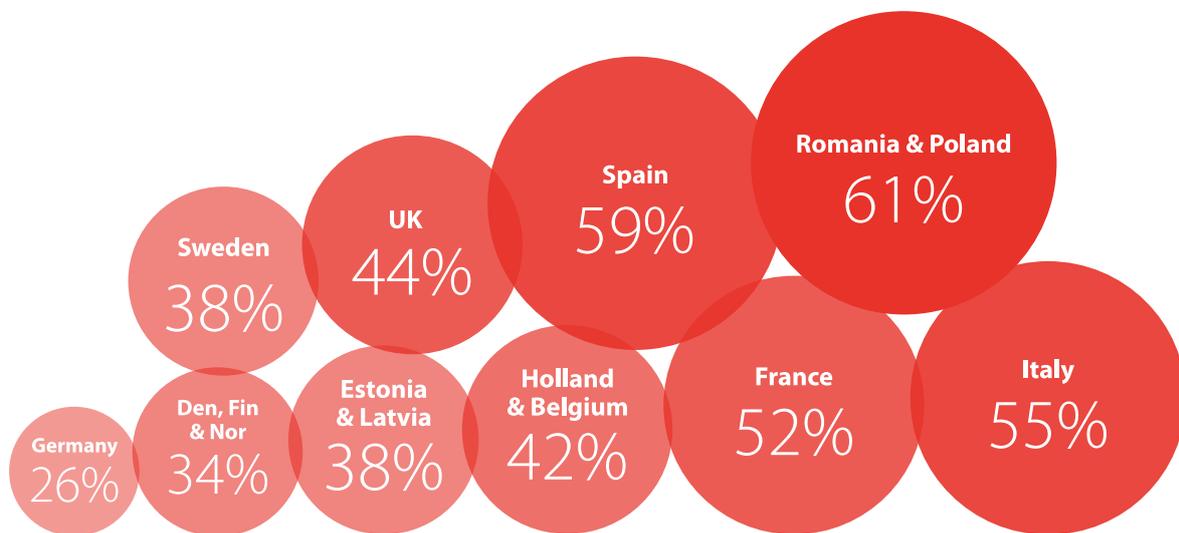
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Social media is emerging as a way to connect young people with employment opportunity

This research paints a very clear picture of Generation Direct: an empowered generation accelerating their prospects through active use of social media. Yet, for many, this optimistic picture is set against a context of adversity. Youth unemployment in Europe, sparked by the 2008 financial crisis, has remained a constant problem across the continent. Youth unemployment was 20.7% in the EU28 countries in 2015 (europa.eu), making it necessary for young Europeans to use every tool at their disposal to improve their chances of gaining employment. While online portals are now an established tool for jobseekers, the role of social media in improving and directly accessing job prospects has until this point remained largely unexplored.



% using social media to find job opportunities



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For Generation Direct, social media is a natural channel for the active pursuit of job opportunities. This research shows that **almost half of young Europeans who are on social media have used it to find jobs (45%)**. Moreover, this is a highly successful channel, with **43% of students stating that social media has improved their prospects of finding a job** after completing education.

Generation Direct strongly endorse the utility of social media in tackling unemployment. **Two-thirds of young European jobseekers who've used social media to find a new job opportunity found it useful (66%)**.

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Our survey found that young people are, in essence, reaching out to their online peer network in a digital 'word-of-mouth' campaign.

Highest uptake in countries with high unemployment

Notably, those countries where young people are more likely to use social media to look for job opportunities are also some with the highest youth unemployment rates. Overall such findings suggest that a generation often labelled as disengaged is actually highly resourceful in the face of challenging circumstances.



In Spain, a country where youth unemployment is as high as 53%, three in five young people (59%) have used social media to find a job.



In contrast, in Germany, where youth unemployment is less than 10%, fewer than three in ten young Germans (26%) have used social media to find a job opportunity. This could be attributed to higher levels of concern on privacy and more available alternatives to the social media channel.



Use of social media to find new job opportunities is highest among the most qualified: 62% of those with a postgraduate degree, and 52% of those with a university degree have used social media to find a job.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Generation Direct are successfully using social media to circumnavigate traditional employment processes, accessing work opportunities directly and helping to tackle the unemployment challenge in Europe.





Ilaria Maselli
Research Fellow, Jobs & Skills Unit, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)

I think the rise of social media as a tool for recruitment is not surprising. On the one hand it offers low transaction costs for those advertising positions and on the other it is the primary channel that young people use for all communication. This makes it a natural place for them to seek employment and to promote their qualities. I think it is also natural that Facebook is currently of great importance, as young people will seek to use the largest and most diverse networks to further their goals.

And yet I do feel that we have further to go to take full advantage of these trends. Social media has not yet reached the age of peak data. Even without using personally identifiable information, organisations can analyse social media to better understand what people are learning, what businesses need and where the skills gaps are.

“This makes it a natural place for them to seek employment”

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The social media channels with a higher degree of reach/penetration and user-friendliness are also being used to find job opportunities. They are used because of their potential to broaden the job search and to present a rounded persona rather than an impersonal CV. Engagement through social media is also the most direct access to a potential employer and is seen by young Europeans as the first step in the interview process, before a face-to-face engagement.

Among those who are using social media to actively search for job opportunities, Facebook, the most popular platform generally, is the most used (46% used Facebook for this purpose).

LinkedIn, a specialist professional network, often seen as the best route to employers, has fewer overall users and, among those who are using social media to search for job opportunities, lags behind (28%).



Facebook widely used, Lower uptake hinders LinkedIn

One striking discovery made by this research was that Generation Direct use social media and networks flexibly, adapting them to their needs. For example, the most 'social' of social networks, Facebook, is actually used more extensively than the more professional online networks for seeking employment or during individuals' professional lives.



Xavier Estève,
Head of the Career Service, College of Europe, Bruges, Belgium

The report confirms that social media is playing a growing role for students to find a position or to start with a new enterprise. However it is also important to make students understand that they have to be attentive to what they are doing on social networks and especially on Facebook where you have no clear limit between the private and the professional.

This problem is reduced with LinkedIn as it is only dedicated to professional purposes, but the information provided also has to be carefully thought through, which is not always achieved as well as with the traditional CV. One of the other issues with digital means is that applicants tend to communicate in a non-formal way that is not suitable in a professional framework – for example, as a recruiter, I have often received applications where the cover letter was fine but the email which was used to send it was totally inappropriate. In this respect, we try to draw the attention of the students on these issues through presentations organised by our Career Service or the academic departments themselves.

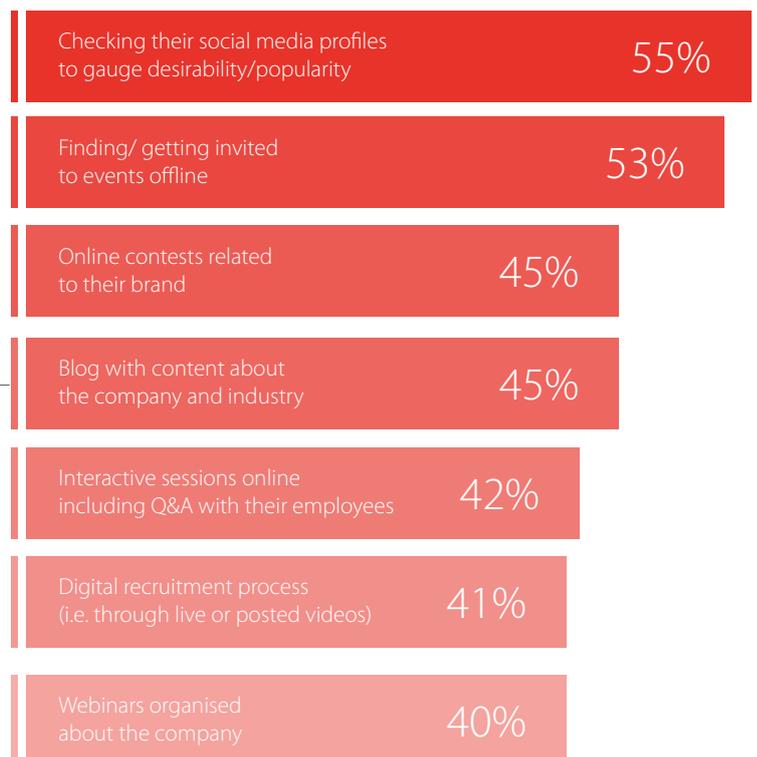
“Social media is playing a growing role for students to find a position or to start with a new enterprise”

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Social networking: a new career skill

For Generation Direct, social media is an active and obvious tool to accelerate their careers. We found that students are bypassing traditional processes and engaging directly with potential employers through social media in a number of ways.

Although not all companies have a social media presence, students are demanding interaction via these channels, and actively seeking contact with prospective employers. This ranges from checking corporate profiles to participating in online contests and interactive sessions (see chart below). This is particularly relevant given that social media has not yet been seen as a key channel in the efforts to tackle unemployment across Europe. Indeed, many career services still focus on the traditional routes of written CVs and job interviews.



There is also evidence that this desire to use social media to start a dialogue with prospective employees is reciprocated by employers – most notably by those who themselves belong to Generation Direct. Our research showed that **three in five young entrepreneurs (60%) agreed that social media enables them to find freelancing staff** on an ad hoc basis.

Case studies in this survey demonstrate that social media groups linking jobseekers to employers can be a cost-effective method for recruiting new staff.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

To attract and retain the best young talent, companies must actively position themselves on social media, especially on channels with a high degree of use and reach. Generation Direct are unimpressed by traditional recruitment processes and large companies should focus their use of social media on engaging young people inside and outside their companies.





Patrick Thomas

Chairman of the Board of Management and CEO, Covestro, Germany
Chairman of the EIL Industrial Advisory Board



The use of social media to engage with young talent and to attract them into our companies is something everyone in industry recognises as essential. This year the European Institute for Industrial Leadership concluded our own study of over 500 18-30 year-olds and 250 industry managers. 'Workplace 2020' found that it is not just attraction of talent which should matter to our members; industrial companies also need to create the working environment, and develop workplace behaviours amongst its current managers, which will help them to retain their best young talent.

Young people want to feel valued at work; they want to take responsibility early for meaningful work, and to produce great results for which they will get recognition. Increased social media use in the workplace helps them collaborate in their own way, to create and access networks, to find ways around the organisation's hierarchies - all good practices that help young people contribute more effectively. TCS' study seems to confirm that these social media-enabled ways of working are becoming more widespread.

Young people want to feel part of the company they work for, and to contribute to its direction, so as business leaders we need to give them the opportunity to be heard (and to hear us, without filters). More widespread and better use of social media is surely one of the ways to get the best ideas from young people into executive levels of our companies, and all levels in between. I would read from this TCS study, and I know from our own experience, that some companies are beginning to get this message but I also agree that more European companies could do more to create the right environment to retain their best young talent.

"Young people want to feel part of the company they work for"

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Mary Kunnenkeril

Director, Three Hands, UK



The breadth and depth of TCS' recent report on young people's growing use of social media for employment purposes is impressive. This data provides companies with the justification to begin questioning whether they are interacting with their future talent in the right way, and if they are not, to question whether this is a barrier to them being an employer of choice for young people.

A secondary consideration is to what extent young people understand the need to distinguish between their personal social media presence and their professional social media presence? As companies seek to adapt to the way young people use social media; young people must also be aware of adapting their use of social media for the professional world and this is potentially an area where business and young people can learn from one another.

"Business and young people can learn from one another"

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Manuel Moreno

Brussels DIGITALEUROPE

www.digitaleurope.org

TELL US HOW YOU STARTED

Manuel is currently Creative Communications & Events Manager at DIGITALEUROPE, the voice of the European digital technology industry. He is also the winner of “Most Inspirational Career Campaigner” European Award of the eSkills for Jobs 2015 Campaign.

You recently won an award for your use of social media to find a job – tell us about it

The eSkills for Jobs campaign, part of the EU eSkills strategy, is a Europe-wide initiative highlighting the need for citizens to improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills at work.

There were five categories in the 2015 competition, and I entered the “Most Inspirational Career Campaigner” with a fully integrated digital submission. In this, I explained every step I’d taken to eventually find a job: developing my own ‘brand’ and using my social media expertise to create an inspirational cross-channel communications campaign aimed at other jobseekers, with a range of memes and gifs across Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

I have always had an entrepreneurial streak, constantly learning new skills online and constantly taking steps to progress my career, so when I heard I had won – based on a jury of ICT experts and the impact on social media (number of likes, comments and shares on the eSkills for Jobs YouTube channel) – I was thrilled.

What advice would you give other young people searching for work?

To be honest, the award was about more than winning something, it was about showing what the future of job-seeking is. I really believe that the traditional path of recruitment no longer exists, and that applying for a job now must take advantage of all channels available, with an integrated strategy that uses social media to its full potential.

In fact, to sum it up, I’ll use the last line of my YouTube awards video: “Creativity and the use of digital tools helped me to get a job. It may help you too, why don’t you start now?”

Do you think there are any challenges to the social media recruitment process?

The main challenge I faced was how to change perceptions of senior leaders – the older generation who may not realise the power of social media.

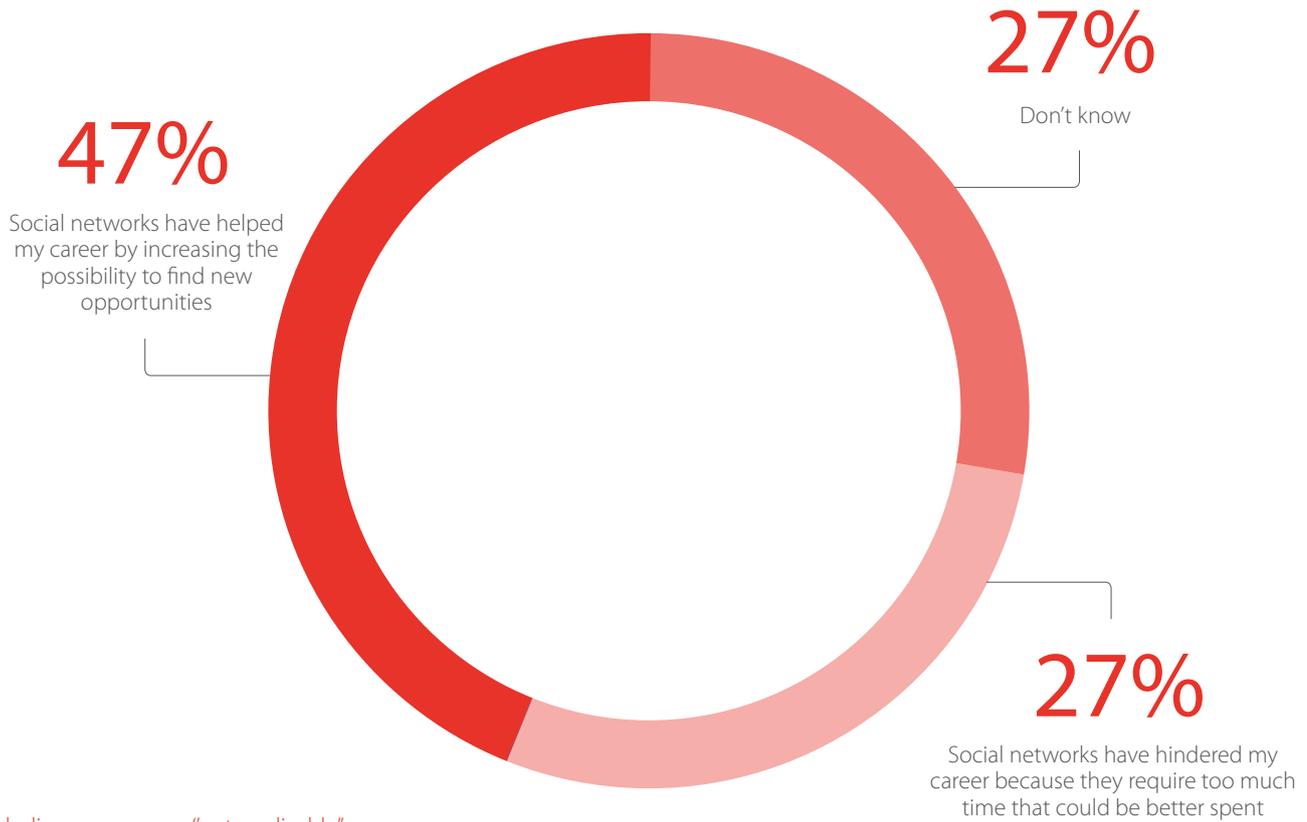
When I started in my role at DIGITALEUROPE, the organisation was not embracing what social media channels could do for us but today, after having experienced tremendous growth, it’s become a crucial way to promote our activities and to impact our target audiences. Now, they are always thinking about social media, which is great, but it does prove some generations might need convincing about it first.

What is next for you?

At DIGITALEUROPE, I will keep working on the corporate communication of the association as well as on other campaigns we are involved in to promote digital tech and to bridge the digital skills gap in Europe. On a personal level, I will keep learning, keep developing and keep exploring as many new, exciting possibilities as I can.

Future career enabler

All these findings challenge the long-standing view that social media is simply a platform for social interaction; instead, creative and ambitious young Europeans see it as an opportunity to directly seek out new work opportunities. Around half of young Europeans (**47%**) agree that **social networks have helped their career** by increasing the possibility of finding new opportunities.



Excluding responses = "not applicable"



Maximilian Malterer
President of AIESEC Germany

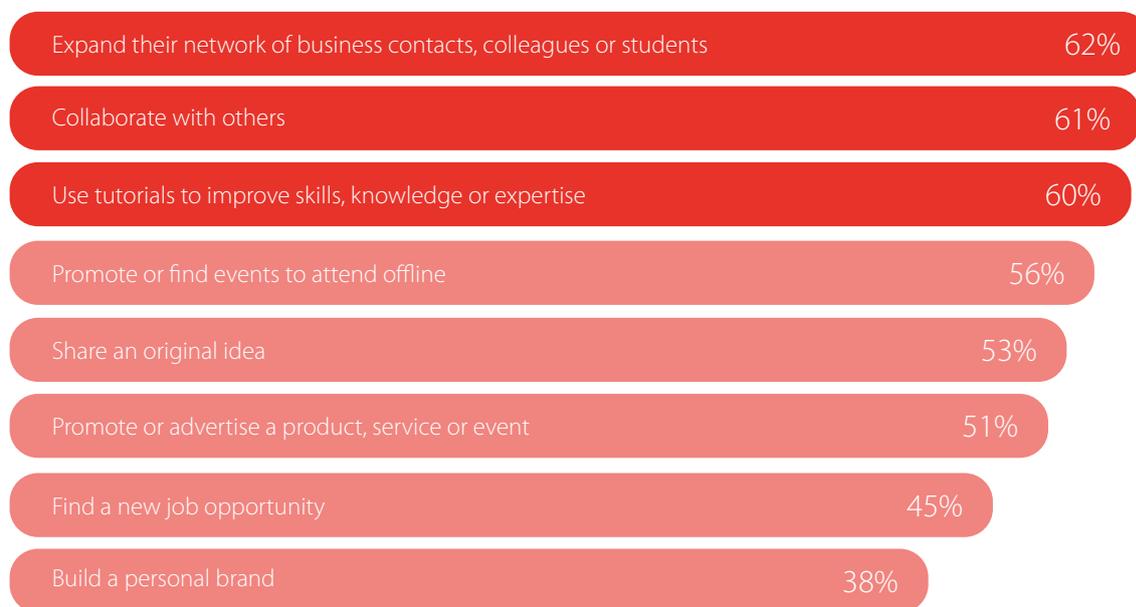
"Social media is key to connecting organisations internally and externally, thus driving organisational results. In AIESEC they support us in reaching students all across Germany who want to drive change in our society and then engage them in one of AIESEC's leadership development programs. Furthermore, internally they strongly reduce the complexity of communication as a bottom-up youth-led organisation and enable collaboration across 42 locations."

"Social media is key to connecting organisations internally and externally"

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YOUNG EUROPEANS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, FOR THE MOST PART, INCLUDES PROFESSIONAL TASKS SUCH AS EXPANDING THEIR NETWORK, OR USING TUTORIALS TO IMPROVE SKILLS.

% using social media for the following tasks



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ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

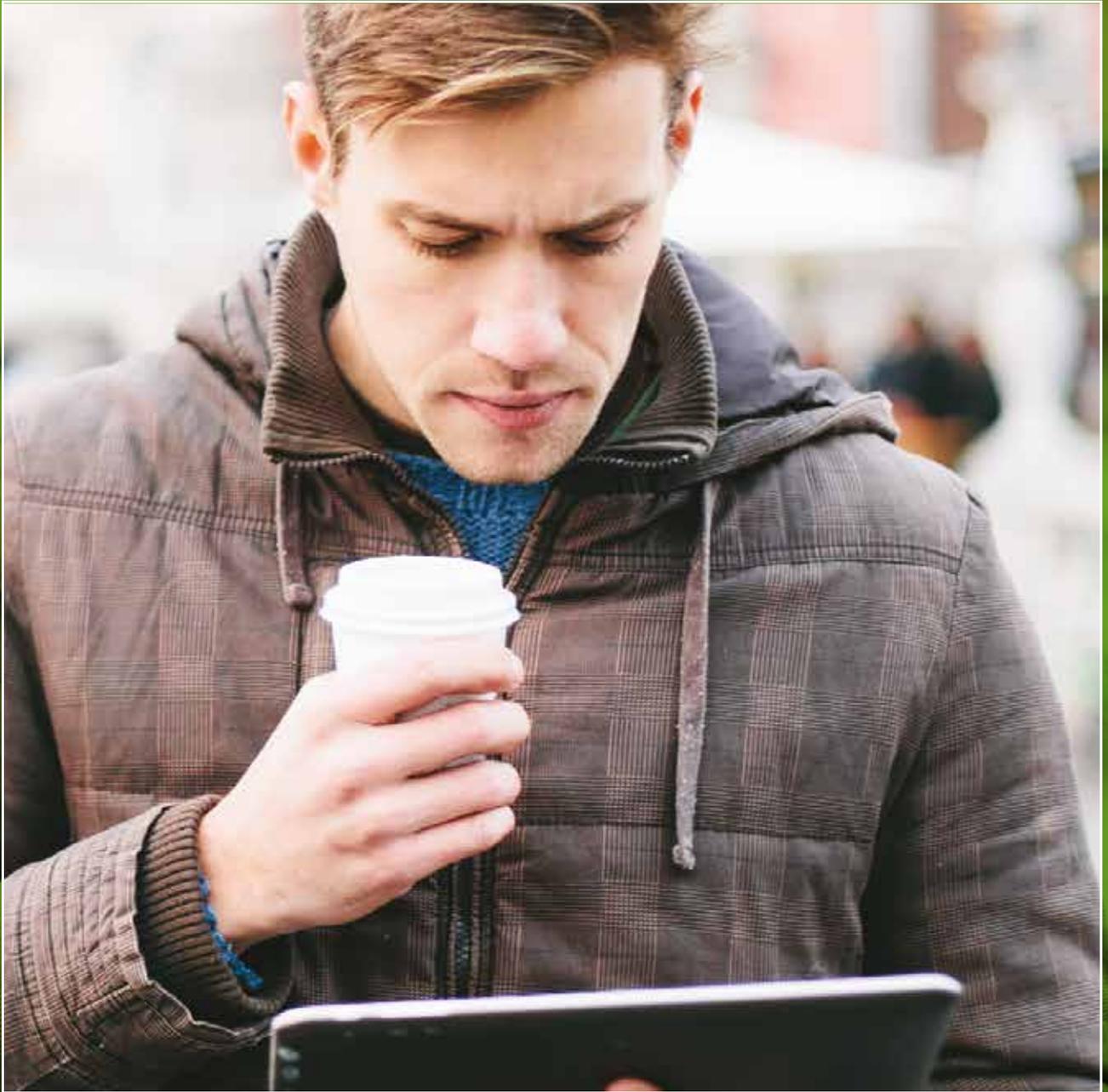
Social media is shaping the job market for both recruiters and jobseekers, so to keep pace, leaders must ensure their organisations adapt – or they risk losing the best talent to their more agile competitors. Social media is playing an ever-greater role in the professional life of Generation Direct, who see it as means to bypass traditional processes to take action into their own hands.







DRIVING
GROWTH



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Driving growth

The European Union recognises that stimulating entrepreneurship is the key to bringing back growth after the economic crisis, and Generation Direct in particular are at the forefront of demands for a new digitally-led, socially-enabled start-up economy. This research has shown that social media is an important enabler for young entrepreneurs, both as a means of engagement and as a direct contributor to their economic success.

Across all measures, young entrepreneurs appear more engaged and productive on social media than their peers.

“Entrepreneurs appear more engaged and productive on social media than their student or employee counterparts.”

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN YOUNG PEOPLE OVERALL TO USE TUTORIALS TO IMPROVE SKILLS...



...TO EXPAND THEIR NETWORKS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA...



...AND TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS.



YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS



YOUNG PEOPLE

SOCIAL MEDIA IS A VITAL BUSINESS TOOL FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

When it comes to tasks specific to entrepreneurs, such as marketing their companies and securing additional finance, we noted an even higher degree of engagement with social media. Generation Direct has bred entrepreneurs who intuitively know that social platforms such as Facebook are critical within these business contexts.

CONNECTING TO CLIENTS, GROWING BUSINESS

Four in five European entrepreneurs use social media to promote their business, product or service to potential customers (78%), with the majority of those who do so, using Facebook for this purpose (59%), and only 14% using LinkedIn.

Three quarters of entrepreneurs also engage with existing clients via social media (77%) – with two in five doing this daily or more frequently (41%). Again, Facebook is the most popular channel for entrepreneurs (59%).



Gavin Perera-Betts Executive Director of Product and Marketing at National Employment Savings Trust (NEST), UK

The study shows that European youth use social media extensively to enhance their productivity, whether they are students, entrepreneurs or employees and we recognise this trend. Social media is increasingly a core way of not only communicating but also doing business. For example, social media marketing allows young entrepreneurs to reach a large audience with low advertising costs; the networks developed through social media allow young professionals to connect with, influence and learn from like-minded people. Organisations that provide digital services and use social media to connect with their customers and stakeholders of course have a duty to ensure that these services are secure and provide what their customers need. The importance of this is only likely to increase as the services these organisations provide - and the expectations of customers - get more and more sophisticated.

“Social media is increasingly a core way of...doing business”

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share



Peter Todd
Dean of HEC Paris - École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Paris, France

Young entrepreneurs are leading users of social media and are heavily leveraging it to expand their businesses and create economic growth. With a customer-centric approach, companies can use such platforms as a fantastic source of information, to listen to their clients, understand their journey and enhance their experience. In this way, they can succeed in providing a better service or better products. Some companies go even further and leverage the collaborative aspects of the Internet to make value for a large range of stakeholders. At HEC Paris, we see all of this in the stories of our alumni who have gone on to build successful businesses in these fields. For instance, Lending Club is a peer-to-peer lending company set up by HEC Paris graduate Renaud Laplanche. It uses the social media technology and mind-set to operate an online lending platform that enables borrowers to obtain a loan and investors to purchase notes backed by payments made on loans. The world's largest peer-to-peer lending platform, it is a company that would not exist without today's social media technologies and culture.

“Young entrepreneurs...are heavily leveraging social media to expand their businesses and create economic growth”

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Connecting entrepreneurs to finance

Generation Direct entrepreneurs are using social media to circumvent traditional banks and receive funding straight from investors. In fact, **seven out of ten use social media to attract potential investors (70%)**.

This is particularly pertinent as a number of European markets are still experiencing reduced bank lending for entrepreneurs. Problems in securing finance remain a significant obstacle for start-ups and the leading cause of market exit.

More than half (54%) of the ever-innovative Generation Direct entrepreneurs say social media enables businesses to crowdsource.



Eva Paunova

Member of the European Parliament, Bulgaria

This study shows that the use of social media is stronger in countries with a higher rate of unemployment, which also appears to be countries with weaker economies. The fact that smaller, less digitised countries have a higher rate of leveraging the benefit of social media makes sense to me. By using digitisation and especially social media, weaker economic systems gain the chance to participate in the world economy. This benefit is also very useful for start-ups and SMEs as social media is an effective and cost-efficient tool in terms of marketing. I believe that social media can boost our businesses and improve the economy throughout Europe.

“I believe that social media can boost our businesses and improve the economy throughout Europe”



Like



Comment



Share

The enthusiasm for social media means that around half of young entrepreneurs surveyed indicated it had improved the fortunes of their businesses.

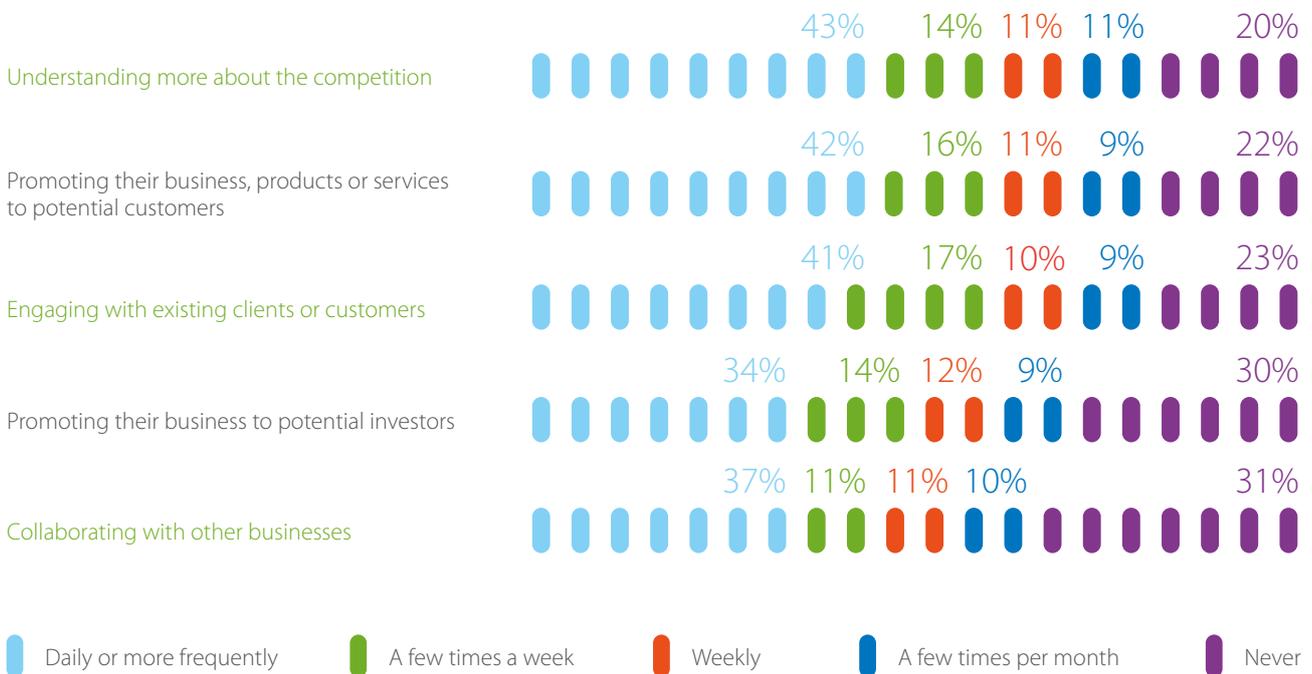
54% say social media has improved prospects of growing their business

47% say it has helped attract new investment

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS ARE MORE LIKELY TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE THEIR BUSINESSES.



% of entrepreneurs using social media for different tasks:



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Campaigning for growth: the entrepreneur as micro-lobbyist

Entrepreneurs emerge as an active, engaged group who leverage social media for their benefit. **Half of young entrepreneurs say it has improved prospects of campaigning for start-ups (50%) and their industry (50%).**

Entrepreneurs are also the most likely among all young people to have **signed an online petition through social media – 67% say they have done so.**

Young entrepreneurs are emerging as innovators who view social media as a place for a two-way dialogue. One where they both acquire customers and benefit from their input and collaboration.



Ilhan Kyuchyuk
Member of the European Parliament, Bulgaria

I am not surprised that according to the findings of your research, 78% of European entrepreneurs use social media to promote their business, products or services to potential customers. For new start-up companies, SMEs and entrepreneurs, creating brand awareness and achieving faster recognition on a limited budget can often be challenging. Social media is a great way to tackle this issue and the most important thing - at little to no cost compared to other traditional advertising and marketing methods. As companies create blogs and link their businesses activities to social media accounts, they further improve their visibility online and have the opportunity to improve the service they provide, based on customer demands. Users can like, comment and share pages thereby creating free advertising to expand businesses and bring in potential customers.

“For new start-up companies, SMEs and entrepreneurs, creating brand awareness...can often be challenging. Social media is a great way to tackle this issue”

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Markus Beyrer
Director General, BUSINESSEUROPE

It is interesting that young entrepreneurs use social media to improve their resources, skills and personal profile. The online environment allows businesses to exchange information and best practices between each other. Social media can facilitate contact between entrepreneurs and investors to improve access to finance, also within the alternative finance market – for instance using crowdfunding. The digital revolution is changing value chains of many businesses. In this environment, new digital professional profiles are needed at all levels.’

“New digital professional profiles are needed at all levels”

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Generation Direct entrepreneurs are nimble, ambitious and, most importantly, successful users of social media for improving their businesses. They are the group that has most maximised the opportunities offered by social media, taking financing into their own hands by going straight to their investors and crowd-funding.





Hera Hussain

London CHAYN

chayn.co

TELL US HOW YOU STARTED

To be honest, I started by accident in 2013 after helping a friend from Pakistan escape domestic abuse. We googled 'How to make a legal case' and quickly realised there was little information out there to support vulnerable women. I instantly knew I wanted to change this and, because I was volunteering at the time for MakeSense, an online hub for social entrepreneurs, I knew how. After reaching out to this huge network, I soon had the resources and knowledge to start an open source gender and tech project empowering women against violence – which became Chayn. We now produce crowdsourced platforms and how-to toolkits, and run digital services and hackathons that offer empowering solutions to vulnerable women around the world.

How did social media help you grow?

Social media is the essence of Chayn, and without it, we wouldn't exist, let alone grow. It initially enabled us to launch two crowdsourced platforms. Since then, it has enabled us to both run our organisation and have direct contact with volunteers and the women we are trying to help. Through the power of social media, we have recruited 70 volunteers from 11 countries, offering an average of 500 volunteer hours a month and reaching over 60,000 people around the globe.

Name the key social media channels for Chayn

We use Slack to run our processes, Twitter for general communication, and Facebook as the primary forum for interaction, be that collaborating with volunteers or being a support for vulnerable women. We have found many of these women instinctively feel more secure in Facebook groups, talking and accessing information in a way they would not when face to face.

Social media has also helped us educate; Ammal is Chayn's education network for women, where they can collaborate, share, discuss, and access workshops we run on improving employability skills, like self-branding, design and coding. We have a rule that women can't progress to the next level unless they teach three other women what they learnt in their first course, an idea which creates a community of female support and celebration, and is easily tracked on social media.

Were there any challenges to using social media?

The danger of sourcing volunteers on social media is that people often feel they have 'done their bit' simply by being part of a Facebook group. We have learnt to carefully monitor our users now, and only keep people who actively contribute.

Another challenge is more of a general social media challenge, rather than specific to me – I think for some people, social media still has a bad reputation, seen as a personal space not a productive space. But they don't realise you have to be on it; everyone is there. For the people we are trying to reach, Facebook is a habit.

Obviously, there are many harassment dangers in social media too, where women are targeted and social networks do not do enough to protect them. This is something constantly being raised by activists, including ourselves.

What's next for Chayn?

We are looking to scale up what we are currently doing; our aim is to develop survivor-led initiatives, training women who have been through abuse to join networks of support, learn new skills, become happy and independent – and, when they can, pay this forward.



Philippe Vanrie
CEO, EBN - The European Business & Innovation Centre Network



Today's economic challenges in Europe are allowing more and more people to exploit their entrepreneurial potential. For young people this is especially true. Youth unemployment rates are generally much higher than unemployment rates for other ages, so entrepreneurship might be a good solution to start tackling this issue. An entrepreneurial mind-set also enhances a young person's chances of finding a job.

This study shows that seven in ten entrepreneurs are already using social media to promote their business to potential investors. This is particularly valuable since social media has proven very useful in helping entrepreneurs build their business model. It does so by allowing them to gain knowledge and market intelligence on their target audiences, by creating meaningful relationships with their clients, and by giving them the opportunity to receive interactive feedback on their MVPs easily and quickly.

Policy-makers have now realised that entrepreneurs and innovators are the best people likely to create the jobs and growth the economy needs. Entrepreneurship and in particular SMEs are the backbone of Europe's economy and represent the most important source of new employment. At EBN - which is an international network of business and innovation centres and organisations that support the development and growth of innovative entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs - our members are increasingly working closer with universities and young people in order to make them aware that entrepreneurship is a career option which allows them to create not only their own job, but possibly many others. We support the development of new strategies and policies to increase the uptake of entrepreneurship as both a skill and a viable career option for young Europeans.

"Policy-makers have now realised that entrepreneurs and innovators are the best people likely to create jobs and growth the economy needs"

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BOOSTING SKILLS



 Like

 Comment

 Share

Against the backdrop of a growing skills gap in Europe, social media is playing a strong role in skills development. In both formal education and in work, young peoples' proactivity online is delivering 'network effects', where peers can easily collaborate and share information. This self-driven learning is having a huge effect on education, enhancing the traditional, system of teacher-driven learning.

Social media supports self-directed learning

With the European Commission helping to fund new courses to meet the digital skills gap, research has confirmed that real demand exists. Across Europe, Generation Direct are showing a willingness to learn online and drive their own education.



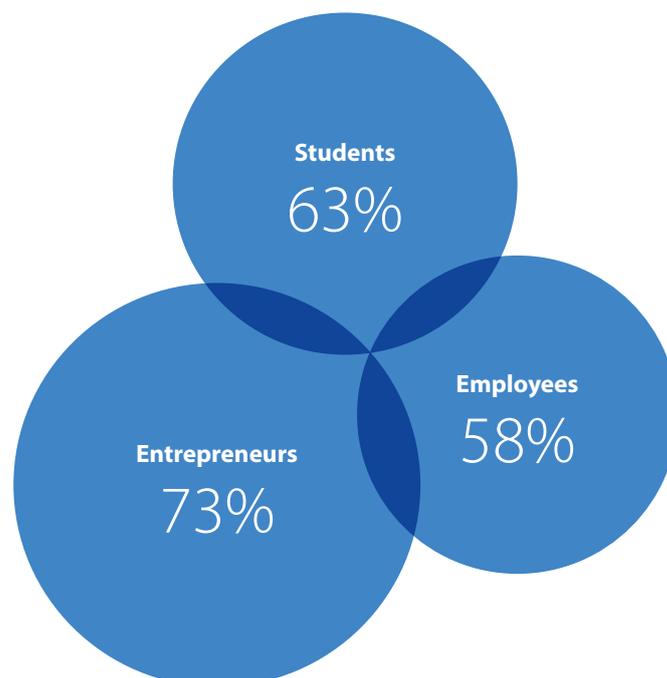
- Three in five (**60%**) young Europeans on social media use it to improve skills, knowledge and expertise through tutorials.
- **42%** of young people across Europe say they can learn new skills and sector knowledge online that make them marketable to industries outside their own.

While MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) provide a more formalised way of learning, the last few years have also seen the dramatic rise of the 'V-logger' or 'YouTuber'. This has resulted in a rapidly-expanding and lucrative industry that is encouraging more people to start their own tutorial channels, providing an even greater breadth of opportunity for self-directed learning. Our research has shown the degree to which these new opportunities are valued by young people.

- Four in five young Europeans who have used any social media platform for tutorials to improve their skills, knowledge and expertise find it useful for this purpose (**79%**), with YouTube the most used platform (**68%**).
- Uptake for improving skills through tutorials is once again greater in Southern and Eastern Europe, while Germany and Nordic countries see far smaller proportions of young people using social media with this aim.

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% WHO USE TUTORIALS TO IMPROVE SKILLS



The tighter job markets in Southern and Eastern countries could be pushing young Europeans to up-skill and reskill in order to gain employment, explaining why they are more likely to use social media for this purpose. Another explanation could be the different education systems of these countries – young people in Spain and Italy could simply be attempting to fill gaps in their education.



Sara Mella
Executive Vice President, Nordea Bank Finland Plc

I was especially interested in how social media is felt to improve skills. It is known as a platform for sharing, but it is notable how many think it has a strong impact, actually improving skills. Also a significant number think it has improved their potential to achieve better grades which opens up great possibilities to anyone motivated to improve their abilities, regardless of their background or economic status.

“It is notable how many think [social media] has a strong impact, actually improving skills”

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Susan Danger
Managing Director, American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union

Addressing the skills gap is fundamental to jobs, growth and developing a competitive Europe. Policy action is needed to help equip citizens for the needs of the workplace, and social media is definitely part of the solution. It is encouraging to see 42% of respondents here using skills learned online to become more marketable to employers. From the point of view of our own organisation, we are certainly seeing this potential to use online training, with a huge number of webinars and online training available. From a practical perspective, this makes it much easier to give staff the opportunity to develop their skills without necessarily needing to go offsite.

“We are certainly seeing this potential to use online training”

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ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Young Europeans are engaging on social media extensively to improve their skills, making social media a key channel in helping bridge the skills gaps.



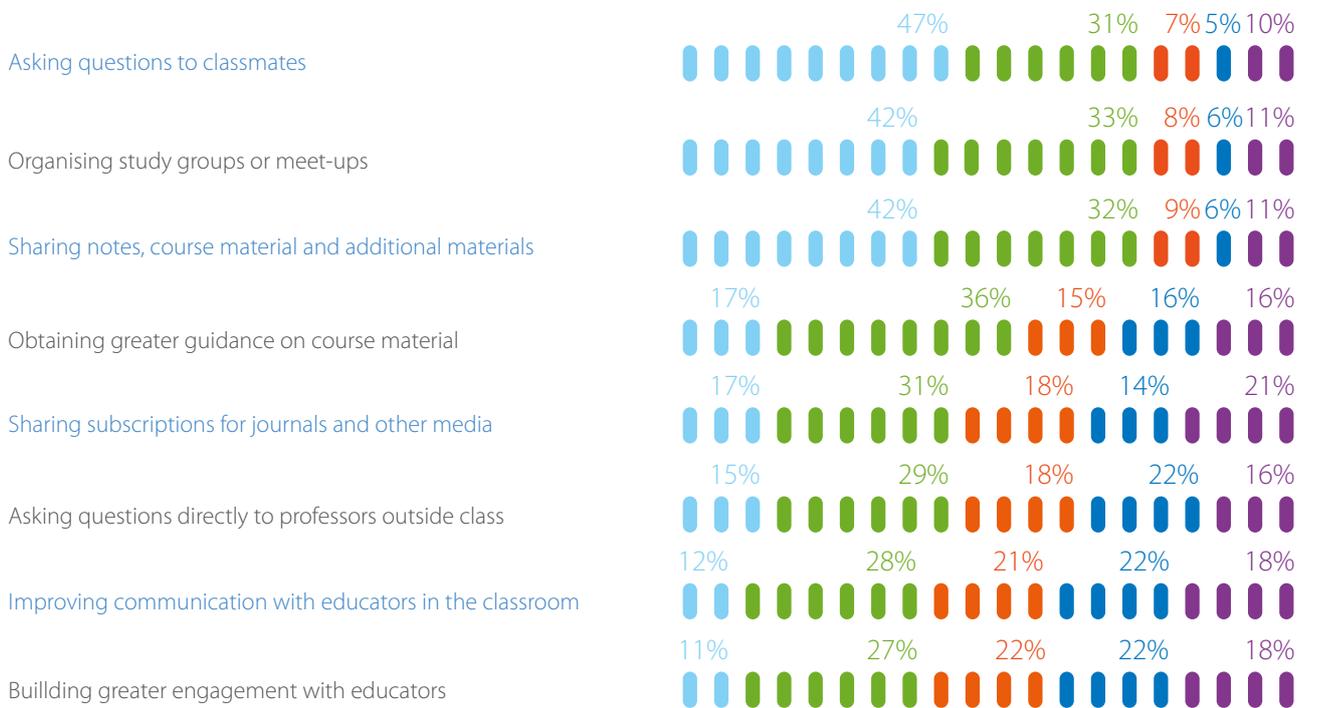
Connecting with peers / classmates

While the entrepreneurs of Generation Direct are using the pervasive reach of social media to maximise the possibilities for their businesses, students are demonstrating high levels of proactivity in using these platforms to improve their education experience, via peer-networking and sharing educational material. Given that students are a very active group on social media, initiatives aimed at improving their educational achievement could resonate well through these platforms.

FOR EXAMPLE, ALMOST NINE IN TEN STUDENTS (88%) USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO TALK TO CLASSMATES ABOUT COURSE RELATED ISSUES.



% with which students agree social media enables different tasks:



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Fairly agree
 ■ Fairly disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know

👍 Like
 💬 Comment
 ➦ Share

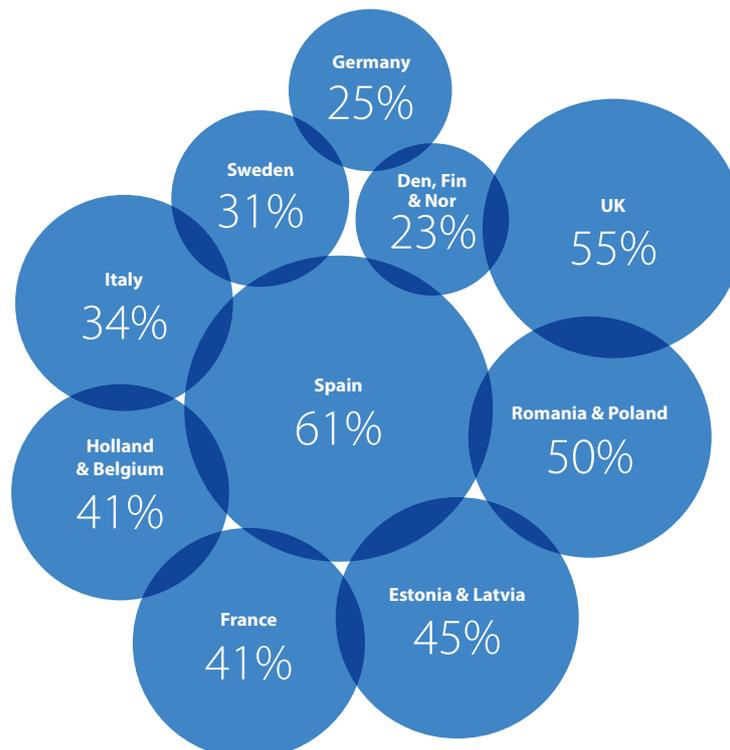
Social media and educational attainment

The relationship between social media use and attainment has proved to be a subtle one, varying greatly by country. Notably, in countries with the highest social media use, young people report that this has improved their prospects of achieving better grades.

In Spain, where students report that they engage with their peers to a great extent online, three in five students feel their use of social media has improved their prospects of achieving better grades (61%).

Alternatively, in Germany, where engagement with peers via social media is not as frequent, only one in four say social media has improved their attainment prospects (25%).

% OF STUDENTS WHO FEEL SOCIAL MEDIA IMPROVES CHANCES OF ACHIEVING BETTER GRADES



Room for growth: the role of educators

While student engagement on social media is generally high and in some cases correlated with high academic attainment, this seldom translates to improved relationships with their educators, who are failing to adapt to the shifts in behaviour.

- Only two in five students think **social media enables them to build greater engagement with educators (39%)** or to **improve communication with educators in the classroom (39%)**.
- This could be because the majority of students are not being taught by digitally confident teachers. Indeed many fail to see and apply the benefits of social media within and outside the classroom.
- It might also be because the structure and format of courses and curricula do not really allow for use of social media. In the worst case, use of social media is restricted. One in five students **(20%) indicate that social media platforms are restricted within their university** with **Facebook (the most widely used social media platform) restricted for 14%** of students across Europe. Too few universities are matching student demands for a social-media powered 'open education' model. It is counter-intuitive that universities are still blocking access when it can improve educational outcomes.



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

The skills gap across Europe can be plugged through the opportunities of social media. Generation Direct are already embracing this idea, improving their skills through self-directed learning, and it is time for organisations to catch up and review the engrained educational system.





Martina Dlabajová

Member of European Parliament, Czech Republic

I think there is a clear opportunity for social media to help young people boost their skills and their chance to succeed in the labour market, and address the mismatch between the skills they have and the needs of the workplace. A key area where this mismatch is occurring is with digital skills: while young people are native users of social media they still lack a lot of the knowledge that will be needed for future jobs. It is estimated that 60% of the jobs of the future are not even known today – reliant on new technologies and applications. Additionally, there is often a mismatch between the needs of employers and the skills being delivered by education systems. Again, social media can help to fill such gaps.

“There is often a mismatch between the needs of employers and the skills being delivered by the education systems. Again, social media can help to fill such gaps”

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Where academia and social media are coming together

The good news is, in some cases, that the demands of young Europeans are being recognised. The Council of the European Union, in its conclusions on investment in education policy, points to the need to optimise ICT-supported learning and improve access to high-quality open educational resources in order to improve education outcomes, while the Open Education Europa notes that open educational resources allow students to engage in learning/study groups, creating online learning communities.

In some areas, there is already a blurring of lines between formal academic education and the world of social media. Indeed, the UK's Open University identified 'social learning' or massive open online courses (MOOCs) as one of the key trends in learning in its 'Innovating Pedagogy 2014' report. The vast majority of these courses are free, open-source, and provide subscribers with "nano-degrees that teach the minimum skills needed to enter a new career". MOOCs leverage social media to engage thousands of people in discussions about their course and in sharing information about their project. Such 'network effects' operate via liking, recommending and following the most popular content created by their peers (akin to a newsfeed).

Thomas Händel, MEP, Chair of the European Parliamentary Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, recently wrote that the EU should do more to encourage people to fill the 'digital skills gap'. He suggested that one way to achieve this would be via collaborations between institutions across Europe. Following this, the European Commission recently part-funded a new MOOC alongside Salford Business School for digital and social media marketing skills. Senior lecturer at the University, Dr Aleksej Heinze, said of the course; "It's completely free and can be accessed online anywhere in the world, so what have you got to lose?"



Paul Feldman
Chief Executive of Jisc, UK
(UK higher education and skills sector NGO for digital services and solution)

To me, the key point here is that it's important for university staff to work with students to use social media to benefit them both – it isn't all about students using social media just with one another, but also with their lecturers. In our experience, universities do embrace the opportunity to use social media to engage their students and boost employable skills.

"The key point here is that it's important for university staff to work with students to use social media"

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Jesper Tække
Associate Professor of Media Studies, Department of Communication and Culture,
Aarhus University, Denmark

It is remarkable that the positive use of social media comes from below and is not orchestrated from above, for example, where it is not permitted to use social media in educational contexts. It is young people who use new media to improve opportunities and increase the efficiency of their workflow. It is ordinary people that are exploiting its huge potential to form networks and upgrade skills.

"It is young people who use new media to improve opportunities and increase the efficiency of their workflow"

Like Comment Share





AT
WORK

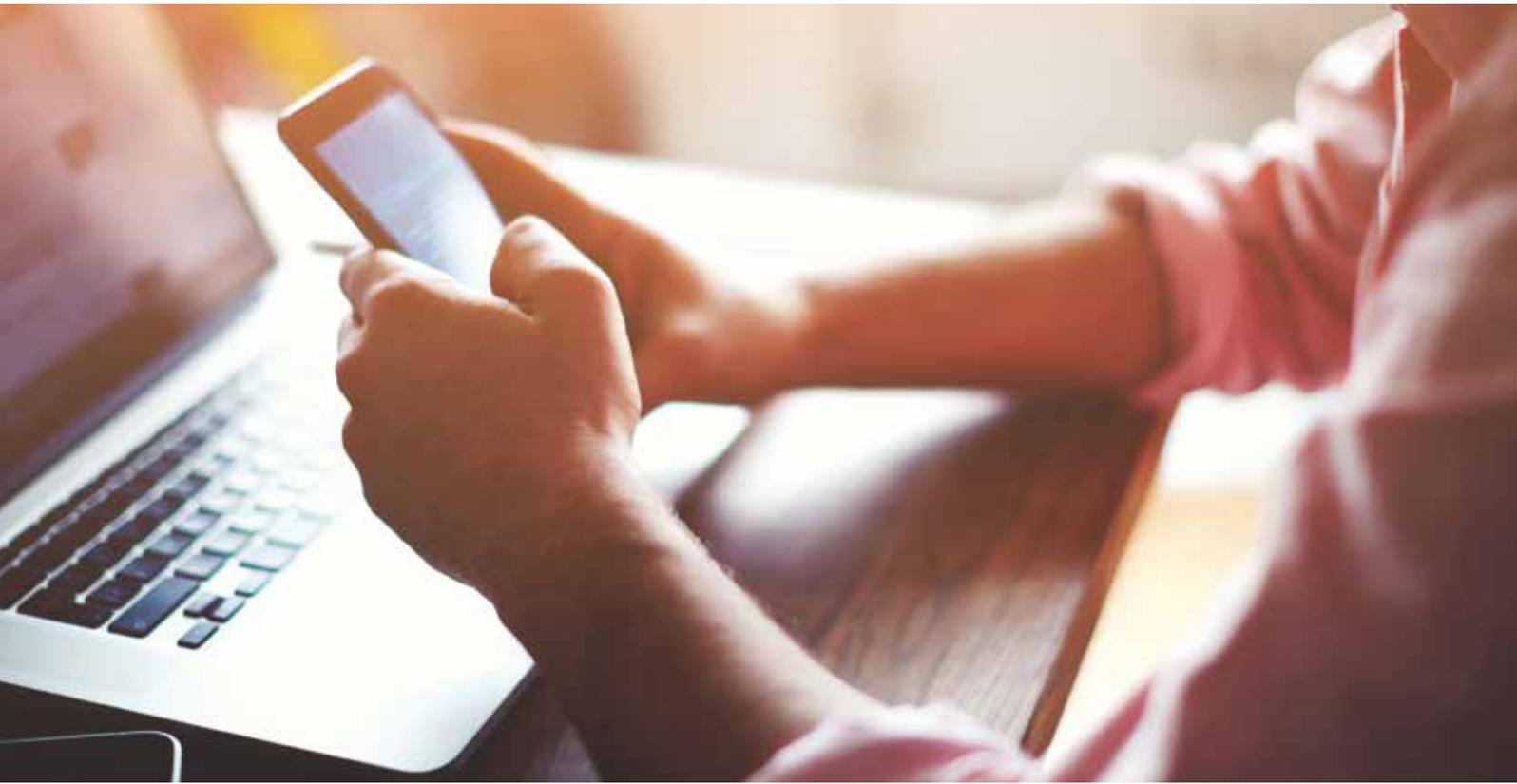


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Challenging conventional thought in the workplace

Since the arrival of Facebook more than a decade ago, businesses have had a 'love-hate' relationship with social media. Indeed, at the peak of employer anxiety in 2011, half of employees in Britain said they had been banned from using Facebook and other social networking sites in the office.

This is now seen to be an outdated suppression of the natural communication style of Generation Direct. Young people now use social networks flexibly – applying tools such as Facebook in professional contexts as well (even before more professionally-oriented platforms such as LinkedIn). In response, social media platforms are trying to integrate further into the working environment through initiatives such as 'Facebook at Work', designed to help connect colleagues in the workplace.



Another way to introduce social behaviours into the enterprise is to create a dedicated social platform for business use, giving employees a tool that will allow them to share and collaborate with colleagues as they would on public networks, but with the reassurance that they are in a secure online environment. TCS created its Knome platform to fulfill this purpose internally. Today, the platform has more than 200,000 active users and over 9,000 communities, discussing both work and personal activities.

By embracing this change and taking ownership of the way social media is managed in the workplace, there is an opportunity for businesses to keep employees productive and satisfied in equal measure. The young employees surveyed by this research demonstrated a clear understanding of this symbiotic relationship, seeing social media as a useful tool in the workplace to boost collaboration.

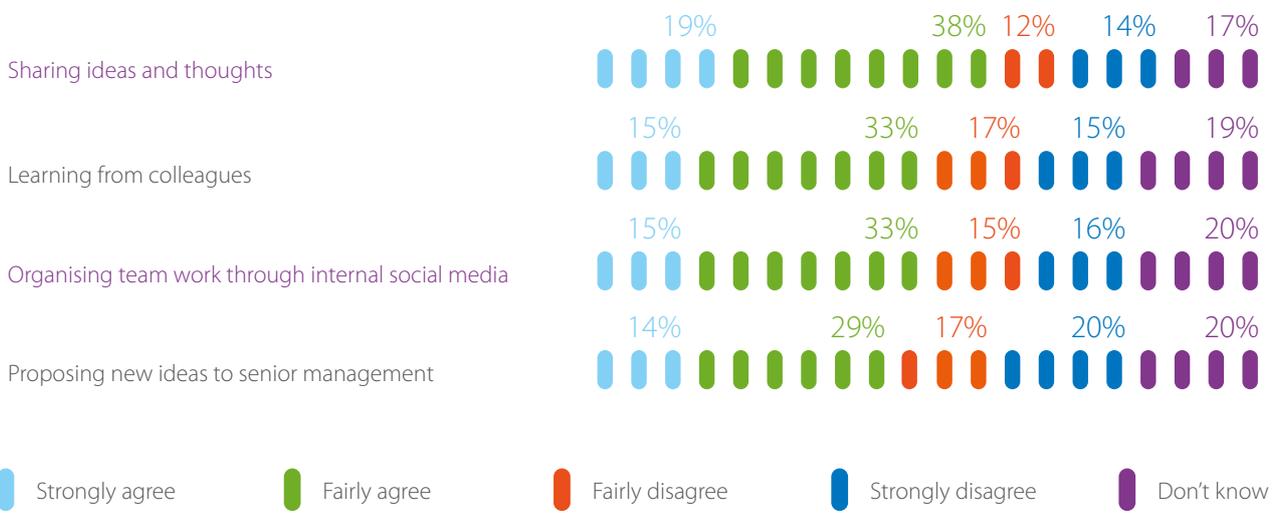
Three in five use social media for talking to colleagues about work-related issues (62%), with 29% doing this at least once a day.



How young people in different countries perceived social media's impact on work reflected their views on its role in education. In particular, young Spanish employees are more likely than Europeans overall to agree that social media enables them to achieve a range of work activities. While young employees in Sweden are the least likely to feel enabled by social media in their engagement with colleagues.



Young employees' beliefs about the benefits of social media in the workplace:



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Sara Green Brodersen

Denmark DEEMLY

deemly.co

CAN YOU EXPLAIN A BIT MORE ABOUT YOUR START-UP, DEEMLY?

At university, inspired by living in California and witnessing the rise of Airbnb in 2011, I wrote a thesis on the sharing economy. Ever since then, I have been using blogging platforms, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to establish my identity as a 'voice' in how the sharing economy works, and why it is so important. Because the idea is – or was - relatively new in the Nordics, my expertise was in demand and I was soon asked to do everything from giving advice, to speaking at events and meeting politicians.

All this time though, it wasn't simply about spreading the word on the sharing economy; my ultimate aim was to start up my own company. I wanted to create something that aggregated people's scores across sharing economy platforms like Airbnb and Uber, giving an honest reflection of people's online reputation. In January 2016, after 36 months of planning, we finally launched deemly.

How did social media help you establish and grow?

Having built my personal networks and reputation so extensively before we launched, I've been able to use them to build deemly too. I have promoted the idea of the company, I've sent updates of schemes or awards we've won, and I've even been able to connect with investors. The joy of social media is this crossover between personal and professional; it's a very fluid way of connecting and working.

Can you imagine achieving what you have without the power of social media?

No, not at all. I attend networking events, but I may speak to two or three people there. With social media, I can speak to hundreds. There is also the added joy of being able to see how people are interacting with what I'm saying, and then being able to react and adapt to that.

Will social media always be fundamental to your business?

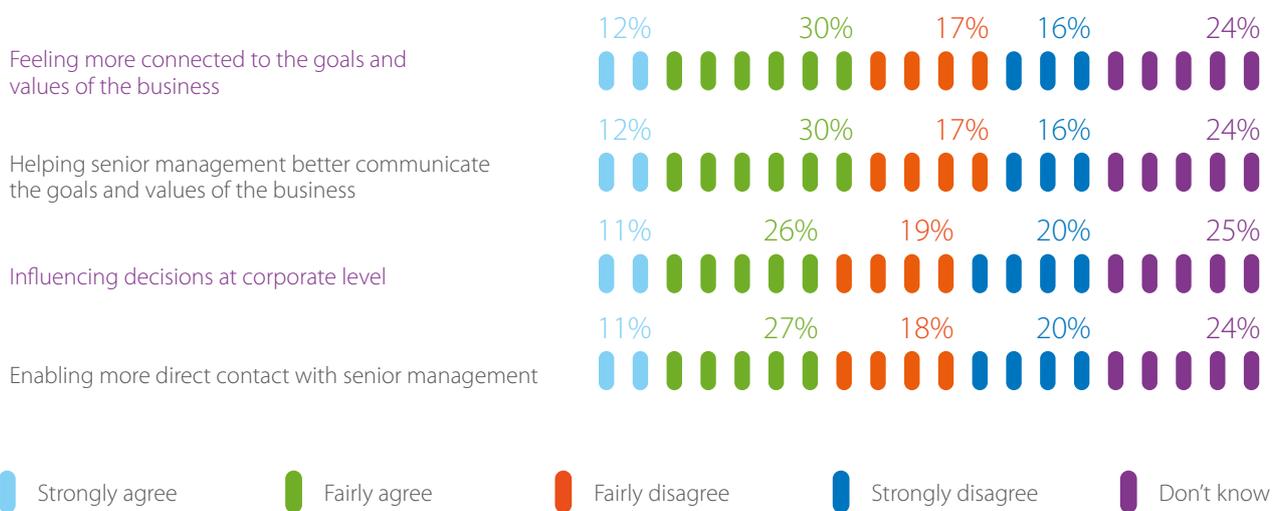
There is a lot of noise on social media, and it can be challenging to make yourself heard as a brand, but it's the only option. We're in our beta-testing phase at the moment, but as soon as we go live, we will ramp up our social media presence and reach, particularly on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

It's my go-to tool for recruitment, too, both in terms of advertising a new role at deemly, and in being able to check applicants' profiles, seeing how they're using social media. I'd also expect people to apply digitally, maybe having an online portfolio or creating a video application. For younger generations, social media is a grey zone, entwining professional and personal, and that makes it a critical tool for every aspect of my business.

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Young European employees' beliefs about the benefits of social media in the workplace:



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Influence of social media is limited in the workplace and lacks corporate facilitation

The overall high level of engagement young people have with their peers is not reflected in engagement with their superiors.

- Less than two in five employees think that social media has enabled more direct contact with senior management in their workplace (38%).
- Only 43% of employees think that social media allows them to propose new ideas to senior management.

**Bill Liao**

Co-founder, non-profit CoderDojo clubs

It is interesting to see that young people want business leaders to communicate more via social media. In many respects this is a rather “me-centric” view of the world. As someone who uses social media who is also a charity leader and a business leader, I don’t always want to use social media to manage employee interactions. Even though I like social media a lot, I think there are different tools for different things, and email is still a better forum for work conversations, not to mention in-person engagements!

Conversely, young people can be individually impacted greatly by social media and there is a tendency on social media to judge people that are seen to have abused their privilege. For my own Twitter profile, with a large number of younger followers due to my work at CoderDojo.com, I have to be very careful to publish only what is appropriate for that audience. Younger people do need to develop an awareness of the risks and a social sensitivity. They need to be conscious of their social history, and how to mediate between their social persona and what they would communicate professionally online.

“Young people do need to develop an awareness of the risks and a social sensitivity (when using social media)”



Like



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Employers restricting access

Established employers commonly restrict access to social media in the workplace. While there might at times be legitimate reasons to do so, restricting Generation Direct's social instincts could impact on productivity.

- Nearly two in five employees report that one or more social media platforms are restricted in their workplace (38%).
- Less than a quarter of employees (23%) think that their use of social media has improved their prospects of achieving recognition at work.



Mikko Vastela
CIO at LähiTapiola Group, Finland

Social media is gaining traction rapidly in professional use, thanks to our younger employees and customers. Because they use social media – and new media as a whole – so fluently it creates a natural place for all of us to inform, communicate and interact. The older generation has introduced their children to telephones, television and libraries and now it is that generation's turn to introduce their media of choice to others, even in a professional environment.

Co-creation, crowdsourcing and other ways of doing things together with the help of social media is something that Millennials are also educating us all on. The ability to get things done online is creating efficiencies, for example, by reducing the need for meetings and other face-to-face engagements. Younger workers are becoming more productive using social media and it is incentivising others to do the same.

“Social media is gaining traction rapidly in professional use, thanks to our younger employees”

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John Higgins
Director General, DIGITALEUROPE

This survey confirms that business leaders aren't yet using social media enough to communicate with their workforces and we should ask why this is. I believe that unfamiliarity and scepticism is leading to a prejudice that social media is for social exchanges for the young. This attitude needs to be changed, and I think many people in this leader generation will be persuaded by the data as well as a growing awareness that social media is an integral part of a business's communication and marketing strategy. In this regard, we already see the importance of social media as an early detector as to the direction of travel on certain issues and public debates.

“Business leaders aren't yet using social media enough”

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Jussi Mekkonen

Executive Vice President, Deputy Head of Banking, Nordea, Finland

Social media offers new ways of interaction and collaboration within companies. However, this opportunity has not been exploited well so far. Organisations can and should use social media more – particularly for sharing ideas and learning from colleagues, and for building bridges between top management and younger generations.

“Organisations can and should use social media more – particularly for sharing ideas”



Like



Comment



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Marc Lhermitte

Partner, EY Advisory, France

Global Leader of EY's International Location Advisory Services

I think it's noteworthy that no parts of the social media industry have been born in Europe, with much of it originating in the US and out of that culture. Being adjacent to the evolution of such technologies has no doubt made US businesses and corporate culture much more familiar with that sphere, and I do think this plays a role in the way European companies relate to social media. I think the distance between our businesses and the culture that created social media has meant that there is greater wariness on the part of Europe's business leaders as to social media, and a time lag in the pace of its adoption in the workplace and as a vector for recruitment or for brand promotion. I think this is largely true of European businesses on the whole - although some countries across the region are moving faster than others.

I believe there are huge opportunities for businesses in using social media for brand advocacy, recruitment and sourcing talent, knowledge sharing, and internal communications. Of these, I see brand advocacy as being a great opportunity that in many respects isn't being fully realised, with many organisations still struggling with developing communication policies for their employees for the use of platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter.

“There is greater wariness on the part of Europe's business leaders as to social media”



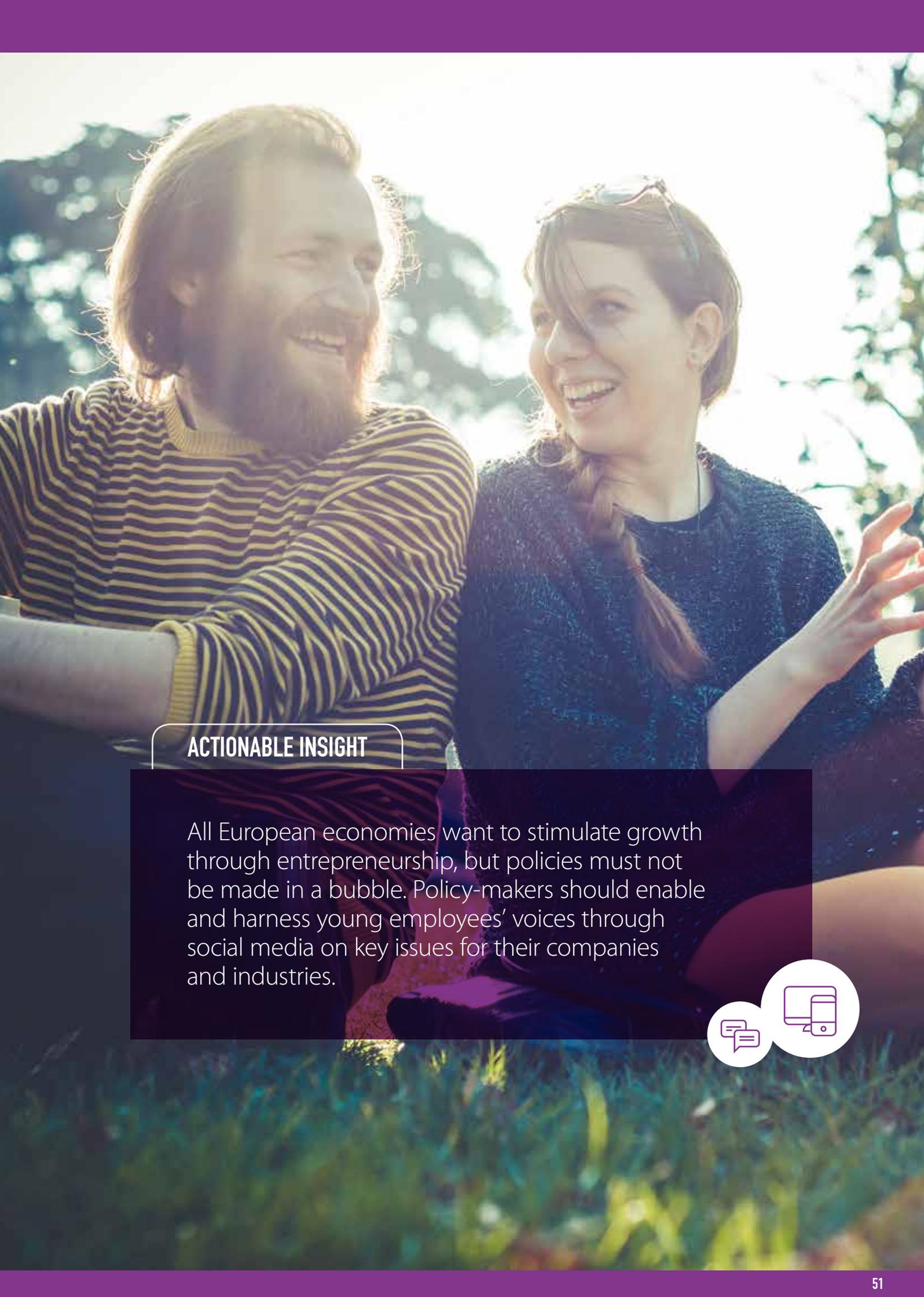
Like



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A photograph of a man and a woman sitting outdoors, smiling and talking. The man has a beard and is wearing a striped sweater. The woman has her hair in a braid and is wearing a dark sweater. They are in a grassy area with trees in the background. A dark purple overlay is at the bottom of the image, containing text and icons.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

All European economies want to stimulate growth through entrepreneurship, but policies must not be made in a bubble. Policy-makers should enable and harness young employees' voices through social media on key issues for their companies and industries.



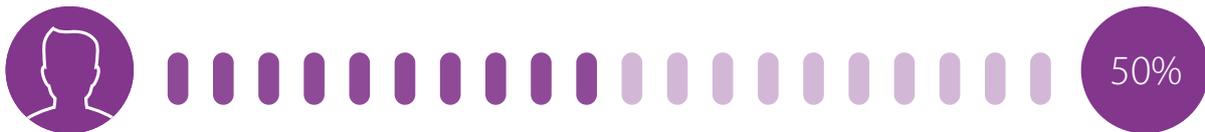
Catalysing change

We have already seen how social media has assumed a significant role in recruitment, business growth and workplace communication and skills for young Europeans, so it is only natural that it will also play an increasingly important role in public life. The rise of 'digital democracy' or 'e-democracy' is one of the defining political trends of the 21st century. Governments across Europe are enabling a new breed of citizen to participate in the proposal and creation of laws – such as directly petitioning parliaments (for example, in the UK and Germany) - or even to vote online (for example, in one of our surveyed countries, Estonia).

While these digital tools and services are still limited to a number of countries, they have sparked debates across Europe and the new, digitally savvy Generation Direct are increasingly likely to demand these options. For example, after establishing a Commission for Digital Democracy, the UK Parliament received thousands of tweets with suggestions on how to use digital technology to improve parliamentary democracy.

Social media is a force for change

HALF OF ALL YOUNG EUROPEANS, WHO HAVE USED A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM, REPORT THEY HAVE SIGNED AN ONLINE PETITION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA (50%)



EVEN IN COUNTRIES WHERE GOVERNMENTS ARE NOT SPONSORING SUCH INITIATIVES, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PARTICIPATING IN ONLINE PETITIONS, CAMPAIGNS AND CONSUMER GROUPS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA IS BEING USED AS A FORCE FOR CHANGE.



Among those who campaigned to get better products or services, and those who complained about specific consumer issues through social media, two-thirds believe their actions were effective (65% for both).

Young people are taking an active role in social media campaigns, making effective use of these channels to rapidly reach a far larger audience than previously possible.



Neena Gill
Member of the European Parliament, UK,
Vice-Chair, Delegation for Relations with India

Social media also builds bridges between youngsters all across the globe. Consider the power of innovation that is unleashed when youth from parts of the world as far apart as the EU and India are able to connect through social media to combine their respective talents, experience and backgrounds to join forces in finding the answers to tomorrow's challenges. That is why we need to make sure young people everywhere are equipped with the resources and abilities that allow them to take part in these global exchanges.

Providing vast amounts of news and political information, social media is also a key channel to involve young people in politics and society. And let's not forget the value of social media as a means for politically engaged youngsters to connect and become a force for democracy.

“[Social media is] a means for politically engaged youth to connect and become a force for democracy”

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Young Europeans are harnessing the power of their social networks

Helped by the high degree of peer-to-peer interactions students have on social media, online campaigning has the potential to greatly impact universities and other education establishments.

More than half of students across Europe say that social media enables them to campaign for better campus services (55%) and petition for specific changes to their course (51%).



One in two young entrepreneurs say it has improved their prospects of campaigning for start-ups (50%) and for their industry (50%).



Entrepreneurs are also the most likely among all young people to have signed an online petition through social media – 67% say they have done so.



Tommi Laitio
Director of Youth Affairs, City of Helsinki, Finland

Adults worry about young people's dependence on devices. This focus on gadgets disregards the fact that for the young, it's about being in the same place as everyone and everything that matters. Eagerness to share and to be in touch will change everything, from health to traffic.

“For the young, it's about being in the same place as everyone and everything that matters”

Like Comment Share



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Young Europeans are using social media as a powerful force for change. Political and business leaders would do well to invest in a strong presence and more importantly, a healthy dialogue on social media.







PREFERRED
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Facebook's broad presence makes it the prime social media tool for productivity amongst young Europeans

Social media is used widely by young Europeans for a variety of purposes – improving their employability and skills, and creating growth and opportunities. One social media platform specifically emerges as the leader among young Europeans: Facebook. In fact, out of the 14 parameters polled on the scale of social media usage for professional purposes, Facebook emerged as the clear leader in 13 of them.

What is striking in this study is that Facebook is not only the most commonly used social media platform for young Europeans expanding their social networks (among those who use social media for this purpose, 70% do so through Facebook), but that Facebook also leads in how they seek out job opportunities.

46% OF YOUNG EUROPEANS WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO FIND JOB OPPORTUNITIES DO IT ON FACEBOOK, VS. 28% ON LINKEDIN.



59% OF YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS WHO PROMOTE THEIR BUSINESS TO POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS DO IT THROUGH FACEBOOK, VS. 14% WHO DO IT ON LINKEDIN.



Young Europeans know that to reach the widest professional audience they must go direct, and use 'social word of mouth'. Facebook's reach is therefore their greatest asset – 93% of young Europeans report using this platform, compared to 36% who say they use LinkedIn.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

In order to maximise their opportunities, young Europeans inventively stretch the boundaries of what a specific social media platform can do. They have clear preferences, with Facebook the most used medium for professional purposes.





Constance Claviez Homberg

worldcraze.com

France WORLDCRAZE

SO, TELL US THE STORY OF WORLDCRAZE...

In 2013, our co-founder, Frédéric Simons, flew to New York and quickly realised everything was much cheaper there – a pair of a Levi’s jeans, for instance, was 70% cheaper than in France. From here, the idea of WorldCraze was born. Basically, we wanted to create a platform that connected people who regularly travel to certain places with people who wish to buy products from these places, either because they are cheaper – like the Levi’s – or because they are only available in one country.

The traveller who transports the product would earn a bonus equal to at least 10% of the purchased item’s price, while the buyer either saves money or accesses something otherwise unavailable.

Three years after the initial concept, WorldCraze is now operating worldwide with ‘Crazers’ mainly in America and France but with plans for an upcoming office in Brazil.

How have you used social media in your development?

WorldCraze has been on Facebook, Twitter and Google+ since day one, and latterly we’ve been on Instagram too. We post daily updates on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, sharing anything from links to our blog, to new available products and general information about buying cheaper abroad. It’s also a great means of blending with the more traditional marketing channels and updating people on WorldCraze press articles or TV that they may have missed.

And it’s been critical to your success?

Undoubtedly, yes. We created these accounts to develop our community and engage users, knowing that whenever they want to get in touch, we can chat directly and instantly. This open line of communication makes all the difference to consumer relations and I believe any business who doesn’t offer that in the modern world lacks credibility. It’s not only about meeting a user’s expectations though; social media means you can target the users you want to reach in the first place.

Have you encountered any difficulties using social media?

No – that’s the advantage of being a Millennial – it’s instinctive, although even if you haven’t grown up with it, the UX (user experience) of all the channels guarantees you can quickly understand.

If I could change one thing, ideally we could have been quicker in building a clear content strategy to navigate our broad base of users and identify the type of content they like most, but we are learning as the business evolves.

What’s next for WorldCraze?

We will continue to grow and consolidate our existing markets and expand into new ones – like the office in Brazil. We will also continue to depend on the power of social media as our means of communicating our message to people from all over the world.

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share



Caroline Jenner
CEO, JA Europe

We as an organisation work closely with LinkedIn, but it was interesting to see the greater perceived importance of Facebook by young people as a channel for job skills. The study also shows the value of self-driven learning and communities for sharing best practice. I think greater adoption of these by organisations can speed up the pace of innovation and improve competitiveness.

"The study shows the value of self-driven learning"

Like Comment Share



Ismo Riitala
Managing Director, K-Plus Oy, Finland

Facebook is also increasingly being used as a group workspace, making many intranet platforms redundant. At the same time, leadership is often far detached from social media, and does not know how to use Facebook for knowledge sharing. The most important change will be that young people will not be using the traditional tools for self-development and training. Rather, they turn to YouTube, Google or, when facing problems, professional online communities. A number of traditional players, such as coaches and consultants, will be bypassed as the new generation adopts new things and systems.

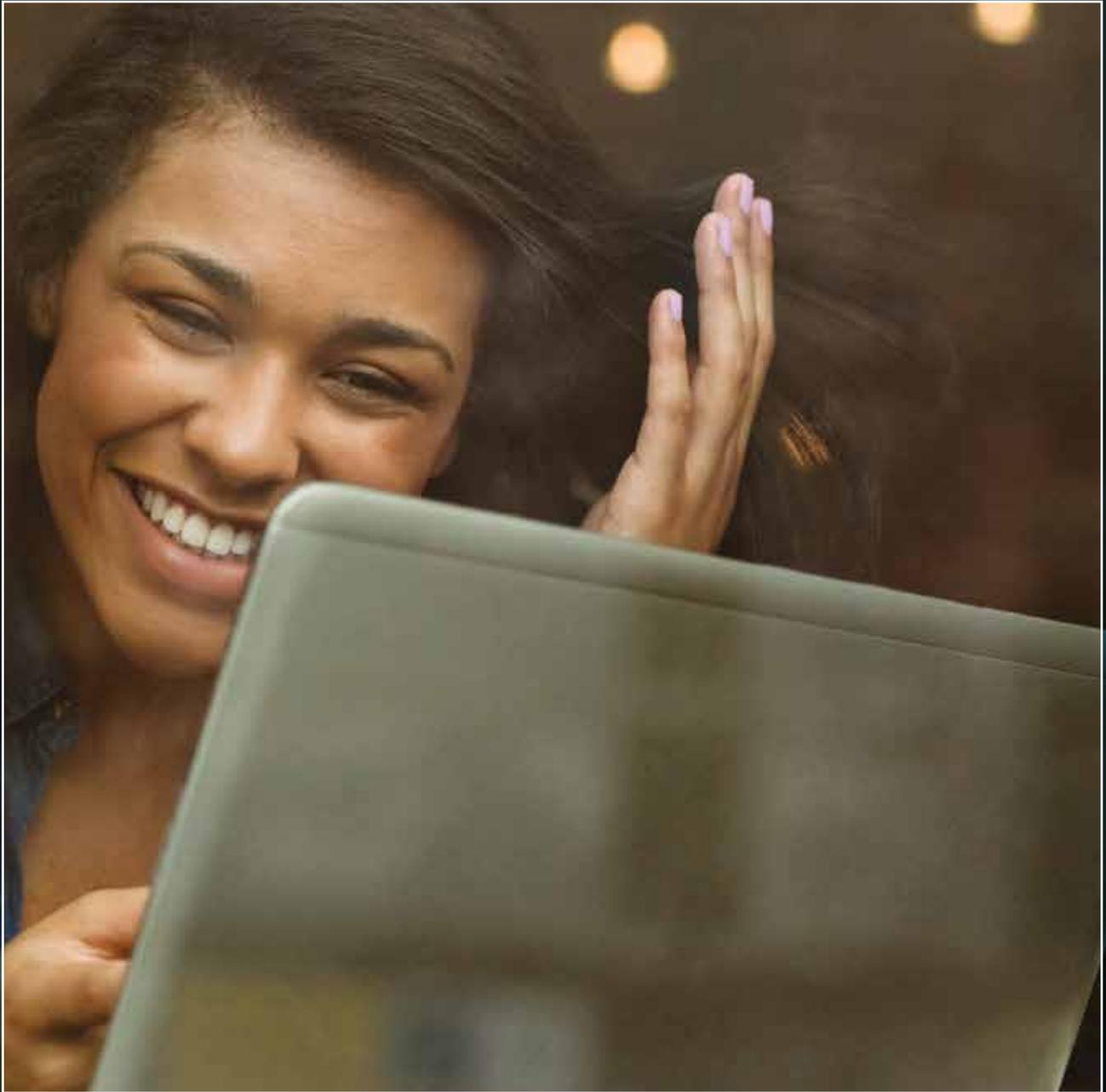
"Facebook is making many intranet platforms redundant"

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GEOGRAPHICAL
DIVIDE



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 Comment

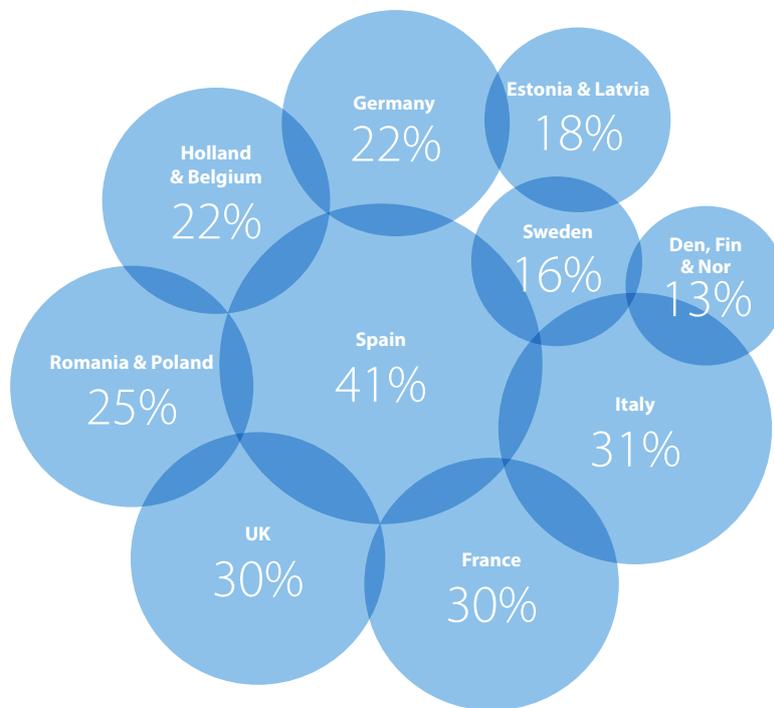
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Geographical divide

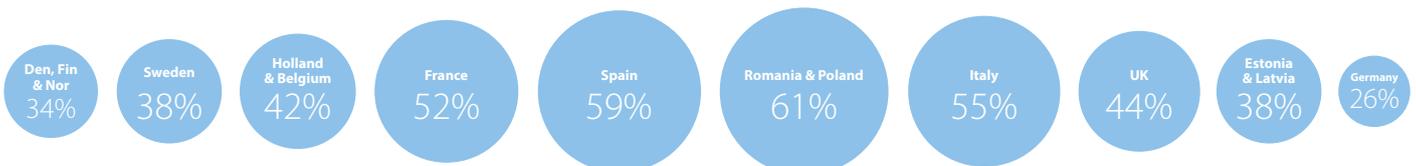
As highlighted throughout the report, a significant geographical divide appears in both the use of social media, and attitudes towards it, among young Europeans.

Spain emerges as a particularly engaged and optimistic country, but one where young people may also be using social media to fill gaps left by education or to manage in a challenging jobs market. Countries in Eastern and Southern Europe present a similar picture, while Germany and Nordic countries show the opposite.

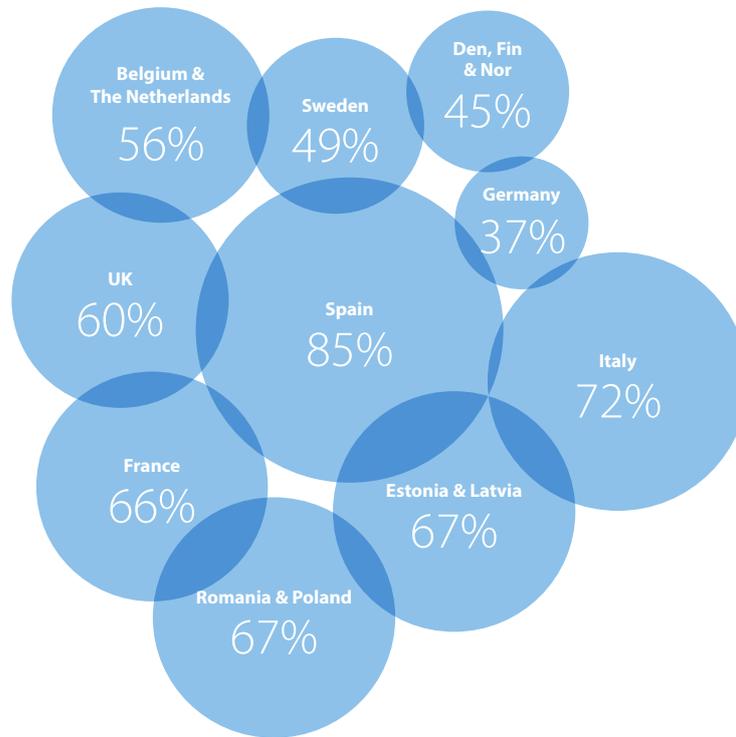
% OF YOUNG EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL SOCIAL MEDIA HAS IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK



% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO FIND JOB OPPORTUNITIES



% USING TUTORIALS TO IMPROVE SKILLS



William Akerman

Founder and Managing Director, MyKindaFuture, UK

At MyKindaFuture, we find ourselves very much strategically aligned with findings in this superb report. We share the view that young people are accelerating their migration to consume content on mobile, and this will be true for both career development skills and job seeking. With this in mind MyKindaFuture are investing heavily in mobile and digital strategies. The report provides underpinning evidence of the growing disconnect in communication channels between senior industry decision makers and young job seekers.

The TCS report sends a warning-shot to companies and recruiters reliant on historic recruitment models. The fact is, young people use social, digital and mobile. With a known skills gap impacting economic and corporate growth for the next 15 years, companies ignore this trend at their peril. The fact that regions of higher youth unemployment have corresponding higher use of social networks when job seeking is logical, but the TCS report is the first to evidence this fact within EU nations. Scrolling even further along the curve, non-EU emerging economies have an even greater reliance on mobile and social.

“With the skills gap impacting economic and corporate growth for the next 15 years, companies ignore this trend at their peril”

Like Comment Share



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

There is a distinct geographical divide in usage of social media - Southern and Eastern European countries are more active and creative in the use of social media relative to the more conservative approach in the North.





Tom Charman

London KOMPAS

kompasapp.com

WHAT EXACTLY IS KOMPAS?

KOMPAS is a mobile travel application that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to understand your unique tastes, and can then adapt and suggest a personalised itinerary of local – often hidden - places for you to visit. We are currently operating in 21 cities worldwide, and have seen month-on-month growth in the form of website visits, and sign-ups of 300% since our initial launch in 2015.

Sum up how important social media was to setting up your business.

With its low cost and huge potential for reach, social media is fundamental to the growth of every start-up. For me, it's helped me both contact my target audience (and far beyond it) and build loyalty for the product we're creating. As we're testing a very new idea, our social media following has been the primary way for us to know what they like and what they don't like, and this has played a big role in shaping the direction of our company.

Can you imagine achieving your success without the power of social media?

No, not at all. Without social media's reach, proving our concept would have been a much more strenuous, slow and expensive process. Without the instant communication it enables, we wouldn't have been able to adapt to the changing demands of our customers either, so it's let us remain agile and relevant.

Have you hit any problems with it? Is there anything you'd do differently?

The number of companies now reliant on social media as a sales and marketing tool has inevitably resulted in a much more crowded marketplace, which at times is hard to penetrate. In Germany though, we've managed to penetrate three markets – Munich, Berlin and Düsseldorf. We did this by following a specific model of scalability, showing the importance of a defined social media strategy.

What's next for your company? How do you envisage your use of social media developing?

The next steps for KOMPAS will be to launch the mobile application on Android, then to develop an iOS app. We will constantly iterate on these two applications, while also looking at the potential of the wearables market. Social media will continue to be key to this, not only when looking at ways to drive up the user base, but also in feedback for product development.

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Implications for public policy

Offering unparalleled speed and connectivity with very targeted audiences, the ubiquitousness of social media is a foregone conclusion for Europe's young people.

Now, it needs to become equally ubiquitous for public policy-makers and business leaders too. The right social media channels, at the right moment, connecting to the right audience can truly impact the effectiveness of policies and programmes.

This study shows that social media's biggest impact has been the instinctive, real-time ability to collaborate, share and co-create that it has helped to instil in young people. Hierarchy, status and bureaucracy are anathema to this new generation who will circumvent traditional processes when learning, working, starting a business, or expressing themselves politically.

Not only do Europe's young people overwhelmingly endorse the use of social media for professional purposes, the Generation Direct mindset is giving rise to a parallel economy of digitally-led, socially-enabled start-ups. This offers a huge economic potential while threatening to disrupt established, but slower moving businesses.

For Generation Direct, behaviours made possible on social platforms are now the new norm across their personal and professional lives. The impetus now lies with industry, policymakers and educators to react to this.

The First step: A 360 degree view

The first step is ensuring that social media tools and mobile are embedded deeply in all policy processes, and that officials understand the opportunities – and the risks – of putting social media alongside more traditional approaches. This can be implemented at all stages, from making draft strategies and policies available for comment, to embedding social media as an integral part of policy implementation, and finally closing the loop with feedback and evaluation on the policy using these channels.

Through the study results, some clear directions emerge for embedding social media into policymaking in key areas:

In entrepreneurship programmes

- One of the strongest conclusions of the study was that entrepreneurs who are using social media proactively have benefited significantly from it through access to funding, talent and new customers.
- As all European economies seek sustainable economic growth, the European Union and national governments are rightly focusing on boosting entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial education, training programmes and initiatives, such as those falling under the European Commission's Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, could focus more on communicating the benefits of using social media and teaching young entrepreneurs how to use it more effectively for business. For example, through

programmes such as the European E-Platform for Women Entrepreneurship or the European Enterprise Network.

- This could also be supplemented by frameworks that encourage successful entrepreneurs to share their experiences with younger potential entrepreneurs. Community initiatives like ThinkYoung's Entrepreneurship school will go a long way in supplementing efforts from governments.
- European and national public-funded programmes, which promote the teaching of entrepreneurship, such as those supported by the European Social Fund, could also incorporate the economic advantages of using social media.
- The European Commission's EFSI (European Fund for Strategic Investment) is looking to create €315 billion of real investment from 2015-17, focused on SMEs and Small Caps. It has already benefitted 140,000 start-ups and SMEs, while triggering €100 billion in investment. Yet there is work to be done for generating better awareness of this programme and its benefits to Europe's young entrepreneurs, particularly inside each EU country. A stronger outreach and communications strategy on social media could give the boost required to take the programme to a larger set of stakeholders.

In employment programmes

- The study clearly shows many young people are using the volume, relevance and immediacy of social media to improve their employment prospects, and policy-makers must cultivate this to build employability. Member state bodies responsible for employment policy, career guidance centres and education and training institutions could therefore review how social media is incorporated into training and communications activities, so more young people are able to benefit from the possibilities offered by social media in a positive, secure way.
- Skills on improving their professional profiles on social media could also be taught more effectively at employment centres across Europe. For example, today there are many social portals that create marketplaces for different service professions like plumbers, electricians, nannies, gardeners or other service provider jobs with potential employers directly. Those seeking employment could be better trained to access these social networks to find employment possibilities through self-empowerment.
- NEET is an acronym for young people 'not in education, employment or training' is a group that concerns policymakers, especially given that there are an estimated 18 million of them in Europe. Whether actively looking for a job or inactive due to personal health problems or caring responsibilities, young NEETs are of concern, prone as they are to becoming a 'lost generation' with enormous consequences for them and for the economy. One of the foremost challenges that NEETs have is that they often do not possess the skills needed to create their first employment opportunities. Imparting practical digital skills through specialised social channels, including video and better social networking, could be helpful in improving the employability of this segment.

In skills programmes

- Social media is a key tool for addressing skills challenges. This research shows social media is an effective channel in helping bridge the skills gap, and employers and policymakers must utilise this, both to fill existing skills gaps and proactively prevent new ones. Young people have been shown to be keen adopters of self-guided studies, even using video tutorials via YouTube to develop their skills. To complement these informal resources, educational institutions and employers could also develop their use of social channels, including 'Social Learning' or 'Massive Open Online Courses' (MOOCs).
- Furthermore, governments should explore possibilities for validating and recognising the skills acquired via online learning resources, adapting the same transparency and recognition used for traditional, formal education - as set out by the Commission's 2013 Communication Opening up Education. Member States could consider accelerating their efforts in this to meet the 2018 deadline set by the Council's 2012 recommendation, and where possible they could adapt their schemes to take into account informal learning via social media and MOOCs.
- Advanced tools like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are becoming available more progressively and could have a transformational impact on skills development. For example a VR enabled mechanics course or tourism course could help impart quick new vocational skills very effectively. Policymakers must encourage new technology adoption in education and training centres in their remit.

In companies and universities

Young people make active and diverse use of social media for professional purposes. Universities and organisations should respond by doing the same and not seek to restrict their access. The study found that young people indicated that at work or at school their access to social channels was at times more limited than outside these circles.

While universities have embraced social media as a channel for marketing themselves to their potential students, embedding social media as a learning-support tool shows far lower in adoption. Educational institutes that have not yet done so must embrace digital channels for coursework as well as teacher-student interactions. This will not only boost productivity, but boost their students' digital skills. Given the growing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills gap in Europe, early access to mobile platforms, coding, digital systems and social media will help reverse this trend and better prepare our younger generation for the digital economy.

In the business world, the study clearly indicates that young people feel that business leaders are failing to tap the power of social media to better engage with them or empower them. Only 38% of young employees stated that social media inside companies enabled them to engage better with their leadership. Business leaders must make a crucial change here to better engage their employees, using both internal and external social platforms.

A company's use of social media should not be restricted to those networks that are focused on professional applications, but also look at any networks that have a high degree of

penetration. As the study shows, young Europeans prefer to adapt their favoured platforms to any purpose – whether personal or professional – and organisations wishing to engage young people must therefore look to enable their access to the most popular platforms (like Facebook), rather than focusing exclusively on those that appear more business-oriented.

Organisations that deal with privileged and confidential data may also benefit from developing clear and reliable social media guidelines on its use, for example with regards to data protection, privacy and the ownership of content and information. This will ensure that while they embrace the benefits of social media, its risks are also mitigated through employee education and training.

In government and citizenship initiatives

In this study, European youth emerge as strong and engaged stakeholders in the democratic and social process.

They want to participate in change and are using social media to do so. Over 50% indicated that they had used social media to sign an online petition in support of one or another cause. Governments would do well to support their interest in participation and leverage their preferred channel – social – to better engage them in vital debates and citizenship initiatives.

One very effective way is to have officially sanctioned petition platforms such as the UK government's ePetition platform, which allows its citizens to raise any issue officially. Petitions with over 10,000 signatures require an official response from the government and those with over 100,000 signatures get discussed in parliament. Similar channels should be considered, wherever currently unavailable, at a European, country and local government level to bring citizens closer to government.

The European Commission, through its youth strategy adopted in 2009, and in conjunction with the European Parliament are also engaging in several initiatives to promote active citizenship and social engagement with young people. Their respective Eurobarometer surveys – "Political Participation & EU citizenship" and "European Youth in 2016" are crucial tools in understanding the views of young people and how to engage with them. It is recommended that all policyholders consider the key insights from these reports. The parliament's report indicates clearly that a significant portion of young people feel that social networks represent a significant progression for democracy. Given the present Commission's stated aim to reach 1 million young people during its term, social media will also undoubtedly play a key role in enhancing outreach and engagement of the European Institutions with young people across the continent.

Social media can also be used by political circles to "listen" more effectively to what concerns their constituents. For example TCS' own Perivista platform was leveraged in the multiple electoral cycles, allowing candidates to follow what their constituents were discussing on channels such as Twitter, through big data analysis of millions of tweets. This gave them another tool to understand the priorities, hopes and concerns of their citizens in an aggregate manner and in real time; without the need for costly and complex surveys.

Concluding remarks



Andrea Gerosa
Founder of ThinkYoung, Belgium

The Internet has brought us closer, made us more open, and given us new social, family, and business opportunities. Young people are at the forefront of this.

ThinkYoung researches young people's concerns daily, and views the Tata Consultancy Services survey as a key insight into how social media is not merely a social tool, but an opportunity. The new generations are the most skilled when it comes to mastering digital innovations; they are not passive when watching TV or listening to the radio, they are actively creating content, searching for information, learning new skills, meeting new people and, ultimately, becoming better people.

Browsing social media opens young people's minds and sharpens their skills. Moreover, young entrepreneurs can boost their products and crowd-funding activities, can engage in a dialogue with new clients, and find ideas on how to improve their company.

With all this in mind, wouldn't it be better if teachers promoted and taught social media too? Wouldn't learning be faster, more involving, less passive, if students could use their Facebook Group to work with the class and improve their teamwork skills? Wouldn't young people be more prepared and professional if they could discover the international job market through LinkedIn rather than from a teacher's description of it? Wouldn't young entrepreneurs have more business opportunities if they could learn how to do guerrilla marketing through Instagram and Snapchat rather than from a 500-page book?

It is time we all embrace the digital revolution, and make sure young people see the opportunities, not the threats.

ThinkYoung is a think tank founded in 2007 with the aim of making the world a better place for young people, by involving them in decision making processes and by providing decision makers with high quality research on key issues affecting young people.



Claus Hjorth
Head of Children & Youth
Department at Danish Film Institute, Denmark

This research by Tata Consultancy Services is inspiring. The study is a strong reminder that digital media is an integrated part of society and that young people today are already using it to participate and develop as citizens and job seekers, and not just as consumers of digital services and entertainment. In this respect, a strong and sustainable effort on Media and Information Literacy should be at the heart of the 21st century skills agenda.

Besides the basic skills (writing, reading, calculation etc.), digital empowerment and critical understanding of the digital society is needed. The study indicates that reaching out to young people is a good place to start. We need their view on the digital development and the concomitant potential for business and society. We need a better understanding of how young people are using the Internet and digital services – for the good and the bad – in order to strengthen the innovation and growth potential for all of us.

The Danish Film Institute (DFI) is Denmark's national agency for film and cinema culture, operating under the Ministry of Culture. It supports the development, production and distribution of films, with a special focus on children and youth.



Take part in the discussion today by using #GenerationDirect or following @TCS_Europe on Twitter

To download a copy of this report please visit <http://tcs.com/GenerationDirect>

Tata Consultancy Services is an IT services, consulting and business solutions organisation that delivers real results to global business, ensuring a level of certainty no other firm can match.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) created this report to examine attitudes to social media and its impact on society, business and education. The aim was to understand how social media can help improve productivity, drive growth and generate new opportunities for individuals and organisations.

TCS is the fastest growing brand in the IT Services industry over the past six years, with a brand value of US\$9 billion accorded by BrandFinance™ in 2016. It ranks in the topmost tier in terms of business performance and leads the industry in customer satisfaction. Europe's largest ever survey of 1500 C-suite executives across 13 countries rated TCS with the highest general satisfaction (82%) in the industry, ahead of all other IT and digital services companies. Its 21 country European operations account for 27 per cent of its US\$16.5 billion global revenues, working with 350 clients, including 50% of the FT Europe 100 companies to digitally reimagine their businesses. The company has been recognised as a Top Employer in Europe by the Top Employers Institute for the three year period 2013-16.

For more information, visit www.tcs.com

Research Partner: COMRES

The survey was conducted by ComRes, a UK-based research agency. For further information please visit www.comres.co.uk

Methodology

This study was conducted online among 5,024 young adults aged 18-29 across 15 European countries in 2015. The countries reflect different geographical areas of Europe, and therefore these respondents are referred to as 'young Europeans' in the report.

Respondents were divided as follows:

- All those describing their working status as self-employed were classed as 'entrepreneurs', regardless of whether they were also undertaking other studies or employment. This group included 222 respondents.
 - All those describing their working status as students were classed as 'students' (unless they also described themselves as self-employed), regardless of whether they were also in part-time or full-time work. This group included 1,613 respondents.
 - All those describing their working status as full-time or part-time employed were classed as 'employees', unless they were also self-employed or undertaking studies. This group included 2,520 respondents.
 - All those describing their working status as not working were not classed in any of these categories, but are still included in the young European group.
-

Number of respondents per region

502 Italy

502 Germany

500 France

500 Spain

504 UK

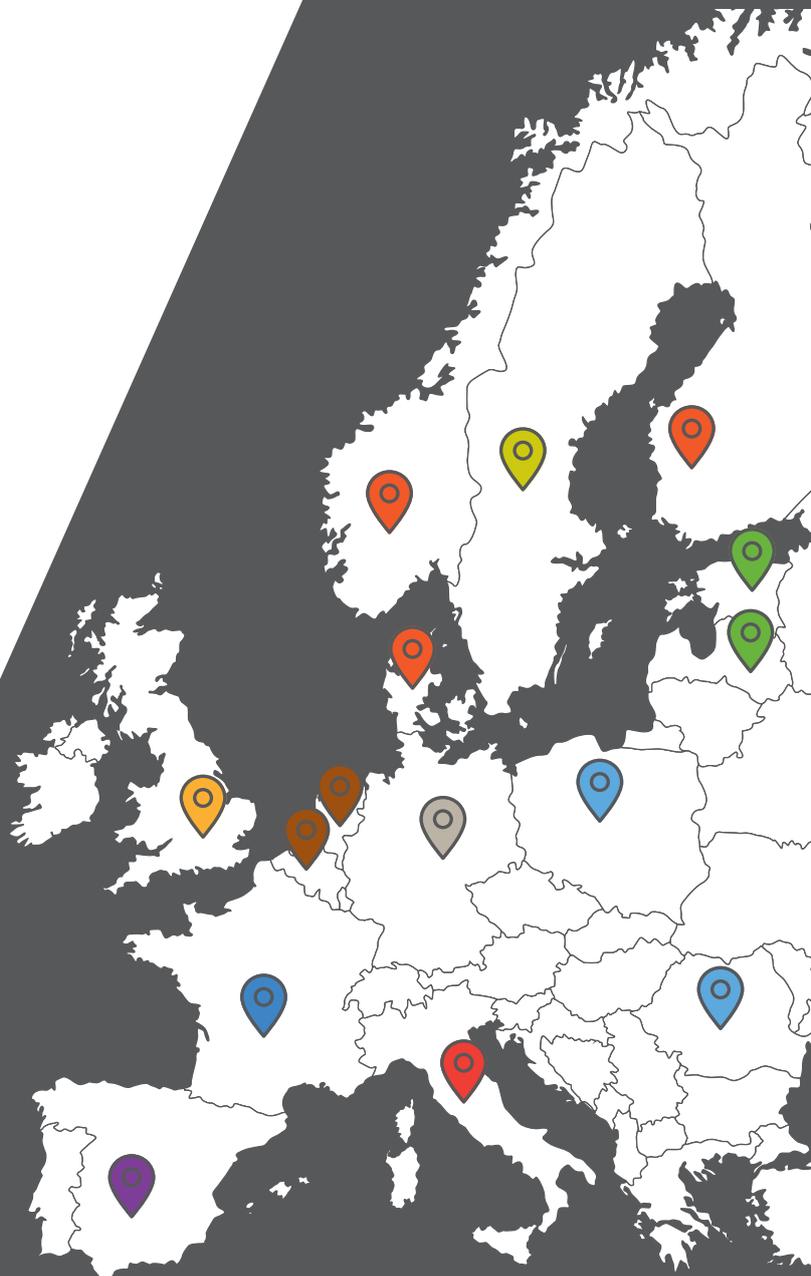
500 Poland, Romania

500 Estonia, Latvia

500 Norway, Finland, Denmark

500 Sweden

500 The Netherlands, Belgium



Data was weighted by gender, age and region to be representative of all adults aged 18-29 in each country



Tata Consultancy Services Europe

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