

10 November



# Léargas Research Forum 2020

The Impact & Experience  
of European Programmes in Ireland

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## **Erasmus+ Mobility: Connecting Adult Education in Ireland to its Rich Tapestry of Values, Philosophy and Community of Practice in Europe**

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## Reflection on Key Action 1 for Adult Education 2014-2020

- How, in particular, ETBs have used KA1 mobility in Erasmus+ for adult education staff
- The ways in which these projects reflect the Adult Education landscape and support policy implementation
- Elaborate on the value of connection to European networks and communities of practice
- Erasmus going forward – the new programme – new possibilities

# Adult education professional development in EU Programmes



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

**LLL Programme 2000-2014**

**Grundtvig** In- Service Training

**Grundtvig** Visits and Exchanges

Individual rather than organisational



**Erasmus+**

**Erasmus+ 2014-2020**

KA1 Applications from organisations rather than individuals – centred on the concept of the

**European Development Plan**

Offers an opportunity for professional development of adult educators in an international context – in the form of courses, job shadowing, conferences and work placement





## Adult Education KA1 projects 2014- 2020

- ETBs are the main provider of Adult Education in Ireland and over the lifetime of the programme, 9/16 ETB's have participated in Key Action 1 Mobility Projects for Adult Education Staff
- Tipperary ETB (7), CDETB (4), Limerick Clare ETB (3), CMETB (2), WWETB (2), Donegal ETB (2), Mayo Sligo ETB (1), Kerry ETB (1), Cork ETB (1)
- NGOs/Community Education providers have also participated in KA1 (Aontas, NALA)
- 48 projects involving 580 staff awarded funding from 2014-2020
- Projects are for 1-2 year duration and range in size and scope
- Staff attend conferences, courses, job shadowing from 2 -30 days duration

# Situating the Adult Education Field



Usually involves working with adults who experience social and educational inequality

Typically refers to the organised provision of education outside the formal primary, second level and higher education sectors

In Ireland can be described as a diverse field which has historically encompassed a breadth of actors including community education, Education & Training Boards (Regional providers) as well as non-formal learning spaces (community, arts, civic etc)

In this regard: Adult education is seen as a way to “enhance people’s lives, to develop social awareness and a collective sense of purpose, and to address societal marginalisation and exclusion” (Connolly, 2008, p.31).

Draws from principles of democracy, community and social justice with its philosophical underpinnings influenced by humanism, progressivism and radicalism (Popovic and Kouladaouzides, 2017)

# Reflecting the Adult Education landscape

While 2014 marked the beginning of the Erasmus+ programme – it also marked the launch of the **FET Strategy** which followed the amalgamation of the VECs into the 16 ETBs we now know today.

FET (Further Education & Training) became the new umbrella term for the sector. Adult Education and Vocational Education & Training would now come under this umbrella term.

It can be said that this reform was a period of change, uncertainty for many and this is reflected in the project themes and activities in the early days of Erasmus+ for ETB's with needs outlined in project proposals referencing 'team building' and 'change management' in response to their reform.

KA1 proposals submitted by ETB's were seeking to address needs around **delivery/ methodology in particular staff capacity to use technology in the classroom and the digital divide** experienced by learners– they were also alongside this seeking to address **staff leadership and capacity to deal with the complexities of the sectoral reform**. Issues around **staff morale, leadership and teambuilding** are themes that one can find threaded through KA1 projects in the period of 2014 – 2016.

# The European Development Plan

It can be said that earlier iterations of ETB projects **expressed the individual needs of staff rather than a whole organisation approach.**

From 2016 - ETBs AEOs/ professional development officers and later EU Project Officers oversee projects with an organisational/strategic view.

ETBs with a number of projects see a model of KA1 projects emerging (LCETB, TETB).

**The European Development Plan allows for an organisational mapping of the needs of learners and staff, linked to the strategic plans of the organisation.**

**It also asks for projects to explicate the value of the European dimension to their continuing professional development.**

**Importantly, it outlines plans for integration of learning on return.**

**KA1 projects are used to complement and** underpin ETB Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Strategies informed by FET CPD Strategy.

**Other Policy areas include:**  
Strategy for TEL in FET  
Ireland Refugee Resettlement Programme  
National ESOL guidelines  
SOLAS Literacy & Numeracy Strategy.



# The practitioner

## Reflective practitioner

Critical reflection  
Conscious of NEED for CPD  
Staff morale & renewed energy  
Team building  
Culture of innovation

## Sharing expertise across/within ETB's:

CPD days/ thematic CPD  
learning exchange events/ Tutor networks/Working Groups (TEL, Literacy)

Staff across the ETB's participating in KA1 included:

Adult Education Organisers

Guidance counsellors

Adult Literacy Organisers

Community Education Facilitators

Tutors/ teachers

## Valuing of:

Connection to European education networks.  
Sharing on different approaches/ experiences/ education systems

**Drawing from and contributing to:** latest research and wider European community of practice in education

**Building Institutional experience of international work:** through European projects

“I learned that I must be more conscious, not only in reflective practice, but also in terms of lesson planning and then observation in the class to see how appropriate the lessons were for the learners”

# The Adult Learner & the Learning Environment

## Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)

Inclusive Technology  
Creative technology  
Blended Learning

## Integrating language, literacy and numeracy, digital literacy

Family literacy  
ESOL  
Development of intercultural awareness

Expression of AE staff needs in project proposals centre around addressing issues of access, participation and inclusion for adult learners.

Outreach, supportive approach, diversity, mixed ability, vulnerability, recognising the pressure to achieve accreditation, motivation, empowerment, wellbeing/ resilience integration and inclusivity drive and shape the work of AE practitioners within ETBs.

Curriculum development informed by latest research in education

Tailored provision

Quality

Appropriate accreditation models

# The European Dimension

**EDEN -The European Distance and E-Learning Network and EATEL/EC-TEL conferences** aim to share knowledge and improve understanding amongst professionals in distance, e-learning and TEL to inform policy and practice and research.



“The conference gave me an **opportunity to engage with other participants from countries all over the world and gain a knowledge and understanding of different educational approaches** to integrating technology and learning. It allowed me also to **develop connections and networks with other learning practitioners in Europe.**”

“The impact that the conference had on me has altered my teaching approach. I am now not afraid to try new ways of imparting knowledge. **I have gained confidence and will use blended learning in the classroom**”

“By attending the TEL conference in Lyon it enlightened me to the future of technology within the framework of education. It was an **exciting, powerful and impressionable environment to be in.**”

# The European Dimension



The **European Basic Skills Network, EBSN**, is an association of policy level stakeholders engaged in basic skills training for adults.



The **ALM** is an international forum for research into **Adults Learning Mathematics** at all levels. It includes leading figures in mathematics education research, policy and practice, many numeracy practitioners, and postgraduate researchers.

'**ESBN** gives brilliant birds eye view of the variety of approaches to basic skills development right around Europe.. And insight into European policy direction'

'It provides an invaluable Networking for ESOL Practitioners, literacy practitioners...'

Our staff had the opportunity to **showcase their expertise and good practice at home and internationally....** Our staff participants were asked to become involved in EBSN working group on family learning and invited to present at future EBSN, ESOL and ALM conferences' LCTEB/TETB



The **European Prison Education Association** is an organisation made up of prison educators, administrators, governors, researchers and other professionals whose interests lie in promoting and developing education and related activities in prisons throughout Europe in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe.



## The European Dimension

The Prison Education Service in Ireland which operates via the ETB's has strong links to a European community of practice through the EPEA.

**Due to the unique context within which prison education is delivered, the community of learning and practice is quite small and so the opportunity to engage with practitioners across Europe is invaluable**

CDETБ has undertaken 3 KA1 projects involving Mountjoy prison education service which included job shadowing to Norway, Sweden and Belgium

**CDETБ outlines that if European prison education policy is to evolve in a coherent, inclusive fashion, consistent with European values, it is important that practitioners are provided with job shadowing opportunities engage in an on-going dialogue and reflection regarding contrasting approaches to core issues such as the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners and the role of education provision in that process'.**

Since 2017 Erasmus + funding has facilitated not only visits by Irish prison educators to Norwegian prisons but also reciprocal visits by our Norwegian colleagues to study the Irish prison education system and adopt our community philosophy course and methodology.

# CDETБ

An Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath  
City of Dublin Education and Training Board



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## Adult Education ETB staff benefit greatly from international CPD

- Take from and contribute to a European community of practice
- Support sharing/learning within and across ETBs
- ETBs are well placed to learn from each other and share on how to use KA1 opportunities
- Supports the implementation of policy

## KA1 will continue in the new programme with new features include:

- Accreditation for simpler draw down of funding
- Invited experts/preparatory visits

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**Thank you!**