



# #DigitalAssociations

Research on the use of social media  
by Brussels-based European industry associations



# Foreword

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Cambre is excited to share its first report on the use of digital media by European trade associations.

Over the summer of 2015, our digital team analysed the social media and online presence of over 600 Brussels-based industry groups working on European policy issues.

The results provide a detailed overview of which associations are active on social media and what channels they use. What's the most popular platform, LinkedIn or Twitter? Who are the YouTube early adopters? Who's got the most views? Is anybody using Pinterest or Instagram?

Our research shows that there is still room for improvement and growth. Associations must never stop thinking about how to keep their channels alive with engaging content.



Thoughts? Ideas?  
Join the #DigitalAssociations conversation

@CambreAssoc

# Methodology

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Data was collected in July-August 2015



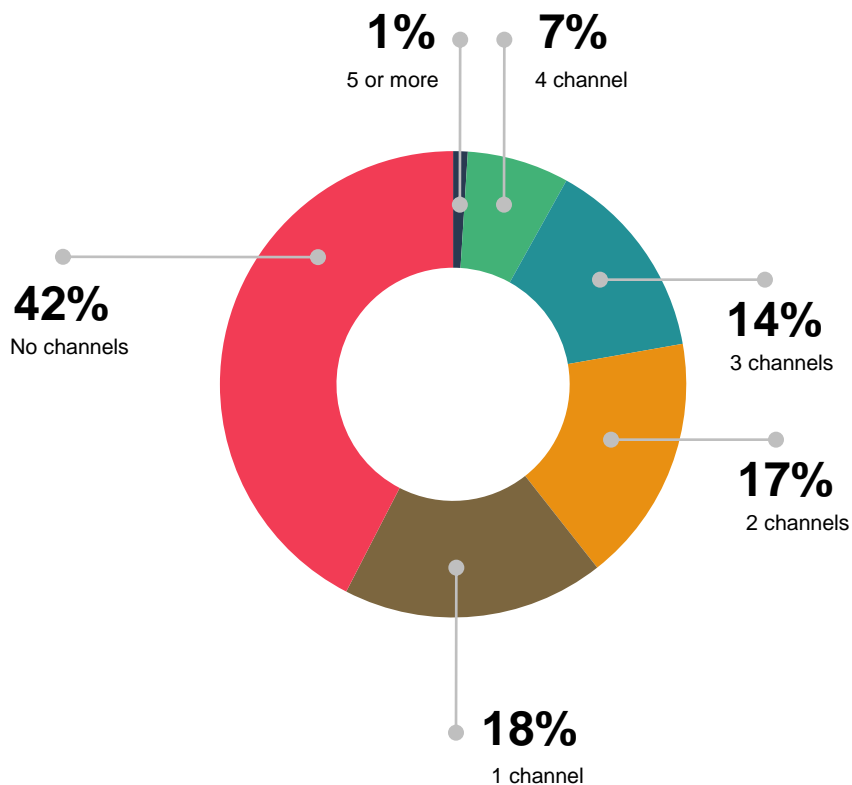
The 609 EU-based trade associations were extracted from the DODS' 2014 European Public Affairs Directory in the category 'European Trade and Professional Associations'



For this research we excluded non-European and international trade associations, NGOs and other non-industry bodies

# Social media adoption

3 out of 5 European trade associations have at least one social media channel



**58%**

351 manage at least one social media channel.

**42%**

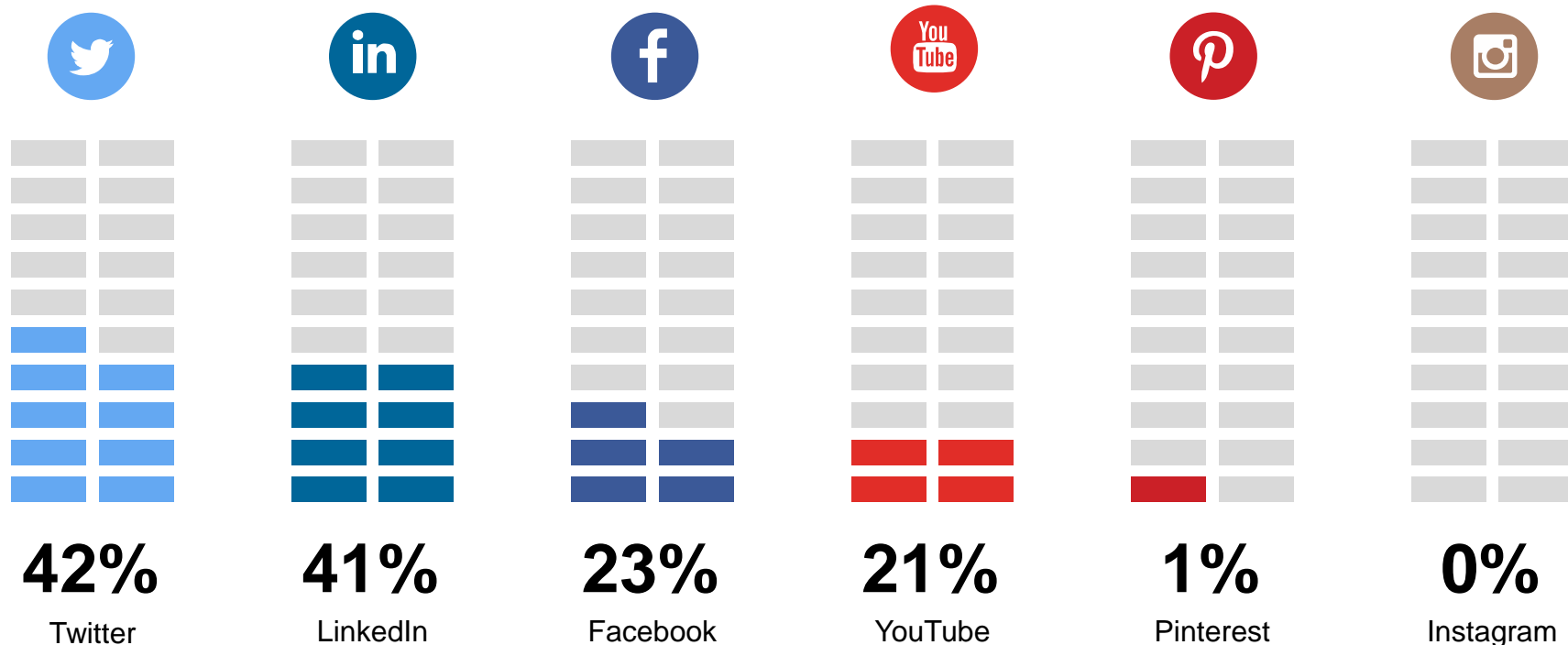
258 do not use social media.

**99% of associations have a dedicated website, although some display a dated "under construction" message.**

N= 609 European trade associations

# Brussels' favourite social media

Twitter and LinkedIn reign supreme over the Brussels social media landscape



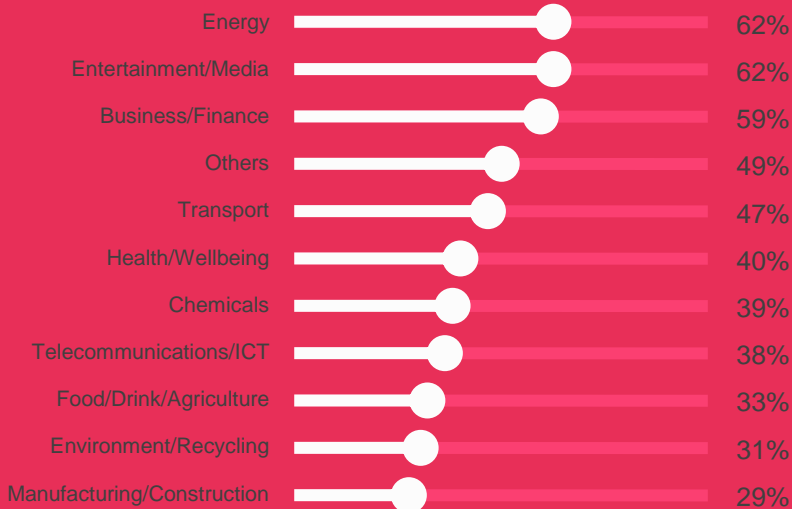
Twitter and LinkedIn appear to be the best suited tools for lobbying and advocacy at European level. Almost half of the associations we have researched use one of these two channels, very often both.

***Links to social media channels are not always displayed on associations' websites, making them harder to find.***

N= 609 European trade associations

# Industrial sectors

Not all industrial sectors are represented equally

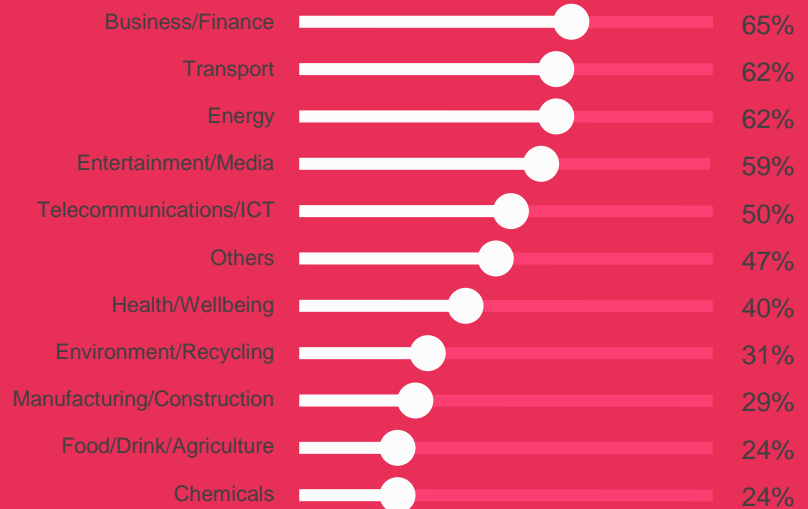


## Best in class

- Energy, Entertainment & Media, Business & Finance are well represented on Twitter and LinkedIn.

*The Entertainment & Media industry – despite representing video and music producers - is the one with the second lowest YouTube adoption rate (14%).*

- Transport sector does well on LinkedIn.
- Healthcare sector is most active on Facebook (43%).



## Room for improvement

- Chemicals
- Food, Drink, Agriculture
- Manufacturing & Construction.

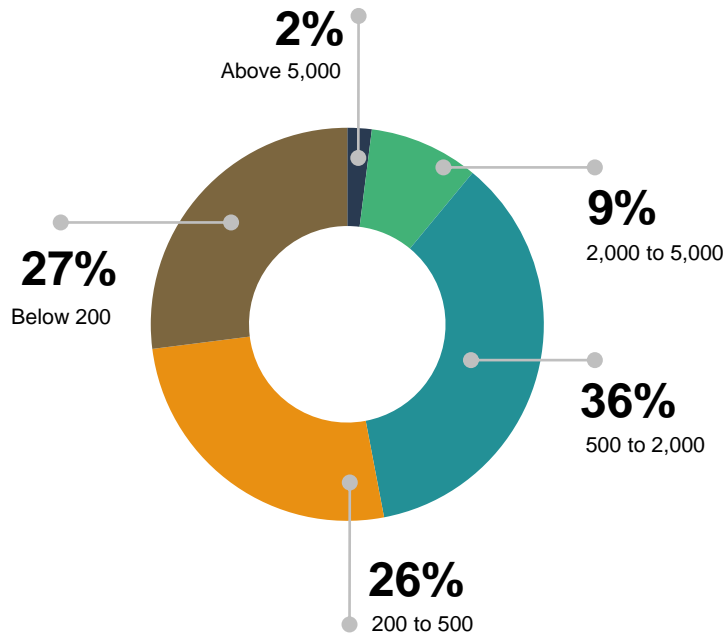
**Sector-specific data show similar results for other channels**



## 42% of associations are on Twitter

### Popularity

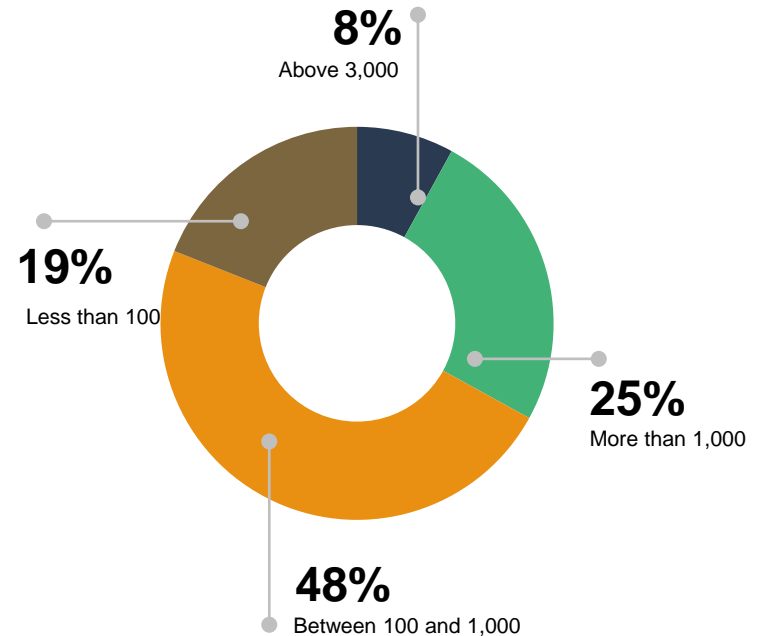
Numbers of followers per account



**75%** of the channels have more followers than follows.

### Usage

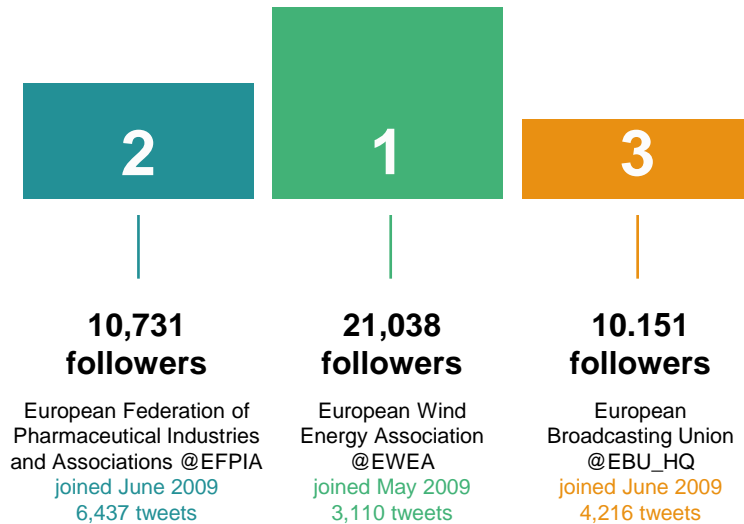
Numbers of tweets per account



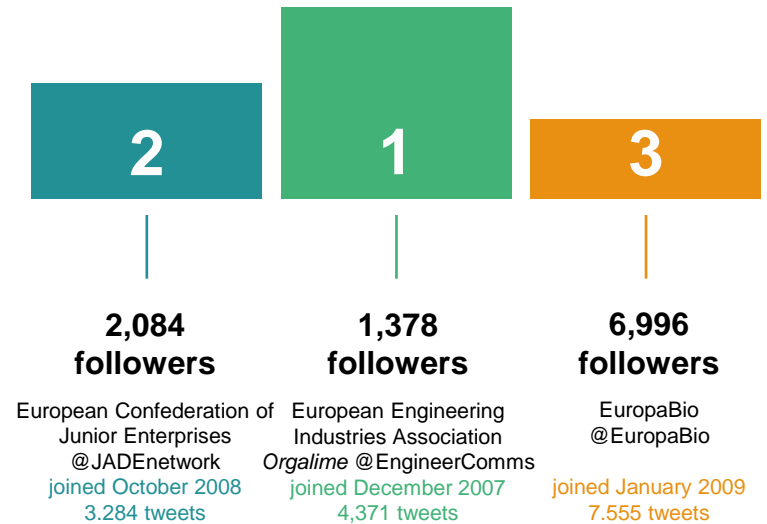
**33%** of these channels have already sent out more than 1,000 tweets to their followers.

*N=255 Twitter channels*

## Most followed



## Early adopters\*



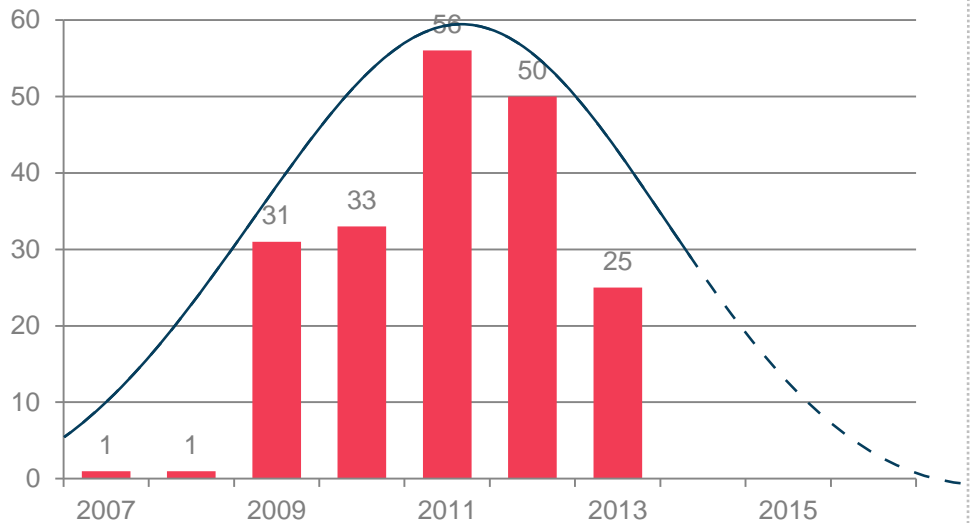
\*Date not available for all profiles

Highest followers /tweet ratio is @Euro\_PM, European Powder Metallurgy Industry (38 followers and 1 tweet).

Lowest followers/tweet ratio is @infoeumarketing, European Marketing Confederation (161 followers and 3,156 tweets ).



## Adoption rate peaked in 2011 when 56 associations joined Twitter



***Twitter adoption may be about to plateau – decreasing number of associations are expected to join the platform in coming years.***

***This does not mean Twitter is losing importance – in Brussels, it remains the ‘go-to’ channel for digital advocacy.***

The date when a user joined Twitter is not shown on all profiles, especially not on those created after 2014 when this info stopped being displayed by default.

Assuming an adoption rate following a classical normal distribution curve, we can expect similar levels for 2014 and 2015 as in 2013 and 2010.

*N=255 Twitter channels*

#DigitalAssociations

## Channel branding and visuals

98%

Associations display their logo

98%

Association included a URL to their website

73%

Associations' profiles have a Twitter header

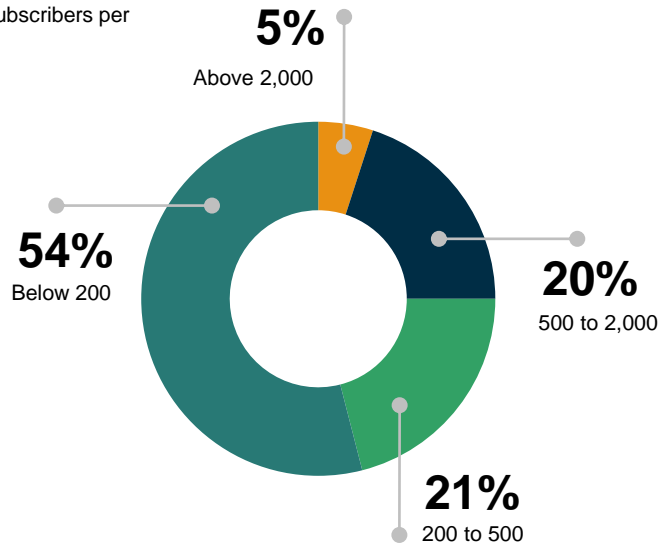
***The 3% of associations that do not display their logo have a picture of a manager – e.g. the Director or Secretary General – a picture related to their sector or nothing at all.***



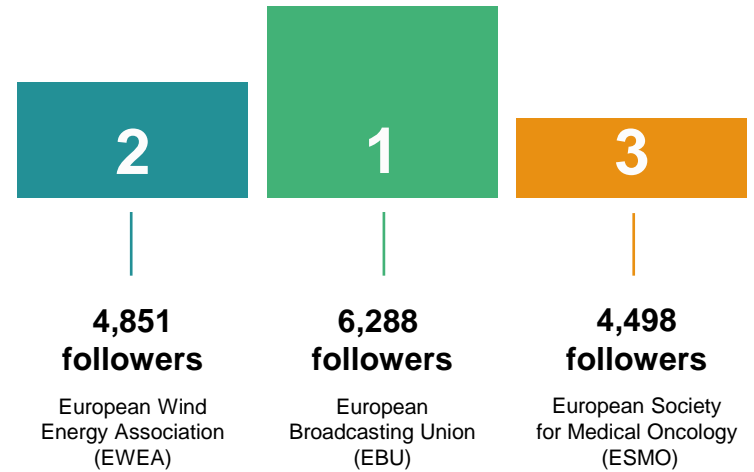
**41% have a company page**

**Popularity**

Numbers of subscribers per



**Most followed**



About half of the associations attract between 200 and 500 followers. Very few associations have more than 2,000 followers.

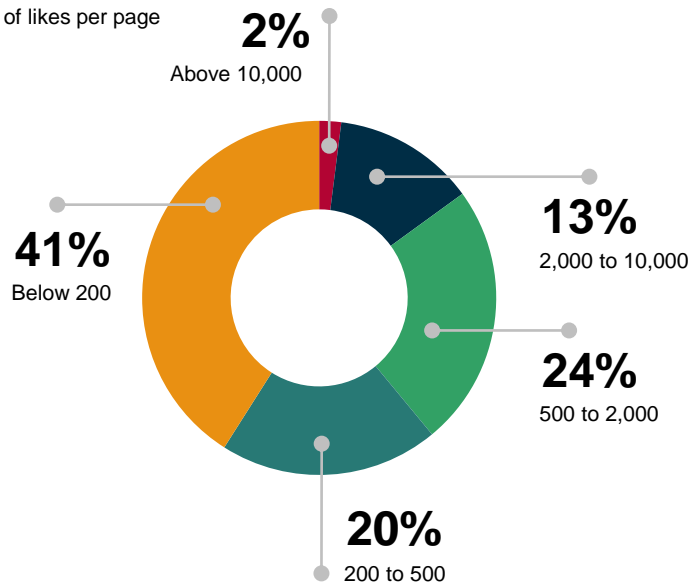
An overwhelming number could make better use of their profiles, especially in terms of audiences.

LinkedIn Groups managed by associations are popular and attract a large number of participants. Their logos are very often used to brand these groups.

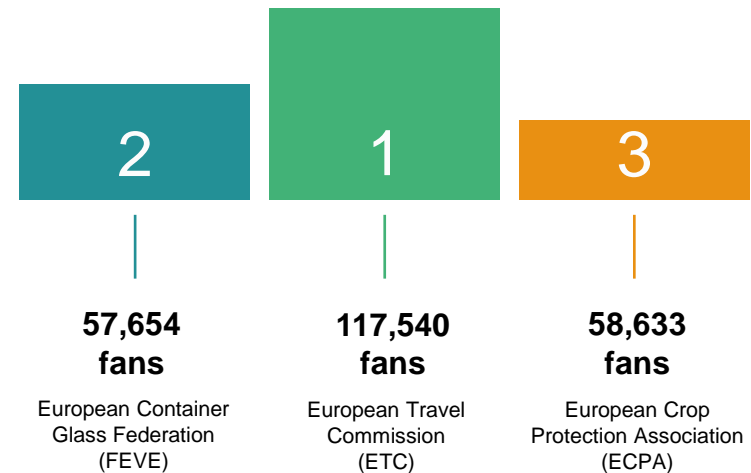
Almost 1 in 4 have a Facebook page

**Popularity**

Numbers of likes per page



**Best in class**



About 2/3 have 500 likes, or fewer.

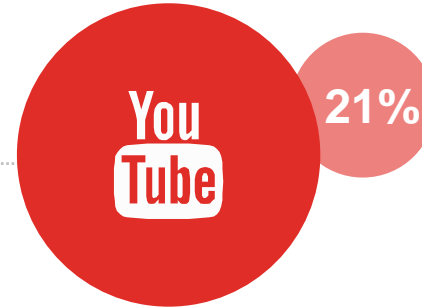
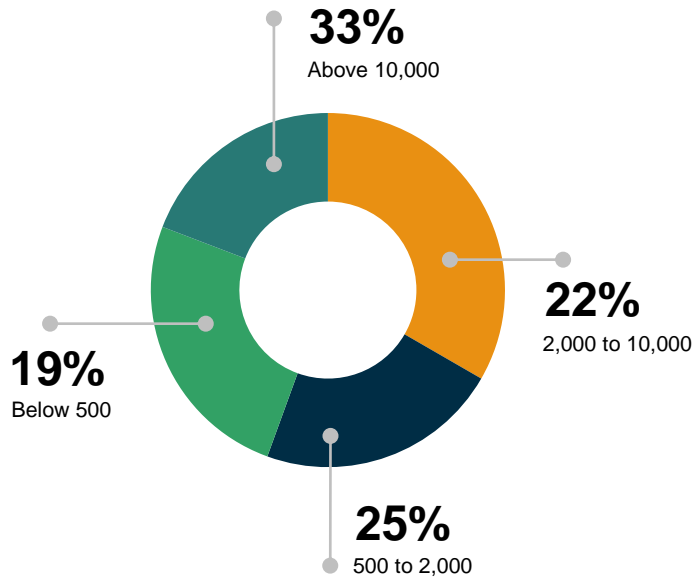
This suggests that it's not easy for trade organisations to use Facebook effectively despite the platform's large audience reach.



## 1 in 5 have a YouTube channel

### Popularity

Numbers of views per channel



1/3 have more than 10,000 views.

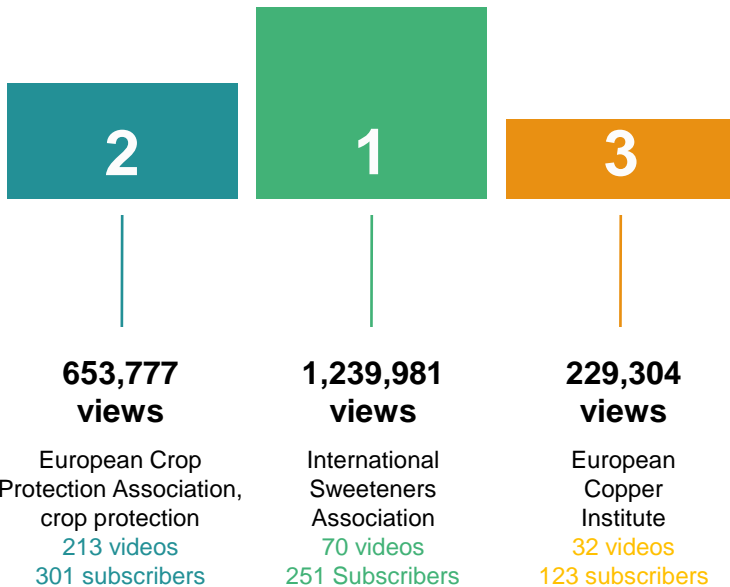
The 10 most popular YouTube profiles account for half of all views.

Views appear to increase exponentially with each video added

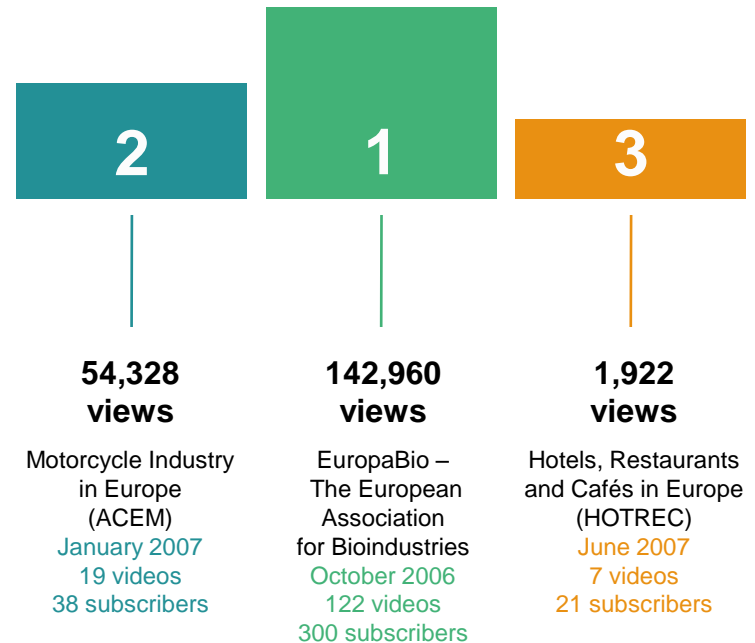
*N= 130 YouTube channels*



## Most popular - viewers

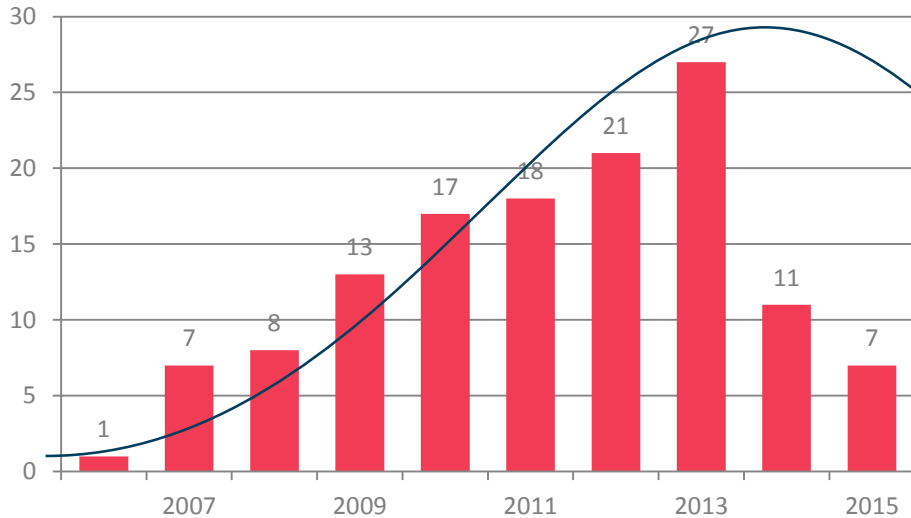


## Early adopters





## Adoption rate is declining



**Similarly to Twitter, fewer and fewer associations are joining this platform. This does not mean that it's less important.**

Contrarily to Twitter, all accounts on YouTube show the date of adoption.

# Other channels

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Significantly less important than the most popular channels



## Instagram

EuropaBio is the only European association with an Instagram account with a total of 9 pictures and 3 followers



## Pinterest

Only 9 associations are on Pinterest. The European Travel Commission (ETC) is by far the most popular with 3,600 followers

***About 1/5 of associations have a dedicated Wikipedia article.***

European associations are still trying to figure out how to harness the full potential of these channels.

This is certainly different for those running consumer and citizen-oriented campaigns.



# Conclusions

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- **A good number of associations view social media as part of a larger mix of communications tools necessary to achieve their objectives.**
  - However, many are yet to take the plunge. The reasons why they haven't are probably manifold: resources, topics, fears, technology, skills, etc.
    - Some sectors are lagging behind, opportunity to fill a void
  - Future research may look at understanding why associations decide to join/not join social media + look at perceived benefits. Do/how associations measure success?
  - Now we have a benchmark – would repeat the same study in 6-12 months
  - Would be interesting to compare US vs EU
- **Not all platforms are created equal**
  - EU-focused policy content seems more suited for certain platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn
  - Some platforms – although they can offer access to large audiences – are not suited to target policy-makers
    - It is also harder to cut through the clutter/noise levels of channels such as Facebook or YouTube
    - Private vs professional use separation still an issue
  - Lessons to be learned from B2C communications – new ways to engage our public

# Conclusions

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## ▪ Twitter

- The best to attract new followers is by providing quality content – but also quantity, keep the flow
- Adoption may have started to plateau – Now it will be interesting to find out if audiences can still grow e.g. MEPs, Commission, civil society organisations, private companies (EU affairs departments), journalists, etc.
- Need to grasp the full potential of, for example, paid advertising and video streaming. Mobile devices are key growth drivers.

## ▪ LinkedIn

- Considered a safe/professional platform but, are associations using its full interactive potential? New publishing possibilities may push blogs completely out of the picture & give more visibility to individuals

## ▪ Content remains the biggest challenge

- Content is king but, are associations ready to up their game? Visuals and video likely to dominate online communications in the coming years

## ▪ New/alternative platforms

- Can they be used for policy communications? What will be the next big hit?



Join the conversation  
on Twitter using  
**#DigitalAssociations**

## Questions? Comments?



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