Tools for external communication and dissemination

Abstract

This deliverable describes the use and development of external communication tools within the EC2U Alliance. The external targeted audience of the Alliance represents the citizens, Partners of the Alliance, entrepreneurs but also the local, national & European authorities and bodies. Though the COVID crisis impacted the physical communication campaigns, the communication strategy was adapted and clear efforts were made to ensure an extensive digital communication presence in order to balance the situation. As of M18, the external communication and dissemination of the EC2U Alliance was efficient, optimally using the various tools at our disposal to reach the targeted audiences across the seven Partner universities of the Alliance. This deliverable will describe all of them, whether they are linked to media relations, actions conducted with Associated Partners, or through digital tools.

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I.   Media relations

In order to reach the external audience, i.e. the group of people that are not directly linked to the Partner universities, the Alliance disseminates its messages through general and mainstream supports, starting with regular publication of releases in the medias. Main events and actions are automatically communicated via press releases, press kits, or conferences, such as for the launch of the first Science Battle, the results of the first-year anniversary of the Alliance, and the organisation of every EC2U Forum.

When communicating on main events or actions via press releases, common practice is the following: the Coordination team decides to send a press release, the latter is redacted by the Communication Coordinator and sent to the Communication Officers for translation, the final press release is then sent to the database of national/regional/local journalists.

Partner university	Number of press releases (M0-M18)
University of Coimbra	5
University of Iasi	10
University of Jena	5
University of Pavia	10
University of Poitiers	3
University of Salamanca	8
University of Turku	3

Up-to-date, more than 55 articles and reports have been published in newspapers or broadcasted on TV/radio.

II.   Actions led with Partners and external actors

A.   General events

Taking part into general events, organised by external actors, is a great way to increase the notoriety of the Alliance, to promote the EC2U expertise, and to develop the community feeling and the sense of belonging.

1. Recurring events

- The flagship event of the EC2U Alliance, the **EC2U Forum**, takes place every 6 months. For the occasion, a wide publicity campaign is made all around the organising city, exposing posters and advertising flyers in key places (bus shelters, local businesses, etc).

Figure 1: EC2U advertisement in the city of Pavia

Though the Fora are organised by the Alliance and address the academic public, these events are wide-reaching public events that include Partners and citizens. EC2U Fora are great opportunities to welcome a very diverse audience and share news about the Alliance in the local media (for further information on the EC2U Forums, refer to the deliverables D8.6, D8.7, and D8.8).

- **Europe Day**: every year on the 9th of May, the Europe Day is celebrated. Many Partner universities are involved in its celebration at different levels. For example, the university of Poitiers takes part into the « Joli mois de l'Europe », organised during the whole month of May by the municipality of Poitiers. For the occasion, many activities are organised and a fair, gathering all the local actors on current European happenings and issues, is held in a historical building in the city centre. In 2022, this fair was organised on May, 14th and counted more than 430 participants.

- A representant of the University of Salamanca represented the Alliance at the **Utah Valley University Conference** on 11th December 2021.

Figure 2: EC2U is represented at the Utah Valley University Conference

2.   One-off events

- The Vice-Rector of International relations from the University of Coimbra participated in the **Expo2020 Dubai,** presenting the EC2U Alliance, along with the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, on 14th and 15th of December 2021.

Figure 3: EC2U is represented at the Expo2020 Dubai

- The Vice-Rector of International relations from the University of Pavia represented the Alliance at the 4th **UUU Panel Debate Degree** on degree design, competence frameworks, and horizontal mindsets organised by ESNA European Higher Education

News on Tuesday, 11 May 2021 (https://ec2u.eu/4th-uuu-panel-debate-degree-on-degree-design-competence-frameworks-and-horizontal-mindsets/)

- The **Coordinator of the Alliance also took part into several events, organised by European administrations**

    - *ERAC Workshop on "Labour market for researchers, skills, assessment and monitoring", 15th of December 2020 (Council of the European Union)*

    - *Consultation meetings with DG EAC for the preparation of the European Strategy for Universities and roll-out of European Universities initiative, Mars to September 2021*

    - *2021 EUA Annual Conference on "Universities 2030: From vision to reality - Session VI: Partners in success", 23rd of April 2021*

    - *Conference on Study, Research and Innovation in Europe 2021-2027 – Collaboration Portugal-France, 28th of June 2021*

    - *ERAC Workshop on "How to empower Higher Education Institutions to develop in line with the ERA and in synergy with the EHEA", 14th of December 2021 (Council of the European Union)*

    - *EARMA and the European Universities Initiative, 15th of March 2022),*

  Or Associated Partners

    - *Coimbra Group public conference on "sustainability of the European Universities Initiative" (speech by Walter Rosenthal, Rector, Jena), 17th of June 2021*

    - *Coimbra Group[1] High-Level Seminar on Research Policy on "impact of the UN SDG on research and contribution of research to the SDGs", 21-22nd of October 2021, (Palais des Nations in Geneva)*

  Or other European Alliances

    - *Webinar "Les universités européennes comme vecteurs d'innovation sociétale sur leur territoire. » organisé par Aix-Marseille Université during the local Civis Days (CIVIS European University)).*

    - *Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU) workshop on « Alliances », 29th of November 2021 (Paris)*

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[1] One of the 30 Associated Partners of the EC2U Alliance. The Coimbra Group is an association of long-established European multidisciplinary universities of high international standard.

- The University of Coimbra organised a meeting of European Universities Alliances with other Portuguese universities on the 20th of January 2022 (https://noticias.uc.pt/artigos/uc-recebe-acao-de-divulgacao-sobre-a-iniciativa-universidades-europeias/).

B.   Coimbra group newsletter

Every month, the Coimbra Group delivers an email newsletter to 2,156 recipients, both internal to the association and external, with a dedicated section on the activities of the European Universities Alliances that are part of the Group. The EC2U Alliance publishes as least one article in each newsletter on burning topics, upcoming events or to promote new pages of the EC2U website (see Figure 3).

Figure 4: Example of an article about EC2U in the Coimbra Group newsletter

The **open rate of the newsletter is 27,7%,** which is considered to be very good[2] and highly contributes to the EC2U's visibility. The content is also published on the Coimbra Group's website: https://www.coimbra-group.eu/subscribe-newsletter/

III.   Digital tools
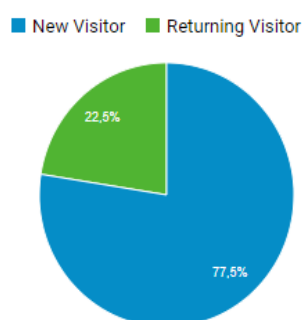
A.   EC2U website

The EC2U website is the primary source of information and services for the general audience interested in the Alliance. It aims at sharing news and events with the audience, but also at disseminating the results of the lead actions and policies.

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[2] The average emailing open rate being around 20%.

1.   Statistics

In 2021, the website counted few visits:

- The EC2U website hosted **5340 visits,** with a peak of 1091 visitors at the time of the 1st EC2U Forum, organised online by the University of Poitiers.
- **17244 pages** were consulted (approximately 47 pages per day)
- Each visit lasted **1'43''** in average
- **67% of the visitors** were located in one of the countries of the Alliance.

Graph 2: Part of new/returning visitors on the EC2U website in 2021

Since the beginning of 2022 (from the 1st of January 2022 to the 15th of April 2022)[3] the website was much more consulted, showing an increase in awareness of EC2U:

- The EC2U website hosted **9266 visits** (88 per day on average)
- **20484 pages** were consulted (approximately 195 pages per day)
- Each visit **lasted 2'36''** in average
- **88% of the visitors** were located in one of the countries of the Alliance.

Graph 3: Part of new/returning visitors on the EC2U website in 2022

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[3] Caution: The above statistics are taken from Google Analytics. Their value may be erroneous (reduced) due to the use of cookies on the EC2U website and other GDPR rules.

B.   Evolution

In order to optimise user satisfaction, simplicity and accessibility, the website structure is currently being revised in different ways:

- **Users will be the priority.** In this sense, the structure will offer a user-centred, personalised, meaningful and simplified process, where one can easily find the information he/she is looking for depending on his/her profile (student/staff/researchers/citizens).
- **A multilingual access will be offered.** The audience being multilingual, the main content will be translated in the different languages of the Alliance.
- **The content will be lightened.** The front page and the menus will offer a better visibility of the key information and tabs of the website to capture the audience's attention.
- **The aestheticism will be personalised.** The website will be adapted to the general graphical aspects of the EC2U Alliance to reinforce its visual cohesiveness. Note here that this evolution requires the EC2U Alliance to go with "free hosting" the website to gain more freedom of action.

The launch of new version of the EC2U website is planned for the end of May 2022.

C.   EC2U e-newsletter

An EC2U Newsletter is in the process of being created. Its objective will be to **keep the Alliance's partners and subscribers aware of its activities, sharing with them news, links, articles and the agenda** of upcoming events. It will be sent monthly. The Communication Coordination Team will collect news and topics' ideas from the member universities and be in charge of the newsletter's delivery.

D.   EC2U social media

The EC2U social media accounts were created to achieve the following objectives: to raise awareness of the Alliance and its actions and to generate social gathering and interact with the community. Thus, an EC2U account was opened on 5 different platforms, reaching different targets through different editorial approaches.

	Creation	Number of followers on 20/04/2022	Editorial line + Link
TWITTER	02/2019	905	Raising awareness of the Alliance, generating clicks to the website. https://twitter.com/EC2U_Alliance
INSTAGRAM	06/2021	538	Creating a true proximity with the community, building a real connection, gathering an engaged audience. https://www.instagram.com/ec2u_alliance
FACEBOOK	02/2021	400	Creating a community of different ages and backgrounds, generating social gathering. https://www.facebook.com/EC2UAlliance
LINKEDIN	03/2021	277	Connecting with staff, Partners, experts, etc. More professional, precise and documented. https://www.linkedin.com/company/71526310/admin
YOUTUBE	10/2020	90	Hosting the totality of the video content related to EC2U, in the way of a media library + streaming live events. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuCsmubiNpFF7gk9rRYVfbg

E.   Member universities digital tools

Thanks to their already existing and predefined communication means, giving them a strong visibility, the member universities can reach a large number of people through their relation with local/national press, but also through digital tools. Another perk of using those channels is that messages are delivered in the same language as the local audience.

You will find below a table that sums up all the different communication actions realised by each Partner university concerning EC2U:

Partner university	Communication actions (M0-M18)
University of Coimbra	**23** articles on university website *No information on the number of Social Media posts*
University of Iasi	**10** articles on university website **36** publications on social media accounts
University of Jena	**10** articles on university website **20** publications on social media accounts
University of Pavia	**18** articles on university website **40** publications on social media accounts
University of Poitiers	**15** articles on university website **55** publications on social media accounts

University of Salamanca	*No information on the number of articles posted on websites*
	40 publications on social media accounts
University of Turku	**21** articles on university website
	200 publications on social media accounts

IV.   Open provision of the results of the Alliance

The Erasmus+ Results Platform is a database that gathers the descriptions, results and contact information of all projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme. The outcomes of the EC2U Alliance will automatically be published online as soon as the project is finalised, analysed and closed by the services of the European Commission.

The EC2U Alliance page is already in place and will be updated at the end of the project, in October 2023. Prior to this date, a review of communication/dissemination actions will be included in the Mid-Term Report, published in June 2022. These data will be updated and communicated to Alliance stakeholders and general public (via external communication channels) at the time of the "2-year progress report" in November 2022.

Finally, all main documents, reports, and deliverables will be available to the general audience through the "Shared Documents" webpage, on the upcoming version of the EC2U website.

Please note that the content of this activity / deliverable is available in the different languages of the EC2U Alliance upon request.