

Dissemination guide

Dissemination guide for participants
for participants



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1. INTRODUCTION

This short dissemination guide is designed to provide practical guidance and be a working tool for participants at the ECML workshops, participants who are hopefully interested in maximizing the use and impact of the ECML and the results of its workshops.

This guide is exclusively based on the experience of former participants at ECML workshops; it does not intend to present “the best way”, but suggests a context-based approach and tries to stimulate participants to adapt and work on their specific dissemination activities, inspired by the numerous examples of good practice. It is also designed to be easy to read and informal in style. Many of the ideas may seem obvious if taken separately, but systematisation is an important feature of successful dissemination.

Who the participants are as professionals, their background, their resources and the economic and social reality in their country will influence the way they see, select and adapt any dissemination activity in this guide - and also because each individual project will vary in aims, target groups and terms of dissemination.

Acknowledgments

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Daniel Ivanus
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WHAT IS DISSEMINATION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Because the ECML can only fund a limited number of projects, the impact of these depends on the ideas developed in this work being taken up by others. The real challenge, both for the Centre in institutional terms, and for ECML participants in practical terms, is in how project outputs are taken up in the “wider world”. Dissemination is essential for the success of the workshop and sustainability of outputs in the long term. **Through dissemination, policy makers, teachers, trainers, students and the learning community are informed about what has been developed by the ECML and the benefits of using it.**

The following definitions and concepts are not necessarily the only possible ones that can be addressed concerning dissemination. They are based on the points of view of former participants at ECML workshops.

A project cannot be considered to have had real impact if there is no dissemination of its results beyond the boundaries of the project itself.

Or, as a former participant says,

*“The challenge of dissemination is to **improve the accessibility of new findings to those who are trying to reach them.** This means, **firstly**, ensuring the availability of materials or ideas to the target audience and **secondly**, making these findings comprehensible to those who receive them.”*

Everyone agrees that dissemination is a difficult part of the operation of projects, being:

difficult but rewarding, as the effect of dissemination is slow but steady and....

examples

“At times it seems that you are tossing stones in the dark and that the unknown individuals and institutions you are addressing will never respond. But the whole exercise is worth it when one of those steps forward and acknowledges your work, or you can trace a line of communication that comes full circle.”

with questionable effects sometimes
Or....

“a bit of a problem in any case, because there is too much information circling around and one can just hope that the right information finds the right audience at the right time!”

difficult to assess

“dissemination can never be measured because of its sporadic and long-term nature.”

But it is very important because:

examples

It provides added value to projects, as the impact can be potentially wider than the original focus

“The question of the “Odysseus” project is very much being debated in Sweden at the moment, and several activities will be prepared and followed through during the autumn, such as more seminars, university courses, conferences. We will be trying to raise this question with teachers, school leaders and other actors involved in basic second language education in Sweden. The Odysseus project serves as a mirror to help us relate reality in Sweden with immigrants’ needs in order to be able to live – and work – in Sweden.”

It is the key to ensuring that these projects have real impact - and more than simply on the co-ordination team

“The first presentation made it clear that the number of themes, ideas and principles worthy of transferring was so great that it was found more reasonable to organize regular mini workshops, at each of which a certain theme was discussed, for example, developing different types of skills (Interpersonal, Assertive, Presentation), Stress management, Language Educators’ Values and Beliefs and so on”

It can facilitate the achievement of sustainability and the long-term maintenance of projects

“The Department of English Language and Literature launched the distance version of a 3-year ELT teacher training course in 1997. Although the programme had been constantly modified, by 2002 it was time to update it more considerably. The experience I gained all through the ECML project and shared with my colleagues has helped us produce a version that utilizes a variety of ICT tools (e.g. teaching material on CD-ROMs, e-mail, the Internet) and can be adapted to be used online.”

3. WHAT SHOULD I DISSEMINATE? WHAT MATERIALS CAN I USE?

The outputs that can be developed or that you can use in your dissemination activities may be classified as follows:

1. “Hard” outputs, in terms of “products” from projects and activities:

- a. ISBN publications,
- b. CD-ROMs,
- c. Learning materials,
- d. Studies,
- e. Conference proceedings,
- f. Posters,
- g. Brochures,
- h. Newsletters,
- i. T-shirts etc.

examples

“...the best resource was having copies of the project guidebook itself, as well as the bookmarks (which contained the URL) as a supplementary item. I presented the project CD-ROM together with the publication and I also included copies in the library where they can be borrowed by those interested.”

“the material I have been using is the CD-ROM which was produced as a result of the workshop; nevertheless, all the paper material we received in Graz has also proved to be very useful. One of the leaders of the workshop sent me a few newsletters giving information on the activities of the Centre.”

2. Know-how, practical experience, general or specific information:

- a. Information on general ECML activities,
- b. Information on the specific results of a project,
- c. Information on the ECML web-site or the project sites,
- d. Practical experience,
- e. Organisational skills,
- f. Intercultural communication skills etc.

“My experiences enriched my contribution to all of those diverse events I participated at afterwards.”

“the members of the committee were interested in the methods of the workshop, the group dynamics, the ice-breaking activities and in the organisation of the workshop in general.”

3. Ideas:

- a. for future developments and possible continuation of the project,
- b. for policy making,
- c. for possible adaptation and integration of the project idea into other initiatives etc.

“We managed to acquire new ideas as the participants came from different countries and had different cultural backgrounds; they also represented different organisations and had different experiences, so we looked at the problems from different perspectives.”

4. WHEN SHOULD I DISSEMINATE?

Dissemination is an **ongoing process** that should be understood as beginning in the first stages of the project and continuing long after its end. In order to maximize its impact, you should carefully plan the timing of any activity focused on dissemination.

You may choose the most appropriate period for dissemination depending on your priorities, availability of resources and opportunities. For example, you may consider integrating the project results into the normal operation of the educational institution / organisation you are part of and follow specific seminars, conferences or other meetings. Or maybe you prefer to dedicate your time to dissemination during “*quieter summer months*” (“*when school is off*”), as some of the former participants did, making efforts to participate then at as many educational events as possible.

But whatever approach you decide to follow, you should consider designing a plan focused on different dissemination phases, from the **initial stage** (when you can have informal talks with your colleagues, for example) to the **final-stage** dissemination activities. You can include **on-going** activities also, if you have designed or just plan to develop certain activities which don’t take place at a specific time (e.g. informing other colleagues about ECML activities (periodical), or distribution of hand-outs to students throughout the year).

This is a short example of a possible **dissemination time – table**:

Phase One: Initial phase dissemination (Year I)			
Target audience	Action taken	Date	Numbers reached (individuals or institutions)
Department staff	E-mail all staff (info about the workshop, the ECML activities and the CoE)	April	x teachers

Phase two: On-going dissemination (Year II)			
Target audience	Action taken	Date	Numbers reached (individuals or institutions)
National educational organizations	Distribution of promotional materials By mail	February	National institutions involved in education
Department staff	Regular information about the project on intranet	May-August	x teachers

Phase three: Last-stage dissemination (Year III . . . and beyond)			
Target audience	Action taken	Date	Numbers reached (individuals or institutions)
Teachers, information professionals, librarians at national level	Information about the project - on the educational website of national government	May onwards	
Project public	Link to the project Portal on the university website	July	

5. TO WHOM?

Given that project outputs are variable, **the target groups will also be variable**. They can vary from colleagues in the same department to persons in external organisations and policy makers.

You can make a preliminary distinction between:

- 1. target users** – who are those who make **direct use** of project outputs;
- 2. project stakeholders** – who are those (local government, university rectorate and administrative staff, local companies) who, although not directly involved in any project activity, **share an interest** in the success of the initiative.

*For example, in the case of a project focusing on innovative methods of teaching, the first group of users are **the learners** (pupils, students, adult learners) who will benefit from these new methods. Also, **fellow teachers** can be interested in exploring and using new approaches and, as well, in getting involved in international cooperation activities; **the institution**, as well, may improve its status and image at local, national and international level and, in return, even increase its number of students.*

It is important to identify the relevant differences between the potential user groups so that the information is effective, using specific dissemination channels to different target groups. You will approach your fellow teachers in one way and you will use other strategies to reach the policy makers in your country, in order to succeed in having an impact on the educational system and on authorities in charge of education and training.

Here are two questions you might also consider before selecting a dissemination path for a specific target group:

- a) *What information do they need? Does it have local/national relevance?*
- b) *Do they have the necessary resources to use the information?*

Remember that the importance of each target group category varies from project to project.

In order to clearly define your target audiences, you can also use the distinction between the following categories:

- **Learners** (pupils, students, adult learners etc.);

Use, inform and recommend ECML publications to your students; it may happen, as it already did, to see some of them planning to research the potential of a specific project in their Diploma paper.

- **Other persons in the school, centre, university, research institution, or partner companies** (including management level): colleagues, teachers, teacher trainers, tutors;

Department colleagues may start using the materials and can help you develop new educational tools, as experienced by one of the participants: "the experience I gained all through the ECML project and shared with my colleagues has helped us produce a version (Distance Learning Language Teaching material) that utilizes a greater variety of ICT tools"

- **Other schools, centres, universities, teacher associations or partner companies in the country;**

"We targeted other English teacher associations like our own, as well as government bodies and official entities. The names of contacts were found on Internet. The research was time-consuming, but I think getting the right contact was crucial. Sometimes people responded to me personally, which was very pleasing. A case in point was seeing an employee of one of the state-run teacher

resource and inset training centres we had contacted turn up at the Graz conference."

- **Other schools, centres, universities or partner companies in other countries;**

"Apart from sending to the Spanish contacts, I also sent a package to my former colleagues in Further Education in the UK. It was felt that personal contacts were valuable and I know my colleagues appreciated receiving the information and in turn shared it with others."

- **Policy makers**, who can provide support and follow-up opportunities and potential benefits for future developments: inspectors/educational advisors, Ministry representatives, curriculum developers, methodologists etc.

For example, one participant also used the opportunity to establish a contact with one of the referents at the workshop and started the co-operation with already existing initiatives taken by one of the political parties in Styria as regards cooperation with Slovenia.

- **The general public**

You can also conceive **the impact of dissemination as resembling four concentric circles**, where the effort to reach different target audiences increases as you move outwards.

In the centre you have the coordinator(s), the immediate team and the participants at the workshop; the participants' institutions next, then the other national educational organisations interested in the project and, finally, the other institutions outside your country.

6. HOW CAN I DISSEMINATE?

Having a dissemination plan considerably helps the shared and effective distribution of your effort over time. One of the most difficult questions to answer is:

What is the most appropriate and effective information format and dissemination method?

When you consider methods of dissemination to cover the range of user needs, a general principle seems to work with all participants at ECML workshops:

Optimum dissemination is achieved through a wide variety of pathways, from traditional, face-to-face communication methods, to the use of ICT

Also, as seen before, when you decide upon different dissemination pathways, think of what you know about the potential users and then try to find the most suitable channel, as dissemination activities instruments must be adapted to the needs of a variety of audiences.

So, in addition to the first question mentioned above, you should try to find answers to some other questions:

*Is the information medium one that can be easily accessed by users?
Are there more effective methods that might improve accessibility and comprehension?*

Bearing in mind the considerations listed above, you may consider using some of the ideas listed below or design your own approaches:

1. Give feedback on the workshop to local and national authorities.

You may also suggest future development actions and follow-up activities.

"I transmitted a detailed workshop report to the Ministry of Education, where I enclosed a detailed description of the other projects which were introduced in the course of the workshop as well as an overview of the workshop's content plus an outlook on possible future activities stemming from this workshop.

The report and personal data are integrated into the experts database so that interested audiences can either get into contact or make use of the detailed description in the report".

2. Tell your colleagues about the ECML, its activities and the specific workshop;

share its findings and results and you can then choose together possible ways for dissemination. Present and make use of the project outputs on various occasions (informal talks, professional discussions with colleagues, regular teacher meetings, continuous training sessions, teacher development seminars, staff meetings, department gatherings etc.). You can also create a direct link to the ECML site on your institution/department web-page.

"I presented the project I attended to my colleagues from the Department of English of the Faculty of Education. They were strongly interested, some of them had been using the methods of on-going assessment and self-assessment for a long time, but they have recently got inspired by the "Can do Project" and by the ELP. There is also a student who is planning to research the potential of these in her Diploma Thesis."

"On my return, I also shared my impressions about the workshop organization, procedure, content and development with the Head of the Languages Department. I also did two presentations on "Learner Autonomy" and "Language Across the Curriculum" at the English Language Department meeting, focusing on the contrastive analyses of cultural similarities and differences in Armenia and English speaking countries, making use of the information acquired from the collected articles in the volume "Second Language Acquisition: The Interface Between Theory and Practice", published by the ECML."

- 3. Display and present the project publication and/or the CD-ROMs of the ECML projects at your institution.** Their innovative approach and the practical experience of other European colleagues can inspire other fellow teachers and students.

"I obtained a few ECML publications and CD-ROMs which are now used not only during my seminars and lectures, but some of them are available for students in "self-access" at the student study centre; some of the materials are also used by my colleagues for their courses in cultural studies. The materials I obtained provide a valuable source of useful and interesting "teaching tips"."

"I made copies of workshop materials, attached the CD and sent them to the University Information Centre to make them available to the University staff and students."

- 4. Send information about the workshop and the ECML's activities by mail/e-mail** to fellow teachers, researchers, methodologists and others in the country or abroad. The use of ICT (web-sites, electronic bulletin, forums) for dissemination aims has great potential for the transfer of results.

Make use of the already-existing contact networks or try and establish new distribution lists.

"We targeted other English Teacher Associations like our own, as well as government bodies and official authorities. The research was time-consuming, but getting the right contact was crucial".

"In these mailings, I sent a letter and a copy of the workshop material. Our postage bill was high, but the feedback was positive. Moreover, we benefit from the contacts."

"E-mail dissemination has turned out to be the most effective and it reached the widest range of audience, though it's time-consuming to set up a distribution list."

"I presented the workshop by e-mail messages to over 30 university fellow teachers in the country, based on the existing PROSPER project networking structure."

- 5. Make a presentation during an event.**

You can deliver your presentation on a variety of occasions: conferences, seminars, workshops, exhibitions, trainings etc. The topics can also be very numerous, ranging from brief oral presentation of the workshop in Graz, to methods of integrating the workshop idea into the national curricula or into teacher training sessions; all these can be done also with the help of others, using ICT tools or other relevant materials.

"During a series of presentations for foreign language teachers, I informed them about the Council of Europe, the ECML and the project I participated in; I used a Power-Point Presentation I had prepared in advance for this purpose. One of the animators of the workshop in Graz participated with me in this presentation to talk about the project. I gave the teachers a photocopy of three brochures I had picked up at the ECML – one about the Council of Europe (Who are we, What do we do etc.), another about the Documentation and Resource Centre at the ECML and the other about the ECML (Information on the Medium Term programme, the Resource Centre, the web site, aims and partners)."

"I have recently given a talk at the AELTA 7th Convention on "Some Methods for Facilitating Communicative Competence in a University Classroom". To prepare the talk, among others, I used materials from the ECML, as my source. I found them very informative and helpful."

"No paper or computer can replace direct discussions"

- 6. Publish an article, interview, review** etc on the workshop findings, the content of a project, the ECML activities or use the ECML materials as a source of inspiration for your research papers. You can write for professional magazines, adult education publications, official journals of unions, conference publications, newsletters, European programmes information publications, information bulletins, language gazettes, monthly newspapers. You may also make use of the virtual possibilities provided by different web-sites devoted to language learning, teaching and training.

"Inspired by the ECML activities and materials found in the ECML workshops reports, I have written two articles: "Traditional Ways and New Directions in Language Teaching and Learning" and "Enhancing Communicative Competence Through Teamwork"."

“Another paper investigates the special implications of language awareness on grammar teaching. When working on this paper, I also used some ECML material, partly directly from Project 1.2.1., partly consulting other works of some of the participants, e.g. Candelier, M. (1998) “L’éveil au langues à l’école primaire, le programme européen EVLANG” . In Billiez, J. (ed.) De la didactique des langues à la didactique du pluralisme“

7. Integrate the project results in teacher training programmes.

- a) **initial training** – use the publications and other resources as teaching materials, suggest ECML activities as topics for final Dissertation Papers, help students put ECML ideas into practice in schools, help them become aware of the new principles and directions in FLT

“During the methodology courses, apart from other aspects of the teacher’s profession, the students become aware of the principles of assessment and self-assessment, the Common European Framework of Reference, the European Language Portfolio and other materials used by the teachers and the students to develop learners’ ability to assess the learner’s own skills and knowledge, to plan their further work, to set their own goals, to take responsibility for their own learning. Among the materials used in these courses are the list of intercultural expressions made in Graz, CEFR, ELP, checklists similar to those on the “Can do” website and students are also encouraged to visit it.”

b) in service training

“In January 2003 a special workshop was organised by the In-Service Teacher Training Methodology and Information Centre with the aim of acquainting an even wider population of educators with the activities of ECML. This paper gave a summary of Project 1.3.2., highlighting the most specific features and its special implications for Hungary.”

“About 100 teachers mainly of English, German and French participated. The Czech version of the ELP, the Handbook written by R. Perclova and D. Little, the Internet resources and the list of intercultural expressions made in Graz were used. Both the information gained on

seminars for disseminators in the Czech Republic and the information gained during the workshop in Graz were made use of. The result of these seminars is that there are some teachers in the region who use either the European Language Portfolio itself or the principles of it in the classroom.”

8. Organise an event related to one of the ECML activities.

“I suggested the organisation of a seminar on “The Status of Language Teachers in Europe” to my university colleagues. The idea was accepted and the project has obtained financial support and it will gather ECML trainers at the University of Besançon in 2005; A large number of officials, media professionals, members of syndicates and associations were also invited.”

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