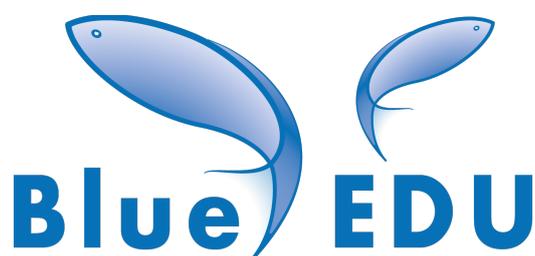

BlueEDU

Communication guidelines

Fostering growth in the blue economy by developing an action plan for innovative European aquaculture VET and harmonised qualifications (2016-18).





Target countries in the north: Norway, Iceland, Finland, UK, Denmark and Ireland

Target countries in the south: Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Italy, Spain and France

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1. Introduction

The BlueEDU communication strategy is designed to ensure that the right messages are delivered at the right times to the right organisations, through the most appropriate channels, to ensure the achievement of the BlueEDU Aims and objectives

See Appendix 1 – BlueEDU aims and objectives

Effective communication is a ‘critical success factor’ within the BlueEDU project, necessitating a well conceived strategy, careful planning, rigorous implementation and regular monitoring and review. The work packages directly dependant on good communications, including the obligatory dissemination package, have been given full consideration to inform the development of this strategy.

In addition, the communication strategies for BlueEDU and the Optimal Strategic Partnership involving Norway, Scotland and Ireland, overlap, and this has been acknowledged. Careful planning and coordination will ensure that, ‘mixed messages’ or information overload and confusion are avoided, so as industry, VET providers and other stakeholders in these three major salmon producing countries are not de-motivated.

2. Target audiences

Who to communicate with

The specific target audiences will be identified for each country by each Full Partner in the first instance, for approval by the BlueEDU Management Board. This may be assisted by Associated Partners where appropriate, once they have confirmed their agreement to support BlueEDU.

The 'stakeholder analysis' (see 4.1 below), may reveal new and important target audiences previously overlooked by partners, that should be included. The message(s) that each should receive will be defined within plans.

Target audiences are composed of the following stakeholders and can be categorised as follows:

Aquaculture education providers

- VET colleges and schools
- Private training providers
- Universities

Aquaculture fish production companies

- Work based learners
- Husbandry and technical operatives
- Production managers
- HR Managers
- CEO

Aquaculture Supplier Companies

- Feeds
- Health products
- Aquaculture equipment and technology

Aquaculture representative bodies

- Producer organisations
- Innovation centres
- National level committees (e.g. Scottish 2030 Vision)
- European stakeholder organisations

Public sector organisations

- VET awarding and regulatory bodies, such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- Government ministry departments

Social partners

- Teaching Trade Unions
- Trade Unions representing fish farm employees
- General public

Each potential Associated Partner will receive a formal request from the BlueEDU Management Board, to partake in the project, specifying any support requests. The management of each stakeholder will be devolved to the appropriate Full Partner.

Some Associated Partners will be requested to support the project by issuing BlueEDU updates in their newsletters and other regular communication to their members via web sites and potentially, social media.

Permissions will be sought to regularly and routinely inform the committee meetings of key Associated Partners, including the fish producer organisations, via reports and presentations. The information content will be designed to enrol company leaders (CEOs) initially. Thereafter, it should change to serve each phase of the project, including ongoing dissemination.

3. Key messages

What to communicate

The BlueEDU key messages for each target audience will be derived from the project ‘Aims and Objectives’, emphasising key themes including the need to increase the availability of aquaculture qualifications and certification. Generic messages will be discussed and approved by the Management Board. Each full partner will then consider how best to express generic messages to those audiences they are responsible for. They will also consider whether there are any additional ‘country specific’ messages that need to be included.

By agreeing key concepts and definitions devised to support the ‘overarching’ theme underlying BlueEDU - “aquaculture VET innovation”, a common voice will emerge to reinforce the projects core principles and aims during subsequent communication exchanges by partners. Over time, this should engender a shared understanding of the projects within all 12 countries involved, creating an environment within which positive collaboration can grow and thrive.

The BlueEDU management committee will consider feedback from the interaction with key industry opinion leaders, revising and updating the key messages to be projected to aquaculture stakeholders, accordingly.

However, the ‘psychological readiness’ of stakeholders for BlueEDU will be carefully gauged in the early stages, by consulting; industry, VET providers and others, in each of the 12 countries. Full and Associated Partners in each country will be best placed to advise on how each target audience should be managed, once identified. A need to vary the initial messages to ensure effective early engagement of key stakeholders may be recognised and agreed.

Universal principles:

3.1 Identifying ‘key influencers’

All industries have their formal structures and hierarchies. Within these frameworks, organisations and individuals go about their daily business and interact. Whilst the senior figures of key organisations (private and public sector) can be readily identified, there are

often influential organisations and individuals, essential to any change process and the early adoption of new practices that can only be recognised by those with the appropriate networks. They will be identified and won over in each country or region during the first 6 months. Stakeholder analysis is a very effective technique for facilitating this process, and will be conducted for each country or region. (See 4.1 below)

3.2 Emphasising project relevance and benefits to win hearts and minds

The relevance and benefits vary for different target audiences and will be expressed in terms that each can relate to. Whenever a ‘change’ or new idea is being proposed to potential stakeholders, the benefits will be emphasised using non-technical language if possible, to ‘win hearts’ and generate belief and motivation, before attempting to ‘win minds’.

3.3 Demonstration of VET good practice and innovation

Previous attempts to establish industry demand for innovative aquaculture VET have been constrained by the respondents existing pre-conceptions as well as inadequate questioning. When consulted, industry have been pre-occupied with subject headings, course content and staff training for legal compliance purposes. They have rarely been encouraged to consider how the quality and accessibility of VET provision could be improved. Not only is it important to ask them the right questions, before doing so, it is vital to open their minds to the benefits of VET innovation and improvement. Most will think they know what VET is, but many will have a very limited vision of what it could become. We will provide them and the more conventional VET providers a compelling insight to VET innovation

VET innovation will be demonstrated deploying a range of high quality media and resources to provide an insight to ‘high quality aquaculture VET’. The partnership will develop a generic shared vision of high quality aquaculture VET that is consistent with all that has been described within the BlueEDU bid document. This will help to ensure that the communication of key concepts remains consistent.

4. Channels

How to communicate

The chosen method of communication to each target audience will be based on some knowledge of how each receives information currently and which sources are most highly regarded and influential. To some extent this will be determined by the message and who is sending it, as opposed to the channel, but all elements of the strategy must be given thought in relation to each target audience and presented within a coherent plan.

4.1 Leveraging partner networks through stakeholder analysis

A stakeholder analysis for each country or region will inform the partnership who the most significant stakeholders are, and which of them are likely to be interested in BlueEDU and could become influential advocates. In summary the technique is as follows:

The first step in Stakeholder Analysis is to identify who your stakeholders are. The next step is to work out their power, influence and interest, so you know who you should focus on. The final step is to develop a good understanding of the most important stakeholders so that you know how they are likely to respond, and so that you can work out how to win their support – you can record this analysis on a stakeholder map.

The resulting stakeholder map provides a very useful insight to industry networks, and where and how they are connected to each partners' networks. This analysis can save a lot of wasted time knocking on closed doors, or lobbying enthusiasts that lack influence and cannot positively impact on project outcomes.

See https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_07.htm for a detailed explanation of the technique.

4.2 One to one interviews, meetings and phone calls

Once the 'influencers' have been identified, through the stakeholder analysis, meetings supported by limited demonstration of key VET innovation concepts will be central to

early engagement. The industry leaders and VET providers that are thought to be receptive to BlueEDU will be prioritised. These meetings should be held early on in the project, face to face. Hearts are won through personal contact initially and non verbal communication can be very important.

Senior figures are potential advocates within their own organisations and networks and are able to assist awareness raising, opinion surveys and dissemination, leading to an amplification of BlueEDU communication and the wider engagement by middle managers and operatives.

One to one meetings with key middle managers, including HR directors and aquaculture managers that are proactive within workforce development may have value as the project progresses, in order to help interpret and validate the opinion survey output and analysis.

Other less influential stakeholders will be contacted by phone calls, to manage communications and keep costs within reasonable limits.

4.3 Seminars and group events (Linked to demonstration of VET innovation)

Depending on the degree of collaboration between aquaculture supply and production companies, it may be possible to hold inter as well as intra company seminars and demonstration. It is beneficial to the project long term to create a climate of collaboration and early intercompany sessions can help to foster this. However, intra-company sessions may be required in the early stages, ideally involving staff at different occupational levels to help overcome initial caution, especially in Norway and Scotland.

There may be existing collaborative relationships within the VET sector to be aware of and exploit. If these are scarce, it may be necessary to use the early engagement seminars and demonstration events to make them aware of each others' existing good practice, and encourage them to reveal their VET development priorities. These insights will be recorded to help facilitate the formation of collaborative work groups at a later stage.

Rapid response technology will be deployed to enable a live feed of feedback at the end of each seminar and demonstration to help gauge and capture audience perceptions.

4.4 Aquaculture conferences and events

There are a wide range of European aquaculture conferences and other events during the

first 2 years of BlueEDU. All events will be identified and evaluated to determine their potential for supporting various activities, including;

- BlueEDU presentations
- Workshops, breakout sessions, seminars and VET innovation demonstrations
- Dissemination of information via a stand, leaflets and social media where appropriate

A calendar of selected conferences and events with value will be maintained. An available partner will be nominated will attend each of the selected events to promote BlueEDU, according to the nature the vent and the opportunity it provides.

See Appendix 3 Aquaculture meetings and events

4.5 Interactive surveys

Formal, quality assured opinion surveys will be conducted to evaluate the opinions of staff within the aquaculture industry and VET sector at a range of occupational levels. By deploying a sophisticated survey system with interactive functionality, follow up questions will be used to assist the analysis of initial returns. Some key actors will also be interviewed, and their input recorded and used to help interpret survey returns.

In addition, key aquaculture companies will be consulted during the establishment of the question sets. Whilst many questions will be common to all surveys in all countries, some may be country specific, to increase industry motivation by ensuring that the results are more relevant to them.

This will increase the level of stakeholder engagement and improve the overall quality of communications. A fully functional survey system will be developed by NTNU with the capability to handle a range of question types. It will be accessible from android devices (phones and tablets) and there will be a localised version for those regions that lack internet access or do not have a suitable band width.

4.6 Social media

Social media offers BlueEDU great potential and its application will be fully exploited during the project. Consideration will be given to the 'mix' of tools to be deployed at the outset. Web sites provides the best medium for presenting promotional information,

formal documents and presentations in repositories, and their interactivity can be increased through discussion boards and blogs.

However, the use of face-book and twitter by businesses and organisations and 'Linked In' by professionals has revolutionised mainstream marketing. An analysis of the social media BlueEDU stakeholders are already actively using will inform the development of a BlueEDU social media strategy which will start low key during the first 9 months, but continue developing thereafter.

The overarching aim of the BlueEDU social media strategy is to drive traffic to 'media rich' compelling BlueEDU information sources held on the BlueEDU web site and provide opportunities for a two-way communication to increase BlueEDU engagement. The application of social media will grow, as the project matures and once survey results and other outputs of interest to stakeholders are available for posting.

In addition, existing aquaculture discussion groups on social media will be infiltrated and evaluated to determine their potential for exposing BlueEDU to potential stakeholders within the 12 partner countries. Once useful aquaculture discussion groups have been discovered, postings will be made and the communication managed by a nominated member, or members, of the BlueEDU partnership.

- Facebook

Facebook offers a relatively informal environment and is widely used by businesses to generate interest and awareness of their brand, products and services by posting engaging images, videos and text based descriptions. The BlueEDU web site will be relied on as opposed to establishing a Face book presence. However, partners may use their own ace book facilities to drive traffic to the BlueEDU web site.

- Twitter

Twitter is widely used by businesses and can be a very effective way to drive traffic to web based information sources, generating awareness, although hard sell tweets are to be avoided. Conversely, relevant conversations can and should be joined. By deploying a range of Twitter communication tools personal interaction with individual stakeholders can be enhanced. Establishing a Twitter presence and campaign momentum is a time consuming task that may need to be shared.

Once followers have been generated, Twitter can act as a free press release, encouraging recipients to interact with you and ask questions, stepping up two way communication to a higher level. It also allows the partnership to find out what is being said about the BlueEDU project and the aquaculture industry. In addition, 'Twitter search' can be used to access and evaluate conversations relevant to the BlueEDU project.

Communication through twitter can build brand and project recognition and loyalty, so long as the tweets strike the right tone by being professional, engaging and perhaps even humorous.

Partners will be encouraged to use their own twitter accounts to drive traffic to central information sources on the BlueEDU web site. Their 'tweets' do not need to be approved by the lead partner.

FEAP will act as advisers regarding social media applications and may incorporate the management of BlueEDU social media postings within their own social media operations at an appropriate time, once the project has matured.

- LinkedIn

Linked in provides a good medium for finding and communicating with senior executives. It also holds a number of relevant aquaculture and education discussion groups which allow new conversations to be started.

Appendix 2 provides a comprehensive evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of different social media.

4.7 Web sites

Website postings will provide stakeholders their main source of quality assured information on the BlueEDU project.

- BlueEDU project web site

The NTNU as lead partner will establish a project web site with sufficient functionality, in order to; promote the BlueEDU project and its benefits, present formal documents and survey results, offer a managed interactive blog and/or discussions boards to encourage ongoing dialogue, providing an open door to comments from all stakeholders and occupational levels.

Innovative VET demonstrations will also be hosted within the web site, presenting bespoke sample resources, created for the innovative VET demonstrations and seminars. In addition, with the consent of cooperative VET providers, links may be made to their own VLEs and resources, to accelerate the sharing of ideas between providers and foster VET provider collaboration, supported by a dedicated discussion board.

The web site will be configured and hosted as a discrete site so as it is possible to transfer

ownership, control and maintenance responsibility at any stage in the future. A logo will be developed for the BlueEDU project to create a recognisable 'brand'. It will be integral to the header of every section of the BlueEDU web site and will appear on leaflets, posters and letter heads.

- Partners' web sites

Each partner can deploy their own web site to promote and support BlueEDU. To ensure consistency with the information posted centrally on the BlueEDU web site, all postings by partners will require the consent of the lead partner.

5. Communication plan

When and how to communicate

Some communication will be reactive, in response to questions raised by stakeholders, hence the need for partners to be 'on message' (See section 3), in order to ensure consistent communication in each country.

However, a lot of communication will be planned and this can be presented as a timeline matrix within the Excel work book – BlueEDU events and partners

The plan held within the BlueEDU Events and partners work book includes:

- Full Partner responsibilities for communications and dissemination within specified countries (the 12 BlueEDU target countries)
- Planned demonstrations, seminars and group meetings
- European aquaculture meetings, conferences and events calendar
- Language requirements for each target audience in each country

In addition, all full partners could record any additional unplanned events and meetings organised during the project, as opposed to planned at the outset, on a shared file accessed within a secure area of the BlueEDU web site. This will keep all partners updated of all activities ongoing in each region.

5.1 Longitudinal studies to measure changes in perceptions

Opinions will be gauged at various stages, initially to determine a bench mark of stakeholder perceptions and subsequently to measure the change in attitudes over time as BlueEDU progresses and becomes increasingly influential.

Combination of rapid response and survey technology can be used to support the process efficiently. The Questback survey system can be configured to allow individual respondents to be asked follow up questions, allowing attitudinal change to be monitored on an individual and group basis.

6. Monitoring communications

Impact and effect

A lot of time and cost will be invested in communications throughout the project, necessitating ongoing monitoring to assess effectiveness. In addition, there is an obligation to disseminate the output of blue EDU effectively in order to satisfy the conditions of the Erasmus+ grant.

Therefore:

- All Full Partners will maintain records of significant formal and informal communications held and their impact, according to agreed stakeholder communication responsibilities. Any significant communication with or from stakeholders will be reported to the Technical and Management Boards, periodically as a fixed agenda item.
- The attitudinal change of stakeholders will be monitored by the rapid response and survey technology, maintaining qualitative and quantitative records for subsequent analysis.
- Stake holder representative groups will be consulted periodically regarding their members perceptions of BlueEDU's progress and outputs. As well as generating useful feedback, this will provide an indication of the penetration and effectiveness of BlueEDU communications in each country.
- Social media could be used to determine what is being said about the BlueEDU project and aquaculture workforce development in general. The information flow will be accessed in twitter and selected discussion groups and evaluated, periodically.

1. Appendix

The overall goal is to identify skills gaps within the European aquaculture workforce, determine VET demand and supply, and establish industry and VET providers' receptiveness to innovative VET delivery methods.

Aim 1. Investigate the definition and application of Aquaculture Occupational Profiles and Standards (AOPS)

- **Initiate an Labour Skills Foresight forum** with producer and supply company representation, to investigate job functions and occupational profile definitions, that are applicable to European marine cage rearing
- **Investigate the application of AOPS** at company, VET provider and national level, to identify good practice examples within European aquaculture VET provision.
- **Define AOPS** for selected high priority occupations and levels within European marine cage based fish production, technical operations and processing, to guide the 'skills gap analysis'

Aim 2. Evaluate the demand from industry for aquaculture education and training

- **Analyse aquaculture skills and training needs** with reference to existing published information to confirm the existing evidence base.
- **Define the knowledge and skills gaps** at each occupational level within marine cage farming, including the identification of language barriers to learning and mobility, in order to inform VET development priorities.

- **Establish the current and emerging ICT and environmental management skills** required in cage based aquaculture, culminating in defined competences for inclusion within the European AOPS.
- Evaluate the nature of demand for aquaculture VET including the preferred delivery modes, technical content and certification, to inform future VET developments.

Aim 3. Evaluate aquaculture education and training supply

- **Map existing aquaculture VET courses and qualifications to the AOPS and EQF**, including statutory training, to create a navigable inventory of existing qualifications and qualification pathways.
- **Identify equivalencies between existing aquaculture qualifications** in different salmon producing countries to enable areas of commonality to be identified and described.
- **Evaluate VET staff qualifications, skills and experience**, including; aquaculture, teaching and industry partnerships or provider networks, to determine the collective staff capacity and innovative VET development capability
- **Evaluate VET delivery modes** deployed by providers, including; conventional face to face delivery, workplace learning and ICT enabled learning, to determine VET accessibility and the sectors capacity for innovation.
- **Evaluate ‘learning cultures’** within salmon farming and technology supply companies’ to determine their investment in workforce development and their attitude towards education and training.

Aim 4. Investigate and evaluate the aquaculture VET assessment process

- **Investigate VET regulation** in European countries, to identify the specific responsibilities for VET governance and quality assurance at national level.
- **Investigate VET quality assurance (QA)** at provider level, to determine the effectiveness of existing policies and practices for the quality assurance of learning and assessment.

- **Investigate the accreditation of prior learning (APL)** in each country, to identify transferable best practice leading to gains in VET efficiency and effectiveness longer term.
- **Evaluate work based assessment practices;** including the application of ICT enabled assessment and QA systems, clarifying the specific role of employers and providers.

2. Appendix

Facebook's strengths are:

- Used more than Twitter by the older demographic prevalent within the aquaculture industry.
- Better for deeper communication and relationship building.
- Supports group discussions effectively and offer an alternative to web site discussion boards and blogs, (where as Twitter is limited to one to one communication).
- Encourages a communication chain reaction, unlike blogs.
- Pulls people back due to the cues that are delivered to Facebook Users.
- Privacy settings allow sub groups to be established that may receive different messages and communication flow.

However, BlueEDU stakeholders must take action to 'like you 'so as they get linked to the BlueEDU Facebook feeds and this can present a barrier that the partnership need to be aware of.

Twitters strengths are:

- Tools available to monitor brand mentions (BlueEDU)
- Easier to connect with followers on a real time basis
- Helps content go viral, (whereas Facebook is private)
- Open and anyone can connect with like minded people
- Using tools like 'followerwonk' can enable specified people to be found through their biographies
- Focussed communication due to the 140 character limit which is more likely to be listened to by busy people

- Advanced search tools allow specific conversations to be found, facilitated by hash tags

LinkedIn strengths are:

- Well established and used by professionals to create connections to their peers and potential work opportunities
- Has existing 'thematic groups' which can be used to launch new discussions on Blue EDU to gain the opinion of others in the field. It might be possible to start a new 'Linked in' Discussion on 'European work force development'