



PRESS RELEASE

Global survey: social media breaking down barriers for women in politics

The biggest ever global survey of social media use by female parliamentarians is launched today at the European Parliament, and shows how platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are helping women break down traditional barriers to get on in politics.

The new report “Social Media: Advancing Women in Politics?”, produced by Harvard University, is the result of a partnership between the Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP), the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, and Facebook. It is based on a survey that examined the use of social media by over 900 female Parliamentarians from 107 countries, including 25 in the EU.

The report looks at how female politicians use social media to launch and maintain successful political careers. Only 22.8% of national members of parliament are women, and there are still 38 countries in the world with parliaments in which men account for more than 90% of its members.

Key Findings:

- Social media, because of its low cost and the role that personal initiative plays in its use, serves as an equaliser for female parliamentarians who are otherwise politically disadvantaged.
- More than 85 percent of female legislators use social media, with the level of use higher during campaign periods than during legislative periods.
- The primary social media audiences for most respondents are the voters that support them, their campaign workers, and their constituents. The media and other politicians were a secondary audience.
- Facebook was by far the most widely used platform – employed by more than 90% of social media users
- Age was the most important individual factor determining social media use, with younger respondents making much greater use of social media than older ones. Younger users were more knowledgeable, more likely to manage their own social media, and also had a higher opinion of the power of social media.
- The “motherhood penalty” does not apply to female Politicians’ social media use. Respondents with dependent children were as active on social media as those of comparable age without children.
- Female parliamentarians who perceive themselves to be treated equally in their political party are far more active on social media than those who believe their party treats its female members unequally.

The report also sets out seven top practical recommendations on how women parliamentarians can further develop their social media use, which are:

- Knowing the audience and which platforms they use
- Acquire specific skills on the use of each platform
- Increase interactivity with audience
- Stick to targeted and relevant messages



- Share personal stories
- Keep up with changes in social media
- Take the time to learn how best to use social media

Nicco Mele, Director, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy:

“As the WIP/Facebook/Shorenstein Center survey reveals, female politicians are not fully equal when it comes to social media. There are barriers, such as attitudes within political parties, that must be swept away to encourage female politicians to make fuller use of social media.”

Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Founder, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP):

“This study confirms that social media are a political equaliser. They are a resource with an incredible political impact, and unlike other resources (such as campaign financing, professional networks or traditional media coverage), they have a very low entry cost.”

Katie Harbath, Global Politics and Government Outreach Director, Facebook:

“Facebook and other social media platforms are transforming the way politicians connect with citizens and campaign on the issues they care about. But this survey also shows how social media is breaking down the long-standing barriers faced by women in politics by levelling the playing field and helping them succeed in the jobs they’ve been elected for.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Access the full report here :

http://www.womeninparliaments.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/WIP-Harvard-Facebook-Study_Oct2016.pdf

Agenda of presentations:

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 11 October 2016, 10:30h – 12:30h - The report “Social Media: Advancing Women in Politics?” will be launched at the European Parliament (10:30h - 12:30h), at an event hosted by MEP Marietje Schaake (ALDE). Speakers will include Silvana Koch-Mehrin, WIP Founder, Katie Harbath, Global Manager of the Politics and Government Outreach Team at Facebook, and Thomas Patterson, author of the study. The presentation will be followed by an interactive debate with the participation of Kaja Kallas (ALDE), Terry Reintke (Greens-EFA), Helga Stevens (ECR) and Julie Ward (S&D).

ITALIAN SENATE, 18 October 2016, 10:00h – 12:00h – The study will be discussed at the Senate of Italy, at an event hosted by the Vice-President of the Senate and WIP Executive Board Member, Linda Lanzillotta. It will be presented during the roundtable “Power, disrupted. An opportunity for more women in politics?” with the participation of Anna Maria Bernini (Member of the Senate), Anna Ascani (Member of the Parliament), Roberta Maggio (Head of Digital Communication, President Matteo Renzi), Rick Zedník (CEO, Women in Parliaments) and Sara Ranzini (Communication Director, Facebook Italy).

MEXICAN SENATE, 23 November 2016 - The study will be discussed at the Senate of Mexico, at an event hosted by the Member of the Senate and WIP Executive Board Member, Lucero Saldaña. The Speakers for this presentation are to be confirmed.



For more information, visual material or interviews, please contact:

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