

The Communication Channels of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies

- report prepared by Network secretary -

The internal and the external communication of the network are based on on-line channels of information exchange. The main platforms for communication are: 1) the CoE webpage, 2) the Network website, 3) the Facebook page of the network, and 4) the Yahoo email-group of the network.

1. CoE webpage: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/romastudies/>

Description:

The webpage is part of the Council of Europe official hub of communication and contains the main details about the project, calls for membership and for early career researchers, list of meetings, reports about the SC meetings etc. It has links to the Network website, Facebook page, and a number of other useful links. The CoE webpage is regularly updated (with the support of Ms Sandrine Marolleau) with reports and information regarding the meetings and the list of the membership is brought up to date.

Traffic: About 1.267 visits to the Network website has been channelled by the coe.int domain during one calendar year.

2. Network website: <http://romanistudies.eu/>

Description:

This is the main communication and visibility tool of the Network. It contains sections on the project, the Scientific Committee, events, call for applications and members. Each member has his/her own profile, can log into the website and update information about his/her own activity. The main content of the website is produced by the Secretary, news items are posted, member profiles added and managed, call for applications posted.

Members: 326 registered members of the network.

Traffic: More than 26.000 page views from about 3.000 people in one year. This means approximately an average 500 views per week distributed unequally as for example during the elections the number of views was higher while there are periods when the activity is lower.

3. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/romanistudies.eu>

Description: The Facebook page has been created by Ms Sandrine Marolleau and it is managed by the Secretary. The total number of posts exceeds 870. The content of posts are: news and reports (including photographs) about Network activities, call for applications, opportunities for publications, and events, conferences, and new publications of interest.

Regular followers: More than 850 Facebook users 'Like' this page. These followers belong to a 'general public' the majority of them is not members of the Network but they are interested in the topic and regularly read the posts, occasionally also comment, and share the content posted with their connections on the Facebook.

Traffic: The number of weekly visits is between 600 and 2.000 on all post, which adds up to approximate 100.000 visits per year on the whole page.

4. Network Yahoo email-list:

http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/romani_studies_network/info

Email Address: romani_studies_network@yahoogroups.com

Description:

This is a closed group. Only members can post messages and read the messages posted by others. The message archive of the list and other facilities (list of the members, pools, files, photos etc) is accessible for members who have a yahoo account. The list is moderated by the Secretary. The content circulated is: 1) announcements and calls to the Network members, 2) requests for policy advice, consultancy and reviews of documents (ex. DG Justice, World Bank, ERTF), 3) general calls and opportunities which are of interest for the membership, 3) queries about topics, references and/or contacts - posted by individual the members, 4) positions, opinions and issues proposed for debate.

Members: 328 network members (1 list-owner, 1 moderator).

Traffic: The total number of the messages posted during 2012 and 2013 is 466. The average number of messages varies between 27 and 76 per month during 2013 (in 2012 there was much less traffic).

5. Conclusions

a) *Ideas and suggestions*

- The different channels should be more integrated -where possible- and used complementarily, where necessary.
- The role of the Network website should be more central.
- A novel space offering “research news” should be added to the network website to feature latest policy-relevant research and attract audiences, i.e. from the policy-making world.
- To make better use of the Forums section of the website in order to ‘move’ some of the discussions from the email group to the public domain.
- Using more visual content (photographs, graphics and videos) on the website and the Facebook page will make them more attractive and also encourage the users to share the content posted on these platforms with their connections (multiplication effect).
- Channelling the traffic of the Facebook page towards the website in order to increase the number of visits, so the overall visibility of the Network would increase.

b) *Issues*

- The majority of the Facebook page followers are non-specialists and not part of the policy making bodies. The Facebook page could succeed as a marketing tool for the network, but it seems difficult to send targeted messages through it.
- The email group being a ‘push media’ has a relative advantage over the Forums: users receive messages in their inbox and are thus more likely they reply. Forums will need animators / moderators to make them work.
Policy makers are not targeted by selected and relevant content by any of the existing channels. The novel “research news” space on the network website might address this.