

Evaluation of Euro Arco Project



Executive Summary of Final Report

John Lancaster – September 2014

Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project

ARCO - KEY COMPETENCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NEET INCLUSION

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1 Introduction

This is the summative external evaluation report of the Euro Arco project, a 24 month Leonardo Da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project launched in Oct 2012 with a final event in September 2014. The project consortium consisted of the following mainly cultural sector based partners:

Wac Arts ¹	UK
Rinova	UK
MuLab	Italy
Questão de Equilíbrio - Associação de Educação e Inserção de Jovens	Portugal
Hope for Children UNCRC Policy Centre	Cyprus
MetroLab	Spain
Kunstbedrijf Arnhem ²	Netherlands

Its overall aim is to support and enhance the employability of young people NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training), particularly those from disadvantaged communities - many of whom have been alienated by ‘traditional’ education and formal approaches to learning.

The objective is to develop key competences and transferable skills to address the needs of disaffected young people so that they are better able to maximise their potential in terms of social, cultural and economic inclusion.

This is principally achieved by the transfer and adaptation of innovative vocational education, training materials and methods (specifically a toolkit) developed by Wac Arts in the UK specifically for the Arts, Cultural and Creative Sectors.

The project met the aims and objectives within the original application in that it:

- a) Tested the Transferable Skills Toolkit in the participating countries taking into account the adjustments required to the partner organisations’ teaching methods, the training needs of the personnel involved (managers, trainers and support workers) and the skills needs of Young People NEET
- b) Built the capacity of the participant organisations via the transfer of know-how, stemming from the original Wac Arts ARCO approach and the adaptation of the learning materials, to generate effective practices regarding organisational management, trainers' peer support, key competences training, and content development
- c) Embedded key competences through transferable skills into initial vocational related content and partner collaboration with local stakeholders
- d) Identified learning outcomes and results and disseminated these widely, particularly at sectoral level, to ensure the knowledge is cascaded down to other organisations via the participating partner organisations/countries.

¹ Wac Arts was a brand name change mid-way through the Euro Arco project from Wac Arts Performing Arts & Media College

² Formerly known as New Arts

2 Evaluation Brief

The external evaluation brief focuses on:

- the **innovation transfer process**
- the **'impact and usability'** of the Euro Arco product produced
- The perspective of professionals/trainers in terms of the **viability and applications** of the project's results.
- An overall assessment of the **impact on the target groups**
- Identifying and describing the **added-value**
- An overall assessment of the potential for **sustainability** of the approach through the impact on, and integration into, the practice of the partner organisations and their staff

The findings are summarised in the following sections.

3 Transfer of Innovation

- The partners felt that they had received great support from Wac Arts and Rinova in both delivery, ongoing support and in communicating the philosophy, values and the vision of the project.
- All partners found the toolkit easy to understand and use. Awareness of concepts such as embedding transferable skills and use of distance travelled tools were raised during each step of the transfer process
- The two pilot programmes undertaken were a vital component of the transfer process as they allowed a controlled and supported space for the partners to both familiarise and then test out the concepts within their own organisations and target groups

- Innovation transfer inherently implies a process of becoming familiar with new knowledge, skills, and methodologies and it was evident that the learning curve during the first pilot for the partner organisations, training managers, and trainers was understandably a particularly steep one
- On reflection, the partners felt that it would have enhanced the familiarisation process if they had been able to come to London for a substantial period at the start and observe in more detail a range of Wac Arts sessions in action. In addition, perhaps the ICT element could have been expanded to cover video examples or live streamed sessions and webinars. If further resources had been available at the project design stage, then it also could have been beneficial to have incorporated placements or exchanges into the programme.
- The internal evaluation and feedback from the first pilot helped enormously in understanding the processes involved and by the end of the second pilot the innovation transfer process had been successfully delivered and had met the project's objectives. The partners now display great understanding of the toolkit, the methodology and its application.

4 Impact

4.1 Impact on lead partner Wac Arts

- The project validated that the Toolkit works in a range of environments and that it can be transferred successfully to European contexts. This has confirmed for Wac Arts particularly that the Toolkit and its methodology should be disseminated more widely and effectively across Wac Arts' own practice and programmes (e.g. its Free School project opening in September 2014)

- The project provided a timely opportunity for reflection and evaluation of the lead partner’s pedagogy and practice allowing them to evaluate and plan for future work.
- Euro Arco developed new productive links with European partners which will create further opportunities

4.2 Partner Organisations

- For all partners there was an increased awareness of the importance of key competences and transferable skills and how to embed them in their work
- Partners and their trainers are already beginning to roll out the Euro Arco transferable skills approach to other areas of their work
- For some, such as Mulab in Italy, they learnt how to work successfully in less formal delivery situations
- Importantly new transnational relationships were developed and existing ones consolidated (Mulab and Kunstbedrijf had worked with Wac Arts in two previous projects)
- The impact of the challenging first pilot programme was that it began the process of cultural change in each organisation which will shape how they work with young people NEET in the future.
- Partner organisations also had key responsibilities for important areas of the programme: e.g. Kunstbedrijf were involved in the implementation and internal evaluation of the pilot programmes whilst Mulab were responsible for the dissemination strategy and implementation.

4.3 Trainers

- 14 trainers – principally active practitioners in their fields - took part in the two pilots

- Euro Arco provided an easy to understand structure to informal training which was revelatory and innovative for many of the trainers allowing them to feel more validated in their approach
- Trainers felt that they were now able to provide planned, structured and more dynamic lessons
- Euro Arco helped to raise confidence in their own training skills
- It raised awareness of the importance of transferable skills and how to embed them within a range of informal learning situations
- It demonstrated clearly how informal learning can deliver change
- For many it was their first experience of working in a European partnership which produced benefits in terms of benchmarking their practice and making new networks

4.4 Learners/Young People

- 72 young people participated in the two pilot programmes (exceeding the programme target of 45 young people). Two thirds were male and one third female, mainly under 25. They were NEET at the entry point when they registered with the partner organisation
- Partners found that courses with more planning, structure and awareness of transferable skills delivered by trained practitioners meant that the whole process was often a better experience for learners
- The diagnostic element of the work at the recruitment and early stages of each course were extremely important in defining the approach, course content and the outcomes for learners
- Not all learners were taking the course in their first language which added an extra challenging dimension
- The safe and trusting environment provided by the trainers enabled the learners to respond to more challenging work

- There were a number of positive outcomes from the courses and support given to young people: some moved on to employment (15%) some continued in education or became involved in other training (55%), whilst 6% set up their own enterprise.
- Distance Travelled was measured using a range of evidence including: the project's own distance travelled scoring tool, case studies, observation, video and audio evidence, lyrics, blogs etc. for written work
- There was evidence of learner change and improvement via the Distance Travelled scores obtained from Pilot Two. The aggregated start and end scores show a 15% improvement by the end of the course with some individual competences such as "Handling complaints and feedback" showing as much as 23% improvement.

5 Usability

5.1 Euro Arco Toolkit

- The toolkit was validated by all partners as an easy to understand and easy to use toolkit and all translated it into their own language
- All project partners stated that the toolkit is a very good guide and starting point for their work which has helped them as organisations and their trainers to understand the concept of transferable skills within informal learning.
- Most tended to use it practicably as a reference tool and then built their own suite of exercises and training materials to support it
- The toolkit transfers well beyond the arts and cultural sectors and has improved practice in partner organisations.

³ Journey to Employment (JET) framework which identified factors that influence young peoples' transition into work

- It is useful and it successfully links practice to theory
- Suggestions for improving the toolkit included: more standardisation, reorganisation, a re-fresh or redesign, and creating more online resources

5.2 Distance Travelled Tool

- The majority of partners were unfamiliar with using distance travelled tools. Therefore, the first pilot saw a range of approaches taken and good feedback given which formed the basis for the trainers/training managers to better understand the implications of embedding distance travelled measurement
- This process informed the creation by Rinova of an online depository of measuring tools for the partners to access as reference tools. These included the JET³ and Outcomes Star⁴ models
- A project-specific and prototype 'distance travelled' tool was designed by Perfect Moment (similar to the Outcomes Star) that allowed the tutor and learner to discuss key competences and jointly arrive at a start and end score. This allowed the learners to participate in their own assessment of progress and raise their awareness levels of how far they had travelled during the course.
- The tool made it easier to discuss and measure the impact on each individual young person allowing for ongoing dialogue with them during the course. It validated and provided status for the young person's experience.
- The partners felt that the advantage of the tool was that it provides a clear visual signal to both the learner and the tutor of the progress made and considered it one of the project's innovations.

⁴ Outcomes Star™ is a unique suite of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

6 Added Value

- The impact on partner organisations, trainers, and learners has been significant and is already having results beyond this project including the roll-out of the Euro Arco approach into other areas of their work.
- Partners took on responsibility for key areas. Kunstbedrijf for the coordination and evaluation of the pilot programmes and Mulab for the dissemination strategy/implementation
- The consortium consolidated and extended the use of the toolkit and its methodology around transferable skills and has shown through this project that its innovation can be transferred geographically, transversally and across sectors
- The concept of working effectively and more informally with young people outside of mainstream education has been demonstrated by the introduction of a structured approach to embedding transferable skills aligned with proved effective practice.
- A new, simple, visual distance travelled tool was produced and tested by the partners and this innovation will now be developed further and rolled out into other areas of their work.

7 Sustainability

- The Euro Arco approach is now thoroughly embedded in each partner organisation's practice and in their trainers' approach to working with young people.
- For all the partners, the approach is now being broadened out into other areas of their work.

- The Toolkit and the Distance Travelled Tool – will continue to be developed and used by each of the partners
- There is a determination by each partner to seek further resources and for the partnership as a whole to seek funding in developing the products further.

8 Key Conclusions

1. Wac Arts' long term experience in EU projects allowed for the innovation transfer process to be delivered successfully with appropriate support to the partners thereby inducing tangible impacts on their organisations, the trainers, and the beneficiaries. They were aided by the valuable support from Rinova's considerable track record in delivering EU projects.
2. The initial learning curve was steep but by the second pilot the learning and awareness of the Euro Arco approach had risen sharply.
3. We would recommend that tutor mobility to share practice is built into programmes such as these perhaps embracing longer term placements or exchanges of staff.
4. The two Pilot programmes were valuable in helping to address the cultural, contextual, and linguistic differences between partners and to ensure successful completion of the innovation transfer process.
5. For all partners the value of taking part has not been in doubt. The programme acted as an awareness-raising experience around transferable skills with lasting impact.
6. All project partners found the toolkit easy to understand using it as a guide or reference point to design their courses and add bespoke additional training materials
7. The project Distance Travelled Tool developed is considered an innovation and highly usable and now needs to be developed further.

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