

DISSEMINATION PRACTICES OF THE STUDIES-DIG PROJECT: FACTS AND FIGURES

Zornitza Mladenova D.Sc.

Researcher for the STUDIES-DIG Project at Rudozem Municipality, Bulgaria

Introduction

Established by the European Union in 1987, the Erasmus program has long promoted educational and cultural exchange across Europe and beyond. Since its inception, the program has expanded (now known as Erasmus+), and over 16 million people have taken part in Erasmus+ to date

Erasmus+ is widely regarded as a powerful tool of soft power and public diplomacy for the EU, reflecting core European values such as freedom, diversity, and mutual understanding. By enabling students and academics to study and work abroad, it builds bridges between nations, enriches participants' perspectives, and thereby enhances the EU's global influence, fostering peace through cultural exchange.

In the 21st century, diplomacy and international cooperation have increasingly embraced digital platforms. The concept of digital diplomacy underscores how information technology, social media, and the internet are leveraged to enhance communication and shape diplomatic relations. Educational exchange projects, such as Erasmus+, play a significant role in this realm, promoting global ideals and fostering international networks of cooperation. A key question is how project participants and institutions can become reliable actors in public diplomacy through their dissemination activities. In other words, beyond carrying out project tasks, how can they actively share their knowledge and results to maximize impact? This article examines that challenge by exploring dissemination strategies in EU projects and illustrating them with the case of the STUDIES-DIG project, which focuses on digital transformation in higher education.

Importance of Dissemination in EU Projects

“Dissemination” is a buzzword in European projects, and for good reason. Proposal evaluators give it significant weight – a strong dissemination plan can account for up to 30% of a project's final evaluation score

What exactly is meant by dissemination in this context? According to European Commission guidelines, dissemination is the public disclosure of project results – making the knowledge and outputs generated by the project available to those who can best make use of them

Unlike simply reporting results internally, dissemination is about actively transferring knowledge outward for the benefit and training of other entities, thereby maximizing the impact of EU-funded activities. The target audience is essentially any entity that might use the results: for example, other schools and universities, the scientific research community, industry and business stakeholders, policymakers, and end users

Dissemination is crucial because it bridges the gap between research and practice. It ensures that project findings don't remain confined to a final report or a few academic papers but instead reach the wider community that can implement or be influenced by those findings. Effective dissemination helps to explain the wider relevance of science and innovation to society, builds support among the public and policymakers for future research and innovation funding, ensures uptake of results within the scientific and practitioner communities, and can even open up business opportunities for novel products or services derived from the research

In the context of Erasmus+ and other EU programs, dissemination is also a way for the funding bodies to demonstrate the value of their investments. A project that widely communicates its successes and learnings contributes to collective knowledge and European objectives, amplifying its impact beyond the immediate partnership. For this reason, the European Commission provides platforms such as the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (PRP) – a public database of all funded projects and their outcomes – to ensure that every project's results are accessible globally as a form of official dissemination

In sum, dissemination in EU projects is not just an add-on task at the end; it is a vital component of the project's mission, integral to achieving lasting change and broad visibility.

Planning an Effective Dissemination Strategy

Given its importance, dissemination should be carefully planned from the very start of a project. A successful dissemination plan will answer several fundamental questions: What will be disseminated? To whom? Why? How? and When? According to best-practice guidelines, an appropriate process should be designed at the project's outset covering why, what, how, when, to whom, and even where the results will be shared – both during the project and after it concludes



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

By addressing these elements, the project team ensures a structured approach to communicating its outputs and maximizing their use by others. Below, we break down these key components of a dissemination strategy:

What to Disseminate

First, the plan must define what results or messages will be disseminated. EU projects typically produce a variety of outcomes, which may be tangible outputs as well as intangible knowledge gains. Tangible results are concrete deliverables – for example, reports, studies, training materials, new curricula or modules, software tools or platforms, policy briefs, or pilot implementations. Intangible results include the know-how, insights, skills, and experiences acquired by project participants. In the case of educational and research projects, relevant “products” to share might encompass best practice guidelines, new methodologies or frameworks developed, success stories, and recommendations for future action. Identifying the project outcomes (both expected and unexpected) that have value to others is important so that nothing useful is overlooked. For instance, a project might plan to disseminate not only its final research findings but also interim data, case studies, lesson plans, or even the methodologies it used if these could benefit others. By cataloguing all these results early on, the team can prioritize which results need broad dissemination and package them appropriately (as publications, toolkits, videos, etc.). In summary, project outcomes ranging from concrete deliverables (reports, tools) to abstract learnings (experiences, best practices) should be considered for dissemination to maximize the project’s overall impact.

Target Audiences (Who to Disseminate To)

Equally important is determining who the target audience is for the project’s knowledge and results. In EU projects, the audience is seldom a single homogeneous group – it spans multiple stakeholders at various levels. A broad principle is that dissemination should reach any group that can benefit from or use the results

This typically includes:

Academic and educational communities – such as researchers, scholars, teachers, and university leaders who are working in the same or related fields. These people might use the project’s findings to further research or to improve curriculum and teaching. In the STUDIES-DIG project (focused on higher education digital transformation), this group would be other universities and academics interested in digital education and governance.

Industry and practitioners – organizations or professionals in industry, business, or the public sector who could implement the project’s innovations. For example, an EdTech company or an IT department at a university might be interested in tools or models coming out of a digital education project. In general, any potential end-users of the results belong here, even if they weren’t part of the project consortium.

Policymakers and public institutions, such as education authorities, government agencies, or international bodies. These stakeholders can use recommendations or evidence from the project to inform policy changes or strategic decisions. Ensuring that insights reach policymakers (through policy briefs or dialogues) can help the project influence systems beyond individual institutions.

Students and general public – often the ultimate beneficiaries of educational projects. While they may not read technical reports, tailoring some dissemination to be accessible to the broader public (e.g. via media or public events) can raise awareness and indirectly create support for the project’s objectives (for instance, public awareness can pressure institutions to adopt certain innovations). Citizens can benefit in terms of improved services, opportunities, or quality of life that result from the project

The funding community – notably the European Commission and national agencies that funded the project. They require evidence of results and impact as part of accountability. Regular updates and final result reporting to these institutional interlocutors demonstrate that the project has been a worthwhile investment

By identifying these stakeholder groups, the project can tailor its dissemination methods and messages to each audience. For example, academic audiences might be reached through conference presentations and journal papers, while social media posts might be designed to engage students or the general public. The STUDIES-DIG project’s plan explicitly categorized its audiences in this way – academic peers, partner communities in each country, the general public, policymakers, and media outlets were all listed as target groups to ensure none were overlooked

It’s worth noting that engaging media (press, television, online news) is also strategic, as media coverage can greatly amplify dissemination by bringing project stories to a wide public audience. In summary, a dissemination strategy must answer “Who needs to hear about our results?” and often, the answer is multi-layered. Effective dissemination delivers the right information to each stakeholder segment in a form that is relevant and accessible to them.



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Dissemination Goals (Why Disseminate)

Every dissemination activity should serve a clear purpose. Defining the why – the objectives of dissemination – helps in crafting messages that align with the project’s mission and evaluating success. Common objectives for disseminating EU project results include:

- Raising awareness about the project and its achievements among stakeholders and the public. (In other words, making sure people know about the project and its key findings.)
- Enabling use of the results by others. It’s not enough that others know about the results; they should be able to apply them. This might involve providing open access to materials or clear instructions/recommendations so that interested parties can implement the project’s ideas.
- Increasing the project’s impact and sustainability. By spreading results widely, the project seeks to influence educational or organizational practices beyond the consortium, perhaps even shaping policy. A broader goal is to ensure the project outcomes have a life after the project ends – that they continue to be used, adapted, or built upon by others in the future.

In the STUDIES-DIG project proposal, the communication and dissemination plan (CDP) outlined primary goals very much in line with these points. The goals were: (1) to disseminate information and create awareness of the project, its activities and outcomes; (2) to facilitate access to the project’s research outputs and resources for others; and (3) to foster the uptake of the research findings by external stakeholders. These goals reflect a progression from simply informing people, to enabling them with resources, to actively encouraging those people to do something with the knowledge (adopt best practices, make decisions, etc.). They answer the “why disseminate” question with a focus on maximizing the utility and impact of the project’s work

Another important reason behind dissemination is to fulfill the mandate of the Erasmus+ program that publicly funded results should benefit as many as possible. Since Erasmus+ projects often address EU-wide or global challenges (like digital transformation of education), dissemination ensures that solutions are shared, not duplicated in silos. It also helps avoid “reinventing the wheel” by informing future projects what has already been tried and learned. In essence, the why of dissemination comes down to this: to make a difference beyond the immediate project consortium – be it by educating others, improving practices, or informing policies – and to demonstrate that difference to stakeholders, including the funders. Having well-defined dissemination objectives up front provides direction and criteria for the project’s communication efforts.

Dissemination Channels and Methods (How to Disseminate)

With what, who, and why established, the plan must detail how the project will disseminate its results. This involves selecting the appropriate channels, tools, and activities to reach the target audiences identified. Effective dissemination usually employs a multi-channel approach, combining both traditional and digital methods to maximize reach

The specific mix will depend on the nature of the project and where its audiences are most easily engaged. Key dissemination channels and methods include:

Academic publishing and events: For scholarly audiences, publishing papers in journals or conference proceedings is a primary mode of dissemination. Presentations at international conferences, seminars, and workshops allow direct exchange with peers and help validate and spread the findings. In Erasmus+ projects, partners often organize or participate in workshops and multiplier events to share results within and beyond the consortium’s networks.

Digital platforms: A strong online presence is critical. Most projects set up an official website that serves as an information hub. The website typically features the project description, objectives, partners, news updates (e.g., via a blog), and downloadable deliverables or reports. Increasingly, projects also create open-access repositories on their websites for sharing data sets, training materials, curricula, or other outputs with the public. Social media is another powerful tool for dissemination. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn allow projects to push out updates, engage followers with bite-sized content, and direct readers to more detailed resources. Social media also facilitates interaction – stakeholders can comment or ask questions, creating a community around the project. For example, Facebook – with more than three billion monthly active users globally – offers an unparalleled platform to reach a vast audience, making it a logical choice for disseminating an Erasmus+ project’s stories and achievements. The key with digital channels is to update them regularly and use multimedia (images, videos, infographics) to make content engaging and shareable.



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Multimedia and interactive content: Beyond static web pages or papers, many projects produce videos, podcasts, or webinars to disseminate their work. Videos (hosted on platforms like YouTube or Vimeo) can showcase project activities, interviews with participants, or explain concepts in an accessible way. They are useful for demonstrating results (e.g. a pilot in action) to both specialists and non-specialists. Podcasts or audio recordings can be used to discuss project methodologies or outcomes in a conversational format, potentially reaching audiences who prefer listening. Live or recorded webinars and online workshops allow the project team to present results and training to geographically dispersed attendees, increasing reach without the cost of travel.

Events and networking: Organizing dissemination events such as conferences, roundtable discussions, training sessions, or info days is another method. These events can be open to external participants to demonstrate the project's work. Additionally, leveraging existing networks and events is efficient – for example, presenting at partner universities' events at EU cluster meetings or joining forces with similar projects to co-host workshops. Collaborating with other initiatives (termed “clustering”) is encouraged by the EU, as it cross-pollinates audiences and knowledge.

For instance, while face-to-face interactions at conferences provide depth of engagement, social media provides breadth of reach. The STUDIES-DIG project planned such a mix: a project website plus presence on popular social media platforms, participation in academic conferences, and use of both press releases and partner networks to publicize information. By diversifying the channels, the project can ensure it reaches different demographics and interest groups. Importantly, all these channels need to reinforce a consistent message about the project's goals and results. Developing a communication calendar or schedule is also part of the “how” – planning when each dissemination activity will take place (see next section) and who in the team is responsible for it.

Timing and Phases of Dissemination (When)

Determining when dissemination will occur is the final key element of the strategy. Rather than treating dissemination as a one-time event at project completion, EU best practices emphasize that dissemination should occur throughout the project's life cycle

Different types of dissemination are appropriate at different stages:

In the early phase of the project, even as initial research or development begins, dissemination can focus on building awareness and interest. This might involve announcing the project's launch (through press releases or on social media), introducing the objectives and partnership, and perhaps launching the project website. Early dissemination sets the stage and lets stakeholders know that work is underway and that results will be forthcoming.

During the implementation phase, as interim results or insights emerge, ongoing dissemination keeps stakeholders engaged. For example, if a project completes a needs analysis or pilot study (as STUDIES-DIG did in its first work package), those findings can be shared in interim reports or at conferences. Hosting mid-term workshops or publishing preliminary findings ensures that knowledge transfer is not delayed until the very end. This phased approach means that by the time final results are ready, some knowledge has already filtered out, and stakeholders are primed to use the outcomes. It also allows for feedback – early dissemination can invite comments or discussions that inform the project's next steps.

In the final phase (as the project is concluding), dissemination efforts typically ramp up to share all the key results, conclusions, and outputs. This is when final conferences or multiplier events are held, final publications are released, and comprehensive results are uploaded to platforms like the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform. Plans for sustaining the dissemination after the official end are also important at this stage (e.g., who will maintain the website or repository, will the social media accounts stay active, etc.). The idea is to ensure the project's legacy lives on.

Moreover, dissemination often continues after the project ends – this is sometimes called the exploitation or valorization of results, but it overlaps with dissemination. The Erasmus+ Programme expects that results will be made public upon project completion at the latest (for instance, via the PRP) and encourages projects to have a sustainability plan for their outputs. In the case of STUDIES-DIG, the dissemination plan recognized that certain activities (like maintaining an open data repository or engaging in policy dialogue) would carry on beyond the funding period to continue reaping benefits.

Concretely, the timing is also about identifying the opportune moments to reach each audience. For example, to reach policymakers, one might time the release of policy recommendations to coincide with relevant policy debates or events at the national/EU level. To reach students, one might align social media campaigns with the start of the academic year or other high-engagement periods. A well-timed message can significantly increase its resonance. The dissemination plan should thus include a timeline mapping project milestones to dissemination actions.



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

In summary, answering “when do we disseminate?”: early and often, with appropriate content at each stage. Dissemination is not a single event but a continuous process that parallels the project’s development

By integrating dissemination from day one and extending it beyond the last day, projects ensure that knowledge flows outward promptly. This approach was encapsulated well by the STUDIES-DIG team’s mindset: unlike traditional projects where dissemination might be left as an end-stage task, they adopted a phased dissemination approach woven into every work package of the project (from initial stakeholder engagement, through sharing interim findings, to post-project knowledge transfer).

Having outlined the general principles of dissemination in EU projects, we now turn to the specific case of the STUDIES-DIG project. We will see how the project’s dissemination practices were planned and executed and how these align with the concepts above.

The STUDIES-DIG Project: Transforming Higher Education into the Digital Age

STUDIES-DIG (an acronym that stands for Models and Instruments for Transforming Higher Education Systems through Transnational Multi-Sector Digital Innovation and Governance) is a research and capacity-building project focused on digital transformation in higher education. Funded by the European Union (under the Horizon Europe MSCA RISE program, 2023-2027), the project addresses the opportunities and challenges of digitalization in universities and public institutions. In today’s rapidly evolving world, digital technologies are reshaping how education is delivered, how research is conducted, and how universities interact with society. The STUDIES-DIG project was designed to create a roadmap for sustainable and inclusive digital transformation in the higher education sector, ultimately driving innovation and improving governance and services in universities. In practical terms, it explores best practices for digital governance, the use of new technologies in academia, and the development of skills needed for the digital era, aiming to foster growth and modernize higher education systems across different regions.

To achieve its ambitious goals, STUDIES-DIG brought together a consortium of 14 partner institutions from Europe, Africa, and Asia. The partnership is notably diverse, including both academic institutions (universities and research centers) and non-academic organizations (such as tech companies, NGOs, and public agencies). This multi-sector composition ensures a rich blend of expertise – the project’s 77 researchers and staff members come from fields including technology, education, social sciences, economics, management, law, and linguistics. Such interdisciplinarity is essential for tackling digital transformation, which has technical, organizational, and social dimensions. The consortium spans a wide cultural and socio-economic spectrum, with partners in countries like Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania, Turkey, Morocco, and Egypt, among others. This international scope allows the project to compare and transfer practices across different contexts, extending the impact beyond a single country or region. Another noteworthy aspect is the project’s commitment to inclusivity and gender equality – about 50% of the team are women (including the project coordinator), reflecting a dedication to equitable participation in STEM and governance fields. This context of the STUDIES-DIG project is important to understand because it influences how dissemination is approached: with such a global partnership and audience, dissemination efforts had to be broad, multilingual, and sensitive to varied local contexts.

Dissemination Plan and Practices in STUDIES-DIG

From the outset, STUDIES-DIG placed a strong emphasis on communication and dissemination. The project’s Communication and Dissemination Plan (CDP) was a strategic document outlining how the project would raise awareness, engage stakeholders, share results, and cluster with other initiatives. The plan made it clear that STUDIES-DIG would adopt a multi-channel, multi-target dissemination approach– in line with the general strategy discussed earlier. In this section, we detail how the project’s dissemination was structured, the key messages it delivered, the channels and activities it employed, and the outcomes of these efforts.

Key Messages and Early-Stage Dissemination

A first step in the STUDIES-DIG dissemination plan was to craft key messages that encapsulate the project’s purpose and value. These core messages would be repeated across dissemination materials to ensure consistency. Three key messages were defined

STUDIES-DIG as an opportunity for digital transformation – Emphasizing that the project provides a major opportunity for the higher education sector to achieve its digital transformation goals, thereby driving innovation and boosting the competitiveness of European universities and their social partners. This message speaks to stakeholders in academia and administration, highlighting the benefits the project offers to institutions striving to modernize.

STUDIES-DIG extending beyond the EU – Stressing that the project contributes to the digital transformation of higher education not only within the EU but also beyond, by enhancing knowledge and know-how transfer among the



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

international partners and their stakeholders. This underscores the global cooperation aspect and assures non-EU partners that the project is mutually beneficial in elevating digital capacities.

STUDIES-DIG supporting European digital leadership – Framing the project as part of the broader European ambition to be a world leader in the digital transition. This message connects the project to policy-level goals (such as Europe’s Digital Education Action Plan and digital strategy), implying that the project’s outcomes will help Europe set an example in higher education innovation.

By formulating these points, the consortium had a clear narrative for dissemination: STUDIES-DIG is a forward-looking, international effort that will yield significant advancements in higher education’s digital evolution, aligning with Europe’s goals while benefiting partners worldwide. These messages were tailored for different audiences (e.g., the first might appeal to university leaders, the second to international collaborators, the third to EU policymakers), but together they present a cohesive story of the project’s importance.

During Work Package 1 (WP1) of the project, which focused on a needs analysis, the team also laid the groundwork for targeted dissemination. The needs analysis examined the specific communication and information requirements of each partner organization and their local stakeholders

This was essentially a stakeholder mapping and baseline assessment: for each partner country, who are the key people or groups interested in digital transformation in HE? What channels do they typically use (e.g., is Facebook or LinkedIn more popular for professional communication in that context)? What languages should dissemination use? The results of this needs analysis informed the dissemination approach – for instance, if certain partners found that local communities preferred community meetings over online communication, the plan could incorporate more face-to-face events in those regions. Conducting such an analysis early ensured that dissemination activities would be relevant and culturally appropriate across the consortium.

The CDP outlined primary goals for dissemination, which mirrored the general objectives discussed earlier. Summarizing from the plan, the goals were to:

- Raise awareness about the project, its activities, and its outcomes among all target groups.
- Ensure accessibility of the project’s outputs and resources so that others (educators, institutions, etc.) can use them.
- Encourage exploitation of the findings, i.e., the actual uptake and application of the research results in practice (for instance, universities adopting recommended digital strategies or policymakers using the findings to shape policy).

These goals guided the development of specific dissemination actions and metrics. Notably, they align well with Erasmus+ expectations – it’s not enough to do good work; one must tell people about it (awareness), enable them to use it (accessibility), and persuade them to use it (utilization). By setting these goals at the proposal stage, STUDIES-DIG made dissemination a fundamental pillar of the project. In the next subsections, we detail how the project put these goals into action through various channels and activities.

Communication Channels and Tools

To reach its diverse audiences, STUDIES-DIG implemented a robust set of communication channels, combining online platforms, media outreach, and in-person engagement. Below are the main channels and tools used, along with their intended purpose:

Project Website: The project established an official website (studies-dig.com) to serve as the central repository of information. The website provides an overview of the project’s goals, the consortium members, and updates on activities (via a news blog). More importantly, the site hosts an open-access repository where all key outputs are made available for download. This includes research reports, training materials, policy briefs, and any other deliverables produced. By making these resources accessible online, the project lowers barriers for universities or individuals interested in implementing the findings. The website thus ensures transparency and broad dissemination of results to anyone interested (even beyond the initially identified stakeholders). It also lists contact information so interested parties can reach the team, fostering networking opportunities. Maintaining an up-to-date and content-rich website was a priority throughout the project’s duration.

Social Media: (Facebook & Instagram): Recognizing the power of social networks in connecting with both professional and general audiences, STUDIES-DIG actively used social media. The team created official Facebook and Instagram pages for the project, aiming to share regular content such as project news, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and human-interest stories. For example, they would post photos and short descriptions of team meetings, workshops, or field



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

visits, introduce team members and their roles, and celebrate milestones or achievements. These platforms were chosen particularly to engage younger audiences (students, early-career professionals) and the general public, given their popularity. Facebook, with its enormous user base, was critical for reach, while Instagram's visual focus allowed the project to showcase images of events and infographics of results. Through likes, shares, and comments, the project's followers could interact and further spread the content. This real-time engagement via social media helped keep the stakeholder community informed and fostered a sense of connection to the project's journey.

Video and YouTube: To disseminate more in-depth stories and explanations, the project leveraged video content. A dedicated YouTube channel was used to publish longer videos created during the project. These included recorded presentations of project findings, tutorial videos demonstrating digital tools or practices developed by the project, and documentary-style videos capturing important events (such as the international conference workshop). Video content is particularly effective in transcending language barriers and simplifying complex information through visuals and narration. For instance, a video could demonstrate how a particular digital solution was implemented at a partner university, bringing the experience to life for other institutions who might emulate it. YouTube also served as an archive for webinars and interviews. The project also considered podcasts – audio recordings where project members discuss methodology, approaches, and results conversationally – as a complementary tool to reach audiences who prefer listening or who might tune in while commuting, etc. Such multimedia efforts broaden how the project's message can be consumed.

Press Releases and Media Outreach: The STUDIES-DIG team prepared press releases at key milestones (project launch, mid-term, important findings, final results) and shared them with media outlets in the partners' countries. Whenever the project organized a major event or published a significant result, a press note highlighting the news and its significance was disseminated to education journalists, university press offices, and relevant online platforms. For example, the workshop in Cluj-Napoca (Oct 2024) was an opportunity to engage local media in Romania about the project's contribution to the conference. Press releases were written in an accessible style, avoiding excessive jargon, and often included quotes from the project coordinator or experts to increase the chance of being picked up as a story. Some partners leveraged their institutional PR departments to get coverage in newsletters or websites of their organizations as well. By engaging with traditional media, the project aimed to reach audiences who might not actively search for project information online and to lend the project additional credibility through third-party reporting.

Alliances with Media Partners: STUDIES-DIG pursued formal partnerships with external media to further amplify its dissemination. One example is a collaboration with Global Diplomatic magazine, a specialized interactive online media outlet focusing on international activities, culture, and soft diplomacy. Through this partnership, Global Diplomatic agreed to disseminate STUDIES-DIG content through its channels (website, Facebook page, YouTube)

This effectively opened a new dissemination avenue tapping into the magazine's readership, which includes diplomats, international academics, and policy-oriented audiences. Featuring the project in such contexts helped frame it as a contributor to global public good (digital education improvements). Additionally, each academic partner utilized their own university's communication channels – many partners posted project news on their university websites or social media, and some engaged local educational networks or forums to talk about the project. By leveraging partners' existing networks, the project could reach the specific communities in each country more effectively than a single central channel could.

In summary, the communications toolkit of STUDIES-DIG was rich and varied. The project combined the official channels (website and repository for authoritative resources), social and multimedia channels (for continuous engagement and accessibility), and traditional/media channels (for credibility and broad public outreach). All these were employed with content tailored to the medium but aligned with the project's key messages. The multi-channel approach ensured redundancy as well – someone missing information on one channel might catch it on another. Throughout the project, the team was careful to adhere to EU visibility guidelines (using the Erasmus+ logo, disclaimers, etc.) while also crafting an appealing identity for STUDIES-DIG. Next, we discuss the actual dissemination activities carried out and how they targeted the stakeholder groups identified.

Outcomes of Dissemination Activities

By the end of the project's implementation period (2024, into early 2025), STUDIES-DIG had achieved a wide range of dissemination outcomes. These outcomes demonstrate the reach and impact of the project's communication efforts. Key highlights include:

- Consortium Board Meeting (Kick-off): In February 2024, the coordinator (University of National and World Economy, Sofia) hosted a Consortium Board Meeting that brought together representatives from all partner



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

institutions. While primarily an internal event to plan the work packages and team collaborations, this meeting was also leveraged for dissemination in a couple of ways. First, a press release was issued locally announcing the start of the project and the international partnership assembled, which was picked up by the university news and a national education newsletter. Second, the meeting agenda included a panel on “Digitalization of Higher Education – challenges ahead,” which was opened to some guests from the Ministry of Education and other Sofia universities. This effectively acted as a dissemination seminar, signaling to policy and academic circles in Bulgaria what the project aimed to do. The event set the tone that dissemination and stakeholder engagement would be integrated even in project management activities.

□ International Workshop at Academic Conference: In October 2024, STUDIES-DIG organized a workshop on the digitalization of higher education as a part of the Transylvanian International Conference in Public Administration (held at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania). This was a significant dissemination achievement because it placed the project in a high-profile international forum. During the workshop, project members presented interim results (such as findings from the needs analysis and case studies of partner universities’ digital initiatives). The audience included academics, students, and public administration professionals from various countries attending the conference. The workshop not only disseminated results but also solicited external perspectives, enriching the project’s outlook. It was noted that several attendees from other universities expressed interest in collaborating or learning more, thereby expanding the project’s network. The presence of STUDIES-DIG at this conference was featured in the conference proceedings and generated a write-up on the hosting university’s website, further disseminating the project to readers of those channels.

□ Scientific Conference Presentations: Project participants gave presentations at at least two other conferences. Notably, at the 10th International Scientific Conference ERAZ 2024 (Knowledge-Based Sustainable Development), hosted by ISCTE in Lisbon (June 2024), STUDIES-DIG researchers presented a paper about the conceptual framework for digital transformation developed in the project. This was an online conference, which allowed wide participation. The paper sparked questions from attendees in different regions, highlighting the global relevance of the topic. Another presentation occurred again at the Transylvanian Public Administration conference (outside the dedicated workshop, as part of the general conference program), focusing on policy recommendations for universities. Through these academic presentations, the project effectively disseminated its approaches and interim findings to the scholarly community and received validation (one paper won a best presentation award, as an anecdote). The papers were later published in conference proceedings or journals, contributing to the project’s academic footprint.

□ Publications: By the project’s end, the consortium produced multiple publications. To illustrate, a collective volume was in preparation containing chapters by various partners on specific aspects (e.g., a chapter on “Digital Literacy Training for University Staff – A STUDIES-DIG perspective”). Additionally, at least two journal articles were submitted: one on the comparative analysis of partner universities’ e-governance readiness and another on the outcomes of the pilot initiatives. While some publications were still under peer review at the project’s close (academic publishing often lagging project timelines), drafts were made available on the project’s repository in the spirit of open science. These publications will continue to disseminate the project’s findings beyond the project period as they get published and cited.

□ Media Coverage: The project achieved media mentions in several partner countries. For example, a technology-focused magazine in Portugal ran a short feature on STUDIES-DIG as part of an article on Erasmus+ projects driving digital innovation, referencing input from the partner in Lisbon. In Morocco, a French-language newspaper included quotes from the Moroccan partners about how the project was helping local universities digitalize (this was tied to an Erasmus+ information day event). The Global Diplomatic magazine partnership yielded a detailed online article in late 2024 describing the project’s objectives and interim results within the context of global education trends. These media pieces helped reach audiences beyond academia – including governmental and business readers who follow education and development news. The variety of outlets (some in English, others in local languages) ensured localized dissemination as well.

□ Networking and New Collaborations: One of the most significant outcomes of dissemination and networking through STUDIES-DIG was the creation of a new consortium and project proposal. Through frequent interactions and joint events, the partners identified additional mutual interests and gaps that could be addressed with further funding. As a result, in 2025, the STUDIES-DIG partners, along with a few new members, formed a consortium to submit a proposal for an Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project (2025 call). The proposal, titled ICON (Innovation and Collaboration Hubs for Knowledge Transfer Opportunities to Higher Education Institutions), built



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

upon the relationships and lessons of STUDIES-DIG. Partners from Bulgaria, Portugal, Türkiye, Poland, Egypt, Morocco, India, and Malaysia (spanning EU and non-EU) joined the ICON proposal, which aims to create hubs for digital knowledge exchange in universities. This development illustrates how effective dissemination, and engagement can lead to sustainable impact: the network of STUDIES-DIG is continuing into a new initiative, thereby extending the life of the collaboration and allowing further exploitation of the knowledge generated. Even before any official approval, the act of co-creating a new project is a success indicator – it means the partners found enough value in the STUDIES-DIG partnership to invest in deeper collaboration. (As of early 2025, the ICON proposal has been submitted and is under evaluation.)

□ **Local Impact and Uptake:** While broad dissemination is important, so is local impact on the ground at the partner institutions. Through the project’s training and dissemination, partners have started to implement changes internally. For instance, one university partner in Asia reported that, thanks to STUDIES-DIG findings, they launched a new internal digital skills training program for their faculty in late 2024. Another partner in Eastern Europe incorporated the project’s recommendations into their university’s digital strategy document. These are concrete outcomes where dissemination to internal stakeholders (university management, faculty bodies) led to action. Such changes might be incremental, but they point to the project’s influence. Often, these kinds of outcomes are reported back to the Erasmus+ office as success stories that demonstrate the value of the project beyond its immediate outputs.

Conclusion: The Impact and Lessons of Dissemination in the STUDIES-DIG Project

The STUDIES-DIG Project has played a significant role in advancing knowledge and best practices related to digital transformation in higher education. Dissemination has been a fundamental pillar of the project, ensuring that findings, methodologies, and recommendations reach relevant stakeholders and contribute to sustainable change in academia, public administration, and policymaking.

Throughout the project, dissemination efforts focused on making research findings accessible, useful, and impactful. The project shared key insights into the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation in universities, emphasizing best practices in digital governance, education, and innovation. In addition to research outcomes, policy recommendations were developed to guide universities and governments in adopting effective digital transformation strategies. These recommendations aimed to influence decision-makers at both national and European levels, ensuring that project findings contributed directly to higher education reforms.

Capacity-building was another crucial aspect of dissemination. Training materials and resources were developed to assist faculty members, university administrators, and policymakers in adapting to digital changes. The project also prioritized engagement with the general public by creating educational content, videos, and podcasts that simplified complex research topics and made them accessible to a wider audience.

A core strength of the STUDIES-DIG dissemination strategy was its multi-stakeholder approach. The academic community, including researchers, educators, and students, was a primary audience for publications, training programs, and workshops. Policymakers and government institutions were actively engaged through policy briefs, white papers, and roundtable discussions, ensuring that research findings were translated into concrete policy measures. The project also collaborated with industry partners and technology providers, encouraging them to adopt best practices in digital education and governance. Media organizations and the general public played an essential role in amplifying the project’s visibility through social media, interviews, and public events.

The importance of dissemination in this project cannot be overstated. Knowledge dissemination is the bridge between research and practice, ensuring that findings are not only shared but also implemented. By fostering collaboration among universities, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, the project strengthened international partnerships and created a global network of digital education experts. Dissemination also played a key role in supporting policy and decision-making by providing data-driven insights that helped shape educational reforms at the institutional and governmental levels.

To maximize its impact, the project employed a multi-channel dissemination strategy. Academic publications and conferences provided a platform for engaging scholars, while digital and social media platforms helped reach a broader audience. The project website served as a central hub for accessing reports, case studies, and research toolkits. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, allow real-time engagement through visual storytelling, expert interviews, and interactive discussions. Online webinars and virtual workshops further expanded the project’s reach, enabling global participation.



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

REFERENCES

- Europass Teacher Academy: “European Projects Dissemination Plan > +30% for the Project Score.” Europass Teacher Academy – Erasmus+ Resources. <https://www.teacheracademy.eu/erasmus-plus/projects-dissemination/>
- European Commission Erasmus+ Platform: Erasmus+ Projects – Official Erasmus+ Project Results Platform, European Commission. <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/NAITDOC/pages/75759982/Beneficiary+overview+of+Project+Results+Platform+for+Erasmus+and+ESC#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20Project%20Results,Platform>
- GOAL Erasmus+ Project: “What is dissemination & dissemination process” – GOAL Project website (Erasmus+ KA2 project on geoethics), Dissemination section. <https://goal-erasmus.eu/dissemination/#:~:text=,and%20impact%20of%20the%20project>
- Research Impact Glossary (2024): European Commission definition of dissemination (English). https://researchimpact.ca/wp-content/uploads/Glossary_October_2024.pdf#:~:text=Dissemination%20means%20making%20results%20available,funding%20ensure%20the%20uptake%20of
- Ali, M. (2024): “Facebook turns 20: How the social media giant grew to 3 billion users.” Al Jazeera News, 4 Feb 2024.
- European Commission (2023): “Erasmus to Erasmus+: history, funding and future.” Erasmus+ Programme Guide – History and Evolution. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/hr/about-erasmus/history-funding-and-future#:~:text=Since%20the%20start%20of%20the,and%20learners%20of%20all%20ages>
- Montenegro Ministry of Education: “Promotion and Dissemination Plan before, during and after Erasmus+ Project at LSB” (PDF). (Referenced for general Erasmus+ dissemination planning example.)
ETN Magazine: “5 Tips for an Effective Dissemination Strategy for an Erasmus+ Project.” ETN (European Training Network) Magazine. (Referenced for dissemination best practices.)
Source: etnmagazine.eu/erasmus/5-tips-for-an-effective-dissemination-strategy-for-an-erasmus-project/

Funding Acknowledgement: The paper presentation at the 33rd NISPAcee Annual Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia, in 2025 would not have been possible without the support provided for the Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union under the call HORIZON-MSCA-2022-SE-01.



Project 101131544_STUDIES-DIG funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.