

Dissemination Evaluation Report



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Dissemination Evaluation Report

This report assesses the effectiveness of the dissemination strategies employed during the Residency project. It analyses the approaches used to disseminate the project and considers how the dissemination activities need to continue in the future.

Participation by community stakeholders – including residents, community organisations and training providers was essential in terms of the Residency methodology. Disseminating information about the project and the learning was integral to how the project operated. By undertaking participatory action research, the stakeholders involved in each of the residencies required information and communication about what was expected from them and about the work, which was going on. In many respects it is difficult to separate dissemination as a distinct activity, because in terms of the activities with participants, sharing and co creating information, news and resources was an essential part of the participatory experience.

However, in this report we have broken down these activities into distinctive approaches aligned with more traditional models of dissemination- and the report considers their effectiveness in relation to the different audiences which they have targeted- including external agencies and community members.

The key aims of the dissemination were:

- To share information about Residency project with stake holders and wider professional community
- To disseminate findings as they occur from Residencies and other research activity
- To gain feedback from stakeholders as Residency project develops
- To launch the Residency tool kit to an audience of peers and stakeholders
- To engage policy makers and Vocational and educational Training (VET) providers
- To launch and distribute Toolkit

Analysis of Key Dissemination activities

- **Sharing the project with key stakeholders**

Each Residency established good links with the local community and established a programme of meetings to help identify the residency host and then subsequently to involve the host in all aspects of the planning process.

Artist Networks were established in each country. We learned early on that Artists had very limited time to attend such networks, therefore in all three countries the Artists reported they preferred network meetings to be hosted alongside other networking events involving participatory and community artists. This approach benefitted residency two fold, firstly it helped assure regular attendance by artists but it also helped establish relationships with other supporting organisations such as Artibarri in Spain and West Midland Participatory Arts Forum in the UK. We had initially envisaged Artist Network meetings and meeting representatives of relevant networks as separate activities. However, by merging the two activities it helped circulate information about the project to a much wider audience of community artists that originally expected. This was evidenced in the high number of applications we received for each residency. Many applicants came to know about the residency through our dissemination activities with artist networks and this helped ensure a wide range of people were able to consider the residency in terms of an option for their own employment.

The networks provided an effective way to discuss VET needs. A range of techniques were used to do this- in the UK participatory methods were favoured whereas in Poland and Warsaw more individual meetings and interviews took place to discuss Vet issues (arguably because there is less of a culture associated with professional development for artists working in a community context).

- **Online Dissemination**

The toolkit was created using co collaboration and we successfully undertook an online survey to get feedback and guidance from stakeholders about its content and appearance.

Facebook was popular with all partners, and in particular in Spain and Poland where this become one of the preferred methods of engagement. Initial feedback suggests that the necessity to keep information brief in social media helped integrate participants who were less familiar with communicating in English. The Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/residency>) attracted over 400 followers (453 likes), and our project partners regularly updated it. One of the most popular posts was the link to the blog or information about the forthcoming online toolkit. Similarly our Website received over 8000 visits during the period January 2015 to October 2015 when it was most active. The Website was not on the whole as responsive to project updates as the Facebook page but did a very good job at previewing the toolkit as it was being developed. Although the website was an important source of documentation and dissemination during the project we expect it have a long and durable life as a hope to the online version of the toolkit. In addition it has been an important dissemination tool for sharing the most important final reports from the project which are available in a downloadable form.

The ADAM database contains all of the key documents required from the project and we hope will serve as a useful tool for other people interested in this approach to training. The project was also disseminated more broadly within Europe through the attendance and presentation at events such as the Festival of Community Psychology hosted by Manchester University (November 20th, 2015) and attended by the Spanish team who made a presentation about the the project, as well as attendance by the UK team at an international conference about managing arts project with a societal impact

(MAPSI) were a conference paper was presented.

- **Toolkit**

The toolkit was co produced by all of the project partners- their experiences and ideas helped for the basis of the work detailed in the toolkit. The mid point and project surveys (e.g. the Qualtrixs online survey) were conducted with a small group of people. In many respects it was difficult- especially in the UK, to get artists to complete it as they explained during artist network sessions that it was difficult to balance doing administration alongside trying to earn a living from being a community artist. Therefore we were delighted to have got such a good response for the interim survey- given that we knew the pressures artists faced in terms of juggling work and tasks. In Spain and Poland, response to the survey was good and was also supported by individual interviews with artists. By adopting an approach which suited the needs of the artists in each country, we were able to personalise the dissemination strategy to take into account country preferences.

The launch of the toolkit as part of the the final seminar event (September 17th 2015) was a valuable time in terms reviewing the online toolkit and assessing what had been produced. Attendance was high, and a good balance of previous participants, industry representatives and participants were able to contribute. The consultation activities include participatory exercises, group discussion and individual feedback was overwhelmingly positive- and the event resulted in a number of offers from participants in terms of additional contributions people could make towards the online toolkit such as links to other project websites and offers of sharing toolkits.

- **Publications and Conferences**

Each country succeeded in publishing at least one article in a relevant publication. This changed slightly as in the UK the intended publication (Mailout) closed during the course of the Residency project. The publications were chosen because they had associations with Vet providers and policy makers. In addition all three countries succeeded in presenting findings to

other European Forums and at one international conference (MAPSI: Managing Arts Projects with a Societal impact, Tallin, July 2015).

- **Database**

Six Newsletters were produced and disseminated to a database of 439 selected organisations and individuals of interested stakeholders. This distribution list was developed by the partners from their own contacts in each country as well as requests to be part of the distribution from contact through the website, Face book and forwarded newsletters. Recipients included Residency participants, Artist Networks and also people involved in VET and civic engagement work. The response to the newsletters was positive and in particular all European partners reported that their local networks valued the newsletter as it helped them understand more about how they can work with European partners.

- **Country dissemination materials**

Posters, invitations and social media/ blog posts were all created in each country to advertise the residency project. These were particularly successful as they helped 'brand ' the project at a local level but also use of the posters resulted in an increase in the numbers of participants from target groups in the project.

Next steps

Overall we felt our dissemination activities fulfilled their initial goal. Nevertheless, as part of the participatory action research process, all partners and key stakeholders were encouraged to reflect on the process and identify some common themes, which may influence the dissemination material, related to using residency as an artist-training tool in a civic engagement context.

How do we work with partner organisations?

The process made us realise the value in encouraging key stakeholders to share contacts and networks. Artists have stressed how precious their time is so they want to work efficiently. We had not initially anticipated such a positive response from other arts and community projects in terms of supporting all three residencies. Therefore in future work we plan to consider country dissemination materials and project materials alongside each other- as the value of a strong brand attached to the residency model, helped encourage people to sign up to the database as well as get involved in the conference.

Publications

The research into dissemination channels- especially in terms of publications revealed how the amount of publications associated with community and participatory arts had reduced since the initial application was made. To a certain extent this has been replaced by more industry specific, E-news type publications, however we were aware of how few peer-reviewed journals there were in each country affiliated with community arts.

However, the process of trying to identify them helped us establish new publications and we became aware that there were more journals and conferences targeted at people working in specific aspects of socially engaged art (e.g. arts and health) rather than being more general publication. This did raise the question however whether there should be a specific journal or a special edition of a publication which focused on Arts and Civic Engagement, and this may be something which we pursue after the project is completed.

Who did the project reach?

In our audit of dissemination, we were able to identify using the database and attendance records who was directly involved in receiving dissemination materials. Evidence from this suggests that dissemination materials reached policy makers, VET providers and educators, policy makers and people from a range of communities in Europe, alongside people from a range of provision. Based upon the feedback from these people, we are alert to the

fact that we would need to do a deeper study into the reach of the project if we are to truly understand its impact.

Addressing specific needs

The project in the UK, involving local old people, revealed that some of the principles such as participation and honesty associated with participatory action research are not always universally acceptable for specific groups in the community. In the case of the care home, this was the equivalent of being in someone's home.