This article presents recent statistics on the use of social media by enterprises in the European Union (EU).

Social media are part of the digital technologies that enterprises exploit to increase their presence on the internet, improve marketing opportunities, communicate and interact with partners, customers and other organisations, and facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the enterprise.

Social media refer to internet based applications such as, for instance, social networks, blogs, multimedia content-sharing sites and wikis. In principle, enterprises use social media for image building or for marketing purposes, for gaining insights from customers or communicating within or outside the enterprise or for recruiting.

For more than a decade, there has been a shift from the static webpages of the earlier websites towards web applications which draw on user data and relevant applications stored in the 'cloud'. In that time, a multitude of internet-based services, collaborative web applications and interactive websites have appeared. Users have been encouraged to subscribe to these services, to author, post and share user-generated content and to add links to other websites. In addition, individuals and enterprises have been able to exchange information, experiences and opinions in the form of 'many-to-many dialogues' over internet communication platforms. These virtual interaction platforms have, in fact, been part of a paradigm shift in the way enterprises communicate with their customers.

Enterprises have not only progressively embraced this new generation of highly dynamic web applications, but have also adopted new behaviours. They have integrated social media into the way they run their business, organised forms of internal communication apart from the management chain and, most importantly, communicated and interacted with customers using the new applications. From that point of view it has been possible for customers to influence business decisions and assist companies in designing and marketing their products.

Enterprises seek to enhance their internet presence by exploiting the possibilities that social media offer. The four most widely known categories of social media are: (a) social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing,
and others; (b) corporate blogs or microblogs such as Twitter and others; (c) multimedia content-sharing websites such as YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, SlideShare, and others; and (d) wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools.

In 2019, 53% of EU enterprises used at least one of these types of social media. Percentages do vary widely from country to country, ranging from 33% in Romania to 84% in Malta. It is noticeable that 28% of enterprises in the EU used only one of the four types of social media (Table 1).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social networks</th>
<th>Enterprise blog or microblogs</th>
<th>Multimedia content-sharing websites</th>
<th>Wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools</th>
<th>Use only one type of social media (%)</th>
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(‡) Differences between the last column and the sum of the previous two columns are due to rounding.
(*) not available
(‡) not reliable
Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_cismt)

Table 1: Enterprises using social media, 2019, (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismt)

Social networks were more popular than other types of social media. Some 51% of enterprises in the EU used social networks empowering customers to connect by creating personal information profiles, to share experiences, to express opinions, to exchange information and, most importantly, to create communities of people with common interests around the enterprises’ product brands. The percentage of EU enterprises using social networks ranged from 83% in Malta to 32% in Romania (Table 1).

The use of blogs or microblogs and content-sharing websites was less popular among EU enterprises, at 13% and 21% respectively. Corporate blogs are websites that are updated frequently, up to several times a day, with posts that contain text, images, audio or videos. Blogs can be used either inside an enterprise or for communicating with outside parties such as customers, business partners or other organisations. Microblogging is posting very short text messages, usually of a few hundred characters or less, and sharing hyperlinks to other websites, which usually contain longer text, videos or images. Multimedia content communities give enterprises
the opportunity to share media content with potential or current customers, thus enhancing their marketing capacity. They may release photos and videos or share presentations and documents over the internet that may be linked to blogs and other social networking services or websites. The percentages of EU businesses using blogs or microblogs were highest in Ireland (33 %) and United Kingdom (32 %), multimedia content-sharing websites were highest in Finland (41 %) and Malta (40 %).

The least popular social media in 2019 were wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools used by 5 % of EU enterprises. A wiki is a website that in principle allows multiple users to create and collaboratively edit interlinked webpages using an internet browser. Wiki-based communication platforms may be open to a global audience or may be restricted to a selected network or community of partners. The highest percentage of EU businesses using wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools was registered in Austria (13 %) (Table 1).

Types of social media used over time (2013-2019)

Between 2013 and 2019, the share of EU enterprises using social networks increased from 28 % to 51 % (Figure 1). During the same period the use of multimedia content-sharing websites increased by 10 percentage points (from 11 % to 21 %) and of blogs or microblogs by 3 percentage points (from 10 % to 13 %, despite a slight decrease between 2017 and 2019 by 1 percentage point). On the contrary, the percentages of EU businesses using wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools decreased slightly by 1 % (and has remained stable since 2015).

Enterprises using social media, by type of social media, EU-28, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019 (% of enterprises)

![Chart showing the percentage of enterprises using different types of social media from 2013 to 2019.](image)

Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_cism)

Figure 1: Enterprises using social media, by type of social media, EU-28, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019 (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cism)

In the EU, between 2013 and 2019 the use of social networks increased most (by 23 percentage points). Among the Member States the highest increases were reported in Belgium (+ 39 percentage points), followed by Den-
mark (+37 percentage points) and Finland (+35 percentage points). The lowest increase was recorded in Bulgaria (+3 percentage points) (Figure 2).

Types of social media used by enterprise size and economic activity

In 2019, three quarters of EU enterprises employing 250 or more people (75%) had an account and used some kind of social networks. By contrast, almost half of small enterprises (48%) employing 10 to 49 people used social networks. Multimedia content-sharing websites were used by almost half of the large enterprises (47%) compared to one fifth of the small EU enterprises-businesses (19%) (Figure 3).
Considering the economic activity, during 2019 the percentage of EU enterprises using social networks ranged from 82% of enterprises in Accommodation and 77% in Information and communication to 32% of the enterprises in the construction sector. Multimedia content-sharing websites were used by more than 4 out of 10 businesses in Information and communication and Accommodation, but by less than 1 out of 10 enterprises in Construction. Enterprise blog or microblogs were popular types of social media among enterprises in the Information and communication sector (44% of the enterprises). On the contrary, less than 10% of the EU businesses in Manufacturing, Transport and storage and Construction used enterprise blog or microblogs (Figure 4).
Enterprises using social media, by type and economic activity, EU-28, 2019 (% of enterprises)

Purposes of using social media

There are different purposes for which the enterprises are using social media. For instance to reach the ‘outside world’ — customers, business partners or other organisations — or for communication inside the enterprise or for specific purposes such as to recruit employees.

As shown in Figure 5, in 2019, 45 % of EU enterprises used social media to develop the enterprise’s image or market products. This is an increase of 23 percentage points compared to 2013 (22%). The second main reason for using social media refers also to the ‘outside world’: 29 % of enterprises used social media to obtain or respond to customers’ opinions, reviews or questions in 2019. This share rose between 2013 and 2019 by 14 percentage points. The percentage of enterprises using social media to recruit employees tripled over the same period from 9 % in 2013 to 28 % in 2019. As concerns communication inside the enterprise, in 2019, 14 % of enterprises reported using social media to exchange views, opinions or knowledge within the enterprise. This represents an increase of five percentage points compared to 2013.
Figure 5: Enterprises using social media, by purpose of use, EU-28, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019 (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismp)

**Purposes of using social media by size of enterprises**

As shown in Figure 6, for 86% of EU enterprises that used social media in 2019, the reason was image building or marketing products. Furthermore, 55% of enterprises reported using social media to obtain customer opinions or reviews, or to answer their questions, implying an effort to improve customer service. At the same time 54% of enterprises used social media to recruit employees. In addition, for 27% of enterprises using social media the purpose was to involve customers in product development or innovation. They might approach communities of customers for new innovative ideas and actively involve them in developing new products based on principles of sharing, joining in and acting globally.
The difference in the proportion of small and large enterprises using social media for purposes relating to the ‘outside world’ in 2019 was small. 85% of small enterprises and 87% of large enterprises used social media to build their image or market products. There were also only small differences in the proportion of using social media to obtain customers’ opinions or questions (55% of small firms, 60% of large ones), to involve customers in product development (26% and 34%) and to collaborate with business partners (24% and 35%). In contrast, 78% of large enterprises used social media to recruit employees while only 50% of small enterprises used them for this purpose. 43% of large enterprises used social media to exchange views, opinions or knowledge internally, while only 25% of small enterprises did so.

**Purposes of using social media by economic activity**

Among enterprises that used social media for the three customer-centric purposes (develop the enterprise’s image, obtain or respond to customers’ opinions or involve customers in product development), those in the Retail trade and in the Accommodation sectors used social media more than enterprises in other economic sectors. In particular, for 91% of enterprises using social media in Retail trade and Accommodation, the reason was to develop the enterprise’s image or market products. For 81% of enterprises using social media in the Accommodation sector the purpose was to obtain customers’ opinions and answer their questions (Figure 7).

Using social media for the purpose of recruiting employees was most common in the Information and communication sector (70% of enterprises using social media).
Enterprises using social media, by selected purposes and economic activity, EU-28, 2019 (% of enterprises using social media)

Figure 7: Enterprises using social media, by selected purposes and economic activity, EU-28, 2019 (% of enterprises using social media) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismp)

Source data for tables and graphs

- Social media - statistics on the use by enterprises 2019 tables and graphs

Data sources

Data presented in this article are based on the results of the 2019 Community survey on ‘ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises’. Statistics were obtained from enterprise surveys conducted by National Statistical Authorities in 2019. The statistical observation unit is the enterprise, as defined in Regulation 696/1993 of 15 March 1993. The survey covered enterprises with at least 10 persons employed.

Economic activities correspond to the classification NACE Revision 2. The sectors covered are manufacturing, electricity, gas and steam, water supply, construction, wholesale and retail trades, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities, information and communication, real estate, professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support activities and repair of computers and communication equipment. Enterprises are broken down by size; small (10-49), medium (50-249) and large enterprises (250 or more persons employed).

In 2019, 160 000 out of 1.7 million enterprises in the EU-28 were surveyed. Of the 1.7 million enterprises, approximately 83 % were enterprises with 10-49 persons employed (small), 14 % with 50-249 (medium) and 3 % with 250 or more (large).

Some questions on social media have slightly changed over the years, in particular between 2013 and 2015, see:

Model Questionnaire for the 2013 Community survey on ‘ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises’

Model Questionnaire for the 2015 Community survey on ‘ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises’

In this article, enterprises using social media are defined as those that use the internet and have a user profile, an account or a user licence, depending on the requirements and type of social media concerned. References to third-party brands, products and trademarks are for the sake of clarification and are not intended to promote the use of such products.
**Context**

The "Digital Single Market" (DSM) for Europe is a prominent priority of the Commission. In particular, DSM strategy is built on three pillars: (1) better access for consumers and businesses to digital goods and services across Europe; (2) creating the right conditions and a level playing field for digital networks and innovative services to flourish; (3) maximising the growth potential of the digital economy. **Online platforms** - parts of which are the social media - play an increasingly central role in social and economic life and are an important part of a thriving internet-enabled economy.

The wider EU policy interest is in spotting business opportunities for launching services based on key enabling technologies such as social media. Social media are part of the digital technologies that enterprises exploit to increase their presence on the internet, improve marketing opportunities, communicate and interact with partners, customers and other organisations, and facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the enterprise.

In this context, social media (along with other technologies such as cloud computing, mobile access to the internet, and "big data") enable business to grow and innovate. Growth remains a condition for business survival while innovation remains necessary for competitiveness. **(European Commission's main innovation policies)**.

**See also**
- E-commerce statistics
- Internet advertising of businesses - statistics on usage of ads
- ICT specialists - statistics on hard-to-fill vacancies in enterprises
- ICT security in enterprises
- E-business integration
- Cloud computing - statistics on the use by enterprises
- Digital economy and society statistics - enterprises

**Main tables**
- Digital economy and society

**Database**
- Digital economy and society

**Dedicated section**
- Digital economy and society

**Methodology**
- ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises (ESMS metadata file — isoc_e_esms)
Legislation

- Regulation (EC) No 696/1993 of 15 March 1993 on the statistical units for the observation and analysis of the production system in the Community

External links

- European Commission’s main innovation policies
- Online platforms
- Digital Single Market