

FLORENCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

HELLO & WELCOME!

Hello everyone, and welcome back to the second edition of the Florence Network Newsletter!

It's wonderful to stay connected with you throughout the year and continue celebrating the work and collaboration taking place across our member institutions.

Thank you to all who contributed updates, news, and insights for this issue — your input helps us share the diversity and richness of activities happening within the network. We hope this edition inspires new ideas, fosters connections, and keeps you informed about upcoming opportunities.

Sara & Claudia Visibility Group

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- Destination Zenica
- Midwifery practice and education in Turkey
- Network collaborations and Outcomes
- New institutional initiatives
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- Typcoming Events
- Communication & housekeeping



Q&A WITH LAURA VISIERS: GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW PRESIDENT

We're delighted to introduce our new President Laura Visiers, who has taken over this role since April 2025. Laura been an active member of the Florence Network for the past eight years and previously served as Vice-President. In this short "coffee chat", she shares her reflections on her journey, her hopes for the Network, and a few personal insights too!



LAURA'S THE JOURNEY IN THE FLORENCE NETWORK

Q: How long have you been part of the Network? What first drew you to get involved?

A: I have been part of the Network since 2017 in the Florence Network Annual Meeting in Bern University of Applied Science (FHS) and Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) in Switzerland.

Q: What first drew you to get involved?

A: I began collaborating on a research project led by a professor from the University of Turku (Finland) (Satu Kajander Unkuri) who was also part of the Research Group at the time. She told me about the Florence Network as a meeting place for Nursing and Midwifery European Higher Education Institutions, both at the teaching and research levels, and it seemed to me and to my University Center (School of Nursing and Physical Therapy, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, Madrid, Spain) like an exceptional opportunity to share, internationalize our curriculum, and combine synergies at a European level.

Q: What is one memorable moment or achievement from your time with the Network so far?

A: For me, the greatest achievement has been meeting so many incredible people and great professionals with whom I can share experiences and collaborate on common initiatives. Furthermore, being part of the Board has allowed me to participate more actively in the network and collaborate with a fantastic team of highly committed people to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude. Hosting FNAM 2023 in Madrid was undoubtedly both a challenge and an opportunity.



VISION/PRIORITIES

Q: What are your main goals for the Florence Network in the coming years?

A: The Florence Network's strategic plan for 2025-2027 was co-created and discussed by all representatives of the network's member universities (FL-ECOs) who participated in FNAM 2024. It will be presented at the half-term online meeting on November 27th. It will include various goals related to academics, internal and external visibility of the network, internationalization, and research involving both faculty and students. For these objectives to be achieved, greater involvement and commitment from network members and their universities will be essential.



Q: What excites you most about your new role as President of the Network?

A: The opportunity to bring together such a vibrant, diverse community of nursing and midwifery educators, researchers, and students across Europe. The Network has an incredible legacy of collaboration and innovation, and I'm eager to help build on that foundation — fostering new partnerships, widening the network, promoting excellence in education and research, and amplifying our collective voice in shaping the future of healthcare. I'm especially passionate about creating opportunities for shared learning and research, supporting the next generation of nursing and midwifery leaders, and ensuring that our network remains a dynamic platform for exchange, inclusion, and growth



SOMETHING PERSONAL

Q: If you weren't working in nursing education, what would you be doing?

A: I think I would work as a clinical nurse, but always with a passion for teaching, management, and research. Currently, I'm very interested in interculturality because I consider it an essential competence for nursing students and educators. I would love to work with culturally diverse groups and those at risk of social exclusion. I believe nursing is a very broad discipline that offers many opportunities for inquisitive and curious people like myself.

Q: If you could give one piece of advice to new members joining the Florence Network, what would it be?

A: My advice to new members joining the Florence Network would be to get involved and stay curious. This network thrives on connection and collaboration — the more you engage, the more you'll gain from it. Don't hesitate to reach out to colleagues across countries, share your ideas, and participate actively in discussions and projects. The real strength of the Florence Network lies in its people, and every member brings unique perspectives and experiences that can inspire innovation and growth in nursing and midwifery education. So, take every opportunity to learn, contribute, and be part of this supportive European community.

Thank you very much Laura for taking the time and answering our questions!



Laura Visiers, during this year annual meeting at NHL Stenden

TESTINATION ZENICA: HOST OF THE 2026 ANNUAL MEETING



We are all very looking forward to this year's annual meeting in Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Who best that our host Dr Mirza Oruč to tell us more about what to expect.

Q: What makes Zenica a unique and meaningful location to host this year's Florence Network Annual Meeting?

A: Zenica is a city that beautifully bridges the past and the future. Known for its industrial heritage, Zenica developed as one of the key industrial centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the modern era. Yet, beneath this image of progress lies a city with deep historical roots — from Roman settlements and medieval fortresses to important events in Bosnia's modern history. This blend of industry and heritage gives Zenica a distinctive character: a place where innovation and resilience meet culture and tradition. Hosting the Florence Network Annual Meeting here allows participants to experience a city that embodies transformation, community spirit, and educational growth — values closely aligned with the network's mission.

Q: What themes or ideas inspired the programme you are developing for participants?

A: The central theme of this year's programme, "Back to the Root," reflects the essence of nursing — a return to the fundamental values, principles, and knowledge that define our profession. In a time of rapid technological advancement and evolving healthcare systems, it is essential to pause and reconnect with the basic elements that form the foundation of quality nursing care: compassion, ethical responsibility, patient—centeredness, and professional identity.

This theme is developed in direct continuity with the previous Florence Network Annual Meeting in Leeuwarden (2025), building upon the discussions that emphasized innovation, global perspectives, and the future of nursing. "Back to the Root" offers a reflective counterpart — a chance to look inward and re-examine what truly matters in nursing education and practice. It encourages participants to explore questions such as: What are the core competencies that every nurse should embody? How can we ensure that, amid modern challenges, we preserve the human touch in healthcare?

Through workshops, presentations, and collaborative activities, the programme aims to create a dialogue between tradition and transformation — linking the wisdom of foundational nursing knowledge with the demands of modern, evidence-based practice. It reminds us that the strength of nursing's future depends on how well we understand and value its roots.

Q: What can attendees look forward to experiencing — academically, professionally, or culturally — during their time in Zenica?

A: Participants can expect a rich and balanced experience.

- Academically and professionally, the programme will feature interactive lectures, project presentations, and networking opportunities with educators and practitioners across Europe.
- Culturally, attendees will discover Zenica's warm hospitality, local cuisine, and artistic traditions. Guided tours and social events will offer a glimpse into the city's history, from medieval landmarks to the legacy of its steel industry. Together, these experiences create a meaningful connection between learning, culture, and community.

Q: How do you hope this meeting will strengthen collaboration and exchange across the Florence Network community?

A: The meeting aims to serve as a catalyst for deeper collaboration and sustainable partnerships. By sharing innovative teaching methods, research outcomes, and crosscultural perspectives, participants can strengthen the ties that unite the Florence Network community. Zenica — with its welcoming academic environment and tradition of cooperation — provides the perfect backdrop for nurturing new joint projects, student exchanges, and research collaborations that extend beyond the meeting itself.

Q: If you could recommend one "must-see" or "must-try" experience in Zenica, what would it be and why?

A: A visit to the Vranduk Fortress is an absolute must. Perched above the Bosna River, this medieval stronghold offers breathtaking views and a vivid sense of the region's long and resilient history. Walking through its ancient gates feels like stepping back in time — a reminder of Zenica's enduring spirit and the connection between its past and present. It perfectly captures the essence of the city: strength, continuity, and openness to the future but also visit to the City Museum and city center will be very inspirative and give you real experience of city life and city history.



The Permanent Board and president of the Student Board visited Zenica (November 2025) to work on the preparation of the Florence Network annual meeting.

MIDWIFERY IN TURKEY: DEVELOPMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS AS OF 2025



Associate Professor Dr. Didem Şimşek Küçükkelepçe and Lecturer Beyza Öztürk, Department of Midwifery, Lokman Hekim University (Turkey) brings up the latest and important changes happening in Midwifery practice and education in Turkey.

Midwifery in Turkey is a critical component of the healthcare system in terms of education, practice, and policy. There has been some important developments, challenges, and forward-looking recommendations in the recent years relevant for Midwifery practice in Turkey.

Midwifery Regulation.

The *Midwifery Regulation*, enacted in 2024, is the primary legal framework governing the midwifery profession in Turkey. It updates the scope and job descriptions of midwives. The regulation aims to standardize professional practices and ensure that midwives play an active role at every stage of healthcare services.

"Annelik Yolculuğu"- "Journey to Motherhood" Mobile Health Application.

Developed by the Ministry of Health in 2025, the "Annelik Yolculuğu" or "Journey to Motherhood" app is a national digital health platform, freely accessible, designed to support maternal and child health from pregnancy through the child's second year. This platform aims at improve maternal and infant health indicators, enhance health literacy, increase normal birth rates and facilitate families' regular access to healthcare services.



Some of the main features offered by this app are:

- Week-by-week pregnancy tracking and mother-infant development information
- Nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle guidance
- Birth preparation module (psychological and physical support)
- Breastfeeding and postpartum counselling
- 0-2 year child development guide
- · Vaccination and screening reminders
- Digital memory journal and name suggestions

Policies promoting Natural Birth.

As of 2025, comprehensive policies supporting normal birth have been implemented in Turkey. Some of the key measures are listed below:

- All public, private, and university hospitals are now required to establish prenatal education schools.
- The "Journey to Motherhood" book has been digitized and made available through the mobile app since May 2025.
- Baby-Friendly Hospital Standards have been adopted nationwide.
- The lead midwife and responsible midwife models have been expanded.
- The project "A Midwife for Every Pregnant Woman" was launched and integrated with the family medicine system.
- 300 midwives in Antalya received training to improve knowledge and skills in normal birth, with plans to expand the training nationwide.
- Awareness-raising events for normal birth were held in all 81 provinces.
- Elective caesarean sections without medical indication have been prohibited in private hospitals. This regulation aims to reduce caesarean rates and increase normal birth rates.

These steps have strengthened woman-centred care during childbirth, improved birth experiences, and increased the visibility of midwifery services.

Projects and Activities impacting Midwifery education at Lokman Hekim University.

Vital Simulation Center- Established in 2024 by Lokman Hekim University, the Vital Simulation Center is Ankara's first and only health-themed simulation center. It provides students in health sciences with hands-on training through realistic scenarios and contributes to the development of clinical skills.

Innovative Educational Practices – Lokman Hekim University supports innovative teaching methods in midwifery education. The research project titled "Gamification in Family Planning Education", conducted during the 2023–2024 academic year, evaluated the effectiveness of gamification in family planning education. This study has proven to be a good practice example in enhancing student motivation and knowledge retention.

Overall, as of 2025, the midwifery profession in Turkey has been strengthened through an updated legal framework, digital health applications, natural birth policies, and innovative educational approaches.



FLORENCE NETWORK IN ACTION

One of the most important goals of the Florence Network is to provide a platform for collaboration between the different universities that are part of the network. As Laura highlighted in her interview....

These are some examples of successful collaboration between members of the Florence Network. Thank you for sharing!



Collaborative Project



Partners: The San Juan de Dios School of Nursing and Physical Therapy (Comillas University, Madrid, Spain) the LAB University of Applied Sciences (Finland) & the Odisee University of Applied Sciences (Belgium)

Highlights: Grand proposal "Ethically sustainable clinical placements for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students in healthcare -HEAL4AL". This has been submitted (October 2025) to the EU funding programme CERV [topic <u>CERV-2025-</u> **EQUAL-RACI-DISC Fighting against** discrimination and racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, including antigypsyism, anti-black, and anti-Asian racism.



Collaborative Project



Partners: San Juan de Dios School of Nursing and Physical Therapy (Comillas University, Madrid, Spain) and Hanze University of Applied Sciences (Groningen, The Netherlands) Highlights: "Beyond boundaries: internationalization "at home" through virtual

exchange at universities from European Higher Education Area" examines the impact of an internationalisation activity at home (dialogue between peers in an intercultural context) on the level of cultural sensitivity of nursing students from the two European universities, and explores their satisfaction with the activity.

Submissions: The project was presented at the International Conference of University Teaching and Innovation (June 2025, Barcelona, Spain) and results will be shared at the <u>International Nursing Research Conference</u> in November 2025 (Toledo, Spain)



Students Exchange < \(\bigsig< \)</p>



Partners: Swedish Red Cross University (Sweden) & UCLL Hogeschool (Belgium)

Highlights: Staff visits between universities; two nursing students currently completing clinical placements in Belgium

Partners: Swedish Red Cross University (Sweden) & University of Udine-Trieste (Italy)

Highlights: Thirty master's students in nursing from the University of Udine-Trieste had a successful visit to Sweden last spring.

'These exchanges have provided valuable opportunities for sharing experiences and strengthening international collaboration in nursing education.'

Maria Gottvall **Swedish Red Cross University** (Sweden)

COLLABORATION OUTCOMES

As a result of an agreement between multiple universities that are members of the Florence Network, the <u>CCA-EUnurse project</u>, led by The San Juan de Dios School of Nursing and Physical Therapy (Comillas University) in Madrid (Spain), began in 2021 and has already obtained several publications



INITIATIVES FROM OUR MEMBERS

Supporting Flexible Learning and Advancing Nursing Education

At **Humanitas University (Rozzano, Italy)**, the Nursing Degree Programme is launching a new project dedicated to supporting working students, allowing greater flexibility and personalized learning pathways.

The team is also expanding the use of their Simulation Center to further integrate simulation-based training into the nursing curriculum.

In addition, the Master's Degree in Nursing and Midwifery Sciences continues to grow, with increasing participation and new educational initiatives aimed at advancing clinical leadership and research skills.

World Mental Health Day- Community Event in Ioannina, Greece

On 25 October 2025, for the second consecutive year, the Laboratory of Psychology and

Person-Centred Care of the Department of Nursing, **University of Ioannina (Greece)** in

collaboration with the Directorate of Social Policy and Public Health of the Municipality of Ioannina, organized a community engagement event to mark World Mental Health Day. The initiative took place on Michail Angelou Street, in one of Ioannina's central pedestrian and commercial areas, and aimed to promote public understanding and sensitivity toward mental health challenges.

Our nursing students actively engaged with citizens through singing and distributing information flyers, green awareness ribbons, and sweets — but most importantly, by sharing messages of hope, empathy, and acceptance for all those who may be facing mental health difficulties. Through this action, they conveyed a powerful message:

"Mental health concerns us all. No one is alone. Fear and stigma have no place in our society."



UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPORTUNITIES

Looking for Research Collaboration:

"We are interested in developing research collaborations within the Florence Network. I have previously conducted studies on for example attitudes toward the prevention of sexually transmitted infections among youth, as well as on the health and support needs of LGBTQ+ refugees. I am interested in collaborating on projects concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights among marginalized populations. Although I do not have a specific project proposal at this stage, I warmly welcome contact from research colleagues interested in similar topics."



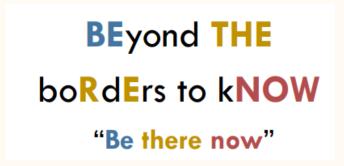
If you are interested in exploring a potential collaboration, please get in touch with Maria Gottvall (maria.gottvall@rkh.se -FLECO from the Swedish Red Cross University).



Mark your calendar: The second half-term FLECOs meeting will take place on 27th November at 16.30hr (15.30hr in UK). Agenda will be sent via email to all members of the network. We look forward to seeing you.



Mark your calendar: The second 'Be There Now' webinar has been announced and it will take place on 9th December. Full information on this event will be sent to your email address.





To keep our Network running smoothly, please take a moment to

- Update your university information
- Notify us of any changes in your representative member

All this information is stored in the Network's Teams site.



TEEPING IN TOUCH

Just a brief reminder to use florencenetworkofficial@gmail.com as your main contact for all Network matters. The Visibility Group manages this inbox and will ensure your message reaches the right person.

Don't forget to follow us on Instagram (@theflorencenetwork) and join our private Facebook group (FNAM2026) to stay up to date. If you'd like us to share something on our social media, simply email us with "Visibility Group" in the subject line.

If you haven't yet, please consider adding "Member of the Florence Network" to your email signature—it's a small gesture that helps strengthen our visibility. Additionally, when attending a meeting or conference, you can promote our network using our new leaflets, available on the "Communications" folder on our Teams site.

FLORENCE NETWORK

SEE YOU NEXT TIME...

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Massive thank you for your contributions; your updates and stories are what make this newsletter meaningful.

Please, let us know what you think about the newsletter. Your opinion is important to us.









WELCOME TO THE

Florence Network Student Board Newsletter

Hello everyone! We are thrilled to connect with you again in this second edition of the Florence Network Student Board Newsletter.

The Student Board has been highly active over the past months. We are excited to share the progress from our regular virtual sessions, which are carefully guided by our President, Marc. The most rewarding part of our meetings is the incredible commitment and contribution from every SB member, every person puts their piece and their unique ideas forward. We are currently crafting several project concepts and are energised by the positive feedback and shared direction!

Our core mission is to foster a genuine sphere of sharing experiences and ensure students 'get connected'. Our immediate focus is on preparing for the Annual Meeting in Zenica, aiming to make the Student Board a dynamic platform where every student can feel truly involved.

Vittoria, Newsletter & Communication SB

IN THE STUDENT BOARD SECTION:

Getting to Know the Student Board Leaders

Our Core Mission: The drive to 'Get Connected' and share experiences.

🗂 Upcoming Events



🥍 GETTING TO KNOW THE STUDENT BOARD **LEADERS**

We sat down virtually with our President, Marc, and our dedicated Host Student for the upcoming FNAM, Elmir, who will jointly lead the student organisation for the Annual Meeting at the University of Zenica. We discussed their vision, motivation, and the exciting plans underway for the event.





😶 with student board president, Marc

We begin with Marc, who is currently a 4th-year Nursing student at Hanze University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands and previously served as the Student Board Vice-President.

Q: As the President of the Student Board, what was the primary motivation behind your candidacy, and what is the central goal you aspire to achieve for students across the Network during your term?

A: My primary motivation was the overwhelming sense of connectivity that the Network gave me. The Network opened perspectives I didn't know existed, showing how students from different countries share information and expand each other's possibilities. My central goal is to encourage others to speak up and feel more confident in their own leadership potential. I want to demonstrate what is possible through action and intention, collaborating within the Student Board and with students both inside and outside the Network. I deeply value this experience, and I feel the responsibility to share those insights with others.

Q: Thinking back on your planning visit to Zenica, what is the single most exciting new idea for the Annual Meeting, and how will it directly benefit the students attending?

A: My impression of Zenica was completely different from what I had expected. I discovered a country with incredible resilience, beauty, and hospitality. Experiencing the contrasts, for example, seeing the stunning natural environment alongside certain local challenges, offers a strong reason or students to attend: it simply opens your eyes to new perspectives and privileges in your own country.

From a content perspective, one detail that made me highly optimistic was the host organisation's effort to include a specific workshop on mental health. This is vital for professional development and will help students reflect on support structures in their own countries.

Q: The Student Board is launching exciting new initiatives, including the Research Project and the Podcast. What motivational message would you give to fellow students to encourage them to participate actively in the FNAM 2026?

A: One of the most exciting developments is that, by the time we arrive, we will likely already have several new Student Board initiatives in motion. Our very first podcast episode has been recorded and should be available online soon, and we're working on a research project that is currently under ethical approval in Spain.

The research project is particularly exciting: it focuses on understanding the student perspective on work migration, covering international internships and the influence of recruitment from higher-income countries. We will also be creating a high-quality promotional video in Bosnia that students can share with their universities. My message is simple: get involved. FNAM 2026 and these new initiatives offer so many ways to engage, share your perspective, and contribute to something that will grow beyond the meeting itself. Your voice is valuable, and your participation helps shape the future of the Network.



The Permanent Board and president of the Student Board visited Zenica (November 2025) to work on the preparation of the Florence Network annual meeting.

Here, our Student Board President, Marc, is on a tour of the University of Zenica facilities. This visit is key to defining the logistics and venues that will host the next Florence Network Annual Meeting.



Thank you, Marc, for sharing your insights and vision. We now turn our attention to Elmir.

with Host Student, elmir

Elmir is a 2nd-year Nursing student from the University of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and will serve as the Host Student for FNAM 2026.

Q: Why did you decide to take on the role of Host Student for FNAM 2026?

A: My commitment is based on a deep belief in the transformative potential of nursing. I am keen to showcase 'what nursing is really about'. My passion is evident; I want to inspire fellow students and educators alike. Throughout my university years, I have gained a profound understanding of the profession.

Q: As the local Host Student, what is the one unique element of Bosnian culture or Zenica itself that you are most excited for students from across the Florence Network to experience during the Annual Meeting?

A: For me, the most unique element is our history and culture. Students coming to Zenica will have an opportunity to see our rich history firsthand. In fact, we are planning to host the opening ceremony of FNAM 2026 at a local museum, where students will see exhibits connected to our past. There is a lot to see here, including our beautiful nature and cuisine.

Q: What final message would you like to share with your fellow European students to motivate them to join us in Zenica?

A: I am extremely optimistic about the outcome of the Annual Meeting! I truly look forward to meeting all the students who will be joining us and ensuring they see how Bosnia truly is. We are planning many engaging sessions and cultural events, and there will be plenty of fun and opportunities for building new friendships!

Thank you, Elmir, for sharing your enthusiasm and giving us such a warm invitation to Zenica! We look forward to the upcoming FNAM 2026.



Student Board
President Marc (left)
meets Host Student
Elmir (right) during the
November planning
visit to Zenica,
confirming their
shared vision for FNAM
2026.

OUR CORE MISSION: THE DRIVE TO 'GET CONNECTED' AND SHARE EXPERIENCES

The foundation of the Florence Network Student Board lies on the principle of mutual connectivity and experiential sharing. While our collaborative virtual sessions focus on identifying shared challenges in nursing and midwifery education, our goal is to extend this dialogue far beyond official meetings. Our commitment is to foster a dynamic platform where every student feels empowered to engage and contribute. We are proud to announce we have initiatives planned for the coming year, specifically designed to keep the network connected outside of the annual gathering.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND SHARE YOUR VOICE:

We actively encourage students across the network to communicate with us informally and directly:

- Social Network: Follow and connect with us on Instagram @florence_network_students_.
- Contribute to the Newsletter: Do you have an insight or an experience you want to share? Write to us to be featured in the next edition. We are always looking for students to interview!
- **Shape Our Topics**: Keep an eye on our Instagram Stories for upcoming surveys and polls. Let us know which educational or professional themes you want the Student Board to address in our future content.



By communicating with us, you ensure that the insights gained from international experiences, whether in person or virtually, are brought back to enrich education in every member FN institution.





UPCOMING INITIATIVES: PODCAST AND RESEARCH

The Student Board is pleased to introduce two initiatives that we have been developing for the Network. For instant updates on both projects, please follow our official IG page @florence_network_students_.



FN STUDENT BOARD PODCAST: LAUNCHING ON SPOTIFY

The Student Board is excited to announce the launch of its podcast! We have successfully recorded the very first episode, which will soon be published on Spotify.

Designed to provide easily accessible, insightful discussions, interviews, and updates, the podcast is highly relevant to European nursing and midwifery students and ideal for listening during commutes or study breaks.

Each episode will feature a different guest, but for our pilot, we focused on the core of the organisation: Student Board President Marc Folkers is interviewed by Vice-President Johannes Smids (who previously hosted FNAM at NHL Stenden Applied Sciences). They will discuss the Network's foundation, current scope, and the direct benefits it offers to students across Europe



Research

FN STUDENT BOARD RESEARCH PROJECT:

In addition to the podcast, the Student Board has dedicated significant effort to drafting a comprehensive research proposal. The project is currently being submitted for ethical approval at the Comillas Pontifical University in Spain.

This study is centred on understanding the student perspective on work migration intention. We aim to examine experiences with international internships, motivations for working abroad, and the influence of recruitment strategies from higherincome countries on student career plans.

SEE YOU NEXT TIME...

Thank you for taking the time to read our Student Board newsletter! To stay fully engaged with the progress of both these initiatives, and to contribute ideas for our next SB newsletter, please remember to follow our official Instagram page. We value your input. See you next time!



@florence_network_students_