



EURO-ASPIRE

Progress Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

The *Aspire* project aims to develop an innovative European competency framework for trainers, mentors and support workers 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.

The Non-formal Learning Sector (NFLS) for the creative industries grew out of the Community Arts and Popular Culture movements of the late 1970's and early 1980's. Across Europe a number of community / educational practitioners began to use Europe's cultural traditions to offer new and exciting methods to engage young people experiencing social exclusion.

Many of the *Aspire* partners have been using non formal and informal creative and artistic methods to engage with disaffected learners, in some cases for 30 years. However, the work of the NFLS is still relatively unknown by policy and decision makers as an effective method to foster employability – whether in the creative industries or the wider economy. It is hampered by a lack of recognition as a sector, and by a lack of common validation, recognition and assessment mechanism, which hinder mobility and transfer at the European level.

In its first year, the project has made excellent progress towards its objectives. The project activity to date has been focused upon the following areas:

1. The implementation of a Project management approach, including the production of a quality and evaluation plan;
2. A Research Programme – led by VIA University and Collage Arts, this has led to the production of report statements about the NFLS for dissemination and to inform project implementation by partners;
3. Exploring the approach to be taken to the common competency and assessment framework, including reference to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Reference Framework (ERF);
4. Developing an on-line action learning set of managers and trainers in the NFLS to collaboratively develop the concept and ultimately act as a 'test bed' for the emerging approaches, through a project extranet, complemented by observations and workshops;
5. Promoting the project partnership and disseminating the *Aspire* project objectives through a published brochure and an attractive, easy to use website.

The next stage of the project will focus upon the development of a Trainer Toolkit and the testing and further development of the common competency framework, before a final phase of dissemination and exploitation.

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1. Project Objectives

Aspire is working 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.

So far we have made progress towards this by pursuing our project objectives, which in year 1 have been to:

- Research into the intrinsic factors in the NFLS in the cultural industries, led by VIA University and Collage Arts;
- Develop an action learning set of managers and trainers from partner organisations in the NFLS, through workshop meetings of partners and participative activity on the partnersihp extranet, *rise up*;
- Develop a framework from which competences can be developed;
- Ensure that these competences are developed with reference to the EQF and the ERF (European Reference Framework);
- Promote the project ambitions and activities through producing and disseminating the ASPIRE project brochure and the ASPIRE project website.

The Non-formal Learning Sector (NFLS) for the creative industries grew out of the Community Arts and Popular Culture movements of the late 1970's and early 1980's. Across Europe a number of community / educational practitioners began to use Europe's cultural traditions to offer new and exciting methods to engage young people experiencing social exclusion.

The *Aspire* partnership was formed from a group of such organisations. The project is targeted at trainers, tutors, mentors and support workers from NFLS organisations who work in this field. This work is taking place initially with a target group of managers and training staff who are working in the partner organisations and who are participating in the action learning set, as well as being the main providers of experiences and information to inform the research programme.

During year 1, the focus of the project programme has been to investigate how informal and non-formal learning – through the performing and visual arts, media, production and design – provides a bridge from educational and economic exclusion to inclusion, new learning and employment in the European creative / cultural industries.

As we have found from the research findings and also through the discussion and exchanges in the action learning set, the target group ranges from full time staff and part-time staff to very many sessional, freelance and volunteer tutors, many of whom are practising professional artists in their main employment and who bring this excellence and experience to the non formal learning environments in many of the partner organisations.

Current generic teaching and trainer qualifications are not 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 is 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 is 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

2. Project Approach

The methodologies employed in *Aspire* have been 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. Our approach in *Aspire* is therefore to explore ways at the European level that we can validate the skills of trainers in Europe's informal and non-formal learning sector in the creative industries.

In recognition of this, we have deployed an approach which provides added value through an innovative work programme that 'starts where the NFLS sector is' and builds from that position. The purpose of this has been to identify and quantify methodologies that can be captured and published on the way to developing a framework that will lend itself to an appropriate form of validation.

Initially, we are doing this through an in-depth programme of research accompanied by an investigation and peer validation through the action learning set – a 'bottom up' approach that is nonetheless fully informed by two key frameworks: The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and also the European Reference Framework (ERF). These have been found to be highly enabling and address the feedback from the EACEA project selection report, which highlighted the importance of aligning the project to the EQF

The project is deploying an on-going process of evaluation, where the partnership meetings, the trainer workshops, tutor observations (recorded with video and used as a feedback tool) as well as specific data gathering and interpretation is used to feedback in to the project progress. The overview of this process is the responsibility of the project coordinator and a written interim report is due in January 2011. This report will review progress against project objectives and the effectiveness of the project's mechanisms and working processes to date, and will also review the degree to which the project has addressed the project selection report comments and any remaining actions that are required. In the meantime, through the process of research, review and evaluation we have identified two different approaches to engaging with the National Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework. The first, by matching 'snapshots of individual practice' against NQF and EQF standards i.e. Equivalence; and the second by creating a 'parallel flow of development' alongside the NQF and EQF which would enable 'interpretation' rather than 'equivalence'.

In either case, the emphasis on the research needed to be focused on observable practice embedded in the values and contexts of the partner projects. With this in mind, the use of narrative video is being 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 would then be elaborated to pan out 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

During the course of year 1, the dissemination and exploitation strategy was time tabled to focus upon awareness-raising. At a partnership level, there have been two primary mechanisms for this. Firstly, a common project publicity brochure was published – describing the partnership and the overall aspirations and objectives of *Aspire*. The brochure is in the partner languages of English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Danish, and also in German and French. 5,000 hard copies of this brochure have been printed and circulated across the partnership for dissemination at the local/regional and national level to publicise the project. Secondly, a project website – www.euro-aspire.com has been designed and produced. Again, the website contains summary information in each of the partner languages plus French and German. It is intended to be a repository of project product and will be used more proactively to support project dissemination in the second year of *Aspire*.

Each of the partners is disseminating information about the project to peer organisations in their localities and sectoral contexts as well as promoting the project via their websites and seeking dialogue with regional policy and qualification authorities. The project is also being highlighted through academic channels by VIA and Dr Denise Stanley of Collage Arts. At a collective level, Representatives of Collage Arts, WAC Performing Arts and Media, Mulab, Artquimia and New Arts College were also able to consult informally on project progress as they were all at the Final Dissemination Event of a Leonardo Transfer of Innovation project, *STEP*, which was staged as part of the 2010 Festival Castel Sant'Angelo and at which dissemination materials from *Aspire* were highlighted and circulated.

With a view on the ultimate exploitation strategy, which is due for implementation in year 2, and in order to maximise the potential take up of the project results by target beneficiaries and longer term impact, the *Aspire* partnership has also sought to formally engage with qualification authorities and relevant artists associations. Project representatives have met with representatives from Goldsmiths College, London, to discuss dissemination with the European League for Institutes for the Arts. We have also consulted formally with the international arts qualification and awarding body, Trinity College and with the Director of the UK National Skills Academy on the project approach to the design of competences and the issues that this may present for validation and accreditation.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Thus far, we have already been able to produce a set of concrete results for the project. Some of these are directly concerned with the quality of the internal work programme and others are as a direct result/outcome of the programme. We need to cover a lot of ground from a low baseline at the European level. The content below describes progress and outcomes within the work packages, indicated where we have completed activity (where appropriate).

We have also listed (by deliverable number) the results thus far:

WP1 – MANAGEMENT OF THE EURO-ASPIRE PROJECT

1) Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Steering Group – completed February 2010

The Terms of Reference constitute the governance document for the partnership; a 'code of conduct' that sets out and fully specifies partners' roles and responsibilities. It sets out the remit of the partnership steering group, other Leonardo requirements; conflict resolution, language, communication and protocols.

2) Project Delivery Plan – completed February 2010, for review January 2011

This document sets out the work packages and sets out the quality assurance and performance indicators, success measures, with roles, timelines and approaches.

WP2 – RESEARCH PROGRAMME

3) How NFLS Motivate Learners – completed June 2010

This deliverable reports 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.

4) NFLS factors in the Creative Industry Sector – completed June 2010

This deliverable identifies 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.

5) Creative industries formal qualifications – completed June 2010

This examines 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.

6) Trainer Profiles and Competency Frameworks – completed June 2010

This examines 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.

WP3 – DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ACTION LEARNING NETWORK FOR MANAGERS AND TRAINERS

7) Establishment of Action Learning Network – initiated February 2010, for elaboration in 2011

Managers, trainers, tutors and support workers from the NFLS organisations have been identified to participate in the new action learning network, enabling them to exchange information in relation to the project. The group language is English. This takes place between partner meeting workshops on email and is complemented by a group on-line environment in the form of an extranet – *Rise Up* (this has taken the place of the private discussion area that was originally envisaged as accessible through the project website). Its effectiveness as a collective discussion forum for the network is being reviewed as part of the evaluation process due to report to the partnership in January 2011.

WP6 – MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND AWARENESS-RAISING

10) Euro-Aspire Project Website (7 languages) – completed June 2010, developing continuing through 2011

The project website, which is at www.euro-aspire.com, has been designed and established initially as an on-line promotional vehicle for the project. It was approved by the partners for use at the Malaga meeting. It also contains a news and updates area for public attention and contains summaries of project activity. The material is available in the partner languages of English, Spanish, Danish, Dutch and Italian and is also translated in to German and French. In the second year of the project, as the results of year 1 evolve more strongly, it will be utilised more proactively as a dissemination vehicle. In anticipation of this, and in order to offer a vehicle to showcase digital creative product generated by NFLS beneficiaries, the web-environment also incorporates gateways to *Aspire* on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and You Tube, the content for which will be more fully elaborated in 2011.

11) Euro-Aspire Project Brochure (7 languages) – completed May 2010

A Project Brochure was designed and developed and approved for use at the partnership meeting in Malaga. 5,000 copies have been 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.

WP7 – QUALITY AND EVALUATION PLANS/ACTIONS

12) Project Quality and Evaluation Plan – completed March 2010

The Quality and Evaluation Plan describes the purpose of evaluation in *Aspire* and the methods that will be utilised to gather data for evaluation. Evaluation in the project is based upon an on-going process of review and feedback through the action learning approach, which will be complemented by an evaluation report, the interim version of which is due in January 2011.

4. Partnerships

The full partnership has met as a steering group on two occasions – Arnhem (the Netherlands) in January 2010 hosted by New Arts College and Malaga/Torremolinos (Spain) in May 2010 hosted by Artquimia. A third meeting of the project partnership is planned for London in mid November 2010, to be hosted by the promoter, Collage Arts

The first of these meetings was concerned with establishing the project management framework, including partner agreements, budgets and protocols, led by the project coordinator. It also ‘unpacked’ the project work packages and the overall objectives and revised and confirmed the project delivery plan. It received a presentation from VIA on the proposed approach to the research programme, which it approved.

The second of the meetings consisted of a three-day workshop, at which managers, tutors and trainers worked together to ‘de-code’ the common values, practice, goals, teaching and learning strategies that relate directly to the issue of validation, equivalence and interpretation in the NFLS in the sector. Partners were required to prepare video-based material for discussion. Arising from this, workshops were facilitated (and filmed) that provided an evidence base with an instrument of validation could be drafted, and subsequently elaborated and adapted.

The first part of *Aspire* was based upon a major programme of research – both academic review and action learning-based, led by VIA University from Denmark, in close collaboration with Dr Denise Stanley of Collage Arts. This research has benefitted from a process that has combined academic review with practical action learning and taken place through two strands, in the form of:

- (a) A set of research studies into the characteristics of learning and training programmes in the NFLS creative / cultural sector, which motivate learners who are excluded or disinterested in formal learning pathways; and
- (b) Observation and exchange in relation to the processes, mechanisms and context of trainers, mentors and support workers who practice in NFLS organisations.

In terms of (a) we identified three fields of informal learning, creative practice and social engagement/participation. We acknowledged the potential paradox of formally accrediting informal learning and identified a commitment to ensure that the values of any validation process needed to be congruent with the values and practices of the sector.

In terms of (b) the practical part of the project has then been founded upon an action learning network of managers / trainers from Artquimia, Mulab, New Arts College, WAC and Collage Arts, informed by the research of VIA and facilitated by Dr Denise Stanley of Collage Arts to identify common competences, informed by the research and developed through peer exchange and debate through the partner meeting workshops and on-line discussion.

Representatives of Collage Arts, WAC Performing Arts and Media, Mulab, Artquimia and New Arts College were also able to consult informally on project progress as they were all at the Final Dissemination Event of a Leonardo Transfer of Innovation project, *STEP*, which was staged as part of the 2010 Festival Castel Sant’Angelo and at which dissemination materials from *Aspire* were circulated.

The partners have successfully engaged in dialogue with a number of agencies including: local small to medium-sized non-profit organisations interested in non-formal learning, young people and learning, open source philosophies, cultural and creative industries; local authorities and regional governmental agencies; national accreditation bodies; industry bodies representing creative and cultural skills.

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 – the international awarding body, Trinity College Guildhall, has met with partners and a representative is attending the forthcoming partner steering group in London. We have also consulted with the Director of the National Skills Academy for the Creative and Cultural Sector Skills Council in the UK, who is also attending the London meeting.

The *Aspire* partners' experience across Europe to date confirms the value of the non-formal learning sector in the Creative and Cultural Industries; the need to recognise non-formal learning as a rich source of human capital and the need to make this more visible and therefore more valuable to society. *Aspire's* aim of validating competencies of trainers working with NFLS learners, many of whom are disadvantaged, to facilitate entry to employment *and* self employment will certainly provide social and economic benefits. The challenges for the partnership in this respect is to engage with EU policy makers to find ways to raise the profile of non-formal learning, simplify the processes, give validity and recognise that the non-formal sector is cost effective.

5. Plans for the Future

The next stage of the project is to consolidate the approach that we are taking to Trainer Profiles and Competency Frameworks at the next Partner meeting and trainer workshop in London, which is being hosted by Collage Arts between the 11th and the 13th November 2010.

The partner meeting will coincide with Collage Art's 'Open Studios' event – at which over 7,000 members of the public and local and regional public policy representatives visit Collage's Chocolate Factory Studios – and *Aspire* will be showcased and presented at the event.

Following consultations in the UK, invitations have been extended to two key public bodies to attend. Firstly, Margaret Morris from Trinity College Guildhall, the international qualifications and accreditation authority, will present and will discuss with the partners the way in which the work of *Aspire* could be accredited by Trinity. Secondly the Director of the National Skills Academy for the Creative and Cultural Skills, Pauline Tambling, will describe the function of the Creative and Cultural Skills Sector Skills Council (SSC) in the UK, and discuss with the partners the potential for collaboration with the employer-led SSC in terms of developing new networks.

In terms of the work that is remaining to achieve our project objectives, the stages of the work programme and the activities that we are planning to undertake are as follows (with the deliverable numbers given under each work package):

WP4 - IDENTIFICATION OF VALIDATION AND ACCREDITATION ROUTES/ CURRICULUM MAPPING/ PRODUCTION OF TOOLKITS AND GUIDANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK

8) Development of Trainer Toolkits (5 languages) – due December 2010

The toolkits will capture and cross reference the range of practices and approaches adopted by trainers in the partner organisations. The indicators will include self motivation, working in a team; communication skills; presentation skills; literacy; numeracy, cross referenced to the use of specific cultural and creative expression facilitated through music, dance, drama, design, audio visual / digital media production.

The project will explore further the development of a common European solution to recognise competences and qualifications gained through informal and non-formal settings, to provide a framework that can be deployed throughout Europe, for creative pathways from informal and non-formal learning to accredited learning and formal education.

WP5 - TESTING AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

9) NFLS Trainer Competencies and Validation Framework (technical competency map) (5 languages) – due June 2011

The competency map will examine the specific orientation of delivery from NFLS trainers in relation to training and learning methodologies adopted to deliver the art/creative form and the key/core skills above. The discussion with qualification and certification authorities will be strengthened, primarily through consultation with the international awarding body, Trinity Guildhall College, and with the Sector Skills Council in the UK. The map will be drafted in English and will incorporate those elements of content along with training and teach approaches that are adopted in relation to personal mentoring/coaching (1:1, group, peer), virtual / collaborative learning; self paced learning and performance support.

The proposed assessment philosophy that will underpin the ASPIRE framework needs to fit the culture of the NFL sector and be congruent with the use of continuous informal assessment as a diagnostic tool. Continuous informal assessment is currently used for giving information in a positive and affirming role about the strengths and weaknesses of the learner-practitioner (LP) in relation to self-directed or negotiated goals. This formative assessment is embedded in the feedback received in conversations and staff, audience and peer reactions, inside and outside any devised or self-negotiated learning programme.

WP6 – MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND AWARENESS RAISING

10) Euro-Aspire Project Website (7 languages) – completed June 2010, developing continuing, updated regularly

As the results of the project become more concrete, the partner website will be elaborated further with relevant content. End users themselves will be producing creative product (music, performances) both live at dissemination events, and through recorded material that will be downloadable from the website and showcased in brochures.

WP7 – QUALITY AND EVALUATION PLANS/ACTIONS

13) Interim Evaluation Report – written report with summary for public dissemination (7 languages) – due January 2011

This document will represent 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 will set the baseline for subsequent priorities in the remaining part of the project, pointing in particular to lessons for dissemination and exploitation. It will also produce an extract of initial results for public dissemination via the website.

WP8 – DISSEMINATION ACTIVITY

14) Dissemination Conferences – July and September 2011

At this stage we are planning two specific conferences to disseminate the learning and outcomes from the project at the European level. It is intended that a conference will be hosted by our Italian partner, Mulab, in Rome. This will coincide with the annual Festival Castel Sant'Angelo in July, during which some 2 million visitors attend. The project will be showcased through an exhibition stand and with publicity

material throughout and the partners will arrange a specific workshop and performances. The second event will be in London, potentially at a prestigious venue at the South Bank (access to which can be gained at preferential rates). A summary of the outcomes from the conferences will be published.

WP9 – EXPLOITATION OF LEARNING AND RESULTS

15) Project Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (English only) – due August 2011

Once the results of the project begin to emerge, a specific plan will be produced which will encapsulate the dissemination work (activities, methods, key audiences), with a gearing towards exploitation and legacy planning. It will be elaborated in full following the mid term evaluation of the project, when emerging lessons are known and the partnership is in a better position to establish priorities for exploitation, based on real potential for impact.

16) Final Project Report – public dissemination report (7 languages) – due October 2011

As the project comes to a close, and the results and lessons have been fully evaluated, a summative statement on Euro-Aspire will be produced. Once again, two audiences will be in mind. Firstly, those for whom the specific and detailed outcomes of the project are of interest, including a review of the evidence base. Secondly, with the building and extending of trainer networks in mind; a summary report in all partner languages, French and German will be produced as a final legacy.

6. Contribution to EU policies

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

Since we started our project, the European Commission has 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.*" We recognise 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.

Furthermore, **A New Impetus for European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training** (June 2010), to support the Europe 2020 strategy, stated that vocational training 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 are developing and prototyping 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
- Be credible and legitimate; and
- Be 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 are directly addressing 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.

Should *Aspire* prove successful we will have established 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.