European Insights Forum

Policy and political research group

BOLDT × BPI | Message House × BPI

Executive Summary

An Invaluable Inside View

Understanding what is really going on at the highest level of European Union politics and policy has never been more important. We now have a way to get closer to it.

BPI's European Insights Forum is a research group of European policy and political experts - more than 50 former MEPs, EU institution policy officials, and policy and think tank experts. It provides a strategic barometer on key issues, mirroring the views of current policymakers, and helping you to understand what's going on and what to expect in turbulent times.

The Forum offers clients first-hand perspectives to empower:

- **Policy intelligence:** get closer to what's really happening on the inside and why
- **Strategic planning:** views on issues, likely trajectories and EU responses
- **Campaign testing:** a sounding board on prospective reactions
- **Political engagement:** deeper background information and analysis

This level of insights is not available elsewhere. At a time when it is imperative to understand what is really going on inside politics and what the key decision-makers really think, this depth and context can prove invaluable.

Perceptions are captured through in-depth interviews, using an agreed list of questions followed by detailed analysis and reporting. We are able to adapt the way in which insights are developed to the clients' needs and the current challenges, as well as gather deeper feedback on an ad-hoc basis around specific issues.

Introducing The European Insights Forum

BPI is a communications, public affairs and business strategy group. We are one team, designed to tackle and win the toughest client challenges. Our BOLDT BPI public affairs experts collaborated with Message House BPI research and insight experts to develop the European Insights Forum - a new service that combines their in-depth understanding of EU policy and politics with the ability to develop prescriptive insights from hard-to-reach audiences.

The Forum is an expert group of former EU politicians, senior officials and influential policy professionals who have expertise across a wide range of critical policy areas. These experts have been at the heart of European debates and decision-making over the last two decades. They are an excellent proxy for the views of current decision-makers: they are as close as it's possible to get to current politicians and policymakers, and understand in detail what today's decision-makers think, feel and do.

We deliberately identify people whose knowledge spans different countries, parties and policy areas, and whose experience is recent and relevant. The group provides unique insights into the attitudes of politicians and officials, and is a valuable guide to the current mindset across Europe. Their perspectives can both inform longer-term strategy and provide shorter-term information for guiding responses to a policy issue or political engagement. The forum is a live group that we will continue to add to over time. The initial cohort is EU-focussed, but we are able to provide insights from member state and other national governments too.

41 Former MEPs

7 Policy/Think Tank

2 Former EU Commission

Political leaning of respondents

8% Right

32% Centre-right

8% Centre

44% Centre-left

8% Left

In these disrupted and uncertain times, there is no single solution for gathering incisive insights. The European Insights Forum enables us to provide clients with targeted advice and contextual insights on critical issues, as well as their reactions to a client's public affairs strategy and messaging. It brings a new element to how companies can develop and maintain policy and political insights, because of the breadth - and particularly the depth - of experience that they collectively bring.

Richer insights

Our European Insights Forum is an international intelligence network of elite political and policy experts who enable us to develop deep insights at a crucial time for Europe and geopolitics.

The Forum offers clients first-hand perspectives to inform policy, engagement and communication strategy, adding greater depth and context. Comprising former politicians and senior officials, the participants in the Forum have been at the heart of European debates and decision-making over the last two decades. They have real, relevant and recent experience to apply to today's disruption and new tensions. They have done the jobs of current politicians and policy makers, so understand them better than anyone.

The need for their insights has never been greater. We live in an age of polarisation, short-termism and fast-changing politics. The information landscape is fragmented and confusing. This makes it difficult to understand what is really going on inside politics and what the key decision-makers really think. And that makes it more difficult for companies to formulate a strategic approach to policy, communications and stakeholder engagement.

Put simply, the European Insights Forum offers closer understanding, perspective, and inside experience of the decision-making process than can be gained by any other means.

Adding value

The European Insights Forum is intended to bring together a group of experts to provide insights and viewpoints that simply aren't available anywhere else. The insights are unique, but they also provide distinct value to companies:

Policy intelligence

Contextual information about how politicians and political influencers truly feel about an area of policy, proposed policy revisions or policy implementation, and crucially which interrelated factors may be influencing those opinions or beliefs.

Strategic planning

Information and perspective on how politicians, policymakers and influencers view an issue and how they are likely to approach it, enabling business, campaign or engagement strategy to be developed with full and detailed understanding of how these critical stakeholders will act or respond.

Campaign testing

Reviews of campaign strategies, concepts and messaging, providing a sounding board on prospective reactions and engagement from politicians and policy makers.

Political engagement

Background information on the political groups and politicians that are central to an issue, policy matter or decision, with analysis of how they have and will act or respond, and why.

Above all, our experts are able to provide greater depth of understanding around why something will or will not happen as policy or its implementation develops, drawing on factors that may be unassumed or are not in the public eye.

How it works

Like many research forums, insights are collated through in-depth interviews and rigorous process, using an agreed list of questions. The research is carried out by Message House BPI, the award-winning research and communications consultancy and a sister team within the BPI Group. The process is:

1 Understand the objectives

Based on our previous work with the forum and our network in the EU and policy spaces, we do the groundwork to understand clients' needs.

2 Identify the audience

We will select the most suitable members of the forum, based on their experience and expertise, in order to provide as accurate of a proxy as we can for current decision makers.

3 Qualitative research

Due to the seniority of this audience, we conduct in-depth interviews based on an agreed discussion guide, moderated by an experienced member of our team. These conversations last 30-45 minutes, in order to get into the nuance of the objectives.

4 Analysis and debrief

We will provide clear-cut analysis and evidence based recommendations from the interviews and conversations with the members of the forum. This will include verbatim quotes, so clients can see what is influencing them most and how they have expressed their thoughts.

We are able to adapt the way in which insights are developed to the client and the challenge. In addition to specific research, we are also able to gather insights through open conversations with members on an ad-hoc basis, where clients are interested in getting deeper information on a particular issue.

This enables us to provide these research and insights services:

- **Full insights report:** for example, on a high-stakes issue or policy area on which a client needs to gain deeper context, or understand underlying drivers or political considerations;
- **Ongoing insight support:** for example, where a client is dealing with an issue or policy shift that is evolving, or on which a key decision is pending, and they require sustained intelligence to remain informed and responsive;
- **Specific insight development:** for example, where a new issue or political development requires a client to gather deeper information rapidly to formulate a response or provide detail to the business.

The interview process

We gather rich, contextual insights - and ask probing questions - by ensuring that the way each interview is conducted allows us to dig deep to get to the heart of the issues that matter to you.

We allow between 30 and 45 minutes for each conversation, arrange those calls for times when participants will have full concentration, and record each interview so we can undertake thorough analysis. Interviews take place with the promise of anonymity so respondents feel free to speak openly about their views. All interviews are conducted by senior, experienced researchers from Message House BPI.

Building the Forum: adding members

We have an initial group of more than 50 forum members, but are able to add more to meet client requirements. We can reach a range of respondents, all with more than 10 years of experience in policy and decision making from across EU member states and in the UK. While all have insights across the broad policy landscape, we have also identified individuals with specific experience who enable us to build highly-targeted proxy audiences, drawing from:

Former MEPs: all who have left Parliament within the past two cycles. They are from across the political spectrum and a range of member states, as well as the UK.

Policy/think tanks: all have extensive backgrounds in policy development and research through experience in think tanks, academia, NGOs and other policy institutions. Job titles include Managing Director of EU Policy, Senior Fellow and Senior Policy Adviser.

Former EU institutions professionals: who formerly worked at EU institutions or other civil servants with a deep knowledge of the political landscape. This includes the European Commission, the European Central Bank and previous advisers to MEPs or politicians in national parliaments.

Cost parameters

The cost of a project or providing ongoing insights will vary depending on the nature of what is required. However, there are some common parameters:

- **Research design:** the time that our research consultants take to set up the project, design the questions with a client and ensure that the research methodology is effective;
- **Recruitment:** of members who will participate, including interview co-ordination;
- **Insights compilation and analysis:** the time that our research, policy and political consultants require to moderate interviews in English and transcribe those conversations, review the findings, present analysis via a debrief and help clients to apply the insights.

We can conduct a range of interviews to suit client requirements, at a starting level projects would take approximately four weeks and cost from €35,000.

For more information, please contact:

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