COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Lifelong Learning Programme

ISEKI_FOOD 4: TOWARDS THE INNOVATION OF THE FOOD CHAIN THROUGH THE MODERNISATION OF FOOD STUDIES

Agreement number: 2011-3634/001 - 001

Project Number: 518415-LLP-1-2011-1-IT-Erasmus-ENW

Report on deliverable D2.7

ISEKI_Food 4 & Social Networks

Work package 2: Dissemination

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Delivery Date: September 2014
Foreword

The work described in this report was developed under the project ISEKI_Food 4: Towards the innovation of the food chain through the modernisation of Food Studies. If you wish any other information related to this report or the ISEKI_Food 4 project please visit the project web-site (http://www.iseki-food4.eu/) or contact:

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This project has been funded with the support from the European Commission. This document reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
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1. Objectives

The objective of this deliverable was to disseminate the project activities to the food-related wider community and, in particular, to favour the discussion of aspects related to food studies in terms of needs, emerging and “hot” topics among the stakeholders of the food chain, and to enhance food knowledge and promote awareness of food quality, safety and innovation to the general public and consumers. The deliverable was also designed to favour the development and maintenance of working relationships among the partners and associated partners in the periods between the general assemblies and project meetings and to “quickly” promote Food Science and Technology news and events to interested parties in a multicultural and international virtual environment.

2. Target Groups

This deliverable was intended for public dissemination use which encompasses a large and diverse range of target groups including ISEKI_Food network partners, students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and early career scientists, academics, associated partners, food related-associations, food industry professionals and the general wider public.

3. Methodology

Based on the diversity of target groups, personal and professional experience of social media usage and the previous success of social media activities developed during the ISEKI_Food 3 and ISEKI_Mundus 2 project, it was proposed to continue the use of Facebook, and to develop an additional social media group using LinkedIn, as well as investigate the parallel use of Twitter to promote ISEKI_Food activities, events and general information to as wide a range of interested parties as possible. All activities were set up as ISEKI_Food Network dissemination tools (rather than the ISEKI_Food 4 project) with a view to the sustainability of these tools by the ISEKI-Food Association (IFA) after the end of the current project.

3.1. ISEKI_Food Facebook

As previously mentioned, an ISEKI_Food Facebook page was set up during the ISEKI_Food 3 and ISEKI_Mundus 2 project activities (https://www.facebook.com/ISEKIFood). Based on
this prior experience, Facebook was felt to be the best (and most user friendly) tool to continue to capture the undergraduate and postgraduate age groups, as well as the wider public. Eight partners responsible for dissemination activities in the previous and/or current project were given administrator access which permitted them to post information to the ISEKI_Food Facebook page timeline. The page was set up to allow comments and sharing by individuals, but the addition of content was restricted to administrators only. At the beginning of the ISEKI_Food 4 project (October 2011), there were 322 page likes.

3.2. The development of an ISEKI_Food Linkedin Group

In addition to the use of Facebook, it was felt that a more ‘professional’ dissemination approach using the more recently developed Linkedin tool would be useful to create a platform open to greater discussion and debate. A Linkedin ISEKI_Food ‘open’ group ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) was therefore created in November 2012 by Lynn McIntyre (‘owner’) with the support of four project partners with manager access in order to approve user requests to join the group. In contrast to Facebook, any approved member of the group could post discussions, promotions, jobs and comments (with membership subject to approval by the group managers), while anyone on Linkedin was able to post comments, and submit discussions for approval.

3.3. The use of Twitter as a secondary dissemination tool

Twitter was the social media tool least familiar to most of the project participants, therefore the overall effectiveness of using this approach was initially uncertain. However it was felt that it would be worth investigating whether this additional information ‘boost’ would have a positive effect. An ISEKI_Food Twitter account was therefore set up ([https://twitter.com/ISEKI_Food](https://twitter.com/ISEKI_Food)) by Lynn McIntyre and linked to both the ISEKI_Food Facebook and Linkedin accounts, but was not accessed to ‘tweet’ independently of these main social media tools. This ‘passive’ use of Twitter meant that Facebook and Linkedin information initiated by the administrators/managers would be further disseminated via the IFA Twitter feed without any additional effort on the part of the disseminator. As Twitter posts (known as ‘tweets’) have a limit of only 140 characters, its overall effectiveness relied
on the succinct use of language and this required a change in the way that Facebook and LinkedIn posts were previously structured and communicated.

4. Deliverable evaluation

4.1. Facebook

There was a steady increase in the number of page ‘likes’ during the ISEKI_Food 4 project, from 322 to 808 (Sept 2014) (Fig. 1). Overall this represents a 150% increase in audience.

![Total Page Likes as of Today: 817](image)

**Fig. 1.** Total number of Facebook page likes (1 October 2011 – 30 September 2014)

Gender and age analysis of the people who liked the ISEKI_Food Facebook page (Fig. 2) shows that almost 50% are in the 25-34 age range, with a higher number of women (57%) liking the page than men (41%). This gender difference may be due to the topics being covered and the increasing participation of women in food-related studies.

![Gender and age analysis](image)

**Fig. 2.** Breakdown of people who like the ISEKI_Food Facebook page
In terms of audience engagement (related to likes, comments or sharing of posts), women were more actively engaged with the Facebook page than men, with the highest engagement associated with members of the 25-34 age grouping (Fig. 3).

![Fig. 3. Level of engagement with the ISEKI_Food Facebook page](image)

Total reach (measured in relation to any activity served from the ISEKI_Food page) is shown in Fig. 4. The highest reach (589 people) was achieved in July 2012.

![Fig. 4. Total number of people served activity from the ISEKI_Food Facebook page](image)

A ‘spiking’ trend is clearly evident which is likely due to the more sporadic nature of dissemination where posts were not made daily, and there was a tendency towards greater engagement following project meetings where partners were reminded about the dissemination tools being used. It should be noted that reach was achieved in an ‘organic’ way only (i.e. without paying for the promotion of posts and other activities).

Dissemination information posted to the ISEKI_Food ‘timeline’ (main page) proved to be of most interest to visitors (Fig. 5), followed by photographs and general page information.
In terms of information posted on Facebook, it ranged across different topic areas of interest (e.g. food processing, food safety, sensory evaluation, education and research, events, announcements and conferences, EU projects, calls for funding, etc.) and was extracted from various media and scientific sources accessed regularly by the administrators. An example of a Facebook post is shown in Fig. 6.

![Page and Tab Visits](image)

**Fig. 5.** Analysis of Facebook page and tab visits

**Fig. 6.** Example of Facebook post promoting an international congress
4.2. Linkedin

The ISEKI_Food Linkedin group attracted a membership of 106 people over the final two years of the project (Fig. 7).

![Growth in membership of ISEKI_Food Linkedin Group](image)

**Fig. 7.** Growth in membership of ISEKI_Food Linkedin Group

The limited membership analysis available (as a non-paying member of Linkedin) showed that 45% of members stated that their job function was in either education or research (Fig. 8). Of the industry members, 22% were in research, while nearly one quarter of members stated that they are in senior positions. In terms of geographical location, members from Greece captured the highest proportion (10%) of the membership.

![Analysis of ISEKI_Food Linkedin Group membership](image)

**Fig. 8.** Analysis of ISEKI_Food Linkedin Group membership

The Linkedin group was used to communicate, for example, requests for newsletter content, to disseminate information about the ISEKI_Food 4 conference held in Athens, Greece and to promote IFA membership and events. It was also used by individuals to promote international conferences and other institutional events (Fig. 9).
4.3. Twitter

Using Twitter as a secondary form of dissemination, a ‘follower’ total of 95 was achieved by the end of the project (Table 1).

Table 1: Categories of Twitter followers accessing ISEKI_Food dissemination information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Follower</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Food Science students (undergrad, PhD); academics, industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project networks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>LinkTADs, RESFOOD, TRADEIT, TRADEITnetwork, Maitre Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations, organisations</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>food-facts-center, assoc.ACTAE, AquaTT Ireland, EURASHE, SRUC Research, CREST UK, FDF, IFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities, Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Holbeach Campus, Harper Adams University, Zero2Five, Kite Programme, FILO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 Events (conferences) | 5 | PARTEC2013, IUFoST2014, IUFoST2016, MUPSA Conference
---|---|---
 Companies | 2 | Thermo Scientific, 3M Food Safety
 Media, news services | 6 | Food Science & Tech, FoodProductionDaily, Foodable, FoodProductDesign, FAO Newsroom, MScFPM

Analysis of these followers shows a diverse audience ranging from individuals (with no affiliation to food extending through to students and academics interested in food-related topics) to large international associations such as the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), educational groups, universities and educational centres, project networks (particularly for FP7 activities) and conference events, companies, media and news services. Many of these groups are actively disseminating news on a regular basis and follow a variety of Twitter feeds in order to access a broad selection of information sources. Examples of the ISEKI_Food Twitter feed and a Twitter post are shown in Fig. 10.

**Fig. 10.** Example of ISEKI_Food Twitter feed (left) and Twitter post (right)
5. Final remarks and conclusions

It is clear from the analysis of social media uptake through the duration of this project that this is a useful approach to permit the dissemination of project and general information to a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in food. Facebook was particularly successful in capturing a younger audience while Linkedin created a more professional community consisting of individuals from education, research and industry. Using Twitter to passively disseminate Facebook and Linkedin posts proved surprisingly successful in accessing an additional and different audience ranging from individual members of the public to large organisations/associations, EU projects, food companies and media/news services.

It is worth noting that the partners who worked on social media dissemination activities did this in a voluntary capacity (and sometimes with little/no previous experience of these tools) and, as such, this was at the discretion of their available time. In order to continue to build on the success of these social media tools, and in particular to promote greater discussion, it is recommended that IFA take a lead role in actively using these established tools to maintain more regular dialogue with social media users to disseminate food-related topics of interest as well as to promote the ongoing activities of the Association and ISEKI_Food Network. The investigation of additional social media tools should also be part of this continuing role, ideally in conjunction with more experienced social media users.