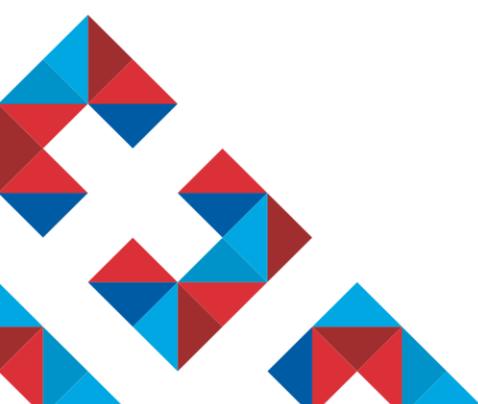


ERASMUS 

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UK ACROSS EUROPE

Learning Networks Event Report

24 May 2017



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 (UK NA). 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 24 May 2017 we held our sixth Learning Networks event. The venue was the Studio in Glasgow. The event had a special focus on promotion and dissemination 'the skills of sharing'. Delegates from across the UK took part in workshops on the three topics listed above, hearing from National Agency staff including the communications team and topic speakers who provided a thematic perspective on engaging with their respective audiences. A pre-event survey helped inform the content for the day and the results were shared in a pre-event blog post:

<https://erasmusplus.org.uk/blog/three-things-you-told-us-you%E2%80%99d-like-to-see-at-our-learning-networks-event>

At the previous Learning Networks event in Cardiff 2016, three notable feedback comments were identified and taken forward to shape the first Learning Networks event of 2017:

You said:

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

With this feedback in mind:

- Workshop content was focused on encouraging a cross-sector approach to discussing promotion and dissemination. Erasmus+ participants were also invited to share their experiences and personal stories which could be reflected upon across the sectors. A networking lunch was also held and delegates had access to a sector colour-coded delegate list to facilitate specific networking.
- Practical examples of dissemination were highlighted throughout the day. In particular, communications team colleagues shared best practice project activity on social media including innovative techniques and tips to maximise the impact of posts. Members also reported initiating their own methods to keep-in-touch, including exploring the potential of 'WhatsApp'.

- An afternoon panel discussion brought together all delegates in order to share learning from each workshop and also to allow attendees to put their questions to our expert panel made up of social media expert Jennifer Jones along with two experienced project beneficiaries.

The event was a success with 53 delegates attending (excluding staff) from all five Erasmus+ sectors: Schools, Higher education, Adult education, Youth, and Vocational education and training. 41 feedback forms were completed and 96% of respondents rated the event 'excellent' or 'very good'. 90% of respondents were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the event. 100% of delegates rated the meeting facilities as 'good'. Widening Participation was the most popular workshop with over 70% of respondents rating it 'very useful'.

Here are some further comments from attendees:

"It was good to meet people across the sectors and to hear about their experiences with Erasmus+ projects and young people and how they promote and disseminate their projects and outcomes."

"Very much enjoyed panel discussion - will be looking up [panellist] Jennifer Jones' work to get future inspiration."

"Thank you for providing this opportunity in order to network and connect with people with similar views alongside learning to enhance practice towards Erasmus+."

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 speakers
Employability	Sarah Hunter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morag Cassidy (panellist) 	Sonia Shakir, Ecorys UK Jen Millman, Ecorys UK
Widening Participation	Lucy Butters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YMCA Bournemouth (volunteer perspective) 	Khalid Miah, Ecorys UK Chris Seal, British Council
Measuring Impact	Sian Richardson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel Breen (Erasmus+ ambassador) 	Heather Smith, Ecorys UK Kevin Robinson, Ecorys UK

Summaries of the discussions at each of the workshops follow below. You can also visit the following page, then select the relevant theme: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics> to discover more about the three themes of our Learning Networks.

Employability

As part of the promotion and dissemination theme, the Employability workshop focused on the theme of engaging with employers as a key audience for the group. Facilitator Sarah Hunter began

the session by asking delegates to share their own knowledge and experiences of dissemination. Jen Millman from the UK NA communications team gave a presentation on the digital tools and resources used and produced by the UK NA to engage and promote all the inspiring work happening through Erasmus+ projects. Tips and trends on how delegates can choose and use the best platforms for their target audiences was a key focus of the presentation. This was followed by a discussion with Morag Cassidy an experienced project promoter demonstrating how they put this into practice.

Morag from Light on the Path and WerkCenter Scotland shared her experiences of recording and sharing their project stories in which the project participants posted photos of their graduation ceremony on social media. Participants shared images via social media which promoted the project to individuals outside the organisation. The project was shown in a positive light and took little involvement or resources from staff.

The group was particularly interested in discussing 'why disseminate.' Sonia Shakir, Senior Project Manager, from the UK NA highlighted the importance of dissemination in her presentation. Sonia discussed how dissemination is frequently the lowest scoring section in applications and highlighted weighting for each award criteria is the same, therefore dissemination should be given equal consideration when preparing an application. All the presentations and resources from the group are available on the employability theme webpage: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics/Employability>

Widening Participation

Delegates from across all the sectors joined the Widening Participation group. Representatives from YMCA Bournemouth shared the experiences of their organisation in engaging with young participants through video. When [sharing their video](#) YMCA staff, Angela Reece and Glen Harvey, said: *"having a video has allowed us to simplify the Erasmus+ language and make it accessible for young people and, especially, hard to reach young people."*

Two young volunteers from the organisation, Andreea Lazar from Romania and Franziska Scharf, shared their own personal stories of promoting their stories and the impact taking part in a European Voluntary Service placement has had on their personal and professional lives. Both have been involved in a range of promotional activities from outdoor activities helping the community to raise awareness and promote the organisation's project to running workshops in schools to recruit new and diverse groups of participants for the organisation.

Chris Seal from the UK NA marketing and communications team gave a presentation on the digital tools and resources used and produced by the UK NA to engage and promote all the inspiring work happening through Erasmus+ projects. Tips and trends on how delegates can choose and use the best platforms for their target audiences was a key focus of the presentation.

Khalid Miah, Senior Project Manager of the Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) and stakeholder engagement team at the UK NA highlighted the need to have a clear end goal when planning dissemination in order to reach out to different departments, organisations and involve a diverse range of participants. All the presentations and resources from the group are available on

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

Measuring Impact

The Measuring Impact group focused on maximising the impact of their dissemination. Delegates in the session represented each of the five sectors, and were a mix of new Learning Networks members, as well as delegates who had previously attended at least one, or all of the previous events.

The workshop began looking at how participants describe dissemination with responses including: *'spreading the word'*, *'sharing news outside of the project'* and *'enabling the multiplier effect'*.

Heather Smith from the UK National Agency communications team gave a presentation on the digital tools and resources used and produced by the UK NA to engage and promote all the inspiring work happening through Erasmus+ projects. Tips and trends on how delegates can choose and use the best platforms for their target audiences was a key focus of the presentation.

Stakeholder engagement lead from the UK NA, Kevin Robinson, followed by discussing how to make use of contacts and opportunities from across project organisations and the benefits of engaging with local networks. Using the Impact+ exercise was highlighted as a resource to inform project dissemination plans: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/impact-assessment-resources>

Hearing directly from a project participant was an important aspect for this group and Rachel Breen, a student ambassador from Glasgow University shared how her Erasmus+ placement in France had made an impact on her life and how this was documented. On her return from her placement, Rachel completed a feedback form for her university where she reflected on the new experiences and skills she had acquired. She also completed a language proficiency test to see monitor how her language skills improved. Rachel spoke about the soft skills required during her year abroad and how she has written articles and shares her time abroad with other students at the university. All the presentations and resources from the group are available on the Measuring Impact theme webpage: <https://erasmusplus.org.uk/learning-networks-topics/Measuring-Impact>

Panel discussion

The afternoon session was an opportunity for delegates to hear from a panel of experts and take part in a question and answer session on the theme of promotion and dissemination. The panel, hosted by Faye Hindle-Lewis, UK NA communications team leader, included:

Iverene Bromfield (Dundee and Angus College), Morag Cassidy (Light on the Path and Werkcentre Scotland) and Digital media expert Jennifer Jones.

A key question discussed by the panel featured around one of the major responses from the pre-event survey: *'how to disseminate with limited time and resources'*. Iverene and Morag shared how they made use of existing networks such as organisational newsletters, as well as internal networks that could be adapted such as a project WhatsApp group which is now used to collate participant content.

A key point made by Jennifer was to “empower participants to tell their own stories” and then curate this around a hashtag or event. For example, enabling participants to create their own content in a safe environment with some established ground rules, and then bring these stories together. Jennifer shared a digital storytelling toolkit which as a useful resource to achieve this:

<http://digitalcommonwealth.co.uk/2014/09/18/handbook-of-digital-storytelling/>

As a result of the questions and discussions from the event, the UK NA is developing a digital toolkit as a resource to support beneficiaries with their promotion and dissemination which shall be shared after the event.

Next steps for Learning Networks

The next Learning Networks event will be held in winter 2017. We have a dedicated mailing list providing 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 the strategic direction for the initiative in 2017 as follows;

1. Consult with members on the current themes of the Learning Networks and what they would like to see at future events including other topics or thematic areas;
2. Share outputs from the day including the new digital toolkit resource produced by the UK NA to support beneficiaries with promotion and dissemination; and
3. Continue to provide opportunities for delegates to share learnings from the day and network 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 sector colour-coded table excludes delegates who opted not to share their contact details.

	Name	Organisation	Email
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Key



Multiple



Schools



Adult education



Y

