# Recommended website

## EURODIS: a new searchable database and website for project dissemination

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**Abstract**

This paper describes the rationale for setting up and the outcomes derived from the EURODIS project carried out with support from the European Commission through its Lifelong Learning Programme from November 2009 to October 2010 (Ref.: 159773-2009-LLP-ES-KA2-KA2AM). The project's main aim was to provide efficient ways of disseminating CALL-related projects and their products to the larger language learning community at all levels of education. The major project outcome has been the implementation of a searchable large scale web-enabled database allowing both learners and language professionals to find specific information in a comprehensive manner.

**Keywords:** EURODIS; project dissemination; materials database; searchable website; CALL network.

## 1. Introduction

Initially, the EURODIS project aimed at providing additional ways of disseminating CALL-related projects that had been funded by the European Commission that had been presented at the EUROCALL 2009 and 2010 conferences in Gandía (ES) and Bordeaux (FR), respectively. A number of actions were envisaged in order to achieve this. Among them: a) acknowledging the EU-funded projects in the conference programme and identifying them in the session rooms; b) publishing leaflets with relevant information about the projects and their products; c) inviting the presenters of these sessions to participate in a CALL research and development network devoted to sharing experience, promoting examples of good practice and advice on particularly important issues such as dissemination opportunities, evaluation models, etc.; d) developing a comprehensive database with information on the EU-funded projects presented at EUROCALL conferences; e) setting up a searchable website to disseminate the EU-funded projects presented at EUROCALL conferences; and, f) inviting selected projects to publish an article in _The EUROCALL Review_ (http://www.eurocall-languages.org/review/index.html) -EUROCALL's online journal which is published twice yearly, in March and September. This paper focuses on the development and implementation of the comprehensive database and searchable website.

## 2. Dissemination

### 2.1 Rationale

The rationale underlying the project was based on a firm belief that project dissemination is one of the most important stages in a project's life-cycle, and which is

a factor that is very often left aside due to a number of circumstances that can be remedied with a bit of planning. One of these causes is often because project partners find it very hard to seek methods of sustaining their projects after the funding period is over and more often than not, dissemination is left to the last stages of the project or even after its completion. This was one of the driving forces that led us to create the searchable project website: in order to provide project partners with a tool where they can feed information from their projects right from the very starting point and, of course, throughout the entire project and after its completion. On the other hand, many years of experience in this area (1) has also led us to believe that, in many cases, even though the official finalization date may have been reached, project partners continue to work on their project outcomes and embark on upgrades, etc.

*2.2 Effective dissemination*

In terms of dissemination, two of the basic questions any project co-ordinator should ask him or herself are: a) How effectively did the project carry out its plan for dissemination? and b) What is the quality of the dissemination activities? With effective dissemination, the awareness, recognition, and possible use of a project's outcomes may be greater than expected. Sound planning can undoubtedly help achieve this result and we must not forget that the ultimate goal of dissemination is utilization. In carrying out a dissemination activity, information or knowledge should systematically be distributed through a variety of ways to potential users or beneficiaries and, as mentioned above, it should be conducted from the very start of the project.

The basic characteristics of dissemination systems have been very clearly laid out by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (2001) and can be thus summarised:

- They are oriented toward the needs of the user, incorporating the types and levels of information needed into the forms and language preferred by the user.
- They use varied dissemination methods, including written information, electronic media, and person-to-person contact.
- They include both proactive and reactive dissemination channels - that is, they include information that users have identified as important, and they include information that users may not know to request but that they are likely to need.
- They recognize and provide for the "natural flow" of the four levels of dissemination that have been identified as leading to utilization: spread, exchange, choice, and implementation.
- They draw upon existing resources, relationships, and networks to the maximum extent possible while building new resources as needed by users.
- They include effective quality control mechanisms to assure that information to be included in the system is accurate, relevant, and representative.
- They include sufficient information so that the user can determine the basic principles underlying specific practices and the settings in which these practices may be used most productively.
- They establish linkages to resources that may be needed to implement the information - usually referred to as technical assistance.

Also according to the guidelines on developing an effective dissemination plan, the same organization recommends taking into account the following ten elements:

i. **Goals:** Determine and document the goals of your dissemination effort for your proposed project.

ii. **Objectives:** Associate each goal with one or more objectives that clarifies what you are trying to accomplish through your dissemination activities.

iii. **Users:** Describe the scope and characteristics of the "potential users" that your dissemination activities are designed to reach for each of your objectives.

iv. **Content:** Identify, at least, the basic elements of the projected content you have to disseminate to each of the potential user groups identified.

v. **Source(s):** Identify the primary source or sources that each potential user group is already tied into or most respects as an information source. Consider ways to partner with these sources in your dissemination efforts.

vi. **Medium:** Describe the medium or media through which the content of your message can best be delivered to your potential users and describe the capabilities and resources that will be required of potential users to access the content for each medium to be used.

vii. **Success:** Describe how you will know if your dissemination activities have been successful. If data is to be gathered, describe how, when, and who will gather it.

viii. **Access:** Describe how you will promote access to your information and how you will archive information that may be requested at a later date. Consider that most people will use your project-related information when they perceive a need for it — not necessarily when you have completed your research project.

ix. **Availability:** Identify strategies for promoting awareness of the availability of your research-based information and the availability of alternate available formats.

x. **Barriers:** Identify potential barriers that may interfere with the targeted users' access or utilization of your information and develop actions to reduce these barriers.

Naturally, the dissemination planning process assists in answering questions relating to these ten elements of effective dissemination planning.

*2.3 Types of dissemination*

There are two possible ways of spreading information about a project and its outcomes: a) academic dissemination and b) advertising and publicising. These naturally have two distinctly different goals: the former, targeting the scientific and academic community, and the latter, aiming at the public at large, target groups, stakeholders, decision-makers, etc. There are of course several means of disseminating via academic channels, among them: professional associations, conferences, journals, specialised magazines, dedicated websites, networks, etc. Professional associations customarily also provide members with a number of ways of sharing information such as special interest groups devoted to specific aspects of a broader common interest, a network of members sharing common interests, discussion lists, newsletters, social networking tools, blogs, wikis, annual assemblies and events, etc. Advertising and publicising a project outcome, however, seeks to awaken public awareness and enhance visibility of the "product" at hand by means of promotional strategies. As a consequence, we cannot increase the afore-mentioned aimed utilisation of the project outcome unless potential users are made aware of its existence and availability. This, of course, may be done in a number of ways, specific to the field of marketing.

Disseminating knowledge, however, involves not only sharing but also transfer. As Söderquist (2006:499) very clearly explains:

*By knowledge transfer, we intend the distribution of knowledge of an essentially explicit nature between individuals and groups (through, e.g., formal information channels, IT systems or more spontaneous communication), while (following Argote & Ingram) by knowledge sharing we mean the dynamic processes of inter-personal interaction (e.g.,*

*discussion, debate or joint problem solving) through which 'one unit (e.g., group, department, or division) is affected by the experience of another' (2000:151), which involves both explicit and tacit knowledge elements. Hence, knowledge transfer and sharing are closely interrelated and reciprocally supportive processes, and one cannot exist without the other. They result in shared knowledge, i.e. 'facts, knowledge, and propositions which are understood simultaneously by multiple agents' (Hoopes, D.G. and S. Postrel, 1999:838).*

If our project, therefore, seeks to disseminate knowledge of some sort, we should bear in mind appropriate ways of not only sharing that knowledge, but also of transferring it to other agents, situations, contexts and so forth.

## 3. The EURODIS website

The EURODIS website comprises a comprehensive database –created by registered users who submit the information– of ICT-based projects, most of which (but not solely) have been funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme which is managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. The website offers the language learning and teaching community at large a place to locate potential project partners, newly developed language learning resources, events, the establishment of a community of practice, a network devoted to CALL where advice can be sought from colleagues, etc.



Figure 1. The EURODIS homepage.

In a multilingual graphical user interface (2), the project data is introduced by means of completing a number of forms allowing the system to organise the information into searchable items which can in turn be retrieved by the user. As illustrated in figure 2 below, project data can be sought by title, acronym, contact person, etc. Once the project is located an information page displaying all relevant information regarding that particular project is displayed (see figure 6 below).

Additionally, all of the display windows identifying the information being looked for include an option to open a printer-friendly PDF version of the information which can also be stored locally for further reference.

| Projects | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ID | Title ▲ | Acronym | Web | Contact | |
| | | | | | |
| 139 | ABC-Sprachreise: Spielend | ABC-Linguatour | | | 🔍 |
| 136 | Access to Virtual and Action | AVALON | | | 🔍 |
| 126 | Autonomous Language Lear | ALL | | | 🔍 |
| 124 | BACKBONE - Corpora for C | BACKBONE | | | 🔍 |
| 132 | CALL@C&S - Online course | CALL@C&S | | | 🔍 |
| 138 | Competences in Elementary | CHINESECOM | | | 🔍 |
| 127 | EUROMOBIL - Multimedia la | EUROMOBIL | | | 🔍 |
| 131 | EUROMOBIL - Multimedia la | EUROMOBIL FR | | | 🔍 |
| 130 | EUROMOBIL  Multimedia la | EUROMOBIL L2 | | | 🔍 |
| 154 | European Task-based Activi | ETALAGE | | | 🔍 |

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Figure 2. Sample project search screen.

Other possible search items include Outcomes, Partners and Events. Within Outcomes, information can be sought regarding the name of an outcome or resource, production date, type, target group, project and availability. Again, once the information sought is found, a display window opens up showing more specific details.

The items allowing us to find a particular Partner include the project name, the coordinator's name, and the name of the institution, amongst others. Events can be found by searching the name of the event or activity, its start or ending date, the type of event or its location. As with all the other elements, once the search item is located, a display window opens up with further information.

| Outputs | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Title ▲ | Production date | Type | Target group(s) | Project | Available | |
| | | | | | ▼ | |
| Booklet: "Web collaboratic | 2010-12-31 | booklet (print and e | teachers (secondary, tertia teacher trainers student teachers trainers ICT experts | Intercultural Communicati | Yes | 🔍 |

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Figure 3. Sample outcome search screen.

| Partners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Name ▲ | Phone number | Fax | Coordinator | Project | |
| | | | | | |
| Jyväskylän Ammattikorkeak | | | Tuija Korpela | Language Network for Qualit | 🔍 |
| Jyväskylän Yliopisto | | | Anne Räsänen | Language Network for Qualit | 🔍 |

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Figure 4. Sample partner search screen.

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Additionally, every project can upload any type of standard-format document (text, audio or graphic files) and set up its own particular Forum (3) (see figure 5 below), which is managed by that particular project co-ordinator. The News Feed facility, however, is common to the entire EURODIS platform and is managed by the system administrator.
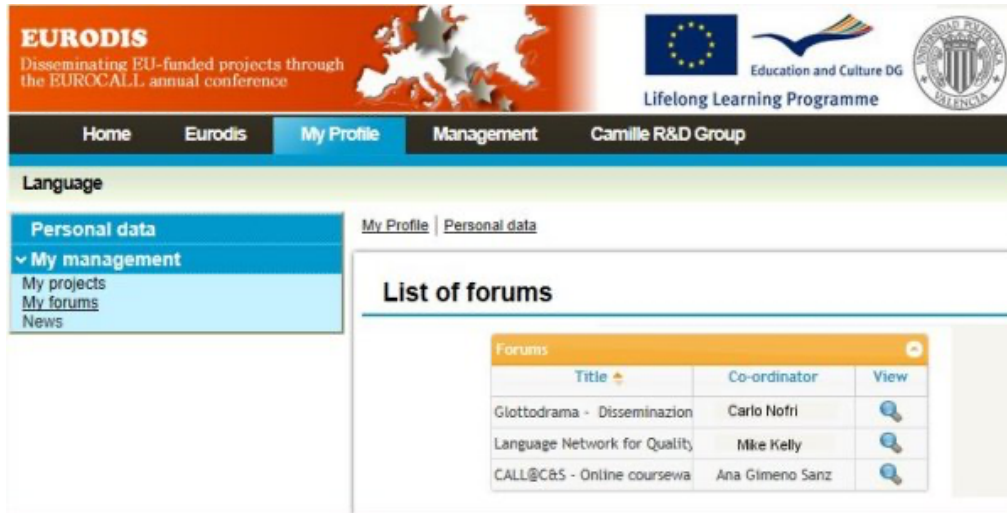


Figure 5. Sample forum page.

The following is a partial sample screen capture taken from one of the projects in the EURODIS database. As we can see, both a summarised and a full version PDF file with the project information is available, as well as the HTML version. The right hand side of the screen offers a short version of the basic project information and the co-ordinator's details for a quick reference.



Figure 6. Sample project screen.

Lastly, any registered user or person interested in enquiring for further information can do so by filling in the appropriate form to contact the system administrator(s).

## 4. Conclusions

EURODIS is a website where the language learning and teaching community can find a unified and comprehensive database from which to retrieve reliable data on ICT-based language learning projects (partners, events, results, products, outcomes, etc.). In this sense, EURODIS aims to be an international reference point for the language learning community at large, as well as serving a number of more specific purposes. Among them:

- helping projects to disseminate all of the facets of their work
- helping potential project applicants to know what has been previously achieved in the field
- helping potential project applicants find suitable partners for their projects
- providing language teachers with a search facility to find resources for their particular needs
- providing language learners with a search facility to find resources for their particular needs
- providing CALL developers a tool to explore past and present developments in ICT-based learning materials
- providing researchers with a database and search tool to investigate how the CALL field is evolving
- establishing a comprehensive archive of ICT-based projects and materials for future reference
- etc.

To summarise, it can be said that, due to its features, EURODIS has achieved its main goal, i.e. allowing a project to enhance its dissemination potential.

## 5. Acknowledgements

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**Appendix**

**Examples of well-established CALL and TELL-related annual conferences:**

- EUROCALL (European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning) holds an annual conference in a different European University - http://www.eurocall-languages.org
- European Language Council (ELC) / Conseil Européenne de les Langues (CEL) holds regular project/network dissemination conferences - http://www.celelc.org
- The International CALL Conference is held every 2 years in Antwerp organised by Linguapolis, University of Antwerp, Belgium - http://www.antwerpcall.be
- CALICO (Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium) holds an annual conference in North America - http://www.calico.org
- IALLT (International Association for Language Learning Technology) hols an annual conference in the USA - http://www.iallt.org
- JALTCALL (Computer-assisted language learning section of the Japan Association for Language Teaching) holds an annual international conference in Japan - http://jaltcall.org
- WorldCALL (an umbrella association founded by international CALL associations which organises a world conference roughly every 5 years) - http://www.worldcall.org

**Examples of well-established CALL/TELL scientific journals:**

- *ReCALL* (CUP) / *The EUROCALL Review* - http://www.eurocall-languages.org
- *CALICO Journal* - https://www.calico.org/page.php?id=5
- *Language Learning and Technology* (LLT) - http://llt.msu.edu
- *Apprentissage des Langues et Systèmes d'Information et de Communication* (ALSIC) - http://alsic.revues.org/
- *CALL Journal* Taylor & Francis http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t716100697
- *JALT CALL Journal* - http://www.jaltcall.org/journal/jcjabout.html

**Examples of well-established journals devoted to Education Technologies:**

- *IALLT Journal.* The official publication of the International Association for Language Learning Technology - http://ialltjournal.org
- *System.* International journal devoted to the applications of educational technology and applied linguistics to problems of foreign language teaching and learning. (Elsevier) http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/335/description#description
- *Computers and Education* (Elsevier) http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/347/description
- *British Journal of Educational Technologies* (Blackwell publishing) http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0007-1013
- *Revista Latinoamericana de Tecnología Educativa* (RELATEC) - http://campusvirtual.unex.es/revistas/index.php?journal=relatec
- *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* - http://www.iste.org/learn/publications/journals/jrte-old.aspx
- *Australian Journal of Educational Technology* - http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet.html
- *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology* - http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt

**Notes**

[1] Ana Gimeno has uninterruptedly been involved in EU-funded CALL-related I&D projects since 1992.

[2] The languages currently available are English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Catalan.

[3] Powered by phpBB (http://www.phpbb.com)