



## **EURO-ASPIRE**

Final Report

Public Part

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# Executive Summary

The *Euro-Aspire* project (ASPIRE) developed an innovative European Competency Framework and Tool-kit for trainers and mentors who utilise the arts and creative expression in informal and non-formal learning environments, particularly those aimed at young people and other communities who have been alienated by, or excluded from, formal educational pathways.

ASPIRE was primarily concerned with the vocational education and training (VET) dimension of the cultural and creative industries workforce in non-formal learning contexts. These non-formal learning contexts include the workplace, community and both arts and non-arts settings. The Euro-Aspire partnership consists of Collage Arts (UK), WAC (UK), MuLab (Italy), Artquimia (Spain), New Arts (the Netherlands) who are all employers of trainers in the creative and cultural sector; Rinova (UK) a social enterprise specializing in project development as coordinator and VIA University College (Denmark) who have an expertise in social pedagogy using the arts and creativity.

The main beneficiaries of the project are the trainers who work in these settings, but the project also provides substantial benefits to the organisations employing these trainers – and the learners that they in turn support. Trainers may be employed or working as a freelancers; they may be highly skilled in arts or creative practice, facilitating the learning of others and in social pedagogy; but they have had no appropriate means of recognizing or validating the core competencies of their work. Nor have they benefited from a common validation, recognition and assessment mechanism, which hinders mobility and transfer at the European level.

ASPIRE produced a comprehensive series of inter-related results to address these issues, specifically:

1. A Research Programme – led by VIA University and Collage Arts. This led to the production of report statements about the Non Formal Learning Sector (NFLS) in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) for dissemination and to inform project design and implementation. These statements concerned: -
  - How NFLS Motivates Learners
  - NFLS factors in the Creative Industry Sector
  - Creative Industry Formal Qualifications
  - Trainer Profiles and Competency Frameworks;
2. Collaboratively developing a common learning approach through the ‘test bed’ of an action learning set of managers and trainers from the partner NFLS organisations, through a project extranet, complemented by training workshops, observations and assessments;
3. Designing and producing a Common Competency Framework and Toolkit. The Framework developed by ASPIRE has enabled the benchmarking of professional standards for the Non-Formal Learning Sector in the CCIs in Europe at three levels:

- Trainee Trainer
- Competent Trainer, and
- Proficient Trainer

These standards are referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Reference Framework (ERF) of competences for Lifelong Learning and are flexible and widely-applicable to creative and cultural workers with training responsibilities in the sector;

4. Undertaking a comprehensive programme of awareness-raising about the VET dimension of the NFLS in the CCIs, through the production and distribution of a project brochure; the building of content through the project website ([www.euro-aspire.com](http://www.euro-aspire.com)) and its promotion through the e-ASPIRE newsletter. The project approach and its results were also disseminated widely, including the specific organisation of two project dissemination conferences in Denmark and London and through showcases at major sector and skills events;

The future for the practice that has been developed in ASPIRE is dependent on three key factors and these have been the focus of the exploitation strategy. These factors are:

1. Evidence of the demand for the recognition and validation of trainers' competences in the creative and cultural industries across Europe, including the financial and other cost-benefits of creative practice trainers pursuing validation;
2. The development of a professional association for employers and professionals that enables the development of a register of approved trainers in the sector across Europe;
3. The potential for partnership with certification and awarding bodies in Europe (including Universities) who are interested in developing awards and qualifications for trainers in this field.

The ASPIRE journey, undertaken through a series of nine closely-related work packages, developed and established the partnership as a collaborative high-performance team that delivered the research, kick-started the VET network and developed a conceptual understanding of the NFLS in the CCIs. Analysis of the research findings, using the learning network and an ambitious commitment by the partners to achieve the best 'cultural fit' with the sector, has enabled this knowledge to be harnessed as the engine for recognition and validation of the sector's established workforce and for up-and-coming trainers, including those recruited and developed from the learners and participants in the organisations that make up the sector.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The overall aim of ASPIRE was to develop an innovative European competency framework for trainers who utilise the arts and creative expression in informal and non-formal learning environments.

In concrete terms, *Aspire* is concerned with the validation and accreditation of trainers in the NFLS in the creative sector who use informal and non formal learning techniques to:

- Tackle the exclusion and alienation felt by disaffected young people and other learners with traditional approaches to learning;
- Provide career pathways into the creative industries through progression to employment, further or higher education and self employment;
- Foster the wider employability and lifelong learning of those it supports – though discipline, team work, confidence and presentation skills. All of these qualities are need if, for instance, a production is to be staged, on time and to a standard.

Current generic teaching and trainer qualifications have not been customised for trainers, tutors and support workers in this sector. Furthermore, full time professional teaching diplomas and certificates are not appropriate and in fact are impractical for industry experts who may be acting as tutors in NFLS organisations for just a few hours a week, delivering specialist art form sessions.

The impact foreseen by the project was to develop a common validation and assessment framework for this diverse group in a 'sector' which, to date, remains largely un-defined, un-quantified and unstructured. This is particularly the case in terms of accreditation routes – and yet is a sector which, on the basis of the little research that does exist, has a very significant role to play in nurturing Europe's talent pool in the increasingly significant creative and cultural industries sector.

The challenge for the project therefore was to identify common values, practices and competences that is suitable for this diverse target group. Ultimately this is to be done so that the NFLS organisations and the trainers employed by them can better support their learners, who have previously been disengaged from formal learning, to develop their career domestically and across Europe

ASPIRE was primarily concerned with the VET dimension of the cultural and creative industries workforce in non-formal learning contexts. These non-formal learning contexts include the workplace, community and both arts and non-arts settings. The main beneficiaries of the project are the trainers who work in these settings, but the project results also provide substantial benefits to the organisations employing these trainers. Trainers may be employed or working as a freelancers; they may be highly skilled in arts or creative practice, facilitating the learning of others and in social pedagogy; but they have had no appropriate means of recognizing or validating the core competencies of their work. The Euro-Aspire project, over a period of two years and through nine inter-related work packages, identified the core competencies of the work and developed a method for recognition and validation of these competencies.

The primary challenge involved in the project was to ensure that the organic, inclusive and creative culture of the sector was not suffocated or constrained by a restrictive or overly-rigid structure but, that the proposed model and methods provided a unity of approach across Europe, with internal coherence, and external validity.

The model developed benchmarks the professional standards at three levels:

- Trainee Trainer
- Competent Trainer, and
- Proficient Trainer

It is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and has been tested and upheld by the community of practice, across Europe that formed the action learning set of managers and trainers. The model will need to be accurate, flexible and widely-applicable to creative and cultural workers with training responsibilities in the Sector. The ASPIRE partnership considers that it has met this challenge and developed such a model for the sector.

We also believe that we have fully achieved our objective to establish a first step towards a wider take-up of the validation system within the NFLS in Europe, leading potentially to our validation and assessment processes generating a more formal accreditation within the framework of the EQF.

## 2. Project Approach

The methodologies employed in ASPIRE were designed specifically to address the fact that, while there are a number of factors in the use of cultural and creative informal and non-formal learning that attract and engage learners, it is not easy to measure learning through formal education processes in these industries.

The ASPIRE project began with formative research, which consisted of desk-based research, aimed at gathering inputs for thought, the further scoping of the project and engaging in a deep analysis of the main constituent elements that appear to make up the context of the NFLS in creative industries. The secondary research was carried out by the VIA team and Dr Denise Stanley of Collage Arts. Key principles were identified from a literature review and an essay, which gave the various considerations and philosophical approaches to the task of focusing the primary research, leading the analysis and inducting a model that fitted the sector and that could act as an entry point or facilitate an exchange mechanism to the EQF and other national qualifications frameworks.

The emphasis on the research was focused on observable practice embedded in the values and contexts of the partner projects. With this in mind, the use of narrative video was explored as a way of providing a common validation and assessment tool, which could serve this purpose if carried out to a specific brief focusing on the relationship between an individual user (trainee/learner but also tutor) and an individual creative practitioner (trainer/tutor/but also learner). This was then elaborated to explore how this relationship operates within the following contexts:

- a) the understanding/thinking/perceptions/goals of the user;
- b) the understanding/thinking/perceptions/goals of the CP tutor;
- c) the group project context with other users;
- d) the organisational context with other projects, staff, resources etc.
- e) the neighbourhood/community/ies that the organisation is located in;
- f) the region/European country/political framework that the organisation is located in;
- g) other contexts that the relationship operates within

### **Development of New Action Learning Network for Managers and Trainers**

The research was used to provide the 'state of the art' insight to inform the learning design that came next. This consisted of an investigation and peer validation through an action learning set of 12 experienced trainers and managers drawn from the NFLS in the CCIs. The action learning set comprised three dimensions: (a) Training workshops – which accompanied partnership meetings and where the approach to be developed and tested was 'unpacked' and agreed, facilitated by Dr Denise Stanley. (b) A Partnership extranet on-line environment – where, between workshops, material was distributed and discussed by the managers and trainers (c) Observations – where trainers were observed in practice situations and relevant dynamics were captured to inform the learning design. This approach was designed as a 'bottom up' approach in recognition of the need for an innovative work programme that 'started where the NFLS sector was' and built from that position. Its

purpose was to identify and quantify methodologies that could be captured and published on the way to developing a framework that would lend itself to an appropriate form of validation.

Whilst this approach was 'bottom up, it was nonetheless fully informed by two key 'top down' frameworks: The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and also the European Reference Framework (ERF) for competences in Lifelong learning. These Frameworks were found to be highly enabling – in particular in relation to Spain and Italy where partners reported that there was no relevant trainer qualifications within the National Qualification Frameworks. In the UK and the Netherlands, for instance, the vocational qualifications that did exist that were of some potential relevance to the area addressed by the project were not suitable for (a) the non formal context within which much of the learning took place (b) the fact that many trainers in the NFLS in the CCIs are freelance, commissioned, sessional part-time or practising professional artists for whom the professional teaching or training qualifications that do exist are not suitable for them.

Alongside this, the major task was the transfer of know how (the process of learning) from a restricted habitual formation by means of role-taking, bearings, narratives, mediation, moderation, modelling etc. in a learning situation which is tinted by social pedagogy and also to some extent described and understood (by the trainer) in a vocabulary of social pedagogy and into a new, common understanding, which is shared by both trainer and trainee. This new understanding – if the process is successful – is 'empowerment' so ASPIRE endeavoured to map this process in practice.

The key factor for validation in ASPIRE was to answer the question '*can the recognition of individual achievement be adjusted to apply to informal and non-formal settings?*' This meant that we needed to consider the direct influence or outcome of learning settings as an assessment of aesthetic production, rather than assume the norm of 'personally achieved qualifications'. This was because some of the importance or effectiveness of the trainer may depend on the trainees (tacit) knowledge of the achievements of the trainer.

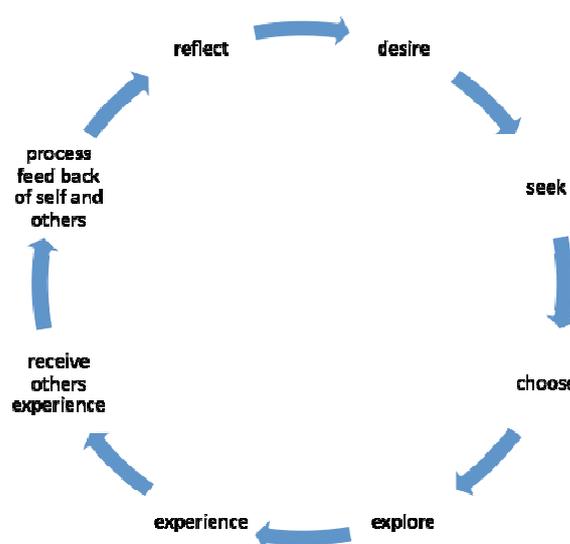
Trainers and Managers in the Euro-Aspire partnership were used to test the products of the analysis and to ensure the best cultural fit of the materials, methodologies and resulting framework and tool-kit. This took place through training workshops, individual observations and assessments and between partner meeting workshops on email and is complemented by a group on-line environment in the form of an extranet – *Rise Up*. The initial thesis was that the ASPIRE non-formal organisations in creative industries share a common landscape incorporating three distinct, but overlapping zones. These three zones are: (a) informal education, (b) social pedagogy and (c) artistic practice. The Non Formal Learning process in the creative industries: Practice (artistic), Participate (social), Progress (learning) was represented thus:



The trainer interacts with the trainee in this process thus stimulating motivation, activity, productivity and reflection - a continuing process of negotiating “meaningfulness” to:

- Facilitate experience
- Encourage interaction
- Provide feed-back
- Encourage reflection
- Support choices

This process contains elements of play, trial and error, being in and managing chaos, working with boundaries and structures, discovery, uncertainty, taking risk, being outside ‘the comfort-zone’, changing contexts, working with constraints, testing limits, developing artistry, making artefacts. Therefore, it is in no way a linear process and an extended model of the Non Formal Learning process in the creative industries was represented thus:



## **Awareness-Raising, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities**

In order to raise initial awareness of ASPIRE, a Project Brochure was designed and developed. 5,000 copies were printed and shared amongst the partners for distribution amongst networks and at relevant events and exhibitions attended by the partners aside from the events in this project. It explains the project concept and objectives and is translated in to English, Spanish, Danish, Dutch, French, German and Italian. In addition, a specific project website was set up, which is at [www.euro-aspire.com](http://www.euro-aspire.com) Initially designed and established initially as an on-line promotional vehicle for the project, it was progressively developed, in terms of references, news and project results for public attention and contains summaries of project activity. In the second year of the project as the project results evolved, the website was utilised more proactively as a dissemination vehicle. It offers a vehicle to showcase digital creative product generated by NFLS beneficiaries, the web-environment also incorporates gateways to ASPIRE on Facebook, Twitter and You Tube and was supported by an e-Aspire webzine / newsletter distributed to an email list of 5,000.

The partner organisations have each adopted the Competency Framework in their organisations, and between them they employ over 350 trainers, supporting over 2,000 students annually. Through the information we disseminate from the website and the distribution of the brochure and e-Aspire newsletter to more than 5,000 stakeholders, we have 'opened up' our partnership steering group meetings to incorporate a greater degree of participation from aspiring trainers as well as established professionals

Having widely promoted ASPIRE at the international Festival Castel San't Angelo in Rome during the summer of 2010 (which is visited by over 2 million people), we undertook more targeted awareness- raising and dissemination activities aimed at specific stakeholders in VET and in the cultural sector. We were invited by the UK Skills Funding Agency to exhibit at 'WorldSkills 2011' at the ExCel centre in Docklands, London – the annual world exhibition of VET which was being held in the UK for the first time in 22 years, where we promoted ASPIRE - see <http://www.rinova.co.uk/news/rinova,-wac-and-collage-at-worldskills-2012> We also invited visitors to WorldSkills (and via the e-ASPIRE newsletter) to use a prototype of our learning materials and give us feedback – via a USB memory stick containing the prototypes of the ASPIRE Toolkit and Framework .

We undertook two formal dissemination conferences:

- Silkeborg, Denmark in May 2011 (see <http://www.euro-ASPIRE.com/readNews.php?news=16&lang=en> )
- A Final Dissemination in London, October 2011 (See <http://www.euro-ASPIRE.com/readNews.php?news=38&lang=en>

Both were to invited audiences of stakeholders (VET, academic education, municipalities, employers, qualification and accreditation bodies, work-based learning agencies, cultural associations, students and trainees) and consisted of presentations and facilitated discussions.

We also presented ASPIRE and the non formal cultural sector to a seminar in May 2011, attended by stakeholders representing business, chambers of commerce, NGOs, SMEs, the municipality and education, who form a 'task group' developing the application for Aarhus, Denmark, to be Europe's Capital of Culture in 2017. VIA also disseminated the ASPIRE USB memory stick with the competency framework at the Creative Industries conference in Tallinn, Estonia in October 2011. Some 300 people were in attendance across these events.

In terms of exploitation and as a result of the development of the toolkit/competency framework and the assessment / validation approaches, we discussed the outcomes of our work with a number of certification and qualification bodies. In particular, we consulted closely with Goldsmiths College and its international cultural faculty in order to fully test our core methodology and its alignment to the EQF/ERF at Masters Level for 'Proficient' Trainers in the non formal learning sector and the extent to which our approach would align with externally recognised and validated requirements. This was to test 2 aspects:

- a) Is our proficient level equivalent to MA level requirements? How does our 'work-based learning in non-formal context' relate to the established 'formal' Professional Certification in relation to level and key outcomes?
- b) Are there any significant differences between the formal professional educational programmes (curriculum, delivery, assessment) and our method of developing and assessing non-formal creative sector proficient trainers? If so what are these? How do we/they deal with these differences and if we/they don't why not?

One of our overall aims for exploitation was to embed the approach to be taken to the common competency and assessment framework to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and (as a result of the project development) the European Reference Framework (ERF) for competencies in Lifelong Learning. The assessment and validation was successful. Trainers who achieve the module will have Masters level credits that can be 'used' towards any other related European Masters level qualification. Exploitation is also addressed in 'Plans for the Future' below.

## **Management, Quality and Evaluation**

Overall management of the project was undertaken by Collage Arts, the lead organisation supported in the second year by a new project coordination organisation, Rinova. All Partners participated fully on the ASPIRE Steering Group, which generated two specific management deliverables:

*Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Steering Group* - The Terms of Reference constituted the governance document for the partnership; a 'code of conduct' that set out and fully specified partners' roles and responsibilities. It set out the remit of the partnership steering group, other Leonardo requirements; conflict resolution, language, communication and protocols, including equal opportunities and diversity considerations.

*Project Delivery Plan* - This document set out the work packages and the quality assurance and performance indicators, success measures, with roles, timelines and approaches.

*Project Quality and Evaluation* The QEP (Quality and Evaluation Plan) managed by Rinova described the purpose of evaluation in ASPIRE and the methods that would be utilised to gather data for evaluation. Evaluation in the project was based upon an on-going process of review and feedback through the action learning approach. This was complemented by an interim evaluation report, which represented a formal assessment point in the Quality and Evaluation Plan, bringing together the above factors to produce initial findings across the evaluation criteria, at the mid point of the project. Short and sharp, it set the baseline for subsequent priorities in the remaining part of the project, pointing in particular to lessons for dissemination and exploitation and produced an extract of results for public dissemination via the website. Evaluation findings include:

a) *Proof of concept*: - The Partnership identified the characteristics of learning and training programmes in the creative/cultural sector, and examined ways in which learners, who have been excluded or are disinterested in formal learning pathways, become motivated. We have also developed and published methodologies that can bridge creative pathways from informal and non-formal learning to accredited learning and formal education.

b) *Core competencies of sector trainer/managers*: - We have identified common competencies using the Euro-Aspire action-learning network of managers and trainers working in the sector.

c) *Industry validation*: - We have explored how partnership members who are employers and part of a sectoral 'community of practice' that exists across Europe can validate trainers with a licence to practice and as part of this validation to develop a European Register of Approved Trainers.

d) *Broader stakeholder validation*: - We have identified that we can validate the skills of trainers in Europe's informal/non-formal learning sector in the creative industries. We have developed a methodology for this that will apply to any trainer from the sector, providing that they are working or are training to work in the sector and have 6 months of current evidence that demonstrates their competencies. This evidence can be gained as an employee, a freelancer, a trainee, an apprentice, an intern or a volunteer.

e) *Assessment*: - We have adopted the method of criterion referencing, which compares an individual's performance with specific, external and explicit criteria rather than with other learner's performance.

Criterion referencing is designed to:

- a) Provide specific information about what individuals actually can do
- b) Enable a passed/not yet passed basis
- c) Recognise a wide diversity rather than ranking against others

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The 'centre-piece' result arising from the ASPIRE work programme, in terms of results, was the production of the Common Competency Framework and Toolkit. The public Summary and Guide to the Framework can be found here:

[http://issuu.com/collagearts/docs/euroaspire\\_framework/1](http://issuu.com/collagearts/docs/euroaspire_framework/1)

ASPIRE set out to make an impact by exploring ways at the European level that we could validate the skills of trainers in Europe's informal and non-formal learning sector in the creative industries – since no such validation frameworks exist.

Whilst being a specialist 'sector', its reach is considerable: Although no European-wide research has been conducted on the number of learners who engage in non formal learning through the creative industries, the only study known to have quantified this found that, in London alone, some 30,000 learners participated in one year alone. Furthermore, 'Employment in Europe' has reported annually that the creative industries work force in Europe exceeds that of a number of other industrial sectors including, for instance, Europe's automotive sector. Some 300 trainers and mentors are employed by the partner organisations (many are freelance, sessional or part-time) who in turn support some 2,000 learner each year, all of whom will directly benefit from the adoption of the Framework by the partners.

The Framework developed by ASPIRE benchmarked of professional standards for the Non-Formal Learning Sector in the CCIs in Europe at three levels:

- Trainee Trainer
- Competent Trainer, and
- Proficient Trainer

The ASPIRE trainers framework provides a way to recognise and validate the experience, knowledge and skills of practice-based workers. It is designed for those who lead, train, teach, mentor, coach and support young people at work, in the community, as part of recreational activity or in any other social non-formal situation.

ASPIRE focuses on performing arts, media production, visual arts and design in a way which has provided a bridge from social exclusion to inclusion in new learning opportunities and/or livelihoods in the creative and cultural industries. In order to use the framework, each trainer will need to demonstrate experience, knowledge and skills in three areas:

- *Creative practice*
- *Social engagement* including personal and interpersonal awareness, managing self and interactions in a range of social settings
- *Facilitation of learning* including transfer of practice, person-centred learning strategies.

Following its elaboration and testing in the action learning set of managers and trainers, the draft competency framework and toolkits were completed.

It is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Reference Framework (ERF) and has been tested and upheld by the community of practice, across Europe that formed the action learning set of managers and trainers. As such, it represents a common European solution to recognise competences and qualifications gained through informal and non-formal settings, providing a framework that can be deployed throughout Europe, for creative pathways from informal and non-formal learning to accredited learning and formal education. The ASPIRE partnership considers that it has met this challenge and developed such a model for the sector. It captures and cross-references the range of practices and approaches adopted by trainers in the partner organisations.

In order to explain the Competency Framework and Toolkit in an easy to understand format and through accessible media, an innovative Animation was produced – one version aimed at Individual practitioners and one version aimed at organisations in the NFLS in the CCIs. These animations can be found here:

<http://www.euro-ASPIRE.com/readNews.php?news=44&lang=en>

<http://www.euro-ASPIRE.com/readNews.php?news=43&lang=en>

### **Research Programme**

A comprehensive programme of research was undertaken to inform the subsequent pedagogy of the project, led by VIA University of Denmark and Collage Arts of the UK. The primary research was formulated through a literature review and an exploratory essay. This was carried out in order to position the direction, approach and scope of the primary research with partners. The primary research aimed at achieving a number of closely-related objectives including an understanding of each of the partner organisations, their community and institutional capital. It also examined the relationships between trainee and trainer, the working contexts and probed the concept of internal and external legitimacy and cultural fit of current assessment mechanisms and validation systems through both small focus groups and the manager and trainer action learning set.

The results of this WP were research reports in the following areas (all completed in June 2010):

*How NFLS Motivate Learners* – reported on the characteristics motivating learners to undertake informal and non-formal learning within the creative industries, examining the profile of learners in terms of socio-economic demography and how NFLS techniques have contributed.

*NFLS factors in the Creative Industry Sector* - This identified the contextual background to the partner organisations; the precise nature (learning methods, creative media) utilised in non-formal and informal learning; the relationship with regeneration initiatives, public funding in the cultural and creative field, education and employers in the creative sector and key target groups in each case.

*Creative industries formal qualifications* - This examined vocational training systems in the creative industries in the partner countries, reviewing the criteria needed for learners and trainers to use in a common framework that is aligned to the EQF.

*Trainer Profiles and Competency Frameworks* – This examined how trainers have developed their skills, in the absence of a dedicated accreditation framework for the NFLS, in each of the partner contexts and examines the mechanisms or techniques deployed by NFLS organisations to establish the capability and development needs of trainers.

The results of the primary research provided some very rich qualitative data that did not fit neatly across the categories but did give clear directives in terms of the direction of ASPIRE. The primary research enabled the partnership to gain an understanding of the location of the sector, of the potential interfaces with other stakeholders, and how to uphold the integrity of the sector. It also provided insight into how to facilitate and further the validation and progression rights of the learner through partnership and within the EQF and other appropriate frameworks.

A copy of the research findings is available by request. For a copy, please contact [info@euro-aspire.com](mailto:info@euro-aspire.com).

## 4. Partnerships

A transnational European partnership can really produce effective work if there is a shared vision and they feel ownership of the vision, the process and the outcomes of the project and the project and partnership is taking them further than they could travel individually in their own national contexts. Below is a brief description that sets the ASPIRE context for each organisation (partner websites, which also contain fuller descriptions and their own perspective on ASPIRE can be found on the project website [www.euro-aspire.com](http://www.euro-aspire.com)):

- a. MuLab (IT) founded in 2004, operates in Rome, the Lazio region and throughout Italy and lists its main interest in the Aspire project as to develop common competencies in the creative industries and working collaboratively with others aiming to achieve standards of accreditation in the sector.
- b. Rinova (UK) is a social enterprise was established in 2010 as a partnership project enabler and capacity builders. On Aspire it provides project management support and co-ordination, quality assurance and evaluation services.
- c. New Arts College (NL) and New Arts Experience, both of which work with young people not in mainstream school. The latter develops films/DVDs for use in education/schools.
- d. WAC Performing Arts and Media (UK) provides social inclusion as a way to engage young people outside of mainstream education in London, with a 'sister' organisation in Liverpool. 60% of the trainers used by WAC have come up through the training programmes WAC has developed over the years and is keen to develop formal standards of accreditation for trainers.
- e. ArtQuimia, (ES) music creation/experimental school in Malaga is described as the smallest, less established organisation in the partnership. The Aspire project has provided an opportunity for ArtQuimia to grow and develop.
- f. Collage Arts (UK) benefits from experiences coming from both formal and informal learning settings and experience driven learning are most important. The Aspire project provides an excellent vehicle – a learning journey and intellectual challenge for how learning has developed/is developing within the non-formal learning sector.
- g. VIA University College (DK) is a new member of the partnership and is humbled to be involved in such an established partnership and with long-established organisations. The main role of their work is to develop pedagogical learning materials.

The funding support from Leonardo da Vinci in the Lifelong Learning Programme and time-scale have been sufficient to get the project to the point of being a resource rather than giving the time and resources to fully develop and champion the project as a set of products or services, which could be established and marketed together with further developing and extending the partnership.

The Partnership engaged with the development of an employer-led framework with three reference points to the EQF for the professional recognition and certification of trainers working in the non-formal learning sector for the creative industries in Europe. Added value has been achieved by the partnership through the project for a number of stakeholder groups beyond that of the targeted beneficiary, the trainer, for example:

1. *The employers or organisations employing the trainers.* Providing a strategic tool for human resources management and a means to demonstrate the quality and competencies of their staff;
2. *Managers of European projects in the sector.* Providing international professional standards and benchmarks and encouraging mobility of trainers (with and without learners);
3. *Investors in the non-formal training contexts of the CCIs.* Public and private investors need to know that they are spending their resources wisely and that they can be assured that the approved trainers in an organization or in a partnership of organisations have an externally validated level of expertise.
4. *Formal education institutions that want to work within the field of CCI practice.* Formal education will be able to accept the validation of previously unqualified but experienced CCI trainers that wish to participate in formal education opportunities.
5. *Academics working in CCI and non-formal learning.* The Euro-Aspire project will provide an example of the application of social pedagogy to training in the cultural and creative industries.
6. *The Partners.* Trainer and learner exchanges were arranged, joint projects were set up and opportunities to perform and participate in each others work programmes occurred as a result of Euro-Aspire. At least 3 trainers moved from a partner organization in one country to do some work in a partner organisation in another country.

In terms of the NFLS partner organisations, this pan-European approach (at the partner level initially) has provided unique and significant added value. There is no obvious way that individual partners could have undertaken this project at the local or national level. It remains the case that is a very low level of validation amongst national vocational agencies and awarding bodies.

Being able to build in the EQF and the ERF as ‘pillars’ at the outset of this work – as opposed to attempting to compare and align pre-existing and set qualifications or validation frameworks – has enabled the partners to work together ‘as equals’ to start with an in-depth ‘unpacking’ of our differing and common training processes and cultures of work. As this transnational validation framework has begun to emerge, this has then enabled us to start a meaningful dialogue with qualification and certification authorities.

## 5. Plans for the Future

Collage Arts and the Partnership are committed to the sustainability and continuation of the ASPIRE Project Website following the end of the project and beyond the 12 month commitment in the application. Indeed, it is intended that the ASPIRE 'brand' and website is to be developed and utilised as an Exploitation vehicle for the continuing promotion of the ASPIRE Competency and Validation Framework and the accompanying Took-Kit, which is available to all interested parties through licensing arrangements via the Project Promoter, Collage Arts.

It is also intended to develop the 'Euro-ASPIRE' website as a 'brand' for mobility amongst trainers, managers and policy-makers in the non formal learning sector in the creative industries from across Europe. This is forming the basis of an application for a Development of Innovation Multi-lateral Network in 2012, with the view to the development of a Professional Association for NFLS CCI trainers, underpinned by the Competency Framework – which we also intend to develop into a formal, certificated Qualification Framework.

We now have new partners from Greece, France, Bulgaria, Poland and Germany that we have identified through our dissemination activities, who are expected to join as partners in developing this network, as well as some 20 cultural institutions, organisations, municipalities and employer associations who will be joining as associate partners. These partners have formally registered an interest to joining the partnership and extending the practice further afield than the initial partner countries.

We have also addressed key issues concerning the validation strategy which we aim to take forward and which will be given below:

*a) Who will validate individual performance/attainment in the NFLSCI?*

In the first instance it is the community of practice who validate the individual with stakeholders drawn from across the partners and carried out by proficient trainers. The partnership will also look for opportunities to present a business case for working with appropriate external awarding bodies, particularly those that work internationally.

*b) How will this validation be carried out?*

In the short term, the partnership organisations will carry out this validation process in their own organisations, using their proficient trainers as the first cohort. These proficient trainers will then act as supervisors and internal and external assessors for the assessment of the competent and trainee-trainers. In the longer term, the partnership will form a professional association that manages the validation process and provides support to organisations and individuals claiming for recognition and validation.

*c) What purpose(s) will this validation have?*

This validation will serve to recognise and acknowledge the achievement and expertise of the workforce, whether employed or freelance, in the sector and to also provide the means for organisations to demonstrate the capabilities of their staff. It will additionally provide entry-routes or gateways, through partnerships with formal and non-formal institutions, into other professional and personal development

opportunities at different levels, in different countries and within formal and non-formal learning contexts.

*d) What currency will this validation have?*

It will have currency with investors who are seeking evidence of quality assurance and qualified staff. It will have currency with other organisations operating in the sector, as employers and training organisations. It will have currency with other non-formal learning contexts or work-based learning providers through the EQF, national frameworks and the national occupational standards, where these exist. It may also lead to having direct access or exemption from formal programmes from other providers.

*e) What will be the cost? Who will fund it? Why?*

In the first stages, the community of practice will seek to obtain funding to pursue and extend the Validation scheme. There may also be the possibility of presenting a business case to an awarding body if there is shown to be sufficient demand.

*f) How will this validation occur across Europe?*

The current partnership will promote the validation process, framework and tool-kit in their own countries using appropriate networks and dissemination strategies.

*g) Who will manage, deliver and quality assure this programme? Why?*

In the short term, the partnership organisations will share the responsibility for managing, delivering and quality assuring this programme but in the longer term, the partnership will form a professional association that will manage the validation process and provides support to organisations and individuals claiming for recognition and validation.

*h) If assessment is part of the validation process then what format will it take?*

Assessment is initially formative and then, summative at the point it becomes internally validated by a supervisor. This supervisor-supported submission, with all the supporting evidence, is passed on to either another internal assessor with an external assessor or two external assessors. It then becomes a final externally validated summative assessment. Evidence can be drawn from a range of sources including professional discussion with supervisor or mentor, excerpts of video-footage of delivering training in a range of different contexts, reflective journals or blogging, testimonial statements, etc.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Since we started our project, the European Commission published its 2010 Green Paper **Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries**. This key development notes the value of the creative and cultural industries to Europe's economic and social well-being. It states that *“Through partnerships with education, CCIs can also play a major role in equipping European citizens with the creative, entrepreneurial and intercultural skills they need ... Through these spill-over effects, Europe's CCIs offer a path towards a more imaginative, more cohesive, greener and more prosperous future.”*

The results of ASPIRE will also contribute to the new **'Creative Europe'** programme unveiled by the European Commission announcement in Brussels on the 23rd November 2011 stating *“Thousands of people working in cinema, TV, culture, music, performing arts, heritage and related areas would benefit from increased EU support under today ...with a proposed budget of €1.8 billion for the period 2014-2020, it would be a much-needed boost for the cultural and creative industries, which are a major source of jobs and growth in Europe ... representing around 4.5% of European GDP and account for some 3.8% of the EU workforce (8.5 million people).”*

In addition, the Council of the European Union Council adopted its **“Conclusions on cultural and creative competences and their role in building intellectual capital of Europe”** in Brussels on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2011. This states that these competences are *“a basis for creativity and innovation, which in turn boosts smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”* and notes how they contribute to *“development - and maximisation of the spill-over effects - of cultural and creative industries as they are embodied in the competences of artists and creators as well as audiences and consumers: Education training and preparation for jobs including those requiring high qualifications and social skills, to employability at all the relevant stages of life and to effective functioning and development of companies”*.

All of these factors were identified in the ASPIRE research programme and have been incorporated in the three dimensions of the ASPIRE competency framework. ASPIRE recognises the concept of 'spill over effects' in the way that as well as equipping young people for careers in the cultural industries, so much of our work in the NFLS supports young people and those from other communities to develop their wider employability and education (i.e. outside the sector) through the development of their core skills, aptitudes and imagination. NFLS organisations in creative industries can potentially build stakeholder partnerships and further the mobility of workers and rationalisation of the validation process and range of qualifications. These stakeholder relationships are crucial to driving the external legitimacy of the framework and to the success of the validation proposals.

ASPIRE contributes to the **Europe 2020 Strategy** in that creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship are heavily stressed as they encourage:

- risk taking and experimentation
- experience-based learning
- exposure to non-routine work and non-typical situations
- giving individuals the ability to control and develop their own learning

- education which develops a sense of initiative, creativity and self confidence and the ability to turn ideas into practice

In this sense, the project also contributes to the aims of the **Lisbon Strategy** which was based on the economic concepts of:

- Innovation as the motor for economic change
- The "learning economy"
- Social and environmental renewal

Furthermore, **A New Impetus for European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training** (June 2010), to support the 2020 strategy, stated that VET must:

- create flexible systems based on recognition of learning outcomes, supporting individual learning pathways
- develop adequate support for those at a disadvantage
- play a major role in addressing Europe's high youth unemployment
- promote social inclusion through accessible and equitable training
- support cross border mobility

ASPIRE is concerned with all of these things, as it is with the evolving role of teachers and trainers, which **A New Impetus** noted is crucial in the modernisation of VET, including their professional development and status.

In the context of non formal and informal learning, the 31 EU Ministers of Education and Training called for the development of "*a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries and at different levels*". This is also exactly what we are seeking to do for the NFLS within the framework of the EQF (and the ERF) and we also aim to provide an approach in support of this which could be transferred to other sectors outside of this project.

In addition, the **Copenhagen Declaration** calls for the development of common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. All of the methodologies that we developed and our prototype Competency Framework and Toolkit in ASPIRE fit within the requirements of the Copenhagen Declaration on informal and non-formal learning validation, in that they incorporate:

- Confidence and trust in the system developed
- Are credible and legitimate; and
- Are based on a quality system

In terms of the European **Lifelong Learning Programme** Objectives the project contributes to objective (a) in that ASPIRE aims to contribute to the development of high quality lifelong learning by developing a new solution for assessing, validating and ultimately accrediting the skills and competences of trainers and tutors in the creative sector NFLS. In terms of the **Leonardo da Vinci** programme itself, ASPIRE is directly concerned with Leonardo Operational Objective 4, which makes specific reference to non-formal and informal learning and is at the heart of the project. In terms of the 2009 priorities we directly addressed Leonardo-MulPrj-1 and Leonardo-MulPrj-3, as there is presently no recognition of qualifications for NFLS trainers in the creative industries, which also suffers from a lack of transparency in relation to validated knowledge and skills.

## **7. Appendix: Review of Project Approach and Outcomes**

A comprehensive report by Dr Denise Stanley of Collage Arts as an appendix to this Public Report on the Euro-Aspire Project Approach and Outcomes is available by request. For a copy, please contact [info@euro-aspire.com](mailto:info@euro-aspire.com)

