



Web2LLP - Improving Web Strategies and Maximising Social Media Presence of LLP Projects

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Abstract

Social media are a reality that cannot be disregarded but their communication potential for Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) projects has not been exploited so far and there still are no guidelines on how to set up a coherent Internet strategy featuring social media tools for the promotion of LLP projects.

In order to answer these needs the Web2LLP project - funded with support from the European Commission through the Lifelong Learning Programme under Key Activity 4, Dissemination and Exploitation of Results - provides tailor-made training solutions and professional support for LLP project managers, so that the necessary knowledge to fully integrate web strategies based on social media within existing dissemination and exploitation plans can be developed.

Introduction

Social media (or web 2.0 tools) are tools allowing people to build social and business connections, to share information and to collaborate on projects online, empowering a variety of human activities such as learning, interaction, collaboration, knowledge building and economic growth.

The dissemination and exploitation of projects' outcomes is a key element of LLP projects but, despite the rising popularity of social media marketing, the advantages of integrating social media tools within existing dissemination and exploitation strategies of LLP projects have been disregarded so far.

According to the needs analysis [1] carried out by Web2LLP project partnership this is mainly due to:

- lack of visibility of good practices in the field, displaying what can be achieved in an LLP context through the use of social media.
- lack of information on how to use social media tools in the framework of a dissemination/exploitation strategy of an LLP project
- lack of time to customise a web strategy which can boost dissemination and exploitation of results for LLP projects.

Project objectives

Web2LLP (Project number: 519024-LLP-1-2011-1-LU-KA4-KA4MP) (<http://www.web2llp.eu/>) aims at boosting the dissemination and exploitation strategies of LLP projects, so that more coherent, participatory and sustainable project activities can be achieved in the European lifelong learning area. The project emphasises personalised support and tailor-made training solutions for LLP project managers, in order to ensure the full integration of improved web strategies based on social media within existing dissemination and exploitation strategies.

More specifically Web2LLP aims at:

- raising the visibility of innovative good practices in the use of social media for LLP projects, in order to promote a common understanding as to how social media can be used as part of an effective dissemination and exploitation strategy in the framework of LLP projects
- providing customised training based on a bottom-up approach, mindful to the needs of each project, so that managers of LLP projects can develop the necessary skills to promote their results in the way which is more suitable for them

Main Project Activities

The main activities carried out in the framework of the Web2LLP project are:

- Needs analysis
- Identification of good practices in the field
- Development of training material
- Delivery of training course



Needs Analysis

The Web2LLP partnership carried out a needs analysis based on a desktop research taking into account 150 randomly selected LLP projects started in 2010. The needs analysis was aimed at understanding to what extent social media are integrated within dissemination and exploitation plans of LLP projects and what kind of social media applications are actually used to promote LLP project activities. Aside from providing an understanding of the state-of-the-art as far as the use of social media in LLP projects is concerned, the research highlighted associated needs and provided the starting point for further development of skills and competences.

The needs analysis is available on Web2LLP Project website at the following address:

<http://www.web2llp.eu/outcome/d7-needs-analysis>

Identification of Good Practices in the field

The desktop research allowed the identification of those LLP projects in which project managers actively used social media to boost dissemination and exploitation of results. 15 experienced project managers were contacted and interviewed in order to raise the visibility of innovative good practices in the field and to allow a common understanding as to how social media can be used as part of an effective dissemination and exploitation strategy in the framework of LLP projects.

The showcase including video interviews with 15 experienced project managers who have used social media for the promotion of LLP projects is available on web2LLP Project website at the following address: <http://www.web2llp.eu/videos>

Development of training materials

On the basis of both the needs analysis and an online survey involving managers of LLP projects the partnership developed educational material meant to provide LLP project managers with a broad overview of the ways in which web strategies and social media tools can effectively be used within dissemination and exploitation plans of LLP projects. The training material developed is meant to be publicly shared, self-paced and available in English, French and Italian.

The training material includes:

- Handbooks
- Video tutorials

Handbooks

The Web2LLP team created these guides in response to the needs highlighted by a desktop research of 150 LLP projects funded by the European Commission[1], as well as by an online survey involving LLP project managers. Both identified a low uptake of social media for dissemination and exploitation purposes and revealed the need to upgrade skills and improve practices in this area.

The handbooks are intended to be used by project managers and members of current or future LLP projects who are unable to attend the face-to-face and online courses organised by the Web2LLP project team, but can also be useful to anyone interested in using digital networks as enablers of sustainable interaction with target audiences.

The 3 handbooks created in the framework of the Web2LLP project are available, in English, French and Italian, on Web2LLP project website at the following address: <http://www.web2llp.eu/handbooks>

Video Tutorials

27 video tutorials were developed in the framework of the Web2LLP Project. The videos are meant to give LLP Project managers an overview on how to use social media tools for dissemination and exploitation purposes. The subject covered by tutorials are:

- social networking sites,
- media sharing
- social bookmarking
- web analytics
- social media editors
- online curation tools
- integrating networks
- social monitoring tools
- blogs and microblogging



The 27 video tutorials are available in English, French and Italian on the Web2LLP Project website, at the following address: <http://www.web2llp.eu/tutorials>

Delivery of training

Web2LLP will provide tailor-made training and professional support in the set-up and use of a social media-supported web strategy, targeting managers of LLP projects who want to improve their online dissemination and exploitation activities.

This training will be available both as a face-to-face training course and an online training course

Face-to-face training course

A face-to-face training course will be organized in Leuven, Belgium, from 18 to 23 February 2013. Participants will receive hands-on training on the use of social media as part of an effective web strategy for dissemination activities. Training materials will be especially designed for LLP project managers and will include practical guides and methodologies, showcases of the most successful dissemination practices and video tutorials.

Working in team, participants will be required to develop and implement a social media plan for a fictional LLP project using the skills and knowledge they have gained. The works will be reviewed in a final evaluation session that will include a public presentation to a jury composed by other project managers who will select the most suitable strategy for the given LLP project.

The training will follow a bottom-up approach based on each project's communication needs, providing customised professional support.

The course will be delivered in English.

Online training course

A 10-hour-long online training course will be delivered via video conference over 5 sessions of 2 hours each, to groups of participants located in different countries. Elluminate will be used as the video conference training platform. The training will be delivered in English, French and Italian.

An online helpdesk service will be available to all European LLP project managers, independently if they attended the training sessions or not, responding to their specific questions and setting up an extensive FAQ in English, French and Italian.

Main Project Outcomes

Project website

The Web2LLP website provides the main source of information about project activities, as well as a gateway to the online training course and help desk service. It also collects all the products developed in the framework of the Web2LLP project.

The Web2LLP project Website is available at: <http://www.web2llp.eu/>

Video Showcase

The showcase including video interviews with 15 experienced project managers is available on web2LLP Project website at the following address: <http://www.web2llp.eu/videos>

Handbooks

The 3 handbooks created in the framework of the Web2LLP project are available, in English, French and Italian, on Web2LLP project website at the following address: <http://www.web2llp.eu/handbooks>

Video Tutorials

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Conclusion

The Web2LLP project website is a very useful collection of resources for current and potential LLP project managers. Not only the project is filling a void in the literature covering activities funded by the



European Commission, but also providing outstanding advancements in the potential dissemination and exploitation of LLP projects' results.

References

- [1] Song, J., Zourou, K. 2012. «How LLP projects use Internet and social media for communication purposes: a desktop research». In C. Stracke (Ed.) *The future of Learning Innovations and Learning quality: how do they fit together?* Proceedings of the LINQ conference Brussels, October 23, 2012, pp. 114-123.



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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.