

European Documentation Centres

Pan-European Working Group 2019 on **OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

Recommendations and good practices

DG COMM Directorate C
Representation & Communication in Member States

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Objectives	4
Organisation.....	5
Recommendations – Academic Community Outreach.....	6
Good practice 1: Europe Day Student Quiz Night.....	7
Recommendations – Collaboration with EU Networks	8
Good practice 2: Career Expo	8
Good practice 3: Anti-Cancer Association Christmas Fiesta	9
Get inspired – 100 EDC good practices.....	9
Conclusions – Charting the Way Forward.....	10
Members of EDC PEWG on Outreach 2019	12

Executive summary

Some EDCs are actively engaged in carrying out outreach activities with the academic community. The European Commission is wholeheartedly supporting these efforts. To that end, the new **Partnership Agreement (PA)** from 2018 defines ways in which the European Commission would support EDCs doing “the extra mile”. The **Pan-European Working Group on outreach** is an action with this very objective in mind.

We realize, however, that for some EDCs it might be slightly outside their comfort zone to organize outreach events. The identification of typical documentation tasks with being a documentation centre is deep-seated.

Another caveat is the lack of level playing field across the EDC network. Some EDCs have a renowned university backing every initiative with resources, whereas others might be a one man/woman show. Yet, there is no straightforward line between resources and between results. There are good examples of small EDCs undertaking **smart and innovative outreach activities**, if not alone, in collaboration with others. Indeed, joining forces with a Europe Direct Information Centre, or other organizations, can effectively reduce the EDCs’ own investment in time and resources.

In fact, the **assets of an EDC** (network of good speakers on EU policies, venue for meetings, audiovisual equipment etc) could **spearhead cooperation**, if used as a bargaining chips when cooperating with EDICs and other organizations. In addition, successful outreach activities, in cooperation with others, would often become self-promotional, and yield new opportunities in the future.

Finally, this report summarizes the **recommendations** of the PEWG. There are a number of recommendations about developing cooperation primarily with Europe Direct Networks. Other recommendations focus on tapping into the potential of the broader academic community in the immediate surroundings of the EDC. To translate those recommendations into practice, this report also displays three **good practices** that are truly **innovative, interactive and replicable** in other countries.

Introduction

EU is going through a challenging time. Populism is surging across the continent. Citizens perceive EU institutions and EU policies as remote from their daily lives. We must take actions to reverse these trends. The revamping of the EDC network, initiated in 2015, is an attempt to do just that: give a boost to the EDC network to engage more in outreach activities. The revamping exercise came to fruition in 2018, resulting in a new Partnership Agreement (PA). The PA asks EDCs to: (1) team up with Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) and/or Commission Representations; (2) to organise activities; (3) and to participate in Citizens' Dialogues, targeting the academic community. The PA does not change the EDCs' core tasks, which are typically those of a documentation centre. It rather seeks to recalibrate the EDCs into becoming more communicative. It invites EDCs to do "the extra mile", if they are capable and willing.

Currently 171 out of 317 EDCs have signed the PA. EDCs in Bulgaria and Poland are in the process of signing it.

This report aims at presenting key conclusions of the work of the Pan-European Working Group (PEWG) on outreach.

What is the role of a PEWG?

- (1) To help members of the ED network pool their knowledge and expertise on a particular subject and share this with other network members;
- (2) To assist in the preparation of specific actions organised by DG COMM for the benefit of ED network members;
- (3) To create a knowledge base, using a bottom-up approach to identify and evaluate the experiences and multiple sources of expertise available within the ED network;
- (4) To present tangible outputs of knowledge for the benefit of ED network members.

Objectives

Outreach activity is defined in broad terms to cover any activity that either helps to make the EU understandable to citizens, and/or inform about the EU benefits/added value, and/or nurture a dialogue with citizens. Thus, common presentations and/or trainings for students and teachers in more creative ways of

reaching out and collaborating locally, such as forging cooperation with other Europe Direct (ED) networks, can all be described as “good practice”.

The **objectives** of the PEWG on outreach were as follows:

- To **motivate and support the EDC network to develop its outreach potential**; organise activities and engage in debates with the academic community;
- To **give impetus to the EDC training** and invite PEWG members to participate in workshops/panel discussions on outreach activities in the Florence EDC Training for the entire EDC network, 1–2 December 2019;
- To contribute to the **final report with Recommendations and good practices** on outreach activities.

Organisation

The **PEWG** operates **mainly** as an **e-working** group. The members also convene once in an EU member State.

Method

1. Nomination of PEWG members in June 2019.
2. DG COMM creates a template to gather good practices on outreach for the whole EDC network .
3. PEWG members encourages their national EDC networks to contribute with their expertise and fill in template.
4. By September around 100 good practices collected.
5. Meeting in Seville, 26–27 September 2019, hosted by the EDC of the University of Seville. On the basis of the good practices collected, participants are divided into workshops, discussing recommendations that could be extracted from the good practices.
6. October – the workshops continue online, using for the first time the knowledge-sharing App” Slack”.
7. DG COMM collects contributions by mid-October.
8. DG COMM extracts and edits the main recommendations derived from the reports of the working groups (see Recommendations).
9. Two members of the PEWG prepare PowerPoints on the results, and present them to all EDCs at the Florence EDC training.
10. DG COMM produces a final report of the PEWG, reflecting the results of the workshops, and taking into consideration the panel debates at the EDC training in Florence.

Recommendations¹ – Academic Community Outreach

The first set of recommendations related to how EDCs could nourish outreach activities at the university where they are located. It aims to pull the academic community more into following and debating issues around the future of the Union. EDCs are invited to make use of the recommendations that are applicable to their specific situation.

Involving the academic community in debates about the future of the EU

- **Approach the Rector to mobilise** tutors, professors & students *across* faculties.
- Learn more about your host institution/faculties/faculty members, and **identify experts in your host entity**; identify how your activities could tie in with their expertise.
- **Approach the Jean Monnet Department** to carry out joint activities. The teams of Jean Monnet often have a variety of projects aimed at the general public.
- **Invite professors/lecturers active on EU related topics** as speakers or moderators to help mobilise interest for EDC activities among students.
- Get to know university's **student organisations** – these are **key recruitment grounds** for mobilising students and finding ambassadors for your events.
- Make sure your **activities** revolve around the topics of the **Conference on the future of the EU**.

The above recommendations should be read together with the figure below, *Elements for Success* (further explained in the PowerPoint presentation by Georgia Christodoulou, at the EDC training in Florence).

¹ The PEWG also looked into the use of social media. However, as the working groups covered this uneven, it is modestly mentioned in this booklet.



The PEWG members were also asked in Seville, and in online collaboration via Slack, to assess, and to identify three good practices, out of the circa one hundred collected. The three good practices would have to comply with these criteria:

- ✓ Activities that can be replicated elsewhere
- ✓ Innovative
- ✓ Interactive
- ✓ Activities with the potential to reach out to the general public (e.g. including, but also going beyond, the academic community)

Good practice 1: Europe Day Student Quiz Night

EDC University of Malta

OUTREACH ACTIVITY: EUROPE DAY - STUDENT QUIZ NIGHT; FROM THE EU TO FOOTBALL TO MUSIC AND MANY MORE TOPICS.

PURPOSE: CREATE AWARENESS OF THE EU ON THE EUROPE DAY IN A FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE AND ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE TO LEARN MORE ON EUROPE AND THE EU THROUGH MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS.

AUDIENCE: TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS AND PAST GRADUATES.

PROMOTION: MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL WAS TO CREATE A FACEBOOK EVENT AND BOOSTING IT AS A PAID ADVERT, AND TO TARGET SPECIFIC GROUPS. SHARING ON VARIOUS FACEBOOK GROUPS. ADVERTISING ON THE WEBSITE OF UNIVERSITY OF MALTA. FREQUENT EMAILS (ON AVERAGE ONE REMINDER EVERY TWO WEEKS, STARTING TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT) TO ALL STUDENTS. THE EVENT WAS FULLY BOOKED.

COOPERATION: JOINTLY ORGANISED WITH EDIC UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF MALTA). COOPERATION WITH OTHER LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE

UNIVERSITY'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER TO HELP PROMOTE THE EVENT.

SPIN-OFFS: ENHANCED COOPERATION WITH LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS.

LEARNING POINTS: POTENTIALLY OPEN THE ACTIVITY TO THE PUBLIC IN ORDER TO HAVE A WIDER AUDIENCE AND AWARENESS ON THE EU.

Recommendations – Collaboration with EU Networks

The second set of recommendations focus on effective collaboration with other EU Networks, in particular Europe Direct Networks. This would help EDCs to leapfrog activities carried out mainly by other organisations, but to which EDCs can be associated. That would be a resourceful way to lessen the time and efforts spent on organizational matters.

Improving collaboration with other (EU) networks and engagement with citizens

- Use **EDCs' strengths as bargaining chips** when trying to collaborate with other EU networks (free access to the host organisation's facilities: meeting rooms, audio-visual equipment, and privileged access to order publications from the Official EU Publications office).
- **Join forces with EDICs** – invite their network of contacts to your events and vice versa.
- Organise **citizens' dialogues** in cooperation with EDICs.
- Prepare **interactive activities** to **create engagement** and interest for the EU (Round-tables/debates with expert speakers on key EU policies, competitions, Quiz, celebration of specific days that revolve around the EU: Europe Day, day of languages. It makes planning of activities foreseeable and can create some “celebrative momentum”).

Good practice 2: Career Expo

EDC University of Nicosia

OUTREACH ACTIVITY: ANNUAL CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT EVENT IN CYPRUS. EDC NICOSIA HAS ITS OWN INFORMATION BOOTH AT THE EVENT. OVER 800 PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED THE EDC BOOTH IN 2019

PURPOSE: OUTREACH TO A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

AUDIENCE: MAINLY TARGETED UNEMPLOYED AND NEWCOMERS TO THE LABOUR MARKET.

PROMOTION: SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL CAMPAIGN TO ALL UNIVERSITY STAFF, STUDENTS AND ACADEMICS ONE WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT AND A REMINDER THE DAY BEFORE, UNIVERSITY'S WEBPAGE, POSTERS, FLYERS, RADIO SPOTS.

COOPERATION: EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S REPRESENTATION, EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (EURES), THE PUBLICATIONS OFFICE.

SPIN-OFFS: YOUTH AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS SIGNING UP TO TAKE PART IN YOUTH MULTIPLIERS INITIATIVE, FREE PUBLICITY FOR EDCS IN THE EVENTS PROMOTION MATERIAL.

LEARNING POINTS: IMPORTANT TO ADAPT TO THE AUDIENCE NEEDS: A SPECIAL BOOKLET WAS PREPARED SUMMARISING INFORMATION THAT JOBSEEKERS NEEDED (BASED ON EU PROGRAMMES). BE PRECISE AND TO THE POINT TO BE ABLE TO CATER FOR AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE AT THE BOOTH.

Good practice 3: Anti-Cancer Association Christmas Fiesta

EDC University of Nicosia

OUTREACH ACTIVITY: A HIGH PROFILE EVENT WITH 2000 VISITORS. ORGANISED BY UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA IN COLLABORATION WITH CYPRUS ANTI/CANCER ASSOCIATION.

PURPOSE: RAISING INTEREST FOR THE EU IN A NON-FORMAL SETTING. USING A VERY INTERACTIVE GAME "DO YOU KNOW EUROPE? LET'S SEE".

AUDIENCE: GENERAL PUBLIC, PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS, SCHOOL TEACHERS, UNIVERSITY STAFF, ACADEMICS AND STUDENTS.

PROMOTION: FACEBOOK PAGES, EMAILS TO STUDENTS AND ACADEMICS, POSTERS, RADIO, PRESS RELEASES AND NEWSPAPERS.

COOPERATION: EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S REPRESENTATION, PUBLICATIONS OFFICE, UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA LIBRARY.

SPIN-OFFS: THE INTERACTIVE GAME WAS A SUCCESS AND IS NOW TAKEN TO ALL EVENTS ORGANISED BY DIFFERENT MUNICIPALITIES. THE GAME DREW ATTENTION TO THE EDC BOOTH AT THE EVENT AND PEOPLE WISHED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE EU AND HOW IT AFFECTS THEIR DAILY LIVES. NEW TYPES OF COOPERATIONS EMERGED, FOR EXAMPLE TEACHERS AND HEAD MASTERS ASKING THE EDC FOR MATERIAL THEY COULD USE FOR THE EU SECTION OF THE CURRICULUM .

LEARNING POINTS: BY BEING PART OF A PRESTIGIOUS EVENT THE EDC CAN GET FREE PROMOTION ON NATIONAL TV AND RADIO, PLUS EXPOSURE TO HIGH-END BUSINESSES AND KEY ORGANISATIONS AND TO A HIGH NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS .

Get inspired – 100 EDC good practices

The members of the PEWG managed to assemble around 100 good practices, demonstrating the richness, diversity, and highly skilled staff of the EDC network. These good practices are accompanied by contact details to the responsible EDC. Do not hesitate to reach out to your fellow EDC peer for further guidance. To note also that the three good practices in this booklet are covered in more detail in the separate document *100 Good Practices on Outreach Activities*.

Conclusions – Charting the Way Forward

Based on the work carried out by members of the PEWG², we conclude the following:

- ✓ Sharing of **recommendations** on outreach activities and **good practices** at the Florence training helped to **boost** the EDCs' **outreach potential**;
- ✓ Exploring **creative ways** to **expand EDCs' outreach** to academic staff, lectures and professors would help to create **beneficial partnerships** with **host structures**;
- ✓ intensifying **collaboration** with other **EU communication networks**, including EDICs, Team Europe and other EU outreach networks would help to **energize outreach activities** with the academic community, and potentially, citizens from all walks of life

Moreover, the first day of the EDC Florence training was almost entirely dedicated to panel discussions and workshops, discussing the results of the PEWG. It helped to foster understanding of the opportunities EDCs can seize, but also highlighted the obstacles that some EDCs face.

Whilst the Commission strongly supports initiatives to engage with the academic community, it recognizes that this can only be achieved to a varying degree, depending on human and other resources at the EDCs' disposal. In practical terms, the Commission presumes that EDCs signing up to the PA are committed to the following objectives and those who have not can try to get as close as possible to them:

- (1) Keep up with the European Commission's policy agenda and display and promote key documents as "best sellers" in the EDC, clearly visible. The latest document on the major EU initiatives, such as the European Green Deal, a cornerstone of the new Commission's priorities, should catch the attention of people visiting the EDC.
- (2) Reach out to a nearby EDIC and/or TE speakers and collaborate with them. The EDC is invited for example to help host a joint event in the university's conference facilities – for example to steer a debate on the "best seller" –or help find a professor at the university to speak at an EDIC event. The minimum requirement would be to establish contacts at the university where the EDC is hosted, and which, depending on the topic, could be prompted to moderate or participate in an EDIC– staged outreach event.

² The European Commission thank all the members of the PEWG for their active involvement and engagement

Finally, The PEWG and the subsequent EDC training in Florence constitute important milestones for translating the promise of the PA into action. This booklet, based on learning from a bottom-up approach, shall serve as inspiration and as a source of knowledge and ideas. Indeed, learning from each other is what makes the EDC network stronger than its individual parts!

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