INTRODUCTION
The European Training Foundation (ETF), an agency of the European Union (EU), helps transitioning and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education and employment systems. The ETF operates in 30 countries in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and the former Soviet Union (including Central Asia). It employs about 130 staff and has an annual budget of €18 million.

The ETF’s work as a public institution is based on the conviction that the development of education and labor markets can make a fundamental contribution toward increasing prosperity, creating sustainable growth and encouraging social inclusion.

Working on behalf of the EU, the ETF helps partner countries to develop people’s skills and knowledge in order to promote better living conditions, active citizenship, and democratic societies that respect human rights and cultural diversity. It does this through projects that support the reform of education and training systems. These projects can take the form of activities like building up networks of teachers in countries within a region or supporting capacity building in human resources development within public administrations. Helping people to learn about policies in other countries and supporting the exchange of information are some of the ETF’s key activities.

To support this mission, the ETF has developed a communication strategy with a strong social media component, based on the overall objective of facilitating dialogue and delivering innovative solutions to relevant target groups.

NEED/OPPORTUNITY
2010 was the “European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.” As part of this initiative, the EU encouraged its institutions to participate in activities associated with this topic by organizing events. The ETF contributed with two corporate conferences. For these events to be successful, the ETF needed to:

- Reach out to new audiences beyond traditional partners in government and public institutions.
- Gain access to voices on the ground that would help the organization understand the actual needs of its partner countries.
- Engage online influencers on their terms.

The use of social media offered the ETF the opportunity to extend the duration, reach and impact of two corporate conferences, Women & Work (7–8 March 2010 at the University of Turin Faculty of Architecture in Turin, Italy) and Promoting Social Inclusion (2–3 December 2010 at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium). Social media also made it possible to add an online dimension to International Women’s Day (8 March); to identify new stakeholders, establish a dialogue with them and invite them to participate in the conference (virtually or
otherwise); and to tap into networks of online influencers in order to collect case studies to exhibit at the Promoting Social Inclusion conference. The team was able to convince the ETF’s senior management of the advantages of Web 2.0 as an integral part of ETF events and initiatives in addition to profiling the ETF as an innovative communicator and early adopter of Web 2.0 tools within the community of EU agencies and other EU institutions.

INTENDED AUDIENCES
Individuals and organizations with a significant online presence interested in combating poverty and social exclusion made up the primary audience. They are committed to these issues, have established a regional online following, and their cause/project would benefit from exposure and visibility.

For the Women & Work conference, the ETF’s social media outreach focused in particular on female bloggers and women who write online about gender issues. For the Promoting Social Inclusion event, the ETF concentrated on social networkers and bloggers who work with young people, women and groups at risk, and use social media for their projects. The main audiences were located primarily in the regions in which ETF operates (the Middle East, North Africa, Russia, Caucasus, Central Asia and Southeastern Europe).

Other audiences included EU institutions and pundits. These audiences were instrumental in positioning ETF as an early Web 2.0 adopter and a social media champion among EU institutions. ETF senior management and other key operational staff members formed another important audience.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
For the two flagship events—Women & Work and Promoting Social Inclusion—organized as part of ETF’s contribution to the “European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion,” the ETF set the following goals and objectives:

Outreach: Tap into networks of powerful influencers and use their online channels to support and spread the messages of the two ETF conferences.
- **Objective No. 1:** Attract a large number of visitors to a Posterous page (to be viewed more than 500 times) with a call for proposals for projects to be exhibited at the Promoting Social Inclusion conference.
- **Objective No. 2:** Gain a significant following on a Ning site used to contact female bloggers for the Women & Work conference (at least 50).
- **Objective No. 3:** Collect representative experiences/projects through online interactions to present at the conferences.

Engagement: Enhance the impact of the two ETF conferences.
- **Objective No. 4:** Increase attendance at the Promoting Social Inclusion conference through virtual participation by more than 50 percent over previous ETF conferences (average offline attendance of 100–120).
- **Objective No. 5:** Bridge the divide between the two audiences and expose state representatives and other decision makers to new voices by using innovative tools.
- **Objective No. 6:** Find a cost-effective way to multiply the number of participants at ETF events.

**Brand:** Profile the ETF as a social media champion within the EU community and convince key ETF staff of the viability of Web 2.0 as a new tool for ETF projects/initiatives.
- **Objective No. 7:** Be seen by other EU agencies as a source of expertise and social media best practices.
- **Objective No. 8:** Raise awareness among EU institutions and related bodies (EU-focused news services and monitoring organizations) of ETF activities.
- **Objective No. 9:** Convince key ETF staff of the viability of social media.

**SOLUTION OVERVIEW**
Social media experts believe that networks are replacing the individual as the base unit of communication. The ETF is a firm believer in this idea, which became central to the approach it took to solving the challenges presented by the two conferences.

**RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**

**Women & Work conference (7–8 March 2010)**
- Analyzed and monitored blogs and other online content produced by women committed to gender issues.
- Searched for online events that the ETF could tap into and use to reach its target audiences.
- Identified Kolena Laila (with an online network of 500 women and men focused on women’s issues in the Middle East) and established contact with the founder, who was asked to send names of members eligible to be invited to conference in Turin.

**Promoting Social Inclusion conference (2–3 December 2010)**
- Tapped into the networks of women who had attended the “Women & Work” event before and asked them to recommend case studies to be presented at this second conference.
- Used the network of the Arab Social Media Forum (3,000 followers on Facebook), a conference that took place in Amman, Jordan on 11 December, to publicize the ETF’s message and to collect contacts.
- Followed a conference for Arab bloggers via Twitter in December 2010 and established contact with a number of female participants.

**KEY MESSAGES**
The main external message of the communication campaign supporting the two events was “We are inclusive. We give a voice to the voiceless. We help individuals committed to social inclusion and connect them with decision makers and opinion leaders.”

The internal messages were:
• We can prolong and enhance the impact of our events by nurturing contacts and interactions with influential networks online.
• We can widen the ETF’s network by using social media. This helps us widen our outreach in individual partner countries.
• We can encourage colleagues to take up social media as a vehicle for communication and interaction with key counterparts in different countries.
• Social media is an innovative way of collecting content to present at conferences.

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

IMPLEMENTATION

Women & Work conference (7–8 March 2010)
• Set up platforms to facilitate interaction with intended audiences (Ning site, Twitter hash tag, blog).
• Contacted networks and built and nurtured relationship with key influencers.
• Encouraged conversation and contributions in the form of posts on the Ning site, Tweets, etc.
• Collected names of candidates to be invited to the conference via the Ning site.
• Selected 22 women from a number of ETF partner countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Russia, Tunisia and Uzbekistan.
• Exchanged ideas with this group for the content of the conference.
• Invited 22 women to participate in the workshop on 7 March and to attend the conference on 8 March in Turin, Italy (ETF covered travel and accommodation costs).
• Organized a workshop to discuss the conference’s major streams and to develop a set of recommendations for policymakers and opinion leaders invited the following day.
• Used YouTube videos and Twitter to present recommendations to conference participants on 8 March.
• Produced an article that included interviews with female bloggers in ETF’s monthly magazine Live & Learn, and an online publication “Women and Work” as a follow-up.

Promoting Social Inclusion conference (2–3 December 2010)
• Set up platforms to promote the message of the conference and to help identify case studies to be exhibited at the conference (via the Posterous site, Twitter hash tag and Facebook page).
• Contacted online networks and encouraged previous Women & Work participants to share contacts and ideas for interesting case studies.
• Conducted conversations on social media platforms.
• Identified projects in eight ETF partner countries (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, and Morocco), featuring individuals/organizations/NGOs who that have been using social media to fight social exclusion, and invited the project managers to Brussels, Belgium (ETF covered travel and accommodation costs) to present at an interactive session organized as part of the conference.
• Streamed the conference live through Cover It Live.
There were many challenges. Some ETF staff were reluctant to use social media. ETF worked with countries that had different degrees of social media literacy and take-up. There was a large gap between policymakers and digital grassroots influencers. ETF had to build its social media presence from scratch. Because the ETF website is not Web-2.0 enabled, ETF had to rely completely on external platforms. ETF had to introduce itself as a new counterpart to relevant social networkers. Finally, it was difficult to secure sufficiently large samples to enable the selection of a representative group of contributors.

**MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION**

**Outreach**: Tap into the networks of powerful influencers and use their online channels to support and spread the messages of the two ETF conferences.

**Objective No. 1**: Attract a large number of visitors to post on the Posterous site (to be viewed more than 500 times) with a call for proposals for projects to be exhibited at the Promoting Social Inclusion conference.

**Outcome**: The Promoting Social Inclusion Posterous site was viewed more than 600 times.

**Objective No. 2**: Gain a significant following on the Ning site to contact female bloggers for the Women & Work conference (at least 50).

**Outcome**: More than 70 women joined the Women & Work Ning site between January and March 2010.

**Objective No. 3**: Collect representative experiences/projects through online interactions to present at the conferences.

**Outcome**: 22 women from 20 countries were identified through social media and invited to the Women & Work conference. Eight case studies from eight countries were identified through the Posterous site and presented at the Promoting Social Inclusion conference.

**Engagement**: Enhance the impact of the two ETF conferences.

**Objective No. 4**: Increase attendance at the Promoting Social Inclusion conference through virtual participation by more than 50 percent over previous ETF conferences (average offline attendance of 100–120).

**Outcome**: Live streaming of the Promoting Social Inclusion conference on Cover It Live was viewed 972 times. This corresponds to six times the actual participation rate of the conference and is more than the total number of participants at all ETF events in a single year (929 at 42 events in 2010).

**Objective No. 5**: Bridge the divide between the two audiences (social networkers and the traditional audience) and expose state representatives and other official decision makers to new voices by using innovative tools.

**Outcome**: The YouTube videos produced by the 22 women attending the workshop preceding the Women & Work conference were viewed by 120 decision makers and opinion leaders present at the conference.

**Objective No. 6**: Find a cost-effective way to increase the number of participants at ETF events.

**Outcome**: Online participation by 900 people saved ETF €900,000 (the average cost for a participant to attend an event held by the ETF is €1,000).
**Brand:** Profile the ETF as a social media champion within the EU community, and convince key ETF staff of the viability of Web 2.0 as a new tool for ETF projects/initiatives.

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<th><strong>Objective No. 7:</strong> Be seen by other EU agencies as a source of expertise and social media best practices.</th>
<th><strong>Outcome:</strong> The ETF communication team presented at the EU agencies’ heads of communication meeting (Helsinki, 14–15 February 2011). The ETF webmaster presented at the EU agencies’ webmasters’ meeting in Lisbon (3 December 2010).</th>
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<td><strong>Objective No. 8:</strong> Raise awareness of ETF activities among EU institutions and related bodies (EU-focused news services and monitoring organizations).</td>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> ETF tweets were retweeted by a number of significant EU-related bodies and news services: the European Voice, the European Association for Bioindustries, the European Commission, the press office of the EU council, the World Economic forum official Twitter account, the official Twitter account of the United Nations, the official Twitter account of the United Nations development program, and Social Europe.</td>
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<td><strong>Objective No. 9:</strong> Convince key ETF staff of the viability of social media.</td>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> Key ETF staff members (country and project managers) began using social media and interacting with online audiences before, during and after the Promoting Social Inclusion conference.</td>
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