

The Case for embedding International Youth Work in Youth Service Delivery in Northern Ireland

Evidence of the benefits, impact and relevance for Youth Services in Northern Ireland and the need to embrace existing and new opportunities presented by the existing and new Erasmus Programmes as a means of supporting the development of leadership, capacity building and social cohesion among young people, young leaders, youth work practitioners and those with a remit for young people.

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The arguments for making a commitment to being involved in International Youth Work, particularly at a European level, need to be more robust. There is now growing evidence of the benefits, but the challenge to convince policy makers in Northern Ireland, and in turn, practitioners, apart from *the few* that has previously been involved and need no convincing, has effectively failed. That is the challenge before us

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Almost inevitably and without fail, at least in my experience, on return from an international programme, young people will ask, when is the next one, can we do it again? A reference of course to the desire to take part in another programme, which can be the gateway to building a new, or different relationship which was perhaps unimaginable before the programme began, now becomes eminently achievable, such has been the life changing impact, or at least how the once-firmly closed door has been wedged open to new possibilities. For those managing the purse strings, this ultimately is a much more efficient way to achieve the same long-term goal we all share, i.e., the personal and social development of young people.

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Just as Johnson and Tatam have observed, *'There is a lack of international material that has a direct bearing on good relations.'* Involvement in Erasmus+ has led *'to eye-opening and awareness-raising processes; a better understanding of societal and political processes and interrelations; a deepening and/or updating of existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values; [and] stimuli and motivation to participate in civil society and democratic life.'* The need for, and the opportunity for a more in-depth exploration of the impact of International Youth Work on Good Relations can be easily accessed through the opportunities presented by current and future Erasmus programmes.

Page 16 The current ‘state of play’ for International Youth Work in Northern Ireland

The role of any Erasmus+ tailored-service in Northern Ireland should be to raise awareness, nurture curiosity, promote engagement, increase accessibility, support participation, identify goals, measure impact, document experience, collate evidence, capture the ‘Magic’, celebrate learning, collect ‘Champions’ and generate inspiration among others to travel the same journey.

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At a time when politicians were attempting to incorporate an outcomes-based focus in its Draft Programme for Government, it is imperative that youth service policy-makers advocate the benefits of participation of International Youth Work as contributors to these outcomes.

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Any question of our need to embrace opportunities presented by the incoming Erasmus Programme, or the existing Erasmus+ Programme, to support the development of leadership, capacity building and social cohesion among young people, young leaders, youth work practitioners and the broad youth work community, has never been more clear.

It really should be our collective obligation to ensure that we embed International Youth Work in Youth Service Delivery in Northern Ireland.

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Introduction

I have prepared this paper in an effort to make the case to local youth work communities including practitioners, managers, policy advisors and those in a position to exert influence, that the benefits of involvement and participation in youth work at an international level far outweigh the reasons for non-involvement.

I can say this with absolute certainty - the benefits are not only immense, but often life changing, and not only is there growing evidence to support this claim at national and international level, but in my own work at local level, I have collected testimonials from more than 100 individuals and self-assessments from 90 individuals as evidence of the benefits. Be it young people, young leaders (carving out a career in youth work), qualified youth workers (who have been practicing for years), or those who work with young people but are not youth work trained or qualified, the evidence is now without question.

I make this claim with confidence, as someone who has been directly involved in more than 130 European projects and programmes dating back to 1998. I also say this as someone who most certainly felt like I was floundering somewhat on my first international programme, in what was then, (albeit) a trade union study visit to the Soviet Union in 1988.

I was completely out of my comfort zone. I had never travelled abroad before; had never been on a plane before. The food was different, currency also, not to mention a new language, and no home comforts - sanitation was far from great, for example! In addition, I had never been away with such a large group all of whom were much older, most of whom 'drank' (I didn't at the time) and thus enjoyed socialising together - I was to put it bluntly, a fish out of water. Therefore, I understand the challenges that such an experience can also present. The first few days I wondered why I was there but by the end, I loved the experience and memories that it brought, and embraced the challenges it put before me.

Many years have passed and I now speak from a position of experience having held a number of roles over the years including - Trainer, Facilitator, Co-ordinator, Leader, Advisor, Youth Worker and participant, and in a wide variety of settings including Training Programme, Seminar, Study Visit, Conference, Youth Exchange, Job Shadow, Planning and Evaluation Meetings. I also say this as someone who has experienced those kinds of settings in more than 20 countries.

I make the argument that economically speaking, and from an efficiency point of view, involvement in International Youth Work makes a lot of sense for the Youth Service. For example, I have always argued that you can achieve as much, arguably more, by involving local young people, in an intense weeklong programme with their European peers than if you were trying to engage them, one or two nights per week for say, a year, in their regular setting.

That of course is quite a claim but I will go on to argue the merits of this claim. It is important though to begin this paper by outlining the value of youth work, or non-formal education as it's oft referred to at a European level.

I do so to underline not only the importance of, but also, the recognition that youth work has received at European Level, and in particular, the esteem in which it is held, and the role that 'Europe' views youth work playing in terms of addressing contemporary and future issues. This in itself should give us additional motivation to be central to existing developments, and embrace International Youth Work more fully in the future.

Not to embrace the opportunities currently afforded to us, at least through Erasmus+, and those that might still be accessible to us post-Brexit, i.e., the new Erasmus programme in 2021, would be a collective failure on our part to offer young people potentially the greatest learning opportunities we can offer them, particularly with Brexit in mind.

Fergal Barr
December 2019

Political Context at European Level

The commitment to non-formal education at a European Level is not in doubt – this has become increasingly clear over the years with significant developments being realised since the turn of the century.

The launch of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 signified a further step in the development of EU Youth Policy and reaffirmed Article 126 of the Maastricht Treaty, '*Encouraging the development of youth exchanges*'¹ and was made possible by a new generation of programmes - YOUTH, SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI.

The Commission published its White Paper, *A New Impetus for European Youth*, in 2001 signalling the development of an all-encompassing EU Youth policy and was an attempt by the EC to open up their decision-making process to young people for policies that affect them.

In 2005, the European Council adopted the European Youth Pact, the first time that young people had been the focus of the European Council and underlined the importance of increasing youth employment, improving the social inclusion of vulnerable young people and ensuring that fewer young people left school early.

A Council Resolution in November 2006 '*Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society*' was formally adopted in September 2007 and marked the third generation of programmes including Youth in Action which supported youth policy and its priorities, in particular cross border mobility, volunteering, participation, youth work and political cooperation.

The Commission launched *Youth – Investing and Empowering* in April 2009 in response to the EU's New Social Agenda in 2008. The Strategy recognised youth work as providing added value in the fight against unemployment, school failure and social exclusion and extended an invite to all Member States to organise a permanent and regular dialogue, i.e., '*Structured Dialogue*' with young people.

The Renewed Framework for European Co-operation in the Youth Field 2010-18 was the Council of Youth Ministers' response to the new EU Youth Strategy and geared towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of European co-operation by building a strategy motivated by two interrelated objectives:

- (i) the creation of more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market; and
- (ii) the promotion of active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

The EU Council Resolution on Youth Work in 2010 recognised that '*youth work has a considerable socio-economic potential*' whilst the same resolution, singled-out in the Youth in Action Programme, spoke of providing '*an important contribution to the quality of youth work at all levels, as well as the development of competences among youth workers and youth leaders.*'

In 2011, Pathways 2.0 was designed to increase recognition of non-formal learning/education and youth work in Europe whilst the Renewed European Training Strategy for the Youth in Action Programme defined generic competences for both youth work practitioners and trainers.

The European Council Conclusion on quality youth work in May 2013 aimed to promote an emphasis on quality and the attainment of youth work outcomes, as well as determine the impact of quality

¹ EU Youth Policies – The Transition from the Independent “Youth in Action” to the integrated “Erasmus for All” program and its future impact on Youth Organizations and their work, Fulda H,

youth work through the development of evidence of the same, and encourage, the exchange of good practice, training, skills acquisition and peer-learning.

In 2014, The European Commission published the *Value of Youth Work in the EU* and the Europe 2020 Strategy, *Youth on the Move* which put 'young people at the centre of the EU's agenda to create an economy based on knowledge, innovation, high levels of education and skills, adaptability and creativity, inclusive labour markets and active involvement in society.'

Fast forward a number of years, the new EU Youth Strategy 2019-27 offers further evidence of young people being central to this agenda when it describes how 'young people should not only be architects of their own lives, but also contribute to positive change in society'. The Strategy goes on to outline that

'... youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for empowerment: Youth work brings unique benefits to young people in their transition to adulthood, providing a safe environment for them to gain self-confidence, and learn in a non-formal way. Youth work is known for equipping youth with key personal, professional and entrepreneurial competences and skills such as teamwork, leadership, intercultural competences, project management, problem solving and critical thinking. In some cases, youth work is the bridge into education, training or work, thus preventing exclusion.'

The new Erasmus programme, which will replace Erasmus+ in 2021, is funded to the tune of €28billion - twice that of the existing Erasmus+ budget. Whilst Youth provision in the UK has been savaged by cutbacks in funding over the last 10 years, the Youth Service in Northern Ireland, whilst not immune to cutbacks or change has emerged relatively unscathed.

There is of course no 'magic money tree' but the level of funding available in the next Erasmus cycle is unprecedented and not only provides ample opportunity for the wider youth work community in Northern Ireland to become involved in International Youth Work but should be viewed as a source of co-funding for service delivery.

All of this of course is Brexit-dependant as it is unclear what that status of the UK will be (in relation to the new Erasmus Programme) once it leaves the EU. Reality aside, this should not be a reason for not engaging in International Youth Work. On the contrary, Brexit has inadvertently magnified the need for greater involvement; such has been the divisive nature of the debate with, for example, a rise in hate-crime and hate speech. This alone signifies the need to ensure young people and youth workers are as open to (if not more than ever) engagement with individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities beyond our immediate borders.

The arguments for making a commitment to being involved in International Youth Work, particularly at a European level, need to be more robust. There is now growing evidence of the benefits, but the challenge to convince policy makers in Northern Ireland, and in turn, practitioners, apart from *the few* that has previously been involved and need no convincing, has effectively failed. That is the challenge before us.

Benefits of involvement in International Youth Work

National and International Context

Documenting the benefits of International Youth Work, and in this case, at a European level, has been somewhat slow although it has gathered pace in recent years and there is plenty to suggest why it should be *'woven into the fabric of youth work'*.

Titley (2007), asserts that international programmes support *'workers in developing awareness of cultural issues and the dynamics of cultural identities, and in developing competences for planning and implementing youth activities with an intercultural dimension'*² whilst Cotton (2009) argues that benefits include *'Understanding the global community and seeing the world differently'* as well as *'Cultural awareness or understanding difference.'*³

Wolfgang Ilg describes how, *'young people experience themselves in a new setting, make friends in a group, and get in touch with adolescents from a totally different background. They fall in love with a peer from another country, see how similar and yet different life for youngsters in Europe can be, and learn that a sense of community and caring can bridge cultural and economic gaps.'*⁴

A British Council evaluation of the EU Youth in Action programme in 2010 found *"Young people love this programme, because it provides them with serious but exciting activities combined with fun and friendship, it gives them challenges and responsibilities outside their comfort zones, and it raises their aspirations by taking them out of their normal environment and exposing them to something new"*.⁵

In its interim evaluation of Youth in Action, Ecorys was clear about the success of Youth in Action *'in achieving objectives regarding young people. The Programme also achieves the objectives regarding youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities are actively targeted..... YiA has a sustainable impact on participants and youth workers in terms of participating in events after their participation in the Programme, including continued work for NGOs and increased mobility.'*⁶

SALTO has produced evidence that putting ex-offenders in *'new and different environment[s] forces you to find new solutions for the challenges you meet. In the beginning maybe a frightening experience. But then you discover that you find those new solutions, you find other ways to deal with what comes on your way...and, what's more important, it works, you can do it!'*⁷

Young people from rural backgrounds *'discover new cultures, new people, new places, etc. An international youth activity can be a 'window on the world' where young people have new experiences outside their own communities. They learn that their way of doing things is just one of many. Knowing that things can be done differently (e.g. in different countries) can stimulate young people's creativity, encouraging them to find new solutions to old challenges. It can also increase their empathy, helping them to try and look at things from different perspectives.'*⁸

² Titley G (2007) 'Plastic, Political and Contingent': Culture and Intercultural Learning in Directorate of Youth and Sport Activities. In: Ramberg I. (2007). Intercultural Learning in European Youth: Work Which Ways Forward. Council of Europe (p61)

³ Cotton N (2009) *Global Youth Work in the UK: Research Report* Here and There Consultancy (p22)

⁴ *Learning Mobility and Non-Formal Learning in European Contexts – Policies, Approaches and Examples, Evaluation of international youth exchanges*, Ilg W.,

⁵ This is ... Youth in Action. A report based on an evaluation of the EU Youth in Action Programme in the UK (2010), British Council, London

⁶ Youth in Action Interim Evaluation, Ecorys, 2011

⁷ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionresources/inclusiongroups/inclusionoffenders/InclusionOffendersBenefits/>

⁸ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionresources/inclusiongroups/inclusionrural/InclusionRuralBenefits/>

A survey⁹ of over 300 practitioners in 2014 (including European practitioners)¹⁰ found that the main benefits to young people included an increase in confidence and self-esteem (66.31%), learning about [their] own culture or other cultures (60.28%), an increase in tolerance and acceptance of 'others' (56.38%) and greater self-awareness (36.17%).

The opportunity to share, compare and contrast practice (61.82%) and critically reflect on own practice and consider the impact of that practice (52.73%) in addition to increased knowledge of youth work contexts in other countries (45.09%) and enhanced ability to interact with *others* from a diverse range of backgrounds (38.91%) were the top four benefits for practitioners.

The *Value of Youth Work in the EU* (2014) reported a '*Growing body of international evidence about the impacts of youth work and the characteristics that make it successful to inform practice and overall to support the future of youth work*'¹¹.

A study of Youth in Action also found that participation in YiA activities led to '*considerable development of competences for citizenship....positive impact on behaviour....significant effects on organisations in the direction of improved quality of support....[and] positive impacts on persona development of participants*'¹²

Published In 2017, *Studying the impact of international youth work: Towards developing an evaluation tool for youth centres*¹³, lends further weight to the benefits of involvement in International Youth Work. The report involved Youth Centres in three countries – Finland, Estonia and Slovenia – and presents the expertise and knowledge youth centres have gained by organising international youth work processes.... the main objective [of which] was to gain an overview of the impact of international youth work conducted by youth centres.' Among its findings were:

- '*...international youth work provides young people with the opportunity for a "fresh start" so that they can implement their goals in surroundings without the weight of previous "baggage" or stigma from their everyday life. This helps to create an environment where both the young people and youth workers can see the full potential of individuals, and thus challenge and support individual development.*'
- '*The involvement of young people in international youth work seems to connect with individual transitions: from being young people to becoming adults, from consumers to producers and the claim of power over life decisions. The young people experience "finding themselves" through the positive challenges that international youth work activities pose and lead to transition and growth.*'
- '*International activity can only happen when young people claim ownership for running an activity. Naturally, this is a good learning process for young people in finding their voice, having a say, and making an impact in a democratic way....In other words, the stories express how international activity encourages young people to take ownership of international processes themselves through their involvement and to increase their role as they continue to participate.*'
- '*...it also seems typical that enduring relationships are created during international youth work activity. Young people are not only seen as participants in a single activity, but they are viewed from a wider perspective. Thus, youth work aims to attain long term relationships and young people are also encouraged to have a similar attitude.*'

⁹ Carried out by The Inside Our Programme as part of an exercise into 'Mapping the Benefits of International Youth Work'

¹⁰ 87% of which were either working directly or indirectly with young people; at least one-quarter had been involved in a minimum of 16 international youth work programmes; 70% of respondents had experienced at least 3 programmes

¹¹ European Commission, (2014) *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union*, European Commission

¹² Ohana Y., (2016) Youth in Action Findings and Implications for Practice (p4)

¹³ Anu Gretschel (Ed.), Tina Cupar, Merle Linno, Tomi Kiilakoski, Noora Hästbacka & Antti Korhonen

- *'Although it is often thought that international youth work generates considerably more work for the youth workers, based on the stories it is also possible to say that some of the challenges that the young people enjoyed would not have existed if the international dimension had not been introduced. In an intercultural setting, the situations that occur are new and challenging for everyone (yet in a safe way) and they also bring more authenticity to the responses and reactions of the people involved.'*

One of its main conclusions stated:

'The results of the pilot survey identified considerable growth in the investigated competences recognised by the respondents. There were altogether 102 respondents from three countries. On average 75–95 % of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they recognised growth in intercultural (includes for example openness and tolerance), personal (to set and achieve life goals) and social (cooperation to achieve common goals) competences.'

A draft report from the RAY (Research based Analysis of Youth in Action) published in 2018 has sought to examine how Erasmus+: Youth in Action contributes to the development of citizenship competence. Using a mixed-method approach involving more than 2000 participants, the study has summarised:

'.....that E+/YiA projects do exhibit effects on their participants in certain areas related to active citizenship and participation....[including]...eye-opening and awareness-raising processes; a better understanding of societal and political processes and interrelations; a deepening and/or updating of existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values; [and] stimuli and motivation to participate in civil society and democratic life.'

Local Context

In recent years, the language of participation and active citizenship has oft been articulated as goals and outcomes for young people through various policy instruments including *PEACE*, Programme for Government, *T:BUC*, and *Priorities for Youth*. This begs two questions:

- (i) if these benefits are evidently achievable through participation in E+/YiA, then why has involvement in (International Youth Work through) Erasmus+ (primarily) not been embraced more fully;

and

- (ii) why has this not been more of a priority for policy makers, advisors and influencers alike?

In its 2012 report, *Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work*, The Youth Council for Northern Ireland highlighted many of the benefits not only for the individual but also for 'the state.' With particular regard to Youth Work, it provides a useful overview of benefits to participants, practitioners, partner organisations, the community, policy makers and employers (Appendix 1) as well as an outline of outcomes for the youth work curriculum in addition to benefits to practitioners, partner organisations, young people and the community (Appendix 2).

According to the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, International Youth Work *'makes a significant contribution to the personal and social development of young people and there is evidence that anticipated learning outcomes are delivered in a relatively short period of time [in]....environments*

*where identity, nationality, culture and religions are not necessarily seen as divisive. This produces a basis from which to explore and appreciate diversity.*¹⁴

The financial benefits to the local youth work community in Northern Ireland were also identified, so for example, in the five year period between 2007 and 2012, the Youth in Action Programme brought 'in excess of £4M to youth organisations' in Northern Ireland.

The LID Programme

Since 2008, The Inside Out Programme has been involved in promoting international learning opportunities through (its own) *The LID (Leadership through Intercultural Dialogue) Programme*. It has enabled access to almost 300 international learning opportunities for no less than 200 different individuals (from young people to youth workers) in more than 100 programmes.

The underpinning theory of LID is based on the *Theory of Change* popularised by Carol Weiss in which she describes the 'set of assumptions that explain both the mini-steps that lead to the long term goal of interest and the connections between program activities and outcomes that occur at each step of the way.'¹⁵

There are of course quite a number of change theories alongside The Theory of Change itself - Logic Model, Lewin's Three-Step Change Theory and Lippitt's Phases of Change Theory are just a few. The LID Programme - based on Lewin's model that involves a process of 'unfreez[ing]' the status quo, followed by a change in behaviour and concluding with 'refreezing.'

In 2013, Inside Out commissioned an evaluation of 'LID'. In the period between April 2008 and September 2013, the organisation, provided international opportunities for 141 different individuals - 42 young people, 43 youth workers, 22 young leaders and, 34 other practitioners with a remit for young people - from 46 different organisations in 62 programmes in more than 20 countries. The evaluation found that its programme of activities was a:

*'significant contributing factor to enhanced cultural diversity, Interculturalism and good relations...the two foremost strengths of the programme identified were 'Enhanced Interculturalism' and 'Bringing People Together'*¹⁶

A follow-up conference in 2015 (facilitated by an international team of facilitators and) documented by an external consultant brought together 47 people from across a range of sectors¹⁷ to focus on discussions around the values and benefits of *the international* and how such engagement can impact on good relations and peace building in Northern Ireland.

Among its conclusions, the conference found that:

- (i) International experience can build confidence in individuals to communicate and collaborate broadly without (or with less) fear of difference;
- (ii) people who have participated in international experiences reflect that they are more open, more engaging, more actively seeking to work with others, embracing the value of diversity; and
- (iii) International experience brings a new, often fresh, perspective on issues that can reach an impasse when persistently viewed from the same standpoint/s.

Added to this, 90 individuals completed the LID Self-Assessment Tool which (grew out of the Conference and) is a series of statements (63 in total) across three categories, i.e., skills, knowledge

¹⁴ Youth Council for Northern Ireland (2014) *Impact of International Youth Work: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland perspective* YCNI (p6)

¹⁵ <http://www.theoryofchange.org/background/origins.html>

¹⁶ The LID Programme, An independent evaluation of the programme's outcomes, impact and successes. Riggs C., 2012

¹⁷ See Appendix for Full List of sectors and organisations represented.

and attitude, and asks participants to rate themselves, 1 -10 against each statement - 1 being poor, 10 being 'perfect'.

In a nine-month period from 2014 to 2015, ten participants of varying age, experience and backgrounds took part in a wide and diverse range of programmes offered by The LID Programme. In the summers of 2016 and 2018 two groups of young people (28 and 29 respectively including ten young people from Northern Ireland) took part in musical youth exchanges whilst as recently as November 2018, 23 participants (including three from the UK) participated in a Training Programme in Austria.

Completed at the beginning and end of each programme, the LID Self-Assessment Tool recorded a combined increase in skills (19.5%), knowledge (31.75%) and attitude (14%); taken together, an increase of 21.75% across all four groups was recorded.

Education Authority

In 2018, the Education Authority carried out a review of International Youth Work among its registered groups. The review included outcomes from two international study visits in February 2017 - one to Brussels (for youth work managers), and the other, to Helsinki (for youth work practitioners).

The Review reported that *'Both study visit groups felt that, in general, youth organisations in Northern Ireland lagged behind international counterparts in the promotion of, and engagement in, international activity despite the fact that there was broad recognition of the value and benefits these opportunities afforded.'*

Further to this, an online survey found that only one-third of (164) respondents were engaged in International Youth Work and less than half of statutory groups (44%) were involved as compared with their counterparts in the voluntary sector.

The survey also *'asked respondents to rate the importance of current and planned international youth work in relation to effectiveness in realising the six capability-based outcomes¹⁸. International youth work rated particularly effective in meeting all the outcomes, as demonstrated below by a weighted average close to the maximum of 5.'*

Outcomes	Current Activity	Planned Activity
Enhanced personal capabilities	4.5	4.79
Development of positive relations with others	4.6	4.77
Development of thinking and life skills	4.4	4.77
Increased participation	4.4	4.72
Active citizenship	4.2	4.55
Improved health and well-being	3.7	4.28

It is abundantly clear from the growing evidence base, including local data, that a designated policy-led commitment to participation in International Youth Work would have immense benefits for young people and practitioners alike.

¹⁸ These outcomes are generic to all youth work provision as required in the Department of Education's Priorities for Youth policy.

Why has International Youth Work the potential to be transformative?

The environment, interactions, pressures and dynamic is entirely different from that of any young person's 'normal' setting. For example, the challenges, ideas and opinions of others they have to contend with, extends and broaden a young person's capacity to at least begin to tolerate in the first instance, and accept in the second, difference, that they may not have had to countenance before.

Moreover, when a young person begins to think more critically about their own values and beliefs when contrasted with those they have met for only the first time, they begin to rethink their own narrative they have historically articulated in their native environment. They do so because they are no longer merely in the company of their own peers, often having to share meeting space, meal times, accommodation, small groups, activities and one-to-one scenarios with 'others' in the most intensive of environments. Hearing diverse views can also open up space for them to share ideas that previously would have been a step too far among their peers.

Such impact can also be captured, and measured with much greater effect, because it's captured in real time using a wide range of tailored methodologies in-situ and for that particular moment. For example, behaviour comes into much sharper focus in a diverse range of activities over a shorter and more intensive period. The result is that there's no escape or hiding place as you just can't get up and leave and go home. You have to look into the 'whites' of people's eyes and have to be more accountable for your views and actions because you have to explain them there and then, often against the unhindered critique of others. And this accountability and learning can be recorded, evidenced, monitored, evaluated and supported whilst young people are still in that environment as opposed to the next time they come into the club of group session.

The nature of interaction is also 'full-on' so it 'forces' individuals to adapt and overcome, thus maturing more quickly, and growing in stature more readily. Friendships and romance often blossom ensuring that those with previously deeply held convictions are more open to reflection and change, if only to make an impression on another person, whilst support is on-hand throughout the period of the programme from committed staff which, is often not available when the club doors shut, or the group session ends.

Often young people find common ground with others for the issues they face on a daily basis and the environment they occupy for that period because it creates space, time and support not previously or readily available 'at home.'

Momentum is created and captured, and can be built upon almost instantly rather than the 'slow-burn' that is often the case in regular youth work, providing an in-roads to a young person who previously might have been 'out of reach.'

Our lack of diversity 'at home' whilst offering us security also detracts from our capacity to engage with and embrace others who are different to ourselves and thus limits our ability to change. The more diverse the community, people or nation the greater its capacity to contend with change; the more diverse the community, people or nation the greater its ability to accept, understand and transform itself.

Change and Transformation comes about because of having to deal with difference. Every time a young person from Northern Ireland engages with their international peers, s/he has to 'slow down' when speaking in order to be understood, literally. He or she also has to pronounce his or her words more clearly, and has to be more patient so that people can understand more of what is said, how it is said and make sense of the tone used, even if just to 'get' the nuance we use so often to communicate a message.

Young people have to begin to consider (more thoroughly) and reflect more in-depth as to how they normally do things and decide whether it is appropriate, culturally sensitive or even relevant. They have to assume less and question more; they have to make more allowances, sacrifices and compromises, and have to think more and perhaps, talk less. They have to check things more often and critique things more carefully.

Personal change only happens when we have experiences that confront us with new situations, situations we have not encountered before. In addition, personal change only happens if we let it happen – it is much easier to sit in the status quo and not allow ourselves to be confronted by different realities – this doesn't require much effort. We can go with what we know, rest easy and not extend ourselves because it's the easier option; it means we don't have to think more than is necessary; we don't have to make decisions, we don't have to confront our world view because it's much more comfortable to leave it as it is.

To confront and challenge the validity and veracity of our values, beliefs, perceptions and ideals, is to begin to unpick our identity, to chip away at the things that make us 'us' - to question or begin to 'disown' those things we have held dear and stood up for over the years is to appear to be 'weak', that you can't be trusted or (as is the case in some situations) you are a 'turncoat' or you've 'sold out'.

We have grown up in a culture where staying loyal to whatever, be that friends, beliefs or otherwise is a mark of integrity, strength, clarity and unquestionable desire. In a society where conflict is as much part of our fabric as it has been in our history it's important to be strong, to know what you are, to know what you're not, to know where you're going to and so on and so on. To alter this reality is to put all that you know at risk – however, it is the only way to transform our society.

Almost inevitably and without fail, at least in my experience, on return from an international programme, young people will ask, when is the next one, can we do it again? A reference of course to the desire to take part in another programme, which can be the gateway to building a new, or different relationship which was perhaps unimaginable before the programme began, now becomes eminently achievable, such has been the life changing impact, or at least how the once-firmly closed door has been wedged open to new possibilities. For those managing the purse strings, this ultimately is a much more efficient way to achieve the same long-term goal we all share, i.e., the personal and social development of young people.

Relevance of International Youth Work to 'The Local Context'

Many of the characteristics required for peace building in Northern Ireland, e.g., clarifying '*personal attitudes, values and beliefs; recognise, understand and respect difference; [and] develop[ing] respect for others*'¹⁹ are often exhibited in youth work.

Youth Work has been to the forefront of building relationships between communities in Northern Ireland for decades, be that providing safe spaces for young people at the height of 'the Troubles' or most recently as part of Government Strategy in the form of T:BUC (Together: Building United Communities).

Embedding peace has up to now, proven difficult for Northern Irish society as a whole, for example, flags, emblems, parades, punishment beatings/shootings and segregation are among many unresolved issues.

With the stalemate at Stormont and the increased polarisation nurtured by the discourse surrounding BREXIT, the long-term prospects for a lasting peace that allows people to move beyond tribal politics remain a distant goal. Those prospects might be enhanced however if the practice of involving young people, young leaders, youth workers and other practitioners in International Youth Work (IYW) became the norm rather than the exception.

By providing opportunities for members of the wider Youth Work Community to engage with and learn about diversity outside of their normal environment, you 'allow' or enable individuals to change more quickly and more freely. Individuals can reflect on their identity with 'others' who do not pose an immediate threat, nor do they have to fear 'losing face' that comes more readily by being in close proximity to your immediate 'neighbours.'

A group of young Protestants from an interface area in Belfast is more likely to engage with young Palestinians from the West Bank because the threat is not on their doorstep. However, the experience better equips them to engage with their immediate Catholic neighbours thus improving prospects for peace building in the longer-term.

The diverse and unique nature of IYW and the interactive methodologies it advocates, i.e., Training Programmes, Youth Exchanges, Seminars, Planning Meetings, Study Visits, etc, increases the capacity of individuals to build peace because it engages them in intercultural dialogue, which as research suggests '*offers much hope to peace and harmony among nations.*'²⁰ Whilst of course differences exist in Northern Ireland, our culture is predominantly a white, Christian, English-speaking population that shares the same language, has similar names, eats the same food, exhibits the same sense of humour and so on. Our differences are not so different and thus the need to engage much more in-depth at an inter-cultural level is essential.

The number of institutions alone engaged in intercultural dialogue are *too numerous to mention*,²¹ which in itself lends credibility to the notion of intercultural dialogue is the most viable means of building relationships among diverse people.

Intercultural Dialogue encompass elements which are essential for peace-building, i.e., Intercultural Literacy (which includes *understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation*

¹⁹ Curriculum Development Unit, (2003), *Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice*, Department of Education, Antrim (p12)

²⁰ Holmes P (2014). *Intercultural dialogue: challenges to theory, practice and research*. Language and Intercultural Communication, 14:1, 1-6 (p1)

²¹ Holmes P (2014). *Intercultural dialogue: challenges to theory, practice and research*. Language and Intercultural Communication, 14:1, 1-6 (p1)

*and identities necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement*²²) and Intercultural Competence, (which helps *individuals negotiate cultural boundaries throughout their personal encounters and experiences*).²³

The *Youth Work: Model for Effective Practice*²⁴ underpins youth work practice whilst *T:BUC*²⁵ is the Government's Strategy for Good Relations. The three Core Principles of *Youth Work: Model for Effective Practice*, i.e., preparing young people for participation; promoting acceptance and understanding of others and testing and exploring values and beliefs are similar in vein to the key priorities of the *T:BUC* strategy.

T:BUC aims to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full part in building good relations; create a community where division does not restrict life opportunities for individuals; create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

Just over 91% of the 1.8 million people living in Northern Ireland are born here and from this, ninety-eight percent are of a white ethnic background and 85% percent identify as Catholic or Protestant and less than 5% are immigrants from outside of the UK. At least 90% of the population live in segregated areas whilst more than 90% of the school-going population is also segregated.

The demography of Northern Ireland does not overly lend itself to achieving the principles and priorities of either the Model for Effective Practice or *T:BUC*, but the opportunities afforded by International Youth Work through participation in much more in-depth intercultural dialogue stands a better chance of achieving both.

Just as Johnson and Tatam have observed, *'There is a lack of international material that has a direct bearing on good relations.'*²⁶ Involvement in Erasmus+ has led *'to eye-opening and awareness-raising processes; a better understanding of societal and political processes and interrelations; a deepening and/or updating of existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values; [and] stimuli and motivation to participate in civil society and democratic life.'*²⁷ The need for, and the opportunity for a more in-depth exploration of the impact of International Youth Work on Good Relations can be easily accessed through the opportunities presented by current and future Erasmus programmes.

²² Heyward M (2002). *Globalized World, From International to Intercultural: Redefining the International School for a globalized world. Journal of Research in International Education* 1 (1) 9 (p10)

²³ *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)* (2013). Intercultural competences: A conceptual and operational framework. Available from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002197/219768e.pdf> (p5)

²⁴ Curriculum Development Unit, (2003), *Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice*, Department of Education

²⁵ NI Executive (2013) *Together: Building a United Community Strategy*

²⁶ Johnson, N. and John Tatam 2009. *Good relations: a conceptual analysis* London: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

²⁷ Long-Term Effects of Erasmus+: Youth in Action, Draft Interim Transnational Analysis (2018)

The current 'state of play' for International Youth Work in Northern Ireland

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland, which, up until it was absorbed into the new Education Authority in 2016, was the only regional organisation promoting International Youth Work in Northern Ireland as well as supporting the involvement of youth work organisations in Erasmus+.

Its role in specifically promoting International Youth Work assumed by the creation of the Educational Authority and now falls under the Regional Youth Support Services. Since being absorbed into the EA, arrangements to ensure greater levels of participation in International Youth Work have benefitted recently from additional resourcing, i.e., it has become a prioritised area of work, additional staff support and guidance materials are available.

There is a need to ensure that the momentum built up over the years through the work of the Youth Council for NI, where Northern Ireland consistently outperformed the rest of the UK, is not lost for good. This takes on greater significance in light of Brexit, to ensure previous levels of commitment to Youth in Action/Erasmus+ are achieved going forward through the new Erasmus programme, or other similar programmes.

Following the 2016 referendum the number of applications from Northern Ireland has dropped. The Education Authority's review of International Youth Work in 2018 noted that *youth involvement from Northern Ireland in Erasmus+ in recent years identified a year-on-year reduction in applications and success rates for these projects...[and] that the submission of applications from the statutory youth service, recognised RVYO's and registered groups is also on the decline. From a peak of 12 in 2014, this reduced by 50% to six applications in 2016, with a further reduction to five in 2017.'*

A further concern raised was in *that in 2014, 2015 and 2016, 53 project applications were unsuccessful or ineligible: 16 deemed unsuccessful due to lack of funds, 29 unsuccessful as they failed the minimum criteria and eight deemed ineligible.*

In 2017, the overall picture in Northern Ireland was as follows: 36 applications (26 KA1, 4 KA2, 3 KA3, 3 Strategic EVS) submitted to the UK NA but only 11 were successful, or at least only 11 funded. This can be a little misleading in that 12 were categorised as unsuccessful because funding for that round was used up even though they might have scored reasonably highly.

In 2018, 33 applications were submitted - 17 KA1, 9 KA2, 1 KA3, & 6 volunteering projects. In rounds 1 and 2, six were successful but 10 unsuccessful (again due to a lack of funds whilst five failed to meet the minimum criteria and one was withdrawn).

What is clear is that not only has the number of applications from N Ireland to the UKNA reduced over the last few years, the level of success previously enjoyed by groups from Northern Ireland under the Youth in Action programme and E+ (initially) have also dropped, suggesting that the quality of application submitted has also declined. Even if the application is deemed good enough, there's not always a guarantee of funding being available, reducing further the potential for groups to commit to developing/making an application.

It might be a little inaccurate to attribute the total drop in the number of applications to BREXIT. Anecdotal evidence most certainly suggests that uncertainties created by BREXIT is a major contributing factor. However, changes in the programme, the complexities of the application and reporting process, re-structuring and transitioning of youth services, new and evolving youth sector support structures and public bodies receiving less in terms of organisational support costs has also complicated matters.

Looking back over the period 2014 – 2019 (up to and including October deadline/Round 2), it's interesting to note that 37 organisations/bodies have made 104 successful applications across all Key Actions - 80% of these were KA1 Mobility Projects, e.g., Youth Exchange, Training Programmes, etc. Whilst this reads well on first glance, there has in fact only been, on average six applications approved per round (three rounds per year).

In addition to this, it's also worth noting that only seven of the organisations (19%) were responsible for the majority of applications, i.e., 61 (59%). Worryingly, only 11 of the 37 organisations that were successful could be categorised strictly as Youth Organisations (30%) but on a positive note they were responsible for 41 applications (39%). However, two of these no longer exist and only three have a presence in the West. Going by these figures, less than 1/3 of youth organisations are applying to Erasmus+.

Considering the size of the youth sector in Northern Ireland (voluntary and statutory sectors) included, it is incredible that only 11 youth organisations/bodies have successfully applied in the last 5 years.

Looking back, the Youth Council for NI had made a major contribution in ensuring that Northern Ireland as a region was always well represented when it came to the number of applications made and the number of applications approved.

The pro-active approach of the Youth Council for NI²⁸ in engaging potential applicants was achieved through a number of tailored measures which were designed to ensure Northern Ireland 'held its own' at national level.

The question of why there has been a reduction in the number of applications can be teased out a little more when the barriers to becoming involved in International Youth Work, and more specifically, engaging in Erasmus+ are explored.

Evidence collated by the Youth Council for NI and The Inside Out Programme in recent years has demonstrated that the main barriers to participation include:

- insufficient budget to enable international work to be mainstreamed;
- a lack of knowledge about setting up programmes;
- accessing money and finding partners;
- lack of interest in or acknowledgement of value of international youth work at management level and daily work taking priority; and
- improved terms and conditions of employment.

Study Visits organised by EA in February 2017 not only reaffirmed this but added to these findings when '*group discussions [among participants] highlighted some reasons why this might be the case:*

- *Lack of visibility/priority in policy documents and from management;*
- *Limiting terms and conditions of service;*
- *Competing priorities for practice and for young people;*
- *Increased levels of bureaucracy and associated paperwork;*
- *Lower financial assistance at 50% through Erasmus+ if using EA PIC number;*
- *Safeguarding considerations;*
- *Exchange rate variations between the Euro and £sterling; and*
- *Uncertainties created by 'Brexit'.'*

²⁸ <http://www.ycni.org/downloads-publications/Euro-International/ImpactInternationalYouthWork.pdf>

The on-line survey identified ‘support....[that would] enable engagement in international youth work included:

- *Funding to top-up grants;*
- *Information on funding opportunities to deliver programmes;*
- *Supportive processes to develop applications to Erasmus+ and other funders;*
- *Focused training initiatives, for example, delivered locally, through the Erasmus+ UK National Agency and SALTO Resource Centres;*
- *Regional networking opportunities to share resources and models of practice;*
- *Development of guidelines and procedures for engagement.’*

Additional Recommendations not included in EA’s review but are worthy of consideration in an effort to increase engagement across the sector include:

- the need for a commitment embedded within youth work curricula;
- public endorsement from government departments with a responsibility for youth work;
- ‘Ring fenced’ money from youth work budgets to complement existing funding and regional networks to promote and share learning.

A successful model to support involvement in International Youth Work

Whilst registered EA groups and RVYOs benefit from designated staff, the service once provided by the YCNI to all groups in NI, including those not registered with the then Education & Library Boards no longer exists. That which has come closest to replicating YCNI services, was launched in 2017, albeit temporary in nature, i.e., funded by the European Commission for 12 months.

The Inside Out Programme in Claudy, delivered ‘LID+’, one of seven short-term projects funded by the European Commission to promote Erasmus+, in the post-2016 referendum period. The yearlong project sought to provide tailored services to local organisations across the UK but primarily Northern Ireland.

It had four main outcomes in mind - increases in: (i) awareness of the Erasmus+ Programme (ii) numbers expressing an interest in participating in the Erasmus+ programme (iii) the number of ‘submission-ready’ applications (post-programme) and (iv) the number of applications actually submitted.

Notable among its achievements were:

- (i) 16 KA1 applications submitted to the October 2017 deadline;
- (ii) (a team of nine) UK based Ambassadors were recruited to deliver a range of tailored services to potential applicants;
- (iii) at least 92 formal information and support activities delivered across the UK (not inclusive of the further one-to-one follow-up activity and support provided); and
- (iv) two x 2-day intensive ‘From Idea to Submission’ international Contact Making Seminars involving 17 international and 21 local partners.

An external report measured the projects impact and concluded:

- ***The impact on people:*** *LID+ can be deemed to have had a very positive impact on the participants. In general, people are more aware of the opportunities and support available through Erasmus+.*

For those more deeply engaged in the LID+ programme through the Contact Making Seminar and other support measures, the whole experience broke down the programme for them and helped them overcome fears of the whole process being a 'daunting task'.

- ***The impact on practice:*** *a Model of Practice for the delivery of LID+ services emerged, which details the measures required to support and mentor participants through from initial contact, the development of ideas and proposals to final submission of an Erasmus+ application.*
- ***The impact on organisations:*** *a range of organisations developed a significant number of proposals or completed applications. A further consideration will be the need to provide on-going support to any organisation, which is successful in obtaining funding: the current LID+ status and termination of the programme, may not enable this to come to fruition.*
- ***The impact on systems:*** *three conclusions were drawn: stand alone public information sessions work best when included as part of a wider event and it may be beneficial to consider greater synergy with Erasmus+ National Agency Information Sessions; the UK wide Ambassador dimension proved beneficial but added difficulties to co-ordination and management; and there was a concern that, in the absence of additional funding, the increase in relation to the number of applications would only serve to further disappoint applicants and organisations.*

A similar service, available to all youth organisations in Northern Ireland would go some way to achieving previous levels of engagement. The evolution of Erasmus+ demands that the quality of application is at such a standard that is now likely to succeed, only with tailored support.

The nature of such a service should be to ensure any young person, young leader, youth worker, and practitioner or policy maker, working alongside or has a remit for young people and expresses an interest in participating in an international learning experience has the opportunity to do so.

The role of any Erasmus+ tailored-service in Northern Ireland should be to raise awareness, nurture curiosity, promote engagement, increase accessibility, support participation, identify goals, measure impact, document experience, collate evidence, capture the 'Magic', celebrate learning, collect 'Champions' and generate inspiration among others to travel the same journey.

Local Socio-Policy Context

Policy in Northern Ireland contrasts significantly with that of Europe. The European and Regional Strategic Context elicits nothing more than a mere reference in the Department of Education's *Priorities for Youth* document which whilst recognising youth work '*as an important aspect of learning*' places no emphasis on engaging young people in International Youth Work.

In September 2014, MLA and leader of the Ulster Unionist Party Mike Nesbitt in his capacity as Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (now The Executive Office) spoke of the benefits of Europe when he asserted that, '*It is only through more effective engagement in European affairs that we can hope to maximise the benefits of our EU membership and grow our economy....grasping the opportunities currently afforded by the European Union.*'²⁹

This of course was welcome but ensuring the active participation of young people, practitioners and youth work communities in International Youth Work at local level is another thing entirely. As the Youth Service knows very well, one of the most enduring challenges it has faced throughout its history is proving to those outside the profession the value and benefits of its work with young people. Ironically, it seems that proving the value and benefits of involvement in International Youth Work to those within youth work, is no less of a challenge.

A growing evidence base suggests that the contribution of International Youth Work is not in doubt, however, the very nature of evidence in itself is the problem. It is still emerging and so far has failed to convince policy makers that involvement should be more than a mere recommendation, or viewed as an 'add-on' as has often been the case. It has failed to convey the direct benefits for a Northern Ireland context.

Whilst Government in Northern Ireland does not advocate International Youth Work directly, it does however recognise the importance and influence of engaging in International Youth Work - the NI Government (through the NI Assembly Commission) had planned to '*work with the National Assembly for Wales and the Flemish Parliament to make a joint application to Erasmus+ to deliver a trans-national youth project.*'³⁰

This action was in keeping with two of (what now seem somewhat meaningless because of the length of time N Ireland has been without a government) Draft Programme for Government Outcomes, i.e., '*a shared society that respects diversity*' and '*a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society.*' Such a project would in all likelihood increase participants understanding of and respect for diversity not to mention the confidence that comes with interacting with those beyond Northern Ireland.

Evidence already exists that such engagement has many physical, psychological and physiological benefits and if the population of Northern Ireland is to enjoy '*long, healthy, active lives*' (outcome 4) and become '*an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential*' (outcome 5) then innovative ways of achieving this has to be sought.

A recent study by the OECD into governance in Northern Ireland made *Improving engagement with people* as one of three key recommendations. At a 2017 event in Belfast, Sinn Fein's Martin O'Muilleoir and the DUP's Emma Little-Pengelly reiterated these recommendations but in doing so also outlined the relevance of their Well Being Framework which includes eight indicators for Quality of Life – three of which have direct relevance to Erasmus+: (i) Education & Skills (ii) Social Connections and (iii) Civic Engagement and governance.

²⁹ <http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=583888b4625db6430a7f34bb&id=bcbbed2016>

³⁰ Under measure 3.2 of its Good Relations Action Plan

Parallels were also drawn between these and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which include (i) *'healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages'*, (ii) *'inclusive and equitable quality education and* (iii) *'promote lifelong learning'* and *'peaceful and inclusive societies'*.

At a time when politicians were attempting to incorporate an outcomes-based focus in its Draft Programme for Government, it is imperative that youth service policy-makers advocate the benefits of participation of International Youth Work as contributors to these outcomes.

Moving Forward

Peace building in Northern Ireland has relied to a large extent on relationships with (and the influence of) 'actors' outside of Northern Ireland. Both the US and EU have demonstrated their financial support through bodies such as Atlantic Philanthropies, the IFI (International Fund for Ireland), and SEUPB (Special European Union Programmes Body).

With its hundreds of millions in 'PEACE' funding, the EU has had arguably greatest influence, whilst difficult political issues have been resolved through the moderation of respected politicians such as George Mitchell, Richard Hass, John De Chastelain and Chris Patton. Bill Clinton has continued to support the peace process beyond his presidency whilst Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama and esteemed academics like John Novak and John Paul Lederach have all influenced and informed the Northern Ireland peace process.

It is clear that much has been achieved, but arguably, if we were to crudely analyse our peace building efforts we might struggle to evidence real progress.

Over 90% of our school going population is still segregated, as is our housing; there has been a significant increase in 'Peace Walls' since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and the growing polarisation of communities as evidenced by increases, for example, in hate speech and hate crime belies some of the notable achievements we have accomplished.

Alongside the continued existence of loyalist paramilitaries and the ever-present threat of dissident republicans is our stagnating political institutions and the nature and tone of political discourse post-2016 referendum doesn't offer much hope or optimism for the future.

It seems somehow ironic that in recent times, people lament the loss of 'big hitters' such as Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley, who for all their background and history, were viewed as showing much more leadership than the current crop of politicians.

The signing of the Good Friday Agreement offered much hope and optimism but this seems a distant memory now and therefore new thinking is necessary, or at least, exploration of other approaches.

There is growing recognition of the importance of Interculturalism in conflict transformation – Cante tells us it is *'about changing mindsets by creating new opportunities across cultures to support intercultural activity'*.³¹ A greater level of interculturalism can be achieved by our engaging with our peers and neighbours in Europe, even if we are not in the EU.

The role of Europe in Government policy has received recognition in the past, for example, in its budget for 2011-15, The Executive Office asserted the importance of strengthening *'our engagement with Europe...and [to] share our experience of conflict resolution and peace building'*.³² Priorities also included, Northern Ireland being a *'positive, outward and forward-looking manner and to become a preferred region of choice for partnership working.'*³³

Local Government further recognised the importance of participation in the international setting, particularly in Europe. In 2013, a report submitted to the Northern Ireland Assembly, made a recommendation that *'consideration should be given to encouraging Assembly Members to apply for any future programme in 2014'*³⁴ following the launch of *Erasmus for local and regional elected representatives* by the European Commission in 2012. The NI Assembly did indeed follow this up when

³¹ <http://tedcandle.co.uk/publications/about-interculturalism/> [Accessed: 23 February 2015]

³² Budget 2011-15, Northern Ireland Executive (p108)

³³ NI Executive -European Priorities 2014-15: Winning in Europe, NI Executive (p3)

³⁴ NI Assembly Report of the European Project Manager, June 2013 (p12)

in 2014, it was awarded almost €50k from the UK National Agency to deliver its Structured Dialogue Project, 'Connections.'

In an era of shrinking budgets and reduced funding, Erasmus provides options for partnership building and co-funding. Traditionally, there has been a focus on a number of specific funding streams in Northern Ireland but regrettably not as much uptake of YiA/E+ as might have been. Supporting groups to make applications to E+ would help reduce pressure on existing resources and allow groups to meet various *T:BUC, Priorities for Youth* and *PfG* indicators.

Involvement in International Youth Work should of course not be limited merely to young people, young leaders and youth workers (by profession). It should be accessible to other types of practitioners with a remit for young people, e.g., health, youth justice, social care, etc, in addition to other practitioners who are 'influencers' in their respective communities, and thus can help to support, or bring about change that is needed in communities which in turn, helps deliver Government outcomes.

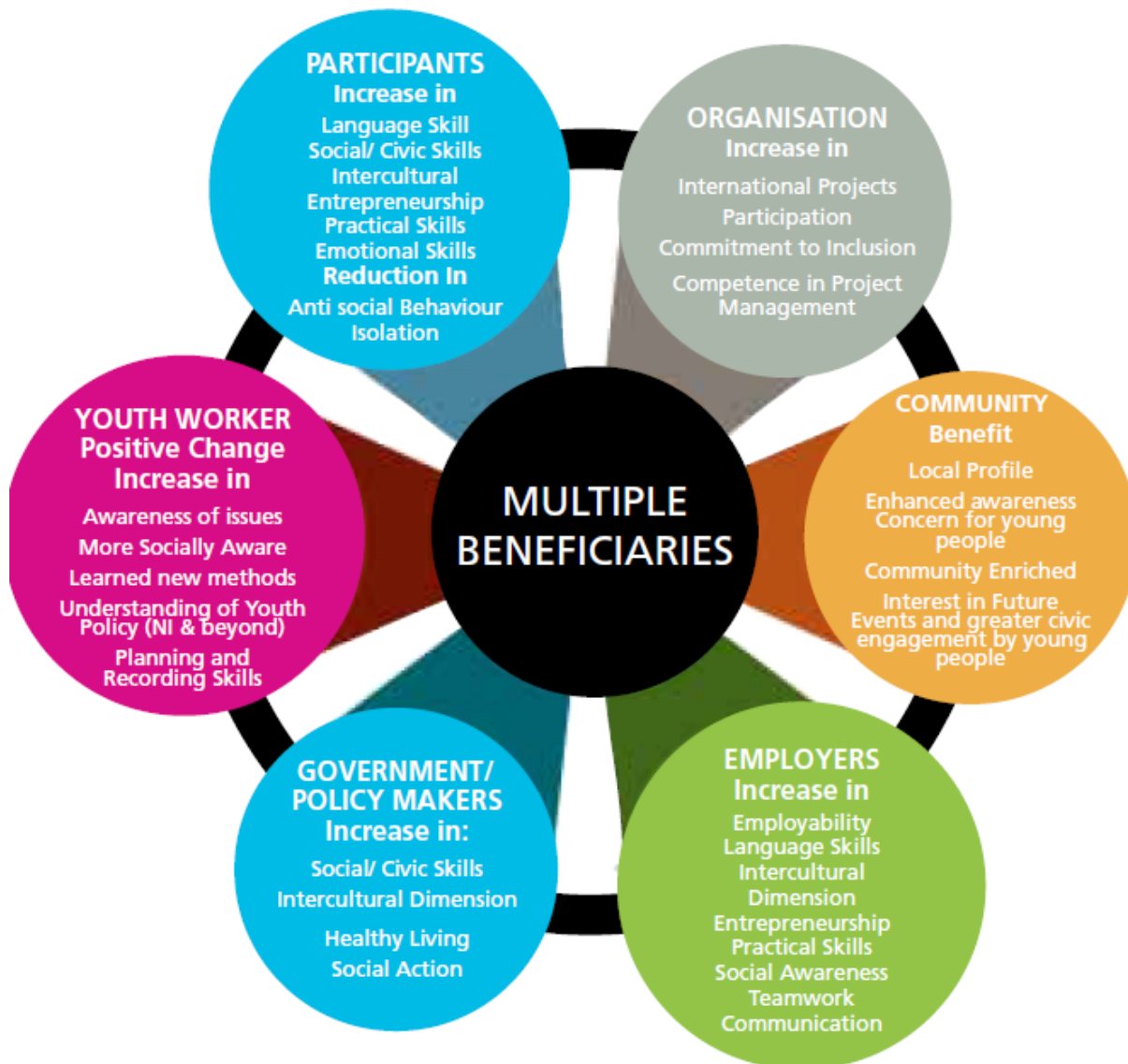
There is clear evidence that in recent years applicant organisations have come from outside of the traditional youth work community but again, given the heavy focus on non-formal education within Erasmus+, it is inconceivable that the number of youth work organisations applying is as low as I have mentioned earlier.

The role and value of youth work in itself has taken on much greater significance across Europe in recent years, and both the European Commission and Council of Europe have formally acknowledged its contribution.

Emerging evidence in recent times suggests that involvement in International Youth Work can contribute to both the personal and social development of young people as well as peace building and social cohesion in Northern Ireland.

Any question of our need to embrace opportunities presented by the incoming Erasmus Programme, or the existing Erasmus+ Programme, to support the development of leadership, capacity building and social cohesion among young people, young leaders, youth work practitioners and the broad youth work community, has never been more clear.

It really should be our collective obligation to ensure that we embed International Youth Work in Youth Service Delivery in Northern Ireland.



Appendix 2 (overleaf)

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
1. Interaction with and between people from more diverse backgrounds (ranging in religion, nationality, identity, ethnicity, political, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds) promotes learning about and experience in a range of diverse practice, language, customs and tradition	Able to develop a wider range of projects & programmes based on a deeper understanding of how issues affect individuals & communities	Greater range of activity with others outside of Northern Ireland ensures young people are more adept in dealing with diversity	Greater knowledge exists within the organisation that can be shared with peers – better equipped to challenge stereotypes, prejudice, etc	Increase in number of individuals able to challenge perceptions & misinformation; members of the community including family members get to hear about experiences and recognise the importance of learning
2. Increased understanding of communities from within respective jurisdictions and also jurisdictions not recognised by international mechanisms	Greater appreciation of the complexities of multiple communities that exist within Europe and beyond as compared with two traditions in N Ireland	Contact with ‘others’ outside of the traditions of N Ireland ensures young people begin to reflect on what they understand to be ‘correct’ and helps them re-evaluate their beliefs	Ethos of the organisation alters – shifts from position of empathy for one position to an understanding of a variety of perspective.	Ethos from organisation can be shared & permeate out to others – through a variety of mechanisms, e.g., presentations, new activities, message being carried beyond ‘club walls’ by those who took part in the programme
3. Experience of ‘new and/or more diverse’ situations where perception and understanding of how things are or have been is challenged.	Increased in knowledge and thus more able to challenge misinformation and myths	Young people begin to examine and consider what they have known to be ‘true’ against the reality of their experience	Organisation can begin to review its approach to certain situation, individuals, groups, communities, etc and consider its existing values and beliefs	Through various activities the community can be engaged in exploring (or at least more willing to explore) issues, values or beliefs it shied away from in the past
4. Opportunity to compare and contrast practice at local, regional, national and international level and in doing so share and exchange information whilst raising the profile of workers organisation and its practice to other colleagues including practitioners, decision-makers and academics	Able to promote NI-based practice to new audiences; able to reaffirm and/or reflect on own practice whilst considering and responding to more diverse perspectives from those not familiar with youth provision in NI	By sharing information about their experiences in their own youth setting young people have to share ‘the message’ about what the organisation does or tries to achieve in a way that is more articulate, thoughtful and concise due to language barriers and challenges	Practice evolves & organisation employs new methods to deliver activities – professionalism or organisation is enhanced – reputation & credibility grows	Community has access to a more insightful and better equipped organisations – more users attend; reputation of organisation grows and in turn impacts positively upon the perception of the community

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
5. Provision of space and time for conversation and discussion, both formal and informal, and as a result critically reflect on own practice and consider the impact of that practice as against the thoughts, ideas and opinion of others	Opportunities to engage in genuine discourse around delivery and the merits of existing delivery and thus increase knowledge of the variety of practice available to use	Young people build relationships and friendships as they hear about each 'others' stories of 'club life' and in doing so learn what it takes to maintain these relationships outside the normal parameters and restrictions of N Ireland	Growing recognition of the importance of time & space for discussion – enters into the culture ethos of the organisation	Connection between organisation and community grown – relationships are enhanced
6. Enhance confidence and knowledge as to how to be more pro-active at local level in order to bring about positive change	Commitment to invest in further contact with same partners or seek out new partners or combination of both but provides the 'spark' to engage peers, colleagues and community on a deeper and more constructive level as appreciation of the value and impact of involvement in programme grows	Be inspired and motivated to make things happen on their return – this often is articulated as a 'reunion' or desire to do more but it provides a platform for increased activity which has ripple effect on family, friends, peers and wider community	More confident & better equipped individuals who can deliver stronger outputs & outcomes, reputation & credibility grows, organisation engages with more users	Potentially the seeds of leadership & more pro-active community are 'sewn' – more users attend organisation, stronger engagement, users want to participate more in their community
7. Develop programmes, projects, initiatives, resources and materials that might not have come about without direct involvement in programme	Greater productivity and output, improved motivation, credibility and reputation of worker and organisation is grows, users benefit from new or enhanced services	Increased involvement in follow-up activities, growth in maturity and stature as young people assume greater responsibility and commit to a more pro-active stance within the life of organisation	Practice & credibility of the organisation is enhanced, achieves stronger recognition among its peers or equivalent – creates and promotes 'products' that can be replicated	Community has access to 'products' that would not have existed; 'products' draw others into engaging with the organisation and this leads to development of further actions for the benefit of the community
8. Appreciate the value, benefits and importance of engagement in international youth work/learning opportunities	Can see the value of investing in programmes in short-term to sew dividends in long-term – workers become more strategic in thinking and improve practice as a result and often become re-energised at a personal level thus yield stronger workforce	Young people benefit from more thoughtful and sustainable commitment that arises from their involvement in the programme - this nurtures greater engagement in youth provision and/or other activities; Young people endeavour to convince others who haven't benefitted from experience by challenging	Growing recognition of the impact that international engagement has for internal culture of organisation including enhanced systems, processes, procedures, values, concepts and ideals	A more 'rounded' organisation that is easier to approach, more open to different ways of operating, is more in inclusive and more adept at dealing with diversity and conflict.

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
9. Improve physical, mental and emotional health as a result of personal interaction with a diverse range of people	Feeling more reassured on a personal level about practice and capacity to deliver against competing needs/demands of users, community and local action plans	Feeling more positive about oneself, improved self-esteem, greater self-awareness and increased confidence through interaction with others outside of N Ireland not 'seduced' by pressures of Westernised culture	A more healthy & enriched staff and volunteer team, services alter accordingly, culture of organisation shifts towards one of pro-active interaction with diversity rather than necessity or merely re-active	Community has the opportunity to engage with others or 'otherness' where the possibility to do so before may not have arisen and/or where the sense of obligation to deal with the past can be facilitated sensitively
10. Increase a range of skills including team-building, decision making, motivation, communication, participation, organisation, and leadership	Interaction with those from outside of traditional UK and Ireland wide practice enhances ability to deliver to users and alongside colleagues	Better able to apply oneself in a range of settings with a diverse bunch of people against a more diverse context and 'test' own ideas and skills with others who do not critique in the same way as friends or other centre users might	Increased capacity of organisation – better equipped staff and volunteers – productivity increases and better quality of work delivered	Greater & more diverse range of provision available to young people in the community – community also has access to service provider that has enhanced its capacity to deliver through more equipped staff
11. Better able to express opinion, thought, ideas and emotions with regard to a wide range of issues	More aware of language used and how it is received or perceived by others	Greater self-awareness and more in control and thus better able to deal of how to manage complex relationships and situations	More informed staff better able to articulate key messages of organisation to a variety of audience and more aware of target audience	Credibility and reputation of organisation is enhanced – services are more clearly defined & greater continuity & consistency of key messages is achieved – reflects well on whole community
12. Increased knowledge of funding bodies and opportunities and enhanced capacity to identify and source appropriate funding to support local projects that compliments existing and 'normal' funding channels	Increased options to support delivery with users	Increased motivation to develop ideas that will provide similar opportunities, learning and enjoyment	Existing services can be complemented and new programme supported that might not have been otherwise; expertise regarding making applications is enhanced as well as strategic approach to working with others at international level	Current services are sustained & additional programmes implemented offering greater accessibility to users. Additional programmes offers potential for wider community to be involved in activities that facilitate engagement with 'others' outside of the community

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
13. Enhance peace building skills including greater understanding of various concepts such as conflict resolution/management and reconciliation, peace building structures, strategies and methodologies	Greater understanding of how other countries can function 'normally' and deal with diversity and as a result employ some of that learning in programmes and projects	Greater appreciation of how life can operate without being dominated by sectarianism and can aspire to create such a dynamic in their own setting and communities	Skills capacity within the organisation is enhanced & staff & volunteers better able to respond to issues that arise; culture of acceptance & tolerance permeates throughout & underpins ethos leading to a more inclusive organisation	The community has in its possession an organisation that can be a 'role model' through its activities and can promote a sense of belonging, ownership and partnership among & with the community. Community can also come to depend on the organisation to uphold values that enhance life within the community
14. Understand the importance of providing a safe and secure space to create confidence and self esteem among participants	Obligation to look after and respond to all participants and/or to ensure and share 'compact' intensive setting and experience with peers hones various skills and increases empathy	Intensity of longer than normal residential experience with a more diverse group leads to a greater appreciation of what it takes to ensure people feel welcome, cared for, included, acknowledged and respected	Organisation is more thoughtful about how it uses & promotes use of existing space. It recognises & therefore works to enhance user-environment in a bid to make experience more enriching & rewarding	Users witness a shift in young people's approach to their surroundings and thus the relationship between users, adults, the elderly and their environment is enhanced.
15. Share information on the attitude and skills required to engage with local publics	Involvement with more diverse group(s) ensures greater empathy for target audience(s) and 'forces' re-think of what message is being delivered and how, i.e., terminology used, pronunciation, 'local words' only 'locals' would understand, etc	Increased confidence from taking part in programme(s) leads to belief that young people have something important to say, can exert influence and are able to offer advice to their peers and adults	Capacity of the organisation is enhanced through better understanding of what it is trying to do/achieve and therefore services are improved	Community sees improvement in service delivery and connection with organisation is enhanced leading to a more effective relationship
16. Enhanced ability to plan and organise events understanding the importance of having a clear rationale and allocated roles and responsibilities	Deeper knowledge and understanding of methodologies and approaches that can be applied to delivery	Growth in maturity and stature and a better understanding of the amount of work involved in organising events	Organisation is better equipped to deliver events thus better maximising times, resources, personnel & finance leading to a better output stronger outcomes	Better quality of service ensures community are more likely to engage and thus stake a claim in the interests of the organisation – users & community see a more professional service

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
17. Increased knowledge of different learning styles and methods for capturing learning	Better equipped to apply diverse range of learning methods or develop methods in response learning needs of users	Young people benefit from seeing a wider range of learning methods and engage more effectively with learning process and appreciate that learning can be captured beyond formal school-esque methods	Organisation has a wider variety to choose from when planning activities therefore increasing quality and effectiveness – practice is enhanced.	Users experience of activities is enhanced and thus they become agents for ‘selling’ & marketing programmes to new audiences – levels of interest in organisation increase & relationship improves & sense of pride in organisation is evident
18. Greater understanding of what is required to work in intercultural teams and thus having to discuss, debate and negotiate appropriate learning for target group as well as give and receive feedback	Development of skills and language that is appropriate for working closely with people coming from quite diverse backgrounds	Development of patience, tolerance and acceptance of others whom they might normally meet but because of the longer time and more intensive experience are better equipped to deal with others	Greater teamwork ethos encourages which leads to a more conducive work environment – service delivery improves & greater outcomes are achieved.	Users are receiving higher quality of service delivery & the reputation brings positive perception of the community
19. A collective of more ‘culturally competent’ individuals underpin youth service practice and policy	Able to consider if delivery and reach of provision reflects a greater appreciation for others outside of traditional relationships in Northern Ireland	Young people have a better understanding of what is involved in engaging with others from diverse backgrounds and are therefore able to engage with them in a more that respects differences and is sensitive to their needs	Organisation is better equipped to deal with diversity – knowledge base improves & level of expertise is enhanced. An ethos of appreciation for culture emerges or is enhanced.	Community benefits from better informed & more empathetic practitioners & are also able to access expertise that enables community to address questions of culture within their environment, locale as well as externally
20. Development of a ‘creative side’ and ‘innovative instincts’ to respond to particular needs that result from the dynamic created by combination of diverse elements in project such as location, setting, nationality, language, customs, background, etc	Enhanced ability to step outside of the norms of their practice and thus introduce new ways of resolving difficulties into their work setting that can be used with service users, peers, colleagues and community	Young people are tested by a series of challenges that fall outside of the norm, e.g., others engaging in conflict in their own language; enhances their resolve to understand, support and adapt	Alternative ways of responding to or addressing issues are possible as knowledge and expertise is enhanced. Ethos of creativity emerges & is nurtured & leads to enhanced productivity	Better quality of services begin to emerge as new ways of delivery are implemented. Users share their resulting experiences with peers, friends, family, etc & this begins builds connections

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
21. Enhanced levels of tolerance and acceptance which increases patience, tests resolve, beliefs, values, increases understanding and develops resilience	Develops a more 'mature' approach to dealing with issues though a broader perspective nurtured by interaction with other colleagues who share different outlooks and approaches to problem solving	By meeting others from a different background for the first time young people learn to exercise more discretion and patience in their interaction but in time this manifests itself as a more caring and compassionate nature as they understand 'others' are not familiar with nuances and ways of N Ireland	Culture of inclusion is created & has positive impact on quality of delivery & relationships between staff, between staff & users & the wider community. Staff morale is enhanced	Culture of inclusion nurtured within the organisation extends to the community; community is engaged in processes that supports this and shift in wider thinking regarding inclusion gradually takes place.
22. Increased understanding of values such as social justice, equity, respect, transparency, , etc	Able to contrast and compare their own ideas and opinions of these concepts beyond a Northern Ireland context and in doing so support their learning and put themselves in a better position to share this with service users, peers, colleagues and community	Moving beyond the traditional Northern Ireland arguments of rights and responsibilities to one where fairness, justice and respect replaces confrontational language	The ethos & culture, approaches & methodologies that underpin practice are discussed & clarity around how the organisation continues to do its work is progressed leading to all round better quality of delivery	The organisation becomes a vehicle to help explore & address these areas & in doing so helps to inform discussion around them leading to a reflection of opinion, ideals and values
23. Enhanced knowledge and understanding of particular models of issue-based practice such as participation, citizenship, human rights, etc	Better positioned to reflect on their current curriculum delivery and amend, adjust or overhaul in light of their new knowledge	Better understanding how these operate in practice in terms of being active within their organisation or assuming a role within their community	Organisation is better placed to meet the targets & outcomes it sets itself with regard to the curriculum; a better informed & clearly more thought out curriculum ensures that the organisation is better equipped to deliver higher quality outputs.	By developing related to these areas that also reflect priorities in Erasmus+ structures can be developed that enable young people to play a fuller role in their community; the community benefits from a better equipped young people with a greater array of skills & capacity to engage with issues & structures in their community

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
24. Enhanced knowledge and understanding of the project management cycle including risk assessment and health & safety	Greater understanding of the variety of approaches that exist on a national and international level and opportunity to contrast and compare so as to share expertise and also to learn from	Growing understanding of how projects are organised, why, objectives and intentions behind them through conversations with and instructions from their peers and practitioners	Staff & volunteers are more informed about what's required to deliver projects successfully & thus ensure better standards & in doing so enhance the capacity of the organisation to manage projects particularly within an international context	Community has organisation in 'it's possession' that enables it to lead on projects and where if necessary be tasked with doing same on behalf of the community
25. Enhanced capacity to deliver more diverse programme of activity in organisation setting through hearing and learning about theme-based activities from peers, colleagues and users	Widens knowledge of options available when planning programmes and encourages innovation and creativity in delivery	Young people better able to approach delivery of activities by recalling stories and experiences of peers who took on various responsibilities and were successful – young people are inspired and believe they	Reputation of organisation is enhanced as users recognised the range of options available to them; expertise within organisation increased as staff & volunteers critique content & methodologies in more detail	Greater variety of programme, enhanced quality of activity, users expectations are raised, community view organisation in positive light, community has resource it can rely on & call upon if needed
26. Better able to consider delivery of 3 core principles of Model for Effective Practice as a result of meeting and engaging with those from other diverse settings which offers scope for reflection and critical thinking	More reflective of what is being delivered, why and how some of the new learning can be embedded or integrated in practice	Greater or a new awareness of relevance, contextual or otherwise, of the influence and role that core principles play in life of organisation and delivery of activities	Service delivery is improved & staff & volunteers can relate to & understand better the relevance of 3 core principles in delivery – capacity of the organisation is enriched through a more considered approach	Better understanding of how organisation relates to core principles means that practice is enhanced & thus users benefit from more effective delivery. Community has higher quality of programme available to them

Outcomes for service delivery/ curriculum development	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
27. Greater appreciation for the significance placed upon the use of ICT within the context of Erasmus+ Programme	Increased knowledge of the potential that ICT has within youth provision and more significantly the role Social Media can play in relation to dealing with and responding to a wide variety of issues including lobbying and campaigning	Increasing opportunities for young people to engage in using mechanisms such as twitter, facebook, tumblr, blogs, etc to reach new and wider audiences to promote programmes, experiences and activities and with it increase potential of career possibilities through new skill set	ICT capacity is enhanced – staff competence is improved, profile of organisation is higher among new audience & greater awareness of & access to ICT mechanisms including social media is implemented	ICT capacity of community is enhanced as staff, volunteers & users have been ‘upskilled’ & their skills can be accessed by the community. If peer learning is implemented these skills can be shared & thus learning ‘rolled out’ among others
28. Working together in partnership with users on post-programme and follow-up activities for other users	Able to increase levels of participation in organisation setting and offer users new and/or additional responsibilities unlikely to have occurred had they not took part in programme	Young people feel a greater sense of ownership, have increased responsibility, are more positive about themselves and relationship with practitioner has been enhanced	Staff & volunteers put skills into practice through implementation of activities & thus hone the skills further not to mention motivation is enhanced leading to increased productivity	Community benefits from a range of activities organised by organisation & can learn from the experience that results
29. Better understanding of and access to Youthpass	Extra tool to be utilised and structure in place to support learning when engaging with young people – can also be used by practitioner to support his/her own learning	Young people can have recognised qualification at the very least but also use it as a means to enhance a variety of key competence	Organisation has another option it can use to recognise contributions of young people, staff & volunteers & develop knowledge & skills & how to implement it	Users have recognition tool that can support entry into labour market and/or describe improvements in competence-based learning which in turn supports personal & social development

Notes