

Welcome to
Erasmus+ Launch
in Ireland
12 May 2014

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Erasmus+

Launch in Ireland

Dublin Castle
Conference
Centre

12 May
2014

Consultation Summary

The Erasmus+ programme in Ireland was launched by Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn T.D., in Dublin Castle Conference Centre on 12 May 2014. The event was jointly hosted by **Léargas** and the **Higher Education Authority**, the National Agencies for Erasmus+, and attended by close to 200 stakeholders and policy makers in the youth, education and training fields.



For Léargas, the launch also marked the beginning of an ongoing consultation with project practitioners regarding the strategic implementation of Erasmus+ in Ireland.

This took the form of four parallel facilitated workshops, at which stakeholders and policy makers were invited to consider ways to maximise the social and economic value of Erasmus+ in their own organisations as well as at national level.

This document summarises the results of the workshops along with contributions from individual evaluation forms.



This practitioner feedback was presented by Léargas to the Department of Education and Skills Management Advisory Committee in June 2014, and has informed the work of the newly established Irish EU Reference Group for Education and Skills.

Specific suggestions for Léargas and issues raised during the consultation process are addressed at the end of this document.

[Click to read Emily O'Reilly's Keynote Speech](#)



Key areas of focus for the implementation of Erasmus+

- Support for older people, young people, and disadvantaged groups
- Addressing challenges in literacy and numeracy
- Maintaining value of acquiring basic skills, not only skills for the labour market
- Access to education
- Cultural integration
- Improving language skills
- Soft skills development
- Taking into account the learner's voice
- Citizenship

National supports needed to achieve the goals of Erasmus+

- National policy in the area of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)/Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- Use of the national education networks (Education and Training Boards, Joint Management Body, Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools, etc.) to circulate information
- Nomination of international project officers in national networks
- Mainstreaming of project results to ensure sustainability and impact
- Involvement of employers; finding champions to promote the benefits of participation
- Recognition of activities at individual and organisational level (perhaps 'International organisation' certification similar to 'Green Schools' mark?)

Benefits of participation in Erasmus+ for organisations

- Observing how other countries and organisations deal with changes, and learning from their experience
- Motivating staff and learners, thus increasing their engagement
- Accessing new learning and systems through the wider skills base in Europe
- Establishing relevant networks and solidarity with similar organisations
- Acting as a bridge between theory and practice
- Acquiring transversal skills through managing, reporting, and evaluating projects
- Structured opportunity for cross-sectoral cooperation
- Access to learning and quality standards as well as to finance, thus addressing the curtailment of training budgets and allowing organisations to strategically plan CPD

Benefits of participation in Erasmus+ for individuals

- Adding value to the qualifications of future graduates
- Making transnational experience viable for all ages and sectors (i.e. short stays are possible, funding is provided)
- Learning to appreciate diversity through exposure to other cultures
- Initiating and motivating learners
- Assisting with the shift to more autonomous learning
- Improving social, intercultural and language skills

Schools Education

Facilitator: Annette Honan

Erasmus+ could be used to address the deficit in language skills among Irish students, by increasing engagement with Europe and therefore increasing motivation to learn other languages.

Encouraging students to think beyond borders at a young age could bring benefits in later life, as students will be familiar with transnational experience and be more open to work or study abroad.

Teachers can upskill in languages and digital learning and pass this on to colleagues and students.

Engagement in European projects creates networks of schools which can last far beyond the project lifecycle, and actively participate in policy and reform.

Erasmus+ is an opportunity to promote active democracy, by engaging students and giving them a voice.

Although the Comenius Assistantship programme has concluded, it was perceived as one of the best ways of promoting Europe to schoolchildren and broadening horizons. Some participants clearly remembered the assistants from their own school days.



It is important to cultivate champions e.g. National Parents Council, CEOs of ETBs

European projects should generate evidence that can in turn inform policy.

Projects can aid student engagement and student retention.

Policy and pedagogy can be developed by observation/experience of other countries and learning from their experience e.g. in the area of Junior Cycle reform.

Erasmus+ provides access to a greater pool of expertise in migrant education.

Vocational Education & Training

Facilitator: Helen Newman

It's crucial to work closely with ETBs in the delivery of projects; for projects to flourish there must be a positive support structure at local, regional and national levels.

Erasmus+ offers opportunities for staff development and international exchanges, progression and up-skilling.

There is potential to reach the appropriate target groups to tackle youth unemployment by directly linking training with the world of work.

Having recognition of project activities is very important (e.g. through ECVET or Europass).



Projects should capitalise on the potential from peace agreements through cross-border cooperation.

Use different social media to reach different target audiences.

Transfer projects and results to other countries/ sectors through further projects and study visits.

Involve employers more – they are a key target group for impact.

Find champions, particularly amongst employers, who will help sell the benefits of participating in the projects and programmes.

Involvement of Trade Unions is a way of including different target groups and mainstreaming outputs and results.

Adult Education

Facilitator: Helen Keogh

Erasmus+ provides the opportunity to learn how other countries and similar organisations have dealt with changes in the Further Education and Training sector, and provides the scope to learn from their experience.

In light of numerous cuts, Erasmus+ can provide access to learning, opportunities, and quality standards as well as to finance. This can address the curtailment of training budgets, and provide organisations and staff the opportunity to strategically plan their CPD.

Transversal skills and valuable expertise are gained in learning how to run and manage a project, and assist in upskilling those involved in projects.

The wider benefits of the Community Education Sector can be recognised and acknowledged through Erasmus+.



Erasmus + identifies the need for long term strategic planning across all departments within an organisation. The European development plan adds value to the planning process.

Before addressing impact at national level, organisations need to ensure stronger communication across all departments and ensure all stakeholders are informed regarding projects, outcomes and results. This can be done through internal newsletters, web page, staff meetings, etc.

The focus on employment should not result in value being lost for people who are gaining basic skills and not at the stage to participate in the labour market.

The opportunity for cross-sectoral cooperation is valuable, particularly in gaining insights from other countries (e.g. in Sweden adult education and third level work closely, which here could be linked to thenational skills strategy).

Youth

Facilitator: Janice McGarry

Erasmus+ can address isolation and stigmatisation of young people regarding issues relating to LGBT, poverty, asylum seekers, integration of new Irish, etc; participation in Erasmus+ encourages international experience and greater awareness of cultural differences.

Erasmus+ could also address the problems of societal negativity and hopelessness affecting some young people by broadening their experience.

Youth groups should be aware that although youth initiatives have to be international, this can involve online exchange rather than purely geographical mobility of participants.

Strategic Partnerships can provide funding for research, giving an evidence base for proposals for change.

Erasmus+ can directly involve young people in operating projects, giving them a framework for real engagement in project work.



The European context gives legitimacy to youth work and inspires youth workers, improving the morale of the sector in Ireland.

Sending and hosting volunteers has value for organisations. One young participant, used to meeting international volunteers in her youth club, said: 'I can travel without leaving Bray'

Hosting volunteers also inspires young people from Ireland to go abroad and to try new things.

The Youth sector can use Key Action 3 to work towards policy change.

Consult young people on their needs and interests; continue to support them in developing their own understanding of Erasmus+, so that they can be empowered to navigate in their own right or with the support of the organisation.

Youth groups should look to each other for learning and exploration of potential opportunities that are complementary.

The workshops and evaluation forms produced a number of valuable suggestions for Léargas specifically, regarding both assistance for practitioners and the development of Erasmus+ in Ireland. This input is very much appreciated and has directly informed elements of our strategic plan for the coming years. While our primary remit remains the management of Erasmus+ as mandated by the European Commission, we endeavour to support and promote the sectors in which we work as far as possible and encourage collaboration between them. Initiatives underway in this area include:

- A Forum, to which stakeholders from all sectors will be invited and have the opportunity to directly share experiences and expertise, will be held annually. The 2014 event has been scheduled for Thursday 11 December, in Dublin Castle Conference Centre. Further information about the event will be circulated in due course.
- Léargas has collaborated with Quality and Qualifications Ireland and Euroguidance to form an EU Reference Group for Education and Skills. This group held a stakeholder meeting in July 2014 at which Léargas presented feedback from practitioners. The Reference Group will publish a resource guide to European programmes in November 2014.
- The Léargas website is currently being redesigned, and is anticipated to go live in December 2014.
- Léargas has presented feedback from practitioners to the Department of Education and Skills, and is committed to continuing the consultation process with all stakeholders over the coming years.
- A dedicated Communications team has been established in Léargas and can be contacted at comms@leargas.ie.

Specific points raised by practitioners are addressed by Léargas below.

Information & Documentation

- Create an information sheet about the EU Priorities for each year
- Provide more information on strategic partnerships and opportunities outside of youth exchanges
- Provide simplified information on the nature of Erasmus+ programmes and how to apply
- Provide more information on specific mechanisms for engaging in Erasmus+, in particular for organisations that are not educational institutions *per se*
- Provide guidance on impact analysis and dissemination of project results
- Simplify the paperwork and the application forms

Léargas will produce simplified information on the application process, Strategic Partnerships and EU Priorities for the next Call. A dissemination toolkit is being developed for projects and will be available online. Léargas, like all NAs, gives regular feedback to the European Commission regarding the usability of application forms and other documents. Ultimately however these processes are centralised and the same forms must be used across Europe.



Networking

- Provide opportunities for direct communication with others involved in Erasmus+, particularly on a cross-sectoral basis
- Create an active sharing forum for practitioners to exchange experience from previous projects, and examples of good practice
- Assist organisations in contacting other European programmes/projects/agencies
- Introduce organisations that could work together



The Léargas Annual Forum will provide an opportunity for practitioners to network in person. Our redesigned website will also include a virtual space for practitioners to exchange experience. The EU Reference Group will publish a resource guide about other European programmes and agencies shortly.



Dissemination

- Publish an annual thematic compendium of projects
- Publish thematic case studies
- Publish follow-up studies showing impact of projects over time
- Provide many more information sessions in all regions of the country

While summaries of funded projects and case studies are published each year on the Léargas website and on the European Commission's website (www.europeansharedtreasure.eu), we hope to develop these on a thematic basis as Erasmus+ develops. Léargas will continue to hold information sessions for upcoming programmes, but we are limited by resource constraints and cuts to our operational budgets.

Miscellaneous

- Continued telephone/personal support for applications and projects are crucial
- Be the catalyst to developing a strategy group at national level to focus and develop issues
- The timelines tend to be difficult to meet because they coincide with other deadlines
- Be more flexible in relation to budgets to encourage and develop organisations' engagement and capacity
- It would be important to know the EU priorities sooner, specifically in relation to Key Action 3
- Seek practitioner input into choice of EU priorities
- Engage with national educational organisations regarding moratoriums on resources for new projects

We hope that developing simplified information will reduce the amount of support required with standard procedures, allowing individual support to be concentrated where most needed. Léargas is working closely with the EU Reference Group and others to inform national strategy. Timelines and budgets are decided centrally by the European Commission, and abiding with them is a condition of participation in Erasmus+ projects. EU priorities are also set centrally in consultation with the National Authorities (i.e. in Ireland the Department of Education and Skills), and circulated by Léargas as quickly as possible once they are agreed. We welcome practitioner suggestions for priorities but have limited input into the final decision. We will actively engage with all educational organisations to support their participation in Erasmus+, particularly in the context of ongoing recruitment and resource limitations.

Consultation Outcomes

Themes of particular interest to participants

Good practice models for international work

78%



Improving employability for young people and adults

65%



Extending recognition for formal and non-formal learning

59%



Generating evidence-based research

46%



Consultation Outcomes

Preferred methods for Erasmus+ consultation coordinated by Léargas over the coming 18 months

Attend one focus group workshop within the next 12 months

96%



Attend two focus group workshops within the next 12 months

57%



Contribute opinions via email

54%



Take part in online discussion group

52%



If you would like to contribute to the Léargas consultation group in future, email comms@leargas.ie