Léargas Forum | CONNECT+

Dublin Castle Conference Centre, 10 December 2015

#leargasforum

Forum Summary
The Léargas Forum once again brought together participants and practitioners from the formal and non-formal education sectors for a day of celebration and analysis of international collaboration. The theme of this year’s Forum was ‘Connect’ and there were ample opportunities for learning and connecting at our series of morning workshops, the Forum Café, and the Project Showcase. There was time for inspiration too, provided by Father Peter McVerry in his keynote speech, as well as from our presenters of the TED-type talks in the afternoon. And there was also time for delight: the talented performers of the ‘The Core’ dance group from Inchicore College of Further Education and the ‘Hands in Motion’ choir from St. Mary’s School for Deaf Girls brought to life beautifully the programmes we manage.

This document provides you with a concise summary of the day, supplemented by links to more detailed information. Click through to listen to interviews, speeches and videos. We would like to thank the Youth Media Team for their valued presence at this year’s event - this group of young people report on educational events around the country and interviewed Léargas director Jim Mullin, Father Peter McVerry and others at the Forum.

As ever, we would be delighted to hear your opinion: you may wish to provide detailed feedback on the day here. Or if you wish to contact us with less formal comments, contact comms@leargas.ie. We extend our sincerest thanks to all the speakers, facilitators, exhibitors and participants for making this year’s forum such a special day. We look forward to seeing you again at the 2016 Forum!
“What are we doing when we work with young people on the margins? We’re not trying to change them; still less are we trying to control them. Nobody wants to be controlled and anyway we can’t change people. The only people who can change people are themselves. All that we can do is to encourage people, to walk with people, to open doors for people, support them and open the possibilities to them that were not previously available. Our job is to walk with people” - Father Peter McVerry.

The Peter McVerry Trust works to reduce homelessness and the harm caused by social disadvantage, and has been involved with the European Voluntary Service (EVS) for the past ten years. It has both sent and hosted many young volunteers through the service. Father Peter McVerry’s inspirational keynote address focused on the importance of a social development model that prioritises people over profit, the affirmation of the dignity of people over economic growth, and the role that Léargas-managed programmes like EVS have in “allowing people to grow and develop extra opportunities and choices in life”. The overarching message was that we are ‘planting seeds’ with our projects. Even if we never see the fruits, we must work with the hope that our interactions with people are making a difference to their lives and to our community.

Themes of development, strategic partnership, mobility and how the “philosophy and methodology of Léargas should become mainstream in every organisation” ran throughout. If social development is about expanding the opportunities available to young people and those on the margins, Father McVerry argued that involvement in Léargas programmes was a key factor in achieving this. Giving people the opportunity to travel abroad, and to experience other peoples, other cultures and other possibilities is, as he said, “extraordinarily affirming for them”. He stressed the importance of these programmes for organisations too. Strategic Partnerships are “the way we have to go” in ensuring that our organisations adapt to an era of rapid change: “We need to be learning, we need to be listening and we need to be adapting”.

We sincerely thank Father McVerry for being a part of the day. Listen to the full speech via the link above and to his interview with the Youth Media Team below.
The Core Dance Company, Inchicore College of Further Education

The Core Dance Company is made up of advanced third-year students, who have completed their two-year dance performance course. They opened the Léargas Forum 2015 with a performance of their piece ‘Uniquity’.

Uniquity was created in June 2015 under the mentorship of Jackie Simoncelli at the Pacifique Choreographic Centre in Grenoble, France. The group travelled there as part of Inchicore College’s Erasmus+ VET Key Action 1 project. This dance has also been performed in Grenoble, France; at the Irish Youth Dance Festival; the Belfast Festival; and the Aviva Stadium.

Click here for more about The Core Dance Company.

Hands in Motion, St. Mary’s School for Deaf Girls, Cabra

The Hands in Motion choir received the European Language Label award in 2015. The choir was set up six years ago by Shirley Higgins, a teacher in St. Mary’s School, and began with just eleven girls. It now has over sixty members, both boys and girls, ranging in age from four to 20. Music is a huge part of school life at St. Mary’s. Shirley told our audience that “It’s amazing to walk into a Deaf school and the first thing you actually hear is music. To see Deaf young people walking around school singing and signing is just breathtaking”.

Students’ level of deafness does not impact on their ability to take part in the choir. Some students can hear the music and words, some hear only the music, and some have no hearing but use eye contact with the choire leader to follow the music. The choir performed three songs: ‘May the road rise to meet you’, ‘Lean on me’, and the very seasonal ‘Merry Christmas Everyone’!

Find out more about the Hands in Motion Choir on our YouTube channel.
Workshops

We held four parallel workshops on the themes of Dissemination, Impact, Participation and Recognition. Responding to feedback from last year’s Forum, most of the workshops had a practical, ‘how-to’ focus enabling participants to add value to their projects.

Dissemination: How to share project results with the wider community
Facilitator: Charis Hughes, Léargas

The workshop began with an ice-breaking game that opened up discussion of who we perceive to be in our ‘wider community’ and how we communicate with them. The group considered the distinction between dissemination and promotion: promotion is about making people aware of your project, while dissemination means sharing your project results with those who can use them. However, both require the same process to be effective: identify your audience, decide your message and choose clear and appropriate methods of communication.

When identifying audience, it’s helpful to think creatively about who you need to reach rather than focusing solely on existing networks or participants. One approach is to ask yourself who can benefit from the knowledge and results you have to share, and who can take action based on it. It’s helpful to decide within your project group what messages you want to share, and to build a dissemination plan into your project so that you share your learning from the beginning. The method of communication should be appropriate for the audience you’re trying to reach e.g. for a young audience, social media might be more effective than print. Dissemination does not need to be large-scale or dramatic to be valid: even an informal conversation would be considered effective dissemination if it leads to action!

Participants highlighted some examples of dissemination that worked well for them, including: use of Google ad grants; linking with similar organisations; getting everyone in the project involved in dissemination; use of Facebook ads; joining existing events; making short videos (3 minutes maximum); and using the learners’ voices. Finally, participants were introduced to the Erasmus+ Project Results platform and its role in dissemination.

Outcomes from this workshop will be included in a Léargas Dissemination toolkit to be produced in 2016.

Impact: How to measure and improve the impact of projects
Facilitator: Natalie Parish, ISOS Partnership

This workshop introduced the Erasmus+ performance framework that Léargas has been developing in conjunction with ISOS Partnership. The framework is intended to:

- Track the impact of funded projects during and after their implementation so that we can create a culture of continuous improvement and learning throughout Erasmus+.
- Demonstrate to funders, policy makers, potential applicants and the wider public the impact that Erasmus+ investment has had in Ireland.

The framework has been developed with the support of organisations that have already benefited from Erasmus+ funding, and will be introduced in partnership with Erasmus+ funded organisations over the 2016-17 financial year. It is evidence-based and includes self-assessment by the organisation, along with some moderated evaluation by Léargas. It identifies four key groups affected by projects: learners, educators, learning organisations, and the wider community/young people’s voice. Organisations are asked to consider the progress of each of these groups on a continual improvement scale of ‘beginning – developing – embedding – leading’ as their involvement with Erasmus+ unfolds.

The workshop group found the framework a very useful tool and were pleased to see investment from Léargas in developing the model. They could see progression for their own projects and organisations through using it. They remarked that the framework could be used retrospectively and that it would help organisations to see the value of their own learning at the end of a cycle, which would be particularly helpful for longer projects. Questions included how ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’ would be defined, and whether the framework would allow space for different types of evidence. Some commented that if the model is to cover the experiences of pre-school to adult learners, it would be important to ensure that the voice of learners is captured through the mediators.

Next steps in the process will include further training for users of the performance framework model, and its inclusion in Erasmus+ Project Management Days. It was suggested that Léargas should create clusters of projects to assist with networking and sharing experiences of using the framework, and compile a ‘How to’ guide for its use.
Participation: Young people shaping society - are we there yet?
Facilitators: Bernadette Larkin and Dermot O’Brien

This workshop examined how Erasmus+ has enhanced the experience of youth participation, and how it can be used to ensure diversity in the selection of young participants. It also looked at the methods and tools available to optimise the influence of young people on decision makers.

The participant group was diverse and included a large proportion of young people, who shared their own experiences of politics and the reality of challenging existing structures. The group as a whole discussed how to make the connection between the personal and the political relevant for young people. There was a particular focus on how to empower and encourage young people with fewer opportunities to use their voices for change, and on connecting with disaffected young people. The conflict between encouraging young people to challenge or conform to power structures in their lives was also highlighted.

The workshop identified the potential for Léargas to encourage more young voices to be heard through the growth of structured dialogue programmes (Erasmus+ KA3), and to encourage more diversity within them. Léargas will explore providing further training and support for projects to fully use the structured dialogue process.

Read the Youth Media Team blog about the workshop.

Recognition: How to use European recognition tools in mobility projects
Facilitator: Marie Cleary, Léargas

This workshop started with an overview of European recognition systems, and continued with input from practitioners about their use in mobility projects. Donegal Youth Service presented their experience of using YouthPass, and Mobility Consultant Catherine Fox spoke about using ECVET and Europass in VET mobility projects.

This was followed by small group discussions of key topics relating to recognition. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds in VET, Youth, Adult Education and School Education, so there was substantial cross-sectoral learning and sharing of experience. Topics of particular concern to participants were gaining knowledge of suitable recognition tools, and bridging the gap between knowledge and implementation.

Participants discussed their own experience of using European recognition tools in mobility projects. The advantages highlighted were: common reference systems across countries; transparency; improving access for learners; added value; confidence building; recognition of soft skills; and enhancing transnational employability and transversal skills. Participants exchanged experience of using reflective practice to help participants identify their own learning. Examples included: Youthpass; learner self-assessment workplans; learner journals; participant self-evaluation; and the ‘Photo Speak’ app that animates users’ photographs and mirrors their voices.

The group then exchanged their own ‘top tips’ for integrating European recognition tools into their mobility projects. These included: use of blending tools; establishing a community of learners; being solution based; learning to learn and focus on key competencies; having a flexible approach to learner-driven autonomy and student motivation; and both formal and informal sectors being open to learning from each other.

Participants who wished to explore the subject further were notified of the Quake Strategic Partnership project on implementation of ECVET, that included a seminar in Limerick on 12 February 2016.
TED-TYPE TALKS

This year saw the introduction of our “TED-type Talks”, with inspirational inputs from four of our Erasmus+ participants:

- Youth worker/trainer Nora Furlong from FDYS, Wexford
- Teacher Kieran Brosnan from St. Paul’s Parish Primary School, Portlaoise
- Adult educator and theatre director Peter Hussey from Crooked House Theatre Company, Kildare
- Former EVS volunteer Sheila Quigley from St. Michael’s Youth Project Inchicore, Dublin.

Listen to their five-minute talks below!

Nora Furlong, Youth Worker
Kieran Brosnan, Teacher, St. Paul’s Primary School
Peter Hussey, Adult Educator, Crooked House Theatre Company
Sheila Quigley, Youth Worker, St. Michael’s Youth Project, Inchicore

Clockwise from top left: Nora Furlong, Kieran Brosnan, Sheila Quigley and Peter Hussey
Project Showcase
Click the organisation names for more information

**ADULT EDUCATION HUB**

- **Erasmus+ Adult Education KA1**
  - Social & Health Education Programme
  - Coolmine Therapeutic Community
  - Smashing Times

- **Erasmus+ Adult Education KA2**
  - NEAR fm
  - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

- **EPALE**
  - Dundalk Outcomers
  - Peter McVerry Trust

- **Erasmus+ Youth in Action KA1**
  - FDYS, Wexford

- **Erasmus+ Youth in Action KA2**
  - NYCI Structured Dialogue

- **Causeway**
  - St. Andrew’s Talk about Youth Project
  - Eurodesk Ireland

- **Photo Exhibition | Chasing the Rainbow**
  - Humans of the Rainbow

**SCHOOLS HUB**

- **Erasmus+ School Education KA1**
  - eTwinning
  - eTwinning Quality Label winners
  - Davis College, Cork

- **Erasmus+ School Education KA2**
  - St. Mary’s Parish Primary School, Louth
  - Scoil Mhuire Lourdes, Cork

- **Erasmus+ VET KA1**
  - Inchicore College of Further Education

- **Erasmus+ VET KA2**
  - H2 Learning
  - IAESTE Ireland

- **IAESTE Ireland**
  - Lucan Community College

- **European Day of Languages**
  - Hands in Motion
  - Lingua-App
  - Mary Immaculate College/Bua na Cainte
  - Teanga.me
  - University of Limerick

**LANGUAGES HUB**

- **eTwinning**
  - Davis College, Cork

- **IAESTE Ireland**
  - Lucan Community College

- **European Day of Languages**
  - Hands in Motion
  - Lingua-App
  - Mary Immaculate College/Bua na Cainte
  - Teanga.me
  - University of Limerick
eTwinning Quality Label Awards winners
Congratulations to the teachers granted awards for their excellent eTwinning projects:

- Amy Ní Cho firg, Gaelscoil de hÍde, Co. Roscommon
- Brendan Colleran, Castletroy College, Co. Limerick
- Ciara Rock, Salesian College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick
- Mairéad Breathnach, Gaelscoil Mhuscraí, Blarney, Co. Cork
- Melissa Sinnott (on behalf of Glenda McKeown), Our Lady of Fatima Special School, Co. Wexford
- Ronan O’ Sullivan, Davis College, Mallow, Co. Cork.

European Day of Languages Competition Winners - Lucan Community College
Congratulations to the teachers and students of Lucan Community College, worthy winners of our ‘A Day in the Life...’ competition. Students studying German wrote imagined diary entries for holocaust survivor Tomi Reichenthal, who lives in Ireland, and presented them in a hand-made book. The winning individual entry told of a harrowing day at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

The prize was for one language and one history teacher from the winning school to take a small group of their pupils to a European city. Lucan Community College were on their way to Bruges, Belgium very soon after this year’s Forum. We were delighted to have them with us on the day to celebrate their achievement.

#LeargasForum Trending
Thanks to everyone who got involved in the Photobooth and Social Media Hub at this year’s forum. We certainly had a lot of fun snapping and tweeting you!

Due to your engagement, #LeargasForum was trending on Twitter in Ireland. If you use Twitter in your work please do follow us at @Leargas!

From our poll on the day it is clear that most of you are using Twitter and Facebook. Our site currently links to both our Twitter and Facebook accounts so Follow us or Like us today and keep up to date with our latest news!

Lots of the photographs from the day are now available in our Facebook photo album.
It was great to hear people’s reactions to the Forum, in person, on social media, and from our feedback forms. Add your voice by telling us your experience of the day.

**Europe for Citizens**

Excellent insightful message from Peter mcverry @PMVTrust regarding value of young people&volunteerism within community work #LeargasForum

“At the Recognition workshop I learned that Ireland is more advanced than other European countries in frameworks – surprised! ECVET is probably the way to go for the future when credits will be portable.”
Kevin Devine, Ballyfermot CFE

**Catheरine Fox**

#Erasmusplus funded programmes can be very effective CPD @TeachingCouncil #LeargasForum #edchatiev

“The dissemination toolkit is a great idea, looking forward to it. Thank you for a brilliant day, it was informative, dynamic and entertaining (performances).”
Ayuna Murphy, Fast Track to IT

**Great @Leargas workshop on communication #erasmusplus project results! #LeargasForum**

**Mister Joe**

@Daizobrien doing @nycinews proud. Rocking youth work #LeargasForum #YoungVoices

“The Erasmus+ Impact framework looks very good, should be useful in informing practice as we work through our project – may need to be modified or be adaptable for primary schools. It was also nice to get an opportunity to talk to other project participants and hear their ideas. The choir were amazing.”
Aidan Crowley, Scoil Mhuire Lourdes

**Erin Savage**

St. Mary's Deaf Choir in Dublin Castle - inspirational and moving. What a treat. #LeargasForum #erasmusplus