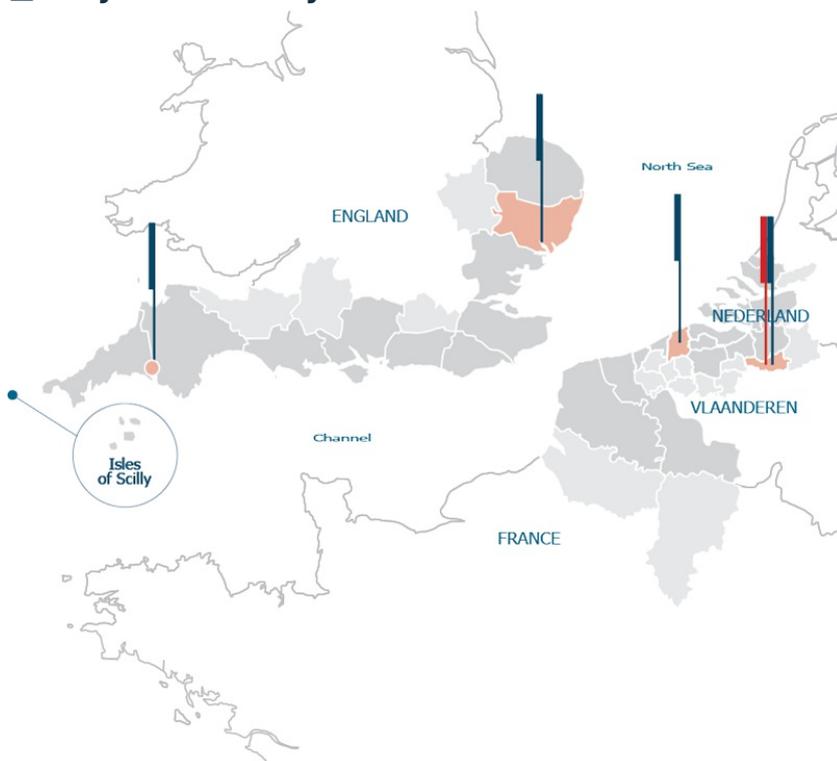


Villa Crossmedia (VXM)

Villa Crossmedia promotes and facilitates experience-based media education, knowledge, participation, production and dissemination initiatives by connecting cross-border media centres and a virtual youth community platform, targeted at 12 -25 year olds. It has particular foci on cultural identity and local empowerment.

■ Project summary



Villa Crossmedia is a media project designed to promote social inclusion, cultural exchanges and empowerment among youths. Increased media awareness and the creation of media for and by young people (radio, TV, internet and especially social media) allows them to acquire the relevant skills that will help them on their pathways to further training and employment. The project focuses on 3 areas targeted at 12-25 year olds: - media wisdom - ensuring that young people are aware of potential dangers and other issues concerning new media, in particular the internet and social networks, through training and peer-to-peer activity. - media education and production -

establishing new media centres or improving existing ones to create places where young people can learn about media in an informal and inclusive way. This will include site visits, practitioner exchanges and the encouragement of cross-border youth media production. - cultural identity - promoting a heightened sense of identity among young people in a multi-cultural world and providing opportunities for exchanges between young people in the 2 Seas area. A key output of the project will be a highly accessible, open-source virtual media platform to enhance peer production, collaboration and free sharing of media by the youngsters in the 2 Seas cross-border area.

■ Activities

What was the project trying to achieve?

AIM: Virtual European Youth Interaction. Villa Crossmedia wanted to create an online platform

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on Facebook, strengthening the territorial integration of youngsters. Through the project young people could discover, consume, publish, communicate, share and collect information about themselves and their fellow citizens. Best practices of the project are accessible Europe-wide on the website. The activities and platform should contribute to greater consideration of young citizens and their needs by focusing on the elements of everyday life: media education, training, citizenship, social cohesion, etc. It should also increase their skill levels, which is an important condition for being included in society. AIM: create Youth Ambassadors of the multicultural society. The purpose of Villa Crossmedia was also to showcase multi-cultural young talent and to develop young role models. Through enabling the 12 to 25 year olds to experience the important values of mutual respect and mutual obligation, and through addressing issues of intolerance, we expected them to gain an important frame of reference for their future social behaviour. AIM: set up cross-border media regions. Best practices from more than two countries were analysed and incorporated. Through cooperation and mobility youngsters can be challenged to create a certain image of the current cross-cultural society. Using the Villa Crossmedia instrument we hope they would take part in public opinion forming in a global context, however locally compiled and reviewed by the media coaches. This project involved young citizens and the voluntary sector to increase impact at local level. Specific procedures were implemented to target the potential beneficiaries of the territories. All partners involved had the potential of becoming media axis for their region, initiated by young people. We hoped that the medialabs would become the principle structure from where media activities for young people in the region evolve.

What were the activities implemented?

Act 1: Research-> focus group sessions were organised and a report was written based on these. Training package, We asked Mediaraven, expert in media and young people, to start from the report and develop a training package on media literacy. This led to the development of CASPAR, our media literacy card game. Train the trainer: Thomas More organized sessions to train the trainer in using the cardgame. Conference: was held on the 2nd of April in Mechelen. Distribution of the CASPAR game via website, partners and network. Act2: Cross border research on good practices: in the beginning of the project, all partners visited other medialabs for inspiration and tips and tricks. We all used the information we collected at these visits in our own medialabs, but did not manage to make all this info to a coherent report/toolkit (due to lack of time and in-house experience). We eventually asked Mediaraven to do some extra research in Europe on medialabs and develop a brochure on how to start a medialab. Implementation: all partners set up or further developed their medialab. 5 exchanges were organized and the co-created media output was published on the website. Act 3: Crossborder digital storytelling on Cultural Identity: all partners (except PP2) started with a training in video production. Especially PP3 had a big reach with its digital storytelling project. With the LP and PP4 we noticed that young people were not really willing or felt the need to tell about themselves/their own lives, so we gradually evolved from specific digital storytelling to a broader video approach (fiction, stop motion, video clips etc). Culture and diversity in media: PP3 developed a training package on youth engagement. Closing media festivals: all partners involved in digital storytelling (LP, PP3 and PP4) held a closing media festival in the last months of the project.

■ Results

What were the key results of the project?

Results activity 1: We reached approximately 1000 young people. A research report was written, based on the focus groups. A media literacy package (card game) was developed, tested with all partners, evaluated and adapted. The output was shared via network, conference, partners and the expertise centre for media literacy in Flanders. A closing media conference

Results activity 2: A report/toolkit with good practices and guidelines for setting up media centers
New or expanded media centers for young people to create their own media
Training and material for young people to experiment with media
Peer to peer training sessions
International platform + exchanges to increase European citizenship
A website on which the content of the project is shared

Results activity 3: Empowering young people by giving them a voice through digital storytelling
An online archive of digital stories
Giving training in video production
Working on soft skills of young people and in doing so, increasing employability and economic activity.
Up skilling staff and trainers in working with the most disengaged
Production of a report with good practices and guidelines on digital storytelling
Report on volunteering in youth culture using media
Youth exchanges
Closing media festivals

Did all partners and territories benefit from the results?

The beneficiaries were young people between 12 and 25. A minority of young people with less opportunity were reached. They had informal training by medialabs, by performing media activities on events + they had formal media training (cooperation schools) The benefits included up skilling, increasing employability, increase in confidence, team work + soft skills. In terms of media skills, three types were reached: - Those without media knowledge/skills. For some the project was an incentive to start media studies. Others became more involved in socio-cultural work, learned basic media skills, soft skills and confidence - Those who already had media skills from secondary school, they became more involved in media in their free time and gained a broader view on media. - Those in media education who used the media labs to experiment, gain more experience/practical skills and show their competences. This difference in skills and ambitions made peer-to-peer education possible. The socio-cultural sectors in all regions have benefited as the gained engaged volunteer that brought media activities to their events and made reportages of their work (video, audio, print...) For the media sector in the region have gained as the young people involved in the project, when finishing their studies, have gained practical knowledge, experimented and have become innovative, and as employees become valuable for the industry. The project strengthens the industry

What were the effects / outcomes for the territories involved?

It is a project related to community quality of life, social inclusion and well-being of different groups in society. We reached a 1000 people that benefit from the joint events and recreational facilities during the lifespan of the project. We organized 5 crossborder cultural activities. We reached at least 250 young people that participated in joint education or training activities. The establishment of the medialab, the digital storytelling project on cultural identity and the training on media literacy are 3 new measures that improve the community quality of life, social inclusion and well-being. The project support cooperation on education and training. e.g. CSV: The young people we worked with as a direct result of the project progressed into employment, further education and volunteering. A number of community groups that were

formed continue to operate and IO radio is now a going concern. Feedback shows there was an increase in confidence and sociability of those involved in the project. All partners: Young people are very open and are prepared and able to share knowledge: especially working with coaches/peer teaching gives the opportunity to gain teaching and social skills. They also learn to take responsibilities. On top of technical skills, they have learned social skills which will help them in any further career (increase confidence and soft skills). By the medialabs, the community has more engaged, confident young people who are also developing skills. The medialabs make socio-cultural work and the strength of young people to work with media more visible.

■ Distinctiveness

What was the real added-value of doing this cross-border project?

The exchange between the young people and the contact with a different culture and different habits was the most valuable output. Young people from very different backgrounds became united through a common interest. In the beginning of every exchange, we had to make sure there were some incentives to get them to mix up and connect, but as soon as they looked passed the superficial differences and discovered common interests (going from football to rap music to art house cinema), friendships were founded. In Bruges, almost all (young) people are white middle class, which is a big contrast with the multi-cultural, mainly working class population of Ipswich. Young people from Ipswich did not feel welcome of 'home' in Bruges, and this lead to discussions, in which we were able to explain that a city like Bruges is also a reality were they had to deal with. They realised that they were probably as prejudiced about Bruges as they thought the people from Bruges were towards them;

Have any synergies been developed with other projects or networks?

There was a close cooperation with SeaMedia (especially with PP3 and 4). For the cluster project, we all developed synergies with other 2 Seas-projects.

What are the key messages , key lessons learned you would like to share?

There are six main things that make whether you can have a successful project with young people in their free time: fun, friends, challenge, profit, ownership and coaching. It is quite impossible to make a detailed plan so many years in advance, it is inevitable that you have to adapt and update your expected results and outcome throughout the project. We also learned that you cannot force young people into anything. Not into an activity they don't want to do, or a medium they don't care about, or a new online platform they do not care for. But if they can take the initiative, feel some kind of ownership over what they do, then magic happens. If you want to communicate towards a specific audience, such as young people, it is always a good idea to have a sort of test panel of your target group, who can comment on your communication tools and give feedback and suggestions.

■ Project Information

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| Title | Villa Crossmedia promotes and facilitates experience-based media education, knowledge, participation, production and dissemination initiatives by connecting cross-border media centres and a virtual youth community platform, targeted at 12 -25 year olds. It has particular foci on cultural identity and local empowerment. |
| Total project budget | € 4 300 475 |
| ERDF | € 2 150 237 |
| Priority & objective | Priority 3 a. Promote and allow for social inclusion and well-being of different groups in society |
| Timeframe | 2009-09-01 - 2014-09-30 |
| Lead partner | Stad Mechelen |
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