

Impact of
International
Youth Work:
**A Youth Council for
Northern Ireland
Perspective**



Foreword



Youth in Action, Youth and Youth for Europe represent some of the programmes the European Commission has set up for young people in the non-formal education sector

since the 1990's. The recently launched Erasmus+ Programme continues to build on this investment by boosting skills and employability and modernising Education, Training and Youth work. The seven year programme has a budget of **€14.7 billion** which represents a **40% increase** and reflects the EU's commitment to investing in these important areas.

This publication will be a very useful resource for individuals and groups across the non-formal education sector. It highlights the various benefits of EU/International Youth Work by setting it within the education and wider government policy context. It also assists those who are applying, or are thinking of applying for funding, by providing clear objectives and demonstrating the value which the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) adds to the process.

With this publication, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland has succeeded in dispelling the myths surrounding engagement in International Youth Work and highlighting the benefits of involvement for young people, practitioners, organisations and communities.

I would like to whole-heartedly commend the Youth Council for Northern Ireland for seeking to argue for a higher profile for International Youth Work. Furthermore, I commend the ongoing and valued support provided by the Youth Council in encouraging youth organisations across the region to participate in Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes.

I would also like to pay particular tribute to the key role played by Bernice Sweeney, YCNI International Manager, as the main author and co-ordinator of this timely and beneficial publication.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colette FitzGerald".

Colette FitzGerald
Head of Office
European Commission
Office in Northern Ireland

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INTRODUCTION



Rationale

Since 1990, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) has been an ardent promoter and co-ordinator of International and North/South youth work programmes, particularly those which serve to target marginalised and difficult to reach young people. Regional participation in non-formal education programmes, such as Causeway and the EU Youth in Action Programmes, has consistently outstripped other parts of the UK, bringing in excess of €7M to youth organisations since 2007. Participants (organisations, youth workers and young people) have benefited from opportunities to explore locally, or share with their peers from other countries, youth work practice and concepts such as participation, active citizenship, cultural diversity and inclusion.

In this publication, the Youth Council aims to dispel the myths surrounding engagement in International Youth Work and seeks to clarify how International Youth Work complements and underpins the Youth Work Curriculum and in particular, 'Priorities for Youth' (PfY), the new policy for youth in Northern Ireland, which sets the overarching policy framework for youth work within education.

In the following pages, the Youth Council will set out clearly how the implementation of 'Priorities for Youth' could be supported by engagement with the EU's Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020) and will demonstrate the high level of synergy between the overarching aims, objectives and priorities of Erasmus+ and those contained within PfY.

With 10% of the total budget (€14.7bn) ring-fenced under the 'Youth Chapter' section of the programme, dedicated to non-formal education activities, Erasmus+ presents real funding opportunities which should not be ignored.

Future Potential

For Northern Ireland to be competitive in a European and global economy of knowledge and rapid change, it is essential that it has a mobile, flexible and motivated workforce. Engaging with partner organisations abroad helps to broaden horizons, triggers independent thought, improves ability to deal with difference and makes us question the established ways of seeing and doing things.

Involvement in international activity can also support the economy by enabling young people to develop the skills and attributes which are recognised by employers and which are transferable to other aspects of life i.e. communication, leadership and teamwork skills.

The Youth Council would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to Fergal Barr, Clare Harvey and David McClarin for their valued contributions to this publication.

Bernice Sweeney
Bernice Sweeney
YCNI International Manager



INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

What is International Youth Work?

International Youth Work is the overall name given to a strand of youth work which focuses on engaging young people, youth workers and policy-makers, with peers from other countries, cultures and backgrounds. Whilst there is a trend to see international work as requiring travel, within Europe and beyond, International Youth Work also takes place within Northern Ireland, as evidenced by the large number of NI hosted international and cross-cultural programmes and locally based projects dealing with concepts such as cultural diversity, European citizenship and policy.

International Youth Work may include young people participating in an exchange with their peers from another country; an organisation hosting a training programme for youth workers from a variety of different countries; a thematic seminar bringing together policy-makers/key decision-makers from more than one country; a study visit or job shadowing opportunity to observe models of youth work practice in another setting and so on. This is quite different however from holidays, academic study trips, language courses or work camps, where there is no non-formal educational focus.

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 time. Through the acquisition of soft skills relevant to employment, involvement in International

Youth Work also enhances the prospects of a young person securing and maintaining employment.

Benefits of International Youth Work

We can take young people, youth workers, volunteers, policy-makers and managers out of their everyday context and place them in environments where identity, nationality, culture and religion are not necessarily seen as divisive. This produces a basis from which to explore and appreciate diversity. By providing opportunities for engaging with others different to oneself in a different setting, we are creating space and time for participants to contrast and compare their own situation, and in doing so begin to contextualise it and thus understand it in a much deeper way. Opportunities of this kind can help to create new possibilities and new realities for those involved.

Engagement in international activities adds a unique dynamic to the relationship between people from Northern Ireland. For example, many overseas participants are not only unfamiliar with, but also have difficulty understanding, the background to the Northern Ireland conflict. As a result, 'locals' are forced to try even harder to explain things in a coherent manner, and in doing so this has helped them to reflect upon and reconsider their own narrative and understanding, and their relationship with difference. Consequently, they are better equipped to interact with others, maintain and manage new and challenging relationships.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

The Organisation

An organisation whose staff and/or young people become involved in International Youth Work stand to gain immensely from the experience. Engaging in International Youth Work can impact positively on all those who become involved, and as such can lead to an increase in quality outcomes for an organisation and ultimately the community it serves.

The Youth Work Practitioner

By providing practitioners with the opportunity to work alongside their peers from a diverse range of backgrounds, including nationality, identity, religion and ethnicity, we are testing and challenging their ideas and concepts of 'norms', their perceptions, their prejudice, their values and beliefs system. Whilst the population in Northern Ireland has become more diverse in recent years the opportunity to interact with others from different backgrounds is still limited.

In order to enhance effectiveness at a local level and offer real stimulus for practice innovation and development, there is a need to promote contact between practitioners from different cultures and traditions, within and beyond Northern Ireland, in order to provide meaningful opportunities to compare and contrast practice. There are many key benefits¹ to youth workers being involved in International Youth Work.

The Young Person

An evaluation² of the EU Youth in Action programme found that "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".

There is strong evidence³ that International Youth Work has the power to enhance and deepen youth work outcomes, and accelerate skills development across the following areas:

• Team Work	• Motivation
• Participation	• Leadership skills
• Communication	• Relating to Peers
• Taking Responsibility	• Self-Confidence
• Decision Making	• Taking Initiative
• Self-Expression	• Greater Awareness of self and community
• Enhanced Self Reliance	• Understanding of difference
• Language skills	• Ability to place own culture within the context of others.
• Intercultural Awareness	• Citizenship
• Mutual Understanding	• Testing Values and Beliefs
• Tolerance & Acceptance	• Emotional Health
• Cultural Competence	• Risk Taking
• Networking	• Learning is Fun

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

These attributes align very closely to the characteristics sought by employers in creating a confident, flexible workforce. In addition, there is strong evidence⁴, from both youth workers and young people, that the intensity of engaging in an international project has led to accelerated learning and skills development.

The chance to meet young people from non-English speaking countries normally brings with it multiple learning opportunities and challenges and requires much work in the form of preparation. Providing opportunities for young people to engage initially at a local level with their peers from across Ireland and the UK often serves as a useful stepping stone to enabling young people to develop the skills, confidence and aptitude to engage at a European level.

Young people do not only benefit from the development of soft skills. The European Commission devised the **YouthPass Certificate** as a recognition tool to be used by participants in the EU Youth in Action Programme. It aims to assist employers, educational and vocational institutions in recognising the skills young people have developed through participating in an international and non-formal educational project. At present, it is the only form of accreditation for non-formal learning recognised at European level.

The Community

Local communities benefit from International Youth Work in a number of ways. As a result of their participation young people are better informed, more self-aware, develop enhanced levels of confidence, increase their skills base, develop a greater awareness of, and sense of pride in their community, as they become more engaged as active citizens.

The community also benefits from youth workers who, like the young people they work with, are more confident and better equipped with knowledge and skills and are more adept at addressing issues such as diversity, identity, conflict, peace-building. They are equally more culturally competent and therefore better placed to engage their communities in addressing issues that affect them. In a society where a very significant proportion of the population still live apart from one another, and in a country where most youth work takes place in segregated areas, the need for culturally competent workers is fundamental to our moving towards a shared society.



INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

International Youth Work creates space and time for young people and their supporting staff to engage in dialogue with those coming from different backgrounds, nationalities, identities, politics, language, custom, culture, beliefs and traditions, and in doing so, enhances their capacity to engage

local communities across Northern Ireland in reinforcing progress towards a shared society. Perhaps the most potent argument for the pursuit of International work is the multiplicity of impacts that emerge from it. This is illustrated in the following diagram from a number of perspectives:



EUROPEAN CONTEXT



In this section the value and benefits of engagement in international work, from the young person's, youth worker's and community perspective are set out.

In the Council of Europe publication 'Perspectives on youth', the editorial team wrote in their introduction to '2020 – what do YOU see?'

“...young people present both an opportunity and a threat, in their personal behaviour, civic engagement, economic activity or political commitment. They will both contribute actively or passively to the different scenarios and be the fortunate or unfortunate recipients of them. What is not in doubt is that, whatever happens in nation states and local communities, the European level will continue to be important. Though it may not directly touch the lives of a huge number of young people, both the European Union and the Council of Europe can shape the parameters and pioneer the experiences that affect many more young people throughout Europe.”

Arguably the same can be said for practitioners, youth work management, policy-makers and so on. We are part of the European project - we benefit from European funding, when we travel across Europe we use the same currency, we elect politicians to the European Parliament, and we are subject to many European laws and policies. But arguably there is also a disconnect from Europe, if not in reality, at least in feeling – by geography, by political argument, by ignorance, or by arguments played out in the media.

As a region, Northern Ireland has benefited immensely from European monies, be it via the 'European Social Fund', 'PEACE', the 'European Regional Development Fund', or 'Erasmus+' and its predecessors in the field of non-formal education: 'Youth in Action', 'YOUTH' and 'Youth for Europe'. Whether or not we as a community have fully embraced Europe, the notion or concept of Europe, or the 'European Project', it is important to acknowledge the benefits derived from these funding streams.

EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Youth work in Northern Ireland has a history of availing of these EU funded opportunities. Evidence⁵ collated within the youth work sector over the years has clearly identified the added value and benefits of engagement in these programmes, and whilst many projects funded addressed peace-building and reconciliation within Northern Ireland, many others incorporated a North/South or International Youth Work dimension into their project proposals.

During the 7 year lifespan of the EU Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013), Northern Ireland proved to be the most active and successful region of the UK, in terms of promotional efforts, support to local organisations and successful applications. Much evidence⁶ has been gleaned from this involvement as to the benefits of International Youth Work for young people and those that work with them. Yet, if we compare the overall numbers involved in youth provision across Northern Ireland and the percentage of young people who engaged in the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013), the participation levels remain relatively small.

With the more recent introduction of the Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020), involvement in its activities should not be viewed merely as an additional source of funding, but rather as an opportunity, particularly for marginalised young people, made available via the Programme. There is clear evidence to suggest why.

In 2005, The Institut Für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik in Germany co-ordinated a study of the structures of youth work in ten countries, on behalf of the Partnership on Youth between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, entitled: '*The Socio-economic Scope of Youth Work in Europe*'. This study identified International Youth Work as being one of the central fields of youth work and made a series of recommendations including:

- increased exchanges between experts in the field to intensify and bundle shared knowledge, particularly with regard to the central concepts of youth work
- increased exchanges with the competent, in some cases newly established national ministries (of Youth), to prepare for the creation of a European reporting system on youth work
- stronger cooperation among stakeholders, particularly governments, youth associations and professional groups to contribute to 'a common documentation of youth work'.





POLICY CONTEXT

In 2013, The Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) published its first edition of *'Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work'*, which offered an explanation as to what International Youth Work is, why we need it, and its relevance and importance to the Youth Work sector in Northern Ireland.

It also outlined the many benefits of such work to young people, youth workers, youth organisations and the local community. The publication was based on evidence accumulated over a sustained period of time during the Youth in Action Programme, which as mentioned earlier, has now been succeeded by the Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020). The new programme has a budget of €14.7bn with 10% of that clearly ring-fenced for non-formal education, under the banner of the Erasmus+ 'Youth Chapter'.

In *'Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work'*, YCNI began to make the argument for youth provision in Northern Ireland to engage with and participate in International Youth Work. Not only did it outline the many benefits to those involved, but it also highlighted the correlation between youth work practice in Northern Ireland and the policy context at both European and local level.

Much of the work already accomplished across Northern Ireland aligns directly with EU priorities, including the EU Commission's 'Social Inclusion Strategy', the 'EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering', the 'EU Resolution on Youth Work' and 'Europe 2020 Strategy: Youth on the Move Initiative'.

Practice that promotes participation, citizenship, healthy living, employability and social inclusion can be found embedded in these policy and strategy documents.

In Northern Ireland, there is recognition of the importance of the role of Europe – from the 'Taking our Place in Europe' Strategy in 2008 and commitments contained within the 'Barroso Taskforce' to the 'NI Executive-European Priorities 2012-13: Winning in Europe' and key priorities in the 'NI Executive Budget 2011-15' including *'strengthening our engagement with Europe to deliver investment and growth, influence emerging policy and share our experience of conflict resolution and peace building'*.

More recently, 'Priorities for Youth' recognised the relevance of a European Dimension in Youth Work when it stated that:

'It is clear that across regions, countries and at European level, youth work is recognised as an important aspect of learning, on the continuum of educational provision. Although it has distinctive characteristics which set it apart from formal education, it seeks the same long term positive outcomes for young people. At European level, there are initiatives and funding opportunities which local youth organisations should be encouraged to explore.' (PFY, para 2.11)

With an invitation to explore initiatives and funding opportunities at European level, the Erasmus+ Programme presents an ideal opportunity for young people, practitioners and organisations to maximise available resources to support curriculum delivery.

POLICY CONTEXT

Northern Ireland had the highest percentage of uptake across the UK under the former Youth in Action programme, and yet despite this impressive achievement, it is estimated that less than 2%⁷ of 16-25 year olds across Northern Ireland had the opportunity to benefit from these international opportunities. This statistic clearly begs the question 'why'?

YCNI have outlined a range of reasons as to 'why' in its *'Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work'* publication, some of which are as follows:

- no effective or coherent strategy to promote International Youth Work in NI;
- international activities are often seen as additional work and not viewed as an intrinsic part of delivery by youth work managers;
- often perceived as a 'junket';
- 'management' tend not to pro-actively encourage practitioners to become involved;
- information regarding international opportunities often reach staff too late and are often disseminated at the discretion of management;
- senior managers may fail to acknowledge the value, relevance or connection of international practice to that of their day-to-day practice;
- not enough support systems in place for practitioners, e.g., toil, subsistence, staff cover, etc;

- NI remains insular and its population tend not to think about benefits of international work;
- perceived lack of timely information from the UK National Agency for aspects of the process, including finding the right partners, feedback on applications, financial and administrative arrangements;
- lack of recognition - little or no recognition for efforts made or achievements secured;
- residential experiences in other countries require in depth risk assessment and planning strategies;
- not all practitioners are motivated to take on this level of responsibility.



ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

The European Commission oversees the Erasmus+ Programme and sets its priorities and criteria. In the UK, the Erasmus+ programme falls under the authority of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). National Agencies, located within each programme country are responsible for the implementation of the programme at a national level. The British Council in partnership with Ecorys UK is the UK National Agency.

The Erasmus+ programme is structured around three Key Actions:

- Key Action 1: Mobility of Individuals
- Key Action 2: Co-operation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practice
- Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform

Whilst it is easy to articulate an argument for greater involvement in EU and North/South funded non-formal youth education programmes, the fundamental issue remains as to why uptake within Northern Ireland is still relatively small. Despite this, as a region, we have consistently out-performed other parts of the UK in terms of performance and quality applications, under the outgoing EU Youth in Action programme.

'Priorities for Youth' underlines the importance of complementing formal education and supporting existing educational priorities, whilst Erasmus+ will contribute to (among other objectives) the 'Europe 2020 Strategy', including the headline education target 'to reduce early school leaving to less than 10%

and increase attainment in tertiary education to at least 40% by 2020'.

Other Erasmus+ youth-specific objectives include:

- I. improving the level of **key competences and skills** of young people;
- II. promoting **participation** in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, fostering quality improvements in youth work;
- III. complementing **policy reforms** at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy; and
- IV. enhancing the **international dimension** of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations as support structures for young people.



ERASMUS + PROGRAMME

Erasmus+ priorities include:

- I. promoting young people's **social inclusion and well-being**;
- II. **raising awareness about EU Citizenship** and the rights that go with it or stimulating the active participation of young people in EU policy-making;
- III. **developing basic and transversal skills**, such as entrepreneurship, digital skills and multilingualism in the field of youth;
- IV. enhancing **ICT uptake** in youth work; and
- V. promoting **stronger coherence** between different EU and national transparency and recognition tools, so as to ensure that skills and qualifications can be easily recognised across borders.

Much of what is contained within the above-mentioned objectives and priorities will find resonance with youth work practitioners. Whether we are looking at the development of skills, participation, policy reform, social inclusion and well-being, or awareness of the EU, there exists a clear correlation between these Erasmus+ objectives and those stemming from local and national policy objectives within Northern Ireland. As a result, there exist huge opportunities to complement and support the implementation of 'Priorities for Youth' with additional funding from EU funded initiatives, such as those offered by the Erasmus+ Youth Chapter.



YCNI Support and Advice in NI

For organisations wishing to engage in International Youth Work, support is available within Northern Ireland, via the Youth Council for NI. In the absence of regular training, face to face support and promotional activities being provided by the UK National Agency in Northern Ireland, relevant to the Youth Chapter, YCNI performs the role of 'Erasmus+ Regional Information Provider', on behalf of the youth work sector.

The YCNI has performed this role as part of its core function since 1990, and continues to provide ongoing support to both local and regional organisations within the voluntary and statutory youth work sector. The support offered by YCNI has been in the form of:

- training and promotional activities
- much needed assistance with the application process
- one-to-one clinics for potential applicants
- regular e-bulletins highlighting funding and training opportunities, project partner requests, EU Programme and policy developments

NI YOUTH WORK CURRICULUM



It is worth acknowledging that one of the reasons that practitioners and/or youth work management might not see the relevance, the importance and advantages of engaging in International Youth Work, is perhaps because the connection between it and 'A Model for Effective Practice' (Youth Work Curriculum) is not always clearly visible.

By building on 'Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work', the Youth Council for NI has in this document attempted to make these linkages more explicit and to articulate more clearly the advantages and rationale for engaging in International Youth Work.

LINKING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO ERASMUS+

This publication serves to outline various overlaps in policy objectives by comparing strategies at European level and linking these with policy at local level, such as 'Delivering Social Change.' In addition, it is intended to demonstrate that there are a number of consistent themes which underpin all of these, for example, partnership, health and well-being, and social inclusion among others - many of which will have resonance with local practitioners.

It has achieved this by outlining the benefits and exploring the policy context; mapping out the connection between priority areas (contained within PfY) and opportunities for development; highlighted the benefits to the Youth Work Curriculum of involvement in Erasmus+; made connections with the current policy context and compiled a matrix of associated benefits for the Young Person, the Youth Worker, the Organisation and Local Community.

In the following pages, we aim to provide a 'short-cut' for managers and practitioners to identify relevant policies to reflect in their applications. In addition, we seek to explore the key themes contained within the 'Priorities for Youth' policy document and to map these across to those of Erasmus+. 'Priorities for Youth' is now the key policy driver for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland and over the course of this section, we aim to demonstrate how the Youth Work Curriculum can be assisted by programmes such as the Erasmus+.

USEFUL REFERENCE GUIDES AND SUMMARY TABLES

The section which follows incorporates a number of tables, which have been sub-divided under the following headings:

**Table 1:
How Erasmus+ can support the 5 main priority areas
of Priorities for Youth**

**Table 2:
Opportunities for development that Erasmus+ can support within
Priorities for Youth Principles and Key Actions**

**Table 3:
How Erasmus+ can support and complement
Curriculum Programme areas**

**Table 4:
Relevant Policies and Strategies at Devolved Administration
and European levels**



Table 1

How Erasmus+ can support the 5 main priority areas of Priorities for Youth (PfY)



PfY Priorities	Erasmus+ opportunities for development
<p>Raising Standards</p>	<p>Practitioners have the opportunity to compare and contrast practice and in doing so critique their own delivery.</p> <p>Workers can learn from other practitioners how they deliver to various age groups and reference this against those set out in Priorities for Youth.</p> <p>Emphasis from Erasmus+ Programme on proportionality will support more effective use of services and targeted delivery.</p> <p>Links with practitioners in other countries will support approaches to strategic planning as they use opportunity to discuss wide range of societal matters, including area planning.</p> <p>Practitioners have opportunities to engage in and discuss youth work policy among their peers from other countries.</p> <p>Young people have rewarding experience and thus expectations rise, 'forcing' practitioners to 'bolster' delivery.</p>
<p>Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equality</p>	<p>Meeting and sharing practice with a much more diverse range of practitioners operating in a much wider range of environments can only support creativity and innovation in this area.</p> <p>Practitioners have the opportunity to view other models of practice and consider how to close the gap between 'the highest and lowest achieving young people and those most and least disadvantaged'.</p> <p>Sharing of information, practice and advice can support local practitioners attempts to respond to need effectively.</p> <p>Interaction with others from societies where access and equality are more embedded can inform practice.</p>

<p>Developing the Non-Formal Education Workforce</p>	<p>Wide range of training available on an on-going basis developed between partner organisations from various countries and/or available through the SALTO training network.</p> <p>Stakeholders in NI have the opportunity to develop various initiatives and lead on developing the workforce by applying to the UK National Agency to deliver projects that will respond to a particular need and enhance standards.</p> <p>Stakeholders have the opportunity to engage with partner organisations across Europe and in doing so provide access to training for employees which enhance delivery.</p> <p>Opportunities to develop cross-sectoral relationships between formal and non-formal stakeholders and in doing so access funding to support developments.</p>
<p>Improving the Non-formal Learning Environment</p>	<p>Practitioners and young people can visit a range of settings in different countries in order to draw inspiration as to how they can enhance the environment they work and participate in.</p> <p>Practitioners can learn about how funding and resources are administered in other countries, which helps to provide new or amend existing ideas.</p> <p>Practitioners and young people can hear about or see different models of participation in action, thus strengthening practice 'at home' in order to generate greater evidence of participatory practice.</p>
<p>Transforming Governance and Management of Non-Formal Education</p>	<p>The proposed funding schemes under this priority echoes to some extent Key Actions 1 & 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme where Key Action 1 can support Project Funding whilst Key Action 2 is designed to develop Strategic Partnerships.</p>



Table 2

Opportunities for development that Erasmus+ can support within Priorities for Youth (PfY) principles and key actions



PfY Principles & Key Actions	Erasmus+ opportunities for development
<p>Value for money</p>	<p>Erasmus+ provides opportunities for organisations to access funding directly or to complement existing funds. Budgets are based on unit costs and thus ensure value for money, eg. no overspend and a degree of match-funding or fund-raising is required in most cases.</p> <p>Resources are used in the most cost effective way according to best practice principles.</p> <p>Experience of the Erasmus+ Programme can enhance capacity and develop expertise with regard to securing additional funding, providing value for money and developing competitiveness with an eye to provision of services in the future.</p> <p>The intensive learning opportunities which Erasmus+ facilitates can often lead to the accelerated achievement of educational outcomes.</p>
<p>Collaboration between sectoral partners</p>	<p>The nature of Erasmus+ actively encourages and supports collaborative and cross-sectoral working as funding is mainly only granted when other partner countries are involved.</p> <p>Participation in Erasmus+ involves working with partners from across a range of countries, nationalities and cultures, and so helps practitioners and organisations to develop a cultural competence which ensures they are better placed to sustain collaborative working.</p>
<p>High quality services and practice development</p>	<p>The opportunity to compare and contrast policy and practice, with organisations and practitioners from other countries, can enhance the quality of services, outputs and delivery of youth work. It can also facilitate networking and the development of new partnerships.</p>
<p>Best practice in Child Protection</p>	<p>Northern Ireland has higher standards of Child Protection practice than in many parts of Europe. Involvement with other organisations presents an opportunity to share our learning, whilst at the same time reaffirming and critiquing our own practice.</p>

<p>Voluntary participation which enables young people to tackle issues of importance to them</p>	<p>Participation by young people is voluntary, and provides intensive and accelerated learning opportunities (often through engaging with peers from other countries) which develop or enhance their knowledge, skills and attitudes, whilst enabling young participants to share, compare and address issues which are important to them.</p>
<p>Equality and inclusion</p>	<p>The opportunities offered by Erasmus+, and particularly for young people to meet and interact with peers from a wide variety of countries and cultures, provides stimulus for experiential learning about equality, diversity and interdependence.</p> <p>Erasmus+ is wholly compatible with the implementation of the CRED policy and with the principles of inclusion.</p>
<p>Demonstrating educational outcomes, young people's progression, and quality of delivery</p>	<p>The intensive nature of the former Youth in Action (YIA) and Erasmus+ programmes provides many opportunities to evidence more concretely the value of youth work and to develop an expertise (through partnership with others) about how to capture that evidence.</p> <p>Practitioners can benefit from a much wider array of evaluation methods used in various programmes and activities under Youth in Action (previously) and which will feature again in Erasmus+. Many organisations have built up expertise in this area.</p> <p>There is greater emphasis, within Erasmus+, on producing quality applications, outputs and evidence of impact and as such youth work practitioners are encouraged to deliver quality outputs and evidence of learning.</p> <p>'Youthpass' is the European Commission's recognition of learning tool for non-formal learning, which if used during the course of a project, can provide an additional option for young people to obtain a certificate which will recognise their individual progression and learning.</p>
<p>Support existing educational priorities</p>	<p>Erasmus+ has subsumed a range of formerly independent formal and non-formal educational programmes, e.g. 'Life-Long Learning' and 'Youth in Action' and as such there already exists a context for supporting educational priorities.</p>
<p>Targeted provision</p>	<p>Erasmus+ supports targeted provision in the way it is set up to deliver programmes, e.g. Section 75 groups and young people facing obstacles (i.e. those at risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation) are particularly encouraged to participate in the programme.</p>

<p>Activities should be engaging, enjoyable and planned to deliver outcomes.</p> <p>Youth work (generic and targeted) should support young people to reach potential.</p> <p>Interventions should be appropriate to needs and age, e.g. young people (16+) supported to develop leadership capacity; access to recognised or accredited programmes, etc.</p>	<p>Young people are involved at all stages of an Erasmus+ funded activity, from the preparatory phase right through to the implementation and evaluation.</p> <p>Sustained engagement during youth mobility projects is an essential feature in young people's accelerated learning. There is much evidence of the positive impact that a young person's voluntary involvement in YiA (has had) and Erasmus+ will have.</p> <p>An example of this (and also of 'value for money') might be the scenario where a young person spends an average of 4 hours per week at a youth club. It may take approximately 7-8 months to build the same relationship with him/her that could be achieved via an intensive 8 day residential exchange programme (based on an average of 16 hours contact time per day).</p> <p>The key difference is that an exchange often takes place in a neutral setting and completely different location/country, and alongside new and 'unfamiliar' people, thus triggering a range of fun and challenging experiences that can achieve as much learning (if not more), in 8 days as opposed to 8 months.</p>
<p>Strengthening participation, including demonstrating an ethos and culture of active participation</p>	<p>The Erasmus+ programme provides a 'political' context for young people to examine citizenship and also to learn from the diverse examples of participatory practices and structures which exist across Europe.</p> <p>Erasmus+ provides youth work practitioners in NI with diverse opportunities to incorporate 'citizenship' into their programmes, and also for young people to be actively involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of projects.</p>

Table 3

How Erasmus+ can support and complement Curriculum programme areas



Curriculum Area	Erasmus+ Potential Support
<p>Health Education</p>	<p>Focus within programme on healthy behaviours, physical health and well-being. The issue of health and well being is also contained within the EU Youth Report (2012) which focuses on Social Inclusion, Health and Well-Being – opportunities exist to use this report to support and underpin development of local projects within Erasmus+.</p>
<p>Information, Guidance & Counselling</p>	<p>One of the aims of a Key Action 2 application and particularly those applications geared towards 'Strategic Partnerships' is 'Increased participation through career guidance and counselling'. A clear opportunity exists to link with local and European partners to develop medium & long-term approaches to this issue. For example, building skills capacity in counselling through sharing practice, via a combination of activities such as job shadowing, study visits and training programmes, is entirely possible.</p>
<p>Testing Values & Beliefs</p>	<p>When local young people engage with those from very diverse backgrounds and cultures from other countries, particularly in the more intensive environment of an international exchange programme, they experience an excellent 'safe' forum within which they can test out their own values and beliefs. The challenge of explaining these to such an audience in itself forces a young participant to reflect carefully, and develop a greater understanding of their own beliefs.</p>
<p>Creative Arts</p>	<p>Whilst no specific measure within Erasmus+ is geared towards the Creative Arts, the Arts are often used as a tool to engage young people during the life-span of a project – via the use of music, dance, art and drama.</p> <p>Erasmus+ Key Actions 1 and 2 continue to provide many opportunities to engage the arts to reach out to young people. For example, a youth exchange to Berlin might examine the many wonderful examples of street art or explore how youth centres use hip hop to work with young people. Similarly, under Key Action 2, a cross-sectoral partnership could be developed to bring formal, non-formal or corporate partners together in a project to promote the job prospects of young people in the arts.</p>



Outdoor Education, Sport & Recreation	Within Erasmus+ there is a specific focus on Sport, Outdoor Education & Healthy Lifestyles'. One element of Erasmus+ is 'Developing European Dimensions in Sport'. Real opportunities exist therefore to develop successful applications in this area and the EU Youth Report (2012) on Social Inclusion, Health and Well Being also provides strong evidence to underpin any application in this area.
Widening Horizons	Organisations that provide opportunities for young people to take part in exchanges or similar mobility type projects inevitably widen their horizons because of the forced interaction with their peers from other countries. However, this opportunity is also available to youth work practitioners, who often take advantage of the plethora of training, sharing of good practice and networking opportunities, made available to them via the Erasmus+ programme, its National Agencies and SALTO led activities.
Community Involvement	Both Key Action 1 and 2 provide scope for community involvement via youth and youth worker mobility type projects (exchanges and European Voluntary Service), and through opportunities to share and explore practice around how youth work is carried out in other countries. For example, organisations might wish to visit the local communities of their project partner countries, to share, exchange and learn from good youth work practice.
Community Relations	All Key Actions can support Community Relations – an exchange with an overseas partner that includes, for example, visits to World War sites could provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their views of Northern Ireland. A Strategic Partnership might provide a longer-term project to examine diversity through a series of activities, whilst a Key Action 3 application might enable local groups to facilitate dialogue around policy debate which informs approaches to issues or diversity, reconciliation and peace building within the context of a decade of commemorations.
Political Awareness & Active Citizenship	Key Action 3 promotes the active participation of young people in democratic life and fosters debate around topics centred on the themes and priorities set by the Structured Dialogue and the renewed political framework in the youth field. Structured Dialogue is the name used for discussions between young people and youth policy-makers in order to obtain results which are useful for policy-making. The debate is structured around priorities and timing (e.g. forthcoming elections) and foresees events where young people discuss the agreed themes among themselves and with policy-makers, youth experts and representatives of public authorities in charge of youth. Projects can take the form of meetings, conferences, consultations and events. These events promote the active participation of young people in democratic life in Europe and their interaction with decision-makers. Transnational Youth Initiatives (funded under Key Action 2) also encourage active citizenship and entrepreneurship.

Development Education & Environmental Awareness	With regard to Development Education & Environmental Awareness, the opportunity to provide real learning experiences for practitioners and young people (in particular), with the capacity to ignite and influence positive change at local and global level has never been greater. With the Erasmus+ three Key Actions that support Mobility, Partnership and Policy Reform, there is an opportunity to enhance the capacity of the current work force, whilst growing and nurturing a cadre of young leaders who could be better equipped to confront global challenges head on.
Information Technology	As organisations and their staff become more aware of the need for and use of IT in the delivery of their work, including the role it plays in young people's lives, Erasmus+ presents a clear opportunity to support work in this field and in doing so, to engage both practitioners and young people more effectively in ICT. Participation in Key Action 2 'is expected to result in the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European levels'. Amongst the outcomes produced by organisations supported under this strand, could be 'innovative approaches' to addressing their target groups, by providing for example: use of participatory approaches and ICT-based methodologies. One impact of this key action could be 'more strategic and integrated use of ICTs and open educational resources (OER) by education, training and youth systems'.



Table 4

Relevant Policies and Strategies at Devolved Administration and European levels



In October 2014 Education Minister, John O'Dowd, "encouraged all schools and youth organisations to look into the amazing opportunities that the Erasmus+ programme offers."

While the Erasmus+ assessment forms do not directly ask questions (such as in the former Youth in Action Programme) regarding "demonstrated relevance to a UK National Policy", it may be useful for local applicants to make reference to the relevance of their own proposal to one or more of the many policies/strategies which exist at local, national and European levels when answering the question about "impact". They would then need to be specific as to how their proposal will complement or help implement the policy/strategy.

Below, we have pulled together a list of current policies and strategies, from both a European and a Devolved Administration perspective, that could be cited in an Erasmus+ application. It is important to point out that this list is not exhaustive.

Devolved Administration Level

Programme for Government 2011-15: The priorities include: growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future; creating opportunities and tackling disadvantage and building a strong and shared community. A key commitment is "to facilitate delivery of the Executive's 20% target for increased drawdown of competitive EU funds" and this has already been achieved between 2011-15, with one year of programming still remaining.

NI Executive Budget 2011-16: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFM/DFM) Key Challenges: - Key priorities include "strengthening our engagement with Europe to deliver investment and growth, influence emerging policy and share our experience of conflict resolution and peace building." The Budget statement for 2015/16 confirmed that "the Executive's office in Brussels will ensure that our profile remains high and our interests will continue to be promoted."

NI Executive - European Priorities 2014-15: Winning in Europe: The Executive's Euro vision is to participate in Europe in a positive, outward and forward looking manner and to become a preferred region of choice for partnership working and within which to live, work, study and invest. The priorities have been aligned with the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme and the Europe 2020 Strategy, which provide a strategic framework to help shape and focus our approach.

The 2014-15 Statement of European Priorities details strategic, cross-cutting objectives to focus on European engagement for the year ahead. It contains a vision for better engaging with Europe supported by three strategic aims: to promote our interests; raise our positive profile in Europe; and encourage greater participation in European matters.

The priorities focus on the most vital indicators, tracking overall progress towards the Executive's strategic aims - Economy, Environment and Climate Change and Social.

North South Ministerial Council: The Education sector remit includes "mechanisms for facilitating co-operation in the area of youth exchanges, including the need for linkages between YCNI and the Irish national Youth Council."

Investment Strategy for NI 2011-21: "Tourism has become one of our most important growth areas and with continued support for tourism schemes we can continue to attract more visitors."

Northern Ireland Skills (10 year) Strategy "Success through Skills" 2011: This aims to enable people to access and progress up the skills ladder to raise the skills levels of the whole workforce. The key commitment in the Programme for Government (PfG) is to "deliver 200,000 qualifications" over 3 years.

Department of Education: The Minister's statement on "The Next Steps for Education" in September 2011 included "in future, the pattern of provision and investment must and will be dictated by the needs of education in the 21st century and an economy that requires a diverse educated workforce with an array of skills."

Priorities for Youth (PFY) is structured around the 5 education priorities, which are all relevant to helping shape and modernise youth work in education to produce more equitable outcomes. International activity through the non-formal sector can contribute significantly to at least 3 of these:

- raising standards for all;
- closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality;
- developing the education workforce.

PFY meets the Erasmus+ objectives of promoting active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity.

Youth Council for Northern Ireland: International Work Policy Aim is "to influence EU and relevant local policies and to encourage and enable young people, and those who work with them, to increase their levels of European awareness and to benefit from North/South and European Community programmes, through effective information exchange, international contact and travel".

Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice: Around the central theme of personal and social development of young people, the three Core Principles are: preparing young people for participation; promoting acceptance and understanding of others; testing and exploring values and beliefs.

DE CRED Policy states: "it is important that the role of education in community relations, equality and diversity is relevant to children and young people today"

"understand and respect the rights, equality and diversity of all Section 75 groups, value and respect difference and engage positively with it."

NI Executive Strategy to Improve the Lives of people with Disabilities, 2012-15 has the vision of "a future where disabled people contribute to and benefit from the cultural, social, political and economic life of NI on an equal basis as others." It also recognises that "disabled people face unique barriers when accessing information and services online. During the lifetime of this strategy, greater efforts will be made to address the needs of disabled people by providing greater access to digital inclusion."

OFM/DFM: Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People: Child Poverty 2014: this is the Executive's comprehensive new delivery framework to co-ordinate its efforts across Departments to take forward work on priority social areas. (This addresses the Erasmus+ objectives of "key competences and skills of young people including those with fewer opportunities ...and participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market.)

OFM/DFM: Together: Building a United Community: key priorities include:

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

This Strategy includes a **United Youth Programme** which will offer young people in the NEETs⁸ category structured employment, work experience, volunteer and leisure opportunities, along with a dedicated programme designed to foster good relations and a shared future. (This addresses the Erasmus+ objectives of quality improvements in youth work; policy reform at local, regional and national level; recognition of non-formal and informal learning; the international dimension of youth activities.)

Sport Matters: The NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-19: The vision is of “a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport.” Government will:

- Promote the value, importance and priority of sport and physical recreation;
- Promote increased participation among under-represented groups;
- Promote community cohesion through sport and physical recreation.

OFM/DFM: Together: Building a United Community includes: “We recognise that sport is a powerful tool in bringing people together; sport can play a central role in breaking down divisions in society; a Youth Sports Programme will contain a significant good relations element.”

NI Executive: Pathways to Success: this aims to reduce the number of young people who are in the NEET category and has the aspiration that “by 2020 every young person will not only have an opportunity to access education, training or other preparation for employment but, to the extent that they are able, also avail of that opportunity.”

OFM/DFM: Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2024: will establish a framework for Government departments (and others) to tackle racial inequalities, to eradicate racism and hate crime and along with *Together: Building a United Community*, to promote good race relations and social cohesion.

OFM/DFM: consultation document on Sexual Orientation Strategy, 2014: the strategic objectives include:

- To promote an environment free from harassment and bullying and to tackle homophobia in all forms, including violence and abuse;
- To promote equality of opportunity for LGB people.

OFM/DFM: Gender Equality Strategy 2006-16: this is about providing men and women with “equal conditions for realising their full human rights and their potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development and to benefit equally from their results”.

European Level

European Youth Policy: The Lisbon Treaty (2000 - Article 165) had called for the EU to “encourage the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors and encourage the participation of young people in the democratic life in Europe.”

EU Youth Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering 2009: The Strategy seeks to establish a cross-sectoral approach to empower young people in Europe to face a number of current challenges in particular regarding education, employment, social inclusion and health. The EU’s vision for young people is based on two approaches: investing in and empowering youth, with particular attention to youth with fewer opportunities.

Renewed Framework for European Co-operation in the Youth Field 2010-18: This is also referred to as the EU Youth Strategy. It aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of European co-operation by building a strategy motivated by:

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

Europe 2020 Strategy: “Youth on the Move” Initiative: This “puts 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.”

EU Council Resolution on Youth Work, 2010: Member states were invited to “create better conditions and more opportunities for the development, support and implementation of youth work at local, regional, national and European level” and to “promote opportunities for exchange, co-operation and networking” at these levels.

Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training - ET2020: This should better provide the means for all citizens to realise their potential, as well as ensure sustainable economic prosperity and employability. The framework should take into consideration the whole spectrum of education and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, covering all levels and contexts (including non-formal and informal learning).

The conclusions set out four strategic objectives:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training – all citizens need to be able to acquire key competencies;
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship – education and training should enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and competencies needed for their employability and foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue;
- enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training – the acquisition of transversal competences by all citizens should be promoted.

EU Youth Report 2012:

This Report summarises the results of the first cycle of the EU Youth Strategy (2010-12) and proposed priorities for the next three years. Emphasis should continue to be placed on:

- employment and entrepreneurship and increased access to work;
- developing the innovative and creativity of young people;
- focus on social inclusion and health and well-being.

E+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2014:

To improve the number and quality of inclusion and diversity projects within Erasmus+ in the field of youth, this Strategy has a number of aims including:

- increase the commitment to inclusion and diversity from different actors in Erasmus+;
- promote Erasmus+ as a tool to work with young people with fewer opportunities and actively reach out to disadvantaged groups;
- reduce obstacles for young people with fewer opportunities to participate in the programme and help applicants to overcome obstacles;
- support organisations in developing quality projects that involve or benefit young people with fewer opportunities.

POTENTIAL PROJECT OBJECTIVES FOR ERASMUS+ FUNDED INITIATIVES AND RESULTING BENEFITS



In the section which follows we have created a **matrix** which links **22 key potential objectives for Erasmus+ programme delivery**, with anticipated benefits that International Youth Work can bring for the Practitioner, Young Person, Organisation and the Local Community. It is important to note however that this list is **not exhaustive**.

Benefits for the practitioner and young person are based on evidence collated⁹ and feedback from individuals, who have been involved in international work at some level. Benefits for organisations and communities are based on examples of anecdotal evidence¹⁰ alongside anticipated impact, where the possibility to 'roll out' the benefits can only truly be felt where there is wholesale commitment to the process from management and other staff and where communities 'buy in' to such a process as well.

Regarding the benefits for young people, it is relevant to cite a project currently being undertaken by the Youth Service Sectoral Partners Group, to develop an appropriate mechanism to measure the outcomes for young people from engagement in youth work programmes. International projects funded via the Erasmus+ programme, with their potential for accelerated learning, offer young people and those that work with them the possibility to record learning against clearly defined key competencies and only projects submitted with clear and achievable outputs and outcomes will be funded.

YCNI is acutely aware of the resource implications of a youth worker attending a week-long training programme or a 10-day job shadowing placement overseas. Whilst the temporary absence of staff members

might not have the same impact within a larger organisation, covering a wide geographical remit, as compared with a smaller rural community organisation, the benefits to participation can have a huge impact irrespective of the size of the organisation involved.

Taking young people away on a youth exchange requires the support and co-operation of many players, particularly the families and friends of those young people involved. Engagement in an exchange project can be a fun, life-changing learning experience, for those concerned, and as such a whole community can be affected in a positive way.

The level of impact will be determined by the robustness of the programme and the starting point of the individuals within the group. Whilst projects can be paced to reflect the maturity and capacity of the group, all groups will nonetheless still be able to set clear and achievable outputs and outcomes against which progress and learning can be monitored and recorded.

Opportunities exist for young people who participate in international mobility projects to progress through the ranks to become 'young leaders' on future projects. These opportunities for leadership development and personal growth are real within the Erasmus+ programme and demonstrate the huge potential that International Youth Work can have for those that have the opportunity to experience it. Youth workers who have experienced this type of activity when young, often become the most ardent advocates of international work and through their continued engagement in these types of activity, help to embed this type of learning into local practice.

Project Objectives (Erasmus+)	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
1. To appreciate the value, benefits and importance of engagement in International Youth Work and learning opportunities	Can see the value of investing in programmes in short-term to sow 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 Opportunities for accelerated learning and formal recognition of learning Wider 'pool' of more culturally competent youth work personnel, who engage in international projects as an integral part of their overall youth work delivery Practitioners become active advocates for the benefits of International Youth Work	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 Opportunities for international travel enable young people to directly witness and have personal experience of other cultures, views and ways of living As a result of their positive experience, young people endeavour to convince their peers to become involved in international activities and as such become active advocates for the benefits of International Youth Work	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 inclusive and more adept at dealing with diversity and conflict Users experience of activities is enhanced and thus they become agents for 'selling' & marketing programmes to new audiences Levels of interest in organisation increase & relationships improve & sense of pride in organisation is evident
2. To enhance confidence and sense of belonging to the community	Provide the 'spark' to engage peers, colleagues and community on a deeper and more constructive level	Become inspired and motivated to become involved in the local community which will have a ripple effect on family, friends, peers and wider community	More confident & better equipped individuals who can deliver the outcome of more effective engagement with the community	Greater civic engagement by young people in their community

Project Objectives (Erasmus+)	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
3. To actively engage with people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and countries	Able to develop a wider range of projects & programmes based on a deeper understanding of how issues affect individuals & communities Greater appreciation of the complexities of multiple communities that exist within Europe and beyond as compared with the two main traditions in N. Ireland	Greater range of activity with others outside of Northern Ireland ensures young people are more adept in dealing with diversity Contact with 'others' outside of the traditions of N Ireland ensures young people begin to reflect on what they understand to be 'right' and helps them re-evaluate their beliefs	Greater knowledge exists within the organisation that can be shared with peers – better equipped to challenge stereotypes, prejudice, etc Ethos of the organisation alters – shifts from position of empathy for one position to an understanding of a variety of perspectives	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 relevance of an international experience 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
4. To enhance levels of tolerance and acceptance	Develop a more measured and reflective approach to dealing with issues through a broader perspective nurtured by interaction with other colleagues who share different outlooks and approaches to problem solving Increases patience, tests resolve, beliefs and values, increases understanding and develops resilience	By meeting peers from a different background, young people learn to exercise more discretion and patience in their interaction. In time, this manifests itself as a more caring and tolerant nature	Culture of inclusion is reinforced & 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. The community is engaged in processes that support this and a shift in wider thinking regarding inclusion gradually takes place.

5. To increase understanding of values, such as social justice, equity and respect for diversity	Ability to enable young people to compare and contrast their own ideas and opinions beyond a N. Ireland context and in doing so support their learning	Enables young people to gain a wider perspective on similar issues experienced by peers in other countries Young people become advocates for greater tolerance within their local community	The ethos & culture, approaches & methodologies that underpin practice are discussed & clarity around how the organisation does its work is progressed, leading to all round better quality of delivery	The organisation becomes a vehicle for the community to help explore & address these areas & in doing so helps to inform discussion, leading to a reflection of opinion, ideals and values
6. To enhance peace building skills & understanding of related concepts (conflict resolution/management/reconciliation, peace building structures, strategies and methodologies	Practitioners gain a greater understanding of how other countries can function more 'normally' and deal with diversity and conflict Practitioners improve the effectiveness of their practice within this field through employment of new strategies and skills	Greater understanding of how young people from other countries deal with diversity. Young people develop culture of acceptance and tolerance Young people begin to critically reflect upon their own values, beliefs and behaviours	Skills capacity within the organisation is enhanced & staff & volunteers are better able to respond to issues that arise; culture of acceptance & tolerance permeates throughout & underpins ethos leading to a more inclusive organisation	The community hosts 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
7. To enhance capacity to express opinion, thought, ideas and emotions with regard to a wide range of issues	More aware of impact of language (verbal and non-verbal) and how it is perceived Greater understanding of policies, procedures and legislation which relate to these issues, in other jurisdictions Enhanced awareness of cultural sensitivities and beliefs of 'others'	More aware of impact of language (verbal/non-verbal), how it is perceived, and enhanced awareness of cultural sensitivities and beliefs of 'others' Greater understanding of policies, procedures and legislation from other jurisdictions	Organisation is better able to facilitate people to share their views more openly and within a safe environment	Young people from the community have the opportunity to share ideas within a safe environment Credibility and reputation of organisation is enhanced which reflects well on whole community

Project Objectives (Erasmus+)	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
8. To improve physical, mental and emotional health and resilience, as a result of personal interaction with young people from other cultures and countries	Develop a greater awareness of the need to address the physical, mental and emotional well-being of young people and the skills to address these Feel more confident and competent about practice and capacity to deliver in this area	Feeling more positive about oneself, improved self-esteem, greater self-awareness and increased confidence through interaction with peers from outside of NI	A more healthy & enriched staff and volunteer team, services alter accordingly, culture of organisation shifts towards one of proactive interaction with diversity rather than necessity or merely reactive	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
9. To develop and enhance a range of skills including team-building, decision making, motivation, communication, participation, project organisation, project management and leadership	Interaction with those from other countries enhances practice and ability to deliver effective programmes Opportunities to share and learn from practice	Better able to engage in a range of settings with a diverse group and in a different setting and context. Able to 'test' own skills with others in a safer and less critical environment Opportunity to have learning recorded and formally recognised, via 'Youthpass'	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 better equipped staff
10. To increase knowledge of different learning styles and methods for reinforcing learning	Better equipped to develop and apply a diverse range of teaching/learning methods in response to the learning needs of young people and their peers from other countries	Young people benefit from experiencing a wider range of learning methods and engage more effectively with learning process	Organisation has a wider variety of approaches to choose from when planning activities, therefore enhancing quality and effectiveness of practice	The application of the knowledge gained will result in better equipped young people, who will have a more positive impact on the local community

11. To promote a greater understanding of the value of ICT as an important 'tool' in delivering effective youth work projects under the Erasmus+ programme	Increased knowledge of the role that ICT can play, the confidence to utilise it and an appreciation of the appropriate controls that are necessary	Greater competence and confidence in applying ICT within youth work projects (subject to appropriate safeguards). The acquisition of transferable skills to enhance career opportunities	Overall ICT competence within the organisation is enhanced with staff and young people learning together and supporting one another, leading to improved delivery in all youth work programmes	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
12. To enhance capacity to identify and source appropriate funding to support external projects which are aligned with local priorities	Increased options to support delivery with users and for accelerated learning Enhance competence of practitioners in securing funding from other sources	Young people are more motivated to support funding applications, which if successful, will provide a wide range of opportunities, learning and enjoyment	Existing services can be complemented and new programmes supported 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
13. To develop new programmes, initiatives, resources and materials as a result of participation in the programme	Greater productivity and output, improved motivation, credibility and reputation of worker and organisation grows, and young people 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

Project Objectives (Erasmus+)	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
14. To understand the importance of providing a neutral, safe and multicultural space to facilitate discussion of sensitive issues	The intensity of the shared living experience promotes the development of friendships and more open sharing of views on sensitive issues Will have more confidence and a stronger commitment to co-creating an environment that will facilitate open discussion Provides opportunities for accelerated learning Enhanced ability to step outside of the norms of practice and thus introduce new and creative ways of resolving difficulties within their work setting that can be used with service users, peers, colleagues and community	Increased confidence from taking part in programmes leads to self-belief that young people have something important to say, can exert influence and are able to offer advice to peers and adults The intensity of the shared living experience promotes the development of friendships and sharing of views on sensitive issues Will have a stronger commitment to co-creating an environment that will facilitate open discussion Provides opportunities for accelerated learning Young people are tested by a series of challenges that fall outside of the norm, which enhances their resolve to understand, support and adapt	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 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	Users witness a shift in young people's approach to their surroundings and thus the relationship between users and their local community is enhanced Better quality of services begin to emerge as new ways of delivery are implemented. Users share their resulting experiences with peers, friends and family
15. To enhance knowledge and understanding of particular models of issue-based practice such as participation, citizenship, human rights, etc	Better positioned to critically reflect on their current practice and subsequently amend this, in light of knowledge gained from interaction with peers from other countries	Better understanding of how these issues are addressed, both locally and through contact with peers in other countries	Organisation is better placed to meet the targets & outcomes it sets itself with regard to the curriculum; a better constructed programme ensures that the organisation is better equipped to deliver higher quality outputs and outcomes	The community benefits from better equipped young people with a greater array of skills & capacity to engage with these issues

16. To enhance ability to plan and manage complex projects involving a range of issues, including child protection	Deeper knowledge and understanding of methodologies and approaches that can be applied to delivery Gain understanding of the importance of having a solid project rationale and negotiating clear roles and responsibilities Greater appreciation of the importance of pre-planning	Opportunities to develop project management skills and ownership of project, leading to greater motivation, engagement and transferable skills Opportunity to have learning recorded and formally recognised, via 'Youthpass'	Organisation is better equipped to deliver events thus better maximising times, resources, personnel & finance leading to a better output and 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
17. To enhance 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 learn from others and share expertise	Opportunities to develop project management skills, understanding and ownership of project, leading to greater motivation, engagement and transferable skills Learning can be recorded and formally recognised, via 'Youthpass'	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', enabling it to become involved/lead on projects on behalf of the community
18. To promote a greater understanding of what is required to work effectively in multicultural teams	Development of skills appropriate for engaging with people from diverse backgrounds Opportunities for gaining knowledge of other languages Opportunity to discuss, debate and negotiate appropriate learning for target group with partner groups	Development of patience, tolerance and acceptance of others with whom they would not normally meet Opportunities for gaining knowledge of other languages	More effective teamwork leads to a more conducive work environment, which improves service delivery and so greater outcomes are achieved	Users are receiving higher quality of service delivery & the reputation brings positive perception of the community

Project Objectives (Erasmus+)	Benefits for Practitioners	Benefits for Young People	Benefits for the organisation	Benefits for the community
<p>19. To assist in the creation of a wider 'pool' of more culturally competent personnel, who engage in international projects as an integral part of their overall youth work delivery</p>	<p>Practitioners receive greater support and encouragement from management to participate in/organise International Youth Work programmes Practitioners become active advocates of international work Practitioners derive benefits in terms of personal and professional development Become more reflective of what is being delivered, why and how some of the new learning can be embedded/integrated in practice</p>	<p>Young people recognise the benefits of participation in international programmes and are actively involved in their design and delivery</p>	<p>The organisation has greater capacity and support for developing a more strategic approach to international work</p>	<p>The local community derives longer-term benefit and a greater legacy from a regular stream of international youth programmes</p>
<p>20. To enhance the ability to create and sustain effective partnerships with other bodies, in other countries</p>	<p>Staff become more skilled in developing effective complex partnerships through the experience gained with partners from different jurisdictions Transnational initiatives to encourage active citizenship and entrepreneurship among young people</p>	<p>Young people gain an understanding of the importance of creating effective partnerships with other bodies to deliver good projects Opportunities to engage in Transnational Initiatives encourage active citizenship and entrepreneurship among young people</p>	<p>Better prepared at governance & management levels to deliver effective partnerships Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships provide organisations with the opportunity to develop innovative projects with peers in other sectors/countries, which support sharing, development and implementation of high-quality training, learning, outputs and youth work Working together to create new innovative approaches & outputs can improve the quality & relevance of learning on offer Can create new ways of working in meaningful partnership on common objectives together, through developing long-term collaborations</p>	<p>The local community will receive a positive impact from the more effective delivery of local projects Strategic Partnership Projects facilitate co-operation between regional authorities in the development of youth systems</p>

<p>21. To recognise learning achieved by young people in Erasmus+ funded initiatives, against key competencies</p>	<p>The 'Youthpass' certificate is a recognition tool which can help practitioners to support young people in identifying and recording non-formal learning – it can also be used by the practitioner to support his/her own learning Youthpass can help practitioners to record the impact, outcomes and learning processes within Erasmus+ activities Youthpass is the only form of accreditation for non-formal learning recognised at European level</p>	<p>Young people can use Youthpass to identify, understand and document what they have learned during their Erasmus+ activity Youthpass is designed to support the reflection of the individual learning process</p> <p>All young people can obtain a recognised certificate which will validate their non-formal learning across a wide range of key competences</p>	<p>Youthpass assists organisations in recognising the skills young people, practitioners and volunteers have developed through participation in an international project Youthpass is designed to support the reflection of the individual learning process, the social recognition of youth work, the employability of young people and the active participation of young people in society</p>	<p>Youthpass assists employers, educational and vocational institutions in recognising the skills developed through participation in an international and non-formal educational project Youthpass is designed to support the social recognition of youth work, the employability of young people and the active participation of young people in society Users have another recognition tool that can support entry into the labour market and/or describe improvements in competence-based learning which in turn supports personal & social development</p>
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Project Objectives (Erasmus+)

Benefits for Practitioners

22. To enable young people, through European Voluntary Service (EVS) in another country, to acquire a comprehensive set of skills and competencies which are transferable to a range of settings, including work and civil society

Practitioners benefit from working with volunteers from other countries by becoming more culturally aware and open to new ways of communicating and learning

In working with volunteers from other countries, practitioners are forced to test and challenge their ideas and concepts of 'norms', their perceptions, their prejudice, values and belief system

Benefits for Young People

European Voluntary Service (EVS) enables young people (17 to 30 years) of all socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds, to spend a period of time in another country, as a full-time volunteer

Volunteers experience huge learning through the opportunity to experience life in a different country, learn about another culture, develop workplace skills as well as other personal and social skills

A reality check for volunteers about life in other countries and cultures

Language proficiency greatly increased (of the host country)

EVS is virtually free of charge to volunteers

Young people can use Youthpass to identify, understand and document their learning

Many young people cite their EVS experience as being key to having secured employment

Benefits for the organisation

Organisations involved in hosting/sending of EVS volunteers can use Youthpass to monitor, document, identify and record the learning achieved by volunteers during their placement period and their overall impact upon the organisation

Organisations benefit from hosting volunteers by becoming more culturally aware and respectful of other cultures and more open to new ways of communicating and learning

In hosting volunteers from other countries, organisations are forced to test and challenge their ideas and concepts of 'norms', their ethos, perceptions, prejudice, values and belief system

Organisational capacity is increased through connections that have been established and developed

Benefits for the community

Potential employers can refer to Youthpass to identify and understand the learning achieved by volunteers during their Erasmus+ placement

Youthpass is designed to support the employability of young EVS volunteers and their active participation in society

Employers can assist entry into the labour market by recognising and valuing the learning achieved through a volunteering work placement

Positive differences in attitude and behaviour are often observed by families and the community

Notes

References

- ^{1, 3, 4, 7} YCNI *Independent Surveys 2009-2012* carried out by WRITE Associates
- ² *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
- ^{5, 6, 9, 10} *Outward and Forward looking Youth Work (2013)*, Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI)
- ⁸ **NEET**: Not in Education, Employment or Training

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