



Widening in Dissemination & Exploitation of Results

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Beneficiary organisation: North Devon College

Project coordinator: Jenny Sparling
Project coordinator organisation: North Devon College
Project coordinator telephone number: +44 1271 338181
Project coordinator email address: jsparling@ndevon.ac.uk

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Executive Summary

In January 2008 the European Union granted North Devon College funding from the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 to carry out a unique research project that is aimed at increasing the amount of European Union Leonardo da Vinci funding coming into the region with the primary objective of increasing the number of people participating in a Leonardo da Vinci project. Leonardo da Vinci funds mobility projects where participants visit a range of European countries and undertake a work placement and benefit from different cultural and practical experiences.

The WIDER Project (Widening in Dissemination and Exploitation of Results), is the only project of its kind being undertaken in the EU and celebrates over 10 years of North Devon College activity utilising European funding, particularly within the scope of the Leonardo da Vinci programme (and its predecessors), which promotes the mobility of students and staff across Europe, focussing on vocational education and training. The programme provides opportunities for vocational trainees and trainers to gain work experience, exchange best practice and observe different ways of delivering training across the European Union.

During the past 10 years, small groups of vocational trainees have taken enormous benefit from the opportunity to gain work experience in other EU countries such as Sweden, Hungary, France, Spain and Germany, with North Devon College staff, who have worked with those involved, witnessing the immensely positive immediate impact EU mobility has had on individuals in terms of raised aspirations, and skills, knowledge and experience gained.

North Devon College is the main provider of training and education for those over 16 years in North Devon and Torridge and also delivers significant volumes of training in other areas of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. These are rural counties within the South West of England covering a wide geographic area, with many isolated communities. The rural isolation of the region fosters a parochial view of life and work, with large sections of the community unaware of, and not aspiring to work within other areas of the European Union. This parochial isolation also fosters a low skilled, low wage economy, where the high cost of living compared to low levels of income creates relative poverty and disadvantage. Increasing the potential for a higher skilled, higher waged workforce is one way of combating this disadvantage and isolation in the South West of England. Making vocational training more attractive and more effective through EU mobility will assist in achieving a higher skilled workforce and will ensure participants are much better equipped to compete in the EU Labour Market.

The key focus of the WIDER project has been to undertake research to assess the longer term benefits of participation on these projects.

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1. Project Objectives

The WIDER Project undertook activities to promote the benefits of Leonardo projects, and improve the visibility of potential opportunities through dissemination and exploitation of previous project results.

The overall objective of the project was to increase the number of applications made to the Leonardo programme from the South West, greatly increase the number of participants and the involvement of businesses in the programme and to stimulate interest amongst staff working in vocational education and training in the possibilities of transnational partnerships. The project also sought to increase the number of Leonardo participants welcomed into the region on placements from other EU countries.

Initially, the project carried out a systematic assessment of the results of previous projects undertaken by the College, and using the findings of this analysis, undertook dissemination activities to promote the Leonardo Programme to staff, trainees and SME employers throughout the South West of England region.

The project set out to encourage staff, trainees and people in the labour market throughout the region to look beyond the boundaries of their local community and embrace the entrepreneurial spirit through raising the aspirations of communities suffering the disadvantages of a low skills, low wage economy. It also set out to promote openness of mind and a creative and competitive spirit, as well as a sense of European Citizenship, which will hopefully ultimately lead to increased employability of individuals from traditionally low aspirational backgrounds.

Through encouraging those involved in training to participate in Leonardo mobility actions, the project set out to promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills and qualifications which will lead to greater employability in the European Labour market through increased personal development. The projects aimed to encourage the acquisition of broad experiential skills, as well as a broadening of horizons, leading to the development of individuals as highly skilled and rounded European Citizens.

A questionnaire was sent to all students who had previously participated in a Leonardo mobility project through North Devon College, and staff who have participated have been interviewed.

The results of the research confirm that not only does the experience increase skills and aspirations, it also enhances employability and opens up new opportunities for participants, and helps to provide a stronger workforce to support the economy of the region. A questionnaire was also sent to some of the employers identified by the respondents, whose responses reinforce these findings.

A group of students were also undertaking an exchange visit whilst we carried out our research. 14 students studying a catering qualification went to Sweden and Hungary for four weeks in April 2008. They were interviewed prior to their visit and after their visit to determine what immediate impact there had been. A pre and post visit questionnaire was also sent to their parents/guardians to get their feedback and

views about the visit and if they had observed any immediate impact upon the young person involved.

2. Project Approach

In April 2008 the following questionnaire was sent to 144 students who had participated on a Leonardo da Vinci mobility project between 1998 and 2007. Questionnaires included a range of qualitative and quantitative questions, designed to provide an opportunity for respondents to identify specific strengths and weaknesses with the mobility activity, as well as providing overarching opinions. Of these, 80 were female, 67 were male.

Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 Leonardo da Vinci

WIDER Project

Widening in Dissemination and Exploitation of Results

Questionnaire

NAME:

DATE OF BIRTH:

GENDER: MALE FEMALE

MEDICAL/LEARNING NEEDS: YES NO

EXCHANGE DESTINATION/COUNTRY:

WORK PLACEMENT DETAILS:

DATE OF EXCHANGE: Month Year

1. Which of the following influenced your choice of course? (Please tick all the answers that you agree with).

- Because it fitted with my future career plans
- It was relevant to my job
- Because I like the subject
- To gain qualifications
- To advance my skills and knowledge in this area
- Suggested or required by employer
- Suggested by others
- For my own personal interest
- To meet other people/make new friends

2. Did you know about the exchange trip when you enrolled on your course?
 YES NO

3. If yes, did this influence your decision to enrol on your chosen course?
 YES NO

4. Are you currently:

Employed Full-Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employed Part-Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-Employed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed (and length of unemployment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
In Further Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
In Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homemaker	<input type="checkbox"/>

If employed:

Name of employer:

Address of employer:

Job Title:

How long in present position:

If in education:

What are you currently studying for:

5. What courses have you done since this course?

Has there been any time that you were unemployed?

What jobs have you had / companies you have worked for?

6. Where have you travelled abroad to since your exchange trip?

7. Have you worked abroad since your exchange trip? YES NO

If yes, where and what did you do.

8. How helpful was the project to you?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neither helpful or unhelpful
- Unhelpful
- Very unhelpful

9. What did you gain from your exchange trip. Tick as many as apply.

- Increased confidence
- Learnt new skills relating to my course
- Gained new knowledge relating to my course
- Learnt about a new culture
- Foreign language skills
- Dealing with new situations

•	Made new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Managed my money	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Working in a team	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Learnt about a new country	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Learnt more about myself	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Used my initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Enabled me to see my UK work in a new perspective	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Please choose as many of the following statements that apply to you.	
	My exchange visit:	
	- Increased my chances of getting the job I wanted	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Enabled me to gain the qualifications I required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Enabled me to pursue my chosen career	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Changed my view on the type of career I wanted to pursue	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Reinforced my commitment to my course	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	How has participating on your project influenced what you have achieved since leaving college?	
12.	Did you put your work experience on your CV/application forms when applying for jobs?	
	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	At job interviews, was this work experience commented upon? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Do you think it positively impacted upon your interview?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	Do you think it has positively impacted upon your earnings?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Would you participate in a similar exchange visit again?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Would you recommend your course to others?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Would you recommend the exchange visit to others?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Are you still in contact with the other students who were on your exchange visit?	
	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
17.	In what way was your exchange visit different to how you expected?	
18.	What elements of your exchange visit could have been better?	
19.	Would you encourage others to participate in this type of course? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
20.	How satisfied were you with the learning experience you had through the exchange trip?	
•	Extremely satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Fairly satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	Fairly dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Very dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

Please indicate if you are happy for us to contact you if we require further information regarding this questionnaire. YES NO

Please indicate if you are happy for us to contact your employer if we require further information regarding this questionnaire. YES NO

Contact Details:

Address:

Phone Number:

ANY OTHER COMMENTS:

Students were identified using data already held for all Leonardo projects that we had run during that time period. It was realised however, that some addresses may not be current and could now be just the parental home address, thus creating a potential barriers to obtaining the data required.

Once questionnaires were received, respondent current employers were identified and subsequently questionnaires were sent to them also, to ascertain how, as an employer a Leonardo project may have impacted upon employability. Only those employers where the respondent had given us permission to do so were contacted.

Staff here at North Devon College were spoken to who had played a role in a mobility project to gauge what benefits they felt had been derived for themselves and the students.

Funding for the RICE Project (Restaurant Industry Cultural Exchange) was applied for in March 2007 and acceptance was given in June 2007. 14 students participated and at the time of sending out the questionnaires, were about to embark upon their work placements in Sweden and Hungary.

This was an opportunity to explore and identify the immediate impact upon the students from their experience and formally record the results to solidify the previously anecdotal evidence regarding the impact. Each student was interviewed before they went on their exchange visit and interviewed upon their return in order that comparisons could be made on their views and opinions of the trip. Questionnaires were also sent to their parents/guardians before and after their trip to ascertain their views and opinions and to gauge whether they observed any immediate impact upon the young person involved.

Additionally a questionnaire was sent to a “control group” being those students who had studied the same courses as the students who had participated in the mobility projects over the past 10 years but who did not go on the exchange trips. We wanted to try and identify whether there were any significant reasons for not participating in order to address any issues for future participation as well as being able to measure more accurately the impact of participation.

Project Respondents

Of the 144 questionnaires that were sent out, 38% returned their questionnaire. To ensure the maximum number were returned, on two occasions following the specified deadline, outstanding respondents were called by telephone to encourage them to return their questionnaires. A number of questionnaires were returned uncompleted due to participants having moved address. During the telephone campaign it was also evident that a number of students had moved on. Where current contact details were provided, questionnaires were resent. A total of 13 projects were covered and at least one questionnaire was returned from each project which gave a good overview for the time period in question and mean results take into account all the projects.

Once it was decided that as much information as possible had been gathered, a review of the data collected began. Statistical analysis of both quantitative and qualitative questions was undertaken in order to demonstrate both positive and any negative responses.

From the information gathered, several respondents were identified and contacted and interviewed in order to produce more in-depth case studies.

Once the results had been analysed, they were disseminated in various ways. A brochure was produced detailing the key results of the project, together with case studies and key conclusions.

To reach the target group of staff, trainees, trainers and SME employers, many options were explored and utilised. A television interview, newspaper article and advertising on local radio meant that at various stages of the project a vast number of the target audience were reached in terms of raising awareness of the objectives of the project, the benefits of Leonardo mobility projects and of the dissemination activities that were being undertaken. Having established these links, they can be used again in the future to sustain the dissemination of information about the project. Additionally, many contacts were made during the lifetime of the project, namely through the Steering Group members, the majority of which were members of the Chambers of Commerce and other business networking organisations, and whilst at other events where project results were disseminated i.e. North Devon Business Showcase, open evenings and other local events. Through maintaining a relationship with these contacts and providing regular updates about the project, the target audience continues to be reached.

The project was also endorsed and supported by several key people. Firstly, David Dodd, the Principal at North Devon College, commented, "The Leonardo programme has been brilliant in providing exciting aspirational opportunities for many of the young people across North Devon". Additionally, Michael Caines, a celebrity chef and owner of key hotels and Michelin Star restaurants, who regularly takes students for work experience, gave an interview which was filmed for a project film that was produced and shown at dissemination events and features on the project website, www.wider.org.uk.

During his interview, Michael said he believes it is important that young people have an open mind for learning and as they move away from

education to continue to acquire skills and learn. As an employer himself, he believes European work experience is hugely important because of the experience gained from going to another country and embracing another culture and seeing hospitality from a European perspective in order to raise expectations of quality and deliverance in service standards.

The project was also endorsed and supported by John Savage CBE, Chief Executive of GWE Business West and who is also Chairman of the South West Region Learning and Skills Council and a board member of Connexions West of England. He gave a presentation at our dissemination event at Exeter City Football which was inspiring and warmly received.

Additionally, Councillor Brian Greenslade, the Liberal Democrat County Councillor for Barnstaple North, in Devon opened the dissemination event and was highly supportive of the project and what it had achieved. He is also a Vice Chair of the South West UK Brussels Office Management Board and Vice President and Treasurer of the Assembly of European Region (AER).

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The results from the research show that:

- 93% of respondents said they would recommend their European work experience placement to others
- 88% of respondents said the project was either very helpful or helpful to them
- 96% of respondents said they would encourage others to participate in their type of course
- 81% of respondents said they would participate in a similar programme again.
- 78% of respondents said they were either extremely satisfied or very satisfied with the learning experience they had through the Leonardo mobility project

A more in-depth analysis of the research results as are follows.

Analysis of data collected from questionnaires returned from previous students between 1998 - 2007

Overall feedback was 91% positive

Which of the following influenced your choice of course? (Respondents were asked to tick all the answers that they agreed with)	
• Because it fitted with my future career plans	67%
• It was relevant to my job	39%
• Because I like the subject	61%
• To gain qualifications	56%
• To advance my skills and knowledge in this area	72%
• Suggested or required by employer	27%
• Suggested by others	22%
• For my own personal interest	54%
• To meet other people/make new friends	35%

Did you know about the exchange trip when you enrolled on your course?	Yes	30%	No	70%
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If Yes, did this influence your decision to enrol on your chosen course?	Yes	28%
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Are you currently:	Employed Full-Time	60%
	Employed Part-Time	11%
	Self-Employed	8%
	Unemployed	6%
	In Further Education	11%
	In Higher Education	1%
	Homemaker	4%
	Carer	1%

Since participating on a Leonardo mobility project, respondents have gone on to study courses such as AS Business Studies, Certificate in Management, Level 3 Pastry, PGE Food Technology and some have set up their own businesses.

The question “Where have you travelled abroad to since the exchange trip” was asked in order to investigate if the issue of rural isolation had been addressed. In the South West area, there is a tendency for young people not to travel and have low aspirations. Presented with the opportunity to travel can significantly raise confidence levels and demonstrate how easy it is and therefore encourage young people to explore travelling further. Respondents have since travelled globally and during one to one interviews and from comments made on the questionnaires, this travel has directly results from their experience of travelling to Europe.

Additionally, 17% of respondents have also worked in another country since their European work experience, again as a direct result of their Leonardo mobility project experience.

How helpful was the project to you?	
• Very helpful	44%
• Helpful	44%
• Neither helpful or unhelpful	12%
• Unhelpful	0%
• Very unhelpful	0%
What did you gain from your exchange trip. (Respondents were asked to tick as many as apply).	
• Increased confidence	69%
• Learnt new skills relating to my course	76%
• Gained new knowledge relating to my course	63%
• Learnt about a new culture	87%
• Foreign language skills	52%
• Dealing with new situations	69%
• Made new friends	56%
• Managed my money	46%
• Working in a team	61%
• Learnt about a new country	87%
• Learnt more about myself	61%
• Used my initiative	57%
• Enabled me to see my UK work in a new perspective	39%

Respondents were asked to choose as many of the following statements that applied to them. My exchange visit:	
• Increased my chances of getting the job I wanted	30%
• Enabled me to gain the qualifications I required	43%
• Enabled me to pursue my chosen career	39%
• Changed my view on the type of career I wanted to pursue	17%
• Reinforced my commitment to my course	56%

Respondents were asked how participating on a Leonardo mobility project had influenced what they had achieved since leaving North Devon College. The overwhelming response was that it had raised their aspirations, increased their confidence and skills and had increased their chances of getting the job they want in the future.

Did you put your work experience on your CV/application forms when applying for jobs?	Yes	81%	No	19%
At job interviews, was this work experience commented upon?	Yes	54%	No	46%
Do you think it positively impacted upon your interviews	Yes	63%	No	27%

Would you participate in a similar exchange visit again?	Yes	81%	No	19%
Would you recommend your course to others?	Yes	94%	No	6%
Would you recommend the exchange visit to others?	Yes	93%	No	7%
Are you still in contact with other students who were on your exchange visit?	Yes	67%	No	33%
Would you encourage others to participate in this type of course?	Yes	96%	No	4%

How satisfied were you with the learning experience you had through the exchange trip?	
• Extremely satisfied	41%
• Very satisfied	37%
• Fairly satisfied	13%
• Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3%
• Fairly dissatisfied	2%
• Very dissatisfied	2%
• Extremely dissatisfied	2%

The response from the questionnaire was extremely positive and clearly indicates what a positive and invaluable experience Leonardo mobility projects are for those that participate.

In respect of the RICE (Restaurant Industry Cultural Exchange) project that was running at the time of the research being carried out, the comments on the questionnaires from those students who were participating and their parents, also demonstrated the immediate impact the experience had on them. All the students said they would recommend their course and work placement trip to others. The initial feedback upon their return was that they had gained more confidence, gained a better understanding of another culture, and had acquired new skills. They felt the experience had opened up new opportunities and would increase their chances of getting a better job, and that working in Europe was most definitely an option for the future.

Additionally, the employers that were identified on the questionnaires in the main research that gave permission to be questioned, reported that the skills the students brought to their job role exceeded expectations. It is clear that employees with

international experience can give businesses an edge in today's global market place with increased skills, confidence and raised aspirations.

The results of the research confirm that not only does the Leonardo mobility project experience increase skills and aspirations, it also enhances employability and opens up new opportunities for participants, and helps to provide a stronger workforce to support the economy of the region.

4. Partnerships

Not applicable.

5. Plans for the Future

In the future, we will continue the Lifelong Learning Programme through Leonardo da Vinci funded projects and will continue to adopt a proactive approach of stimulating project ideas and applications in order to increase the applications and the number of teachers, trainers and trainees who participate on them year on year. Already, for 2009/10 this has been significantly increased by over 50% on the previous year which can be directly attributed to the dissemination of the research results and increasing the interest in European mobility. From our dissemination events, interest was shown for applications which will be submitted for 2010/11 and first indications show an increase in participation by another 50% on 2009/10.

By updating the website on a regular basis and updating information produced from the project we will continue to disseminate that information to the relevant target audiences. It is also planned that programmes be run to cover all vocational subjects and already this has been expanded significantly. Additionally, we want to increase our number of partners in Europe in order to run more programmes in more vocational areas.

We will continue to disseminate our findings from the project using the methods and channels we have already adopted as they clearly demonstrate they are a successful way to communicate given the impact on the increase of applications made as a result of the project and the resulting indication of the clear benefits to be gained from European work placements and experience.

We will continue to communicate with teachers, trainers, trainees and SMEs to reinforce that employees with international experience can give businesses an edge in today's global market place; that European work experience increases skills, confidence and raises aspirations; that placements have the potential to change people's lives; and it can make trainees more "work ready".

6. Contribution to EU policies

Lisbon Education & Training Progress Indicators

The WIDER Project has addressed several goals of the Lisbon strategy. Through our research and dissemination of those results we have encouraged and increased the inward and outward mobility of teachers, trainers and Leonardo da Vinci trainees. This is directly reflected in the increase of the applications we submitted for 2009/2010 in terms of the number of teachers, trainers and trainees who wish to participate now and in the future.

Lisbon Key Competences - Entrepreneurship

It was clear from the feedback from participants on previous Leonardo projects, that their experience had a significant impact upon their lives and consequently raised their aspirations. This is shown in the number of trainees who as a result of their European experience consequently went on to work and travel in the EU and have expressed a desire to set up their own businesses and adopt an entrepreneurial approach. Participants expressed that their Leonardo experience widened their horizons and made them realise the opportunities that exist.

LLP Horizontal Policies – Promoting an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe

All activities carried out by North Devon College are undertaken in accordance with the College's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which promotes equality and diversity at all levels and in all areas. The project has promoted the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity which has been proven in the research results from participants who have expressed the importance and impact the experience of another culture has had on them.

Employment

The WIDER project has promoted the acquisition of skills, knowledge and qualifications to enhance the employment prospects of participants. From the case studies conducted, it is clear that participants have looked beyond the local economy for opportunities and their Leonardo experience has encouraged them to participate in the EU labour market. It is intended that through the dissemination of the results of the project to SMEs, it will boost the local economy to provide increased employment at a higher level.

