



## EURO-ASPIRE

### Trainers Framework and Toolkit

Follow the link to view the animation explaining this framework

<http://www.collage-arts.org/euro-aspire-framework-explained/>

#### **Important News....**

If you work in the arts or creative industries?

Or

If you train, teach, or coach people in artistic and creative activities in a work-based or community-based setting?

Or

If you use arts and creative activities as a catalyst to engage or re-engage people into society for example, refugee communities, disabled people, young people etc?

You are not alone! In fact, you are working in one of the most dynamic sub-sectors of the creative industries, and in a field of practice which is gaining momentum across the European Community.

Despite over 30 years of participatory arts practice – the sector has developed without any recognition or validation by mainstream regulators and policy makers. And as arts funding is placed under increasing strictures it is important that the strongest possible case can be made for this work – in a way that will attract mainstream funding and support. This will help organisations to explain and demonstrate the quality of their work, and to present a stronger case so that resources can be accessed to engage or re-engage people in learning, work, and society.

The skills, experience, and know-how of our practice is used every day by our workforce. This practice is highly valuable and highly relevant to tackling today's social and political challenges. Despite having so much to offer, our workforce, our work and the people that we nurture and develop remain invisible; Not adequately consulted, not valued for the contribution we have made, and not adequately resourced or built into plans for the future.

Why has recognition of the sector been so piecemeal?

## **Obstacles to development**

Unlike the formal education sectors, people working in this sector do not have a specific qualification, which recognises or validates the skills, experience and know-how that they have gained.

More people have a qualification in their artistic or creative practices, but do not have a recognised teaching or training qualification.

Some people do not have any qualifications at all, as they have been nurtured and developed entirely within the sector; starting as participants or learners and over time becoming trainers themselves as they gain confidence and experience.

External qualifications have not been seen as relevant or important. Workers and participants in the sector have felt that the 'work speaks for itself' through sharing the creative practice, or through the growth in confidence and competence of the participants. But this value-added is also notoriously difficult to quantify to mainstream organisations more used to formal education practices and procedures.

## **A way ahead...**

Faced with this challenge of validating the sector in a climate where public investment is placed under great scrutiny a group of organisations got together to look for solutions. This consortium consisted of:

- [www.collage-arts.org](http://www.collage-arts.org) (United Kingdom)
- [www.rinova.co.uk](http://www.rinova.co.uk) (United Kingdom)
- [www.wac.co.uk](http://www.wac.co.uk) (United Kingdom)
- [www.mulab.it](http://www.mulab.it) (Italy)
- [www.viauc.com](http://www.viauc.com) (Denmark)
- [www.artquimia.es](http://www.artquimia.es) (Spain)
- [www.newarts.nl](http://www.newarts.nl) (Netherlands)

Together this consortium secured funding from the European Commission for a project called EURO-ASPIRE [[www.euro-aspire.com/partners.php?p=7&lang=en&ani=animation2](http://www.euro-aspire.com/partners.php?p=7&lang=en&ani=animation2)].

The vision outlined in the bid was to develop a framework to recognise and validate the skills and expertise of people working in arts-led informal learning.

In addition, the project sought to:

- identify and define the sector characteristics
- explain the work practices
- demonstrate the standards
- explore development strategies employed in the sector

Having done this we then wanted to locate what we had found out within the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) [[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm)]

The framework has been developed and is being piloted in different European countries. What has emerged from the review of the partners was that we share many of the same practices, we work with similar participants, learners, trainees, and our trainer profiles are very similar. In short we face the same fundamental issues. But, excitingly, there is a body of practice that is working in different European countries. So, we are a European sector and that means we have a critical mass of organisations, staff and learners.

### **The EURO-ASPIRE framework**

The EURO-ASPIRE has been developed to recognise and validate the experience, knowledge and skills of trainers or teachers of artistic or creative practice working outside the formal education system in Europe.

This framework is particularly for organisations and individuals who nurture and support others to achieve

- Artistic practice AND
- Learning or personal development AND
- Social engagement with others

The framework enables us to define for commissioners of services who we are and what we do; to demonstrate our practice and the competencies that underpin it.

For too long, the practices and competencies employed in the sector have been internalised; held within the 'hearts and minds' of the workforce. Often, this knowledge and expertise has been transferred to others through ad hoc training. These have been developed non-formally over the life-time of the individual organisation and have been pragmatically organised and 'fit for purpose'.

The EURO-ASPIRE framework project has enabled us to explain, demonstrate, and evidence the recruitment, training, and work-practice strategies that we use across the organisations involved in the project. The partners all agreed with, and have adopted the terminology and approaches of the framework in their own organisations.

We examined these roles and identified similarities across organisations in different countries and agreed on what was most important to our shared practice. We identified those elements or characteristics that make us a sector. We felt very strongly that our sector works in ways that are fuzzy i.e. the participants are comfortable with blurred boundaries between social, learning, and artistic elements of our programmes and projects; they want to be free to develop themselves and their work organically, and not necessarily in a linear direction. This is clearly linked with the non-formal settings and values of the sector. Indeed, it can be argued that the strength of the sector comes from this fleet of foot approach, which blends and mixes learning opportunities. One of the major points of departure for us is that, unlike the formal education sector, the non-formal sector cannot tell learners what it plans to teach them from the outset. This is because learners become co-creators of their learning programmes – but more fundamentally learners who are not very confident or have significant challenges in their life circumstances would be unable to commit to a formal learning contract, which they may see as beyond their grasp. This is why most established European training qualifications were not, and are not, appropriate.

We have developed three key profiles of our ‘competent trainer’, ‘proficient trainer’ and also our ‘trainee trainer’, which we have linked to the European Qualification Framework and any relevant national Occupational Standards.

These profiles were very loosely based on a driving licence type model. The ‘provisional driver’s licence’ is for the trainee trainer; the ‘driver licence’ is for the competent trainer and the ‘advanced driver’s licence is for the proficient trainer.

The **proficient trainers** are the leaders in our sector and they are the people that develop and shape the work, make judgements about what is good and bad practice and are able to identify who is a competent trainer or a promising trainee. Proficient trainers are the experts in our sector and so, as part of the EURO-ASPIRE project, we also carried out a parallel exploratory test in relation to the level of our proficient trainers. We found that the proficient trainer profile was of the same level as that expected of a Master of Arts programme of a London University.

The **competent trainers** are the people that make up the core of our organisations and further develop their own creative, training, and social engagement skills and experience whilst training others. Together, these roles give the sector its quality benchmarks and uphold the standards of the practice and must be able to demonstrate consistency in benchmarks, and benchmarking strategies.

Through the EURO-ASPIRE project, we have collected, collated, and represented our work from across Europe linked to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). We have created 3 profile reference points from our non-formal setting so that our trainers can have their experience, knowledge, and skills recognised and validated but without imposing the standards or benchmarks of another, more formal, practice.

So, where do we go from here?

This is where you come in!

We want you to join with us by carrying out any or all of the following:

- trying out the framework to profile the quality, knowledge and expertise of the staff in your organisation;
- engaging in joint projects including trainer exchanges, increased mobility within organisations, and other staff development opportunities within our sector;
- demonstrating the contribution, value, and potential of our sector to relevant and appropriate commissioners of public or private services across Europe.
- identifying and addressing the needs of the sector.

**Please complete the survey now (follow the link) – we would really value your views <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L3WJFXZ>**

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