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PRESS RELEASE

Influence Index: European Parliament Newcomers Take to Social Media to Break Political Glass Ceiling

Newly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are using social media to cultivate influence and break the political glass ceiling, according to new ground- breaking analysis by VoteWatch Europe and BCW Brussels.

The **Influence Index** uses data and insight to rank MEPs based on the two independent dimensions of political and social media influence. Seniority and incumbency – the amount of time spent in office – remain key factors for political influence. In contrast, newcomers are more adept at using social media to shape the public debate and build a community of support for their ideas. Only five (10%) of the MEPs ranked in the top 50 for political influence were elected to the Parliament in 2019, compared to 28 (56%) of those ranked in the top 50 for social influence. MEPs elected for the first time in 2019 make up 59% of the current European Parliament.

The top 20 MEPs for combined political and social influence are:

1. **David Maria Sassoli,** President of the European Parliament (Italy, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats - S&D)
2. **Manfred Weber** (Germany, President of the European People's Party - EPP)
3. **Antonio Tajani** (Italy, EPP)
4. **Iratxe García Pérez** (Spain, President of the S&D group)
5. **Dacian Cioloş** (Romania, President of Renew Europe)
6. **Sven Giegold** (Germany, Greens-European Free Alliance - Greens/EFA)
7. **Luis Garicano** (Spain, Renew Europe)
8. **Pascal Canfin** (France, Renew Europe)
9. **Dimitrios Papadimoulis** (Greece, European United Left–Nordic Green Left - GUE/NGL)
10. **Guy Verhofstadt** (Belgium, Renew Europe)
11. **Heidi Hautala** (Finland, Greens/EFA)
12. **Bas Eickhout** (The Netherlands, Greens/EFA)
13. **Karima Delli** (France, Greens/EFA)
14. **Juan Fernando López Aguilar** (Spain, S&D)
15. **Sophia In 't Veld** (The Netherlands, Renew Europe)
16. **Younous Omarjee** (France, GUE/NGL)
17. **Irene Tinagli** (Italy, S&D)
18. **Bernd Lange** (Germany, S&D)
19. **Tiemo Wölken** (Germany, S&D)
20. **Reinhard Bütikofer** (Germany, Greens/EFA)

The Index also ranks MEPs' influence in six key policy areas: Health, the European Green Deal, Digital, Economy, Foreign Affairs and Democracy & Home Affairs. A full analysis of the findings is available at www.influenceindex.eu. A deeper analysis of the political ranking can be found on VoteWatch Europe's website.

On Tuesday 13 October at 16.00 CET, the Influence Index will be launched and presented with a webinar moderated by Shada Islam, Senior Advisor at BCW Brussels, and featuring Members of the European Parliament Eva Kaili (Greece, S&D) and Dragoș Pîslaru (Romania, Renew Europe), VoteWatch Europe CEO Doru Frantescu and political blogger Jon Worth.

"With its "first-of-its-kind" combination of political and social influence, underpinned by BCW's proprietary analysis of social media meta data, the Influence Index sheds new light on who is influential across key policy areas in the European Parliament," according to Andrew Cecil, CEO of BCW Brussels. "As the pandemic has turbo-charged the shift to digital and social communications, the Influence Index will fast become the "go-to" tool to understand the new dynamics of who and to how to influence across the EU."

"The most prominent political and institutional leaders are at the top of the ranking, as they have been able to influence different policy areas, while the activities of most other MEPs have a narrower focus" says Doru Frantescu, Director of VoteWatch Europe. "Yet, MEPs who are specialised in topics that are currently at the top of the EU agenda, such as environment, economic affairs, etc., have also been able to stand out."

Insights

Political influence

- Seniority and incumbency are key factors in the political index, with the ranking dominated by seasoned MEPs. However, there's room for newcomers, with recently elected MEPs **Irene Tinagli, Dacian Cioloş, Dragoş Pîslaru, Luis Garicano** and **Ewa Kopacz** among the top 50 political influencers.
- MEPs representing Portugal wield most political influence proportionally to the size of their national groups, mainly because of their leading role in shaping legislation. German MEPs rank sixth out of the 27 member states for average political influence, while French MEPs punch below their weight, ranking 21st.
- MEPs from Renew Europe are most politically influential in proportion to the size of their group, reflecting the party's role as 'kingmaker' in the Parliament.

Social Influence

- French MEP **Manon Aubry –** a newcomer to the Parliament, Co-Chair of the GUE/NGL group and a former Oxfam France spokeswoman – tops the social influence ranking. She is a strong voice on Twitter on issues spanning tax evasion, humanitarian aid and climate change.
- There is a clear East-West influence gap when it comes to social media influence, largely due to the reliance of the social influence score on data from Twitter, a platform less widely used in the Eastern member states.
- Members of the Greens/EFA group emerge as the most influential on social media, on average, followed by GUE/NGL. There is a clear pattern of left-leaning groups wielding more influence on social platforms to promote their policy positions and objectives.

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About the Influence Index

The Influence Index is a new data-driven ranking of MEPs by BCW Brussels and VoteWatch Europe.
It is the first MEP ranking to measure influence through the two dimensions of:

- **Political influence:** the ability to change legislation, win votes and shape debates
- **Social influence:** the ability to reach people, shift the public conversation and build a community of support

More information, including a detailed description of the methodology, is available at www.influenceindex.eu.

About BCW

BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe), one of the world's largest full-service global communications agencies, is in the business of moving people on behalf of clients. BCW delivers digitally and data-driven creative content and integrated communications programs grounded in earned media and scaled across all channels for clients in the B2B, consumer, corporate, crisis management, healthcare, public affairs, purpose and technology sectors. BCW is a part of WPP (NYSE: WPP), a creative transformation company. For more information, visit www.bcw-global.com.

About VoteWatch

VoteWatch Europe is a leading Brussels-based independent organisation specialised in combining large data sets of EU political data with cutting-edge expertise in order to provide the best insights into EU politics.
Independent studies ranked VoteWatch Europe as the top influencer in the category of think tanks communicating on EU affairs.