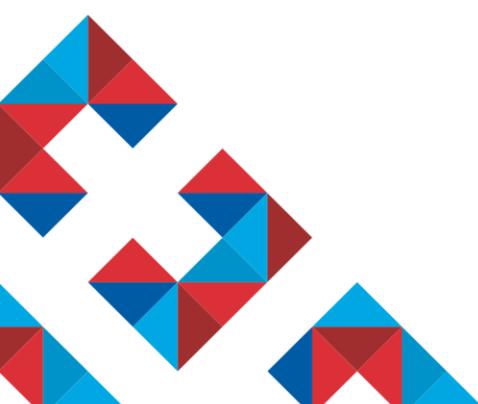


Learning Networks 2019 Event Report



Event summary and feedback

For 2019, we decided to change the format of Learning Networks and held three half-day events, each focused on one of the three themes: Widening Participation, Employability and Project Management and Implementation.

At these events, delegates from across the UK took part in workshops, hearing from National Agency staff and case study speakers who provided real-life examples of their experience in each thematic area.

Feedback from previous Learning Networks events was identified and taken forward to shape these three events.

You said:

- There needs to be the ability to attend more than one workshop; and
- There needs to be case studies in all workshops.

With this feedback in mind:

- We changed the format of Learning Networks to three half-day events, each focused on one of the three themes, allowing delegates the opportunity to attend more than one; and
- We included case studies in each of the half-day events.

Workshops

Delegates took part in the following three workshops.

| Workshop | Case study speakers | National Agency staff |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Widening Participation | Christine Bissex-Foster, Merthyr Tydfil College Manju Patel-Nair, HEC Global Learning Centre | Gavin Askew, Ecorys UK Simon Chambers, British Council |
| Employability | Neil Finnie, Corkscrew Ltd Heather Hedley and Heather Houston, Belfast Metropolitan College Trevor Burgess, Rinova Ltd Gursimran Vim, Erasmus+ participant | Sonia Shakir, Ecorys UK Daniel King, Ecorys UK Sara Southam, Ecorys UK |
| Project Management and Implementation | Sian Holleran, CollegesWales Dr Audrey McKeown, Erasmus+ assessor | Sion James, British Council Stephen Green, Ecorys UK |

Widening Participation (28 June 2019)

In this workshop, attendees explored good practice and common struggles in widening participation, as well as discussing how to place inclusion at the heart of Erasmus+. During the event, the group heard from two case studies and had the opportunity to share their own experiences and insights.

Attendees were split into two groups; the first led by Simon Chambers and the second by Gavin Askew. Simon Chambers' group discussed widening participation from three perspectives: participant response, organisational impact, and changing attitudes on a personal and professional level. Meanwhile, Gavin Askew's group shared challenges they encountered in widening participation and discussed viable solutions to counteract such difficulties.

Case studies

Christine Bissex-Foster from The College Merthyr Tydfil shared her college's experience of VET mobility projects, specifically supporting young people from areas of multiple deprivation. Christine's top tip: "Always get the buy-in of your senior management and heads of division before applying for funding for groups. If staff are not committed, getting students to go is difficult. The backing of senior management is essential when issues arise."

Manju Patel-Nair from HEC Global Learning Centre spoke about two of her organisation's projects. The first was a Key Action 3 youth dialogue project titled 'Tafahum' which looked at co-creating a safe, collaborative, shared community that is inclusive for long-term residents and new arrivals. The second was a Key Action 2 schools partnership project called '@ The Heart of Communities' focusing on learner-led active citizenship initiatives for community cohesion.

Top tips

Following workshop discussions, these top tips were outlined:

- Create innovative evaluation methods to motivate participants, such as peer interviews, videos, Padlet;
- Ensure expectations in a partnership are communicated clearly and finances managed professionally by appointed staff;
- Consider holding cross-sector, community-focused activities; and
- Collaborate with organisations that have participants with similar needs to prepare and host with wellbeing and safeguarding mechanisms in place.

All the presentations and resources from the group are available on the [Widening Participation theme webpage](#).



Employability (26 September 2019)

The Employability group focused on entrepreneurship, discussing how to build entrepreneurial skills in the UK and the role the Youth@Work National Agency Strategic Partnership and the European Solidarity Corps play in supporting employability and entrepreneurship.

The day began with attendees discussing entrepreneurial skills and qualities. Daniel King, from the UK National Agency, then led the European Solidarity Corps UK update. Specifically focusing on the Occupational Strand of the programme, he explained how this strand of funding enables organisations to create traineeships or job opportunities for young people.

Sara Southam, also from the UK National Agency, led the Youth@Work Initiative update, a strategic partnership on youth employability and entrepreneurship. The group was introduced to EntreComp, the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, one of the partnership's outputs.

Case studies

Neil Finnie from Corkscrew Ltd, shared insights from the organisation's two projects, both based around boosting learners' employability and entrepreneurial skills. In particular, how the project used entrepreneurship as a tool for preparing and up-skilling participants. During placements, they encouraged learners to adopt 'corkscrew' thinking and 'magpie' ideas to solve creative challenges.

Heather Hedley and Heather Houston from Belfast Metropolitan College spoke about the college's project 'ICE with GRIT'. This project identifies the barriers and challenges young people face when developing innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship (ICE), and engages them with growth, resilience, independence and tolerance (GRIT). Students from the Netherlands and Northern Ireland had the opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences, through shared education, cultural and short-term placements within the social enterprise sector.

Trevor Burgess from Rinova Ltd shared insights from the Key Action 2 project, 'Bridging the GAP'. It focused on VET provision for the enterprise skills that creative young people need to enter and

thrive in Europe's creative economy. The organisation supports skilled participants who face employment barriers by building their confidence and creating networks to help them enter creative industries.

Attendees also heard from Gursimran Vim, who did an Erasmus+ placement with Praxis Europe. She did her work experience at a printing shop in Spain and learnt how to use the machinery to produce t-shirts, as well as about technology and safety. This sparked a business idea that aligned with her interest in fashion and she is now looking to start her own business.

All the presentations and resources from the group are available on the [Employability theme webpage](#).



Project Management and Implementation (24 October 2019)

This workshop focused on good practice in final report writing. Attendees heard from Erasmus+ assessor, Dr Audrey McKeown, who delivered a final report-writing workshop, sharing valuable insight from the other side of the reporting process.

Audrey drew on her 11 years as an assessor, reminding the group that each report is assessed in isolation. She also highlighted how impact and dissemination is often the worst scoring area of the report, advising that beneficiaries pay extra attention to this section and ensure they understand what is being asked, as well as preparing throughout their project's lifecycle. Audrey also discussed dissemination at all levels, from local to international and noted tools and platforms that can support beneficiaries with disseminating their project outputs.

In addition, delegates heard from a fellow beneficiary and came together to share common issues around report writing. Attendees worked together to suggest possible solutions to the identified issues.

Case studies

Sian Holleran from CollegesWales began by sharing her organisation's experience with Erasmus+ via many projects. Sian described the final report as an opportunity to evaluate your project, by looking back at your application and assessing whether you did what you originally said you would do. If you have not achieved your initial aims, Sian advised being honest about it and reflecting on what you could do to achieve this next time. In this way, the report can then serve as a starting point for future projects.

Top tips

Following workshop discussions, these top tips were outlined:

- Choose your partners based on your subject – not the other way around;
- Consider having back up staff assigned to roles;
- Ensure all partners are happy with agendas for mobilities or meetings and all provide sign off;
- Do your research about your partners but trust your gut; and
- Start with bullet points as an activity diary and build on this when writing your final report.

All the presentations and resources from the group are available on the [Project Management and Implementation theme webpage](#).



Next steps for Learning Networks

Further Learning Networks events will be held this year. We have a dedicated mailing list providing members with the latest news and updates. To sign up, visit our [Learning Networks webpage](#).

Feedback from these workshops will be considered when planning future events. Comments suggested that delegates would like to see:

- More time for in-depth discussions;
- Further student/participant involvement in workshop sessions; and
- Equal split of case studies across sectors and Key Actions.