

CREUS

Developing and nurturing the transversal skills of disadvantaged young people through non-formal learning in unconventional spaces.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CREUS was a programme, funded within the European Union Erasmus + programme, KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices, looking into innovative ways for disadvantaged and NEET young people (aged 16-24) to develop transferable, and transversal, competences through engagement with non-formal, cultural and artistic learning.

Guided by one driving question, *'In which ways can peer mentoring using creative practices in unconventional places be said to contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable young people?'*, partners undertook a programme of action research to explore ways in which they might create a methodology based upon four pillar or leading principles:

- the use of the arts, culture and creative practice to engage with excluded young people through non-formal practice
- the notion of 'space' as a learning environment, and how 'unconventional' spaces offer innovative and novel places for non-formal creative learning;
- the specific contribution of peer mentors in non-formal creative learning
- the transversal competences of the European Reference Framework for Lifelong Learning (ERF).

From the on-the-ground experience of developing a peer mentoring programme within less conventional spaces and places which resulted, a curriculum and a shared approach to learning began to emerge. The diverse needs of the different partner countries, and the different stages at which non-formal learning through creative approaches has been developed in each country, meant the programme was not without its challenges. But this is a common theme within many EU projects, and the sharing of experience this provokes can be also be a rich and important source of intercultural and trans-national learning. The time constraints of any project like this, were also an issue when many of the young people the partners were working with required time to learn to trust and begin to gain confidence in their own ability to be creative themselves and encourage it in others.

What emerged clearly from partners' responses to the questions asked within the evaluation process, was that everyone involved had found the key to success lay at the intersection between peer-mentoring, informal learning and the use of unconventional spaces. Equally important was to have a diverse group of mentors, for the mentor/mentee relationship to have the potential to be bi-directional, and to have the real possibility for social impact as well as cultural and artistic expression within the projects undertaken.

What is also clear is that partners feel the approach CREUS has developed is now clear and strong. The trans-national mentor/mentee aspect of the programme has led to a climate of trust and intercultural dialogue

which can now be built on and the learning which has emerged can be now be used as a springboard for exploring ways in which many other topics, such as citizenship, could be addressed.

Two or three possible ways forward for the partnership therefore suggest themselves at this stage:

- To explore ways in which this combination of peer-mentorship with experiential and practice-based approaches to learning within unconventional spaces can begin to provide a model for non-formal learning across a number of sectors and different themes.
- To share this model, and the practice-based curriculum which has been developed, within a wider national and international context. Especially in the context of all those working with more vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- To investigate ways in which this approach might be validated, and accredited, through programmes that use less formal methods to map the skills and competences acquired through creative and non-formal learning. Especially those like the CLOCK programme¹, which are able to identify and recognise ways in which the transversal competences of the European Reference Framework for Lifelong Learning (ERF) can be represented. And the learning supported through reflective practice and peer mentoring.

At the final Steering Group meeting partners discussed a potential successor project, which would further develop the empowerment of young people through engaging them in actively co-creating more innovative content (Apps, games, Vlogs etc). It was proposed the at further follow up activity could involve intergenerational learning and further development of accreditation of non-formal learnin

¹ <https://clockyourskills.com/about/>

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS and OUTCOMES (IOs)

Five potential outputs were originally identified for the project, which were successfully carried out. They were as follows:

- **IO1 Case studies and qualitative enquiry – non- formal learning approaches with a focus on creative mentoring practices in unconventional spaces**

The Transnational Report successfully collected and compared a series of case studies from each partner country and was used to inform the subsequent stages of the research.

- **IO2 Methodology concept – Creative Peer Mentoring in CREUS**

Using partner consultations, a clear methodology was created and creative peer to peer mentoring opportunities were created in each partner country. Peer mentors and mentees were actively encouraged to work with each other trans-nationally in order to exchange their thinking about progress and support each other in beginning to recognise their attainments. This exchange also enabled opportunities for greater mobility.

- **IO3 The CREUS Development Curriculum**

The extensive partnership CREUS Curriculum Guide created is made up of four modules which contain the fundamental skills, knowledge, and competences mentors require to be successful and effective in their practice and is intended to assist mentors in structuring their learning and development. Learning Objectives and Assessment Methodologies are clearly presented.

- **IO5 Recognition Tools for Peer Mentors - Learning Agreement Peer Mentor Transcript Youth Pass**

IO5 developed and provided a package of Tools for the recognition of the non-formal learning experiences undertaken in CREUS. These were 1) a learning agreement which identifies the skills the learner will gain during a transnational mobility. 2) a Peer Mentor Transcript which defines what the mentor has achieved after undertaking a mobility. 3) Guidance on achieving a Youth Pass certificate completed the process. Participants in the transnational events all had the opportunity to gain Youthpass accreditation. Peer mentors from all 5 participating countries (6 mentors in total) gained a YouthPass certificate.

- **IO6 E manual - The CREUS e-learning guide for young peer mentor, tutors and coaches**

The Creus e-learning guide presents the learning from the project in an easy to use online format accessible via mobile devices. It includes the Creus Curriculum and all the Intellectual Outputs, online Tools and Resources for Peer Mentors, an Audio-Visual Library provision for uploading an e-portfolio, and visual guides for mentors and mentees.

The successful development of the Curriculum Guide also included two transnational short-term joint staff training events at which mentors, tutors and coaches exchanged and shared practice and methods in participative workshops and reviewed and reflected upon the CREUS approach.

MOVING FORWARD: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has become increasingly clear many young people across Europe are no longer following traditional routes to employment; and formal education is no longer the single route to a successful future. Transitions from education to employment have become increasingly difficult and many young people are caught up in a cycle of increasing precarity. Unfortunately, in the creative and cultural sectors, this has often led to those who wish to enter the workforce being compelled to either accept low-paid jobs or work for free, in what can feel like an endless row of non-paid internships: with no assurance of permanent employment at the end.

For those young people who are already from disadvantaged communities, such as those engaged with the CREUS programme, taking up these roles, with little formal or non-formal training being offered as part of them, is rarely an option. These young people need approaches and support that cater more closely to their individual needs, especially if they are to acquire the transferable and transversal skills and competences to respond with confidence to this rapidly changing landscape. Skills such as those identified by the ERF: communication skills, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression, and social and civic competences. 'Non-formal learning' as a recent Youth Forum report² notes is one of the key ways in which society can 'reach out to those young people that formal education providers do not reach,' at the same time as offering complementary pathways to formal education.

Having been created in direct response to the needs of those disadvantaged young people, many of whom are not in education, employment or training, the CREUS programme has been successful in implementing two innovative and successful approaches to learning. These have been a transnational peer mentoring scheme and the implementation of more experiential approaches to learning by situating the programme in unconventional spaces. These spaces, from disused warehouses to museums and galleries to a community music festival within a housing estate or at an immersive theatre event in a shopping mall, or an arts session within a young people's hostel, were not only found to be more accessible and inclusive to this group of young people but, even more importantly, were places they did not associate with formal education. These unconventional spaces, especially when they were situated in more diverse parts of towns and cities, also offered the possibility for young people to think about the ways in which the 'creative activities' they are engaged with 'can also impact on social change'. 'They enable you to make connections with more marginalised communities that wouldn't have been made otherwise'.

The partners have all indicated how important these two approaches have been; especially when used in tandem. By setting up real projects where young people could work together creatively, they allowed them to acquire new skills, whilst being mentored to recognise those skills and competences they already possessed.

² <https://www.youthforum.org/future-work-and-youth>

‘What was so good about this project was that I began to understand so much in relationship to myself, both as someone who had been mentored by others in learning ‘on the job’ and then as someone who could then pass these skills on to others by mentoring my peers’.

Whilst this not the first time a number of the partners in the project have worked together, CREUS has enabled them to consolidate what is becoming a robust trans-national community of practice around non-formal learning and around creating opportunities for less advantaged young people within the creative and cultural sectors. A community of practice that now has the possibility to build on this learning to develop new approaches and methodologies and explore them through on-going dialogue and reflection. A community of practice that has, importantly, offered disadvantaged young people the opportunity to experience mentoring in a trans-national context, leading to the greater confidence and enhanced life chances, skills and competences that come from working internationally.

This community of practice now has the potential to share this learning not only with others in the creative and cultural sectors but across all those sectors involved in establishing routes to non-formal learning for disadvantaged young people. This could happen in a simple way by disseminating the model, and the learning that has emerged from it, across partners countries and this has begun to happen. But in order for the approaches that have been developed to have impact at a wider EU level, it seems important that partners consider some kind of transferable qualification or validation of learning. This will inevitably mean developing this aspect of the programme in a more formal sense. Not only to enable those young people taking part to necessarily enter the formal learning sector but also to ensure this more flexible model of peer learning through mentoring is validated. And to support the recognition of learning through experience in unconventional spaces as a pathway to both employability and entrepreneurial capacity building.

By producing a curriculum and tool kit which are linked very clearly to the ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) system and aligning outcomes with the Youth Pass, CREUS has created possibilities for this to happen and to find ways forward which are relevant for each of the different partner countries. As well as facilitating greater mobility opportunities for participants. By focusing particularly on the needs of NEET youth, the CREUS methodology and learning tools also provide opportunities for partners to form new alliances with those working with these groups in different sectors. And to use the approach to deliver those horizontal and sectoral priorities which are focused on the development of relevant basic, transversal and soft skills needed to progress to relevant VET or employment in the labour market. Equally important, as noted by a number of mentors and mentees, is the link with to the Diagnostic Skills Check tool developed by the Talent Matching Europe programme, in which many of the same partners participated, which helped facilitate recognition tools through which peer mentors and mentees were able to acknowledge their existing accomplishments and attainments and actively build on them through the mentoring process.

The work on the CREUS toolkit and curriculum, although successful in itself, also alerted partners to the need to find ways to reflect the non-formal and flexible learning style central to the programme in the ways in which that learning is recognised. This has been an important learning process in itself and, as such, a strong indicator of a group of partners who still feel they themselves are on a learning journey, alongside their participants. While they now feel equipped with strategies and plans to effectively implement and share the CREUS methodology and training curriculum they have co created, they also recognise that the different contexts of each partner country means some modification at a national level may still be necessary. The diversity of approaches, needs and target groups indicated in the case studies makes it clear different countries are at different stages in implementing these methodologies. At the same time, each of them acknowledges this methodological approach of combining peer mentoring with non-formal learning and unconventional spaces as a means of encouraging and enabling NEET young people to acquire key EQF skills alongside creative and artistic skill, has been uniquely successful. And could very usefully be disseminated and shared at both a formal and non-formal level nationally.

All partners agreed CREUS had offered them the opportunity to ‘form partnerships with new organisations as well as to create new and important materials, which can be used to inspire/propose/implement new projects and partnerships’ and imagined the approaches developed would work effectively in a range of cross-sectoral contexts. In Italy both MULAB and ERIFO felt this might be best done by helping other organisations working in training or education to implement what are still new approaches to peer learning, diversity and different learning styles. Especially by exploring the opportunities unconventional space offer young people, and others, in a peer to peer process which uses creativity to explore and develop transversal skills. As one of the largest private VET organisations in Greece, DIMITRA were sure they would be using and sharing the tools and methodology in the wider training courses they provide, while Cypriot partners realised how important it might be to share the methodology with other groups working with young people emerging from care and undocumented children. Partners in the Netherlands, with greater experience in the field, have already developed an umbrella body working with partners in (alternative) education, research, social community work, arts, municipality, funds, regional and national expertise centres, IMPACT, and are planning to extend the methodology to this context.

In a desire not ‘start from zero’ again and working from a conviction that ‘connecting and working together was key for the future’ all partners noted that the dissemination, adoption and implementation of this practice at a national and/or European level would best be supported by looking more closely at ways in which the learning might be validated. While agreeing the means of recognition and validation would need to be flexible, and as rooted in the reality of these young people’s experience, as the programme’s central methodology, ‘It needs to give them the confidence and trust in their own process and skill sets and inspiration to continue in action’ validation at a European level would be a crucial next step. For those partners already invested in ‘the

European community', such as the Dutch and UK partners, the most logical step to doing this seemed to be to engage with the 'CLOCK your skills programme'³.

What CLOCK does, having emerged from a concern to validate the experiential 'on the job' learning that more and more young people experience, is enable those following it to use the mentor/mentee relationship to begin to unpick and recognise their own skills; and to do this through a process of peer review. In this way it reflects the non-formal approach CREUS has been developing with its participants. As one of the mentors in CREUS, describing his own experience of CLOCK notes, 'It makes you think about your practice from different points of view, by giving you two or three different peer mentors with whom you can discuss your work. Suddenly you recognise the value of things you have just learned by doing. Then, of course, you can begin to imagine how you might share these skills with others.'

At present CLOCK qualifications are only available at higher levels: 5-8 which are more suited to more experienced practitioners in the field. But these qualifications are now being developed to include EQF levels 1-4. Explorer, Participant, Trainee and Advanced Industry Trainee. Each status, award and certification using a common framework to enable mapping according to 4 key skill sets. Practice, Enterprise, Sharing knowledge and skills and Developing Social Potential. These would seem to be an ideal way to build on the methodology the programme has created. Especially when the non-formal learning sector in many countries is still developing its confidence in being able to validate the learning opportunities it has been able to offer.

By building on the *practice* young people may have developed through taking part in creative projects in unconventional spaces, taking part in CLOCK activities would enable them to recognise the *entrepreneurial skills and competences* they have developed, identify the opportunities these have given them for *sharing knowledge* and understand *the social potential* of their actions. As one of the mentors explains, 'Following CLOCK has opened my mind and enabled me to build up a portfolio by encouraging me to think more rigorously about the things I have learned, and in doing so, to identify them as real and valuable creative sector skills.' What is also powerful about the CLOCK method in working with this particular cohort of young people is the possibility to evidence learning in a range of ways; not only through the written word but through audio and visual means and then to have that validated by peers working in similar fields.

In a trans-national project such as this, with partners who have worked together before, engaging with a programme such as CLOCK would also support the strong cycle of learning which has begun to merge. Young people who were mentees when the partnership began are now able to act as mentors for other young people and pass the skills they have developed on. As they gain confidence through recognising the skills and

³ <https://clockyourskills.com/2018/08/28/the-clock-your-skills-programme-what-does-it-do-and-how/>

competences they have developed throughout the programme, and having that knowledge validated, they are able to act as role models for a new cohort of disadvantaged young people who can begin to see that their hopes and expectations can be realised.

The creative case for diversity is increasingly being argued for in the arts and cultural sectors. Creating a means of recognising and validating the different kinds of knowledges that can emerge from working in unconventional settings and learning through action and reflection, with the support of a mentor, is an important way of ensuring this happens. The CREUS partnership has a real possibility of taking the lead in this approach to non-formal learning. Whilst acknowledging there may be many ways in which this might happen, working with a programme such as CLOCK to provide a springboard from which to formalise that learning would be a strong step forwards. *

*Postscript. When this evaluation report was first drafted the possibility of the UK leaving the EU was still just that. Now that this is confirmed to happen on 31st January 2020 this may have implications for future partnerships which include the UK.

EVALUATION PROCESS

All partners, and a number of mentors and mentees, were asked a series of questions, some of which were then followed up for clarification, or to probe further, with telephone conversations.

The questions asked were:

Partners

- What went well?
- What were the main challenges?
- What do you want to do now? How do you imagine this being exploited in your country?
(Legacy/sustainability)
- How might this work with future partnerships?
- What are the lessons for future?
- Any additional information?

Mentors/mentees

If this model was to continue:

- What would you keep – because it works?
- What would you let go of – things that didn't really work?
- What would you want more of – things you missed or there wasn't enough of?
- Any additional information or other points you would like to raise

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Partners

Benefits

- Working in unconventional spaces *is key to working with these groups of young people*- there was overwhelming support for this as a strategy amongst partners, mentors and mentees
- Unconventional spaces are useful for other work too, as they can *enhance creative thinking* - many topics could be addressed in this way, such as citizenship, and other training and education initiatives
- *Meeting face to face* is really important, rather than by Skype, especially for project partners
- Working with *a good number of young people*, e.g. 20 in a session
- The *cultural diversity of mentors and participants*, and mentors' experience of working with young people
- The *opportunity for cultural and artistic expression* as part of the programme
- *Bi-directional contribution, between mentors and mentees*, leading to a climate of trust and intercultural dialogue
- The *meeting point of formal and informal learning* is key

- *The learning is now well developed and can be used as a springboard rather than starting from scratch again*

Challenges

- *Bringing the two main themes of the project (mentorship and unconventional spaces) into one structure*
- *Fitting an informal learning experience into what then became more formal, word based, tools and outcomes.*
- *Keeping mentees, many of whom are disadvantaged young people, engaged for long periods of time and cultivating the capacity for forward projection and understanding and meeting learning goals*
- *The limited time for implementation within the programme: the mentoring journey for each mentee needed more one-to-one time for further development, even though each individual session had a great impact on both mentors and mentees.*
- *The curriculum material was in draft form, at this stage which, meant major adaptations and changes needed to be made in the local setting*

Recommendations

- *Allow more time to build a relationship one to one between mentor and mentee, and for the mentee to have time to grow and create something s/he feels proud about*
- *Keep the manual visual rather than word based – and allow the young people to help design it*

Legacy/ sustainability

- *Use the 4 pillars of Creus, to continue to develop the work; and particularly draw on CLOCK as a more formal training method to mentor other individuals and organisations and implementing rigorous methodologies - but bearing in mind that the combination of informal learning and unconventional spaces could be an uneasy fit in terms of more formal toolkits*
- *Use the mentoring methodology with other groups: For example, unaccompanied children from three shelters from two different cities during the summer of 2020 (Cyprus)*
- *The mentoring sessions will be incorporated in a mechanism of support for children coming out of care.*
- *Create a community of practice*

Mentors/mentees

Benefits

- *The fundamental structure works really well*
- *The importance of meeting face to face with your peers from different countries*
- *Working in unconventional spaces is very beneficial, the most important factor: ‘an unusual place, never seen before but safe and stimulating like a football field, a living room or a free space full of painting and colours... far away from barriers, prejudice and discrimination’*

- *Mentees from different cultural backgrounds* and with different languages discovering their different conceptions and ideas related to art and freedom of expression.
- Recognition of *the need for a team of professionals* in this work field.
- Creating a group of young people who have started their own group to inspire other youngsters to do activities for each other
- A further group of young people who are interested in presenting the vision of the work to other groups, thus encouraging new participants

Challenges and recommendations

- Something that didn't always work was the "one to one" interaction. As part of the mentoring journey the young people could be divided into smaller groups in order to better enter in relation with the mentors but, at the same time, enjoy the journey and the session as well. Sometimes, perhaps some of them were a step behind due to the shyness and the presence of many other people.
- As mentioned above, the unconventional space was the strongest point of this model but at some point the journey stopped without a proper conclusion. Therefore, we would recommend more sessions in many other unconventional and stimulating spaces
- There is never enough time!
- The training could have been a little longer, with more material (s)
- Look again at the toolkit and how to design it with, for and by young people so it is not too directive
- Find different ways of evaluating with young people rather than questionnaires
- Clearer guidance from 'the top down'

Legacy/Sustainability

- Ensuring that the young people who took part will continue to work with the mentors and the organisation and start moving into paid work as mentors themselves
- If this model will continue in the future I really hope that these main positive aspects will be improved and strengthen as milestone of the same model and taken into consideration as good practice in our experience with teenagers on the project.

Mentees (this was sometimes more difficult to gather, as mentees have moved on and were not easily contactable)

Benefits

- The non-formal approach and unconventional spaces approach is very beneficial
- Using creative techniques (Digital Storytelling) in a relaxed environment

Challenges and recommendations

- Allow enough time to build the mentorship relationship

APPENDIX ONE: COUNTRY BY COUNTRY DIRECT RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Partners

NETHERLANDS

I think the IO1 and IO2 went well. The international meetings, especially with the mentors and mentees, were very inspiring, connecting and eye opening. Working with Peers in unconventional spaces as a learning environment and using creative activities to work on skills seemed to be a perfect match. A lot of input came out of these meetings that could be used for IO3.

The material produced in IO2 was put into a nice colourful folder. The aim was to develop that folder in to a 'comic book' or at least something with less words and more visuals for the IO3 CREUS modules/curriculum so that it would be more readable for the target group. Unfortunately, the outcome is a manual with a lot of words. I think that this was a money issue but it's important to realise that if we develop a manual/curriculum for young people, that one of the IO's should cover a design that fits in with the experience of young people. The other challenge was to have the project managers physically participating to the meetings. I remember at one of the meetings in Cyprus that Collage arts wasn't physically present, but on Skype. That didn't work at all for me, especially because they were leading IO3 and we had to comment on the produced material.

Legacy/sustainability:

In the Netherlands, at Rozet, we are developing IMPACT (I am practitioner at the Academy of Community and Talent), an umbrella body that will house a number of departments: education, talent development, labour and social. The 4 pillars of CREUS will be leading this. For IMPACT we are already working with a lot of partners in (alternative) education, research, social community work, arts, municipality, funds, regional and national expertise centres and the European community of CLOCK.

Connecting and working together is key for the future.

Italy - MULAB

The part of training that was developed between the meeting in Greece and the one in the Netherlands was very positive and inspiring. All the people involved at different levels, both seniors and juniors, were really inclusive and very open to sharing ideas, opinions and experiences.

I think the most difficult part was bringing the two main themes of the project (mentorship and unconventional spaces) into one structure and then fitting everything in more formal tools and outcomes.

Legacy/sustainability:

Italy at the moment is a little behind compared to other realities in the effective exploitation of similar methodologies, and even the proper concept of mentorship is a topic for experts, mostly related to the formal

sector - even if, in the last years, something is slowly changing. However, there are many opportunities where such experiences can be used, suggested or transmitted both in work and in training in our ordinary activity. In my opinion the awareness that we have achieved in the journey of this project is an important goal and a sowing that will certainly bear good fruit.

Considering future partnerships, exploiting the experience or the path already developed in this international context means starting again not from zero but from three – i.e. from something. And this something has already had to overcome the barriers of cultural diversity and different contexts. So working from here will be more understandable and easier.. We need to improve, enhance and cultivate the work of peer mentorship. Because from our shared experience it's clear that it really helps reaching goals in training, inclusion, and happiness in itself.

Italy – ERIFO

The training activities in Larissa and Arnhem and the connection that created between mentors and mentee, considering the different background and culture, I think had a positive impact on the practice of each country. It was also a moment where “formal” and “non-formal” come together, and the creativity was at the centre of all processes as a tool to gain and improve competences and skills.

Explore the learning opportunities that unconventional space can give to young people in peer to peer process and using creativity to explore and use transversal skills. From the lessons learned through CREUS and other projects, we are aware of the potential of unconventional spaces where the learning activities take place and also the changing of the dynamics in creating a different relationship between young people and mentors. We discover how a warehouse can be transformed in movie set were mentors and mentee became directors, actors, writer, photographer, storyteller and the most important thing is they were not only doing things. They were making decision and reflections, solving problems, communicating in different languages, and so on.

Legacy/sustainability

We are continuing our activities in using unconventional spaces to develop skills and competencies targeted to young people and raising awareness on different topics from Human Rights to Citizenship using creativity and arts. Unconventional spaces can also be used for formal things like seminars because the environment sometimes inspires, make people act differently, create a new form of connections and open new perspectives and point of views.

The mentors and mentees from the CREUS project could help other organisations in implementing new approaches to peer learning using a dynamic approach able to approach diversity and different learning styles. Enhancing experiences in unconventional spaces, opening new horizons in learning, creating community of practice is rewarding and allows us to reach unexpected goals. Managers, trainers/tutors should not

underestimate the aspect of implementing rigorous methodologies for the validation and monitoring of the results achieved to consolidate good practices with structured data and information.

The participant enjoyed the activities and for us was another opportunity to learn from each other. Probably, during the project, there were moments of ups and downs.

GREECE

Our opinion is that in general CREUS is a very well developed and good implemented project with useful outcomes. The project implementation and the collaboration with the partners went very well and smoothly. Both the coordinator and partners worked very well together for their common goals. Overall the outcomes of the project are very useful for both mentors that will use those and mentees that will get benefited by these mentorships.

Of course, the main advantage was the concept of the project and the involvement of the unconventional spaces. It was indeed very useful for students to be in spaces that were not established as classrooms and that gave them more. Whilst it was a challenge to design and develop activities for unconventional spaces, the challenge helped to produce a very well thought through and designed product.

Legacy/sustainability

DIMITRA is one of the biggest private VET organisations in Greece and we will be using the material developed for CREUS both as a whole to train mentors or use the tools in other training courses that could benefit by the unconventional spaces activities. CREUS helped us form partnerships with new organisations as well as to create new and important materials, both of which can be used to inspire/propose/implement new projects and partnerships. Unconventional spaces work really well with creative industries, and thus it might be worth trying it with other industries/sectors as well. Thinking outside of the box is very important in the training and education sector.

CYPRUS

The CREUS Pilot programme was organised in Cyprus in November 2018 with 5 mentors (from Cyprus, Spain, Italy and France) with different background experiences, but all having previously worked with young people. The 3 pilot sessions with mentees have engaged around 15-20 mentees for each session.

The mentees were unaccompanied children coming from different countries as Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Somalia. Each mentee had the opportunity to be part fully in the mentoring journey as the learning sessions could have been negotiated with the peer mentor. All mentees have been benefiting from one to one mentoring and from working in a team, taking part in sessions in unconventional spaces. This

was essential to let them all express freely their creativity and their own personalities. The sessions were designed so that they can easily be carried out in a variety of unconventional spaces in Nicosia (shelter, soccer field, Agora, creative space for interactive activities), offering also the possibility for the mentees to choose a learning space they felt stimulated from. Both mentors and mentees contributed to the sessions through creativity, improvisation and spontaneity and created a climate of trust and intercultural dialogue which was the milestone of the mentoring journey.

The main challenges were keeping the mentees engaged and cultivating the ability of forward projection and learning goals and the limited time for implementation: the mentoring journey for each mentee needed more time one to one time for further development, even though each session had a great impact on both mentors and mentees. The curriculum material was just a draft so major adaptations and changes needed to be made in the local setting.

Legacy/sustainability

We envision using the mentoring methodology with other unaccompanied children from 3 shelters from 2 different cities during the summer of 2020: the mentoring sessions will be incorporated in a mechanism of support for children coming out of care. We now realise how important it is to allow more time to build a relationship one to one between mentor and mentee and for the mentee to have time to grow and create something s/he feels proud about this.

UK

Although some peer mentors were initially apprehensive about the use of a framework to professionally develop their peer mentoring skills (some did not realise they had existing skills in peer mentoring, perhaps as they mentored on an ad hoc or informal basis and their skills were not necessarily visible or valued), what did work well once peer mentors were introduced to the curriculum was being given the space to reflect on their strengths and areas for development.

Having time away from the practice of mentoring to test out approaches and methods through a series of workshops, group sessions, and exercises was an effective way to bring together the peer mentors and enable them to contribute to each other's development through discussion, role-play (so testing out responses to difficult or challenging scenarios in a safe space), sharing knowledge, stories, approaches and experiences of peer mentoring. Mentors were able to develop their practice and relationships with the peer mentees over a sustained period of time. This allowed for the ongoing development and acquisition of skills and knowledge fundamental for successful and effective mentoring.

The group training events were a particularly effective way for the partners to get inside the work of each of the partners and to develop areas of best practice together.

The challenges included working with peer mentees who had different levels of experience, knowledge and skills, as well as different ideas about the practice of peer mentoring. As with all projects with multiple partners, reaching a consensus among the project partners was often a challenge. Virtual meetings and the partnership meetings were an efficient way in which to address this

Legacy/sustainability

CREUS will enable peer mentees to become peer mentors. This is a model that is in place at Collage currently and CREUS will allow us to accelerate and sustain that. The curriculum in particular gives peer mentors a framework for professional development. Projects could use this as a foundation for the development of peer mentors. Development can be evidenced through providing the artefacts/evidence which are suggested in the learning outcomes. This curriculum is open and flexible enough that other project partners can contextualise it and shape it to meet requirements of a variety of projects. Moving forward, we should account for any risks associated with change of staff in the risk management plan and have a plan to both mitigate against this and a course of action if this happens.

Mentors

NETHERLANDS

The most important thing that worked well, was bring young people together in a peer to peer-based gathering. The strength in their skill sets came naturally when the young people gathered through similar interests and basic respect for the knowledge and skills of the other. The second element that worked well, was the use of unconventional spaces. This environment worked well to give the young people the confidence to trust their natural skills on what was being asked of them. Therefore, the peer to peer element started to work to give the youngsters awareness of teamwork. The arts give an open perspective within. The approach worked well for the mentees and mentor to play within this and develop their skills and mentor awareness.

There is still a need to get a workable toolkit that will help mentors and mentees to create a point on the horizon. It needs to be flexible and without expectations, but within the guidelines on how to influence the process – and so, to answer the question, the developed toolkit, didn't work for us: it gave the youngsters/mentees more the feeling of a puzzle of how to do it right, than it gave them confidence and trust in their own process and skill sets and inspiration to continue in action

We think a comic book with good storylines they can relay to would help more. It could also be helpful to let the young people develop the toolkit: give them the confidence to fill in their own toolkit. In our case, the mentees and mentors let the toolkit down in the process because they didn't feel connected to it. They finally delivered something great by just doing what they are good at and working well together.

I think we tried to develop with the mentees, but maybe our approach was very top down and our guidance

from top down wasn't always that clear.

The wonderful benefit of the Creus project is the movement that it started in our company Rozet. It uplifted the strength of non-formal learning and it gave the young people a playground to prove themselves to themselves first. It also offered a good collaboration between Rozet and the young people. Who need us to build the perspectives and possibilities for development? The first outcome of Creus is that Rozet recognized the need of a team of professionals in this work field. Here we have a youth team of professionals who are connected to Rozet through different departments, so we can move quickly to make it workable and have an impact for the youngsters.

The second outcome of Creus is a group of young people that, beside the mentors, started their own group to inspire other youngsters to do activities for each other, where arts and sharing is the main reason. They are working on their vision now and taking steps to action.

The third achievement is a big group of young people who are interested in a trip we are organizing from Rozet to enable them to present the vision of our approach to the work we deliver for young people thus giving the young people the voice and space to build their needs by themselves. The young people who are currently connected to this, will be/can be the ones who will make a better youth art development in the non-formal industry programme in our hometown Arnhem - and even have a chance to make it their profession.

ITALY

I think that the non-formal approach is the right key for the expression of everyone in fluid, motivating and creative contexts. Moreover, thanks to the unconventional space we can discover that learning doesn't belong only to the academic world, and that it could be much more fun in "alternative" places, like a square, a museum, a cultural centre. Another important thing is the relationship: building safe relationships with peers and tutors allow you to broaden yourself awareness and develop your skills.

As a junior mentor I noticed that mentees didn't really like having to complete the evaluation questionnaires. During the project activities I would have liked to experience more mentorship.

I think that the project activities created the right conditions for everyone to find their expressive and growing dimension, without feeling judged, but only guided.

GREECE

All mentors responded that they would keep the programme as a whole because it helped them develop their competences as well to successfully guide their mentees.

Two mentors identified that the training duration could have been a bit longer (more materials). *'Everything was so well designed and facilitated that we would like to spend some more time on the training'*

All said that they would happily take part in future activities/trainings like the CREUS one, and that it will make their job easier and inspire lots of mentees.

CYPRUS

This model brought many factors in an environment where mentees (teenagers from different countries and different cultures) discovered their different conceptions and ideas related to art and freedom of expression.

As a mentor, there are some aspects that I would like to point out in order to give my feedback about the whole experience.

- First of all, this was a stimulating experience under many points of view: the idea of “unconventional space” was the most important factor to me. I actually think that it worked as an opportunity to relax and take our time to know better each other and learning from each other as well in an unusual place, never seen before but safe and stimulating like a football field, a living room or a free space full of painting and colours. In all those places my perception was that, after the icebreaking, everyone was feeling calm and without daily worries, part of a new experience far away from barriers, prejudice and discrimination.

Furthermore, different cultures, languages and way to define art were key aspects in order to raise the so-called “cultural awareness” and develop creative paths to express our feelings and opinions.

- Something that didn't really work was the “one to one” interaction. As part of the mentoring journey I would have divided them in smaller groups in order to better enter in relation with the mentors but, at the same time, enjoy the journey and the session as well. Sometimes, in fact, I felt that some of them were a step behind due to the shyness and the presence of many other people.
- As mentioned above, the unconventional space was the strongest point of this model. I would have liked to have more sessions in many other unconventional and stimulating spaces since I felt that at some point, the journey stopped and there wasn't a proper conclusion of it. Of course, also time represented a key point since it was never enough.

If this model will continue in the future, I really hope that these main positive aspects will be improved and strengthen as milestone of the same model and taken into consideration as good practice in our experience with teenagers in Cyprus.

Mentees

UK

Many mentors were also mentees. It was a two-way process for many of them. As one UK mentor describes it:

My personal situation is not like a mentor in broad sense, but knowing others' experiences made me realise what I had done in past, and am still doing now, was a lot of mentoring, as well as being mentored by peers - so a good thing about this project was understanding this in relationship to myself. What Creus does is keep you on track – more than everything, the most helpful thing was to discuss it with someone like Liz from Collage, and then with others in the UK and then at international training activities. This was the best outcome of the project across all the countries.

Another good outcome is to have the possibility to validate this learning – in my case through CLOCK. I was required to rigorously build a portfolio to demonstrate my creative practice and entrepreneurship and sharing of knowledge and then connect this to mentoring. The mentor – mentee relationship worked both ways in this project. I believe it is something that is always on-going, and the good thing is you can be mentor for some-one and then you can change and be their mentee for something else. In an international context I was able to share skills I had learned in the UK like funding activities, digital processes and online media.

Working in the non-formal sector we sense that people think they don't have a clear path, so we need to set up some structures in the way CREUS did. CLOCK being one possibility. More funding should be available for this.

ITALY

I participated in this pilot organized by Mulab just for curiosity. Now I can say that I tested for the first time a non-formal approach to learn something. In a few hours I learned that it's important building good relationships with peers and mentors, to know better our boundaries and our talents and how to develop it. I think it has been possible using creative techniques (Digital Storytelling) in a "special" venue as Corviale district and having fun in a relaxed environment.

I learned a lot about how it is important to listen the others in a group, telling our doubts and listening to the mentors. I realised that the most relevant aspect of building a good mentee/mentor relationship is time.