Social media - statistics on the use by enterprises

Businesses raise their internet profile by using social media

This article presents recent statistics on the use of social media by enterprises in the European Union (EU) as part of their strategy for integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) in their business. 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.

Use of social media: highlights

• Some 47 % of EU enterprises used at least one type of social media (e.g. social networks, blogs, content-sharing sites and wikis) in 2017, with more than eight out of ten of these businesses (84 %) using such applications to build their image and to market products.

• The second important reason for using social media was to obtain customers opinions or reviews or answer to their questions. This was reported by more than half of EU enterprises that used social media, especially enterprises in the accommodation sector.

• Social networks were the most used form of social media; compared to 2013 their use strongly increased.

• Among the enterprises that used social media, the size of the enterprise was not so important in determining whether the firm used social media to attract customers: 83 % of small enterprises used them for image building or for marketing products, compared with 85 % of large enterprises.

Social media, a business paradigm shift

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 supported in exchanging 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, as enterprises have been able to reach an audience in ways that the audience wants to be reached.

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.
Use of social media by enterprises

Enterprises attach importance to internet presence. Consequently, their websites increasingly offer functionalities such as online ordering, product catalogues and information, order tracking, product customisation and links to social media. As shown in Table 1, in 2017, some 77 % of EU enterprises employing at least 10 people reported having a website. This is 4 percentage points more than in 2013 as adoption rates are slowing.

![Figure 1: Enterprises using social media, by type of social media, EU-28, 2013 and 2017 (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismt)](image)

Table 1: Enterprises’ presence on the internet, 2017, (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ciweb), (isoc_cismt)

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<th>Social networks</th>
<th>Enterprise blog or microblogs</th>
<th>Multimedia content-sharing websites</th>
<th>Wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools</th>
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(*) Differences between the last column and the sum of the previous two columns are due to rounding.

Table 1: Enterprises’ presence on the internet, 2017, (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_ciweb), (isoc_cismt)

![Figure 1: Enterprises using social media, by type of social media, EU-28, 2013 and 2017 (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismt)](image)

Social media - statistics on the use by enterprises
Furthermore, 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, Present.ly, and others; (c) multimedia content-sharing websites such as YouTube, Flickr, SlideShare, and others; and (d) wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools. In 2017, 47% of EU enterprises used at least one of these types of social media; compared to 2013, this is an increase of 17 percentage points. Percentages do vary widely from country to country, ranging from 27% in Poland to 74% in Malta. Some 44% of all enterprises in the EU that reported having a website also reported using one or more social media (Table 1).

In 2017, more than two thirds of EU enterprises employing 250 or more people (68%) had an account and used some kind of social network. By contrast, just over one out of four enterprises (43%) employing 10 to 49 people used social networks (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Enterprises using social media, by type of social media and size class, EU-28, 2017 (% of enterprises) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismt)**

It is noticeable that 26% of enterprises in the EU used only one of the four types of social media. In fact, the use of only one type of social media is significantly correlated with the use of social networks.

The use of blogs or microblogs and content-sharing websites was less popular among EU enterprises, at 14 and 16% 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 was highest in the United Kingdom (42%), multimedia content-sharing websites was highest in the Netherlands at 29%.

Some 5% of EU enterprises used wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools in 2017. 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 Lithuania (12%).

Social networks were more popular than other types of social media. Some 45% 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. Since 2013, the use of social networks has increased more than that of the other types of social media. Denmark and Cyprus (+31 and 28 percentage points respectively) reported the highest increases, followed by Finland (+27 percentage points), Luxembourg and Belgium (+26 percentage points each) (Figure 3).
Purposes of using social media for businesses

It is important to distinguish the purposes for which enterprises were exploiting social media in 2017: it might be to reach the ‘outside world’ — customers, business partners or other organisations — or it might be for communication inside the enterprise or for specific purposes such as to recruit employees.

As shown in Figure 4, among EU enterprises, 40% used social media to develop the enterprise’s image or market products. This is an increase of 18 percentage points compared to 2013. The second main reason for using social media refers also to the ‘outside world’: 27% of enterprises used social media to obtain or respond to customers’ opinions, reviews or questions. This share is almost twice the one of 2013 (15%). Using social media to recruit employees registered also a significant increase: from 9% of enterprises in 2013 to 23% in 2017. As concerns communication inside the enterprise, 13% of enterprises reported to have used social media to exchange views, opinions or knowledge within the enterprise. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points compared to 2013.
**Purposes of using social media by size of enterprises**

As shown in Figure 5 for 84 % of EU enterprises that used social media in 2017, the reason was image building or marketing products. Furthermore, 56 % of enterprises reported using social media to obtain customer opinions or reviews, or to answer their questions, implying an effort to improve customer service.

In addition, 26 % of enterprises using social media expected customers to be involved in product development or innovation; these enterprises accounted for 12 % of all EU enterprises. 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.

![Figure 5: Enterprises using social media, by purpose of use and size class, EU-28, 2017 (% of enterprises using social media) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cisnt) and (isoc_cismp)](image)

The difference in the proportion of small and large enterprises using social media for purposes relating to the ‘outside world’ in 2017 was small. Some 83 % of small enterprises used social media to build their image or market products, compared with 85 % of large enterprises. There were also only small differences in the proportion using social media to obtain customers’ opinions or answer questions (56 % of small firms, 60 % of large ones), to involve customers in product development (26 % and 31 %) and to collaborate with business partners (24 % and 32 %). In contrast, 72 % of large enterprises used social media to recruit employees while only 45 % of small enterprises used them for this purpose. 41 % of large enterprises used social media internally, while only 27 % 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 mentioned above, those in the accommodation sector used social media more than those in other economic sectors. In particular, 83 % of enterprises in the accommodation sector used social media to obtain customers’ opinions and answer their questions (Figure 6).
Figure 6: Enterprises using social media, by purpose and economic activity, EU28, 2017 (% of enterprises using social media) - Source: Eurostat (isoc_cismt) and (isoc_cismp)

Data sources

Data presented in this article are based on the results of the 2017 European Union survey on 'ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises'. Statistics were obtained from enterprise surveys conducted by National Statistical Authorities in 2017. 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 2017, 159 000 out of 1.6 million enterprises in the EU-28 were surveyed. Of the 1.6 million enterprises, approximately 83 % were enterprises with 10-49 persons employed (small), 14 % with 50-249 (medium) and 3 % with 250 or more (large).

Data presented in this article may differ from data in the database due to non-rounded data used for the update of this publication whereas data in Eurobase tables are rounded.

Figure 3: only countries that have reported results for both years (2013 and 2017) are presented in the graph.

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. The European Commission’s main innovation policy is the Broad-based innovation strategy for the EU.

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

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**

• Broad-based innovation strategy for the EU

• Online platforms

• Digital Single Market

*View this article online at* [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Social_media_-_statistics_on_the_use_by_enterprises](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Social_media_-_statistics_on_the_use_by_enterprises)*