



 **léargas**

Forum 2014

**Dublin Castle
Conference
Centre**

**11
December
2014**

Forum Summary



Forum Summary

The Léargas Forum brought together Erasmus+, Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action participants and practitioners from the formal and non-formal education sectors for a day of celebration and analysis of international collaboration. Over 140 people from organisations across the country joined us for the event in Dublin Castle Conference Centre in December 2014. We intend to make this an annual occasion for sharing experience and expertise, and are planning the next Forum for **10 December 2015**.



The Forum began with a presentation from Séamus McLoughlin, Principal Officer in the International Section of the Department of Education and Skills, setting out the Irish and European [policy contexts for Erasmus+](#). This was a useful reminder that European projects are not carried out in isolation, but contribute to the achievement of wider national and international goals. This point was underlined by the Project Exhibition, where practitioners showcased projects covering an extremely wide range of topics and target groups that nonetheless reinforced the fundamental themes of Erasmus+:

improving skills, encouraging partnership and increasing engagement. These themes were also reflected in the projects and schools which won eTwinning Quality Label Awards, presented on the day by Léargas Director Jim Mullin.



The [consultation process](#) between Léargas and practitioners regarding strategic implementation of Erasmus+, which began at the programme launch event in May 2014, continued through four facilitated workshops based on practitioners' indicated areas of interest. Practitioners also had the opportunity to consult directly with Léargas staff about current or future project work.

The presence of so many young people and adults who directly participated in projects was a welcome addition to the event, and was first-hand evidence of the impact that European programmes can have. We were delighted that two participants, Sally Flynn and Pa Win from St. Michael's Youth Project, were able to join Cavan Institute's project coordinator Catherine Fox to talk about Erasmus+ on the Pat Kenny Show that day.

Léargas would like to thank all who attended for their participation on the day, and in particular those who contributed their expertise to the workshops and exhibition space. The outcomes of the workshops are summarised in this document, and points raised in evaluation forms or during the day are addressed at the end of this document.



Presentations, Awards & Exhibition



Seamus McLoughlin: 'Policy Context of Erasmus+'

[Click for the full presentation](#)

- EU member states have full responsibility for the content and organisation of education systems
- The EU's role is to encourage and facilitate cooperation between states
- 'Europe 2020' is a set of agreed common goals that will allow Europe to compete in a globalised world, in terms of productivity, quality and innovation
- Education and training are crucial for both economic and social progress, as they bolster personal development, active citizenship and social inclusion
- Among the country-specific education and training goals for Ireland are reducing the percentage of early school leavers, increasing participation in third level education, and aligning skills with labour market needs to achieve employability for young people and adults
- Erasmus+ is one of the identified available mechanisms for improving the performance of education and training systems in order to reach these goals

eTwinning Quality Label Awards winners

Congratulations to the teachers granted awards for their excellent eTwinning projects

- Amy Ní Chofaigh, Gaelscoil de hÍde, Co. Roscommon
- Brendan O'Dwyer, St. Michael's Boys' School, Co. Galway
- Ciara Rock, Salesian College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick
- Mairéad Breathnach, Gaelscoil Mhuscraí, Blarney, Co. Cork
- Mary Purcell, Scoil Eoin, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5
- Peggy Cheevers, Carrick National School, Co. Roscommon
- Sheila Hession, Claregalway National School, Co. Galway



Project Exhibitors

Thank you to all the exhibitors, who represented their projects so well!

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| • Ballymun Regional Youth Service | • IT Tralee |
| • Cavan Institute | • Lingua Swap |
| • Coláiste Íde | • Meán Scoil Mhuire |
| • Complex Youth | • National Youth Council of Ireland |
| • European Youth Parliament | • Neighbourhood Youth Project 2 |
| • eTwinning Awardees | • PRO Sign (TCD) |
| • Eurodesk | • Quality & Qualifications Ireland |
| • Fast Track to IT Ltd | • St Andrew's Talk about Youth Project |
| • Fingal County Council | • St Sylvester's Infant School |
| • Europe Direct Information Centre | • Translex |
| • Galway Technical Institute | |



Good Practice Models for International Work

Facilitator: Annette Honan

Participants discussed a number of real world examples of international work, including websites and extracts from application forms. Conversation around these examples identified some specific challenges in carrying out international work in the education and training sector.

In the school sector, the issue of School Inspectors not explicitly recognising the value of international work in their reports was raised.

The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural areas can also affect ability to take part in international projects e.g. in one case, a school's Board of Management was paying for faster broadband to enable the school to work with ICT and to support European projects.



In Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (Strategic Partnerships) there can be difficulty in managing funding when the lead partner has control of the finances, and perhaps consequently becomes the driver of the project rather than a partner. Participants asked for support from Léargas on this issue and for examples of agreements which partners could use between themselves.

Participants also highlighted the benefits of international work. One commented, "Why did I get involved in a Comenius Project? Because I wanted my staff to come whistling to work!"

[Click to access the full report.](#)



Measuring Impact of European Projects

Facilitator: Helen Newman

Measuring impact is a concern both of practitioners and project funders. While funders may focus on value for money, practitioners may want to measure intangible benefits such as increases in participants' self-esteem and motivation, and to use results to create positive change in their sector.

Measurement must be qualitative as well as quantitative, taking into account the results for participants and organisations.

Many organisations already use qualitative methods to measure impact, such as surveys, focus groups, participants' reports, exit evaluations, and self-assessment using Cantril's Ladder. However informal mechanisms such as Facebook posts, blogs, and conversation can also reflect impact on participants and should not be discounted.

Significant challenges in measuring impact were

identified, including following up with participants after they have completed the project; a perceived pressure to over-declare impact; the need for extra resources; uncertainty about indicators; and gaining feedback from partners. Project coordinators also felt that the time between completion of a project and submitting the Final Report can be too short to see the full impact.

The increased emphasis on impact and dissemination in Erasmus+ has made measuring impact an area of focus for coordinators. However there is some confusion and nervousness about how best to do so. Workshop participants requested further guidance and support from Léargas/ the European Commission on this, including the provision of Key Performance Indicators for projects.

[Click to access the full report.](#)



Improving Employability for Young People & Adults

Facilitator: Jessica Carson

Employability is an important social as well as economic priority. Society tends to place high status on being employed; there is a danger that unemployed young people and adults can feel excluded or disconnected from society.

However, 'employability' cannot stand alone as a priority but must be considered holistically and take into account the close relationship between people and the work they do.

For unemployed people, there is a risk of education and training becoming a 'conveyor belt to jobs', which may reach targets but does not consider the needs of the individual. This can lead to a mismatch between the person and the job. This approach should be challenged, as it can adversely affect people's experience and approach to learning.



Studies indicate that a high performing economy is one where wellbeing is addressed. The 'five ways to wellbeing' should be taken into account when working to increase an individual's employability skills. These are: Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Give, and Connect.

When considering employability, emphasis must be placed on developing skills such as teamwork and collaboration as well as professional qualifications.

When working with young people and adults to increase employability skills, it is important to nurture knowledge, understanding, skills, behaviours, values and attitudes in a holistic sense. This protects their wellbeing and enables young people and adults to survive and thrive in the future.

[Click to access the full report.](#)



ECVET is the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, a framework for the recognition and transfer of individuals' learning outcomes from one learning environment to another. ECVET is in use across Europe and Léargas has recently assumed responsibility for ECVET in Ireland.

There is a comprehensive process or toolkit for implementing ECVET online at www.ecvet-toolkit.eu.

In the Irish VET context, ECVET can be used to facilitate credit transfer from one learning institution to another after a period of learning abroad ('learning mobility'). The outcomes of

ECVET in Learning Mobility

Facilitator: Patrick Halley

learning mobility can then be integrated easily into the intended qualification in Ireland. There is particular intersection between the FETAC 'Transnational experience' module and ECVET.

Feedback from practitioners at the workshop was that using ECVET had helped them streamline and manage their projects more effectively.

All workshop participants agreed to form a community of practice to contribute to the evolution of ECVET use in Ireland.

[Click to access the full report.](#)





The workshops and post-Forum evaluation forms produced a number of valuable suggestions for Léargas specifically, regarding both assistance for practitioners and the development of Erasmus+ in Ireland. Initiatives currently underway to support and promote the sectors in which we work include:

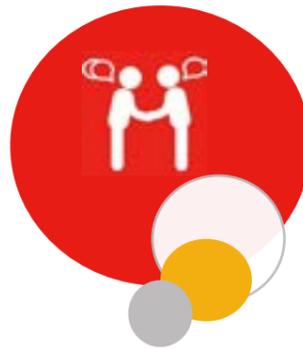
- The launch of a new Léargas website in April 2015. This will be a fully responsive website (compatible with tablets and smartphones), with streamlined information on how to apply for, manage and report on European projects. It will incorporate a discussion facility, blog, and designated sections for sharing success stories and examples of good practice.
- As one of its strategic goals for the coming years, Léargas plans to carry out an impact assessment of Erasmus+ in the sectors it manages in Ireland. In 2015 Léargas will develop a performance monitoring framework and a plan for evidence-based analysis of Erasmus+ in Ireland. This will be developed in consultation with project coordinators and Léargas hopes that it will be useful or transferable to them in future.

Specific points raised by Forum participants are addressed by Léargas below.

Networking

Many participants highlighted networking as a beneficial aspect of the day for them. Some suggested that hosting a Contact Making seminar between Irish organisations would be helpful.

While funding for a national Contact Making seminar is not available, this idea may be incorporated into the 2015 Léargas Forum. Project Management days are another networking opportunity for beneficiaries.



Information & Documentation

Participants requested provision of the following documents or information:

- ‘Good Practice – Questions to consider’
- A sample Partnership Agreement for organisations involved in KA2 projects
- Full reports from the Forum Workshops
- Explanatory model application forms
- Explanatory model Final Reports
- More case studies of good practice projects
- Information/support on how to manage workload and finances when not the lead partner in a project



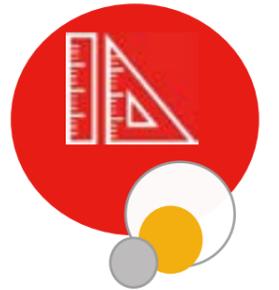
The full Workshop reports and all supporting documents are available [on our website](#). Information on completing e-forms is being developed and will be available on our re-launched website, as will case studies of good practice. In addition, the Application Clinics and Workshops hosted by Léargas before each deadline offer extensive support on completing e-forms. The area of partnership will be considered for a future workshop theme.



Measuring Impact

Participants requested greater guidance from Léargas and the EU on the area of measuring impact. The following supports were requested:

- The provision of Key Performance Indicators for projects by the EU
- Funding for pre-application meetings, so that partners can establish a plan for measuring impact from the beginning of a project
- Later reporting deadlines so that impact can be more clearly identified between a project’s completion and submission of final report
- Examples of successful impact measurement from other projects
- Workshops for projects on impact



Feedback regarding provision of Key Performance Indicators and funding for pre-application meetings will be communicated by Léargas to the European Commission.

Deadlines for final report submission are mandated by the project contract, based on European Commission guidelines. Impact measurement is an area of focus in the Léargas Strategy Statement 2015-17 and we will be liaising with practitioners about this over the coming year. Impact measurement will also be considered as a theme for future workshops.

If you have feedback on this document or would like to get involved in the Erasmus+ consultation group, please email the Léargas Communications unit at comms@leargas.ie.

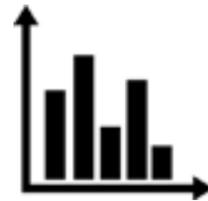




Themes of particular interest to participants

Measuring impact of European projects

50%



Good practice models for international work

47%



Improving employability for young people and adults

43%



Participants' preferred methods for engagement over the coming 12 months

Attend the 2015 Léargas Forum

100%



Contribute to online discussion

80%



Contribute to Léargas blog

37%





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