Communicating Rural Development
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European Network for Rural Development

Session 2. Using digital media

Summary report

Rationale – why the topic is important

Digital media is increasingly used in all fields of activity nowadays. It is the result of a mix of practices, attitudes and aptitudes as implied by this definition: *"Digital competence is an evolving concept related to the development of technology as well as the political aims and expectations for citizenship in a knowledge society. It consists of a variety of skills and competences, and its scope is wide, covering media and communication, technology and computing, literacy and information science".[i]*

For rural development, digital media has made the communication more effective and it has created a growing platform for exchanging knowledge on various aspects of rural development depending on the topic, stakeholder, etc. Digital media's flexibility with mobile phones, television, radio, Internet allows for reaching out to new audiences and adapting its content to new demands. Therefore, the members of the networked rural development community can use digital media to exchange on common subjects of interest (project examples, know-how, available funds, useful contacts, etc.).

The media used to display digital content is becoming more and more diverse and it can take the form of blogs, videos, social media, podcasts, all of this material being easy to store, transfer and made available online in real time. In many cases, cross-media transformations and the possibility to use very diverse type of digital content results into the creation of highly interactive and personalised final products.

Building on how various types of digital media can help the rural development communities, the ENRD put in place the online Communicating Rural Development Gateway where many digital media examples (websites, blogs, forums, online communities, social media, mobile applications, etc.) as used by rural development people (NRNs, LAGs, producers, entrepreneurs, local, regional and national authorities, farmers, NGOs, etc.) are being shared. Inspired by this valuable resources, the ENRD team decided to organise a session on digital media.

Speakers and contributions

During the morning session, case studies about video production, blogs and social media management were presented.

Tim Hudson (ENRD Contact Point) has worked in the EU rural development sector since 1995 at project, programme and policy levels throughout Europe. Qualified in photography, audio-visual technology and sustainable development studies, he has managed the

production of many ENRD publications and now concentrates on producing material for the ENRD's growing video library.

Focus of the presentation: The process of preparing the ENRDs new EAFRD compilation film collection. It described how the film was designed to provide strategic messages for different target audiences and how it has been used for multiple communications purposes.

Oliver Moore is an EU Correspondent & Communications Manager with AR C2020, a platform for 150+ NGOs working towards better food farming rural and environmental policies in Europe. He is also a journalist/feature writer; consultant; research associate with UCC's Centre for Co-operative Studies, and an active blogger. The latter is primarily in the organic farming and food sector.

Focus of the presentation: How does Oliver Moore use a multi-platform approach to communicate specific messages on organic farming and food, as well as on broader agri-food, rural and environmental issues?

James Elliott works for the English National Rural Network. His roles include managing the RDPE Network website, social media tools and dealing with day-to-day enquiries about programme. James Elliott has a degree in Land Management from the University of Reading.

Focus of the presentation: Exploring the landscape, decision-making process and rationale for joining social media, finding out about the benefits, drawbacks, successes and pitfalls of social media engagement.

In the afternoon session, the focus was put mainly on how digital media can be used in order to popularise an RD complex message towards specific segments of the audience (young farmers, young people in schools, communication professionals, organic farmers, etc.)

Raphael Hoogvliets was the project manager for the 'Future of our Food' project which was organised by partnering organisations of the Youth Food Movement, the Dutch Young Farmers Council and the Dutch Rural Network. He works as a business developer for the Youth Food Movement, a network organisation for young agro and food professionals who want to make a change with food.

Focus of the presentation: In the project 'The Future of our Food' young farmers and young people from diverse backgrounds engaged in both online and offline dialogue on the Common Agricultural Policy and the multiple roles that farming plays in Europe.

The Saengerstadt Gymnasium Finsterwalde Class 11 (Germany) was represented by Hannes Schmidt and Jasmin Philipp, two young people who contributed to the making of the "Eternal Cycle", the winning video of the ENRD Rural Youth Video Competition. They were present to share some insights about how and why the video was produced and what impact it can have upon their rural community back home.

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Participants

The average number of participants in both morning and afternoon sessions was about 10-15, including representatives of national rural networks, the European Commission, PREPARE Network, CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, NGOs, etc.

Concept questions and key points discussed

The key points discussed during the Q&A session include:

- How can digital media tools be evaluated in practical terms: do we always think about evaluation at the planning stage, what type evaluation tools are recommended, should evaluation be outsourced or internal, what is the follow-up of evaluation in general?
- Sharing tips for organising successful rural development campaigns; what tools can be used and how can people be involved in offline campaign-related activities, how can audiences be reached in general, what are the difficulties?
- Social media and blog content management: human resources needed for ensuring an effective animation; what tools allow you to manage multiple social media (e.g. Google analytics, Hootsuite, etc.); the social media manager does not have to have the absolute answers but he needs to be a good networker and to rely on the feedback from a team of specialists/journalists; in a crisis situation, offline solutions can be found if the question raised is a valid one;
- As regards to the intervention of the winners of the video competition, questions were raised about how the ENRD competition was organised (countries represented, voting system, etc.); the young people were asked about how the video was produced and what was intended through its production. Their case proves that the short videos are a powerful tool and can get across coherent messages about young people's position towards important issues affecting rural communities in Europe.

Conclusions

Participants were mainly interested in receiving information about tips and stories about how digital media projects can be successfully implemented.

For future sessions, having a digital media professional to deliver training about social media and audio-visual production can be envisaged.

Additionally, during the session it was suggested to organise a "hangout" on Twitter and explain to participants how to create an account and guide through the process of content creation and evaluation. Such a session can be organised as follow-up webinar for those who are still interested in April or May 2014. Another follow-up action will be the integration of all case studies presented by speakers in the ENRD CRD gateway.

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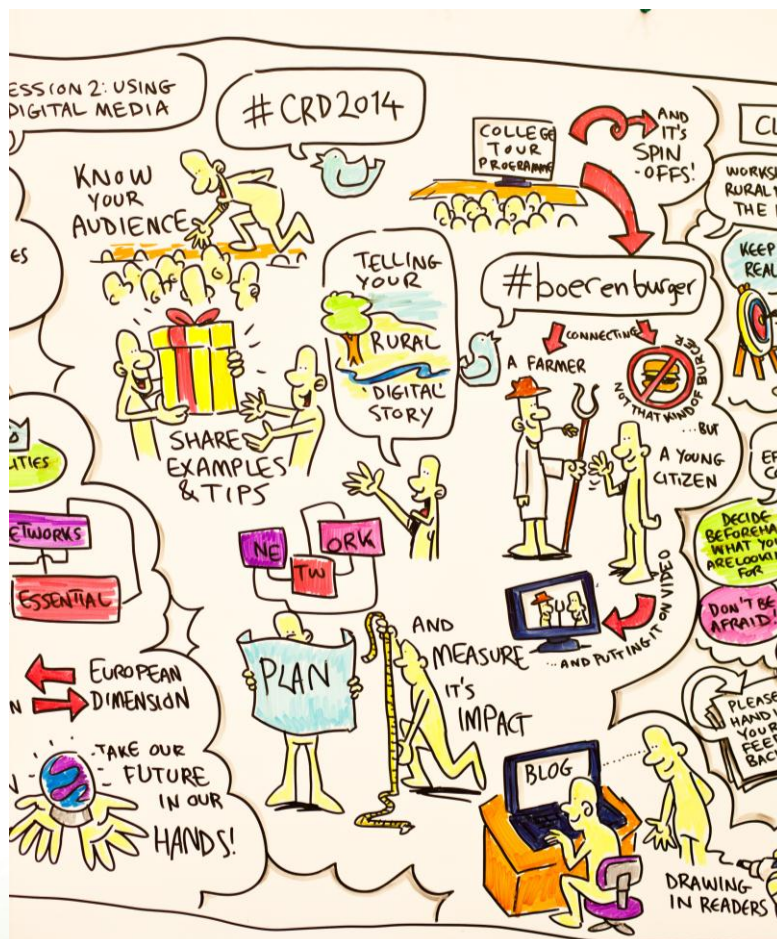
Key lessons learned from participants

- Documentaries and film stories are better understood than interviews.
- Digital/social media is cheap and free.
- Using digital media must be accompanied by good professional practices.
- Improve, engage and advertise projects with digital media to get some feedback.
- Twitter is for special groups and not for the wider public.
- It's worth using digital media if your stakeholders are also active.

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Feedback about the session on Twitter

Download link for presentations and videos

You can download the presentations and videos used in the session by clicking <u>here</u> and going to the "<u>Outcomes</u>" of the event.

[i]<u>http://linked.eun.org/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=16319&folderId=22089&name=DLFE-711.pdf</u> (p.1)