Lifelong Learning Programme: in action

UK projects share their experiences of European funding for education and training

www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk
EU Lifelong Learning Programme

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) provides opportunities for people and organisations involved in education and training across Europe to work together, to learn from each other and to widen their experience of other cultures, languages and expertise.

Running from 2007 to 2013, the LLP supports and funds all education and training sectors including schools and colleges, vocational training, higher education, adult education and non-formal sectors.

Here we present a range of examples, which are designed to give a flavour of the different opportunities the LLP provides in support of intercultural dialogue and a European dimension in education and training. Why not see how you could get involved?

A breakdown of the structure of the LLP can be found at the back of this brochure along with contact details and information points. Alternatively you can check the LLP web portal for further general information and links to the various parts of the programme at www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk

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Panfield High School, Wolverhampton, participated in an eTwinning project entitled Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet and Cultural Investigation with partner school Liceo Classico “G. Galilei”, Italy.

The project consisted of four tasks which the students, aged 11-12, had to complete. All of the tasks were based around Shakespeare with a focus on Romeo and Juliet and an investigation into the culture of Italy as the setting of the play. The project allowed pupils to work independently or as a group and covered many key skills such as teamwork, decision-making, literacy and ICT.

eTwinning – part of Comenius – is the perfect tool to use for any project-based learning for schools in Europe. The school chose eTwinning because it provided a great opportunity for students to learn a little about the cultures of other countries and how this may have impacted upon Shakespeare when he wrote the play.

Through the project, students were enabled to have a greater understanding of the cultural differences between Italy and England. This was achieved by Parkfield High School sharing information about Stratford as the birthplace of Shakespeare, and the Italian partner sharing information about Verona as the setting for the play. Further outcomes were that research skills, independent learning, and communication skills were greatly improved.

As Parkfield High School will have specialist Language College status from September 2008, they plan to use overseas links as a means of developing their students as multilingual, multicultural individuals. eTwinning is a key part of this plan as they look to encourage students to learn more about the world they live in.

When Feride Güne first arrived in Oakgrove Integrated College, Derry, Northern Ireland, from Turkey, she had many challenges to face: a new, much smaller town, new accommodation, a different currency, another language and a different religion. However once settled in, Feride was soon writing down lots of new English words, some very special Derry ones and bits of Irish.

Her work in the school has had a huge impact on students. One student said “We loved learning Turkish. It was something different. We didn’t know much about Turkey but thanks to Miss Güne we now know a lot.”

During her eight months at Oakgrove, Feride worked mostly within European Studies, MFL, Art and Citizenship. She also had the opportunity to teach her native language, which the students loved. She taught Turkish songs and used a DVD and PowerPoint presentations to help teach Turkish language and culture. Feride also helped with Oakgrove’s parents’ open night by making displays and providing Turkish refreshments.

Feride commented: “Being a Comenius Assistant was a great experience for me. Everything was so new and so different to me, which was very exciting, but what attracted me most were the smiling faces of all the people here, especially the pupils who speak in Turkish. What I have learned here will be unforgettable.”

Did you know?

Two Comenius Assistants recently demonstrated their eco-credentials by cycling together from the UK to their placements in Denmark and Sweden – covering almost 1500 kilometres! Find out more about this story in our newsletter by visiting www.britishcouncil.org/comenius
Job-shadowing in Poland

A week-long Comenius job-shadow visit to Szkoła Podstawowa Number One in Gronowie Górnym, Poland, provided a wonderful platform for two teachers from Flintshire’s English as an Additional Language (EAL) service, Janet Vokes and Sue Hughes, to engage in intercultural dialogue with a country that in recent years has had a recent and sudden impact on their daily work. In North Wales, where they are based, 70% of the children they now support are from new EU member states.

Very quickly Janet and Sue found themselves sitting in lessons where they didn’t understand the language, and began to realise just how difficult it was for pupils arriving in the UK.

They spent much of their time observing lessons and found it easier to follow when they had been given some prior indication of the content, where there were visual aids and when the teacher used repetition and gesture – all key strategies which they use with pupils arriving in the UK.

The Polish pupils began the week by tentatively saying “hello” but, by the end of the week, were stopping their UK visitors to chat about what they liked and where they lived.

The Polish teachers quickly moved from feeling they were there to “inspect” the education system to using the opportunity to discover how things were done in Wales.

Whilst the school in Poland had no pupils from other countries, several of the staff had relatives working in the UK, and pupils had previously left the school to be educated in the UK. The final meeting was a sharing of Polish and Welsh culture with exchanges of food, gifts and invitations to meet again.

The visit benefited pupils in Wales, who were delighted that their teachers had visited their home country. For Janet and Sue, the visit reinforced the importance of building a European dimension into UK education.

Comenius Partnerships

CEACH – Citizenship, Enterprise and Comparative Health

CEACH is a Comenius Partnership run between schools in Iceland, Madeira, Romania and Scotland (Portlethen Academy, Aberdeenshire). The project aims to encourage students to take responsibility for their own health and well-being and to encourage their peers, parents and the local community to do the same.

The whole project is based on 5 major central comparative “mini-projects” with specific end goals, including the collaborative design of a Health Passport and a cross-curricular art exhibition.

The partnership’s benefits to the students are manifold. The most obvious is the opportunity they have had to be ambassadors for their school and country, and through taking part in visits to Madeira, Romania and Iceland, allowing students to interact directly with their peers. In addition, through cross-curricular themes which complement European and Scottish priorities, the students have gained self-confidence and self-esteem, have learned to work with all age groups and have discovered other cultures and nationalities.

Leaders in Europe Aiming to Develop Evaluation and Review in Schools

Three schools – Holy Cross and All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School in Saltford, Mater Dei National School in Ireland and Kealklina Kool in Estonia – represent areas of serious disadvantage. The project’s focus on school improvement is inclusive, encouraging all staff to develop leadership skills in their own specific area. At project meetings, the Saltford team included teachers, a teaching assistant and maintenance staff.

School Improvement planning has been enhanced as a result, and Comenius has provided opportunities to hold workshops and invite experts to work with the pupils. The schools have also developed themed weeks as a result of their collaboration.

Each partner benefits in different ways: Kealklina Kool is more open to new ideas; Mater Dei staff are particularly pleased with greater levels of personal development among pupils; whilst at Holy Cross and All Saints, School Improvement planning now involves all staff, resulting in their feeling ownership of the process.

All partners agree that the partnership fulfils Comenius’s aim of developing understanding of and between European cultures through collaboration and exchange between schools.

Comenius In-Service Training

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Did you know?

2009 is the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. There will be lots of opportunities for schools and colleges to get involved – information will be available at http://europa.eu
Sharing new approaches to teacher training

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) hosted a Transversal Study Visit which enabled learning professionals from all over Europe to spend a week at the centre, learning about recent improvements to training for Scottish teachers.

“We’re proud of what we do here in Scotland,” says Tom Hamilton, Director of Educational Policy. “We think we do it quite well so we were glad to be able to spread that message to lots of other countries in Europe. We gave visitors the opportunity to go out to a further education college, to one of the universities, to a school. They like the fact that they’re talking to learners and to teachers and that they’re getting that kind of personal insight.”

By taking part in the Transversal programme, GTCS were able to tap into the Lifelong Learning Programme’s vast network of individuals from across Europe who are looking to go on a Study Visit. Maureen Lowrie, Professional Practice Administrator, says:

“If we’d have done something like this without the Transversal programme, maybe one or two countries would have come, but I counted 13 nationalities on our Study Visit. It’s unlikely that we’d have had 13 representatives if it hadn’t been for the Transversal programme.”

Breaking the link between poverty and low attainment

Paul Morgan from the Welsh Assembly Government went on a Transversal Study Visit to Belgium. The focus was on breaking the link between poverty and low educational attainment. Participants benefited from plenty of theory, taking part in workshops and lectures, and also practical experience as they travelled out to visit colleges in Ostend and Kortrijk.

Paul was impressed with the way in which the country was able to provide well rounded education to learners whose focus was on vocational training.

“One interesting thing I saw in Belgium – we were introduced to some 16-18 year old heavy-goods vehicle drivers, who, as well as having trained as drivers, also had a very rich educational background.”

But beyond the specific issues covered on his visit, Paul found the networking opportunity especially rewarding:

“It’s not just an issue of what you learn from the system. This was an opportunity to talk to people from 13 other nationalities, to compare notes and see how the dynamics of the different countries led to different approaches and it helped us to reflect on what we do here in Wales as well.”

Paul Morgan

Tom Hamilton
Birmingham sport educators go on fact finding trip to Sweden

Nine Birmingham sports education professionals have recently returned from their Leonardo Mobility placement in Sweden, where they looked at the country’s leading examples of how sport can help integrate socially disadvantaged people into their communities.

It was a whistle-stop tour including a boxing tournament, a drop-in centre for adults with learning difficulties, a riding school for children with disabilities and a highly successful volunteer-led sports club.

“It was an outstanding experience” said Lloyd Morrison of City United. “We learnt a lot and shared a lot of good practices. I hope this is the start of things to come because I think the link between Birmingham and Sweden needs to be continued. I’m grateful to everyone who dedicated their time and allowed City United to participate.”

Now that they are back home, each participant is busy publicising the outcomes of the visit through their networks and publications, and the Swedish partner is already planning a visit to Birmingham to see how sport is organised there.

As a next step they are also putting in a bid to take part in the Lifelong Learning Programme’s sister scheme, Youth in Action, on using sport to enhance opportunities for young people – a great example of how Leonardo projects can build a momentum for further European work.

Did you know?

This article first appeared in edUKation, the newsletter for the Leonardo, Grundtvig and Transversal programmes. It’s full of project news, events updates and useful tips on applying for funding. To subscribe to edUKation, email your details to tp@ecotec.com
A Northern Ireland college gets a European flavour with help from Leonardo da Vinci

Walking though the gates of Southern Regional College’s Portadown campus, you forget that the community it serves was once the focus of sectarian tension. In the last few years the political situation has cooled, and up on the hill the college sits proudly, its bright new buildings symbolic of a changing country.

Welcome to the new Northern Ireland: positive, forward-looking and moving beyond the troubles that for decades occupied citizens’ minds from day-to-day. It’s the first thing Audrey McKeown, project co-ordinator at SRC, mentions: the luxury of being able to think beyond national boundaries, to apply for European funding, to develop and to grow.

Southern Regional College has been chosen to be part of a film about Lifelong Learning Programme opportunities in Northern Ireland, having benefited from visits abroad through Leonardo da Vinci, which funds projects within the vocational training field.

The film introduces us to Gerry Goodwin, the college’s furniture design lecturer. His positive nature and smile are infectious as he recalls his recent visit to Norway, where he used Leonardo Mobility funding to take colleagues and students to see how the world’s leading mass-producers of furniture operate.

“At the college,” says Gerry, “we have a lot of the technology that they have, which is used for processes like laminating wood. But in Scandinavia it’s on such a massive scale. The students got to see how they are using robotics in their manufacturing, which was a real eye-opener to experience first hand.”

Leonardo Transfer of Innovation Partnership

Diversity training for people in the steel industry
Cardiff University is part of a nine-nation partnership aiming to improve equality and diversity training in the steel industry across Europe.

The project used Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation funding to develop online learning materials. They started by researching needs within the industry and went through to piloting and delivering a syllabus.

“I work on a number of different European funded projects and Leonardo is the easiest of all to manage. The projects are very structured and we have a good contact point to go to if we have any queries.”

Bethan Pritchard, part of the finance and administration team for the EDLESI project.
Kirstyn MacFarlane, a student of Law at the University of Kent, spent a year studying at the University of Bologna. Kirstyn reports: "I learnt so many new skills, but most importantly I feel that my confidence and self-belief have improved and I have learnt to embrace change and even instigate it."

"I vastly improved my organisational skills and learnt to take control of my own choices, take the initiative and seize the opportunity when it was there. The Erasmus year gave me a European perspective on our own legal system and the ability to understand laws and legal reasoning within other countries, especially those based on Roman law."

The University of Sheffield is strongly committed to the integration and support of European activities. Embracing the opportunities that are offered by the Erasmus programme strengthens the University’s international standing in terms of teaching and research whilst promoting its position within existing and new markets.

The University aims to enrich studies through providing an international dimension to teaching and learning. Erasmus plays a vital part in realising this aim and commitment.

There has been a considerable growth in Erasmus student and staff exchanges: in 1999/00, 32 departments had exchange links, sending less than 200 students overseas, whereas by 2006/07, 38 departments had 270 Bilateral Agreements and sent 265 students abroad. Teaching Mobility is also strong, growing from single figures in the early years of Erasmus to nearer 40 staff in the current academic year. Sheffield has a vibrant Erasmus Society Network; staff comment that one of the most satisfying moments come from seeing incoming Erasmus students happily settled at Sheffield and socialising with home students, and when returning students report back about their amazing experiences abroad.

The majority of students at Sheffield have the opportunity to study abroad. In addition to modern language students, students from non-language degrees are actively encouraged to participate in Erasmus and to study abroad for one semester as part of their single honours degree course.

Incoming Erasmus students add tremendously to the teaching and learning environment by contributing to the class what they have learned in their home countries. Academic staff find this a very valuable and stimulating input. Teaching mobility and training visits for staff add further to creating a global dimension to the teaching, research and other activities at the University.

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Erasmus – a university perspective

Erasmus – a student’s perspective

“One of the most enjoyable parts of the Erasmus year was my experience of a ‘student community’. Every week there would be a dinner party or festa. I truly enjoyed sitting around a table with so many diverse and interesting people, savouring their favourite national dishes, learning about traditions and smashing stereotypes too. Erasmus is not just an academic exchange, but a cultural, culinary and creative one.”

“Law is difficult at the best of times and to attempt it in a foreign language might seem crazy. Taking on an Erasmus year is, to me, about pushing yourself, going beyond the boundaries, accepting the unexpected and embracing the uncomfortable with a smile on your face. I learnt many skills throughout my Erasmus year, academic and personal, which I put to use every day now.”

“Erasmus is without doubt one of the best ways to learn about yourself and to appreciate other cultures and the diversity which makes us the interesting and individual human beings that we are.”
Did you know?
The EASY project was part of a recent film about Leonardo, Grundtvig and Transversal programme opportunities. Email llp@ecotec.com to request your free DVD.

Sharing attitudes across the ages

Belfast Metropolitan College is involved in EASY, a Grundtvig Adult Education Partnership that brings young people together with older people to share and examine attitudes towards European issues. As well as regular meetings, the group has used Lifelong Learning Programme funding to meet partners in other countries, including a recent trip to the Netherlands.

“Travelling around with older people was a new experience for me, because I haven’t had much contact with them” says Zara Tsang, “I came to appreciate the difficulties that they face in everyday life, in terms of mobility and so forth. They also had a lot of life experience and I really appreciated that as well.”

The group includes learners from 16 to 80 years of age. At weekly meetings, their discussions address perceptions of other European countries, politics, art and history. It’s a unique opportunity for people of different ages to understand and reflect on each other’s values and to challenge one another with different ways of looking at the world around them.

William Devlin, who co-ordinates the partnership, sees the project as an important means of supporting learners to reflect on their place within European society:

“I think one of the main benefits is the feeling of ‘Europeanisation’. The learners get more of a sense of European values and European culture. Looking at other Europeans and seeing just how similar they are and how they face the same difficulties and problems brings about an important sense of collegiality.”

Promoting human rights through education

A London college is incorporating human rights education into a number of its courses for adult learners, with help from the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Through involvement in a Grundtvig Adult Education Partnership, Newham College of Further Education is working with counterparts in Italy and Spain to design a teaching syllabus on human rights. The new material will become part of the curriculum for several subjects, including its UK citizenship course, pictured here.

“Grundtvig Adult Education Partnerships are a very good way to meet up with other European partners who share a common interest,” said Joyce Amato, Transnational Co-ordinator at Newham College. “Our grant paid for us to travel to meetings overseas and develop a syllabus. The experience was very rewarding. One of our colleagues in Spain was extremely knowledgeable on human rights issues, so that was a real benefit for us.”

Human rights cover a range of issues beyond the most well known examples such as the use of torture or the death penalty. In the UK, human rights violations might include gender or race discrimination. The course materials being designed by Joyce and her team are not only informative; they also motivate learners to be champions for these basic rights in their own communities.

This kind of syllabus is steadily being introduced into education systems across Europe in accordance with EU policy in order to promote active involvement in democratic society.
Promoting active citizenship through volunteering

We spoke to Mark Richards from National Museum Wales about the Grundtvig In-Service Training Course he attended in Italy which focused on enabling people to get more actively involved in their communities.

LLP: How did you hear about the Grundtvig In-Service Training Course?
MR: We received an email asking us to put forward people to attend and I was selected to go to Emilia Romagna in Italy to represent the museum.

LLP: Tell us more about the course. What themes did it cover and who attended?
MR: It was a five-day course for representatives of museums from across Europe, who each brought their own individual experience of working with volunteers. It was very helpful to hear from them, because we’re looking to attract more volunteers to get involved with the museum.

LLP: Were there big differences in the way in which museums across Europe operate?
MR: Well, our organisation employs a lot of paid staff, but many of the people we met in Italy were from much smaller organisations, so they used volunteers in a different way to us. They relied on volunteers a lot more.

Grundtvig In-Service Training

LLP: How do you envisage volunteers getting involved in your work here at the museum?
MR: We want them to present to the public some of the wonderful collections we hold here, so that people in Wales can come here to learn. It’s very important to us that National Museum Wales is seen as a real learning organisation.

www.museumwales.ac.uk
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