

The Relevance and Benefits of  
International Youth Work for  
Good Relations in Northern  
Ireland

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## Introduction

Since 1998 I have been involved in what has come to be known as International Youth Work. As you might suspect there is no one fixed definition (there are many definitions for that matter), not least of all because there are many that still have problems defining youth work let alone international youth work. And given the nature, style, structure and context of youth work in different countries it's hardly surprising that defining international youth work is in itself difficult.

I have long advocated greater involvement in, and a more pro-active approach to what I simply term '*the international*' among practitioners in Northern Ireland. I believe it is one of the most if not (arguably) the most effective method of learning. I make this assertion because I have seen at first hand many of the benefits that young people, young leaders, youth workers and other practitioners (not youth work qualified but who have a remit for young people) have gained from participating in international programmes. Much evidence of which I have included in this report.

I have witnessed young people shed the metaphorical bucket-full of tears, young leaders change their career aspirations, practitioners make life-changing decisions and older nearly retired youth workers become completely animated and reinvigorated as a result of their involvement in the international setting. I also make the assertion from the perspective of what might have been, at least in one case anyway, but where I am certain there are lots of cases that many a youth worker can relate to.

In August 1989, I was an 18 year old in one of the old government-run Youth Training Programmes, i.e., 'Youthways' I had just come back from my second 'Young People Together' International Camp in Lisdoonvarna – an unforgettable experience - so much so that I had actually paid to go second time around a year later! A year earlier, one of the other young people in our group whom I counted on as a good friend at the time was supposed to attend one of the camps. For whatever reason, he was unable to take part.

Fast-forward to early November 1994 and I was to learn that the very same young man was arrested for his part in the Rising Sun Bar massacre in Greysteel. Disbelief is not a strong enough word for anyone who knew him from our time in Youthways. Complete bewilderment of how this quiet, unassuming young man with whom I had come to know well, a guy I hung out with and laughed with

on so many occasions became involved in one of the most notorious events in the history of the Troubles will always live with me.

I often wondered had he taken part in the 'Young People Together' Camp in Lisdoonvarna and enjoyed a similar experience to mine would his life have been different. No guarantees of course but just maybe, just maybe. Thus, the sense of what might have been will remain with me always.

I do believe his network of friends would have been different, his aspirations enhanced and more so his ideas about the importance and benefits of mixing in diverse company might have steered him in another direction and his involvement in the Rising Sun Massacre might never have been.

To say that this young man 'wouldn't have hurt a fly' is no exaggeration - at least in August 1989 it certainly felt like it.) As is still so vivid on that cold November day in 1994 (when standing in the bedroom of a student friend and) hearing the news emerge on the radio, the realisation that the dividing line between those who (and still do) become involved in political violence and those who don't suddenly became very apparent....and very thin. A salutary lesson to us all!

Had that young man gone to Lisdoonvarna perhaps his life might have been very different? Aside from the positive healthy benefits that involvement in '*the international*' or more specifically International Youth Work brings I also know that it has the capacity to bring about fundamental change in people's lives. If one less person becomes involved in violence of any kind or is less likely to advocate or promote among others, sectarian, racist, homophobic or sexist opinions, then international youth work can indeed support the change that we crave in Northern Ireland and/or other conflict societies for that matter.

**Fergal Barr<sup>1</sup>**

**December 2018**

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<sup>1</sup> Information about Fergal Barr is available under Appendices

## **Purpose of this report**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the important contribution that International Youth Work makes in the:

- (i) lives of young people as regards their longer-term personal development
- (ii) the development of leadership capacity in young leaders as regards career development
- (iii) the continued professional development of established youth work practitioners
- (iv) the possibilities for learning that international opportunities offers other non-youth work practitioners but who engage with young people through the use of non-formal methodologies, i.e., youth work  
and
- (v) the implications for youth work policy and practice in Northern Ireland as a direct result of involvement in international youth work programmes

In highlighting the important contribution it makes to individuals, policy and practice I aim to set out the relevance of and the important contribution that International Youth Work makes to the continued development of Community Relations in Northern Ireland. I will do this by:

- (i) briefly outlining current context affecting (as well as providing a short overview of) International Youth Work
- (ii) providing not only a rationale for the relevance of International Experience as regards peace building in Northern Ireland but also the rationale for further examination of the subject
- (iii) highlighting the results of a survey conducted with a wide range of practitioners examining the benefits of international youth work in 2014  
and
- (iv) outlining findings from work undertaken by The LID (Leadership through Intercultural Dialogue) Programme since 2008 (and 'LID+') which demonstrates the positive benefits of engaging in International Youth Work

I will conclude by linking both the findings of the survey and work of the LID Programme to demonstrate the positive contribution that International Youth Work makes and potential contribution it can make to Good Relations in Northern Ireland and finish by making recommendations for further development.

## What is International Youth Work?

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland describes International Youth Work as

*'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 policymakers/ 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.<sup>2</sup>*

Connect Cymru refer to International Youth Work as

*'the phrase given to a dynamic youth work discipline that connects young people, youth workers and key-decision makers with a host of different cultures across the world to encourage positive actions for the betterment of the individual and the global society.'<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Impact of International Youth Work: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective*, Youth Council for NI, 2015

<sup>3</sup> *Expanding horizons, reviewing the impact & success of Welsh international youth work and opportunities*, Rose J. Dr, Stewart S., Connect Cymru 2014,

Cotton describes International Youth Work as including

*‘visiting other countries with young people, hosting young people from other countries, making international links and experiencing different cultures.’<sup>4</sup>*

Cotton also defines International Youth Work as part of a broader Global Youth Work but differentiates it through its *‘developing a critical understanding of the links between personal, local and global issues’* and its focus on seeking *‘young people’s active participation in bringing about change towards greater equity and justice.’*

As I have already mentioned there is no one fixed definition of International Youth Work although the recent (and 2<sup>nd</sup>) European Youth Work Convention refers to Youth Work as *‘concerned with creating spaces for young people’* and providing *‘bridges in their lives’* and goes on to say

*‘Youth work supports and encourages young people to explore new experiences and opportunities; it also enables them to recognise and manage the many risks they are likely to encounter. In turn, this produces a more integrated and positive attachment to their own identities and futures as well as to their societies, contributing purposefully to wider political and policy concerns around young people not in education, training and employment (‘NEET’), health risk lifestyles, lack of civic responsibility and, currently, extremism.’<sup>5</sup>*

Reference to identity, civic responsibility and extremism highlights the importance that Youth Work has and in the context of Northern Ireland, this is of course significant. It is clear that processes’ involving young people, youth workers and youth work policy makers interacting with their peers from different cultural backgrounds across a range of countries is what sets International Youth Work apart and enables us to maximise our learning which in turn will serve only to enhance our practice.

It should be noted that this report does not aim to articulate nor advocate one particular definition over another but endeavours to offer an outline of some of the current thinking in this area in an effort to help contextualise the findings contained in this report.

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<sup>4</sup> *Global Youth Work in the UK: Research Report*, Cotton N, Here and There Consultancy 2009

<sup>5</sup> Declaration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Youth Work Convention, Making a world of difference, 2015

## **The Value and Role of International Youth Work in contributing to the development of a shared society in Northern Ireland**

The processes I refer to on the previous page are of course underpinned by a commitment to non-formal education methodologies delivering of a range of services in diverse settings but where it involves a wide range of stakeholders from a variety of countries it moves beyond the 'norms' we are familiar with.

Those 'norms' we are familiar with or at least come to expect, i.e., the traditions, customs, traits, cultural assumptions and common language which is indigenous to our own local, regional and national context is challenged.

The beauty of interacting in an international context where the opportunity to create, compare, contrast and critique our own understanding, knowledge, assumptions and experience serves only to enhance our own practice in the long-term.

The contribution that International Youth Work makes to the development of a shared society in Northern Ireland is of course still very much in question as evidenced by the lack of endorsement at policy level. I would argue however, that this is as a direct result of the lack of involvement in International Youth Work and thus greater levels of participation would only demonstrate its effectiveness leading to a change in policy.

Since 1998 we have had *'Youth for Europe'*, *'The YOUTH Programme'*, *'Youth in Action'* and now *'Erasmus+'* (with the new Erasmus programme to come in 2020). Groups in Northern Ireland have historically outperformed their UK counterparts in successfully applying to these programmes but that has dropped off in recent years.

Whilst *'Priorities for Youth'* recognises the importance of International experience, somehow we have neither a policy nor strategy that contains an explicit commitment to International Youth Work and bearing in mind the clear benefits to be had for Good Relations in Northern Ireland (which I will go on to demonstrate further on in this report) it seems somewhat remiss of us as a body of practitioners committed to promoting any concept of a shared or even integrated society.



Why is this? There of course can be many reasons but ultimately when it comes to it there has been a collective 'failure' to convince policy and decision makers about the merits of International Youth Work.

Just as the Youth Service was once faced with the challenge of convincing Government about the merits of youth work, the challenge of convincing all stakeholders including young people, practitioners and youth service managers as well policy-makers, government departments and Ministers even about the value of International Youth Work remains.

The OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) in their 2012-13 European Priorities strategy, *Winning in Europe* did have as one of their three strategic aims '*greater participation in European matters*'.<sup>6</sup> On the face of it BREXIT might have changed this but with the rise of 'the Right' and in the broader context of growing extremism there has never been a greater need to continue to reassert the need to engage with Europe even after BREXIT.

There are clearly some within the Youth Service that have engaged in and/or promoted the merits of International Youth Work. From the Youth Council for NI and local practitioners to 'sympathetic' individuals within Government Departments and regional youth work bodies, many have come to know and articulate the benefits. But with only an estimated 3% of young people in the UK involved in or previously involved in International Youth Work, such a low figure is evidence in itself that the Youth Work community is not entirely convinced about the merits of such work.

It would be wrong to assume that this would be the only reason. Some of course are still unfamiliar with what it entails and without clear policy direction that is unlikely to alter much in the future but whilst benefits are already clear there also seems to be a resistance to recognising those benefits.

Much of the change that practitioners would pursue over the course of a 12 month period in their work with young people for example might be achieved in the same time as an intensive 8 - 10 day international residential youth exchange. If this is the case then surely participation in this type of work should be viewed as a more efficient use of time?

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<sup>6</sup> 'Impact of International Youth Work: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective', Youth Council for NI, 2015

The benefits of International Youth Work are reasonably if not overwhelmingly well documented. Wolfgang Ilg describes,

*‘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.’<sup>7</sup>*

In its report, *‘Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work’* in 2013, The Youth Council for Northern Ireland highlights many of the benefits from International Youth Work. The same report also provides a useful outline of the benefits (see appendices, figure 1) at various levels not only for participants and practitioners but also for partner organisations, the community, policy makers and employers.

These benefits were further articulated in a second publication from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, *‘Impact of International Youth Work: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective’* (2015) when benefits to the 5 main priority areas of *‘Priorities for Youth’* as well *‘Priorities for Youth Principles and Key Actions’* & Curriculum Programme Areas were described. These included relevant areas such as Equality and Inclusion, Community Relations and Political Awareness and Active Citizenship.

The challenge remains to convince policy and decision makers about the value and role of International Youth Work particularly with regard to supporting the development of a shared society.

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<sup>7</sup> *Learning Mobility and Non-Formal Learning in European Contexts – Policies, Approaches and Examples, Evaluation of international youth exchanges*, Ilg W.,

## **External influences on Peace Building in Northern Ireland and the relevance of International Youth Work to Community Relations**

The search for peace in Northern Ireland is littered with examples of external intervention – US Senator George Mitchell facilitated the Good Friday Negotiations, American Envoy Richard Hass along with Professor Megan O’Sullivan convened the Hass Talks. Closer to home both the British and Irish Governments were directly involved in both St. Andrews Agreement and Stormont House talks.

Money from the IFI and EU’s Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (or as we like to call it, ‘PEACE’) has demonstrated a financial commitment on the part of the US and EU to help embed peace and transform our society from one of a violent past to one of a peaceful future.

Issues that have plagued political progress in Northern Ireland at one time or another have also been subject to external influence, e.g., Decommissioning which was led by retired Canadian Military General John De Chastelain, the review of Policing was overseen by former Hong Kong Governor Chris Patton and our attempts to deal with the past although initially led by ‘Eames/Bradley’ saw us take cognisance of various models including the Truth Commission in South Africa.

When looking to make sense of the issues that do divide us and the manner in which they divide us we have often turned to the likes of well respected academics such as Professor John Paul Lederach.

In January 2013 the European Union held a special conference in Belfast to celebrate the success of its first three PEACE programmes and when courting global trade many of our political leaders head off on numerous trade missions whilst visits to the White House on St. Patrick’s Day are the norm rather than the exception.

From this one might conclude that developments in the ‘Peace Process’ are conditional to intervention from outside of Northern Ireland. It’s not hard to see why - the ‘Stormont House’ agreement was only possible because of the involvement of the both the British and Irish Governments and came at the end of some very protracted and lengthy negotiations and was of course given the ‘seal of approval’ by the White House. But as Kelly (2012) has noted there is a

*‘perceived lack of political vision and leadership around the issue of inter-communal division in Northern Ireland’* and there exists a need for *‘a clear and agreed vision of the*

*sort of society that should be created, post-Agreement...with achievable goals and targets which would contribute to the achievement of this vision.<sup>8</sup>*

The current political stalemate lays bare the (evidentially more than) perceived lack of political vision and leadership – there has been little or no joint involvement of both the British and Irish Governments in recent times which would further suggest that political progress is only possible with the intervention of ‘outsiders.’

From this we could logically assume that for many practitioners ‘on the ground’, e.g., teachers, youth workers, mediators, community activists and community relations workers, the opportunity to engage with peers externally, i.e., at international level should also be a feature of practice. The reality though is somewhat different.

To get an idea of just how few are involved you only have to look at the number of young people taking part in International Youth Work. If, as is estimated, less than 2% of 16-25 year olds in Northern Ireland have participated in an International Youth Exchange<sup>9</sup> and when the normal young person to practitioner ratio in an exchange is taken into consideration, i.e., 8/10:2, it can be assumed that the overall number of practitioners involved in international programmes is considerably less. There are a wide variety of reasons for this - the Youth Council for Northern Ireland identified just some of these<sup>10</sup>:

- 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';
- 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;

If, as politicians have done (on a significant number of occasions) and turned to external intervention for support then surely local practitioners can only benefit from doing likewise?

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<sup>8</sup> *Progressing Good Relations and Reconciliation in Post Agreement Northern Ireland*, Kelly G., INCORE, 2012

<sup>9</sup> *Outward and Forward Looking Youth work*, Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 2012

<sup>10</sup> *Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work*, Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 2012

Often left to build (or as the case may be mend) relationships between polarised or segregated communities, youth and community workers are often the conduit between the decisions of politicians and the ramifications of those decisions within and between local communities.

Peace-building in Northern Ireland has of course traditionally evolved around the idea of bringing Catholics and Protestants together in an effort to reduce prejudice and foster better relationships. This tends to happen in 'neutral' settings across Northern Ireland (away from the normal 'tribal' setting).and/or with reciprocal visits to one another's communities, or with joint visits to locations beyond Northern Ireland where the symbolism of the tribal landscape is non-existent.

As Northern Ireland has become more diverse over the years (it's estimated that 11% of the population are now foreign nationals<sup>11</sup>) the concept around promoting good relations between Catholics and Protestants (only) has evolved to take cognisance of the changing landscape. However, as has seemed to have been demonstrated over the last number of years, with an increasing diverse population has come a growing number of racially motivated attacks and/or reported hate crime, our collective capacity for embracing diversity still seems a long way off.

The question of how well equipped (the vast majority of) our existing practitioner base is to deal with diversity looms larger if they are primarily equipped only to 'deal with' traditional division. When only a limited number of practitioners have the opportunity to engage with a much more diverse range of experience are we effectively failing those tasked with dealing with good relations, peace-building and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland?

As evidenced by the small number of young people accessing youth exchanges for example, it is clear (that overall) very few practitioners in Northern Ireland take the opportunity to engage with their European counterparts. Yet the benefits of involvement in these programmes are well documented at an individual, organisational and community level by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

Even with a commitment to non-formal education from the EU since the early '90's (first of all 'Youth for Europe' followed by 'YOUTH', then 'Youth in Action' and now 'Erasmus+'), the opportunity for local practitioners to engage with their peers in countries beyond Northern Ireland has always been there but has yet to be fully maximised.

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<sup>11</sup> *NI Peace Monitoring Report*, Nolan P., Community Relations Council, 2012

Some of the more practical reasons for this I have already touched upon but as was demonstrated in *'Priorities for Youth'*<sup>12</sup>, the European and Regional Strategic Context is referenced but only to merely recognise the value of youth work, i.e., non-formal education *'across regions, countries and at European level..... as an important aspect of learning for young people.'*

Not one concrete recommendation to promote greater engagement at an international level is included in the document and thus reflects the lack of commitment at government or policy level which is in stark contrast to the level of external intervention Northern Ireland has experienced in the past.

In September 2014, Mike Nesbitt, then Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister said, *'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. While much remains uncertain about our future in Europe, we must support the public, private and voluntary sectors in grasping the opportunities currently afforded by the European Union.'*<sup>13</sup>

Cotton (2009) lends some weight to some of the previous points raised when she contends that many practitioners view International Youth Work merely as an 'add on' and thus not a priority but she argues that some of the benefits include *'Understanding the global community and seeing the world differently'* as well as *'Cultural awareness or understanding difference.'*<sup>14</sup>

With regard to peace building in Northern Ireland it should be noted that there has been a recognition of the importance of the international context, e.g., measure 2.2 of the PEACE II programme was specifically geared towards Northern Ireland as an *'outward and forward looking region'* whilst one of the aims of measure 2.1 was *'encouraging a structured approach to participation in wider European and International networks'*<sup>15</sup>

The commitment to this faded in PEACE III when priorities were geared toward (i) building relationships at local level (ii) dealing with the past (iii) creating shared space and (iv) capacity building. A brief overview of evaluation of the PEACE III Programme presented to the NI Assembly in March 2013<sup>16</sup> does not accord any reference to international practice and thus the potential for

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<sup>12</sup> *Priorities for Youth*, Dept of Education, 2012

<sup>13</sup> <http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=5838488b4625db6430a7f34bb&id=bcbbed2016>

<sup>14</sup> *Global Youth Work in the UK: Research Report*, Cotton N, Here and There Consultancy 2009

<sup>15</sup> *The Challenges of Peace*, Community Relations Council, 2009

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2012/ofmdfm/7113.pdf>

building upon this and examining in further detail its role and relevance was arguably lost. This of course is set within a wider context of a reduction in PEACE funded projects, i.e., 15, 000 PEACE I as compared with 400 PEACE III projects.

However, in a presentation to the 'European Territorial Cooperation Delivering Europe 2020' Meeting in Luxembourg in September 2012, Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body concluded that 2 of the emerging 6 themes for a potential PEACE IV programme were '*Building capacity for a shared future*' and '*Sharing Experiences with other regions*'.<sup>17</sup> This reaffirmed the relevance of the international dimension.

The reality of PEACE IV is entirely different. Whilst it has prioritised young people, there still exists no real and meaningful commitment to endorsing, encouraging and supporting involvement in International Youth Work.

As with previous PEACE programmes, activities of an International nature tend to focus on events related to (or arguably limited to) World War I & II and are viewed as a means of increasing understanding of our history better so as to bridge the gap between divided communities in Northern Ireland.

Whilst this is not a criticism and as someone who has been directly involved in that kind of work it brings many benefits but it inadvertently limits other possibilities, e.g., meeting 'others' in a contemporary context provides opportunities to contrast, compare, critique and create without being focusing only to historical events, important as they may be.

There already exists some evidence to suggest that involvement in international programmes, i.e., non-formal education programmes does contribute to peace building in Northern Ireland but the evidence is in its infancy.

The need therefore for a longer, sustained and much more in-depth examination of the subject is essential, not least of all because of the opportunities afforded by (but not exclusively so) the Erasmus+ (and future ERASMUS) Programme are potentially enormous.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://admin.interact-eu.net/downloads/5898/presentation>

Erasmus+ will run up to and include 2020 but will be replaced by the new ERASMUS programme with a budget that will double to €28bn. With PEACE IV being anticipated as the final round of 'PEACE' funding the need to look beyond this and other 'traditional' funding streams as a means of resourcing good relations, peace building and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland is becoming more obvious, particularly in light of the state of paralysis that has engulfed Stormont.

The 'Youth Chapter' of the current programme, Erasmus+, set aside €1.4bn for non-formal education during this period and it was expected that usage among practitioners in Northern Ireland would increase during its lifetime just as was the case with its predecessor, 'Youth in Action' when Northern Ireland constantly outperformed other regions of the UK.<sup>18</sup>

It's become clear however, the possibility that the youth work community in Northern Ireland will engage even less so in the future within an assumed post-BREXIT context is very real and therefore the need to continue to promote involvement in Erasmus+ and the new ERASMUS programme is essential.

The potential opportunities afforded by the Erasmus+ Programme still remain enormous but with many of the key issues such as the Irish Language Act, Marriage Equality and now (to a seemingly lesser extent) flags and emblems, parades and dealing with the past still unresolved, and combined with the public cynicism that has overtaken the optimism generated by the Good Friday Agreement, there's a need to continue to examine other ways of contributing to good relations, peace-building and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland.

One way of doing this would be to examine the contribution that international non-formal education programmes can make to good relations, peace-building and conflict transformation. To do so there emerges a number of key questions we need to address:

1. What is the relevance for and impact of international youth work for the development of Good Relations in Northern Ireland?
2. What are the benefits, direct or indirect, to Good Relations in Northern Ireland from participating in international youth work?

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<sup>18</sup> *Impact of International Youth Work: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective*, Youth Council for NI, 2015



3. What are the benefits, direct or indirect, to the colleagues, organisations, client group(s), family and wider community of practitioners involved in international youth work?
4. What are the policy implications of international youth work for good relations, in Northern Ireland?

### **The relevance and impact of International Youth Work for the development of good relations in Northern Ireland**

There is very little in the way of literature that actually considers this question in any great depth. As Johnson and Tatum found, *'There is a lack of international material that has a direct bearing on good relations... Good relations do not seem to have much salience beyond the UK at this stage; and even that is somewhat limited ....some international contacts with whom we explored the idea felt unable to contribute much due to the fact that good relations was a 'very Anglo-Saxon' concept.'*<sup>19</sup>

Existing literature focuses more specifically on the relevance of international youth work programmes to youth work practice in Northern Ireland because there is of course a natural correlation between both.

Two examples from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, *'Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work'* and *'Impact of International Youth Work on the Curriculum A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective'* provides evidence to support the relevance of international programmes for youth work practice in Northern Ireland and therein contains reference to areas where young people and practitioners have learned to embrace diversity and where they have emerged with a greater understanding and acceptance of other cultures but there is no direct correlation with good relations.

Any practitioner from Northern Ireland giving up time to take part in a programme will normally consider the relevance of any programme they participate in for their own work setting which might include reference to Good Relations; however, on the reverse side, host organisations (across Europe) are of course not anywhere near as concerned (if even) about good relations in Northern

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<sup>19</sup> *Good relations: a conceptual analysis*, Johnson N. And Tatam J., Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2009

Ireland unless of course it is directly concerned with conflict and involves partner organisations from other conflict areas.

There is a wider context for this also. Aside from the EUSPPR ('PEACE' funding) which was set up specifically to help embed peace in Northern Ireland, there are few, if any programmes within the EU that have any specific remit with regards to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The reverse of this is that there exists a wide variety of EU funding programmes that provides opportunities for practitioners from a range of professions in Northern Ireland to engage with their counterparts across Europe but involvement in youth work/non-formal education is now largely confined to the 'Erasmus+' programme under the (oft-referred to) 'Youth Chapter'.

There is of course existing literature available regarding the relevance of 'PEACE' funded projects alongside what have been or can be considered as mainstream funders in good relations work, e.g., IFI, CRC and OFMDFM. However, these funding streams tend to focus on projects that happen within Northern Ireland and border areas and where there is an international dimension this tends to involve (by and large) joint visits to strategic locations, e.g., World War I and II battle sites, death camps, etc so as to allow practitioners to reflect on its relevance to our own history and our role in historical events.

That said, a small amount of work in this area does already exist. One example I will focus on is The LID (Leadership through Intercultural Dialogue) Programme which is addressed in more detail further on in this report.

An independent evaluation, conference and other anecdotal evidence over a period of time has already unearthed some positive results and therefore further exploration of the question is arguably necessary.

## The benefits, direct or indirect, for good relations in Northern Ireland through participation in International Youth Work

An evaluation of Youth in Action in 2009 stated that *'Youth in Action can be an agent for change and helps youth organisations address their priorities.'* It went on to say that *'A great deal of informal learning takes place and there is little doubt as to the positive impact that Youth in Action has on young people, the organisations supporting them, and their communities'* and that *'There is a positive outcome in terms of young people getting involved in the wider democratic process in their communities.'*<sup>20</sup>

These findings were echoed in 2011 when Youth in Action was viewed as having *'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.'*<sup>21</sup>

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland also found that participation in non-formal education programmes, again through Youth in Action, has long term benefits for practitioners including opportunities to *'enhance and share peace building skills, including a greater understanding of concepts such as conflict resolution/transformation and reconciliation, peace building structures, strategies and methodologies'*<sup>22</sup>

Findings so far has largely been within the context of youth work whilst evidence gathered has been collated under programmes primarily funded by the EU but not exclusively so. More in-depth examination of the benefits would not be limited merely to the new Erasmus+ programme as there are many other legitimate non-formal education mechanisms, e.g., UNOY Young Peace Builders Forum, European Youth Forum, World Youth Foundation and so on and so on.

A further limitation to findings produced so far have also been that there needs to be more in-depth questioning and analysis and therefore to truly comprehend whether or not there are benefits to practitioners it's necessary to identify and work with a cohort(s) of practitioners in a much more structured manner and over a more sustained period in order to identify what if any those benefits

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<sup>20</sup> *Youth in Action evaluation Actions 1.1 and 5.1*, Quality Evaluation Consortium, 2009

<sup>21</sup> *Youth in Action Interim Evaluation*, Ecotec/Ecorys Research and Consulting, 2011

<sup>22</sup> *Impact of International Youth Work: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective*, Youth Council for NI, 2015

are and the impact they are likely to have for the work setting or uncover even, if practitioners that participate in international youth work are more likely to be pre-disposed to potential benefits because they are already involved in this kind of work and therefore more sympathetic to it.

### **The benefits, direct or indirect, to the colleagues, organisations, client group(s), family and wider community of practitioners involved in international youth work**

Whilst the benefits for practitioners have received a measure of attention there is very little available evidence to catalogue in any significant way in which the benefits extend to those beyond the practitioner. The Youth Council for Northern Ireland has identified benefits for young people, practitioner, organisation and community in its *'Outward and Forward Looking Youth Work'* and reinforced this in its subsequent publication *'Impact of International Youth Work.'*

However, their findings are based on largely anecdotal evidence collated over a period of time and therefore the need for a more systematic approach that examines the subject matter in a much more robust manner will only enable firm conclusions about International Youth Work to be drawn.

A longitudinal study with clear terms of reference and committed resources and conducted by those with professional expertise in research and evaluation will be the only meaningful way to consider the real and lasting impact of International Youth Work on Community Relations in Northern Ireland.

### **The policy implications of international youth work for good relations in Northern Ireland**

The political context (and geographical position) of Northern Ireland lends itself to developing a closer relationship with Europe more than perhaps most other regions across the globe - there is clear 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' and the *'NI Executive-European Priorities 2012-13: Winning in Europe'* as well as 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'*.

The financial benefits to the local youth work community in Northern Ireland have been also significant. 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. In the context of ever dwindling budgets for public services this may come to have greater significance for future delivery. Our 3 MEP's, Jim Nicholson, and in particular, Martina Anderson and Diane Dodds have historically advocated greater use of European funds – and thus increased accessibility of additional resources may help influence decision-making at local level.

Financial implications aside the correlation between the growing recognition of non-formal education at a European level alone (never mind globally) and for the Good Relations sector in Northern Ireland may arguably not be so far apart.

Much of the work in good relations is carried out with young people and performed in many cases by youth workers using well established youth work methodologies. There has been a long and well established link between good relations or rather community relations and non-formal education over the years with the likes of the Youth Council's JEDI (Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence) Initiative alongside the Dept of Education's CRED (Community Relations, Equity and Diversity) Policy for the Youth Service.

However, many other sectors including formal education, local government and those directly involved in peace-building have their own policies and practice, much of which can be found to cross-over into the non-formal arena but the wider question of policy implications of non-formal education for good relations, peace-building and conflict transformation has been largely untouched, in part due to the 'failure' of many practitioners to avail of or at least recognise fully the opportunities afforded to them in the past by both the 'YOUTH' and 'Youth in Action' programmes.

The introduction of the 7-year 'Erasmus+' programme in 2014 provided an invaluable opportunity to examine in much greater detail if there are indeed policy implications for the Good Relations sector in Northern Ireland but this has by and large not been availed of. There still remains time to do so and leaving BREXIT aside for one moment, the incoming 'ERASMUS' programme in 2020 with its €28bn budget still ensures funding will be available, although of course, it's still unclear how the UK will access these funds but that they will be accessible.

## **Overview of findings from survey exploring the benefits of International Youth Work**

The full survey can be found in Appendices but in an effort to make sense of findings the following provides an overview.

Of the total number of responses 58.45% were directly involved in youth work whilst another 28.87% are working with young people although not youth work trained by profession, combined however, it means that 87% of respondents are involved in some form of work with young people and therefore this provides a firm basis from which to draw some firm conclusions although I'm keen to stress once again that the need for further examination of the subject matter is necessary.

Just over a quarter of respondents have each participated in at least 16 international youth work programmes whilst 69.47% of respondents had experienced at least 3 programmes, again providing substance to the answers collated. Of those who provided additional comments at least fifteen had experience in 3 different Youth in Action Measures whilst two mentioned they had also been involved in Comenius, NordPlus, Erasmus and Student Exchanges.

The main benefits to young people included an increase in confidence and self-esteem (66.31%), learning about 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.

According to respondents, organisations participating in international youth work will benefit mainly from new ideas and methodologies (53.11%), networking possibilities (53.11%), increased understanding of the values of international youth work as a methodology in working with young people (52.38%) and increased creativity within the organisation (staff and young people).

Benefits to communities were cultural awareness (75.65%), respecting difference (67.90%), involvement of local people in programmes (63.10%) and testing values and beliefs (41.70%).

When questioned about barriers to participation in international youth work, the top four responses were (i) insufficient budget to enable international work to be prioritised over mainstream youth work activity (49.25%), (ii) lack of knowledge about setting up programmes, accessing money and finding partners (32.84%), (iii) lack of interest or acknowledgement of value of international youth work at management level (32.46%) and (iv) daily work taking priority (30.22%).

Recommendations to increase participation in international youth work included (i) youth work curriculum to include commitment to International Youth Work (50.94%), public endorsement from government departments with a responsibility for youth work (45.56%), 'ring fenced' money from youth work budgets to complement existing funding (36.98%) and (iv) regional networks to promote and share learning (36.23%).

Further to this links between international youth work activities and youth work curriculum can be nurtured by a commitment to International Youth Work in the Youth Work Curriculum (56.32%), appointment of International Officers to provide support to practitioners 'on the ground' (48.28%), annual programme of policy seminars to support practice and learning (47.51%) and public endorsement from government departments (43.68%).

It's clear from the response to the survey that not only is there a significant number of those involved in international youth work but many of them have significant experience and thus are speaking from a well informed position.

The responses indicated a clear steer (not only) on the key benefits for young people, practitioners, organisations and communities but also barriers to participation and recommendations for greater involvement.

There is a clear link between the barriers that exist and efforts required to improve the links between policy and practice. Only when many of the barriers identified have been addressed can the link between policy and practice be improved. So for example, insufficient budget to enable international work to be prioritised was identified as the main barrier to greater involvement.

There is of course funding available under Erasmus+ but as was evident under Youth in Action match funding and/or 'cash flow' has always been a problem particularly for small organisations.

There is clear correlation between the responses of two specific questions on '*recommendations to increase participation in international youth work*' and '*how links between international youth work activities and youth work curriculum might be nurtured*'. Below is an outline of how greater help can be offered to bridge existing gaps identified.

- **Curriculum:** Youth Work Curriculum to include commitment to International Youth Work scored both 50.94% and 56.32%
- **Government Endorsement:** Public Endorsement from government departments with responsibility for youth work scored 45.66% & 43.68% respectively
- **Policy Development:** An overarching policy and/or strategy that all key stakeholders sign up to scored 23.77% and 36.40% in both questions
- **Sharing Practice:** Regional Networks to promote and share learning and an Annual Programme of policy seminars scored 36.23% and 47.51%
- **Logistical Support:** 'Ring Fenced' money, and International Officers to support practice 'on the ground' scored 36.98% and 48.28%
- **Information:** More information about the Erasmus+ programme and the setting up of an International Unit scored 31.70% and 34.87%
- **Networking:** an annual programme of opportunities to support involvement scored 33.96%

Not one of these options scored lower than 20% with the highest not far off 60% - essentially variance in responses for these options ranged between 1 in 5 and 1 in 2 and thus can be viewed as having from reasonable to significant support.

The lowest score of any of the options was *more flexible and/or improved terms and conditions of employment* which suggests it's not as high a priority compared to the rest and thus implies that if many of the other measures are in place then workers will be more willing to engage in international youth work – 18.11% still represents effectively 1 in 5 of responses but it does suggest that workers do not view terms and conditions as the greatest barrier to greater involvement.

Bearing in mind that respondents had the option of selecting '*none of the above*' then it is clear that the broader youth work community view these measures as significant in the context of bridging the gap between policy and practice.



Some of these measures would address many of the barriers already highlighted but other concerns could form part of a greater 'package of support' which would further help to bridge the gap between policy and practice including:

- Qualifications and/or greater recognition of learning outcomes from international youth work
- Pot of match Funding to support 'up front' costs where groups don't have the necessary 'cash flow' to cover all existing costs relating to hosting programmes or travel costs where individuals struggling with finance are concerned
- Greater levels of support for specific groups such as lone parents through child care

Questions of policy were not addressed directly by the survey but responses garnered from those questions addressing recommendations to 'increase levels of participation in international youth work' and the 'nurturing of links between international youth work activities and youth work curriculum' do offer some ideas. So for example, *'how to integrate policy [through] learning from other countries'* or the *'opportunity to influence practice positively'* could easily be addressed through an annual programme of seminars.

## **The LID (Leadership through Intercultural Dialogue) Programme: A case in point**

Before discussing The LID Programme in detail I should declare what might be perceived as a conflict of interest in that in my role as Co-ordinator of the Inside Out Programme (be that as a full-time employee for 7 years or as has been the case since July 2013, voluntary (with the exception of 2017), I have overseen the development of The LID Programme as part of our work based on a commitment made to the Year of Intercultural Dialogue back in 2008.

I did so with a view to providing international learning opportunities for young people living in and around the immediate and surrounding Claudy area. Providing opportunities formed part of my contractual obligations but equally I was already an advocate of international learning prior to my involvement with Inside Out and thus would have looked to integrate this into delivery in any case.

What has materialised since has by far exceeded any commitment to merely provide 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunities to young people but has been extended to also incorporate young leaders, youth work practitioners and other practitioners with a remit for young people, albeit primarily across Northern Ireland but open to individuals throughout the rest of the UK.

### **Background to the programme**

The LID Programme is an '**umbrella programme**' for a series of activities that were funded under the EU's Youth in Action Programme between 2007 and 2013 and currently, the Erasmus+ Programme.

The purpose of LID is to develop participants skills base, increase their knowledge and affect attitudinal change which in turn enhances their capacity and that of their organisation and ultimately the communities they work in to contribute to the continued development of a shared society in Northern Ireland.

The two main aims of 'LID' are as follows:

- 1) To provide a range of opportunities for local practitioners to engage with their peers at international level in order to raise the value, importance and benefits of shared international practice as a highly effective means of learning among local communities and in doing so promote and increase international output [activities] at local level.

- 2) To promote the development of leadership capacity among young leaders, youth workers and trainers through interaction with other practitioners from across Europe and beyond in order to enhance their capacity for making an active, sustained, valuable and lasting contribution to their community at local level in order to enhance Cultural Diversity, Interculturalism and Good Relations.

Programme participants are normally recruited through open calls across various networks whilst typical programmes have included Feasibility Meetings, Training Programmes, Job Shadows, Partnership Building Activities, Seminars, Large Scale Projects, Youth Exchanges, Youth Initiatives and Youth Democracy Projects.

Themes explored have included culture, conflict, outdoor education, participation, self-organisation, citizenship, environment, photography, networking, EVS (European Voluntary Service), creativity, the arts, democracy and stress management.

### **Successful**

The LID programme has so far proved successful because it:

- utilises the opportunities afforded by the EU's Youth in Action/Erasmus+ Programme in order to make a sustained contribution to good relations in Northern Ireland
- used/s Youth in Action & Erasmus+ funding to support individual participation in LID activities negating the need to source funding from scarce local resources
- engages with a wide range of well established international partners proficient in Youth in Action/Erasmus+ to provide a wide range of opportunities on an annual basis
- focuses on and promotes a positive approach to interculturalism and diversity which are viewed as essential to peace-building in Northern Ireland
- provides a diverse range of theme-based programmes ensuring opportunities are accessible to as wide an audience as possible
- creates networks that support practice and leads to the development of post-LID activities ensuring further investment in youth work provision in Northern Ireland
- motivates participants ensuring greater productivity in and commitment to service delivery

## Evaluation of The LID Programme

In order to get some sense of whether or not LID was making any kind of impact on its participants an independent evaluation of the programme was commissioned covering the period April 2008 to September 2013.

The overarching aim of the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the impact, value and relevance of *'The International'* on good relations in Northern Ireland by assessing the impact of the LID programme on both the programme participants and their wider communities. Specifically, the report set out to:

1. Contextualise the relevance of 'The International' to the social and political context in NI;
2. Assess the extent to which the two main aims, and constituent objectives, of the LID programme were met;
3. Highlight any differences in impact that the programme has had on the young people and the adult practitioner participants;
4. Share examples of good practice that emerged during the programme's lifespan and highlight where practice can be improved;

And

5. Make recommendations for the future of The LID (Leadership through Intercultural Dialogue) programme.

Individualised baseline data was unavailable and thus the majority of the data relied on anecdotal evidence of *increases* in knowledge and *changes* in behaviour and as such, causal claims are limited.

Mixed methods were used to measure the various impacts on beneficiaries, their experiences, behaviours and perspectives. Initially, participants were asked to submit written feedback after their

experiences away with LID, with responses representing 56/141 individual participants<sup>23</sup>, these testimonies were referenced as part of the evaluation process.

A residential was also held at The White Horse Hotel, in Derry-Londonderry on Friday 17 – Sunday 19 January 2014 to facilitate focus group evaluation activities while providing a networking opportunity for past participants (18 in total) to come together, connect socially and engage each other in ideas and learning.

### **Findings from the evaluation**

Findings from the evaluation can be summarised as follows:

- 100% of participants felt the programme/s were **“time well spent,”** citing a range of reasons;
- 100% of participants felt they had **enhanced confidence and knowledge** to assist in bringing about positive change at local level;
- 93% of participants felt more **able to challenge stereotypes** of their own and others’ communities;
- **LID is a significant contributing factor to enhanced cultural diversity, Interculturalism and good relations** and is a good model for improving ‘good relations’ within local/home communities on 4 levels: personal, interpersonal, as well as role models, and as community leaders
- The **most common key learning related to Diversity**, at 41% of all key learning identified;
- **38+ soft and hard skills** were acquired or developed;
- The two foremost strengths of the programme identified were **‘Enhanced Interculturalism’** (29% of all responses) and **‘Bringing People Together’** (26%);

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<sup>23</sup> There were a number of ‘exclusions’ (i) those under the age of 18 and not working for an organisations (ii) those who took part in the 2-day ‘Network Earth: Pro-Active Citizen’ Programme and (iii) those attending the Open Space programme in 2009 – in total 56 out of a possible 74 testimonials has been collated.

- All participants felt that LID was either fully, or to some extent, a **good model for improving good relations** in their own communities;
- In some regards, LID participants show **enhanced good relations compared to the national average**.

### **Recommendations**

The evaluation made a number of recommendations including meeting other participants in advance (whether physically or 'virtually') may help to alleviate some of the fears around participation in programmes; funding which would be made available as a 'Loan Pot' to help pay for 'up-front' travel costs, further networking and conferencing activities post-programme/s, to facilitate shared learning and collaborative working and a need for improved on-going monitoring in relation to the project impact *'to more accurately measure changes in knowledge and behaviour'*.

### **Follow-up Conference**

All recommendations of course have financial and resource implications and as The LID Programme is co-ordinated through a voluntary commitment acting upon such recommendations is challenging. That said, funding from the CFNI (Community Foundation for Northern Ireland) and CRC (Community Relations Council) enabled Inside Out to organise a follow-up conference in November 2015.

The conference was open to all previous LID participants. For a wide range of reasons only four LID participants were able to attend. This didn't detract in any way from the conference in that an almost entirely new audience explored not only findings from the LID evaluation but more importantly the subject of the benefits of international experience for Northern Ireland.

The aims of the Conference were to:

- 1) 'Test' the findings from the evaluation among a much larger and more diverse audience;
- 2) Build a wider and 'more concrete picture' of how international work contributes to the development of a shared society, peace-building, reconciliation and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland;

- 3) Facilitate discussion among stakeholders/participants around the exact nature of the contribution that international practice makes to a shared society and/or peace-building in Northern Ireland;
- 4) Inform policy and practice through a series of conclusions;
- 5) Make recommendations that act as a catalyst for the development of a more pro-active strategy towards international practice across all sectors;
- 6) Document examples of good practice;
- 7) Provide opportunities for stakeholders to connect and network with a view to participation in further international practice.

#LidConf (as it became known during the conference for social media purposes) brought together 47 people from across a range of sectors<sup>24</sup> 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. The conference was facilitated by a team of four international facilitators (from Germany, Italy, Poland and Portugal) and the report prepared by an independent consultant. The report concluded that:

- 1) International experience can build confidence in individuals to communicate and collaborate broadly without (or with less) fear of difference.
- 2) 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.
- 3) International experience brings a new, often fresh, perspective on issues that can reach an impasse when persistently viewed from the same standpoint/s. In the context of peace in Northern Ireland this is particularly pertinent and has the potential to offer new solutions.
- 4) When community leaders, decision-makers and ‘Gatekeepers’ participate in international experience, their capacity to actively implement learning upon their return surpasses the impact that individuals who are not in positions of influence can have.
- 5) Individuals who have participated in international experiences would benefit from greater opportunities for shared learning, project development and peer-to-peer support upon return to their home communities, be that through physical or virtual means.

And the following recommendations were made:

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix for Full List of sectors and organisations represented.

- 1) The values and benefits of international work are well documented, they are tangible but they need to be better monitored and more thoroughly evaluated through longitudinal research which, at the very least, incorporates baseline evidence. This will empower those who are promoting international programmes to deliver a robust evidence base to decision-makers.
- 2) Work needs to be undertaken to actively seek the participation of decision-makers at all levels and across all sectors in international programming.
- 3) There is a strong case for the development of a virtual forum for people who have engaged in, or wish to engage in, international work, volunteering, and/or programming. This should be accessible, informative, and user-led, written collaboratively by the people who use it, utilising wiki, or similar, technology to support the ongoing evolution of the forum.

### **Monitoring within The LID Programme**

A recommendation from both the evaluation and conference was the need for more robust monitoring. With little or no resources to speak of this of course is difficult to achieve but efforts to respond accordingly on a small but manageable scale were made in 2015 when ten participants were asked to complete a pre- and post-programme 'questionnaire' incorporating some of the indicators of learning first identified at the LID Evaluation residential in 2014. In total there were 63 indicators, grouped across three areas - Skills, Knowledge and Attitude.

Participants were asked to mark each indicator from 1 -10, 1 being poor, 10 being 'perfect'. Between May and June 2015, ten participants, (4 male and 6 female ranging in ages from between 21 and 50; 2 living in England and 8 based Northern Ireland; 3 full-time youth workers, 1 freelance trainer, 1 teacher and 1 social worker both of whom work directly with young people in residential care, 1 young leader, 2 freelance community activists and 1 non-youth work practitioner who works in the music industry; some well experienced in Youth in Action/Erasmus+ and some relatively new or only participating for the first time) formed a core group that all completed the process. It should be noted that they did not take part in the same programme and that their scores were taken from a rich and diverse range of training programmes.

### **Increases in Skill, Knowledge and Attitude**

Before proceeding, It's important to note that this particular mechanism is limited in scope, e.g., it's reliant on participants to complete honestly and fairly on both occasions and of course this is can be



influenced by mood, location, environment, timing, etc. That said, it was only ever designed to offer an indication and nothing more concrete and with only 10 participants completing it did of course only represent a small percentage of LID participants at the time, approx 6%.

However, there are some interesting and revealing conclusions that can be read into the findings and alongside the testimonials that participants provided (from their programme experience) more credibility can be attached to the indicators as a result.

With the exception of one participant all experienced an increase in their Knowledge, ranging between 2% for the most experienced YiA/E+ participant and 40% for a regular user of YiA/E+. Under Attitude, there was a similar pattern, with the more experienced experiencing smaller attitudinal change, but equally, the 'regular user' who has attended 6 or 7 international programmes, experienced the second highest level of attitudinal change. This correlates with a 'testimonial' he provided which suggests the programme challenged his views about working practices. This participant was the oldest and therefore the suggestion is that irrespective of age, change in attitude and an increase in knowledge can take effect.

Again, under the heading of Skills, similar patterns emerged with the more experienced gaining smaller increases and less experienced larger increases. Overall, all but one of the participants experienced increases across Skill, Knowledge and Attitude ranging between 2.1% (most experienced) and 40%, i.e., the 'regular user'. For the four participants who were relatively new to YiA/E+ programmes change ranged from 14.4% to 38.4%.

What stood out is that the older participant with at least 6 programmes behind him experienced an almost 40% change which again suggests age is not a barrier to learning. Equally, the participant who experienced a negative change, albeit minimal, i.e., - 0.76% had experience of only two programmes. His testimonial revealed that he was the oldest at his second programme (in a very young group) and he found this a challenging experience although he later adapted to his circumstance and enjoyed the programme but the experience might have affected his overall response of the questions.

## Overall

Overall, participants experienced an increase of 25.3% across Skills, Knowledge and Attitude. Whilst the means used to measuring this has its limitations, the range of participants is quite broad and thus does offer an indication of the change that can take place. This is backed up by the pattern that on the whole, less experienced participants demonstrated more significant change whilst more experienced practitioners experienced smaller changes.

Evidentially, from those participants that completed both pre- and post-programme indicators it does suggest that change results from participation in the LID Programme and this supports the assertions of both the LID evaluation and conference that it is *“a good model for improving ‘good relations.’”*

## Additional Findings from LID Indicators

The same exercise was carried out in 2016 and 2018 with 2 youth exchanges in order to build up a picture of impact upon young people rather than just practitioners but also to determine if findings from the practitioners might be merely a one-off

In 2016, twenty-eight participants from seven countries (including five young people from Northern Ireland) took part in a musical youth exchange in Slovenia. Of the 63 statements scored, 8 showed slight decreases but positively 55 statements showed an increase which equates to 87%.

Taking each area as an average, participants rated themselves an average of 6.78 in skills at the outset and 8.14 at the end, an increase of 1.36 (12%). In attitude, participants scored themselves an average of 8.31 and 8.82 respectively, an increase of 0.51 (9.4%). Knowledge was rated 7.72 at the beginning and 8.20 representing an increase of 0.48 (10.6%). Overall, the combined average figures were 7.60 at the beginning and 8.18 at the end demonstrating an average increase of 0.58 which, in some ways doesn't sound much but on a scale of 1 -10 equates to just under 11% which is not insignificant by any means.

In 2018, twenty-nine participants from six countries (again including five from Northern Ireland) took part in a second musical exchange in Slovenia. The improvement was even more stark as overall, there was a 33% increase in change across all three areas. Below is a summary of the main findings:

- 64% increase in knowledge, 14% increase in Skills, 21 % increase in attitude
- 4 out of 29 (14%) had slight decreases in Knowledge but 25 (86%) saw an increase
- 3 out of 29 (10%) had slight decreases in Attitude but 26 (90%) saw an increase
- 3 out of 29 (10%) had slight decreases in Skill and 1 person showed no change (3%) but 25 (86%) saw an increase
- 12.6% of participants showed decreases or no change across all three areas combined but 87.4% saw positive change

In November 2018, The LID Indicator Framework was used at the ‘Humour is Serious Business’ Training Programme in Austria with practitioners from eleven countries. Overall there was an 18% increase across the entire group, i.e., 28% increase in knowledge, an 8% increase in Attitude and 18% increase in Skills. Key points emerging were as follows:

- Two participants recorded neither increase or decrease whilst two others recorded a slight decrease of between -2% & -4%, however, 19 participants (83%) did experience an increase
- Individual decreases tended to be quite small, for example, under Knowledge the largest recorded decrease was 7% and under Attitude it was 6% (same person), whilst under Skills, the largest decrease was 10%.
- Individual increases tended to be large ranging from 20% to 1346%
- Of all LID statements there were marked increases in 77% of statements and a decrease in 20% of statements whilst 3 remained the same

Leaving aside findings from the original LID Evaluation and LID Conference for just a moment, if we take findings from the original core group, the two youth exchanges and the training programme group we can see some impressive results.

Group	Skills	Knowledge	Attitude	Overall
Core Group (10)	34%	24%	18%	25.3%
Youth Exchange (28)	12%	11%	9%	10.7%
Youth Exxchange (29)	14%	64%	21%	33%
Training Course (23)	18%	28%	8%	18%
	19.5%	31.75%	14%	21.75%

Of course, it has to be pointed out again that the LID Indicator Framework does not equate to research as such and is not subject to the normal conditions that accompany a more structured and robust study but is based on a method often used in research and therefore does have merit.

LID Indicators are merely designed to offer an indicator and are subjective in that participants complete it themselves and thus are subject to the normal bias that individuals possess, such as inevitably scoring themselves higher, or in the case of some underscoring themselves.

Just as we would highlight the positive impact these programmes have it's important to note that not everyone exhibits the same positive increase across all areas but from the 90 participants that have taken part thus far only 7 have exhibited overall decreases which equates to 8%.

As a somewhat crude critique but for the purpose of determining what change there is and how significant it might be, the LID Indicator Framework does offer some indication of the effectiveness and potential impact that participation in International Youth Work can have.

### **The LID Programme after 10 years**

Just as by a way of a footnote, and to give a sense of the work that has been completed by The LID Programme, at the end of December 2018 The LID Programme will have had received 386 applications for 96 programmes in 24 different countries since it first started to promote international learning back in April 2008, which equates to almost one international opportunity every 6 weeks.

It has provided 276 international learning opportunities for 201 different individuals (56 Youth Workers, 40 Young Leaders, 49 Young People and 56 other practitioners) representing no less than 60 organisations (many participants work freelance and do not represent organisations) from 40+ locations across the UK including at least 30 from in and around Northern Ireland.

### **'LID+': Taking the LID concept a step further**

In addition to the work of The LID Programme, an added dimension has been that of 'LID+' which arguably further demonstrate the benefits of involvement in International Youth Work again through the Erasmus+ Programme.

LID+ was one of seven projects funded by the European Commission in 2016 to promote greater engagement with the Erasmus+ Programme in 2017. Funded for one year only, LID+ specifically targeted the promotion of Key Action1 Mobility Projects by providing a tailor-made service to local organisations (primarily) across Northern Ireland but also ensured a presence in the rest of the UK. An external 'Impact Report' documenting the year-long project was commissioned by The Inside Out Programme and among the accomplishments achieved by the project included:

- **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+.
- **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.
- **impact on organisations:** a range of organisations developed a significant number of proposals or completed applications.
- **impact on systems:** three conclusions were drawn: stand alone public information sessions work best when included as part of a wider event; 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 [within Erasmus+], the increase in relation to the number of applications would only serve to further disappoint applicants and organisations.

'LID+' had quite a different role to existing LID Programme but was still based on the concept that Leadership can be achieved through Intercultural Dialogue, so for example, submitting a successful application under the UK NA provides the opportunity for local individuals to gain a similar experience at 'home' as they would were they overseas, thus demonstrating leadership at local level.

Whilst 'LID+' led to successful accomplishments such as supporting the submission of 16 applications to the UK NA alongside hosting an Evaluation Seminar (of 30 years of local involvement in Erasmus+) as well as the establishment of a team of 9 UK based Ambassadors to support access to Erasmus+ it was the success of two Contact Making Seminars that stands out.

Seventeen international partners worked closely with 21 local organisations over two intensive 48-hour periods to support first-time involvement in Erasmus+ which again demonstrates effective leadership and allows practitioners to develop essential contacts not to mention contrast, compare, critique and create practice.

Providing Interaction like this free of charge provides invaluable experience and perspective on local issues to local practitioners that would not otherwise be available which in turn helps to inform their practice which in turn helps to further nurture leadership. Testimonials of the impact of the seminars are available under Appendices.

### **Conclusions**

I stated at the beginning of this report that I would set out the relevance of and the important contribution that International Youth Work makes to the continued development of Community Relations in Northern Ireland and I would do this in four ways by:

- (i) briefly outlining the **current context** affecting International Youth Work (pages 6 & 7)
- (ii) providing not only a rationale for the **relevance of International Experience** for peace building in Northern Ireland but also the context for further examination of the subject (pages 8 – 20)
- (iii) highlighting the **results of a survey** conducted with a wide range of practitioners examining the benefits of international youth work in 2014 (pages 20 – 24)

and

- (v) outlining **findings from work undertaken by The LID (Leadership through Intercultural Dialogue) Programme** since 2008 which demonstrates the positive benefits of engaging in International Youth Work (24 – 37)

In the preceding pages I have attempted to provide an informed overview of the contribution that International Youth Work makes to Good Relations but now I wish to summarise this and look ahead by making recommendations.

## **Relevance of International Experience**

There exists an abundance of literature about the benefits of International Youth Work to young people and youth work practitioners across Europe – some of this has been referenced in this report. Efforts to ascertain the benefits and articulate these in a much more coherent fashion to youth service locally has largely been the domain of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. That said, the YCNI only really exists now in ‘skeleton form’ and thus the role of capturing this information is the preserve of no organisation at this moment in time, at least not locally.

The question of whether International Youth Work contributes to the development of Community Relations in Northern Ireland is still in its infancy but cannot be underestimated. Many of the benefits, ‘cross-over’ from youth work to community relations, e.g., dealing with diversity and interculturalism, exchanging practice, increasing confidence and knowledge and so on. There has always been a close link between community relations and youth work with the latter being viewed often as a mechanism for addressing division among communities, notably at a policy level.

Whilst there is much work to be done in terms of truly measuring its impact, there exists much anecdotal evidence thus far to warrant a commitment to supporting participation at both a policy and strategic level - at least for a time-bound period - in order to ascertain the true nature of the impact and whether it can among other things, be translated ‘onto the ground’ where it really matters.

At a socio-political level and also a political level directly, Northern Ireland has benefitted immensely from international experience and evidence compiled by a range of experts and other agencies testifies to the benefits of international experience. This is as already mentioned is supported by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland whilst evidence collated from The LID Programme over the last 10 years underpins the assertion that International Youth Work has a key role to play in contributing to the development of a Shared if not Integrated Society in Northern Ireland.

## **Survey**

In total, 284 individuals responded to the survey with 83.45% of respondents (71.83% directly) involved in some form of work with young people. The largest group of respondents were Youth Workers by profession (42.96%). From the 12.68% who described themselves as other this included

Managers, Youth Officers, Trainers, Teachers and Arts Based workers - even within this grouping there are some that will have or do continue to work with young people.

Additionally, one quarter of respondents have been involved in 16 or more international programmes (which equates to 1136 programmes) while more than 2/3 of respondents had experienced at least 3 international programmes (which amounts to at least 568 programmes).

Given the total number of respondents and the numbers directly involved in work with young people and combine this with the significant level of international experience it is safe to assume that the conclusions reached are not without foundation.

### **Personal Benefits**

Two-thirds of respondents cited an increase in confidence and self-esteem as the main benefit closely followed by learning about own culture or other cultures (60.28%) and an increase in tolerance and acceptance of 'others' (56.38%).

### **Professional Benefits**

Almost 62% selected sharing, comparing and contrasting practice as the main benefit whilst 53% identified the opportunity to critically reflect on own practice and consider the impact of that practice.

### **Organisational Benefits**

Organisations benefitted from participating in international programmes through the generation of new ideas and methodologies alongside, increased networking possibilities, a greater understanding of the values of international youth work and increased creativity within the organisation – all of these scored between 52% and 54%.

### **Community Benefits**

Three-quarters cited cultural awareness as a benefit to the wider community whilst two-thirds highlighted respecting difference.



## Findings from the LID Programme

Many of the benefits highlighted above are also echoed in the findings from the evaluation of the LID Programme and follow-up conference. Notably,

- 100% of participants felt the programme/s were *'time well spent' and 'enhanced confidence and knowledge'* to assist in bringing about positive change at local level whilst 93% of participants felt more *'able to challenge stereotypes of their own and others' communities'*; *the conference concluded that 'International experience can build confidence in individuals to communicate and collaborate broadly without (or with less) fear of difference'*;
- The **most common key learning related to Diversity**, at 41% of all key learning identified whilst the two foremost strengths of the programme identified were **'Enhanced Interculturalism'** (29% of all responses) and **'Bringing People Together'** (26%); **38+ soft and hard skills** were acquired or developed; *the conference found that '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'*;
- All participants felt that LID was either fully, or to some extent, a **good model for improving good relations** in their own communities and in some regards whilst LID participants demonstrated **enhanced good relations compared to the national average**; *the conference reported that 'When community leaders, decision-makers and 'Gatekeepers' participate in international experience, their capacity to actively implement learning upon their return surpasses the impact that individuals who are not in positions of influence can have.'*
- **LID is a significant contributing factor to enhanced cultural diversity, Interculturalism and good relations** and is a good model for improving 'good relations' within local/home communities on 4 levels: personal, interpersonal, as well as role models, and as community; *the conference report states 'International experience brings a new, often fresh, perspective on issues that can reach an impasse when persistently viewed from the same standpoint/s. In the context of peace in Northern Ireland this is particularly pertinent and has the potential to offer new solutions.'*

In addition to this, the 'LID Indicators' (pre- and post-programme questionnaire) also offer support for the above - ten different participants from a wide range of recent programmes experienced a combined 25.3% increase in capacity across three areas, Skills, Knowledge and Attitude. If you factor the other eighty participants that completed the LID Indicator Framework into the equation all participants experienced an overall increase of 21.75% across all three areas.

These 90 participants alongside 64 participants from both LID Evaluation and Conference events in addition to 294 survey respondents means that 448 individuals were involved in this process.

Additionally, 108 testimonials (see appendices) from 98 individuals (of which only 19 were involved in either the Evaluation or Conference) lends further weight to the claim that International Youth Work, which of course requires a much more robust and in depth examination, does indeed make a positive contribution to the continued development of Community Relations in Northern Ireland.

## **Recommendations**

Barriers to participation in international programmes included insufficient budget, lack of knowledge, lack of interest or acknowledgement of the benefits and workload. However, these are not viewed as insurmountable to future involvement in International Youth Work Programmes. But in order to maximise the opportunities that International Youth Work offers:

1. Involvement is only likely to significantly increase if it is embedded in youth work curricula and government departments are at least seen to endorse participation, namely the Department of Education and OFMDFM who have overall responsibility for Good Relations. OFMDFM in its 'European Priorities' Strategy already offers a context from which to embed this further. The effect would be to give a positive signal to practitioners to become more involved as part of their Continued Professional Development which in turn enables them to further develop good relations work in their own setting which might compensate in some ways for the loss of CRED from the Youth Work Curricula.
2. Work needs to be undertaken to actively seek the participation of decision-makers at all levels and across all sectors in international programming.
3. An increase in dedicated staff to pro-actively support greater involvement in International Youth Work (at all levels) that also includes post-programme activities geared specifically towards

increasing Community Relations activity. This would allow participants to 'un-pick' their learning as many often return from international programmes 'energised' but without further opportunity to reflect upon and share their learning among others with similar experience.

4. Development of appropriate and further qualifications that might encourage greater involvement in and commitment to International Youth Work. There already exists for example, an OCN Level qualification in *'Managing Educational Exchange Programmes'* and NUI Maynooth have developed a *'Certificate in Euro Youth Project Mobility'*. A qualification or qualifications that makes involvement in International Youth Work more 'attractive', e.g., a University Module for example, will only serve to encourage greater levels of participation and enhance the credibility of International Youth Work.
5. Co-funding to complement funding secured by practitioners under Erasmus+ would help alleviate some of the pressures they face when they engage in International work - **the LID Evaluation recommended funding be made available as a 'Loan Pot' to help pay for 'up-front' travel costs whilst further networking and conferencing activities post-programme/s, to facilitate shared learning.**
6. Regional networks including a programme of local activities which for example, provide space and time for 'returning' practitioners to discuss learning or to develop projects would help realise greater levels of participation and ensure those who wish to build upon their experience do not feel that they are working in isolation.

This process would be enhanced by the UK National Agency making information regarding organisations and individuals based in Northern Ireland readily available so that individuals could for example, initiate contact with other practitioners at their own behest - **the LID evaluation also recommended meetings between participants in advance (whether physically or 'virtually') which would help to alleviate some of the fears around participation in programmes...[this] should be accessible, informative, and user-led, written collaboratively by the people who use it, utilising wiki, or similar, technology to support the ongoing evolution of the forum. The LID Conference also echoed these findings by stating that 'Individuals who have participated in international experiences would benefit from greater opportunities for shared learning, project development and peer-to-peer support upon return to their home communities, be that through physical or virtual means.'**

7. Separately from the survey findings, The LID evaluation also recommended collaborative working and a need for improved on-going monitoring in relation to project impact *‘to more accurately measure changes in knowledge and behaviour’*. *The conference also reported that the ‘values and benefits of international work are well documented, they are tangible but they need to be better monitored and more thoroughly evaluated through longitudinal research which, at the very least, incorporates baseline evidence. This will empower those who are promoting international programmes to deliver a robust evidence base to decision-makers.’* This echoes questions that were raised earlier under the section on ‘External Influences’ where the need for systematic, structured and long-term research is highlighted.

Any research should of course be costed accordingly and is not reliant solely on in-kind support or similar where it is vulnerable to changes in policy or resource allocation. It would be beneficial if the European Commission made it a mandatory requirement for National Agencies to ensure longitudinal study into the impact of International Youth Work which in this case would have the benefit of providing a much needed evidence base.

8. Anticipating PEACE monies coming to an end but with the focus that this will have on young people there is an opportunity to develop activities that will complement those opportunities offered by Erasmus+ by linking with and supporting International Youth Work to address Community Relations ‘on the ground’.

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# Appendices



Figure 1 YCNI International Youth Work Model Highlighting Multiple Beneficiaries (Source: *Impact of International Youth Work on the Curriculum: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective*, p9)

### 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.”<sup>25</sup>*

Figure 1: From, *‘Impact of International Youth Work on the Curriculum: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective’*, Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 2015

<sup>25</sup> *Impact of International Youth Work on the Curriculum: A Youth Council for Northern Ireland Perspective*, p6

## Survey Monkey Responses

### 1. How would you describe yourself? (Answered: 284/Skipped: 4)

Answer Choices	Responses
Young Person (member of a youth organisation/club/group)	3.87% 11
Young Leader	5.99% 17
Volunteer (adult) worker	5.63% 16
Youth worker by profession	42.96% 122
Working with young people but not a youth worker by profession	28.87% 82
Other (please describe)	12.68% 36
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>

Other:

Manager/Co-ordinator x 9	Trainer x 5	Non Youth Worker x 7	Lecturer/Tutor/Teacher x 4
Youth Officer x 2	The Arts x 2	Student	Volunteer
Fundraiser	Social Work	Retired	Psychotherapist
Civil Servant			

### 2. How many times have you been involved in any international youth work programmes? (Answered: 285; Skipped: 3)

Answer Choices	Responses
0	10.53% 30
1	10.88% 31
2	9.12% 26
3-5	20.35% 58
6-10	13.68% 39
11-15	10.18% 29
16+	25.26% 72
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>

### 3. What type of international youth (or youth work) project have you been involved in?

Answer Choices	Responses
None	7.47% 21
Youth exchange	18.51% 52
Study Visit	4.63% 13
Youth Democracy Project	2.85% 8
Advanced Planning Visit	0.71% 2
Training Programme	14.95% 42
Seminar	3.56% 10
European Voluntary Service	5.69% 16
More than one of the above	41.64% 117
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>



**4. What do you believe to be the main benefits of international youth work programmes for young people? (Answered: 282; Skipped: 6)**

Answer Choices	Responses
▼ Increase in skills base	32.27% 91
▼ Increase in confidence and self-esteem	66.31% 187
▼ Greater self-awareness	36.17% 102
▼ Enhanced employability/career prospects	26.24% 74
▼ Increase in tolerance and acceptance of 'others'	56.38% 159
▼ Development of friendships	31.91% 90
▼ Learning about own culture or others cultures	60.28% 170
▼ Improved physical, mental and emotional health as a result of personal interaction with a diverse range of people	34.75% 98
▼ None of the above	0.35% 1
Total Respondents: 282	

**5. What do you believe to be the main benefits of international youth work programmes for practitioners? (Answered: 275; Skipped: 13)**

Answer Choices	Responses
▼ Increase in skills base	34.91% 96
▼ Increased confidence and self-esteem	14.91% 41
▼ Greater self-awareness	13.82% 38
▼ Enhanced ability to interact with 'others' from a diverse range of backgrounds	38.91% 107
▼ Increased knowledge of other countries and cultures	29.82% 82
▼ Increased knowledge of youth work contexts in other countries	45.09% 124
▼ Opportunity to share, compare and contrast practice	61.82% 170
▼ Opportunity to critically reflect on own practice and consider the impact of that practice	52.73% 145
▼ Increased knowledge of funding opportunities	14.18% 39
▼ Enhanced confidence and knowledge as to how to be more pro-active at local level in order to bring about positive change	34.91% 96
▼ None of the above	0.36% 1
Total Respondents: 275	

**6. What do you believe to be the main benefits of international youth work programmes for organisations? (Answered: 273; Skipped: 15)**

Answer Choices	Responses
Building Capacity	31.14% 85
Increase in Team Work	10.99% 30
Increased understanding of the value of international youth work as a methodology in working with young people	52.38% 143
Improved strategic focus of organisation on international youth work	30.40% 83
Increased creativity within the organisation (staff and young people)	34.43% 94
New ideas and methodologies	53.11% 145
Networking possibilities	53.11% 145
Increased motivation and passion for work	27.11% 74
Additional source of funding	16.12% 44
Enhanced relationships between staff	7.33% 20
Enhanced relationships between staff and young people	27.11% 74
None of the above	0.73% 2
Total Respondents: 273	

**7. What do you believe to be the main benefits of international youth work programmes for communities? (Answered: 271; Skipped: 17)**

Answer Choices	Responses
Cultural Awareness	75.65% 205
Respecting difference	67.90% 184
Testing Values and Beliefs	41.70% 113
Projects that result from involvement in programmes	37.27% 101
Involvement of local people in programmes	63.10% 171
Additional funding	14.39% 39
None of the above	0.37% 1
Total Respondents: 271	

**8. What do you believe to be the greatest barriers to participation in international youth work? (Answered: 268; Skipped: 20)**

Answer Choices	Responses
International Youth Work	0.75% 2
Lack of interest or acknowledgement of value of international youth work at management level	32.46% 87
Insufficient budget to enable international work to be prioritised over mainstream youth work activity	49.25% 132
International activities are not an essential part of youth work	8.21% 22
Practitioners still need to be convinced of the benefits	15.30% 41
Not enough 'time off' to compensate for time commitment involved	18.66% 50
International youth work is ultimately 'junkets' and therefore not necessary	2.99% 8
'Management' do not pro-actively encourage practitioners to be involved	18.28% 49
Communication systems for sharing Information regarding international opportunities could be more effective	15.67% 42
Not relevant to day-to-day practice	2.99% 8
Not enough time	17.16% 46
There are not enough support systems in place for practitioners, e.g., childcare, subsistence, staff-cover review & evaluation, etc	17.91% 48
Daily work takes priority	30.22% 81
Lack of knowledge about setting up programmes, accessing money, finding partners, etc	32.84% 88
Lack of confidence to engage in international youth programmes	14.18% 38
The need for matching funding and/or 'cash flow' makes it difficult to see it through to completion	27.61% 74
Fear – big input for little return, i.e., application is rejected or when approved the workload exceeds expectations as compared with positive outcomes	17.16% 46
Lack of recognition - big input but little or no recognition for efforts made or achievements secured	14.93% 40
Risk - taking young people to another country is just too risk	11.57% 31
Motivation – not all practitioners have the motivation to take on the responsibility	19.03% 51
None of the above	0.37% 1
<b>Total Respondents: 268</b>	

Other notable comments:

Accessibility for new organisations	Language barriers x 2	Finance/'Cash Flow' x 4	Complexity of paper work x 2
Application Process x 3	Finding the 'right partners'/Lack of synergy x 3	Staffing resources	Lack of transparent support from the National Agency
Report writing	Accessibility for the 'hard to reach'		

**9. What would you recommend to increase levels of participation in international youth work activities? (Answered: 265; Skipped: 23)**

Answer Choices	Responses
An overarching policy and/or strategy that all key stakeholders sign up to	23.77% 63
Public endorsement from government departments with responsibility for youth work	45.66% 121
'Ring-fenced' money from youth work budgets to complement existing funding	36.98% 98
Youth work curriculum(s) to include commitment to International Youth Work	50.94% 135
Regional networks to promote and share learning	36.23% 96
More flexible and/or improved terms and conditions of employment	18.11% 48
Annual programme of international opportunities to support involvement	33.96% 90
More information about Erasmus+ programme	31.70% 84
None of the above	0.38% 1
Total Respondents: 265	

Other notable comments:

Active support for new groups	Recognition of the learning outcomes	New Erasmus+ has become more complex	Face to Face contact from NA's
Application & Reporting Process could be easier	Childcare for lone parents	Less paper work x 2	Mentoring for applicants
More accessible and approachable NA	Dedicated staff to develop international opportunities	Travel paid 'up front'	More information
More Northern Ireland groups to act as 'sending organisations'	Development Education to be part of youth work to demonstrate value of international work	Evidenced based programmes to show benefits	Language skills

**10. How might links between international youth work activities and youth work curriculum be nurtured? (Answered 261; Skipped 27)**

Answer Choices	Responses
An overarching policy and/or strategy that all key stakeholders sign up to	36.40% 95
Public endorsement from government departments with responsibility for youth work	43.68% 114
Youth work curriculum(s) to include commitment to International Youth Work	56.32% 147
Setting up of an International Unit to support delivery	34.87% 91
Appointment of International Officers to provide support to practitioners 'on the ground'	48.28% 126
Annual Programme of policy seminars to support practice and learning	47.51% 124
None of the above	0.77% 2
Total Respondents: 261	

Other notable comments:

Recognition of International Youth Work Status in qualifications	More support for youth workers to challenge their own perceptions	The term of International Youth Work should be 'related to cross-cultural youth work of development education'
All stakeholders to be part of the planning	'Match Funding' as Erasmus+ is not enough	

### LID Conference Participants List

Name	Organisation
1. Barry Lafferty	Clady Cross Community Development Association
2. Berekt Aga	All Nations Ministries
3. Charmain Jones	Rural Community Network
4. Charo Lanao	Community Arts Partnership/Programme for Inter Cultural Arts Support (PICAS)
5. Ciaran Mc Laughlin	Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group
6. Colm McGlone	Interaction Belfast
7. Danielle Bonner	Donegal Women's Network
8. Dorothy Stewart	North Armagh Women's Project
9. Emma McCabe	NOW
10. Frances Donaghy	Youth Justice Agency
11. Eileen Quinn	Killeeshil and Clonaneese Historical Society
12. Frances Shiels	FOCUS: The Identity Trust
13. Hannah-Chloe Magee	Youth Action NI
14. Isabel Jaeger	Public Achievement
15. Jenny McClelland	Derry City Council
16. Joe O'Donnell	Belfast Interface Project
17. Joe Thompson	Extern
18. Johnny Scanlon	HURT
19. Julie Moore	PSNI
20. Sarah Honeyford	PSNI
21. Kirstein Arbuckle	St. Columb's Park House
22. Laya Barr	Extern
23. Marie Quinn	Killeeshil and Clonaneese Historical Society
24. Martin Mc Mullan	Youth Action NI
25. Martine Auzon-McConway	WELB Tuition Service
26. Mary Casey	Amelia Earhart Society
27. Nicola Hassan	Derry Youth & Community Workshop
28. Nicola Mitchell	Equality, Rights and Social Inclusion (ERSI)
29. Orla Devine	British Red Cross (now with the Centre for Global Education)
30. Pamela Shields	Oasis Antrim
31. Peggie Buchannon	All Nations Ministries
32. Rory McKittrick	Public Achievement
33. Roy Samuels	Ellis Manhattan Music
34. Ruth Patterson	North Armagh Women's Project
35. Sally Bonner	Donegal Education Centre
36. Sarah Honeyford	PSNI
37. Selina Quinn	Freelance - Glenree Centre
38. Stephen Todd	YouthAction Northern Ireland
39. Sue Divin	Derry City Council
40. Zhenia Mahdi-Nau	Tapestry of Colours Education/ZMN Creative Studio
41. Matthias Schrenk	Facilitator
42. Anita Silva	Facilitator
43. Elisa Gallo Rosso	Facilitator
44. Luiza Czajkowska	Facilitator
45. Rukiayah Khutan	Guest Speaker
46. Duncan Morrow	Guest Speaker
47. Fergal Barr	Conference Organiser

## LID Indicators

Knowledge	Score
1. Awareness of local issues/current affairs	
2. Awareness of issues at national and international level	
3. Knowledge of funding bodies at European level	
4. Knowledge of peace building and/or peace building methodologies	
5. Knowledge of your own learning style and/or methods you use to capture learning	
6. Knowledge of concepts such as social justice, equality, equity, citizenship, human rights, etc	
7. Ability to understand why you have the views, values or ideals you have	
8. Knowledge of differences between European states - for example differences in laws, culture, etc	
9. Knowledge of theories and/or models of practice that underpin interaction between peoples of differing traditions, nationalities, identities, etc	
10. Ability to think of new approaches to things	
11. Capacity for Self-awareness (knowing how you are especially in front of others)	
12. Ability to be or think more independently	
Attitude	
1. Appreciation of diversity and other cultures	
2. Capacity to learn about other people's backgrounds.	
3. Ability to break down barriers and find common interest(s) with others different to yourself	
4. Ability to understand communities with unique or distinctive culture or values	
5. Ability to consider or question your previous experience as 'the truth'	
6. Confidence to try new things that take you out of your 'comfort zone'	
7. Capacity for adapting to different or new settings that might seem strange or threatening to what you are normally used to, e.g., food, shared accommodation, being in the company of others speaking a different language and so on	
8. Capacity for accepting others that are different to you or fall outside your expectations of 'normal' in your experience or what you might consider your norms	
9. Capacity for embracing difference / being open-minded	
10. Ability to empathise with others from a wide range of backgrounds	
11. Willingness to share ideas	
12. Ability to self-reflect (being honest with oneself)	
13. Capacity for flexibility (adapting to changing situations and environments)	
14. Ability to see different places (outside of your normal environment) in a 'new light' and explore them without prejudice	
15. Ability to relax	
16. Ability to be spontaneous/less controlling, i.e., just go with the flow	
Skills	
1. Ability to work in a diverse team or set aside differences to work alongside others from a different background, i.e., in a task related activity	
2. Ability to reflect upon how you normally do things, e.g., 'tools', techniques, methodologies, etc you use and consider new ways of trying	
3. Ability to deal with conflict or tension with people from a different cultural background	
4. Ability to identify specific learning you wish to gain	

5.	Ability to communicate with someone from a different cultural background	
6.	Ability to bring about change at local level including the influencing of peers & colleagues	
7.	Ability to develop programmes, projects, resources or materials	
8.	Ability to express ideas, opinions and thoughts in a range of settings	
9.	Ability to provide or support a safe and secure space for others to engage in conversation and/or discussion/debate on a range of topics, sensitive or otherwise	
10.	Ability to share and/or present information or advice on a particular topic to groups of varying size	
11.	Ability to plan, prepare and implement events or activities on a particular topic to a variety of audience	
12.	Ability to work or interact with others in an intercultural setting	
13.	Capacity for networking and building partnerships with other individuals and organisations	
14.	Ability to see prejudice and stereotyping and challenge it in an articulate manner	
15.	Ability to consider and contrast own ideas and convictions with those of others	
16.	Ability to represent your interests or those of your organisation in a constructive manner	
17.	Ability to introduce new methodologies into work setting or your own practice	
18.	Ability to speak in and understand other languages (fluent or otherwise)	
19.	Ability to work in Group Work situations, e.g., discussions, debates, etc	
20.	Ability to share ideas in a clear and articulate manner	
21.	Ability to motivate myself	
22.	Ability to co-operate with others	
23.	Capacity for developing your own initiative(s)	
24.	People skills – ability to get along with & work alongside others in a variety of settings	
25.	Capacity for self-organisation	
26.	Ability to be clearer verbally, more pronounced in your message	
27.	Ability to build relationships with individuals	
28.	Action planning	
29.	Ability to play a Facilitation Role	
30.	International team building / networking skills	
31.	Capacity for effective decision making	
32.	Ability to be innovative and/or creative	
33.	Language skills	
34.	Capacity to manage your own expectations	
35.	Capacity to exercise leadership or display leadership skills	

### **Information about Fergal Barr**

Fergal Barr is a freelance youth worker and currently voluntary Co-ordinator of The Inside Out Programme in Claudy. He became a professionally qualified Youth Worker in 1995 but has been involved in Youth Work full-time since leaving school in May 1987.

He has worked in both the voluntary and statutory sectors across a range of diverse areas including Youth Information, Education Welfare, Volunteering, Peace & Reconciliation, Conflict Management & Resolution, Community Relations, Mentoring, Street Work, Research & Evaluation, Participation and Rural Work. He was also a member of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland between 2000 and 2003.

Fergal is also a freelance Trainer and Facilitator for the British Council and Ecorys as well as an Assessor (for the Erasmus+ and Causeway Programmes). He has also worked for a number of organisations including Co-Operation North/Ireland, The Warrington Project, NUS/USI, Leargas, Anna Lindh Foundation, NI Youth Forum, British Council (Active Citizen Programme), Viennese Association of Youth Clubs and ELT in Austria, Klick e.V. in Germany and YouthArt in Turkey. He has co-ordinated, hosted, facilitated, and/or participated in more than 100 international programmes since 1998 working with partner organisations in more than 40 countries.

He made legal history in 2001 by winning a Test Case for Unfair Dismissal at an Industrial Tribunal and published his first book in 2008, *The Things People Say, Political Quotations from the Northern Ireland Peace Process* and a second book, *The Yet Unknown Little Brown Book, A Collection of Poems* in 2011.



# LID

# Programme

# Testimonials

Doing the courses has helped me to look at things in different ways and helped me to identify what key factors to look at and keep in mind when I'm looking at wider and more diverse groups in the sense that each person is different and maybe from a different culture, so the courses have helped me to be more culturally aware and sensitive. The courses have helped me to be more prepared in my youth and community certificate, as the courses have given me a wider knowledge and experience that I have been able to use and stories that I have been able to share with other class members, I have also been able to reference some of those experiences in essays which has been a fantastic resource, which I was fortunate enough to have and be involved in.

#### **Cathy, Foyle Advocates**

From the international programmes that I have been privileged to be a part of I think they have all been absolutely sensational. I feel I have gained a lot of cultural social skills which gave me the ability to meet lots of new friends and had the opportunity to judge life from a different perspective. I think now think this is a vital part in the learning curve for young students.

#### **Glenn, Inside Out**

Aside from the formal part of the training, I also find that there is much to learn from discussing issues, youth work methods and ideas with other youth work practitioners from other countries, in finding out how different projects operate in other countries. If professionals do not get the opportunity to do this, their practice can become stale, inward looking and stilted, I believe, resulting in restricting the growth and development of youth work. I would recommend this training to all youth workers as well as other professionals and encourage them to participate and engage with international events and training, as it will inevitably improve the standard of their work practices.

#### **Mat, Include Youth**

I met really great people and learnt a lot through interactive games. PM4IC was a great chance to exchange information and ideas and learn from people that had more experience in a field that I was just starting to be familiar with. Seeing the project from a time distance I must say that it was a great lesson of what intercultural dialogue is about and I fully support these sort of ideas to be developed and used as a priceless tool to approach young people. The methodology that was used and full availability of facilitators willing to assist participants with their issues made the time very fruitful. Two pieces of my experience with Inside Out brought very valuable content that I have been able to use during my community and youth work.

#### **Marlena, SEEDS**

It was really interesting to see the work of other agencies from a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities and to share our varied experience and practice. I take back from it a lot of learning in terms of methodology and practice but, equally important, a lot of useful contacts with whom we would hope to interact directly in the future. We did not get to participate in any spin off programmes this year, but that was purely because of commitments already made to another EU programme. I have however passed on the contacts to other colleagues as well who are actively seeking to establish partnerships across Europe. I think these programmes are essential for sharing and developing practice and look forward to future participation in similar events.

#### **Paul, SEELB**

Throughout the week long programme a formal but enjoyable format was adapted for several of the topics. Later in the day each of the groups would take some time to present and discuss matters from their own country. This included sharing specific cultural identities with the group and discussing each other's perceived stereotypes of other countries and their inhabitants. This allowed each individual time to develop a greater understanding of the complexity of the issues that are faced in other countries and cultures. These discussions took place in a much more informal capacity. This programme was very enjoyable and I am very proud to have been involved with it. I feel it contributed greatly to enhancing my understanding of several of the related topics and issues that had been discussed throughout the period.

#### **Rob, Inside Out**

The course in which I took part in had a special significance to me as it helped in two major points in my life, 1) I was able to gain an edge on my university application and I believe this helped greatly in my being accepted into my choice of university, and secondly although I have always had an interest in helping people and youth work this installed the idea in my head that I would defiantly in future pursue a career in helping young people and hopefully get into international youth work in due course.

#### **Rebecca, Young Person**

I enjoyed meeting people who were doing similar youth and community work throughout Europe. The opportunity to network, learn from each other and gain contacts for future resources and exchanges was great. The open space experience was memorable. I was familiar with open space from other events and trainings, however, it was useful to see it used again and to indirectly learn more about how to facilitate open space. Memorable aspects of the week included the creativity, the amazing work folks created and the new ideas for activities to do with youth from both participants and facilitators. In addition, I appreciated the informal down time that enabled us to get to know each other and learn about our work and passions. During such times I was able to brainstorm resources and ideas with the participants for a series of workshops I was writing at the time! This was a great example of a cross-cultural exchange of ideas! In conclusion, I appreciated the closing reflection about the week which gave us a space to think about how we could apply and use or learning.

#### **Heather, Student**

The project has been a great experience for me and really helped me to know more about young people and the big difficulty that is the integration for a foreign young person into his community living in this city. I was in Vienna for a week and I had the good opportunity to visit two of their youth community centres and in both I had the chance to see and to 'live with' them how much the problem of the integration can affect their life. The situation in Derry is not so different - still both communities are not integrated with each other and a lot of work has to be done to create one and only community. That is why my experience with the project helped me to understand better, to learn from a different country, to meet new point of views and new people that work with young people, trying to help them to became better adults in a better world. I hope that others project such as this will offer to people like me that wants to work in this sector because I think it gives all the experience that we need to do a good job.

#### **Giorgia, Volunteer**

This has helped me in my masters research in university for my thesis "Sustainability, Citizenship and Future Transformation" and has also helped me in my work as youth and education assistant for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). I have used these experiences to provide children with various aspects and ideas of citizenship from across Europe, particularly ecological and global citizenship. This 6 day programme/conference for youth workers provided me with an opportunity to facilitate one of my own workshops "What's under your clothes" to my peers. The constructive criticism I gained from this was extremely useful, particularly from a European perspective as we discussed the various opinions in the room. In turn I took part in many workshops and presentations from the other participants. I found them incredibly interesting and learnt many things I can use in my own work for the RSPB.

#### **Jen, RSPB**

I learned new creativity approaches and perspectives to work with young people, helping them to reflect about their identity, their community and the future they can build. Karolina and Tracie taught us different ways to build better communication and to resolve conflict. In the groups of young people that I work with we do different kind of videos and this training gave me more ideas for the next videos. I learned new games and icebreakers that I can use with young people as well. In collaboration with others participants, we have developed a Youth Exchange project with the following topics: Creativity and creative expression, Participation, Media and Diversity.

#### **Sabrina, Public Achievement**

Highlights of the programme for me were 'the Happening' which involved us doing a Flash Mob in one of the shopping Centres in Liberec where we performed a dance routine to the public. We also undertook a series of workshops throughout my week there during our tool fair. I thoroughly enjoyed one in particular on European Citizenship and the real life stories of some who had passport difficulties relating to their citizenship. Another highlight was the Presentation which I delivered to a group of 10-12 participants and the excellent feedback I received about this. I had initially been a little apprehensive about doing this. Another highlight was the World Cafe event with local politicians and my role in facilitating a number of groups in this. The methods used in the whole experience were 'top drawer' and I appreciated so much the work that went in to the entire week by the facilitators. There were some nice touches of written evaluations going on the walls up the stairs, personalised mugs which we painted, ice-breakers outside and inside.

#### **Damian, St. Columb's Park House**

During the course of the week I learnt about various models and theories pertaining to creativity, including Edward Desi's theory of The Self Determination Model, the 4 T's, taking an object out of its contextual use and entitling it with a use which suits it, for example, material properties. I also learnt about teamwork and the three different approaches to it, and identified how I prioritise my approach to teamwork. As part of the learning, the highlight was to visit the various roles people play in a team and how they alternate and move around to best suit the situation. For my personal development the highlight of my learning was to realise taking on an 'initiator' role in a group is not a bad thing, as within the team there will be other people who prefer not to or are resistant or adopt a more extroverted role as they feel more comfortable in a role which doesn't involve initiating a process.

As this was the first time I had been on a residential learning programme with other young people from various countries within the EU, I learnt so much about EU culture and how different countries are within the EU, despite being part of an European economic union. As a practitioner I have learnt that it is important to engage as many senses within workshops for young people. Currently my work involves devising workshop and residential for young people within the UK to promote understanding of the other and challenge socially embedded stereotypes. The training programme thus has guided me to devise more holistic workshop plans; I hope to incorporate engaging the 5 senses into subsequent workshop planning. The programme also helped me to challenge my personal stereotypes further and meet and share some common values with other young practitioners. It seems like 'youth work' is not just a profession it is a way of life!

#### **Naseera, Encompass Trust.**

Over and above the content of the training the most important part of the week for me was the opportunity to share practise and experience with other participants from across Europe - gaining a sense of some of the similarities and differences, what works and what doesn't and the everyday issues that other practitioners face. The opportunity to explore the concept of youth work across a number of countries was something that has opened my mind to some of the wider issues across our continent and to different ways of working with young people that aim to achieve results. The chance to work with and establish links with organisations across Europe will hopefully create a connection that is meaningful and long lasting, to both myself and the young people I work with.

Perhaps most importantly, this experience has also given me the opportunity to reflect, not only upon my own practise, but also on the issues and solutions present within my own community. This has helped me to gain a new perspective on what is important within my own work in a way that exchanges within Northern Ireland could never do. On a personal level I was particularly inspired by the energy and enthusiasm that was brought to the project and this something that I have been keen to take home with me and, hopefully, to replicate!

#### **Susan, Council for the Homeless NI**

A few things I have gained from attending this programme: a better knowledge and understanding of the youth action programme including 1.1 youth exchange application; gained networks and developed friendships; came away with exciting new ideas about programmes people have previously been involved in which I believe could work here; learnt about other cultures and the work others do; gained new ideas for team building, energizers and get to know you games; learnt the importance and the need for quality criteria

for any youth exchange and the importance of a good partner; gained confidence being put into groups; reflected on my timeline of my life and the work and skills I have gained; was able to have the opportunity to get to know people from a social perspective (which you can learn a lot about a person on a day to day basis; designed a project which we hope to submit to the Feb deadline.

Having gained knowledge of a fashion project that another country had developed, I have taken this back to Clubs for Young People and designed a project similar but which focuses on the needs of our young people in Northern Ireland. This project has already got funded and we are starting in January 2011. Overall this experience which started off to be very daunting turned out to be a positive experience. I enjoyed every minute, including my presentation and cultural evening. All elements of the programme were informal yet effective!

#### **Suzanne, Clubs for Young People NI**

The benefit to me from taking part in this international exchange programme was it helped me gain an insight into the issues affecting young people in different parts of the world and speak to people who share the same enthusiasm as myself, and passion for promoting youth work be it on the street or in educational/formal settings. It was also interesting to see how these issues were being dealt with in different countries and share methods of dealing with conflict or other certain issues with other professionals. I also feel I gained a lot of learning from this programme as I also gained knowledge on different methods and approaches to facilitating different groups and issues in different settings. I also found the programme challenged me in a very positive way which then resulted in a very successful outcome of satisfaction from both me and my organization by the end.

This training was also important for my organization and myself as a practitioner as it helped both me and the organisation gain more tools for our youth work toolbox. All in all I would recommend any other practitioner who has considered attending one of these programmes to definitely go for it because it was a great enjoyable experience for me and I learnt a lot, I also made some great links as well as friends who I will keep in contact with for a long time. I also feel this experience helped me gain a lot more confidence in facilitating and expressing myself.

#### **Brenda, Youth ActionNI**

I went with no expectations, therefore I could not be disappointed, I left with what I felt sufficient knowledge to use OST in my present role in Youth and Community work. I had planned to use the methodology in my own working circle as I felt most was very beneficial, though I did not completely agree with everything expounded at the training seminar. All in all it delivered sufficient for my needs and gave me enough information, skills, etc to deliver my own OST at some point in the future. That was my reason for attending, so I was satisfied with my outcome. I hold with the methodology of OST, I would however make some small changes when delivering it myself at some point in the future, I feel changes could be made without damaging the methodology involved.

#### **Adrian, N.I.G.E.A. (N. Ireland-German Exchange Association)**

This trip was devised so that Youth Groups from Europe could meet each other to possibly arrange future International Exchanges. From a personal and professional viewpoint I can safely say that this was an excellent idea as everyone involved was able to get to know each other personally and to know more about what each group would offer if an exchange had been agreed.....I can safely say that I really appreciated the use of my time spent at this conference and I feel that my learning experience time dominated my free time, that is not often the case during a conference.

#### **Billy, REACH Across**

It was really helpful for me to see how work is done in a city that is not divided or defined by conflict. As my work is always with young people from regions of conflict sometimes it can be difficult to imagine another way of life. Vienna opened my eyes to the possibilities that come with a more peaceful society. It also made me question whether it would be better for us to take their lead and allow for more relaxation in our legislation

and not have to have red tape around everything. But ultimately it left me with the conviction that we can learn from some of their ideas but need to find our own way of working that suits us, and our society. It was amazing to see the city! A very beautiful place filled with friendly and hospitable people.

#### **Naomi, Corrymeela Community**

At a personal level it was enlightening for me to see others communicating in English, the medium of communication I often take for granted. It's also a journey that I initially thought I would walk alone, but in fact many of us walked on a similar path and the sharing of quite personal and special moments opened me up to new possibilities on a number of levels. Professionally speaking I have built networks that will allow me to be part of projects that I would have not had the opportunity to be part of previously whilst also a chance to create projects or be part of that initial process and it was also helped to create good practice in initiating, developing and following through on projects.

#### **Roy, Ellis Manhattan Music**

I found being a participant in this programme a wonderful experience and I am extremely grateful I had the opportunity to take part. I feel the relaxation sessions I took part in will be very beneficial to me personally and something I can practice to take time out and calm my thoughts. This will be extremely helpful when I have stressful days in work, also when I'm feeling the pressure of exams & coursework. Taking part in outdoor activities such as rock climbing and canoeing were challenging for me, I learnt to ignore negative thoughts and doubts in my head, pushing my personal comfort boundaries and overcome my fears.

The theory workshops give me the opportunity to explore what values are important to me, in addition to identifying aims and setting short term and long term goals for the future. I discovered what learning technique works best for me personally and that what gives me energy. I feel the unique learning experience I had in Slovenia will benefit me greatly both personally, in university and future nursing positions along with the work I do in the voluntary sector. I learnt new ways of dealing with youths from the other participants. Using the relaxation techniques I was introduced to will help me distress myself and calm my mind. The trainers on this programme were inspirational and I will implement some of the learning exercises they used with us to the youth I work with, I also learned some fun energisers I know the teens will love playing.

#### **Emma, Changaro Trust**

The training has been an intense, amazing and enriching learning experience. I have gained knowledge about methods of dealing with stress at work, methods of inspiring positive changes at workplace that can enhance effective and stress less working environment. I have become more aware of ways of dealing with heavy workload, deadlines and pressure. I gained useful techniques aimed at organising and planning tasks as well as time management tools. I realised significant importance of human work-life balance and positive effect it has on our performance once managed wisely. I shared my knowledge and work experience with others.

Meeting with both trainers and participants from various countries, cultures and representing a wide spectrum of youth organisations made me revise and reflect on my own work routines and encouraged and inspired me to continue developing better and more balanced approaches towards my community and youth work involvements. On a personal level it's been an amazing journey for me personally. I have realised how a holistic approach to our own being can enhance our life quality and health. I have learnt a lot about myself: on all levels - physical, psychological, spiritual.

I realised commonalities and the beauty of sharing experiences with like minded individuals from various cultures, countries, backgrounds. I have reconnected with nature, started enjoying physical activities and sport again encouraged by supportive team of participants. I have realised my own SWOT and got loads of positive energy from people, stunning setting (beautiful location) and the whole fabulous experience! I would highly recommend this type of training to anyone who wishes to take a look at own life-work balance. I am grateful I had a pleasure to be one of the participants! One of the best trainings I have ever attended in my whole life!

#### **Agnieszka, Polish Abroad**

The training was incredibly good for me. I found the combination of relaxation, the outdoor environment and activities, and the reflection on work stress related issues to be of great benefit to me. Also useful was the sharing of ideas and solutions used by other participants and being given the chance to consider their problems and offer them feedback and suggestions about these. This training did exactly what I hoped it would for me and I came back refreshed, invigorated and exhilarated, with the energy boost I feel I need to carry out my work.

### **Mat, Include Youth**

I didn't know what to expect from the programme – I had never been at an international youth workers event before. I hoped that it might offer me opportunities to learn from other's practice, develop new relationships and networks and spark of ideas and projects for the young people I work with. The week long residential was incredibly intense at times – a packed schedule, so many different nationalities represented, so many different art-forms. The group bonded incredibly well, despite language and cultural barriers – we were all keen to share learn from each other. Unlike many other youth, youth worker or artist conferences I have participated in, the contacts established have been maintained and real impact on my practice and other's practice, plans and future work. Only a couple of months on we have a firm youth exchange project planned and countless other potential ideas brewing for development. An extremely worthwhile and valuable experience.

### **Pauline, Voluntary Arts Ireland**

Having felt initially nervous as I had never been involved in an international youth work event on this scale before and as I felt I would be much younger (and therefore less experienced) than other participants, but I soon realized that these fears were unnecessary. The main outcome for me both personally and professionally was the contacts - it gave me the opportunity to meet and consequently the opportunities for future communication and projects it has allowed for. We have been working on plans and a funding application for an international youth exchange around the themes of social entrepreneurship and arts/creativity. My involvement has also been extremely beneficial as due to meeting the Icelandic participants, I now hope to undertake my 10 week compulsory international placement for my Community Youth Work degree in Iceland in February. I had not considered a placement in Iceland and this would have otherwise not been a possibility for me. The opportunity to share and learn about other cultures, youth work within different countries and different methods employed, as well as the energy, enthusiasm and approach of the other participants meant that I left that week with a renewed energy and enthusiasm for my work and have since been encouraged to think differently about the ways I engage with young people, my approach and the programmes offered.

### **Laura, Young Arts Collective**

Being a member of the programme saw my meeting different people from all over Europe. We spent time working on different programmes that we had signed up to at the beginning. I was part of the sporting group, as my background is sport; there were also drama, dance, and art and music groups which was part of the project. As a big group we worked well together looking at different issues and experiences. Each person had a chance to share his/her story on what they do and how they do it. This gave us an opportunity to see what others did and see if we could use it in our own communities or work place. After a long week of hard work we delivered the programme to the young people who enjoyed it and had great time and also benefited on meeting new people from out of town as well. As they say all good things must come to an end. Wrong! Because now as a group we still keep in touch and share ideas and finding ways to help each other. I would recommend the programme to anyone thinking on getting involved as it is a good way to meet new people and share good practice.

### **Tommy, TVW Events**

I was profoundly affected by the need to shift from a group led mentality to a self-driven focus. It is not something I am not used to dealing with and took me a couple of days to get my head around. Interacting with others helped me in my quest to deal with the uncertainty and lack of trust in myself and my own ability. Trust was a big issue for me and I felt that I could not trust enough to let go. I got there in the end but not without much trial and tribulation. I feel that I gained a great deal and learnt much from both facilitators and delegates alike. There are ideas and principles that I was working on prior to going to the training. It gave me a chance

to discuss this and explore this with the other delegates. There are social and interpersonal aspects of the training that I will take into my work. As both a trainer and music producer, I felt empowered by much of the topics and conversations. This experience has given me a platform to move forward on issues that I had previously stalled on and felt unable to progress with. The 2 areas of my work will benefit greatly from this journey from both a personal and a social/business perspective.

#### **Roy, Ellis Manhattan Music**

From my first experience of a Youth in Action programme I felt like I was riding on a high when I got back to my day to day life and the same has to be said after coming home from the training programme. The gathering of "strangers" seems to pave the way for people to open up a little and talk about things going on in their lives. Although this can't be said for all participants it can be for me, which has encouraged me to address issues in my life that I'm not particularly happy about. Through some of the workshops I learned of methods that invite me to look at myself a little more deeply and be aware of the type of person I am. The programme as a whole has had a really positive effect on me.

On a professional level I find being back at home I am much more motivated and have more energy to help me get the tasks that I need to do, done. Some of the workshops delivered during the programme, and methodologies used will be of benefit to me, partners in the organisation that I'm involved in and participants on any workshops or courses I deliver. Finding common ground amongst a group when addressing an issue is something we explored on the programme and I aim to implement this method when the need arises. I learned new energisers and ice breakers that I can use but I think most of all, with regards to self organisation, that it seems to have strengthened my get up and go attitude. It's important to make things happen, be it individually or as a team, so I will strive to foster this attitude when it comes to my professional and personal life.

#### **Denis, Link Music Academy**

The week has changed my life and secured decisions that I've been dwelling on for a long time. I've decided now to go my own way and be a free spirit again and to actually get round to doing the things I've always wanted to do. I want to experience life and follow my many dreams. It has given me the strength, courage and self belief to put these decisions into actions so I'm looking forward to feeling liberated and really hope I've made the correct decisions. I'm following my heart.

I've gained much self confidence and I hope I've gained the will to discipline myself. I plan to build upon my music workshops with young people as I find a real joy within young people that part of me forgot. I plan to get back to writing music, to recording and getting into my music technology. I want to build upon composing for films and documentaries as I have a huge interest in this. It's been a while since I've written anything and the week has given me the belief that I am talented and that I do have the potential to create some great art. We shall see. I'm excited for the outcome. I like playing covers but I believe I have something to offer and this week has given me back that belief and confidence.

#### **Caolan, Musician**

It was refreshing to attend this programme and learn something new in relation to self-organization and how to apply it in all areas of life. The experience of meeting different people from backgrounds and cultures was enriching. I gained tools that I will be able to apply to the youth I engage with - in particular the seminars on Evolution Through Trial & Error showed me the need of allowing for complexity, while leaving room for mistakes within a group to happen - giving young people the chance to use their own initiative and having freedom to be creative. The other seminar on Collaboration & Cooperation looking at organising a team and facilitating collective decision making I found to be appropriate when relating to this generation of youth within Europe.

#### **David, All Nations Ministries.**

Living and working alongside people from all over Europe (such as Turkey, Greece, and Romania among others) has improved my cultural awareness and expression; casual group conversations contributed to this



substantially, as did the Inter-cultural night that was included in the programme. On a personal level I was grateful for the chance to get to meet people from across Europe who are involved in a similar field and share similar interests. I enjoyed learning of other countries and cultures and felt that the relationships formed could be of great advantage both personally and professionally - before attending the training in the Netherlands I was aware of EVS and of a local sending organisation, but knew little to nothing about how the programme worked or who could become involved. Since attending the training I have not only gained more knowledge on the programme but a better understanding on how it works, and even how I might use this knowledge within my current post. I plan to discuss some potential follow-on actions with my managers (including the Head of Youth Volunteering) and I hope to continue my learning of and involvement in EVS.

**Alice, Volunteer Now**

As a new member of this network I can see how this will benefit myself and my organisation in the future. As well as the meeting being a learning environment for me, being relatively new to working on a European level, it has also provided opportunities for future projects. The process of the meeting was very focused and methodologies used will, and are, being adapted by myself and the organisation I work for.

**Denis, Link Academy**

The programmes has had a great impact on me personally. I learnt some new warm up exercises which will be of great benefit to me in my work. I do a lot of group work and the energisers are a great way to get the group to bond as well as have a bit of fun. The programme offered me the opportunity to think outside the box and to tap into my creativity in a way that I have not been able to do before. The clowning workshop offered me the techniques to help me to become more relaxed and gain confidence in myself and gave me some good ideas to bring to my group of young people. The ability of the facilitators to present their work in a fashion that was humourous really gave me the permission to go through my own resistance of allowing myself to be comical or funny. I learnt humour theory and have a better understanding of my own humour and the various different types of humour. I got to understand that humour is a serious business and I leave with ideas of how to bring some humour to my workplace. My intention is to integrate my learning into my work with young people and to up skill them as best I can in humour.

**Kathy, Freelance Facilitator & Life Style Coach**

I have been a youth worker for around 10 years and I am always overwhelmed by the impact international work can have on you personally. Not only was this TC a welcome break from the normal type as it focused on our humour and why we use it. I learnt a lot about how and why we use humour. It's a camouflage for fears, worries and what the unknown may hold. In understanding this you understand even more the reasons for using it to work with young people, friends and family. In practice I will take away the Ice Breakers and some of the concepts that the facilitators used during this training course..... The other session that I am learning more about is the "Open Space" session. I have seen various concepts of this type of session but none as well organised and presented as this. I understand that this is based on a very strict guideline and as a result does not allow much room for freedom of delivery however as an outsider looking in I believe the movement is from the participants taking part in the process and as the lines are so tight the freedom within is huge. This is a technique I wish to practice and adopt.

**Sarah, Youth Worker**

During my time in Romania I benefited from meeting a wide range of people from various different countries across Europe. From spending time and working together with these people I now have a greater appreciation of different cultures, attitudes and languages. Outside the workshops we spent a lot of time discussing the differences and similarities of our respective countries and touched on many subjects. From this experience I have a much stronger interest in seeing and experiencing more of Europe, particularly Romania and the rest of Eastern Europe. During the week, we got the chance to explain our own organisations to each other and now have links with other countries which will be valuable to my organisation when they are setting up exchanges or getting involved in other international projects. Throughout the week we took part in different

presentations and I have gained extra confidence through those that I will be able to use when I am making young people more aware of EVS and what I learnt in Romania.

#### **Leonie, Spirit of Enniskillen**

This training course has given me confidence to travel more independently and meet people from other countries. It was a huge learning experience, especially regarding my self-awareness and how I interact with others. I have been introduced to other cultures and made good friends.

This training will have an impact on my professional career in many difference areas, i.e., improved my engagement with young people on a 1-2-1 and group work capacity; expanded my ability to promote decision making and active participation using methods of feedback, coaching, mentoring, creativity and entrepreneurship (I have learned a more diverse range of skills too); increased my knowledge of Youth Exchanges programmes with YiA and European Volunteer Service opportunities; expanded many practical skills from the facilitators and the other participants, e.g., icebreakers, team building games, group work activities, name games etc - this will extend my ability to develop leadership, team-building and self-advocacy skills among the young people I work with; and raised my confidence, understanding and empathy with regards to articulating key messages about empowerment of young people.

I aim to establish a Youth Exchange programme in 2013 through YiA or SALTO. I will partner with one of the organisations that I have newly met. This training has definitely enhanced my practice by enhancing my tools and competences in the area of empowerment and entrepreneurship. The overall impact will improve the quality of the Champions 4 Change programme I'm delivering.

#### **Michelle, Northern Ireland Youth Forum**

Attending the training I feel more awake to new cultures and in touch with the world; I feel humbled by the grace of representatives of other countries who live in less democratic societies than myself and aware of the luxury of having been born in such a Western environment. I feel obliged more than ever to embrace all opportunity that lies before me as I realise now how much I have been given throughout my life. I am inspired to learn new languages and have already made progress with this aim having picked up some phrases in Turkish and ordered a book/CD set to expand upon this even further. Professionally I have gained even more. This was a course which relied upon self-responsibility and those who were willing to learn the most gained the most. I have now formed partnerships between my company and similar companies based in Greece and Turkey. I have one project in the early stages of development myself and I'm assisting with the actualisation of a second; a very exciting step forward for my company. I have grown as a facilitator and have learned from both doing and observing others and feel that both my skill set and my potential for opportunities has expanded. I am very thankful to have been a participant on this course.

#### **Amanda, The Actors Gymnasium**

The experience allowed me to take a step back and allow my emotions and thoughts take me on a journey of discovery and rediscovery. I had connected with people in a way that I had not done on previous programmes. Relaxing and enjoying the experience was important to me and connecting with others as well as myself was also important. I noticed that quite a few folks were taking themselves and the process way too seriously and from my own experience, they were where I was at on projects past. This was a fantastic eureka moment for me regarding my own personal growth. I have made some really good professional connections. Although the majority of projects did not move me to action, there were conversations that led to near future projects being agreed. As a whole I think I could work with everyone again. This project showed me how much I don't understand about other cultures even though I have been on several European programmes by now. I felt more empowered on this training and perhaps it was the second opportunity to deal with some obstacles I had. There are one or two other projects including ones on Cultural Awareness and Diversity, but I am not sure how realistic these are, but I would love to do them or be part of them. Overall, I feel better prepared for taking on projects using the tools gained thus far to achieve the end result.

#### **Roy, Ellis Manhattan Music**

The Personal impact has been strong - relationships developed with other N.I. participants and participants from other countries, a better understanding of different countries and their cultures, ability to communicate effectively with people whose first language isn't English and I learned some phrases in Polish. The Professional impact includes a possible future project opportunity established for young people involved with youth councils/committees/forums; I challenged myself to facilitate an Open Space session and get feedback on my facilitation, developing my ability to receive feedback as well as my understanding of and ability to facilitate OST sessions; I increased understanding of youth service provision and issues for young people in other countries, I prepared a presentation about the organisation to present at the seminar and I encouraged myself to think about working in a participatory way with young people at all times and to assess how participatory I am in my practice. Through thinking about and analysing participatory youth work practice and my own ability to work in a participatory way, it has highlighted for me that participation is one of my strongest professional values and I am therefore more likely to work in a more participatory way within my practice.

#### **Laura, NI Youth Forum**

On a professional level, I feel I can use things that I have learnt on the seminar to help formulate recommendations and strategies for tackling issues of a similar nature in Northern Ireland. It has also helped me to reflect on the work that I do and have done in the past with young people and communities. This came from visiting projects, discussing issues and practices with local practitioners working with young people and communities and from reflecting on these with other participants on the seminar.

On a personal level, the seminar has been another step in helping me to understand humanity, identity, conflict and more about the nature of issues that affect Israel and countries in the surrounding region. This came from the mix of cultural activities, tours, talks and personal conversations I had with individual staff, which enabled me to get an idea of the context of the work which we were looking at in Israel. I would hope to be able to follow up the seminar with some form of action, either involving young adults with whom I work or with other professionals who work alongside me in my organisation. Participating in the seminar was a very worthwhile experience for me, from which I learnt and gained a lot.

#### **Mat, Opportunity Youth**

It was refreshing to attend this training and I learned something new in relation to European Citizenship, and how to apply it in all areas, both in life and community. The experience of meeting different people from various backgrounds and cultures was enriching. I gained tools that will enhance the work our organisation is engaged in the area of youth work. In particular, the seminars on Politics, Employment and Economics. Learning about the various ideologies of political parties within Europe was interesting and educational and the importance of encouraging young people to vote and taking an active interest in Politics as well as learning how to enable young people to find employment and the importance of taking part in the environment in which they live. Hopefully this training will enable our organisation to empower youth within our community. I can pass on the training through seminars and weekly talks in bite size learning. In networking with other youth leaders from around Europe it enabled us to debate ideas and share experiences; as well as sharing good practice in working with young people from diverse backgrounds.

#### **David, All Nations Ministries**

The week I spent in Sicily on the Youth in Action Programme was one of the best life experiences I have ever had. Spending time with 40 people from across 14 European countries I realised the importance of multi-cultural work. I settled down very early in life and had babies and full time employment therefore I have had very little opportunity to travel, the travelling itself was daunting however following the training programme I now feel that I have a plethora of opportunities ahead of me to meet new people, travel to different countries and to broaden my knowledge and awareness of the world around me. The training programme has given me an insight into my own practice, from the programme content I now realise that I am doing sound work with the young people engaged in the programmes I offer. I am now much more aware of the Youth in Action Programme and what opportunities we can avail of to enhance young people's experiences. As well as this I feel that within my professional practice I can now really challenge young people's negative stereotypes to others they perceive as different.

I will now present my learning from the training to my organisation – as well as this I intend to work with the team from Slovenia to organise a youth exchange in relation to youth employability. We have already begun to email each other to get the ball rolling. I will also use some of the activities which were delivered during the training within my youth work setting as well as share activities with colleagues as I feel they will find value in these. Thanks so much for the opportunity, I enjoyed every minute of this opportunity and I hope I will be able to participate further in the programme.

#### **Aileen, SELB**

On a personal level initially I found the programme quite difficult. The reason for this was because of the make-up of all the participants, their culture and their ideas. Over the period of the week I had to adapt, become more aware of differences and accept these. I found this to be a good learning curve for me, it helped me step back and think about others more easily. The training course as well helped me as an individual become more relaxed, less reserved and more willing to participate. I have learned a lot of new techniques that I will use with the groups I work with. I also will use the resources that have been uploaded into the group's inbox. My plans are to actively get involved with other people who have also participated on the course with the hope of completing if not one possibly two programmes throughout 2014. Overall, I found the course to be strange, quite difficult at times but one of the best experiences I have had. I believe these types of course would be invaluable to young people within my own organisation as individuals, I think the learning they would get from such an opportunity would open their minds and opportunities.

#### **Michelle, Derry Youth and Community Workshop**

The training I received didn't really have much of an impact on me as a person it was more the people I met while on training that had the impact. Meeting the different youth workers from around the world was a great experience and has made me look differently at my own life and how I work with young people as well as the role I'm currently working in. I found the training to be great for networking I'm currently working with another member from Hungary on a youth exchange project for 2014, also, I'm adapting some of our current projects such as the Choices Project and the Redshirts Active Youth Citizenship Programme to fit around the training I received. I'm currently planning projects for the next 2 years and the training I received and ideas collected during the training will have a big impact on the projects I'm creating. The training helped me to "think outside the box" when programming and how best to use my time as well opening me up to a whole new pot of funding that I will be working on with other youth workers from the training.

#### **Marty, Greater Shantallow Community Arts**

The programme hasn't really had any impact on me as a person other than I met some really interesting people and have been keeping in contact with them to look at possible projects. From a professional point of view the information session on funding was very beneficial and relevant to my work as was part of the creative thinking session. The programme was very long and I feel that it could be condensed down to a three/four day programme as parts were very drawn out. I wanted to know more about employment in other countries and what they were doing about the issue in their country and this was not discussed through the facilitators, it was only discussed through the participants during their free time. I feel that Northern Ireland is miles ahead of some of the other areas in regards to knowledge of funding, programmes that are being delivered and their partnership working. I will use the information on funding and some of the theories that I was shown such as the "Six Hats" and possibly some of the ice breakers that we did twice a day, everyday!!

#### **Ursula, Limavady Borough Council**

This project has been a once in a lifetime experience and has had a lasting personal impact. The social aspect of the project has meant that it has improved my social skills and my ability to network and break down language barriers. As a result of this I believe that it has boosted my confidence in social situations and so will have lasting importance in my life. This project has made me rethink my possibilities as a student of politics and also made me recognise the possibilities that the European Union has to offer in terms of career opportunities. It has also opened up my interest for politics in general and has had a positive impact on my motivation to be a more active member of society and the EU. As a student I am involved with a number of political societies at my university. With the skills I have picked up through this project I can apply them

effectively with such societies to help be more active and improve their results. It has also made me bring into consideration the setting up of a model EU parliament at my own university, hopefully reaching the same diversity and discussion of ideas I experienced myself in Poland.

### **Aidan, Student**

This trip was a life-changing opportunity for me, visiting somewhere I had never dreamt I'd visit, and meeting some of the most influential people that I intend to work with in the future. Although I had to leave my daughter for 11 difficult days, one day she will grow up and know that the reason for this will hopefully have brought peace and she can one day follow in my footsteps. I feel like I have, with the other participants, actually made a difference, and I personally will not give up the quest to achieve peace and spread the message to the future generations, as the project has given me the most important thing - hope. I believe I contributed to the project in many ways, influencing both the social dynamic of the group and the diversity of the musical ensembles. As I was playing clarinet (the only one in the group) I found myself collaborating successfully with all the nationalities to bring different colours to the performances. I also attended the press conference in the Media Center, Yerevan, showing my personal support for the project and quest for peace, hopefully influencing the mentality and attitudes of others towards peace.

As an experienced musician I was able to demonstrate certain ideas and offer suggestions for improvement to various ensembles. Due to having organised many other youth events including administration, coordination and promotion, I was able to help the head coordinator compile the set list for the 'Sounds of Peace' concert, and speak publicly on the national news about the importance of ...the project and my attitude towards peace. I have gathered many skills from this trip, and have achieved one of the things that I set out to do - break down the language barrier between all the participating nationalities. In a practical sense, I have learned basic phrases in each language, but in the greater scheme of things, this demonstrates the breaking down of the international divide and willingness to make peace. I will apply this to any future youth work that I do, by proving to participants that language is merely an obstacle that can be easily overcome by simply taking the time and interest to find a common ground. I feel like I have a better knowledge of hosting events and intend to do more of this in the future after witnessing the huge impact that this one event had.

### **Saorla, Musician**

On a personal level, participating in this programme has formed a wonderfully unforgettable experience. Through the programme, I had the unique privilege to learn from other participants about historical and ongoing conflict in their native countries – this had a profound personal impact. I will cherish the memories of the people I met, the music created and the beautiful country Armenia for a lifetime. It is certainly an experience that I would recommend to anyone - already I am eager to return! Professionally, the project has provided a medium through which to make new links with musicians worldwide. I have plans to maintain these links and create and record new music with the musicians I met in Armenia.

Throughout the programme I had the opportunity to encounter a wide variety of musical performing styles and creative methods – this experience will certainly impact on future musical endeavours. I have also learnt about different cultural attitudes to music and its ability to heal, which is of particular relevance to medicine and music therapy. The programme has helped me to develop a variety of skills that are applicable to a range of work and voluntary settings. As a medical student, I found the opportunity to learn about different cultural perspectives, cultural norms and conflict management particularly beneficial. I also feel that this experience has helped develop my interpersonal skills which are key in the practice of medicine. Musically, I have had the opportunity to improve my improvisation and performance skills. These skills are integral to one's development as a musician, and in the field of music therapy, in which I have a special interest.

### **Brigid, Musician**

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in the project. I learnt a lot about the European Union. I did not know much about the European Parliament and I found it very interesting. Listening to the speech from the MEP gave me a better idea of how the EU works. As well as learning about the EU, I also learnt a lot about different European cultures, especially during the intercultural evening. It was interesting to hear about the lives of people I would normally not get the chance to talk to. During the project I improved on my leadership skills as

we were regularly split up into smaller teams which required the leadership of participants. This happened during the discussions of different EU topics as well as during energisers which required leadership also. I think that I improved on my communication skills as the majority of the people that I was talking to did not have English as their first language therefore communication required more attention due to the language barrier. My ICT skills also improved as we had to make a video in our groups. I will share the information that I have learnt as well as what I have learnt from the different cultures that participants had with members of future voices. I will give more information about how others in future voices can apply for EU programmes similar to this.

#### **Grant, Young Person**

I found this to be quite an enlightening experience. It gave me the 'stage' to show off some of my better attributes and maybe also some of my bad ones. In this group of twenty people, given the short space of time, there were great bonds and friendships made. It was very easy to expose your vulnerable side. I spoke several times with many of the participants, some who were in enjoying the freedom the project allowed us to have in expressing ourselves in many different ways but were afraid that when they returned home that they back to their same old person. It was just simply a great place to be, to discover myself, to discover new friendships. Although I consider myself well versed in what is going on in the world with the media, politics and the global situation in general, I was perhaps a little naive.

I am not a shy person, nor am I afraid to get up and speak in public but I do so with great difficulty. This project forced me to deal with this, maybe I didn't make much progress with it but my perspective has changed with it. I will make the best effort I can from this moment onwards to deal with this, as I think it is a little disrespectful when I don't make the effort to be understood verbally. Confidence to speak in public, the ability to deal with different people, the awareness to be considerate of other people's needs and feelings are some of the more important ones. This project will be the foundation or springboard for me to go to university, enrolling in a very demanding course as a better and more happier and content person inside. So 2013/14 ..... BRING IT ON!!

#### **Martin, Greater Shantallow Community Arts**

My trip to Armenia was wholly enlightening on so many different levels. On a personal level, throwing myself into an adventure to a place in which I have never been before was brilliant. The cultural differences in terms of language, space, architecture, the way the society functions, and of course music allowed me to more clearly understand my own culture and how things are different in other parts of the globe.

A concentrated (but not overbearing) creative environment working musically with complete strangers (whom are now friends) every day was a very healthy thing for me. I was able to remove myself from my usual roles in musical activity and try new things (singing more, having a large role in group arrangements etc). This will help inform my work as a music facilitator/teacher and have a knock-on effect on my workshop groups.

The exchange has inspired me to perhaps organise something similar in Derry in the future. It has definitely given me a drive to travel more and experience a wider range of cultures and peoples. I didn't realise the importance of this before I went, and I would urge others to participate in similar projects because I feel that I have learned quite a lot about myself in the process – it is not something that can be read about or taught – people have to experience intercultural life themselves to really “get it”. Thank you!

#### **Dan, Musician**

The project has had a tremendous effect on me personally. In general before going on this trip I felt as though I were caught in a 'Groundhog Day' situation. To accept a place on this trip was the beginning of hopefully some form of personal metamorphosis whereby I will challenge myself to place myself out of my comfort zone as much as possible so that I might experience the most from life. On the trip I built valuable relationships and friendships with the coordinators and my fellow participants that I fully intend to keep active and open as these people were wonderful to work alongside and to have fun with equally.

Professionally this trip has galvanised my work ethic and approach when it comes to all things music. The time spent preparing for the immediate finale of the project was an excellent time for me to test my problem solving and time management skills. Not only that but I have further learned how to be more appreciative of the opinions and skills other hold for the advancement of a group trying to create something, in this case a set list of very differing songs, in a relatively short period of time. As a young original musician I have found my time on the project to be beyond invaluable. The industrious attitude created by the groups has left me feeling refreshed and revitalised and I have since found myself putting more and more time into making music, promoting music and respecting my fellow musicians. I would say that the fun but self-regimented approach to achieving the aims of a project is something that will stick with me and be very easily implemented into my own work.

#### **Paul, Musician**

I found the 10 days in Armenia to be a deeply rewarding experience, one that left me musically and personally rejuvenated. Although I have studied music at University, never before have I worked so intensely with musicians I had no personal connection with. I was surprised by the strength of the connections forged and that by the end of the 10 days no one wanted to go home. The project renewed my faith in the positive impacts of creative collaboration. It helped me grow as a musician and introduced me to musicians I hope to work with in the future. In this precarious economic climate, it isn't easy for artists. Very few musicians succeed in living solely from music. Since the project this fact depresses me less than before. I think every artist needs to feel that they do not exist in a vacuum, but rather than searching for monetary validation, a lot can be said for partaking in an artistic project bigger than oneself- that can be its own reward.

#### **Laura, Musician**

My time spent in Austria was without doubt one of the best weeks of my life. From the moment I arrived I was made to feel welcome. Working with others on issues that are important to me has taught me to stay true to my own beliefs. However at the same time, it has made me aware that other people's values/ideas are equally as important as my own and so deserve to be listened to and respected. The experience has developed my communication skills and confidence immeasurably as we were required to do group presentations regularly. These are definitely things that I can use in a professional setting in the future. My communication skills have also been enhanced owing to the fact that we all spoke different languages in Austria, so non verbal communication became important as did speaking slowly and clearly for all to understand. This is also something that I know I will find very useful in the future if I decide to participate in a similar programme, or if I use this experience to perhaps arrange a programme like this myself.

On a professional level, I learned so much about team/group work in a non-formal environment. For example, I have become aware of so many different icebreaking activities, group exercises and ways that a group can present their work which I can transfer into my own work with the children's theatre group I volunteer with and my local charity work. As I mentioned before Austria was an amazing experience for me, I developed so much on a personal and professional level there and I know that I will utilise all of the different things that I have learned for the better in wherever I am and whoever I am working with in the future.

#### **Lauren, Young Person**

The project had a greatly positive effect on me. It taught so much about the differences in culture between Europeans, but also taught me that we have so much in common as people. It also greatly increased my confidence in speaking about my personal politics in front of others so much so that I have recently accepted a nomination and selection from a political party to stand in next year's local council elections to the new 'super' councils. I doubt I would have had the confidence to accept my nomination if it wasn't for the programme, which elected me as Vice-President of the mock European Parliament despite being the solitary member of my political grouping for the week. In terms of professional impact, as a student of Politics & International Relations the project taught me so much about the workings of a multi-cultural institution like the European Parliament and the difficulties that arise from language barriers, but also the benefits of having an institution like the European Parliament to discuss issues that affect all citizens of European nations. Also as I work in security at the City of Derry Airport the experience I gained in terms of communicating with others who do not speak English as their first language was invaluable. In terms of work, the project has definitely given me an

interest in pursuing a career in youth work and has showed me the importance of educating young people in the value of participating in politics at any level and that no part they play would be too great or too small.

### **Diarmuid, City of Derry Airport**

I found the entire week to be quite an eye opener as I went believing I knew a little of these matters but it soon became apparent that actually I knew very little. And that what I did know was barely scratching the surface. Although the talks on each subject were brief it left me wanting to research for myself and gain more knowledge. I have never been out of this country and although I live and work in a very multi-cultural environment never before have I had the opportunity to sit with representatives of so many countries at one time and observe the similarities and differences between my own country and that of others surrounding issues of young people. I especially became very connected with Romania which gave me a great deal of food for thought. Although at this moment in time I work within formal education I have always known that my place in the long term is actually (hopefully) going to be working/volunteering in the community with Young People. I definitely feel that there is a place within my role at work to be raising the issues we discussed and also there is not enough known about the experiences the young people here can gain by volunteering abroad. We are encouraged as staff of Doncaster College to look at non-formal & informal education. The truth is I know I want to do something I just don't know what? Or how? I am looking for an individual who can help me with this I definitely want to take this further.

### **Trudie, Student Support**

On commencing this project I wasn't that knowledgeable of European politics; however I am now more familiar with what goes on in other European countries, their parliaments and their parties. My thoughts on parties changed the more we discussed them, compared to what I had first thought. I thought it was good that there were people from different nations on the programme as we got different perceptions of youth problems. When I first arrived in Poland I noticed that even though I am fluent in English and the project was also in English, I could understand the other participants, however they couldn't understand me fully until I started talking slower. I think I personally this was a positive input into the project and made quite a few friends from other European countries.

Having been on this project I gained information on youth problems in European parliament. The experience and knowledge that I have gained I hope to put it into good practice when I start youth volunteering again in my local community. I also hope to use this information I have gained in my own work and in helping international people with the English language as this may not be their first language and may need help. In youth volunteering I can discuss the problems that were discussed in the project and we might have the same problems in this country and now I am more experienced in which way to take these problems closer to parliament which I hope to help others.

### **Anthony, Young Person**

Poland was a great experience from the culture to the opportunity of meeting a group of great people from various countries in the EU. The programme was a new learning experience and challenge for me. I met and have kept in contact with some of the people who I shared the experience with. There was only two people from the UK and I found a lot of the group looked to us for inspiration. I personally shared a room with a guy from Turkey and he explained all about his culture and his religion of which I gained a better insight and understanding. I found it really easy to communicate with the rest of the guys and their English was excellent. The multicultural evening was a great night and we all shared a little bit of our culture with the group. After returning I feel it was a very worthwhile experience and very enjoyable as well as a great learning experience.

I feel after coming back and reviewing the content of the programme that we as an organisation have good policies and procedures which protect our residents and staff as a whole. I took some information and a handbook that all our residents devised. The group found this really interesting and was shocked of all the rules, guidelines and law that we have to follow in the UK. I found the other people where more relaxed and did not have too many procedures and policies to follow. I explained a little about our safeguarding and child protection, this does not seem to apply very much to other countries and I was shocked at this. They explained that there is no police checks and anyone in Poland can organise a group without being checked to



see if they were suitable. The one thing I will take away from the experience in Poland is the energy of the young people. I hope that I can bring some of that energy to my personal and professional life. In my professional role as Deputy Manager I will engage and listen to the people I work with and the people I support. I feel that sometimes we look at hurdles and fall before we even start a project. We all have policies and procedures to follow and can see these as too difficult to engage with a project or a task therefore just walk away and only achieve what we have to and not go the extra mile.

### **Martin, First Housing**

On the 13th of September I was on my travels to Malta and not sure what I was in for. I was so nervous because it was my first time travelling by myself and in a new country. When I got there my heart dropped because the way Maltese people live it was so different from Ireland - the food, people, weather and the culture nothing was the same. My nerves soon settled when I met the leaders they both were so friendly, nice they would help you anytime if they could they were both amazing. The media French trainers were outstanding - they always had time for everyone and their method of teaching is really good. I didn't feel like I was in a classroom - I felt comfortable it was really informal. Overall this programme was amazing and the skills you gain you can use back home for almost everything. It has helped me build up my confidence, communication and team building skills. I would convince people to do this because they would not regret it. You meet a lot of nice and friendly people, it is a good way to network with people and learn from them and teach them something new. I will take what I have learned back home and try to develop a training pack for young people and old people. Media is a good way to interact with people and everyone should try it. I would love to do something like this again.

### **Sean, Youth ActionNI**

The programme had a large personal impact on me as I have gained lifelong friends from around Europe. Working in such a diverse group of international participants I was able to learn about different cultures and regional variations of traditions. Not having travelled to any of the other participating countries it has given me confidence in travelling around Europe by myself and hopefully to attend more programmes around Europe. From completing this programme I was awarded with a Youth Pass qualification, this will help my portfolio and CV as I am actively seeking employment within the youth service. Being able to work alongside trainers from around Europe gave me great insight into how other countries run youth clubs and organisations.

On top of this, the practical skills I have gained are being more confident public speaking, presentation skills, team building and creative thinking. These skills will help me be successful in interviews and future employment. I have gained confidence in taking control of a large team in tackling problems and completing activities. These can be applied to my own working environment with working part-time in retail with a large team. However these skills will benefit me when applying them to my volunteering. This training has made me more open and confident in talking to new people. Returning from my journey I was filled with great enthusiasm to apply team building and team activities to the organisation I volunteer for from what I learnt in Slovenia, for example, alternative communication tools such as Flash Mobs, the importance of impact through social media and the internet.

### **Hannah-Chloe, Young Person**

I found that the aspect of the programme which had the greatest impact personally was the people I met. As the only native English speaker on the training course, I did not have the luxury of being able to retreat to fellow co-linguists during the more informal occasions. This forced me out of my comfort zone to approach new people, and gain a richer experience as it improved my Spanish and learn a few words in other languages, while others sought my knowledge in order to improve their English. Seeing and experiencing the Alentejo region of Portugal also had a direct personal impact as I could see different people and places in similar circumstances to people and places in Northern Ireland in regard to rural unemployment and economic depravity.

The workshops made a difference, as while I was used to formal education and methods, this opened up new ways of achieving goals and completing tasks. Being in a new location with new people automatically allows you to act with a blank slate. This means you can leave past pressures behind to you when you are asked to do

something individually or as a group, which can give you a fresh perspective in completing the tasks you are given. This naturally bred confidence, and where I would have acted in my normal, set way in Ireland, I automatically thought of new methods of doing things. Acting in this informal way, it is easy to see how you can get more achieved and with a better attitude. The skills involved in informal education are highly transferable to many different topics and situations. By using similar positive methods to teach a group of people it is possible to show that education does not have to be negative. What you learn travels into your subconscious more easily and it also helps to make information stick. Its practical nature means that I can be brought into just about any learning situation.

#### **Dermot, St. Columb's Park House**

During my trip to Wroclaw, Poland I learned a lot about myself, I learned that I can navigate myself around the city using both a map and asking the people in shops. I also became a lot more confident in talking to new people especially to those that don't speak my mother language. I have come back home eager to learn new languages and about new cultures as well as the motivation to travel to new countries. I have also really matured as a whole and came back feeling a new person. On a more professional level I have learnt how to present my own ideas as well as develop projects that both my team or I have come up with. I have also learnt that I am really inspired by the work that I do and want to pass that onto the others around me.

Throughout the exchange I was always working on my ability to speak and present to people. I am excited about working on the projects we talked about in Wroclaw and eager to get started. Now that I am back in Belfast I am going to create a presentation on my time away in Poland and tell people what I have learnt and the experiences I have shared with the people I have met. I will also be taking action on developing the projects and filling in application forms within the Erasmus + programme to ask for funding for these projects to happen! I will also be using the energisers and activities back home as they were really fun and I believe the young people that I work with will really enjoy them and take a lot from each other when doing the activities.

#### **Antonia, GLYNI**

Although I have plenty of experience both in independent travel and also various training programmes, this was my first experience of an international training programme. From a personal perspective I gained more confidence as I was forced to push myself to overcome any language or cultural barriers to socialise and learn from the group. In such a short time frame I felt the group bonded and worked really well and I have made a number of new friendships.

From a professional point of view I was a little disappointed at the age range of the group. My main goal from this programme was to make connections with like-minded youth workers and organisations for future exchange programmes. However a number of the group members were still at high school and University (with no intention of youth work) so they were there for personal gain mainly improving their English. This significantly reduced my chances of making any lasting links upon which to build working relations with and this is something I will need to now justify to my management committee. I did take away a number of new ideas and friendships from the programme. There were some interesting activities which I feel I could use in my youth work. The cultural evenings were a great opportunity to exchange and learn about different cultures and I really learnt a lot but also it has made me curious to find out more. In my parish we have an ever growing Polish community and I feel that from this programme I would like to organise a cultural exchange within our centre of the various different cultures that make up our parish.

#### **Kelly, Youth Worker**

I think that I will keep a longtime memory of this experience. For me, this training was challenging on several levels. It has been emotionally intense. It was also an opportunity to live a group experience and I really enjoyed meeting people from different countries. The programme was well-organized and surprising and I have been touched by some interactions between participants and some exercises. I hope to stay in touch with them. I learnt about myself and I am sure that I will be able to reuse what I have learnt in the future. During this training, we did some exercises which are quite easy to reproduce in a work environment. I do some activities for young service users of my organization and I would like to use these exercises. The training taught us how humour can be used as a tool and I think that this tool is helpful when we work with young

people. We should more often think positively, even in stressful situations that may occur with young people. I would like to create a booklet of entertaining and funny exercises, based on this training. I work with vulnerable people who can't really think about humour and can't think in a positive way due to their situation. Through this training, I have some new ideas of activities that I would like to plan for them.

#### **Eva, Youth Worker**

I found the two greatest aspects of the impacted me the most were the people I met and the practicality of the programme content. As always I thrive on meeting new people from different countries as it is something that always makes me feel alive inside, as well as helping gain fresh perspectives and ideas which I might have otherwise not experienced without the opportunity presented by such programmes as this. I consider myself to be pretty up for most things but like anyone else I am human and having participated in this programme, it definitely took me out of my comfort zone a few times for both the right reasons and the wrong reasons. Lessons are there to be learned right? Only time will tell I guess. Working in a hospitality industry demands good communication skills and not only awareness of the people around you but also of yourself as well. I believe humour can be used as an effective and valuable tool. I am able to use it to improve my communication skills in both my professional and personal life. In particular it has helped my personal development and self-awareness.

I am hoping to transgress from the hospitality industry towards a career as a children's nurse. Humour is an integral part of everyday life and therefore also a component of the care and treatment of patients in the modern health care system. Many of the skills that I already possess from my previous career are transferable and can be as equally adapted or developed as any other. This programme has given me a great platform in which to explore the concept of humour which while may seem simplistic in nature, can be as diverse as you make it and to use it effectively in my future doings. That is also not forgetting all the small things such as energisers, group activities such as music therapy that you can take home with you and share and my particular favourite – clowning.

#### **Martin, Young Leader**

I would consider myself to have a sense of humour and be able to make most people laugh when the occasion arises, but the training in Rogosi, Estonia left me with no doubt that I had a lot to learn. My learning did not come solely from the Facilitators, but from my fellow participants. To say I laughed would be an understatement, as there were times when I laughed that hard, I both cried and peed myself, even over IM on facebook:) The training was full on from the first day to the last with only a half day to take in the sights and the surrounding vista, but the interactions were always positive and fun. One of the best things that happened for me was the Open Space. I had the chance to run an idea for a project which others were interested in getting involved with. My goal was to learn about humour from other perspectives, not just from a multicultural perspective, but from within my own culture here in the UK and Northern Ireland. Overall, the dynamic was a good fit for me and the outcomes made me feel as though I had learned a great deal with respect to: (i) the boundaries in humour (ii) appropriateness/taboo in humour (iii) cultural differences and (iv) my own contribution to humour as a vehicle to communication

#### **Roy, Ellis Manhattan Music**

When I was selected to take part in the programme I was very excited but very nervous at the same time, I deal with difficult and sensitive issues on a daily basis and situations can get aroused and heated. I wanted to look at different options of how to deal with the young people I support and thought that humour was great medium. I looked at the details and hoped I would gain new and valued experience that I could use in my personal and professional development.

After attending the course I feel have grown and developed personally. I really enjoyed all the workshops and the confidence each workshop gave me. If I was told at the start of the week what I would be doing and participating in I would have said I don't think so. The team and all the people around me gave me the confidence to fully engage in the programme in a professional manner. I observed and participated in tasks that I gained insight and knowledge which helped me to use humour in the right place right time situation.

I left Estonia with a lot more knowledge and insight than when I first arrived. I will use a lot of the games and workshops in my professional role. I feel the energisers are a great tool and I will start to use these prior to any support session or residents meetings. I feel they are a great way to involve everyone and get the mind ready for action.

### **Martin, First Housing**

On reflection I realised that I hadn't learnt so much in such a short space of time before. The week's three themes worked in harmony to provide a holistic method of self learning and personal development whilst having fun. The programme constantly challenged my comfort zone and helped to build self confidence. Alongside this the opportunity to discuss different topics with people from an array of countries really helped me gain new insights and perspectives on humour and so many other topics. When leaving the programme I felt the group had made some networks with longevity and felt personally rejuvenated and motivated. The programme has given me a unique and transferable skill set. In particular I feel the programme has helped me to improve my communication and teamwork skills. As I am coming to an end of my studies at University I feel like these skills will help me to gain paid employment.

Alongside this the networking with other participants has given me a greater insight into youth community work and has helped me develop my career aspirations towards this. Moreover this has opened up the opportunity for future projects with other participants. This programme has provided me with an insight into the complexities of humour and how it can be used as a methodological approach. The use of humour as a tool is something I will take with me into future work with young people. In addition to this I will utilise the programmes wide array of methodologies using energisers, ice breakers, music therapy and clowning.

### **Katie, Trainee Social Worker**

The programme helped me to learn and be more aware of the situations in Arabic speaking countries and opened my mind more to how discrimination against women in western countries are subliminal. It has helped to me identify situations that need to be challenged. It has also helped me to improve on my communication skills with non-English speakers and challenged my ability to adapt to different situations. It has also helped me to empathise on a deeper level with the Trans-service users at Cara-Friend. It allows me to understand the blatant discrimination and identify issues that need to be immediately addressed or challenged. As a voluntary youth worker the programme has helped my professional work by providing me with great material and methods of practice that I can conduct in delivering my programmes. From what I've learnt I will hopefully use the methods, models and activities in any youth work related programmes to encourage participation among young people and hopefully work more efficiently with colleagues. Also encouraging others to challenge issues that need to be confronted or resolved. The communication barriers that I have overcome will hopefully allow me to engage with other foreign organisations.

### **Keith, Cara Friend**

I've been thinking about changing profession and moving into the youth work sector. To find out more about this particular field of work I decided to join the Training in the Netherlands in May 2014. This course was a real eye opener for me. I met loads of passionate youth workers from all over Europe and learned a lot about their work in their respective countries. I took a lot of great tools and frameworks away from the training. One of the most important being the use of the little word 'yet'. The change in attitude when you say 'I can't do that' vs. 'I can't do that, yet' is amazing and I learned how important attitude is when working with young people. We also shared many resources (from books and academic articles to videos and websites) that I'm now looking forward to looking into and applying in my work. I will be able to do this during a summer camp for children from care homes in Romania this summer and to a greater extent in my one-year volunteering project in Argentina starting in September 2014. I'm planning to offer workshops to the children and young people that will allow them to boost their self confidence and develop their skills in an area so that they can maybe even make a living out of it at a later stage.

### **Margot, VAP**

One of the greatest benefits of the week was the wide age and experience represented in the group. It was interesting for me to meet young people from around Europe, as someone who works a lot with young people in Northern Ireland I found really useful comparisons and insights which will definitely inform some of my work here. I have met a number of people from organisations who are doing similar work to mine. I am hoping to explore Erasmus+ project partnership opportunities during the summer. On day 5 of the training programme we had the opportunity to meet and speak about specific professional interests. I found some of the work being done by others interesting and useful. Some organisations had a heavy focus on “future skills” while others were more concentrated on changing policy, the range of work represented was really useful. I will be keeping in contact with a number of the participants, those I am planning on trying to partner as well as others who are working on interesting projects in their home countries.

#### **Lisa, FOUR**

I was delighted to have been given the opportunity to attend this exciting programme in July 2014. The course was targeted at those who work with young people, to develop employment opportunities and skills. I was interested in the training course with a particular focus on Arts & Cultural opportunities for young people, and the development of education programmes to assist in access to employment. I found the information, tips and experience of my peers on the course very valuable and have brought that back to use in my own work practice. We have several placements each year for young unemployed people and the programme has been valuable to feed into the work-plans for these placements. A range of relevant and appropriate teaching methods were used, from active learning to peer learning and practical assignments.

Of particular interest to me were the open sessions where all the participants from across Europe could learn from other European communities - their experiences, differences and knowledge. I have now gained knowledge on other work practices around Europe and am able to use skills and ideas passed on by colleagues across the region. One of the most interesting aspects of the course was the opportunity to network, this was a huge part of the programme and actively encouraged. I have since kept in contact with participants from Turkey, Denmark, Holland and Latvia with the hope of collaborating on future projects. Some of the participants had particularly interesting ideas around Arts & Cultural programmes with young people that we hope to develop in the next few years. In the meantime we have been exchanging programmes of work, timetables and possible other links across the regions. It has been a very worthwhile experience to attend this course, and a thoroughly enjoyable one also.

#### **Rosalind, Ballymena Borough Council**

On a personal level this was a very powerful trip for me, there was a lovely friendly atmosphere, and wonderful people to meet and connect with. The relaxed atmosphere, beautiful surroundings, and lovely meals provided helped us devote ourselves to the music, and to making some magical human connections. The diversity of cultures, and the different musical qualities all brought in the melting pot were truly inspiring. I have been on personal journey with the traditional music of Armenia through my journey with playing the Duduk, and to be there in that landscape, to go walking through the wildflower meadows, to see the shepherds with their flocks on the mountainsides, and to sing in beautiful 4th century monasteries carved into cliffs has touched me more deeply than I can put into words. As well as the inspiration of the trip I had a lovely feeling of deepening my love for the UK... sometimes we need to go away to see what we find is so special at home.

Professionally it was a wonderful thing for me. I managed to buy some new duduks, reeds, and make contacts to some instrument makers over there. I am already planning another trip back over there. The meeting and networking with wonderful and inspired musicians was great and I feel confident that the connections will endure. Particularly important to me were the connections made with the Armenian musicians brought into the programme as part of the exchange. It felt like a real connection to the ancient cultural heritage of the place. In a similar reflection it felt wonderful to share a slice of our UK musical heritage, which was well received. Playing the Duduk in the UK has aroused lots of people’s curiosity, and it has been great to be able to connect with the culture directly to bring back and share here at home.

I will use my learning in many ways. It feels like a lot of musical seeds have been sown, song ideas, shared inspirations, and several compendiums of traditional musical notations I purchased at a market. Seeing the skill and discipline of some of the other musicians has really inspired me to get practising, to up my own game

and really be on my best form. To think of the people I have met playing music in their countries in such diverse ways fills me with inspiration to play and share what I have to offer. A lot of inspiring digital media has been collected from the event, and this is great as a reference, for personal recollection, and for my CV. I don't really have anything negative to say about the experience. The amount of strong spirits being consumed was at times a bit overwhelming, but it was not compulsory, and respected as part of others cultures. All in all a wonderfully enriching experience, filling me with much gratitude for life and humanity. In contrast to a lot of the terrible stories we hear in the news right now,

### **James, Musician**

Having the opportunity to go to Armenia was very exciting, and it was great to experience the people and culture there. I learned about Armenia's Soviet history, the Armenian genocide which occurred during WW1, and the strained relationship that Armenia has with neighbouring countries Azerbaijan and Turkey. Participating in a musical project was really interesting given the diversity of the participants. I liked the inter-cultural evenings as they were an opportunity to learn about other countries' customs and traditions. It was enriching to learn about other cultures and meet young people from different parts of Europe. I believe that diversity is something to be embraced and celebrated - that while we may not all be the same, we can respect and treat each other equally.

I learned about Armenian folk music; something I hadn't known a great deal about before going, and learned about different folk instruments such as the 'duduk' and the 'canon'. I was fortunate to experience and participate in the custom of 'Vardavar' which is a public holiday in Armenia where everyone has a huge water fight on the streets. I also discovered Lake Sevan, and tasted Armenian's famous brandy and pomegranate wine. Performing live at 'Lovers Park' in Yerevan was a highlight of the project. I made lots of professional contacts with other musicians and NGO's on this project. I believe these would be invaluable for networking and sharing future projects. Increasingly, social media plays an important role in the dissemination of call outs and proposals - particularly for small NGO'S which do not have a budget for marketing, so having now joined a network of idealistic young people from different countries this will, I hope, be an important channel for news and information about youth initiatives that might otherwise have been unknown to me.

Performing live at a concert in the capital city of Armenia was a great experience and I believe it has helped to build my confidence as a musician and performing artist. It has made me reflect on my own working practices as a creative artist, as there were times when it was very challenging to overcome the language barrier to communicate ideas and suggestions to other musicians. I found the exchange quite useful since everyone was able to promote their art and music in an international setting. I now have experience of working with groups of musicians from other backgrounds which will help if I choose to organise a similar project in the future.

### **Christopher, Musician**

This event was not at the usual pace or collated in manner I am used to. I felt that the large numbers hamper collective working. However this also challenged me to work at a slower pace and since I have not only considered running/helping organise a programme due to these lessons but also I am more relaxed in professional and personal life. I found the quiet time useful to engage in meaningful conversations as others felt this need also. I have developed links with other countries and established a better life work balance as well as developing my love of travel. I would enjoy a similar programme although I felt opportunities to utilise and discuss peace were not done so. This has reminded me of need to establish strong programmes, and delegate work to competent people. I also aim to use this learning and reflect on interactions with services I use and further critique this as it strengthens all aspects of life. I found the country and location to be an opportunity to reflect and think as well as an opportunity to engage with others.

In terms of socialising I developed a greater primary understanding of the attitude to alcohol in other EU countries and that learning I can use as an Outreach worker. I am also reminded that I possess the skills and qualities needed to create music performance and communicate with others; it provided me an opportunity to create an original song and acoustic piece. I enjoyed collaborating with others however I was sad that we did not get a sound check which resulted in poor sound and a poor sounding performance and this reminds me that the small details is key and that as a facilitator, organisation, impartiality and effectiveness is key. It was

also a challenge to be a participant and not to assume the organiser role that I have in my professional capacity

### **Stephanie, Way2Go Project**

Attending the project appealed to me initially because of my interest in Armenian Folk Music, but I received so much more. Folk songs from Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, Italy and Wales, not to mention Armenia! The programme was attended by people with a wide diversity of musical passions, instruments and styles - there really was something for everyone. A real highlight for me was meeting Arik Bambir, a local musician and professor of Traditional Armenian Folk Music at Yerevan University, who was invited to the project to do a performance and lead a workshop. He taught us about the history of Armenia and Armenian music, and the vital role of Komitas, then taught us two traditional songs. The workshop went so well that we worked what he taught us into our final performance at Lover's Park in Yerevan and he joined us as a guest musician. Arik was so pleased to meet us with our interest in Armenian history and music that he invited us to come back and continue to learn from him; an amazing invitation which I feel could really enrich my professional musicianship. Furthermore, I also have invitations to Lithuania and Italy to play music at some festivals in 2015 due to contacts I made at whilst on the project. I am very grateful to the organisers and funders of this wonderful project and hope to be a part of it in 2015!

### **Michael, Musician**

I'd like to express my gratitude for this wonderful opportunity to be a part of the project. It came at a time where I felt completely stuck both musically and in my personal life. I can only describe the whole experience as magical, and one that burst my heart open and inspired me on so many levels. I have always been drawn to Armenia because of the ancient music (especially duduk) and spiritual traditions there, and I'm very happy that between playing music day and night with incredible musicians (such a blessing and a luxury that really set me free and gave me a new outlook and focus in life!), we made time to explore some beautiful monasteries and sing in them. I feel liberated and filled with creative ideas.

I have made connections and close friendships with people from across Europe, which will be great for me professionally in terms of future collaborations, projects and performance opportunities in different countries. The band we created has been invited to perform in a festival in Italy next year, and one of the musicians has already visited me here to rehearse and create new repertoire. Also, getting to know different musical and cultural traditions to my own has given me much inspiration for my own music. For a long time I have been focusing on composing music for orchestras and chamber ensembles, for others to play. The project has taught me that I am much happier playing and creating, sharing music in the moment with others, and in these moments of spontaneity, magic happens and beauty is created. I am reminded of the importance of sharing to create energy, rather than spending a lot of solitary time writing. I am inspired to use this learning by joining an orchestra again, which will help my teaching practice, to focus on my technique, learn new repertoire and play more with others!!!

### **Eloise, Musician**

This was my first international seminar and prior to leaving I was apprehensive to say the least. Having previously, only travelled as part of a group or with family, to now travel unaccompanied was going to be a new experience. So off I set on my travels and on arriving in Greece I had a sudden and shocking realisation..... I DON'T SPEAK GREEK !!! The signs made no sense, but thanks to the concise and detailed information provided by the organisers I was able to get on the correct buses and I arrived at the hotel safe and sound, accompanied by two delegates from Holland who I met along the way.

As the seminar progressed, I began to lose the doubts and fears I had about fitting in, my confidence grew and I was able to contribute to the daily sessions. By the time it came to assist with the workshop presentation I was able to take the group through some energisers and felt confident in my ability to communicate to them the information that I needed to. At the end of the seminar I can honestly say that I have learned many things about health related topics, but just as many things about myself. I now will have so much more confidence in my ability to speak to groups. And the workshops on sexual health were very appropriate to the age group that I work with. I will definitely be making use of the energisers and group games in my work practice. The

information around sexual health and some of the methodologies used may require a little tweaking before delivery but will be very useful too. But most of all I will be advocating the value of international networking and the sharing of ideas and establishing friendships across Europe.

#### **Joe Thompson, Extern**

Having the opportunity to participate in the trainers meeting in Budapest, has given me the opportunity to network with a range of other international trainers whilst at the same time confirm my identity as a trainer and my commitment to establishing a network of international trainers. Through this meeting I have also committed to being a member of the core group who will look to drive forward the development of the network. In addition it has been an opportunity to discuss and share professional practice and I hope this will continue through the development of the network.

#### **Buzz, Youth Worker**

Attending the programme in Slovenia was a great experience both culturally and professionally. Being able to take such independence with travel arrangements whilst in the UK and once arrived at the destination allowed a great satisfaction knowing that I was able to get myself from A to B. Culturally it had a great impact on my life and beliefs due to how different the country is from back home, but having the opportunity allowed me to settle in quite quickly and learn the way of the locals. The main barrier with youth exchanges is always the communication difficulties but with a little bit of patience we got together and conversed easily with no difficulty. Overall the whole experience on a personal level was amazing and defiantly opened my eyes to new and brighter things.

On a more professional level the project was exciting and fun and the leaders always had a new way of engaging us in the workshops. This is great because there was never a dull moment! Being able to attend local business and see how to start up your own and learn how to get help and guidance was useful and informative. I will defiantly be bringing back to my youth group new and more fun ways of doing ice breakers and team building as it helps to gain a trust within your team and it creates a bit of excitement. Also the structure of the workshops were well planned and organised which made it easy to understand, which is something I can defiantly use when it comes to planning workshops for the young people! All in all the project in Slovenia was a success and I wouldn't have changed it for the world! (well maybe make it a bit longer haha)

#### **Antonia, GLYNI**

This was the first course I had done as a participant, as opposed to being a trainer, for a number of years. I met some wonderful people and have made some great connections that I know I will keep for many years to come! I am proud of the fact that I spoke 6 different languages while I was on the course, even if it was just a few phrases in half those languages. The course also reminded me that I enjoy and can take an active part in group work when I am a participant.

I applied for the course as I have been keen to find out more about coaching and how it can be used for a while now and wanted to discover more through sharing experiences with others in the youth work field, which I enjoy much more than personal research into the literature of a subject. I certainly found out more about the difference between coaching and other helping roles and also about some coaching techniques. I also enjoyed being able to observe other trainers, to get some new ideas and also confirm what I like and don't like when I am a trainer myself. I will use some of those techniques from the course in my professional work and some I will leave to those who have a much more specific coaching focus. As a freelance trainer myself I will use some of the short encouraging questions used in coaching in my courses. The more in depth coaching strategies have limited potential for use in my longer term work as this is more often active group work rather than individual reflective work. I will definitely make good use of the contacts I made on the course and have already talked about ideas for potential future projects.

#### **Sean, Facilitator**



Having spent a week in Slovenia, I returned with a different outlook on our own culture and society. I would recommend anyone to take part in Erasmus+ and especially in a country that is not as westernised as the UK for maximum impact. I gained a lot of confidence to talk and meet new friends when previously I was shy. I really enjoyed meeting people from other countries and learning how their experiences are affected by the different politics and culture there. I have gained skills in delivering presentations as well as in evaluating others presentations. I also now have a better understanding of how to work with people from different cultural backgrounds by looking at the differences and similarities and I feel this is particularly important in Northern Ireland. I also feel better about interacting with people on a professional and social level. Having returned I was able to look at my own organisation and by comparing it I have already begun talks of how to improve it. The main theme of the programme which not only focused on starting businesses but also making sure they were environmentally friendly. I will hopefully therefore be trying to set up a small programme with the young people in my organisation to teach the benefits of being environmentally friendly and working towards a sustainable setting to work in.

### **Bronagh, Cara-Friend**

The opportunity to travel to a different country and work with 30 plus people from 8 different countries was an extremely valuable opportunity for my personal development. The programme provided me with an opportunity to gain new cross cultural interaction skills and building my ability to adapt, learn and live with others in a new social environment. It highlighted and reinforced to me the importance of communication and ensuring that you have effective channels of communication when working with others, particularly when there is diversity in your group such as different cultural interpretations and language barriers. I learnt that it is a natural feeling to get frustrated and feel scared at times, but to remember while at the time may feel these emotions, that even under new challenging circumstances that I have the willpower to overcome them, think outside the box to ensure that I succeed in my given objective. Much of the personal development I experienced impacts on my professional development. I've gained greater awareness of the importance of being aware of effective communication and the possibility that the language I use could be interpreted differently by others. As a person working within communities and in diverse social settings I therefore need to ensure that when I am communicating with others that the language I use needs to be friendly, clear and open to avoid miscommunication.

The programme has provided me with the foundations to build my coaching skills and ability to support the development needs of the people whom I will go on to work with in the future. The programme further provided me with the opportunity to meet new contacts across Europe and potential working partners for future projects while it also provided a deeper understanding of the challenges that social and group interaction can bring and how to can overcome these to achieve aims/goals as a community worker. This was the first time I had received any training in coaching so I learnt a lot of new things and developed an understanding of what coaching is. I hope to use some of the coaching methods in my future work with youth and informal educational workshops. Ensuring that future participants are supported in a way which meets their needs and learning ambitions.

### **Danielle, Community Worker**

I was really interested in this course both personally and professionally as personally I have strong connections with Wroclaw and professionally I really wanted to improve my knowledge of PR – especially social media tools. I met some great people during the course and made some good connections that I will try to keep! I decided to push my language skills and practised a lot of Polish while I was there. I also realised through this course that I am actually good at positive PR ideas and have a strong awareness of issues connected to the subject. I will use a lot of the techniques and raised awareness from this course in my work. I will also take a renewed confidence into promotion and public relations work that I do thanks to my interactions during the training. I improved my skills in reframing information to make it more punchy and suitable for any PR work I do with the NGOs I work with too! The biggest revelation for me though was the sheer number and usefulness of social media tools, many of which I am definitely going to learn more about.

I have already started spreading the information about social media tools with other youth work colleagues. I am a keen participant in amateur comedy and musical theatre and will use some of what I learned in those fields as well. For promotion of projects that I am involved with I have gained some very useful insight, which

will definitely improve the promotion of these projects. As well as the content of the course, the organisation of the course was excellent and I gained a few tips in this area that will help me in future projects. Finally, I have already had some work as a consultant that directly came from my involvement of this course so the results are already entirely tangible and positive!

#### **Sean, Facilitator**

My main personal learning centred on the rewards I received from taking myself outside of my comfort zone. Initially I felt very exposed and uncomfortable when participating in role-plays and interacting with a public audience who spoke little to no English. However, not only did I survive it unscathed, I actually enjoyed the experience and could feel myself becoming more confident with each interaction. I am not saying that I will jump at every opportunity to participate in role-plays or give out free hugs in the local park, but I most certainly would not shy away from it.

During the training I experienced a role reversal; I became the participant, not the facilitator. This was a positive experience for me on a professional level as I got an insight into how our pupils feel during ice-breakers and group activities. The experience reaffirmed my belief that ice-breakers and group activities have a positive and effective place in my tool box, as long as I create a safe and energetic environment in which to test them out. I have returned equipped with new strategies, more self-confidence and motivated to do more self-reflection in practice, as well as on my practice in general. I look forward to the challenge of facilitating new group activities, such as short role-plays in the hope that the young people will enjoy them as much as I did, or at the very least learn something about themselves and others.

From the outset I picked up new strategies and activities that I can adapt and try out with the young people that I work with. Using short energisers and injecting movement into group sessions when I see the group's energy levels starting to drop-off is just one example. Another focuses on turning negativity into positivity through the promotion of creativity. Excellent examples of this are problem solving activities that encourage participants to think in different ways to identify a range of solutions, the 'three column' tool used to find effective resolution through the identification of common ground and using role-plays to demonstrate the 'RED' technique. The training has provided me with creative ways in which to further develop current activities that I do with the pupils. For example, designing a badge to display your name and facts makes the 'three facts' activity more creative and hands-on. This new addition ensures that the learning needs of all the pupils are being addressed, to include visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners.

This experience has taught me that we can learn much from our international colleagues. A visit to a special school, while in Poland has presented an opportunity for my colleague and I to facilitate an exchange. We are discussing the potential exchange of staff, with young people sharing their experiences and ideas electronically. A second connection made with a fellow Italian participant may provide opportunities to volunteer in Italy and an exchange programme for pupils. Lots of ideas have been shared, and with some planning and preparation I am hopeful that something will materialise.

#### **Amanda, Education Authority Northern Ireland**

As with new ideas and new contacts there is the potential to create new training opportunities. My experience with coming to places like this and getting excited by the prospect of creating something new isn't new to me. I have had this opportunity in the past. What invariably happens is that it starts off as great intent initially and then the other participants find the commitment too much like hard work, which is a real shame because some failed projects have been born from some genuinely fantastic ideas. So why do they really fail? Well, the honest answer to that is some folks bite off more than they can chew! Am I jaded by the experiences? No, I'm actually enthused by the prospect of reevaluating my pre-determined notions and exploring both my comfort zone and hopefully moving beyond it. I hope to connect with people, not just as a passive observer who laughs and jokes, but to allow people to see me as something else, possibly someone that they would be happy to work or create something with

#### **Roy, Ellis Manhattan Music**

I have thoroughly enjoyed taking part in training in Poland. First of all, this was the opportunity to remind me how much I love being around people of different cultures and nationalities, particularly using the various languages I know or discovering and trying to remember new ones such as Polish. During this stay I discovered that, as I am part of two cultures (French and Irish), I am not as proud of any of them as most of the participants were of their own during the culture nights. I was not aware of this at all previously. Although the age range of the participants was very wide (18 to 57) I found that this was never a problem and I thought that the group dynamic was really good.

As I am a teacher, it was very interesting to be on the learner's side. I know that I am a visual learner but this really made me realize how much you have to constantly use visual clues in order to keep the learner's attention. I am definitely going to use some strategies, such as the "three columns" which will be helpful in order to come to an agreement between our young people and us during a lot of situations we encounter, such as setting the rules of the programme for the new school year in September. One of the outcomes that I did not expect was a possible exchange of teachers between Poland and Ireland as well as the discovery of e-twinning. I would definitely like to avail of more Erasmus plus programmes in the future.

**Martine, Education Authority Northern Ireland**

This training really challenged a lot of my personal attitudes & values & I feel stretched me as a professional worker. I found the cultural norms in the group very difficult at the start with the use of touch in most of the early sessions. I found myself reflecting on the how my work avoids touch in icebreakers & drama & how much more meaning & trust can be developed through appropriate touch in youth work. I will be bringing this back to my work in Belfast & will also be training the rest of our staff team on some of the new approaches learnt on this training. The presentations from each of the partner groups were excellent & professionally I feel that my practice as a youth worker will improve because of these. I hope that I will continue to work with the partner groups & also give young people from Belfast the opportunity to visit some of the partner groups to enable them to see & learn from best practice across Europe. Finally the sessions facilitated by Roberto Mazzini from the theatre of the oppressed were exceptional & I want to bring this theatre style back to Belfast. I would need more training to enable me to do this or apply for funding to get Roberto over to Belfast.

**Stuart, Education Authority Northern Ireland**

Travelling to an unfamiliar country and experiencing a different country within Europe, was a challenging yet rewarding experience for my personal development. Over the course of a week I worked with people from six different countries, which allowed me to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds than myself. I also had the opportunity to become friends with people from Romania and Moldova, two countries I've had no contact with before so it was an invaluable experience to speak with and learn about life in these countries. The experience highlighted the importance of understanding communication and potential language barriers when you are in diverse group setting and to be aware and ensure that you have effective channels of communication when working with others to overcome any mis-cultural interpretations and language barriers.

One of the biggest things I've learnt from this experience is that when you are working with a diverse group you need to understand that within the group there will be people with different ways of learning and that training should be designed to facilitate these different ways. Therefore as a community worker you should never make assumptions about the way people learn and that you work to the group's abilities not what you want them to be like. The programme has provided me with the knowledge and skills to potentially use theatre as a method of raising awareness to social injustices and community empowerment. The programme provided me the opportunity to meet new people and make new working contacts within Europe. And it is my intention to work again with some of the participants on a future peace project. I am hoping to use the method of theatre of the oppressed in some upcoming youth work, which will look at equality and human rights.

**Danielle, Community Worker**

Yes, I definitely learned that there is some situations that while I do still do feel myself to be open minded there are situations that can make me feel extremely uncomfortable. Despite this I will not let the negative aspects of the trip deter me from taking up further study or taking part in Erasmus programmes.

In regards to the teaching methods of XXXXXX I found some of the activities that we were expected to take part in incredibly uncomfortable and involved a lot of 'touching', one of the expectations on the wall was 'allow yourself to be touched'. Another of the activities involved us lying on the ground all over one another massaging each other all over, this to me is extremely inappropriate. While I understand different groups/organisations use different methods as icebreakers being one of the youngest of the group it was not something I felt comfortable with at all and at times almost felt violated. I was not the only person in the group who felt this way and it ironically caused some 'conflict' within the group. Despite being told that we were allowed to sit out comments were made that it was distracting and that people were losing concentration making me feel pressured into taking part.

However, I thoroughly enjoyed the group presentations from each country and felt that I learned a lot about how each country has adopted different methods to explore peace building and deal with issues at a national and international level. It gave me the chance to be able to explore some of the issues faced by other European countries that I am not aware of including issues such as citizenship, social justice. The methods explored by the Greek team and how to deal with conflict at a very personal level is something that I have applied and used since I have come home.

### **Aine, Journalist**

I signed up for my second European exchange and with great excitement I headed off to Poland, this time taking the extra step of travelling first to Dublin so that I could fly direct to Warsaw, rather than have to change flights and hang about airport departure lounges. I was a little less anxious than on my previous exchange, but still nonetheless I wasn't without worry. I met one of my fellow attendees at Dublin airport and this eased the situation for me. Travelling alone isn't one of my favourite things to do!! On arrival we took the bus to Warsaw and I was able to buy the ticket from the machines as it was the same system as in Greece, which I now understood, yaay go me !!

We met with Marta from EBU at the meeting point in Warsaw and we travelled by train to Minsk Maz'. At this point, my enthusiasm wavered slightly and I lost some of my drive, I started to wonder if I had made the wrong choice to attend this particular training course. The other delegates were arriving and we were introduced over the evening meal and I felt very much like the grandfather of the group, the majority of them being in their late teens and early 20's, particularly the other males. As the week progressed I embraced the programme and I regained my enthusiasm, and I definitely made some very good friends despite being old enough to be their dad.

I was able to use the positivity message to help my own lack of drive, for the week. As the week progressed the group helped me to consider alternative ways of thinking about difficult situations and being able to see positive outcomes, rather than only able to see the difficulties

I will without doubt use this way of readjusting our train of thought away from negativity in working with the young people. helping them to reconsider situations and to look for positive options

### **Joe Thompson, Extern**

The Job Affair was an incredible experience. I was not entirely sure what I was expecting from the programme, but I definitely was not prepared for the impact it would have on my personal development. The people I met challenged my existing perceptions and taught me so much about cultures I was previously unfamiliar with. The course itself challenged me and pushed me out of my comfort zone. The fact that I was travelling alone to a completely unknown country was both terrifying and exhilarating in equal measure. I can only describe it as a 'life-defining' experience and one which I expect I will always carry with me.

In terms of my professional development, the course was extremely enlightening and a truly enriching experience. Learning in a completely new environment with people from different backgrounds and with different experiences was eye-opening. I found the course content was pitched at a very accessible level and gave me a superb insight into the concept of youth unemployment. The sessions were also very practical, so while I found it to be an intense learning experience it was also tremendously engaging.

After the conclusion of the training course, I was so excited to return home so I could start implementing the knowledge I had developed during the course of the week. Upon reflecting on the purpose of the Ulster Project, I feel the theme of employability and promoting competences in young people is something that our organisation once lacked. I am currently in the process of developing a new curriculum that will explicitly incorporate the themes of the training into our programme. I am looking forward to using the skills I have learned during The Job Affair and I feel confident that the project will be a success.

#### **Laura, Ulster Project Enniskillen**

The Job Affair training course provided me with an excellent opportunity to develop my personal understanding of how young people can be assisted in identifying and enhancing their competences. On a personal, it was a very engaging training course, which challenged and motivated me to explore and express my own competences through an extremely interactive training methodology. The involvement of participants from diverse youth environments in Europe also contributed to my appreciation of the different approaches taken on the issue.

The trainers provided an excellent overview of the unemployment challenges faced by young people in Europe and gave me an in-depth, practical analysis of training tools that are already available. I found the opportunity to co-design and present new tools very enriching. The practical input from participants of different ages and diverse experiences enhanced the learning outcomes.

Given that our organisation is in the process of developing a competency element to our youth provision, I found the training, informative. It provided me with a mechanism for project delivery within our organisation. The insight from experienced and knowledgeable trainers, access to additional resources and contacts across Europe has given us the ability to implement this new dimension to our programme with confidence.

#### **Stephen, Community Intercultural Programme**

I can confidently identify clearly my competences, those I want to promote, change or improve. I can now apply this to my personal development. For example I have the ability to make decisions quickly in comparison to my partner who takes a long time to think before making a decision. After working within the group in Slovakia with different competences I improved my ability to be patient with others who have a different approach whilst working together to achieve the same outcome.

After identifying my own competences I have changed the way I will work with the young people to prepare them for the employment market. Instead of doing CV writing, interview skills workshops I have planned a series of workshops with energisers and activities aimed at young people identifying their competences. I will also implement these activities in the group am taking on the youth exchange to Trinidad.

Every week at work I do a combination of energisers and activities aimed at identifying competences, followed by which competences they would like to change or improve and keep. The young people will then have a list of competences that they can put on their resume for employers. We have invited employers to attend the centre to tell the young people what they expect from them. In my everyday environment I keep in mind the list of things I am good at, what I can improve or change and how can I learn from others.

#### **Leslie, Youth Activities, Children & Young People's Service**

The rhythm of youth workshop was absolutely fantastic The organizers were lovely genuine people. It has really opened my eyes to what I can achieve. Jaka, Nataša and Ivanna really encouraged me showering me with compliments it gave me great confidence. I've come back with a feeling of pure excitement for my life and the drive that I needed to take the action and live to my 100% potential. I've made amazing friends and we all know this was something really special that will be with us forever. Currently I am organizing my own workshop based on the Slovenian programme and what I've have learned from, the workshop has given me

the inspiration and drive to get making things happen in my own community and woke me up to the possibilities and funding opportunities there are from organizations such as “Erasmus +”.

### **Stephen, Young Person**

Previous to going to the 3M Multimedia Hackathon in Belgrade I wasn't sure what to expect as this was my first hackathon. But as us 24 participants from 12 countries settled in and friendships started to form, I knew this was going to be an unforgettable week, and it was.

I found the week to be full of learning opportunities both in and out of the training sessions. Whether we were in the classroom scribbling on post-its and brainstorming creative digital solutions for various issues, or just chatting in the evening over food and drinks, I came away feeling that little bit more inspired and motivated by my fellow hackathoners.

Besides creating new memories and forming new friendships, this was also a great opportunity to connect and network with other NGO's and developers that I may be able to work with in the future. The small groups we were in during the hackathon included a mix of youth workers, developers and graphic designers which I found to be a healthy challenge as I hadn't had much experience working in this type of setting. It was a great way to learn how to work with new people that come from very different professional backgrounds. During the week we also attended pitching and branding workshops that were informative and applicable to my current and future work.

So now that the hackathon is over I am planning meeting various NGO's and organisations in my area that are addressing the marginalised communities our website platform prototype is targeted for. With the feedback from these groups I hope to have me a much better idea of ways that the platform can be improved and altered in order to be more applicable to the needs of the people. From there we shall see where things go! Onwards and upwards!

### **Laura, Artist**

The opportunity to travel and work in another country has been of great benefit for my personal learning. Working in another post conflict setting with people from different backgrounds was a great learning experience. It offered me the opportunity to see and hear how others are working for positive change in their communities highlighting the challenges being faced in Serbia post conflict and it allowed me to share my culture and work experiences with others in a new cultural setting.

The week training further provided me an opportunity to gain new cross cultural interaction skills and build my ability to adapt, learn and live with others in a new social environment.

It reinforced to me the importance of communication and ensuring that you have effective channels of communication when working with others, particularly when there is diversity in your group such as different cultural interpretations and language barriers. It highlighted and built my confidence that I have the ability to work outside my comfort zone and adapt to new unfamiliar surroundings.

For many of the people I worked with during the training English was not their first language this experience gave me a greater awareness of the importance of being aware of effective communication and ensuring what I am communicating is being interpreted in the way I want to avoid any potential miscommunication.

The training has provided me with the knowledge and skills of app development while reinforcing the important role technology can play in addressing and resolving social problems. Because we live in a digital age with a vast amount of young people using technology on a daily basis the training has enhanced my skills in supporting youth empowerment and engagement. The training also provided me with the opportunity to meet new contacts in the Balkan region whom I hope to work with in the future.

One of the reasons that I wanted to do this training was because it's my intention to develop a mobile application for young people with one of the organisations that I work with. The training has been an invaluable experience because it has provided me with some insight of the process that is involved to create a digital app.

Now that I have an understanding of how you go about developing an app it is still my intention to work with my organisation to develop an awareness app for youth.

### **Danielle, Community Worker**

The Music on the Move programme aided my personal development in a variety of ways. This immersive creative experience allowed me to become more confident in my own ability, and improved my communicative skills. My knowledge of European political affairs and non-governmental organisations has also greatly improved. I feel that this experience made me more mature, empathetic and globally-conscious.

This youth exchange not only impacted me on a personal level, but also on a more communal level in how I interact with others. I have become more patient with musicians I work with, as I have come to understand that music is not just a hobby for many people, but an escape. I have learnt to be more humble when speaking to people, because what I perceive as 'normal' may be very different for those who have experienced hardships that I have not. When working in a group, sometimes the smallest shred of positivity spreads and grows, benefiting everyone.

I do a lot of freelance musical work, and this youth exchange has taught me that a positive, stress-free and fun environmental is essential for creativity. For people to successfully work together, a bond must first be established, and a mutual respect. I have also learnt to appreciate an individual's wishes to abstain from partaking in group work, as sharing ideas is a very personal experience for many. It is important to understand and respect this, but it is also necessary to work in a way which allows everyone to feel included and comfortable.

### **Megan, Musician**

I feel that having completed this programme I have definitely grown in confidence. The whole process has shown me that I am a lot more capable and independent than I give myself credit for. I have the ability to engage with a wide range of individual's from different cultures and backgrounds and I was able to work really well with everyone. I have become more self-aware and have a greater understanding of others. I have had the chance to form and develop relationships with the group members and get to know them both on a personal and professional level. I have worked hard on my active listening skills and my ability to communicate clearly with the others. I am very much a team player and I had the opportunity to do lots of group work which I thoroughly enjoy. During the project I challenged myself and stepped outside my comfort zone by taking the lead on some activities which taught me a lot about myself and has enabled me to develop my leadership skills also.

The programme has benefited me massively on a professional level. I thoroughly enjoy learning new things, especially things that I will be able to pass on to my colleagues and the young people that we work with. I received a wealth of physical resources from one of the trainers at the course including a series of energisers, games and activities which is invaluable as I do these every day with my group so I am delighted to have this valuable resource. I have learned so much from the fellow members of the group too- about the youth unemployment in their countries, how they are dealing with it and what strategies worked for them, and which ones were not as successful. Professionally I feel I am much better equipped going forward. I am better informed, more motivated and even more excited to see the difference that I can help to make with our young people. I have increased my employability skills and if I were able to go for another job or a promotion this project is something that has been very worthwhile that I discuss in great detail. I have learned about the many different opportunities that available both to myself as well as young people, as this could be a chance for them to participate in something life changing once they have finished the Team programme with us, and is a great progression route. I have made important contacts with different people and organisations and we have formed a solid network which will be a massive advantage going forward as we plan to do a future project together.

Having completed this training programme I know that so much of what I have learned will be incorporated into the work that I do. I will use the physical resources that I have received and this will enable me to plan meaningful sessions with my youth group. I learned about many interested topics that I will now be incorporating into my own programme. Having spent a week with a range of individual's from other countries I

now realise the importance of speaking slowly and clearly. It is vital to be audible otherwise the meaning and the message of what is trying to be said will be lost. I can help to educate my fellow colleagues about youth unemployment and what is being done about it around the world and compare strategies. Myself as well as a few others came up with the idea of an inter-cultural youth exchange and this is something I would love to see evolve and to have the chance to put all that I learned into action. I feel like I have developed both personally and professionally and this training has been such an eye opening experience and a fantastic opportunity which I am so grateful for.

### **Kathy, NWRC**

The Erasmus programme Network Squared provided me with an opportunity to develop in terms of my own personal confidence as it encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and travel to another country to meet international participants whom I had never met before. The programme through its range of interactive activities encouraged me to develop relationships with my peers involved in the programme. The programme also helped me become more aware of how to engage in dialogue with my peers from other areas of Europe and adapt my accent to help others understand me better. Through my participation in the programme and the intercultural evenings I personally learnt a lot about the cultures and traditions of others from different areas of Europe as well as having the opportunity to share my own culture and traditions.

Through my participation in this Erasmus programme I had the opportunity to develop professional partnerships with a wide range of European partners, this was key to helping me see opportunities for further partnership working and also learn about the work of other organisations across Europe and how they support young people. Through the sharing of best practice and the exploration of how other organisations are helping tackle youth unemployment this really helped me develop my skills as a professional youth worker. The activities exploring how to develop project ideas was also key to helping me expand my skills and ideas when it comes to working with young people from disadvantaged communities. The programme was very successful in helping me develop professionally

I hope to use the learning from this Erasmus programme to develop programmes at young people which are targeted at helping them develop skills to progress into employment. I also hope to continue the partnerships working with the international organisations that I met through the programme to develop international Erasmus programmes enabling young people from Northern Ireland to engage in European programmes focused on helping them develop their employability skills as well as their cultural awareness of other European countries.

### **Ruth Montgomery, Co-operation Ireland**

During the 7 days I had to adapt how well I could socialise and interact with people in terms of not only a language barrier but in terms of different styles/backgrounds in music and this helped me to develop better my understanding of how to use music as a way of connecting and better communicating where words fail, along with this I have developed a better appreciation for my own country and those around the world for the beauty that every country has.

During my time I also built up skills that can better me in a professional position as I have learnt time keeping which I personally felt I lacked prior to my time in the programme but have built upon better as I was subject to a full timetable for the 7 days that helped me build up a better awareness for timekeeping which could benefit me in a professional environment.

During my time there in addition to the previous skill mentioned I learnt how to put myself forward and seek out how to put in an extra bit of effort for others by helping out with different groups and this I could use in a professional environment as I could understand when to go the extra mile. I also learnt how to better cope with large crowds of people and how to keep attention on you by helping out in workshops and not speaking until the entire room had given undivided attention as I would for anyone

I will use what I learned for the rest of my life as I have developed great skills for my career in music not only as a musician but in terms of how to interact with people and I will continue to help out in my local youth centre by educating about music equipment but with this additional knowledge and experience I can better cope with working with large groups of people.



### **Ryan Goss, Young Person**

My time in Slovenia helped me to develop personally in ways no other programme would have allowed me to do. I built upon my communication skills as most of the participants first language was not English. I bettered my understanding of world issues through musical expression and this allowed me to be more compassionate to those of other cultures. As a person I feel more rounded and that I have gained skills that will help me present myself better in personal settings.

I developed a number of skills that have helped me in my professional life, such as the importance of organised group work. I have taken these skills back to my youth centre and have implemented the music workshops from my trip to Slovenia in my own volunteering. My journey has helped me further understand of how to conduct myself in a professional matter as the group had diverse number of opinions, some of which I disagreed with. Professionally sometimes we have to put aside our personal opinions in order to be successful.

I have used what I have learned to conduct a number of music shops in my youth centre, all of which have helped to further the love of music in the young people in my area. My career plan is to become a nurse and the trip to Slovenia to has helped me to become a more professional person and work better in a team, I will use these skills in my everyday life as a nurse.

### **Niamh, Young Person**

The personal development I undertook on the United in Music project was really amazing. I have come away from the experience with my heart full of joy from meeting beautiful people in a beautiful location. I was burnt out and not sure of my next move in life before I went to Slovenia and even more tired upon my return but the trip has reinvigorated my love for community work and music. I met many different people from all walks of life and had many late night interesting discussions comparing and contrasting the difference in our cultures. I have also come back with a lot more self confidence in myself not only in from a performing point of view but also in just being more comfortable in myself, the close quarters allowing for plenty of opportunities for me to know people intimately (and vice versa).

For my professional development, it has helped me confirm that the Masters in Creative Musicianship doing music and community work is the right step for me, the many workshops that were done also helped give me lots of ideas for the music workshops I have planned within work for young people with learning difficulties helping to express themselves through music. I would like to help facilitate more music workshops within my organisation at CAN but I want to see how the initial workshops go with the young people first. I would also like to use some of the workshops and aspects like the secret friend to my own community orchestra to help boost friendships and morale as I have seen the benefits it can have first hand.

The overall experience has helped me to understand more about the people all around the world; how we think we are different but aren't different at all. I hope to travel to the other countries represented to learn even more about the different cultures and meet more new friends. I thought I would not fit in with the people I met but everyone was open and honest about themselves and we all clicked together well. I hope that in the future I can bring this attitude with me when meeting people as I feel the world would be a better place for it.

### **Molly, Compass Advocacy Network**

This amazing project encouraged me to reflect on my strengths, weakness and opportunities. I had developed a better and deeper understanding of me as an individual: my personality traits, learning style, what can I contribute to a team or group setting and also got uplifted and gained new perspective on life due to learning about others perception of me which was refreshing!

It has been a very enlightening experience that made me rethink my career choices and path. I feel strongly about pursuing my old dream of going further with the voluntary experience in community sector and becoming cultural awareness facilitator in youth and adult community groups in Northern Ireland.

I am sharing my Cre-active project experience with family friends an local community already! I have also created a personal action plan with „Smart,, objectives which outlines the steps I aim to undertake in order to

achieve the ultimate goal of becoming a community facilitator and getting actively involved in creating cultural awareness and sharing knowledge gained during this EU Project.

### **Agneszka, Community Activist**

Through taking part in the 'humour is serious business' course I feel I have developed in a few ways, my ability to work and feel comfortable in a group of people of various ages and backgrounds has improved hugely as well as a being better able to see things from the perspective of others who come from a completely different culture to my own. I also feel my public speaking and confidence to do so has developed significantly as a result of this project.

Professionally I feel like I have a much better understanding of what it takes to run a project, both logistically as well as the amount of material that is needed to fill each participant's day. I also know that I have a much broader and educated knowledge of humour and how it can be used successfully as a teaching tool. Through this course, I have been fortunate to make valuable contacts in other areas of youth-work, these include members of various organisations and people involved in a variety of projects across Europe.

I feel I can bring the skills and knowledge that I have gained through this course back to my organisation quite successfully. I will be able to broach topics such as religion and politics in a much more effective manner without fear of offending one side or the other. I work with young people on projects that seek to end the divide and segregation between the two majority communities that live in Northern Ireland.

Most importantly, I have learnt that one of the first steps to solving a problem can be realising how ridiculous that problem was in the first place!

### **Stjohn Hall, East Coast Adventure Centre**

'I found the embrace the reality young exchange an amazing experience. From a personal point of view, it was great to meet young people from France, Latvia, Slovenia and Turkey among others which helped me gain knowledge and awareness of different cultures and traditions. Moreover, I really enjoyed the serious conversations which he had surrounding Mental Health, Migration and Ecology where he could be completely honest and disagree respectfully, which has helped me feel more confident expressing my views back in the North of Ireland.

From a professional point of view, the programme definitely expanded my competences in the field of media literacy which I believe will help me in my educational progression and future employment. Furthermore, it enhanced my creativity and time management which will also help with my professional development as we had to create photo, video and theatre tasks under time pressure and quickly prepare to present our work to the other young people and staff. I also got to learn more creative informal education methods at the programme which will also be beneficial.

Additionally, there are countless ways which I will use my learning at the programme in my daily life. I feel I am more aware and appreciative of the positive and negative effects of mass media on young people and thus will me be more critical of different media sources. I also know more methods of verifying and fact-checking information I see and have the ability to recognise the manipulation of information, whether it be plain or more subtle which I will use every day. This is invaluable in the current media landscape where we are bombarded with messages everywhere we go.'

### **Oisín, NI Young Person**

From my youth exchange I learned how important cultural awareness truly is.while abroad,I began to realize how cultural diversity can bring together people from all walks of life. I learned I am more capable than I would have previously given myself for.I learned learning is not confined within four walls of classroom.What I gained abroad, was learning that wherever I go and whomever I am around ,I am still my self. I gained confidence to face whatever my journey has in store for me with excitement instead of fear.I was like a turtle,carrying my home with me but unlike a turtle ,I did not hide in my shell.I embraced and engaged with the world around me in every way.

Youth exchange improved my chosen career by giving me the opportunity to grow and learn as a person and as a profession. It helped me to realize how to be able to help others while learning about themselves too. It will help me in near future to act smarter than to study longer. I gained enormous way of learning which I will apply in my study and daily life. The more knowledge we have the better decision we can presumably make. Which will lead to a better life. My exchange experience has given me confidence, not only regarding travelling, but also in my future career and academic life.

This program inspired me to become an active citizen. I discovered awesome friends for forever. I will apply my experience with young people around me, sticking up with all the small things, spread them up and share them among people surrounded by us. This program helped me to work more consciously in social media. It will help me to aware people from the side effect, fake news and critique use of mass media. I will put my specific learning on effective use of electronic gadgets in my daily life, more importantly I will use my learning to face different personality people and walk along with community without any fear :)

### **Emma, Momentum World**

On return from my international exchange I have gained more confidence, I got the opportunity to meet new people and share new experiences. I learned a lot more about media and its uses, we looked at the power of the media and how it effects society. We looked at social media and the corruption that is involved. I learned a lot and this experience has helped give me the confidence to travel again and to believe in myself a bit more.

I feel that through this experience I have gained some things that can help develop my professional career, I volunteer in the Clooney youth club in my city and as a result of the exchange I will be promoting the value of travel to young people I work with and sharing my experiences. The knowledge I gained in relation to social media I will be able to guide young people on appropriate use. I look forward to hopefully getting the opportunity to experience this again.

I will be more careful using social media, I wouldn't be as nervous about going into a new group. I now have a wider view of the world and am a bit clearer on things that I can do. I really enjoyed the experience and I would say to all young people to get involved in international exchanges and explore the world and themselves.

### **William, Young Person**

To be completely honest, this year has been one of the best years of my life. If you'd have told me all the things I've done this year to me a year ago, I wouldn't believe it. I was a very depressed person, not leaving my house for months on end, then there was a literal light at the end of the tunnel. Third Space. I honestly cannot thank Aine and Ken enough for what they've done for me, they were the push I needed to do things out of my comfort zone, and I'm so thankful and appreciative to them.

When I finished, I had no idea what to do next, then this amazing opportunity to travel and do media, it seemed surreal, I've always had a passion for media and this felt like fate, a new beginning for me.

At first, I was hesitant. Going to a new country with people I didn't know for 10 days, but soon it felt right. Meeting new people is sometimes hard, because I am shy and introverted at first, but once I feel comfortable, I really come out of my shell, which happened so quickly in Slovenia.

I honestly didn't mind the long hours of work, because it was fun, and I think everyone felt like those 10 days flew in and, personally at the end, I wished the exchange was longer, because saying goodbye was very hard. Every single person was amazing, we meshed together like a family.

I saw my confidence soar a lot during the exchange. Especially the cultural night. I wanted to do a presentation on Fermanagh, history and the beauty of my county. So, I'm extremely hard working when I want to get something perfect, which is all the time (I am the epitome of a Virgo) and I do tend to overwork myself. But, I stood up in front of everyone, my little notes in hand and talked about my home, showed photos and threw in a few jokes about Boxy being a normal pancake, but since we're Irish, we threw a potato in there.

I also decided to talk about the Titanic, history and the conspiracy theories around it were fun to talk about. At the end I felt proud of myself, I was not the type of person to stand up in a crowded room and confidently talk, but I was comfortable.

This exchange and the people I met were amazing. I let my creativity flow, learned so much about our media, spotting fake news and how something so small could go viral with just a share. Overall, I'm so proud of how much I have grown, for the entirety of this trip, my mental health was so positive, which was something I really needed. Even my family and close friends have noticed such a significant difference in me, which I feel very proud of.

As for my future, it's still undecided. But, media, especially photography is definitely something that I see myself doing. I've had such amazing opportunities this year and to anyone, I would highly recommend this youth exchange. You work hard, but what you get out of it is amazing, you meet new people from all over the world, and I was lucky to have made some amazing friends. The only downside was that the program wasn't long enough, and I didn't like saying goodbye.

**Stacey, Young Person**



## A Brief Synopsis of Accomplishments

### Overview

LID+ is one of seven projects funded by the European Commission in 2017 to promote greater engagement with the Erasmus+ Programme in 2017. **Funded for one year only, LID+** specifically targeted the promotion of Key Action1 Mobility Projects by providing a tailor-made service to local organisations (primarily) across Northern Ireland but also ensured a presence in the rest of the UK. An 'Impact Report' documenting year-long project was commissioned by The Inside Out Programme and the following accomplishments were identified by the project authors:

### Impact

- **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.

### Accomplishments

- **16 applications were submitted for KA1** projects for the October 2017 deadline and further proposals are in the pipeline for the February 2018 deadline;
- A team of **9 UK based Ambassadors** were recruited to deliver the exclusive range of services to be delivered through the LID+ programme;
- **92 formal information and support activities were delivered**, this number is not inclusive of the further one-to-one follow-up activity and support provided;
- **21 editions of 'Lifting the LID' Bulletin were circulated**, initially to a reading audience of 1,040 now resting at 1,520, with a peak opening rate of 22.4%;

- The success of **the first Contact Making Seminar involving 10 international and 10 local partners**, many of the latter new to Erasmus+, **led to the demand for a second event** which was attended by 11 local and 11 international partners, 7 of the latter new to LID+; **in total 21 local organisations were introduced to the Erasmus+ process for the first time**
- the **development of partnerships between LID+ and a range of organisations** will ensure that support will exist to help sustain engagement post- programme.
- LID+ not only established but **grew it's International Network from 13 to 17 partner organisations**
- **International Learning Opportunities for 10 individuals** - 6 young people, 2 young leaders and 2 adult practitioners attended programmes in Slovenia, Netherlands and Austria
- **an evaluation meeting among twenty-one Erasmus+ users** including young people, young leaders, youth workers and adult practitioners representing all incarnations of Erasmus+, i.e., *Youth for Europe, YOUTH, Youth in Action* and the current programme
- **hosting the only public and large-scale Youth Work event in Northern Ireland celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Erasmus+**



### **LID+ Contact Making Seminar Testimonials**

It was great to be part of this experience. So good to involve newcomers on Erasmus Plus and to support them in putting amazing ideas in a structure of a project. And to learn more about the local reality and the wonderful work that each one does. Lovely. Thank you all for this experience.

#### **Sérgio, Ha Moment**

The LID+ Contact Making Seminar was a good opportunity to meet potential partners from Northern Ireland, who work directly on the field and develop a valuable work with youngsters and communities. The process was well defined and well facilitated and allowed the best possible usage of time in order to take concrete steps into developing common international projects.

#### **Anita, TEAM Mais**

80% of the goals fulfilled in terms of quantity and 140% in terms of quality

#### **Dominik, Youth Ring**

We had around the room a lot of expertise and commitment to engage veterans and new comers to Erasmus+ in new projects to be developed together and submitted by Northern Ireland organisations. The number and quality of the project ideas is high, considering the time being, the obstacles for Northern Ireland practitioners to engage in projects (basically low or none knowledge of the Programme) seems overcome and we, international partners, got a precious insight of social and youth realities of Northern Ireland. Thank you for this!

#### **Davide, Nexes**

Definitely a worthwhile weekend. Really enjoyed meeting all our new international friends. The start of something big for our young people.

#### **Michelle, Education Authority**

Had a very productive and inspiring 2 days at the Lid+ Conference. Thanks for the invite Fergal 🙌👏. Exciting times ahead, new projects, new partners with amazing people I can call friends. Safe travel home to everyone until we meet again

#### **Gavin, Education Authority**

Absolutely amazing few days working with the international experts and local youth organisations. No wonder ideas and projects developed when you mix a motivated group like that!

#### **Heather Mc Laughlin, EuroDesk**

The LID+ residential was a fantastic opportunity to meet Erasmus+ experts and to make local connections for future partnership working. The intensive sessions enabled us to get an application completed nearly to submission readiness. In addition to the planned Erasmus+ project, we have also

begun to plan a few additional partnership projects, both locally and internationally and these are very likely to attract external funding, so the reach of the project has been even greater than anticipated.

### **Kat, Social Justice Trust**

Go raibh mile maith agat! Thanks for making me feel so welcome in Derry. I was touched by the hospitality and welcome of the international team, our local colleagues, the staff of the White Horse and, of course, yourself. I was glad to be in Derry as the election results rolled in. It gave me a more nuanced perspective on things. We live in interesting times. I worked with Ursula on her proposal and I hope that I was of some help to her. I also learned a lot myself. Making contacts, especially in Derry, is so valuable to me personally and to the young people I am privileged to work with! I look forward to bringing up some young folks from Dublin to visit Derry/Strabane soon!! Anyhow, sincere thanks again for your warm welcome, your approachable style and for all the hours of work you clearly put into organising this - it's not easy and it does not happen by magic, I know!

### **John, Positive Futures**

Lid+ gave me a wonderful opportunity to link up with like-minded people from around Europe - people who are passionate and committed to the work they do and through their willingness to enter into partnerships we can all showcase and share the work we do. Thank you for opening doors Fergal Barr!

### **Ivy, Inter-Ethnic Forum**

It all started on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2017. This Seminar was about to deliver some of the expertise of our organization, Active Youths of Florina, to local Irish organizations in order to get involved to Erasmus+ programmes in a more active way. Actually this was a great opportunity for everyone who was involved. At this point the things that are worth-mentioned to me are the fact that we had the chance to meet new organizations (local and international) which are a great deal to expand our social network, and also the fact that ideas for future programmes were made and were evolved in just two days.

Moreover, I personally had the chance to also learn new things about how to write an Erasmus + application form properly and realize what it takes to prepare everything for that. What is more through this process, I had the chance to help other people who did not know some things and stages of such preparation, something I never had done in the past, so I would say that it was huge for me as well. The fact that many people with different backgrounds and expertise were all gathered together was really beneficial and useful for every organization involved. Programmes like this one should be organized more often. Last but not least, I would like to personally thank Fergal Barr for this great idea and also the invitation, and all the team who taught me and to whom I also taught so many things in just two days.

### **Eftychia, Youth of Florina**

After 34 years in Youth Work it becomes tedious at times, after 34 years in Youth Work you think you have heard it all & know it all, after 34 you realise that you don't know everything after all, after 34 years in Youth Work you meet people that initially become friends then become the catalyst that enhances your enthusiasm, your commitment to your work & provides through their knowledge the means to take your work to a new level. After 34 years in Youth Work my work is now never tedious,



I realise that I don't know it all & that I haven't seen it all.....well not until our project has taken place.

**John, Education Authority**

“Very inspiring and intensive days where we exchanged a lot of knowledge, experiences, information, perspectives, where we changed our views on things, where we got to know a lot more about different cultures, people, organizations, countries, Erasmus+ opportunities.... This all that will lead to a lot of new possibilities and projects.”

**Laurence, JOETZ**

I came into the contact making seminar knowing very little about Erasmus+, with no Erasmus+ experience whatsoever. Over the course of the two days I gained invaluable insights from the ‘internationals’ who shared their stories, experiences and expertise, to help inspire and develop a practical application. The seminar has provided me with the ideas, tools and confidence needed to complete an application before the April 2018 deadline.

**Ciara, Boys & Girls Clubs NI**

"It was the second time that I participated in a seminar from LID+ and again I enjoyed a lot. It was very productive, clear and well organised. It still surprises me to see how in short time we can support local organisation to develop their projects, from idea to application. I have to say that this 2nd seminar was even better, improving and building upon the results of the first one. Well done! 😊 :) Waiting for the 3rd edition."

**Sergio, Ha Moment**

“For me the seminar proved invaluable, it allowed me to take my initial idea, which was optimistically large, and with the help of the mentors I was able to use the seminar as a distillation process with the end result of a perfectly manageable proposal which I shall be submitting in February “

**Joe, Extern**

"A very worthwhile learning opportunity that has helped me gain insight about the application process and write the beginnings, the foundations of hopefully a successful application. I thought that making an application was aimed at a certain kind youth worker. Now thanks to the experts involved I know its for anyone who has the motivation and an idea. This way of developing an idea for funding should be an option, as part of the application process, for everyone working with young people. A very positive experience.“

**Tara, Education Authority**

Very stimulating and thought provoking two days. It was invaluable getting advice and guidance from our international colleagues to help bring our ideas to life!

**Alicia, VOYPIC**

"I wasn't sure what to expect from the contact making seminar; in fact, I was really quite nervous that my idea wouldn't be considered valuable or project-worthy. Upon meeting with the

professionals and the locals, I learned that, with professional tailoring and focusing on the key points, my idea has huge potential, and would be a strong theme for an Erasmus+ programme. I worked with several professionals over the two days and I came away with a solid foundation and framework that I am now using to construct my programme. Without this seminar, I have no doubt that my application would have been significantly weaker, and I certainly wouldn't have been ready for February's deadline. Thank you to all involved - I feel totally inspired, and I feel part of a great network of people with whom I can contribute to the future of Erasmus+."

**Saorla, Foyle International**

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