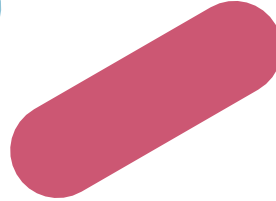




PPI IGNITE
NETWORK

IMPACT CASE STUDY



Building connections, sharing knowledge, expanding our influence across Europe

Who was involved?

- One lead site
- One local partner
- ENLIGHT office, University of Galway
- Two European Universities
- Three European community organisations

Summary

Through participation in the ENLIGHT Network, the PPI Ignite Network @ University of Galway formed meaningful connections with several European universities interested in PPI research and scholarship.

Relationships were developed with European universities, which culminated in a collaborative, successful ENLIGHT grant application funding a European PPI conference led by Galway. This hybrid conference sparked valuable knowledge exchange about PPI across Europe, with 180 registered participants including researchers, academics, students, NGOs, PPI contributors and members of the public.

Postgraduate students at ENLIGHT universities can now register to take the

University of Galway PPI PhD module. Future collaborative initiatives include plans for further grant applications, conference presentations and networking events.

Our work

The University of Galway is a member of ENLIGHT, a European University Network of ten research-intensive universities from ten countries, which aims to establish an open, integrated space for students, teachers and researchers to study, learn and work together.

In 2023, the PPI Ignite Network @ University of Galway initiated outreach to the ENLIGHT Network to strengthen international collaboration around PPI in research and education. We circulated an information document outlining the work of the PPI Ignite Network @ University of Galway and invited ENLIGHT institutions to connect through research and scholarships.

By early 2024, the Galway team had received positive responses from seven ENLIGHT Higher Education Institutions. A visiting professor from Uppsala University, Sweden who met with the PPI Ignite Network team in Galway recommended additional research contacts in Uppsala University.



Professor Martin O'Donnell, Executive Dean College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science– opening event and formally welcoming all attendees (left). European colleagues working in collaboration in Galway to brainstorm for innovative PPI focused grant applications (right)

Over a 12-month period, through Zoom meetings and ongoing correspondence, we built relationships and shared learning about PPI.

Building on these new relationships, the Galway team led a collaborative grant application with consortium partners to establish a European Thematic Network (ETN) focused on PPI. Although the application was unsuccessful, reviewers acknowledged its potential, and ENLIGHT awarded €10,000 in seed funding in January 2025 to further develop this work with a specific aim of organizing an international PPI hybrid conference

Innovative and exciting discussions are on-going in relation to PPI research, scholarship, sharing resources and impact across our European network.

Our impact

Building European collaborations for PPI

Issuing the invitation to collaborate on PPI in research and education through the ENLIGHT Network opened the door to European collaborations with seven Universities, as well as some linked hospitals and NGOs.

Consortium formation and knowledge exchange

A consortium of academic staff, researchers, students, and PPI contributors was formed. This led to active knowledge sharing around PPI research, scholarship, practices, and challenges and barriers in the different universities.



“International perspectives are so valuable and validating of our own work in Ireland. It was great to have a diversity of voices and engagement from the audience.”

Feedback from conference attendee

Showcasing regional practices, sharing innovative approaches

In April 2025, the seed funding enabled the delivery of *PPI Horizons: European Perspectives on PPI*, a hybrid event hosted at University of Galway. The conference attracted over 180 registrants from across Europe and included in-person participation from Uppsala and Groningen, funded by Erasmus+. The conference highlighted regional practices, showcased innovative approaches, and strengthened cross-border learning.

Advancing a European Thematic Network (ETN) on PPI

The seed funding specifically targeted capacity-building between Galway, Groningen and Uppsala universities, as well as the broader ENLIGHT network. The day after the conference, colleagues from these three universities worked together at the University of Galway to brainstorm and collaboratively develop ideas to prepare a new application to ENLIGHT to fund an ETN on PPI. We have now invited new partners, including an additional ENLIGHT university, researchers and NGOs, from artificial intelligence, open science, research impact and clinical research, to join this ETN application.

Educational exchange

There is growing interest in the University of Galway’s PPI in Research PhD module from partner institutions. The module is now being promoted across ENLIGHT universities, with student enrollment scheduled for the 2025–2026 academic year.

Sustainability and future collaboration

A roadmap of shared objectives, such as co-designing PPI resources, research partnerships, and exchange programmes, is under development, forming the basis for future grant applications.

In conclusion, this initiative has demonstrated tangible outcomes in fostering international connections, co-developing educational and research strategies, and positioning the University of Galway as a leader in collaborative PPI development across Europe. The relationships established and the outputs produced provide a strong foundation for longer-term partnerships and transformative, inclusive approaches to research and scholarship in line with ENLIGHT goals.



“I very much enjoyed hearing from the online panel who expressed a wide range of their views and experiences. I also very much enjoyed hearing from Nora, and found the insights into her experience as a PPI participant for Enspired (research project) to be really valuable in terms of considering inclusivity and social culture.”

Feedback from conference attendee

“As a professional from the Netherlands working in the PPI sector, I was truly impressed by the way PPI has a place within the institution and on a nationwide level. I learned a lot about the work that is being done in Galway, and it sparked new ideas that I hope to implement within my own institution. I was also really impressed by the presentation of our colleagues from Uppsala. I strongly believe that by working together, we can accomplish even more. Each of us brings unique expertise to the table, and through collaboration, we can support and strengthen one another in meaningful ways. I look forward to a long-lasting and impactful collaboration between us.”

Paul Van Duuren, Patient Involvement Officer, University Medical Centre Groningen