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| SPAR Curricula for culture volunteers and managers  in sparsely populated areas | EU flag-Erasmus+_vect_POS |

**SPAR partners meeting, Lousada, Portugal**

**Friday 7th October, 2017.**

## Participants

* Laraine Winning, Lindsay Jackson & Damien McGlynn – Voluntary Arts (VA) UK
* Bente von Schindel, KSD (DK) Denmark
* Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard, Interfolk (DK) Denmark
* Dr Janos Szigeti Toth MNT - Hungary
* Agnieszka Dadak and Rafał Dadak, FAIE (PL) Poland
* Artur Pinto – LA (Municipo de Lousada) Portugal

## Aims and key activities of the third meeting

The overall aim of the third partner meeting was to assess and review past work packages and identify an action plan for delivery of the next phase of the project.

The key activities were:

* To discuss the Spot Audit and requirements of the auditor’s report
* To discuss the role of the evaluator in the light of the Spot Audit
* To present, discuss and clarify key issues for the Knowledge Portal (WP 02)
* To discuss the national pilot courses and lessons learnt (WP 06)
* To briefly assess delivery of the European pilot course in Lousada and initial reactions (WP 07)
* To discuss progress and action plans for work packages 8, 9 & 10
* To evaluate the preceding work and the current meeting.

**Minutes**

* Artur welcomed all those attending on behalf of the SPAR partnership.
* It was agreed that Laraine would chair the meeting with Lindsey Jackson helping with minute taking.

**Spot Audit – Carried out by Ecorys**

1. VA wanted to give feedback back to the SPAR partners from the Ecorys Audit which had taken place on 15th September in Manchester. It was a full day assessment of all key governance processes aligned to delivery of the SPAR project.
2. The spot audit was a worrying time for Voluntary Arts, given that this was the first EU project they had led on. The audit was carried out in Manchester in a building VA had hired for the day (Workspace) – as they have no central office in England. They have subsequently been told that any further audits or inspections would need to be carried out at their Head Office (this is in Edinburgh) and they must make available all hard copy documents not ‘e’ copies.
3. The inspection took place from 9am/5pm with regular review sessions. VA staff were not allowed in the room whilst the inspection took place.
4. VA were told that the audit report would only highlight issues of concern. It would not show areas of best practice, although verbally they were given feedback on these areas during the day.
5. VA now have the auditor’s report. This report will be emailed to all the partners.
6. VA as the lead partner have been given until the 1st of November to fulfil the required action points noted by the auditors in their report.

General feedback

* 95% of management processes were viewed as good to excellent.
* Timesheets need to be in days not hours.
* EU logos on all external documentation need to be in place and according to branding guidelines. See your SPAR partnership contract for more details on this.
* Cover letter on non-English contracts needs to be included (terms/conditions/job role) and all contracts need to be signed by employer and employee
* The timesheets need to be relate back to a specific ‘SPAR’ task…e.g. all documentation should indicate the roles/responsibilities of those delivering SPAR objectives.
* Exceptional costs – need to show value for money and full implementation of the working brief as laid out in the original Erasmus+ application e.g. knowledge portal needs to be more than just a website.

**Action**

Laraine to email all the partners as to what is required for the auditors. This may mean slight adjustment of current documents produced or new additional copy to documents already produced. All new forms and documents to be with Ecorys for 1st November.

**Evaluation - ArtKnowledge**

The role of the evaluator was discussed with the auditor/s at the Spot Audit, as this area was viewed as a key work package. There was little to present to the auditors on this key work package only partner minutes, presentations, salary and travel/accommodation costs. The auditors indicated that a) we should assess the role of the evaluator, bearing in mind our current needs and the amount of money we had allocated to this process. They indicated that the evaluator is the most expensive part of the project and the partnership would need to fully demonstrate value for money, as to the overall benefits of employing an evaluator based in New York/USA. Also, they indicated that this role should have been put out to tender, as this is the required procurement process for freelance roles. b) The final evaluation report should be robust and detailed. Should we not be able to demonstrate this, then we could have difficulty in making a full and final claim.

Laraine indicated that we run a severe risk if we maintain the current post-holder, as to date little has been achieved – yet we have spent 7,500 on this post (salary costs and travel/accommodation) and we are mid-way through the project. We now know that we will be assessed heavily on the final report and could suffer a loss of income if the report lacks rigour. She indicated that should we not be able to make our final claim in full – Voluntary Arts would have to reduce all partners final grant contributions as Voluntary Arts is not able to underwrite any losses. She recommended that we viewed the strengths/weaknesses of the current evaluator and her methodology and decide as a group as to whether we continue with her services. We still have time to turn the situation around.

Group thoughts

* Portugal though that from the beginning that it was not a good appointment – very difficult to work with and Artur had found the online system difficult to use. Thought the budget allocated to this side of the project was too much – we could have used 5000 to carry out an evaluation which would have better suited our needs.
* Agnieszka – said the funder approved her prior to us starting so they can’t not pay us for monies already spent. She recognised the concerns of the group.
* Bente – there is nothing at this point in the project to show regarding evaluation. This is not a good situation to be in.
* Hans – Theory of Change methodology perhaps not the best approach now as we already have agreed ways of working in the Erasmus+ application and the needs assessment reviews. We can use the remaining amount set aside in the budget to take on a new agency or freelancer to carry out this role.
* Janos – Was undecided – although appreciated the concerns raised.
* Laraine – Felt that we cannot run the risk of the evaluator bringing the project down or risking the funds we have fought so hard to lever into the partnership. She feels we need to terminate our relationship with Helene and reappoint. If we raise this now on the back of the auditor’s feedback report, we show we have listened to the auditors and are able to make a difficult decision quickly. She also feels that the external assessors will look favourably on this decision and not penalise us for spending 7.5K on ArtKnowledge.

**Action:**

Group agreed to terminate Helene’s contract and take on a new evaluator. Laraine to contact Ecorys and tell them of our change and produce a new brief to advertise this role asap.

**Knowledge Portal**

The auditors indicated that a website (which they looked at online) is not a Knowledge Portal, which is what we indicated we would deliver in the original Erasmus+ application. Damien stressed that the website is not displaying all work achieved – therefore looks weak. He requires partners to help populate the site and would like to use the next months to start building up content e.g. learning courses/curricula, reports, research documents, toolkits, work plans etc. In addition, research documents should be displayed, too e.g. internal and external. The site should be a one stop shop for sharing best practice.

Feedback

* Laraine: Important to keep the website topical and up to date. We all have a part to play in this. Sometimes this can be put way down the pecking order in terms of priorities, but it is good we are reminded of this commitment.
* Agnieszka: Research and outputs to be kept separate – Damien happy to move
* Artur – what will go in research section? We agreed that this should be internal and external research papers and documents, including policy papers. We all need to carry out desk research and identify documents that we can share.
* Hans: how it looks is vitally important. Partners should understand they have a key responsibility to provide documents for uploading. VA needs to tell partners more forcefully what needs doing and by what date and if not done why? VA should also list deadlines for uploading materials.
* Janos – agreed that we need to do better at circulating materials.

**Action**

* Damien to produce a new work schedule with key milestones, dates and who is responsible for what. We can review again the website at the next ‘virtual’ partners meeting in December and also at the last partners meeting in June 2018.

**Work package 06**

**Test national pilot courses**

A summary discussion was held of life-long learning courses delivered in SPAR partner countries and what had been achieved.

* Laraine – VA ran two x two-day workshops for volunteers and volunteer managers supported by Lancashire Adult Learning service. The training was geared to volunteers and volunteer managers working in multi disadvantaged areas with hard to reach groups, within sparsely populated locations. Training was held at 2 locations (Burnley Library and Civic Arts Centre/Oswaldtwistle) supported by professional tutors. We have received positive feedback from all those who attended the sessions – although numbers were lower than we expected. We are aware that more support needs to be in place for both groups. A selection of three volunteers and three volunteer managers attending the above were able to come to Portugal.
* Janos – 7-8 July –– successful in terms of 2 presentations/courses and role playing and workshops - good links now established and possible follow-up themes identified. Recruits were rich in cultural activity and skills, however, it was difficult to recruit those who had good English language ability. Concerned that we are not able to bring talented and skilful volunteers to the events in Portugal because of this.
* Hans/Bente - South of Denmark – was chosen as the key location given it’s a sparsely populated area. Worked with a broad network (groups/individuals) to identify modules/themes using the needs assessment report as a guide. Heritage focus – individuals given understanding of the cultural heritage of this area by a local academic. Priority areas included: how to apply for money, skill sharing, partnership development.
* Agnieszka - 2 events x 1 day – managers worked with people in cultural institutions to shape the learning programmes delivery, groups/partners mostly interested in sources of finances. Courses were practical dealing with local problems and identifying solutions. Recruitment was ok - small groups in the main. August is a difficult time to recruit (too many distractions) all new people put forward to attend the national course.
* Artur - Worked with individuals they already had contact with – mostly middle aged. Events were carried out in the Summer – based on the needs assessment review. Problem areas: difficult to find English speakers and hard to find trainers for the national course. Themes: revitalising local communities via arts and communities – economic development, cultural heritage, capacity and related challenges, community factors, youth engagement and retention, diversity, immigration.

Common aspects to evaluating the above:

* Discussed common evaluation for all of these projects and a common template for sharing information.
* Hans – would like us to share all our learning materials across the partnership and also via the website.
* Bente feels this is a good idea – so that we can compare feedback across the partners and identify common lessons learnt.
* Agnieszka - feels it’s important for everyone to do their own evaluation
* Laraine indicated that she would have liked more people attending the workshops in England but needed to unpick why numbers were low. Partners indicated that sometimes you need to incentivise individuals to attend … foods always are a draw, maybe using the word training is a drawback.
* Janos – happy to share learning materials and resources.

**Work package – 07 – Erasmus+ pilot ‘learning’ course - Lousada**

Initial feedback to the five-day event was positive. Most agreed that bringing beneficiaries together had been worthwhile in terms of skill sharing. The group thanked Artur for his hospitality and organising the learning venue and all additional areas of support e.g. catering, cultural visits, transport etc.

**Bente -** Really appreciated meeting volunteers from other countries and sharing knowledge/skills. Planning of event needed more management control e.g. sharing tasks between partners and designated roles

**Agnieszka –** Felt we neededmore international interactions – national groups tended to stay together (common experience and language) – but it would have been beneficial to mix it up more.

**Hans -** Perhaps the learning modules and workshops were too broad a focus in relation to project outcomes. Possibly our planning was too democratic.

**Janos –** Felt itwould have been better to have moreface to face time to plan the 5-day event. Too big a difference in the groups and their needs/skills – better planning would have resulted in better results.

**Artur –** Tried to provide a comprehensive mix of activities, including cultural visits. It would have been nice to have more time in Porto and had been aware earlier of mobility issues regarding attendees.

**Laraine –** 5 days perhaps too long. Delegates wanted to share skills and resources and wanted more practical support rather than presentations.

**Action**

* Hans to draw up generic evaluation documents and share with SPAR partners
* Laraine to show website address for partners for those interested in UK Volunteer week
* Laraine to breakdown feedback from evaluation forms and share this information across the partnership.
* Partners to inform host organisation of beneficiaries needs in advance of workshops or conferences e.g. need to design template form for this.

**Work packages – 08 – Lead: Interfolk**

**Publish Multi-Lateral Curricula Compendium**

* Hans to send out timescale of when things will need to be back by
* He will review the work package and key areas of activity and development.
* Agreed a date for delivery end of November 2017 – Hans to provide partners with information earlier so he can compile information centrally.

**Work packages – 9 & 11 – Lead: MNT**

**Plan and promote Erasmus+ courses – & development of European Conference in Budapest.**

Budapest Conference – 8/9 June suggested date

* Participants cannot be from your organisation – need signed participation list – otherwise support will not be given
* You can invite partners if you wish
* 40 people optimum number

We discussed the possibility of joint financing as the current budget is small and may not cover everything (200 euros only). e.g. we could ask delegates to pay for their own travel. Discussed SPAR budget categories and seeing if we might be able to transfer or vire money across from one category to another (we can do this on certain budget headings to the level of 20%) but we would need to be sure that we had an underspend to do this.

Erasmus EVS – see if you can link to Budapest.

Hans thought that follow up work could be funded by Cultural Mobility funding. Applications need to be submitted by Feb 18. VA had applied previously as part of the Culture Guide programme but were unsuccessful.

**Action:**

* Janos to provide budget and a plan of action by the end of November (we need it in place to estimate costs across the partnership and put plans in place for levering-in more financial support).
* Lindsey to check to see if we still have EU Mobility applications on file and disseminate across the partnership.

**Work package 10**

**Five national one-day conferences – lead FAIE January/April 2018.**

We all agreed that each country knows best how to deliver these one-day conferences (venue, focus, advertising etc) and what they wish to focus on. We agreed to introduce some common planning reporting tool/s for these events, which would be helpful to analyse key learnings for the newly appointed evaluator. We also agreed it would be helpful, if money permits, for partners to attend one or more of each other’s events, either as a delegate or presenter.

**Action:**

* Agnieszka to compile template documents for these courses in line with what was produced previously. Documents to be discussed at next partners meeting (December 2017) and ratified.

**AOB**

* Skype Partners meeting before the end of the year – given that we do not meet formally before June 2018. 11 December noted as a provisional date. VA to send more details two weeks before.
* VA to send out an evaluation form for this meeting which all can complete and email back to Voluntary Arts.