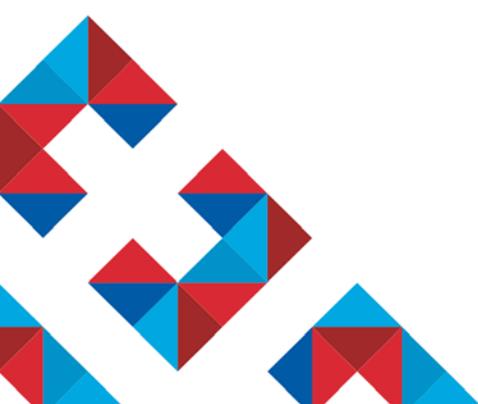


ERASMUS 

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UK ACROSS EUROPE

Learning Networks Event Report

22 November 2016



Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.
The Erasmus+ UK National Agency is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.

Introduction to Learning Networks

Learning Networks is an initiative of the Erasmus+ programme in the UK and was set up in 2014 by the UK National Agency. Learning Networks are discussion groups for organisations involved in projects funded either through the Erasmus+ programme or through its predecessor programmes the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action. The aim of Learning Networks is to provide beneficiaries with a forum to meet, network and discuss topics of interest. Learning Networks focus on three topics; Employability; Widening Participation; and Measuring Impact. You can find out more about why we chose these topics and their relevance to Erasmus+ on our Learning Networks webpage at www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks.

Event summary and feedback

On 22 November 2016 we held our fifth Learning Networks event. The venue was Cardiff City Hall. Delegates from across the UK took part in workshops on the three topics listed above, hearing from topic speakers and National Agency staff who gave a broader programme perspective including updates on government policy. The 'Erasmus+ Effect' Annual Conference was held the following day on the 23 November at the same location.

At the previous Learning Networks event in Manchester 2016, three notable feedback comments were identified and taken forward to shape the second Learning Networks event of 2016:

You said:

- Explore opportunities to encourage cross-sector discussions and facilitate sector-specific networking opportunities;
- Allocate more time to networking opportunities and highlight this in both pre-event communications and the event programme;
- Continue to use relevant case studies and live beneficiary input in creative ways.

With this feedback in mind:

- The day began with a networking lunch designed to provide the networking opportunities delegates requested. A cross-sector icebreaker was also held at the beginning of the day;
- A colour-coding system was introduced on delegate lanyards and in the delegate list. Colours corresponded to the main sector(s) Learning Networks members worked across, to facilitate sector-specific networking for delegates who found this information useful.
- This information was highlighted in both the event programme and a pre-event blog post: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/blog/how-to-make-the-most-of-our-next-learning-networks-event>
- Finally, relevant case studies continued to be used including practical examples to share 'hints and tips.'

The event was attended by 66 delegates (excluding staff) from all five Erasmus+ sectors: schools, higher education, adult education, youth, and vocational education and training. 56 feedback forms were completed and 92% of respondents rated the event 'excellent' or 'very good' overall which was

positive. Over 90% of respondents were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the event. Over 94% of delegates rated the final joint session ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’. All delegates said the networking lunch was ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’. Some further comments from attendees included:

“Good range of ideas and learning across sectors - this is significant added value and should happen more often.”

“I learnt some new exciting ideas from other partners to bring to my project and better communicate its work.”

Workshops

Delegates took part in one of three workshops, making their selection when they registered for the event. Each of the workshops was run by an expert facilitator, enabling innovative and free-flowing discussions.

Workshop	Facilitator	Contributions	National Agency staff
Employability	Sarah Hunter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISA Training (Employer Engagement presentation) 	Sonia Shakir, Ecorys Aisha Smith, Ecorys Huw Davies, British Council
Widening Participation	Lucy Butters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farkhanda Chaudhry (Preventing Youth Extremism presentation) 	Khalid Miah, Ecorys Ariana Gherasim, Ecorys Ashleigh Axiak, British Council Christine Clarke, British Council
Measuring Impact	Sian Richardson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve Murray (Impact Plus Exercise) 	Steve Murray, Ecorys Gavin Askew, Ecorys Maxine Guscott, British Council Rebecca Payne, British Council

Summaries of the discussions at each of the workshops follow below. Full notes from each workshop are made available on our website, visit the following page, then select the relevant theme: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics>

Employability

The workshop focused on the theme of employer engagement, including useful tools, strategies and practical advice which members of the group could learn from and implement within their own organisations.

It began with delegates sharing their own experiences with others in the room, and facilitator Sarah Hunter provided some inspiration on current strategies. The model of ‘eight types of employer engagement’ is available online here in the workshop notes:

<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics/Employability>

ISA Training – Dawn Elliot and Cheryl Pearcey

Dawn and Cheryl presented on a range of activities, initiatives and approaches which ISA Training,

an independent hairdressing training provider operating in both Wales and England, uses for engaging with employers. This included involvement in learner applications, offering opportunities to employers and a 'roll of honour'. ISA Training also produce a magazine, Hot Gossip, which was shared among the group. A highlight for many delegates was also a look into the successful PR methods which the training provider users and benefits both their own organisation and local employers.

UK National Agency update

Sonia Shakir, Senior Project Manager, from the UK National Agency shared an update on the first ever European Vocational Skills Week which takes place between 5 and 9 of December 2016. Sonia shared promotional literature about the Europe-wide campaign, including how UK Erasmus+ beneficiaries can get involved: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/VocationalSkillsWeek>.

Widening Participation

As with previous sessions, there was a mix of delegates in the Widening Participation group from across the sectors. There was an equal split of delegates whom had attended previous Learning Networks and those attending for the first time. The focus of the Widening Participation workshop was preventing youth extremism.

Preventing Youth Extremism - Farkhanda Chaudhry

Farkhanda is an expert in the field of equalities, diversity and inclusion. Her work spans from working with Local Authorities on diversity, to working with female community groups in Iraq. The focus of her update during the workshop was her contributions to the SALTO Preventing Youth Extremism toolkit, authored by Debbie Erwin. She also shared her experiences following a TCA exercise in Bulgaria, where the toolkit was trialled. Farkhanda highlighted the importance of delegates considering their own identity and values, as well as using our own critical thinking abilities.

Although the SALTO toolkit was developed for youth workers, there is lots of information and useful exercises which can be used across sectors. Therefore Facilitator Lucy Butters led a 'how do you see it?' exercise, adapted from the toolkit. This included reflecting on personal values, facilitating discussions with young people and looking at how we feel about and respond to conflict. The full exercise is available in the facilitator notes from the session:

<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics/Widening-Participation>

UK National Agency update

Khalid Miah, Senior Project Manager for Transnational Cooperation Activities and Youth Stakeholder Engagement, presented a short UK National Agency update. Khalid highlighted the objectives and challenges addressed by the Paris Declaration will be reflected in the implementation of all the three Key Actions of the Programme and in the actions in the field of Sport, as part of the 2017 Directorate General for Education and Culture work programme:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2016/0316-paris-declaration-education_en.htm

Measuring Impact

The Measuring Impact group focused on putting their measuring impact skills into practice and using the Impact Plus Tool. There was a good representation of delegates from across all sectors, and participants were given Key Action 1 and Key Action 2 project outlines to review before the event.

Erasmus+ Impact Plus Exercise – Steve Murray, Erasmus+ Impact Assessor

The exercise was designed to help beneficiaries when exploring their impact, including; intended impact, realistic output and outcome indicators and choosing realistic data sources. Delegates worked in their allocated table groups and were given different areas of impact to measure. They were provided with a choice of indicators (to track progress towards an overall goal) and a list of possible data sources. The exercise is available at: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/impact-assessment-resources>

Delegates were also given questions raised at previous meetings to consider when making their choices. These included; how will you measure your own development? Where do you see the possible risks of the project not achieving success? And what do you want partners or learners to feel, think and do?

Some quotes from delegates to conclude the session on putting measuring impact skills into practice included:

“Clarity of stakeholders is needed when developing a project to show systemic impact.”

“To measure impact, you need to have a clear baseline.”

”It is good to see that we do know how to do this!”

Next steps for Learning Networks

The next Learning Networks event will be held in 2017. We have a dedicated mailing list which provides members with the latest news and updates. To sign up, visit our webpage: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics>. Your feedback will be used to help plan the next Learning Networks event and also the strategic direction for the initiative in 2017 as follows;

1. Continue to encourage cross-sector discussions as well as informal networking opportunities such as the networking lunch.
2. Continue sharing practical examples of best practices and explore how members can keep in touch between meetings.
3. Continue to provide opportunities for delegates to share learning from the day with attendees from other workshops.

Thank you for taking part in the Learning Networks initiative. The delegate list from the day can be found below.

Delegate list

Please note that this table excludes delegates who opted not to share their contact details.

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