

Residency: Final Report

This is the final report of the Residency project. Residency was a project funded by the European Union through the Leonardo Da Vinci strand of the Life Long Learning Programme. It took place between October 2013 and September 2015 and involved three artist residencies taking place in communities based in the UK, Poland and Spain using the opportunities created to assess the model as a medium for civic engagement and to explore the opportunities the model creates for Vocational and Educational Training (VET).

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Introduction

The Residency project consists of an action research project exploring the validity of using the Residency model as a training tool for people using arts in the context of civic engagement work.

Residency was designed to not only meet the project objectives but also to impact the communities and people for whom it served. The intention of hosting three residencies- one in each partner country, was about supporting communities in achieving their civic engagement. The intention was to support these communities to use Residency as the starting point in their work to help people get more involved in civic life, with the hope that their activities beyond residency will benefit from their skills and knowledge in engaging with the arts to deliver some of this work. At the same time, Residency was the testing board for whether the Residency model served as a training tool for artists wanting to develop their work in a civic engagement context. Whilst the project teams saw the correlation between these two objectives, we encouraged everyone involved in Residency to engage in the project activities in whatever way served their personal interests and needs.

In this report, we pull together the key findings from each residency to propose some recommendations and ideas about key learning points and potential ways to develop the findings, which began to emerge from the process. The report takes into account the experiences from the residencies, study trips, artist and community meetings and desktop research conducted by each country. It seeks to explore whether there are common European learning outcomes, which could be used in the context of developing a European model of training in relation to artists and communities working in a civic engagement context.

As part of an EU funded project, the Universities of Warsaw and Barcelona and Staffordshire embarked on a two-year project from September 2013, to explore how a Residency model could be used as a tool for learning in the context of developing skills to undertake arts and civic engagement work. Using an action research approach, involving the appointment of a host organisation, a community partnership, a community practitioner, an artist and a trainee artist- as well as a community member, three 2 month residencies were established in each country. Each residency had evolved from community research activities and project management, delivery and evaluation was done in partnership with communities.

Further information and reports about the residencies can be found at www.residencyproject.eu

Participatory Appraisal (PA)

The Residency project was established using a framework and methods associated with participatory appraisal. The rationale for this was to ensure the research methodology complemented the values of the civic engagement intentions of each project.

The very nature of undertaking an EU project meant that the project had to be delivered within structures approved by the EU (such as financial management, safeguarding, health and safety). This therefore required us to be working with communities and organisations who were able to demonstrate a commitment to these issues, and where there was a level of accountability in regards to the work that they did. Therefore, on this level participatory appraisal was artificially implemented, as it meant we were generally working with organisations and not exclusively self-formed groups of individuals in communities- which is what PA is generally associated with.

Nevertheless, each residency was developed in partnership with communities and host organisations and wherever possible issues such as budgeting, programming, management were conducted in partnership with communities. Each residency obviously did this differently, in order to suit the needs of their project.

- **Key Learning**

Participatory Appraisal (PA) in the context of civic engagement work using arts must be considered as an integral part of the planning process. We identified that most guidance around civic engagement is aligned to examples of community development work- much of which is similar in terms of how it is delivered. However, in the case of a creative project- as our three Residencies testify, the PA process gets absorbed into the creative journey- and therefore can look very different in each project.

Project partners reported that integrating participatory appraisal slows down the planning process. On the one hand, feedback reported that this was positive as it ensured time was allocated for reflection and more people felt as though they had control over the process. However, it did occur additional work for host organisations and partners, who were also trying to maintain momentum and enthusiasm within communities about the project and for those not involved in the PA activities, could lose interest in the work.

PA relies upon regular group discussion, dialogue and problem solving activities. Feedback from the Residencies indicated that this process along created an effective platform to help partners build relationships. For those that were hesitant about getting involved in the creative work, then PA became a useful outlet and a way of getting more reluctant people to get involved. It also made them value the notion of cultural partnerships in this context.

The documentation created by PA activities such as meeting notes, diagrams and mind maps served as useful tools to enable people to join the residency

at any stage in the process. Rather than a verbal catch or relying on written documents the PA process created an alternative way for communities to articulate their experiences.

- **Implications for Vocational and Educational Training (VET)**

Even though PA has been closely aligned with community arts / cultural engagement practice there are very limited teaching materials documenting this process. VET opportunities in the future would need to consider ways to merge literature and information associated with PA into an arts / cultural context.

PA is a learning process in its own right. Therefore, arguably the PA model offers an alternative pedagogy in terms of providing an education to artists/ cultural practitioners and communities who want to work together.

PA offer opportunities for communities to learn research skills. If training for those involving arts and civic engagement included a PA methodology and tools, then it would be important to find ways to accredit the learning conducted by the community in terms of research and management skills which they are required to develop in order to undertake the PA work.

Roles and responsibilities and management

The Residencies were organised using a specific structure, which was intended to help fairly distribute workloads and also to ensure community knowledge and expertise was considered as part of the formal management of the project. Each Residency consulted with local community groups and hosted artist network events to help create and monitor the residencies and review the emerging findings. In addition, we appointed an artist, a trainee artist, a host organisation and a community practitioner.

Each Residency, adapted this model to meet local need and in many cases additional support was obtained through people volunteering their expertise in order to support specific roles. For example, Artists who generally work in partnership with other creative practitioners involved their peers on a voluntary basis. In addition, community practitioners were often affiliated to the host organisation or similar, and other representatives from these organisations also offered support.

The purpose of this management structure was to help ensure the Residencies were developed collaboratively but also to help in terms of quality assurance. The overwhelming majority of feedback concerning the roles was associated with the value of using a team approach to deliver arts work in a civic engagement context. People liked feeling part of a team and feeling acknowledged.

- **Key learning**

Residency teams reported how the team structure is often a luxury in the context of community and participatory arts work, however everyone felt it was critical in terms of creating successful learning opportunities and in order to embed creativity into civic engagement work.

Importantly, teams reported that governance is particularly important for civic engagement work. Sensitive, sometimes controversial ideas and stories emerge when developing civic engagement work and the team model helped partners ensure there was capacity to address issues as they arose.

Also on a practical level, it helped everyone involved in a formal capacity understand more about how each other worked, and get to grips more with the roles and responsibilities of each representative. Artists said this helped ensure they were less entrenched by bureaucracy, whereas community partners said it gave them an opportunity to explain more about their work and roles to artists- and thus avoid some of the preconceptions and misunderstanding often associated with community arts work.

On a practical level the team structure meant tasks such as quality management, safeguarding, health and safety, consent and insurance were fairly allocated and ultimately the structure gave people an excuse for people to get together outside of the context of creative work.

Another benefit of the team structure was that it operated to a certain extent as critical friend- and thus the residency and creative practices were not judged by outsiders, but instead by those involved in shaping and delivering the opportunity. Having people in specific roles gave the community and associated professionals and community leaders, a way of articulating their views without necessarily having to personally attend every meeting.

- **Implications for Vocational and Educational Training (VET)**

Our research began to reveal that artists in all three countries felt that their career trajectory was often limited and sometimes confusing- and all valued paid and sometimes un paid opportunities. When we created the trainee role for Residency, we created thinking about a younger and/ or less experienced artist. One of our trainees was actually an artist who wished to use a training opportunity as a way of embarking full time on community arts work, having juggled a range of careers- including that of a community artist for many years.

We also identified that there were vet needs associated with the community practitioner. In the context of Residency these had a specific role, but if these projects had been undertaken just generally in a community then it would have also been likely that a local representative helped assist with the project. Therefore, we became aware that there is a population of people who have

helped broker arts and civic engagement projects, and their needs should not be ignored in the context of VET strategies.

Much of the community support came from professionals either with community jobs such as a community worker or youth worker. We therefore became aware that there could be opportunities to share the residency-learning model with other sectors who may develop arts work and not exclusively focus on arts education.

The role of the artist and the use of creativity

The approach adopted by the artist and the trainee artist was different in all three residencies. This was in response to community need, capacity and the skillset of the artist. Overall, the feedback was that communities felt artists' creative skills served the residencies well and a diverse range of creative experiences and products were generated ranging from photography workshops and community gardening to seed bombing and mobile gardens.

As is common in community arts, all of the residencies had to negotiate the creative process with the communities- and explain the value of the creative process. Expectations were generally associated with the creative outputs- and generally these were well received. However, the residency model appears to have helped artists explain to community partners how they work- including how they create a 'job' from the process and having an opportunity to explain about the value of the creative process.

Being able to work with community staff also helped the artists concentrate on their creative practice- which is something many of them said they did not always have time to do- and bureaucratic, funding and facilitation demands often took priority.

The partnerships the artist made with communities is interesting, as in the majority of cases the community engaged with both the artist as a person as well as their practice. Thus communities continued to use the arts for civic engagement work after the artist had left, but they also reported that they planned to find ways to invite the artist back- as they were now equally valued as a community member.

- **Key learning**

Finding ways to manage project expectations was challenging. The limited time involved for the residency restricted artists in getting to know the community and developing long term work- which is something ideally required for civic engagement work. However, discussions and explanations needed to be made by artists to explain how much time their creative process took, as well as review the realities regarding what can be achieved in this period. For many community members and partners, then this was their first introduction to working with artists in this context and thus had high expectations about what could be achieved. Artists then had to diplomatically manage creative expectations during the very early meetings- which is a

tough job when you are simultaneously trying to form working relationships with people.

All of the artists required a level of practical support- whether that be in setting up an exhibition to locating and storing specific pieces of equipment to help them undertake the work. This requires additional resources, and sometimes cost and is expected of community arts work. However, it is something, which communities need to think about in the context of delivering civic engagement work- as often these resources are not easily available to community settings. What was successful was when the artists were able to draw upon community resources to help support them in the work- such as local plants or purchasing materials from local stores, etc.

- **Implications for Vocational and Educational Training (VET)**

We need to be clear about what aspect of an artist's professional status VET opportunities respond to. The majority of the artists we worked with had a range of professions as an artists- for example they were educators and taught art, they led community projects, they create their own work. In the context of delivering civic engagement work then there may be more demand for artists to juggle their roles. However, this can create friction- for example what is the distinction between the professional artwork and that made with the community. Therefore, VET initiatives need to be explicit about what aspect of creative practice the training material should respond to.

Artists and communities were immensely proud of the creative products, which arose from residency. In response to civic pride, we therefore feel it is important to explore ways to include an analysis of the creative product achieved in the course of the civic engagement work, and/ or find ways to make reference to this in the context of VET.

The current Residency model is efficient but has only been trialled with relatively small projects. Given that communities can be big places and civic engagement issues impact everyone then there is scope to look at VET in relation to community learning initiatives.

European Mobility

During the course of residency, 3 artists from the partner countries delivered an artist residency in a different country to their home. In addition, each project hosted study trips to a partner country and a final seminar was held in September 2015 for project teams and the wider public.

During the study trips, people got the opportunity to learn more about each individual residency but also the partner organisations and communities, as well as understand more about the civic engagement priorities associated with each residency.

In addition, information about each of the residencies has been shared in the Residency Toolkit, which has been printed and freely available for distributed. This is supported by an online toolkit which includes a download of the printed publication as well as additional supporting information, and information in partner languages. People have also been encouraged to communicate via social media and in response to blog entries written about each residency.

- **Key learning**

People engaged in civic engagement work really appreciated meeting other people in similar positions. People reported back that they enjoyed hearing about other people's experiences and feeling like they were not alone in their work- and thus getting the European perspective both gave them new ideas but also offered them reassurance in terms of sharing the challenges they were facing.

We were however aware that the residencies and study trip model set up by this project restricted some people from participating, for example those with additional caring needs or part time workers. The research suggested that it was important for those responsible for the civic engagement work to represent (and preferably include) the community that the project is serving. Thus, in future it would be worth exploring alternative residency models to enable more people with different life experiences to participate.

- **Implications for VET**

The visits and exchanges with those in other countries helped those involved validate their learning. IF the residency model was used for VET then it may be difficult to always arrange such visits, therefore it would be useful to consider how technology could assist people to share their practice across Europe, and to find ways for Residencies to partner with similar civic engagement work in other countries.

Another factor to consider will be identifying ways to assess the learning, which takes place during a study trip, as well as a deeper analysis of the study trip model in relation to how it operates as a tool for learning.

Conclusion

Vocational training for artists working with communities can be controversial. When we embarked upon the Residency project, the emphasis of our research was on exploring how it would help support artists and cultural practitioners develop their practice in order to understand better and to support civic engagement initiatives. What we discovered was that the learning community was much wider- each residency revealed that the desire

to learn more about how the arts operated in a civic engagement environment was not isolated to only the artists, but it included partner organisations and on some occasions communities themselves. We therefore have become more aware of developing resources and learning material, which extends to a range of people- and not necessarily just the arts community.

Our initial focus of civic engagement was very general- and to a certain extent it was left to communities in each country to identify what civic engagement issues were pertinent to their project. Thus, the projects addressed a range of civic issues ranging from the use of public spaces to personal empowerment. Each Residency felt it generally succeeded in achieving their project objectives, but what it also revealed was the breadth of civic engagement work which was being undertaken. Specific issues began to arise such as public involvement in decision-making, civic engagement in the context of arts and health work, consent and civic choices and participatory budgeting and planning. In general, the agreement was that the Residency model is transferable to a range of civic engagement activities, however there is scope for further research to explore its relevance to specific sectors or specific aspects of civic engagement activity.

Action plan for future work

In the context of residency, we have generated a range of documents and findings relating to some of the specific issues highlighted in this summary report, such as an analysis and action plans of the VET outcomes. To conclude, we have created an action plan for future work to develop some of the ideas highlighted in this report.

Short term	<p>To maintain the Residency website and to provide up date information including relevant information regarding civic engagement, tools and resources for community groups and useful case studies.</p> <p>To link the Residency Website with other web based learning materials and resources associated with people working in civic engagement.</p> <p>To continue to work with partners and host agencies disseminate the findings of the Residency project and develop work which has emerged from the original project as well as support them in developing new work.</p> <p>To continue to disseminate new news relating to the Residency communities (such as new projects) via social media.</p> <p>To continue to disseminate the toolkit and the concept of Residency as a training tool within the arts sector and work with those currently using Residencies in an educational context to explore any knowledge transfer opportunities.</p> <p>To continue to support the trainee artist and any of the communities participating in Residency and offer them support and access to HE resources to help them develop their work.</p> <p>To continue to search for opportunities to disseminate the project outcomes through the publication of journal articles and publishing findings through partner publications and websites</p>
Medium term	<p>Launch the newly validates arts and civic engagement module across Europe.</p> <p>To research the possibilities in regards to developing specific civic engagement training in relation to specific sectors e.g. health and social care, community work</p> <p>Liaise with communities concerning their learning needs in relation to working with artists and explore ways to co develop learning materials.</p>
Long term	<p>To work with education and training providers to get the Residency model adopted as a core part of educational programmes and using the toolkit and Residency materials to help deliver this work.</p> <p>For host organisations to adopt the use of Residency as a training module for people developing civic engagement activities in their institutions.</p>

To continue to work alongside the communities involved to identify any longer term outcomes and to support them in their quests for civic engagement outcomes.



