



The Open Think
Tank Directory

Regional Brief Europe

On Think Tanks

February 2022

Think Tank State of the Sector

2020–2021

Contents

1	<u>The Open Think Tank Directory</u>	3
2	<u>Introduction</u>	4
3	<u>How many organisations feature in the OTTD?</u>	6
4	<u>When were think tanks in Europe founded?</u>	7
5	<u>Which topics do think tanks mostly focus on?</u>	8
6	<u>What is the most common business model?</u>	10
7	<u>What is the turnover of think tanks?</u>	11
8	<u>How much do think tanks publish?</u>	12
9	<u>What is the staff size?</u>	13
10	<u>Who founds think tanks?</u>	14
11	<u>How many men and women lead think tanks?</u>	15
12	<u>Which social media channels do think tanks use?</u>	16
13	<u>List of think tanks – Europe</u>	19

The Open Think Tank Directory

The Open Think Tank Directory (OTTD) was created to overcome the shortage of publicly available information about think tanks and other policy research centres and expertise bodies worldwide. On Think Tanks builds and maintains it with the aim of offering a public and open database that benefits the entire evidence-informed-policy community. Through it, centres can identify potential collaborators and connect with peers, funders and others; for the body of scholars who study think tanks, the directory provides a sample frame for their investigations; interested people can browse the profiles of think tanks and also get an overview of the sector; and funders can identify organisations that focus on their agendas. The database is downloadable through this link, which helps increase the sector's transparency.

Defining which organisations are to be included is a difficult task, as think tanks themselves are difficult to define. In the Open Think Tank Directory, we have defined think tanks as a diverse group of knowledge and engagement organisations that have as their (main) objective to undertake research, generate knowledge and use evidence-informed arguments to inform and/or influence policy and its outcomes. To do this, they perform a range of functions, including undertaking research, aiming to influence the public agenda, monitoring how specific policies are carried out, suggesting or advocating for policy changes and so on.¹

The directory has been compiled and is updated using a mixed approach: web searches in Google; suggestions for inclusion by country and regional experts; think tanks' websites; and direct submission by or contact with think tanks. We have established a review criterion for transparency of the quality of the data and include the sources of the information in the profile of each organisation.

The Open Think Tank Directory does not make any evaluations of the organisations it features.

Funding

The development and maintenance of the Open Think Tank Directory has been, and remains, possible thanks to many funders. It has been built based on contributions and grants from: The Open Society Foundations, the Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Latin America from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., UNICEF's Office of Research-Innocenti, Robert Bosch, USAID, and most importantly our grant from the Hewlett Foundation that makes the management, improvement, update and analysis of the Open Think Tank Directory possible.

¹ See [FAQs](#) for more on inclusion criteria.

Introduction

The regional briefs are companion reports to the 2020–2021 Think Tank State of the Sector reports. They aim to provide a more nuanced look at the think tank sector in each continent and the subregions within it. This report is based on an analysis of 2020 and 2021 data from 1,049 active think tanks,² and it aims to describe (but not explain) the think tank sector in Europe, and the internal differences between South & Eastern and West & Northern Europe.³

This regional brief provides and overview of:

- How many organisations from Europe feature in the OTTD?
- When were think tanks in Europe founded?
- Which topics do European think tanks mostly focus on?
- What is the most common business model for European think tanks?
- What is the turnover for European think tanks?
- How much do European think tanks publish?
- What is the staff size in European think tanks?
- Who founds European think tanks?
- How many men and women lead European think tanks?
- Which social media do European think tanks use?
- List of think tanks in the region.

We hope this overview helps further understanding of the think tank sector in Europe and that it inspires others to explore the data further.

Data quality

As in the main report, and given the nature of the methodology and the data available, the findings are representative at the sample level. The report is not a complete sector analysis, but an analysis of the sample of think tanks that the Open Think Tank Directory holds.

The data featured in the OTTD depends on the information that organisations offer on their websites, and in some cases information they themselves have offered. The information that think tanks provide on their websites varies greatly;⁴ some offer little more than a short description, while others display great detail. Because of this, sourcing and completing data for each organisation is difficult and the data completeness by variables between regions is wide ranging.

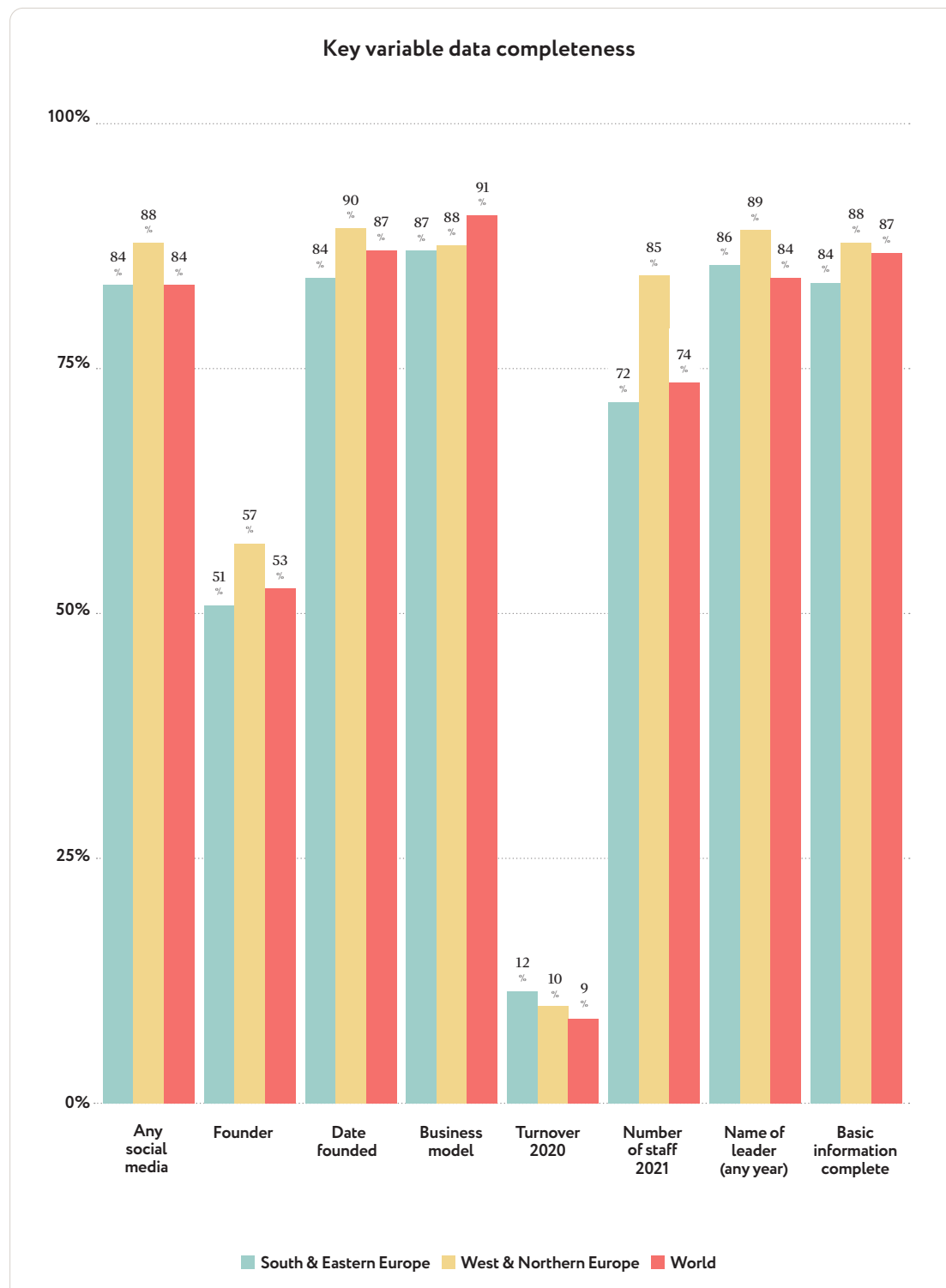
² It does not include organisations that featured in the directory but that are defunct or deemed boundary. The cut-off date for inclusion in the report was August 2021. Organisations registered after this date have not been included in the analysis. We continue to make efforts to offer a complete overview of think tanks worldwide, but we do not claim for this to be a final and complete list of think tanks in each country.

³ Click [here for the database](#) used for the analysis and report.

⁴ For more on differences on the information offered by think tanks on their websites see our article [‘What we learned from looking at more than 3000 websites’](#).

Chart 1 shows the overall data completeness for the region. Turnover information is the variable with the least data available across the world, but we found that think tanks in Europe are slightly more open about revealing their turnover than are other regions. Overall, we found it easier to source information about think tanks in Europe than in other regions, as their websites more readily share staff names and roles, leadership information, publications and so on.

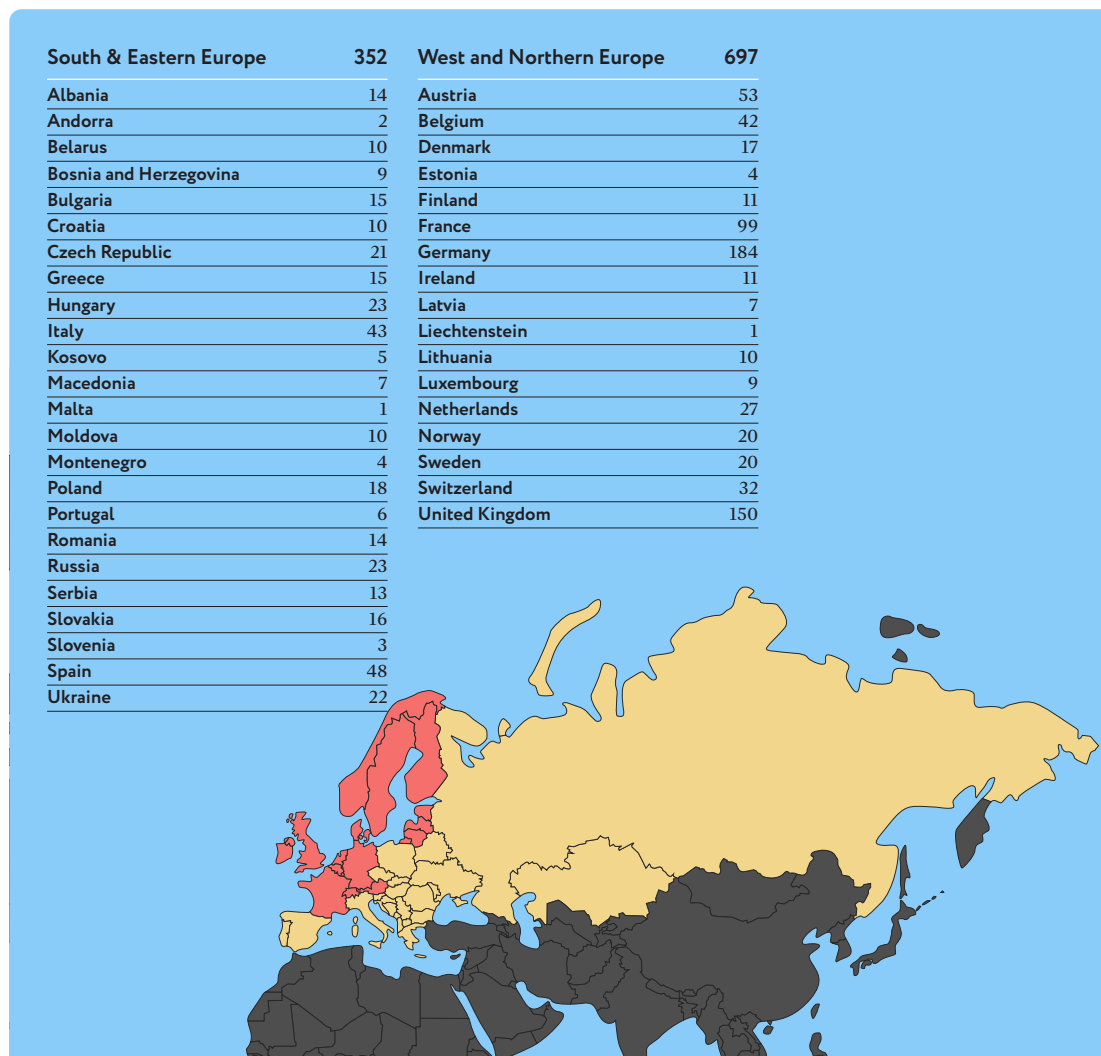
Chart 1.



How many organisations feature in the OTTD?

A total of 1,049 think tanks in Europe are included in the OTTD, which constitutes 34% of all the think tanks in the database. Europe is further subdivided into West & Northern Europe (66%) and South & Eastern Europe (34%). West & Northern European think tanks constitute 22% of the total number of think tanks in the database, while South & Eastern Europe makes up 11%. Most of the think tanks in Europe are in Germany, the United Kingdom and France – all countries in West & Northern Europe. Among the countries in South & Eastern Europe included in the database, most think tanks are in Spain, Italy, Hungary and Russia.

Image 1: Number of think tanks per country



note: If a country is not listed, it means that there are no think tanks registered in the Open Think Tank Directory under that country.

When were think tanks in Europe founded?

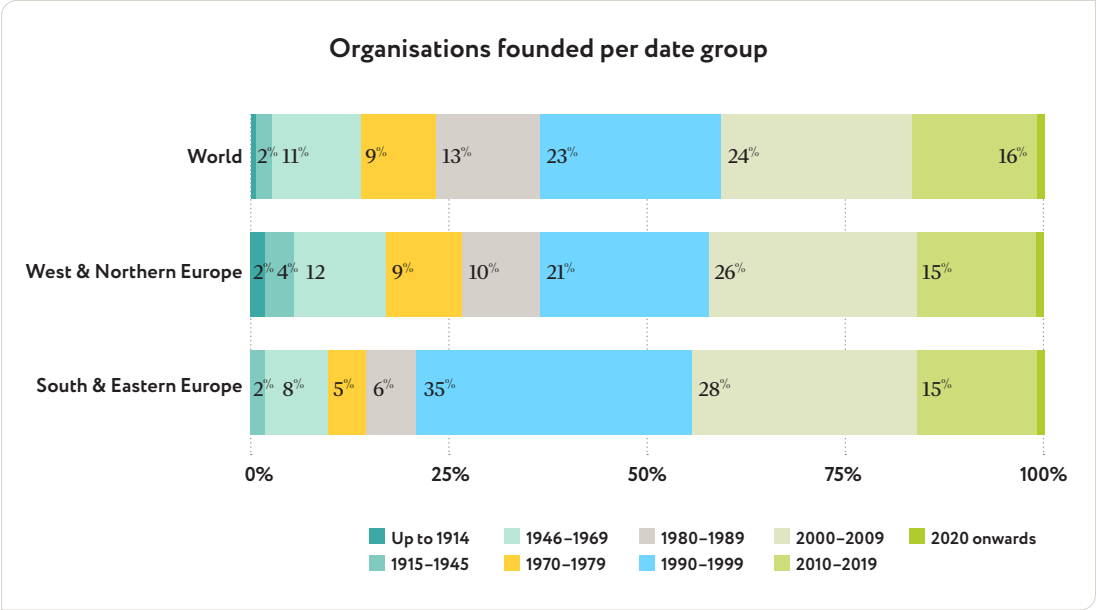
Image 2: Average think tank age by region



The average age of think tanks in West & Northern Europe (32) is higher than the world average (30), which indicates that these think tanks were established a few years earlier than in the rest of the world. Think tanks in South & Eastern Europe, on the other hand, are younger (26). Dividing these regions further shows that think tanks in Northern Europe are older (34) than in Western Europe (32) and in the world. The older average age of think tanks in Northern Europe is mostly due to the UK think tanks.

Chart 2 shows think tank foundation dates. Almost 80% of think tanks in South & Eastern Europe (35%) were established after 1990. West & Northern European shows a slower increase through the years, with a peak in the 2000s consistent with the world trend.

Chart 2.



n: South & Eastern Europe 297; West & Northern Europe 624; world 2,692

Which topics do think tanks mostly focus on?

The key topics that are most favoured worldwide (social policy, governance/transparency and trade/economics/finance) are also in the top four most researched topics across Europe (Charts 3 and 4). But perhaps more interesting is how topics of focus in Europe differ from the rest-of-world averages (Chart 5).⁵ Think tanks in South & Eastern Europe focus significantly more on social policy issues (more than 11% above the world average), but they focus significantly less on health, food/agriculture and environment/natural resources/energy issues. Conversely, think tanks in North & Western Europe don't diverge much from world averages, perhaps because given their large numbers they are in a way leading the world average.

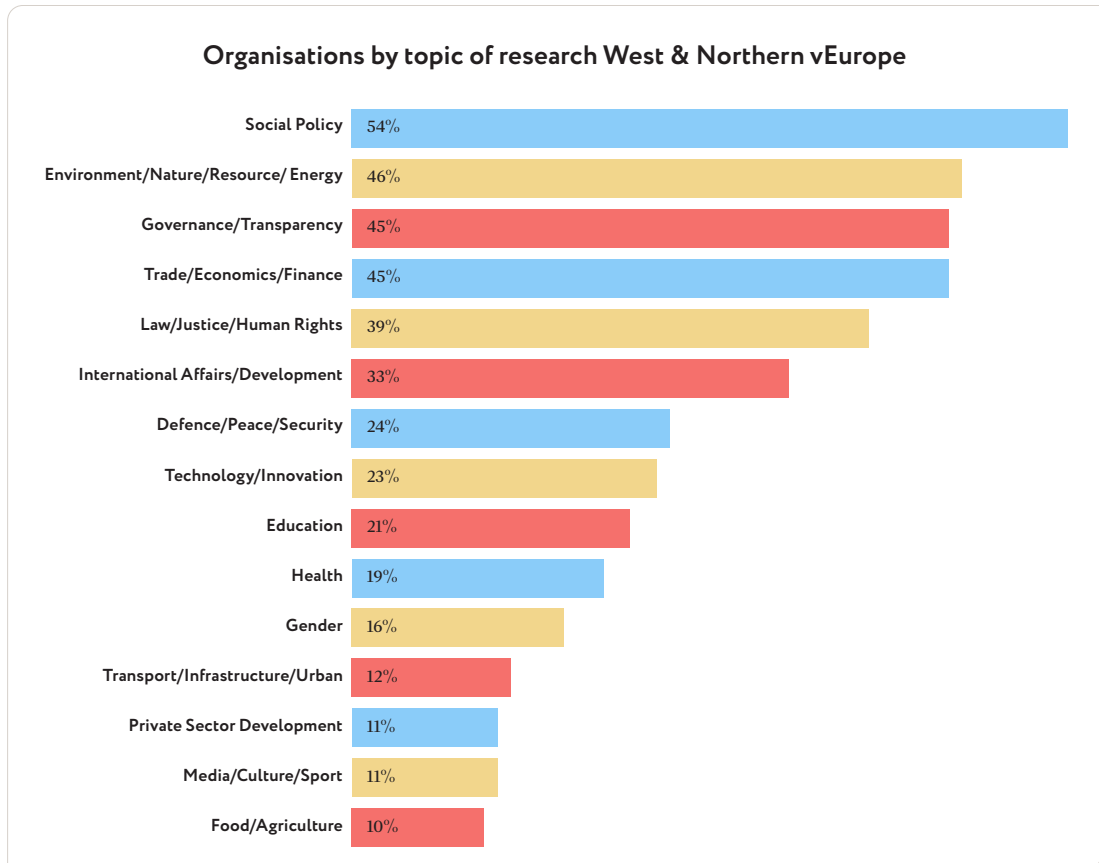
Chart 3.



n: 352

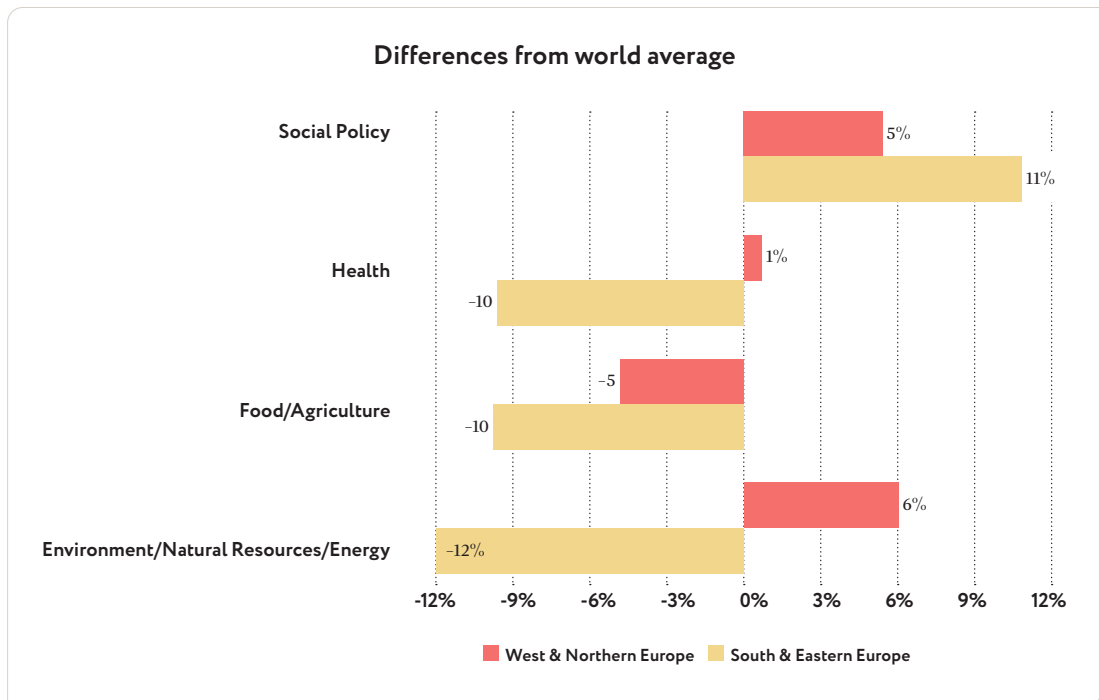
⁵ Only topics in which any of the regions diverge by at least 10% from the world average are shown.

Chart 4.



n: 697

Chart 5.

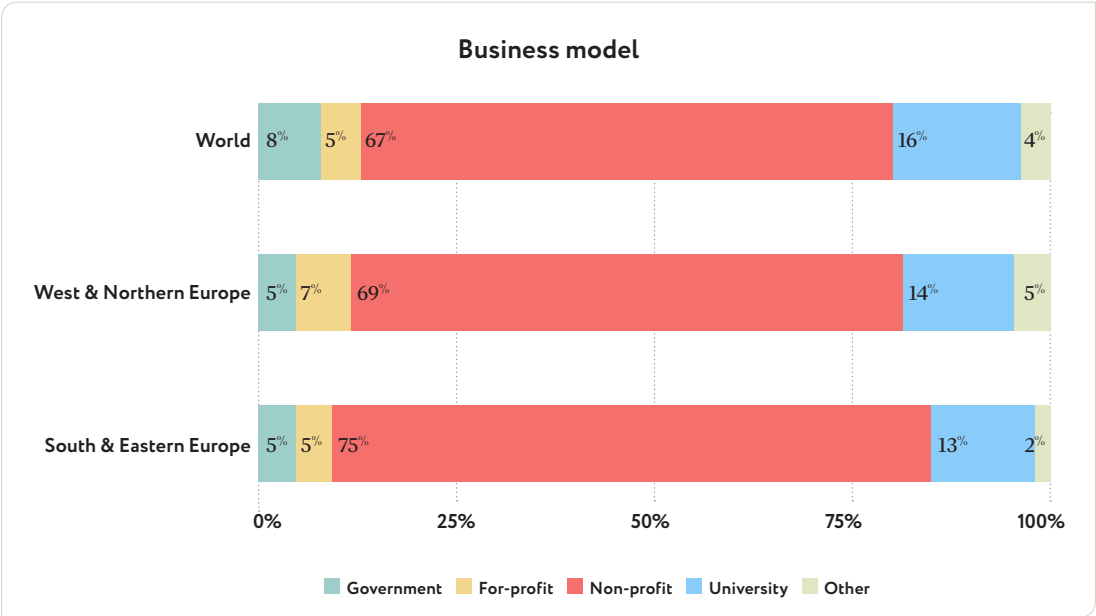


n: South & Eastern Europe 352; West & Northern Europe 697; world 3,107 note:
Only topics in which any of the regions diverge by at least 10% from the world average are shown.

What is the most common business model?

Most of the think tanks in Europe (71%) have a non-profit business model – consistent with the world trend (67% non-profit) – followed by university-affiliated think tanks. More think tanks in South & Eastern Europe have a non-profit business model than in West & Northern Europe.

Chart 6.



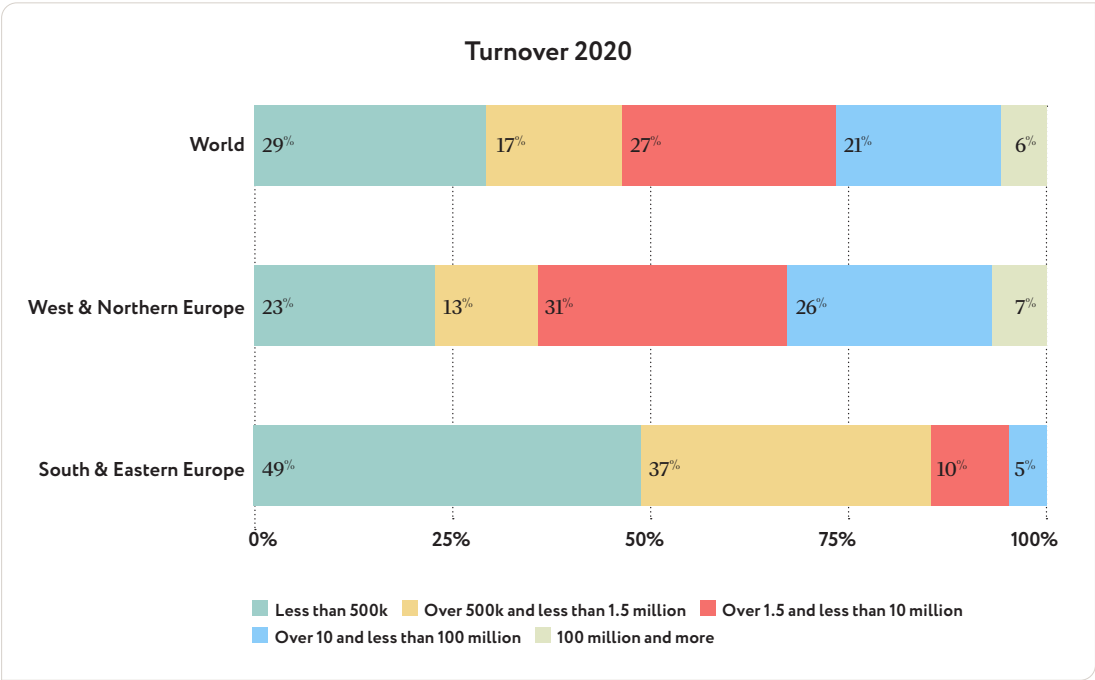
n: South & Eastern Europe 307; West & Northern Europe 611; world 2,819

7

What is the turnover of think tanks?

Both South & Eastern Europe and West & Northern Europe differ greatly from the world averages in turnover, and both regions differ quite drastically from each other. Most think tanks in South & Eastern Europe (86%) have turnovers of up to USD 1.5 million, while only 36% of think tanks in West & Northern Europe fall under this bracket. Additionally, the OTTD does not register any organisations in South & Eastern Europe that have a turnover of more than 100 million.

Chart 7.

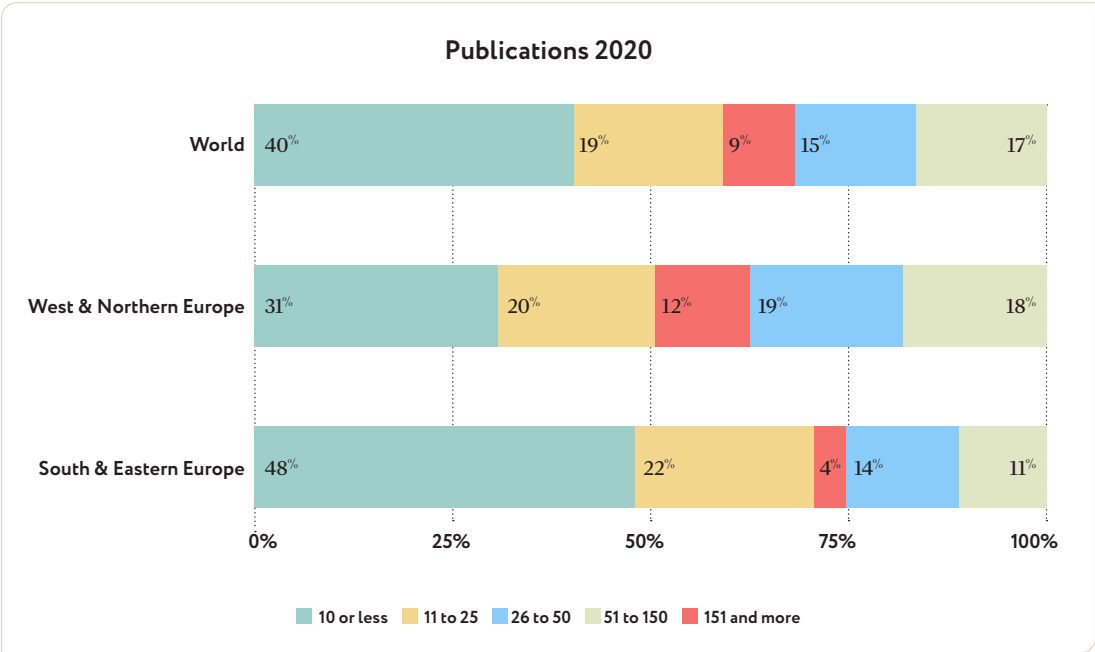


n: South & Eastern Europe 40; West & Northern Europe 68; world 263

How much do think tanks publish?

Think tanks in West & Northern Europe published more than their counterparts in South & Eastern Europe. A third of think tanks in West & Northern Europe (31%) released 10 or fewer publications in 2020, while the same amount was published by almost half of think tanks in South & Eastern Europe (48%). Consequently, a smaller percentage of think tanks in South & Eastern Europe (4%) were able to publish 150 or more pieces in 2020.

Chart 8.



n: South & Eastern Europe 98; West & Northern Europe 350; world 1,011

What is the staff size?

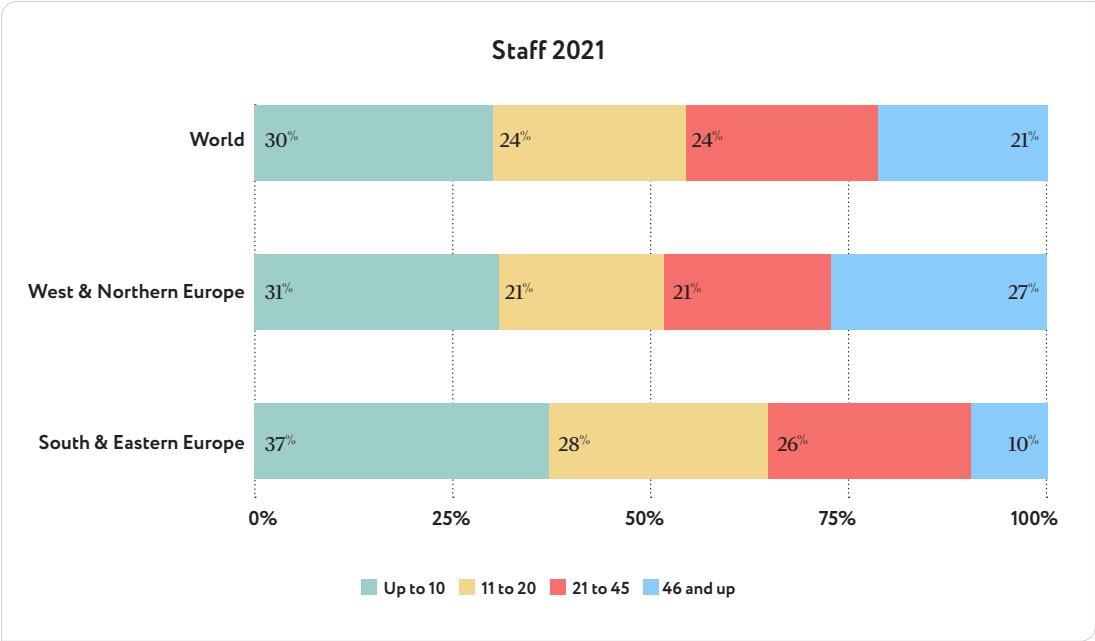
The average staff sizes in the two European subregions are lower than the average staff size across the world. South & Eastern Europe has a lower average staff size, is closer to its median and is lower than the world median, which indicates that South & Eastern European think tanks generally have a smaller staff. The opposite is true for think tanks in West & Northern Europe; additionally the average in this subregion is higher, which indicates that organisations in this region are bigger. This can be seen better in Chart 9; more think tanks in West & Northern Europe (27%) have teams with 46 or more members than in South & Eastern Europe (10%) and the world (21%). Chart 9 also shows that more think tanks in South & Eastern Europe have smaller teams (up to 10: 37%; 11–20: 28%).

Table 1.

Staff size indicators		
	Average staff size	Median staff size
South & Eastern Europe	23	14
West & Northern Europe	48	19
World	62	18

n: South & Eastern Europe 196; West & Northern Europe 485; world 1,716

Chart 9.

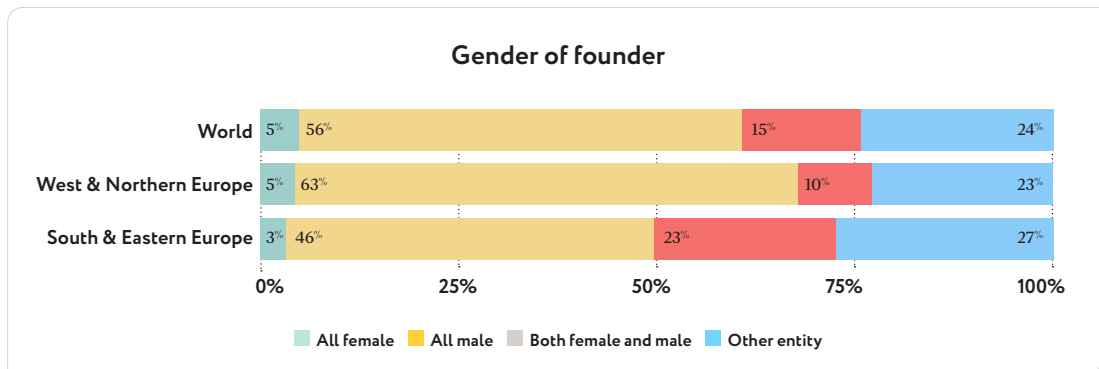


n: South & Eastern Europe 196; West & Northern Europe 485; world 1,716

Who founds think tanks?

Europe follows the same trend as think tanks worldwide: most think tanks are founded by men. But a much smaller percentage of think tanks in South & Eastern Europe were founded by only men (46% vs. 63% in West & Northern Europe). In general, and probably due to the earlier foundation date of the organisations, there are fewer female think tank founders in West & Northern Europe than the world average.

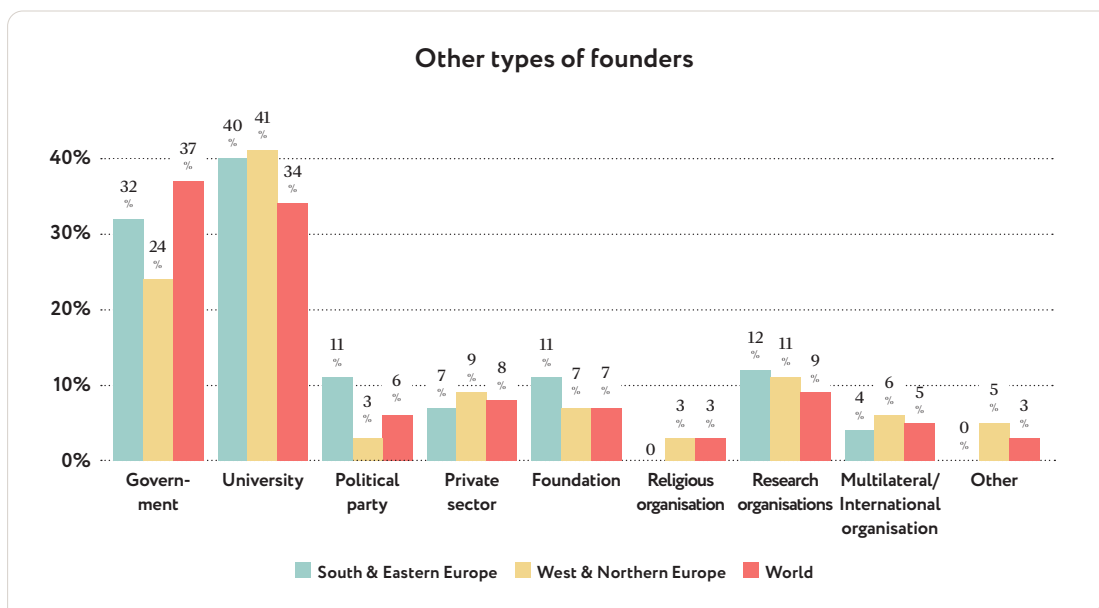
Chart 10.



n: South & Eastern Europe 179; West & Northern Europe 399; world 1,633

Among think tanks that were founded by other entities, university-affiliated entities are most common in both regions – South & Eastern Europe (40%) and West & Northern Europe (41%) – which is inconsistent with the world trend where most entity-founded think tanks are government-affiliated (37% globally). Government is only the second most common type of other founder in both European subregions.

Chart 11.

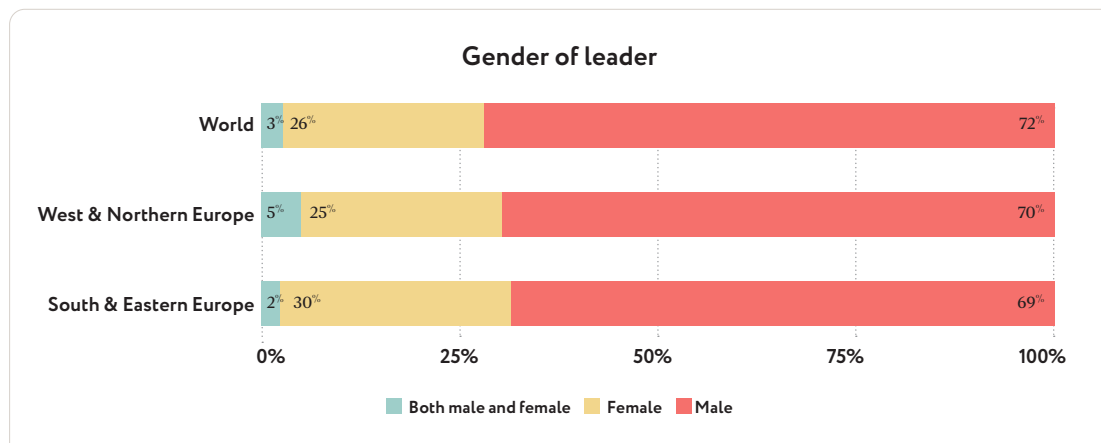


n: South & Eastern Europe 45; West & Northern Europe 116; world 445

How many men and women lead think tanks?

The think tank sector worldwide is still dominated by male leaders (72%), and this is consistent with the findings in Europe as shown in Chart 12. South & Eastern Europe has more female-led think tanks (30%) than West & Northern Europe (25%).

Chart 12.



n: South & Eastern Europe 302; West & Northern Europe 623; world 2,624

If the gender of the founder is taken into account, it is clear that female-founded think tanks are more often led by females. And as expected, male-founded think tanks are more likely to have male leaders, across Europe and globally. However, think tanks with a mix of male and female co-founders tend to have more female leaders, both in Europe and the world. Lastly, among think tanks that were founded by other entities, more females tend to hold leadership positions in West & Northern Europe, but the opposite is true for think tanks in South & Eastern Europe.

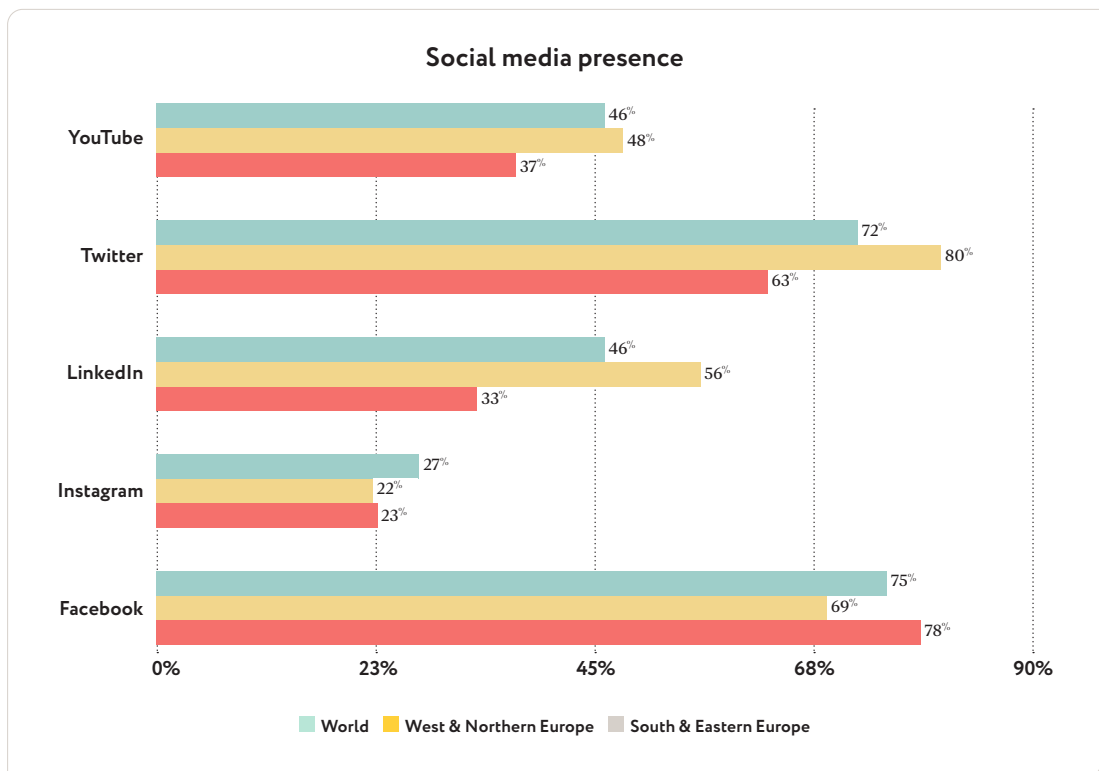
Table 2:

	Gender founder by gender of leader (latest)								
	South & Eastern Europe			West & Northern Europe			World		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
All female	8%	2%	4%	8%	3%	4%	14%	2%	5%
All male	30%	55%	47%	42%	72%	65%	40%	63%	57%
Both male and female founders	40%	14%	22%	18%	6%	9%	24%	12%	15%
Other entities	23%	30%	27%	31%	18%	21%	22%	23%	23%
n:	53	108	161	83	254	337	367	1055	1422

Which social media channels do think tanks use?

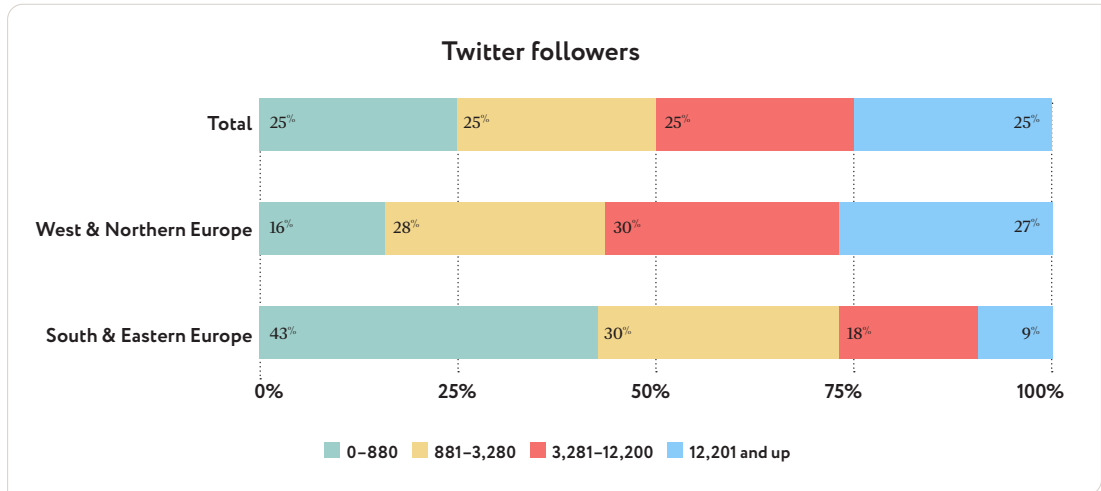
Facebook and Twitter are the social media channels most used by think tanks in Europe. In West & Northern Europe, think tanks prefer Twitter (80%) over Facebook (69%). On the other hand, South & Eastern Europe seem to prefer Facebook (78%) over Twitter (63%). These two platforms are also the most used social media applications by think tanks across the world. The next most-used channels are YouTube and LinkedIn. Instagram usage is lowest in both regions and across the world.

Chart 13.



South & Eastern European think tanks prefer Facebook over Twitter, which may explain why most think tanks in this subregion (43%) have only up to 880 Twitter followers – the lowest category. West & Northern Europe, where more think tanks use Twitter than Facebook, generally have more followers, with 27% of think tanks falling into the highest category of more than 12,201 followers.

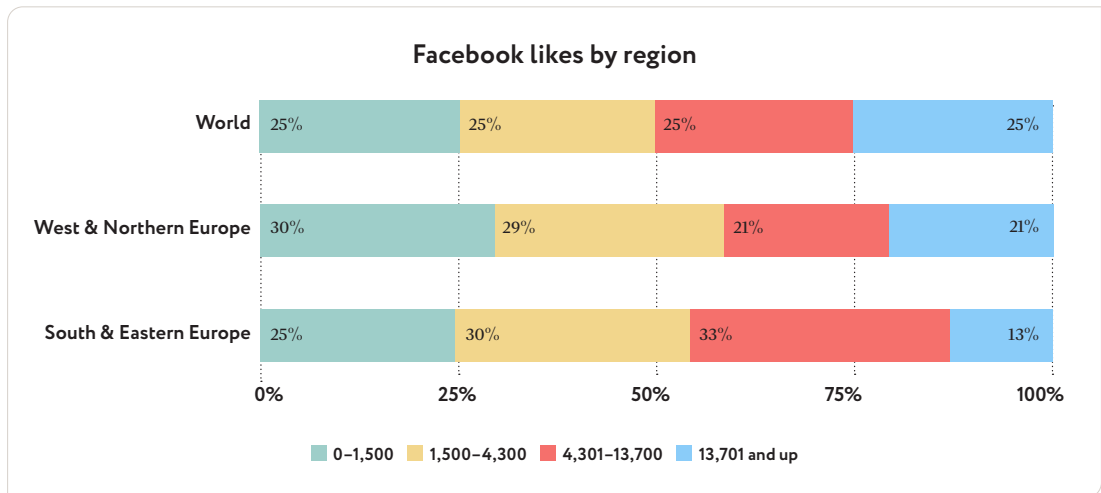
Chart 14.



n: South & Eastern Europe 211; West & Northern Europe 550; world 2,157

Despite the preference for Facebook in South & Eastern Europe (compared to West & Northern Europe), there is a higher percentage of think tanks in West & Northern Europe that have 13,701 or more likes (21% vs. 13%). This indicates the larger followings that the larger organisations in this subregion can accrue.

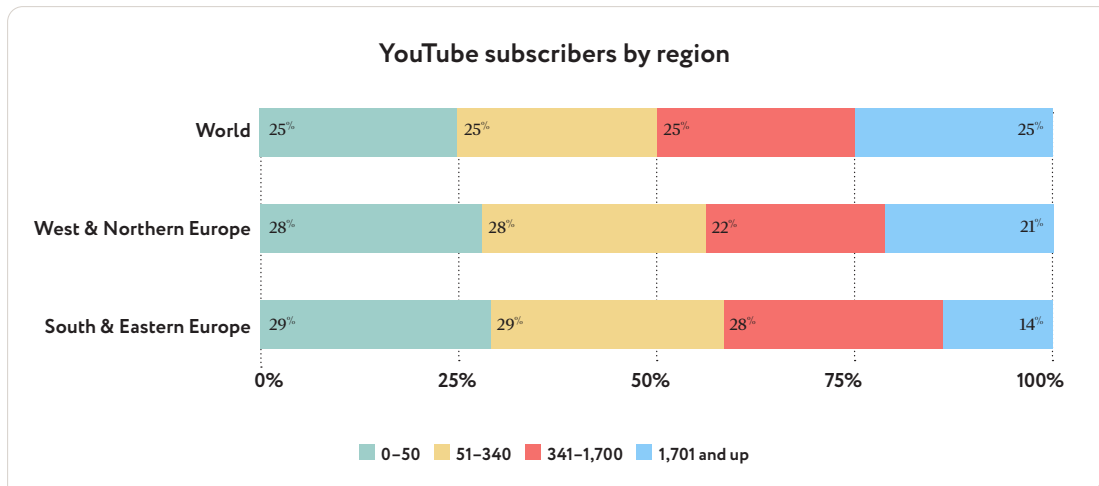
Chart 15.



n: South & Eastern Europe 271; West & Northern Europe 484; world 2,305

YouTube is more common in West & Northern Europe (48%) than South & Eastern Europe (37%). More think tanks in West & Northern Europe have 1,701 or more subscribers (21%) compared to South & Eastern Europe (14%). However, think tanks in South & Eastern Europe have posted more videos (median = 129), while think tanks in West & Northern Europe have received more views (median = 46,220). The median number of videos posted by think tanks in West & Northern Europe is 94. The median number of views for think tanks in South & Eastern Europe is 37,999.

Chart 16.



n: South & Eastern Europe 130; West & Northern Europe 334; world 1,436

List of think thanks – Europe

Click on each country to take you to the list of all organisations from Europe included in the Open Think Tank Directory.⁶

South & Eastern Europe

- Albania
- Andorra
- Belarus
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Kosovo
- Macedonia
- Malta
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Ukraine

West & Northern Europe

- Austria
- Belgium
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

⁶ Some organisations in each country might not have been included in the Think Tank State of the Sector 2020–2021 report as they are deemed boundary organisations (see FAQs for a definition). [Click here for the database used for this report.](#)



**The Open Think
Tank Directory**

**[https://onthinktanks.org/
open-think-tank-directory](https://onthinktanks.org/open-think-tank-directory)**