



CONNECT

KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE
FOR AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

WP7 – EVALUATION REPORT

R7.2, R7.3, R7.4, R7.5, R7.6



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1/ Premise: Framing the project evaluation

1.1 Connect structure and distinctive features

The main objective of Connect was to bridge the gap between teaching in the academic/higher education world and continuous professional development in the cultural sector to improve awareness of the importance of audience development and related skills and competences. In this context, the project aimed to respond to the needs of higher education to create a learning alliance between academics and practitioners to integrate mutual knowledge and exchange skills and approaches in order to update and respond to the labour market's needs and changes in society.

Connect answered these challenges by creating an innovative training programme – the **so-called “Twin Track Programme”, TTP** from now on - targeted at practitioners and post graduate students who shared parallel learning experiences and were matched to work in pairs to exchange competences and approaches in a real working environment.

The TTP had the **following goals**:

- to bring together the academic and professional worlds to share knowledge, practices, test processes and find innovative ways to shorten the distance between these two environments;
- to advance the theory and practice of audience development through high quality research and learning;
- to enable both target groups - practitioners and students - to develop excellent transversal leadership skills, reflective practice, entrepreneurial mind-sets, equipping them to adapt to continuous change in the labour market;
- to use methodologies, approaches and practical tools, tackling cultural organisations' audience challenges through 'action research' - an internship where students and practitioners could apply and test their learning with real audiences and learn from it.

The CONNECT TTP experimentation was based on three innovative **distinctive features**, that were the main focus of the evaluation:

- **Twin track approach**: the compresence of students and professionals, first sharing learning tools and contextual approaches and then working together on a common challenge, developing in pairs a project to tackle real market needs;
- **Action research**: as an internship, participants in pairs (1 student and 1 professional) designed and developed action research based on the principles of prototyping to be carried out in professionals' hosting organisations. This format turned out to be very effective a) to challenge their assumptions about audiences; b) to develop a risk-taking attitude towards failure as a space for learning and improvement c) to learn how to work with prototypes carefully designed as testers of major projects, thus reducing risks d) for professionals, to make the case for audience development within the institutions e) for students, to work on a

project grounded in actual organisations' needs, in order to develop an understanding of organisations' cultures and challenges f) to strengthen their professional skills, raising awareness of the labour market needs as well as their potential;

- **Mentoring scheme** to support an entrepreneurial attitude and individual professional growth as a unique possibility of having participants' strategic work and goals qualified and supported in all processes.

1.2 Evaluation aims

The aim of the evaluation (WP7) was to assess the effectiveness of the whole twin-track programme and the mentoring programme. In detail, the objectives addressed were to:

- Validate the effectiveness of the twin-track programme (TTP) for students and practitioners;
- Validate the effectiveness of the mentoring programme (supporting learners in developing entrepreneurial attitudes);
- Explore the impact of the action research (AR) phase on involved organisations (seek evidence of a change towards a more audience-centric approach by the organisations);
- Provide evidence leading to a set of recommendations on how to improve the TTP in the future;
- Foster the exchange of updates and experiences amongst national hubs, gathering evidence of the adaptations of the TTP at national level;
- Seek evidence that the training developed for the specific context will have provided value for the diverse range of organisations and individuals involved;
- Explore the unexpected results.

1.3 The evaluation framework and its development

An evaluation framework (R7.1) has been designed to describe both the underlying methodology and the practical steps required to implement it. Most of the evaluation actions have been held in parallel in all countries involved in the TTP testing (Denmark, Italy, Poland, Spain and UK).

According to the aims, the evaluation focused **both** on **validating the effectiveness of the different parts of the TTP** and on **defining the impact it has had on all players involved** (students, practitioners, trainers, cultural organisations and mentors). In order to take into account such complexity, a mix of standard and non-standard approaches (interviews and focus groups, learning log analysis) has been adopted to obtain a deeper understanding of overall satisfaction, improvement and evaluation of the programme beyond the hard skills training (thus including the mentoring process and the outcomes for the cultural organisations testing the action research). The adopted framework was therefore implemented through research activities run throughout the TTP implementation (in the middle of the TTP, at the end of the TTP, and a few months after the end of the action research), through the following techniques:

- **Individual structured interviews** with students and professionals in the middle of the TTP (before action research took place) in each country;

- **Final focus groups** (one with students and one with professionals) in each country at the end of the TTP;
- **2 Panel discussions** (mixing students and professionals from all countries) during the two mobilities/winter schools;
- **Post reflection papers** written by students and professionals after the end of the action research;
- **Group Interviews/focus groups with mentors** at the end of the action research;
- **Interviews with partners** to assess the outcomes for organisations involved in action research.

The evaluation process was originally structured in 3 main tasks, here below described.

Task 1: Assessment of the entrepreneurial education and training methods

Evaluation sources for this task: interviews in the middle of the TTP, national focus groups at the end, international panels during the two mobilities, post reflection papers.

The original expected outputs were a Report on Evaluation of post-graduate students' learning outcomes (R7.2) and a Report on Evaluation of practitioners' learning outcomes (R7.3). Nevertheless, partners in all countries reported early in the process that the differences between students and professionals taking part in the TTP tended to disappear after a while and even if they valued the process differently, their learning outcomes were similar. Based on these observations, the present document has been reframed better to meet the aim of this task, by reporting students' and professionals' learning together, pointing out whenever relevant differences were observed. The same structure applies to the different countries: commonalities were reported together, whereas national contexts - related observations were carefully underlined only when they showed relevant differences (see chapter 2)

Task 2: Assessment of the entrepreneurial education

Evaluation sources for this task: Learners' Learning Logs analysis and questionnaires/interviews of mentors.

The aim of this task was originally to evaluate the mentoring scheme in reference to the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Again, during the implementation of the TTP, the trainers realised that the mentoring scheme was just one of the tools that enhanced the entrepreneurial attitude of participants: other parts of the TTP were strongly reported by participants as similarly empowering them in risk taking and self-awareness. For this reason, the expected output (R7.4 Report on Evaluation of the mentoring scheme for the development of entrepreneurial skills) has been extended to analyse the effectiveness of the different parts of the TTP in developing those skills (see chapter 3 and 4).

Task 3: Evaluation of the internships at organisation level

Evaluation sources for this task: Learners' Learning Logs analysis, focus groups, interviews with directors of the cultural organisations hosting the internship (action research) and trainers.

Although the time span of the project is too tight to talk properly about “impact”, the consortium was pleased to detect signs of the change being seeded in hosting cultural organisations. The action research (run through the internships) provided the opportunity to test an audience development (AD) approach in the context of an organisation. This internship “format” was so strongly reported as effective by participants and trainers, that it was decided to dedicate a full chapter to its results (see chapter 4).

Deliverables

Given the findings above mentioned, in order better and more clearly to describe the richness of the evaluation results, contents have been structured as follows:

Correspondence between tasks, deliverables and chapters of the present evaluation report

Task 1	R7.2	Report on Evaluation of post-graduate students' learning outcomes	Chapter 2
Task 1	R7.3	Report on Evaluation of practitioners' learning outcomes	Chapter 2
Task 2	R7.4	Report on Evaluation of the mentoring scheme for the development of entrepreneurial skills	Chapter 3
Task 3	R7.5	Report on Impact of the Action Research	Chapter 4
Task 2	R7.6	Report on how to promote entrepreneurial education	Chapter 5

1.4 Report structure

1 / Connect structure and distinctive features

Describes the overall design of the TTP, mentoring and action research.

2 / Evaluation of student and practitioner learning outcomes

Describes the influence of local contexts in the implementation of a common framework, learning of students, practitioners and trainers.

3 / Assessment of the entrepreneurial education

Describes how Connect fostered entrepreneurial education, the main findings and recommendations.

4 / Focus on the impact of action research

Describes how the action research was implemented in the different countries, the main findings and the outcomes for the hosting institutions involved.

5 / Conclusions and a look into the future

Summarises the main learning obtained from the whole process (recommendations for future capacity building programmes as well as for fostering entrepreneurial attitude) and outlines further fields of development and experimentation.

2 / Evaluation of students' and practitioners' learning outcomes (R7.2 - R7.3)

The overall evaluation of the TTP highlights that in all countries both students and practitioners have acquired skills, knowledge and competences and developed attitudes coherent with the main objectives of the project.

All participants acquired a more holistic, aware and conscious idea of what audience development means. Rather than audience development being seen as a function of marketing strategy, it is instead recognised as a way for each organisation to rethink the role that each has in its specific context.

The 'audience-centric' or 'audience-led' approach is therefore a challenge to:

1. rethink and re-question the role, mission, vision and impact a cultural organisation should have in a contemporary society encountering huge and radical technological, social, political and environmental changes.
2. be meaningful for contemporary and future citizens, without losing sight of artistic and aesthetic missions and core values.

Based on this paradigm shift, participants acquired competences to translate strategies into effective tactics to embed a new way of thinking in the organisation, acting and developing long-lasting processes using different tools according to the holistic and multi-disciplinary approach of the project. Participants reflected how this led to change in the organisations that were involved in

- creating a trustworthy environment in which staff members are supported in the development of productive relationships with audiences
- acting as mediators to achieve their goals and ambitions
- negotiating with and engaging other staff in their organisation
- taking and managing risks
- sharing power and encouraging horizontal decision-making processes

Practitioner and student learning outcomes were similar, which is one of the most interesting and significant findings, indicating that the TTP has been perceived as a co-learning process fruitful for both parties involved. On the one hand, there are similar outcomes for all participants involved in different countries - in line with the manifesto developed within the project – and on the other, there are nuances related to the different implementations of the TTP in the five countries, influenced by the different socio-cultural contexts and approaches adopted of each national hub.

2.1 / TTP at national level: adapting to the local context

All five national hubs developed the seven thematic modules in line with the co-designed format, but each hub carried out a customised TTP that responded to each country's specific contexts. These differences affected:

1. Selection processes and classroom composition
2. Timing and structure of the TTP
3. Approaches to the TTP

1. **Selection processes and classroom composition**

Each partner developed different selection processes to respond both to the local needs and expectations and to institutional constraints. This influenced the composition of the classroom, expectations and consequently the implementation and final perception of the training pilot.

The most heterogeneous spectrum of differences concerned students:

- In all countries, students came from different geographical areas and in some cases, this made the matching with the organisation and the implementation of the action research more complicated
- In most countries, student backgrounds and career pathways were often connected with cultural management, whereas in the UK, Goldsmiths University opened the call to students from different departments, eventually grouping a class of students with a varied spectrum of background and knowledge. In Italy, where the TTP was developed outside the frame of the University, some students had already finished their studies and encountered severe difficulties starting the internship outside of the curricular scheme, due to bureaucratic issues. This also affected the action research as well as the initial expectations of students and the eventual findings.
- Many students had previous expertise as volunteers or amateurs in cultural or charity organisations (so they felt confident in the field or engaging in cultural activities).

2. **Timing and structure of TTP**

Each TTP differed in terms of timing - according to the different university calendars (for example Denmark started sooner) - and duration - including the number of meetings and total numbers of taught hours. In each country, the timing and structure was finalised in response to local needs, student backgrounds, knowledge needs and contextual study habits (e.g. in Italy the number of taught hours was higher than in Poland and UK which is partly due to an aversion of students and practitioners in some countries to complete study-work at home).

Here below is a short overview country by country, related to timing and TTP structure.

Poland

The TTP was structured and executed as an official, validated study programme offered by the public university (AMU) preceded and followed by the regular administrative standards and procedures. It was undertaken simultaneously in two cities: Poznan and Warsaw, for two separate groups, but with some shared sessions in the framework of introductory (Poznan), mid-term (Warsaw) and final meetings (Warsaw and Poznan).

Spain

Students and practitioners were enrolled in two different courses intertwined with shared sessions and the action research project. This choice was related to the assumption that students needed more hours of training to compensate for the extensive experience of the practitioners; even if at the end of the course this belief was dispelled. TTP modules were developed as follows: a theoretical module (between October and November 2018) - with separate and common sessions; an extra internship module only for students (December 2018); the action research (between January and June 2019) matching together students and practitioners.

Denmark

In line with the tight terms of study at Danish Universities, the TTP had to start early and to be compressed into five modules instead of seven. This implied that the topics were combined in a slightly different way than the programme of seven courses would eventually do. But this worked well and was unproblematic; participants were quite able to consume and deliver knowledge and practical work within this rhythm.

UK

According to student and practitioner needs, the TTP was structured in seven modules of one day each and a final (eighth) session in which the partnerships presented their results. Participants were also entrusted to in-work / at-home study as well as in exchanges and practical exercises. The mixing of students from different discipline backgrounds facilitated and enhanced the dialogue and mutual enrichment.

Italy

The TTP was set up in six modules over eight months, from November till June, according to the university calendar, even though the Italian hub (Fondazione Fitzcarraldo and MEP) is not a university. This affected the composition of the classroom: students came from different geographical contexts and had different curricula, backgrounds and educational levels. The huge variety in terms of class composition enriched the discussions throughout the TTP and was helpful in setting a collaborative and horizontal exchange.

3. Approaches to the TTP

The contents of the TTP were developed in line with the training framework designed by the partner consortium during the Warsaw learning mobility, but each national hub developed its own individual approach to the training - strongly related to local needs and contexts – that influenced both the contents and the structure of the modules developed.

There are still big differences between the North (UK, DK) and the South and East of Europe (IT, ES, PL), especially in relation to the need for a **data driven approach**. Italy and the UK can be seen as the two polarisations in relation to this topic. In the UK, the data driven approach is embedded in the way that cultural organisations work, and the training is therefore related to other tools and capacities acquired during the university training; during the TTP the importance of using evidence based data was underlined, but there was not a dedicated module for these different tools, approaches and sources, which are common tools shared at national level. On the other side, Italy is still lacking in this topic: there aren't uniforme statistics or sources which allow comparative and in-depth analysis of cultural behaviour. For this reason, a module of the TTP was dedicated to equipping students and participants of the strategies and tools useful for working with data. This was similar in Poland and Spain.

In all TTPs, a user experience approach was developed, to help participants change their mindset in relation to audiences, with each national hub focusing on needs in relation to the elements that higher education courses are missing.

The second important point in all countries was the topic of **organisational change**, which is one of the most challenging ambitions of the learning process. For this reason, the topic was addressed in a dedicated module and informed other modules focused on the enhancement of soft skills.

All national hubs paid attention to the selection process of the organisations involved to ensure they were open to embracing an audience-centric approach. For example, in Poland, there were in depth interviews with the directors of the organisations and in Italy a letter of commitment was required.

Oganisational change has been tackled in depth throughout the TTP programme giving participants theoretical tools to analyse their organisation and find innovative ways to embed an audience led perspective. For this reason, the module dedicated to leading change was focused on theoretical and practical tools to make this change effective and easier to manage and to generate an impact on the DNA of some cultural institutions.

Local contexts also brought some **difference in approaches to contents delivery**. This was particularly evident in the UK (where Design Thinking strongly shaped the TTP) and in Denmark where the TTP was shaped around the idea of a 'a curatorial turn' in terms of understanding audience development not primarily as a marketing strategy, nor even merely as a strategy for organisational change, – but as a perception of art, artist, public and instructional decisions brought together in a holistic approach.

2.2 / What we learned

The following paragraphs report the main learning outcomes of the TTP both for practitioners and students. It reflects the general outcomes and the specificity for students and practitioners, underlining cultural context peculiarities where needed.

Connecting students and practitioners impacted positively on the training, allowing a constant interaction between internal and external points of view. The informal setting, innovative learning practices, the international mobility experience and the topics at the core of the TTP, eventually resulted in a successful capacity building process for both students and practitioners.

Overall, participants underlined that the greatest impact for them had been the way that they understood their work, the sense of their role in the social context, the feeling of being more aware and better equipped to deal with the changes needed for an audience-centric approach and, ultimately, the appreciation of the role of culture in contemporary society. These elements have been underlined with more emphasis by Spanish, Italian and Danish participants.

The international character of the project, the possibility to deeply investigate other organisations and cultural institutions, the freshness and enthusiasm of the students were for me the strengths of the project.

The most important lessons for me were always have an open look to the future and constantly verify that each choice you make must be consistent with your mission. (Italy)

Learning outcomes are reported on three levels, corresponding to sub-chapters: Twin track, contents related competences and process.

2.2.1 The twin track

The structure of the TWIN TRACK approach which put together students and practitioners was one of the most appreciated elements by participants.

For practitioners, having the opportunity to relate in an informal environment (outside their normal routine) rebooted a positive attitude and allowed them to acquire a more “risk-taking” approach. The work in class and the experimentation and implementation of the tools learned in their organisations, helped the professionals to look differently on their professional roles and in relation to other staff members. The ongoing exchange with students gave the professionals the possibility to question themselves about the reasons and motivations of a series of choices and actions taken for granted during normal working practices.

I really valued speaking to the students, who asked perceptive – and sometimes difficult – questions about established ways of doing things (‘why are your opening hours like that?’). It

was refreshing to hear their perspectives and I found the process of explaining my work helped clarify issues for me, too. (UK)

For the students, the added value of this learning approach was the possibility to work side by side with professionals in an organisation, which - in most cases - hosted them as peers and not merely as interns. Indeed, the classroom environment encouraged a horizontal relationship between students and practitioners, which influenced the perception of the presence of students in the organisations, where they were recognised as fundamental members of the project team.

Working together reinforced the group, stimulated reflections and opened new creative possibilities. (Italy)

The good harmony between the participants has been key in the dynamics of the day to day, the learning is associated with the emotional memory of the people that form the group. I consider my fellow teachers in my learning. (Spain)

2.2.2 Competence related outcomes

The meaning of audience development

Both students and practitioners developed a holistic perspective of audience development. Participants obtained a better understanding of the role of audience development in rethinking the meaning that a cultural organisation has in its context, reflecting on its mission and by giving a key role to the relationship with the audience, beyond a marketing-led perspective.

Let the audience participate can be a big deal: it's not just about offering the best to them, but really letting them into change (Denmark)

Acquiring a theoretical framework for audience development has positively changed participants' perspectives: those who were already familiar with the topic said they had shifted the focus to the concept of community and to the importance of working on data, which are fundamental to a more organic approach.

I have completely changed my view on Audience Development. At first I thought it was related to marketing and the commercial aspect. Now I see much deeper connections with everything we do. (Italy)

Connect was also an opportunity to approach the concept of cultural democracy and the idea of building horizontal relations in a trustworthy environment to avoid hierarchy and set the stage to develop more honest exchanges among peers.

My understanding about democratic culture has changed: I am more aware about the powers of society. It was also really really great to get a feeling and knowledge about the European reality

which I find very important these days where populism, polarisation, scapegoating and destabilization of Europe are major challenges. I also found hope, and motivation for this field, as well as an emphasis on how important an engaged audience and culture is in a healthy democratic society - "If art pays attention to more people, more people will pay attention to art."
(Denmark)

The evidence-based approach

An evidence-based approach was one of the most appreciated topics by all the participants: data analysis, segmentation tools, diagnosis methods, art-based research, social media and internet mediated content analysis have been considered as fundamental instruments to build a strategy. This data analysis was used to set up all the forthcoming activities, and an important tool to measure the efficacy of the pilot.

The evidence of the surveys overturned my opinions and this helped me to understand the importance of an evidence-based practice. (Italy)

Understanding the organisation: identity, purpose, functioning

The reflection on the role and the meaning of the institution, its purpose, identity and mission challenged both practitioners and students. For practitioners, it was an opportunity to reflect on the purpose, identity and pillars of their own organisation. For students, organisational analysis was key to understanding institutions, their way of working and their ambitions.

M2 helped us to ask ourselves some questions usually left apart in the everyday race for survival and to deepen and renew our mission. (Italy)

The audience centric approach applied at the institution greatly modified the way of thinking.
(Spain)

Leading the change

The module on "how to lead change" was also one of the most appreciated: it was helpful to understand how to embed an audience-centric approach, how to promote a more inclusive way by engaging all the staff and the module also offered the chance to rethink the role of each member of staff in an organisation, reinforcing the professional awareness of the participants.

Connect was also an occasion to discover the high potential of overcoming barriers between disciplines, being strongly interdisciplinary. I learnt how to be a stronger innovator. (Italy)

By raising the awareness that "change" is difficult, it requires constant care and effort and it does not occur instantaneously, the module was also perceived as a powerful injection of self-confidence.

What I learned the most is that change is difficult and you have to believe it so hard: so I think that to me the most important gift of the TTP was an improvement in resilience. (Italy)

Connect was a surprise, an infusion of joy. It inspires me to innovate and drive change. (Italy)

Ultimately, the module was useful for reflection on those soft skills which help individuals to adapt to change, to face complexity and to respond to fast changing digital and technological environments, encompassing cognitive (critical thinking and responsible decision-making), personal (awareness, drive and self-management) and interpersonal skills (communication, negotiation, cooperation and teamwork, inclusion, empathy and advocacy).

Design Thinking Approach

The design thinking approach was considered useful and innovative, especially by UK participants where this aspect was stressed the most. It was helpful not only as an operative tool but also as a way of thinking that can be useful in many different aspects of life, including those not directly linked to the cultural area.

The programme gave me the space to interrogate my current practice and as it was twin-track it helped me look at my work from a different perspective. The Design Thinking element was the part that really helped drive forward change in my own work. (UK)

2.2.3 Process related outcomes

A self-reflective approach: *We have learned to change ourselves*

The capacity building programme became an opportunity for participants to challenge themselves, to question their own practices and to be more open to different perspectives. It supported the participants to reflect about previous experiences acquired through practice and re-organise them into a goal-focused perspective, according to the mission of the organisation.

I have found the concepts difficult to get my head around because I am ten years into my practice so unthinking certain fixed thoughts has been taxing. (UK)

Through the capacity building I lined up so many concepts, themes and tools that maybe I had already met but now I have a greater awareness that has allowed me to grow as a professional and improve my work. (Denmark)

This course has allowed me to give shape to all the experience I had accumulated through practice. (Poland)

The training also gave some practitioners a fresh approach to their work. Putting the audience at the heart of the organisation means that everyone has to be involved, since all team members share that responsibility.

I'm a curator. I didn't think that keeping attention to audiences was part of my work, but it is. It gives a new meaning to my work. (Italy)

The importance of soft skills

The capacity building teaching methods, not just the specific modules addressing leadership and change, helped participants - especially practitioners - to enhance their soft skills.

I felt that I have also strengthened my personal skills and I am now more aware of my possibilities as a Audience Developer and as a cultural professional. I feel more recognised as a professional with specific skills. (Italy)

Towards a community of practice

The capacity building developed in the context of a European project gave participants a new relational and social awareness: they felt part of a larger community of cultural operators who work at different levels: local, with their community; national, together with their national peers; and internationally, in relation to other cultural operators who followed the same empowerment process in other European countries.

The TTP was perceived as an opportunity to acquire self-awareness about the role a cultural organisation could have in our civil society. The TTP became a safe space to experiment with new forms of civil and democratic engagement and a testing ground for social transformation. Winter Schools were reported as a unique opportunity to exchange internationally with peers, testing a problem-based approach in a stimulating environment. As participants valued this international dimension, many stressed that this could have been stronger, e.g. by embedding this dimension in all training and not limited to the winter schools.

A participative approach

The participative teaching methods adopted in all countries were based on discussions, presentation and group work to maximise student and professional interaction. Participants appreciated being pushed to think critically about their current approaches to audiences. One of the most valuable aspects of the capacity building for participants was the intrinsic relationship between theory and practice, confirming the importance of bridging the gap between the academic world and a cultural sector where practice-based learning is dominant.

Hands-on: practical and lab approach

All participants appreciated the introduction of new and applicable tools for cultural organisations. The sharing of a heterogeneous toolbox, placed within a theoretical and methodological frame, allowed - as especially reported by practitioners - to give more structure to their work and better connect the different phases of the project development and work cycle.

The immediate application of reflective practices such as the “double loop learning” helped to generate new ideas and contribute to defining a new way of thinking, transferable in other activities and fields of application.

3 / Assessment of the entrepreneurial education (R7.4)

3.1 / The entrepreneurial education in Connect

One of the project goals was to promote an entrepreneurial approach in the participants, which could support the development of strategies focused on audiences. The goal was thus to encourage participants to develop **entrepreneurial skills**. Firstly, the ability to organise, decide, control and plan and secondly, to develop soft skills such as a spirit of initiative, attitude to innovation, willingness to take risks, adaptability and flexibility (resilience), ability to manage interpersonal relationships, to mediate, negotiate and cooperate.

One of the main tools designed to deliver this was the **Mentoring Scheme**. As with the TTP, the Mentoring Scheme was designed internationally. Starting from previous expertise in this field, Goldsmiths University framed a bespoke mentoring scheme. Beyond the given framework, facilitation methodologies and tools were presented and tested with the partners during a learning mobility carried out in Rome. The course adopted a '*train the trainer*' approach: so that each national hub could train a selection of professionals from their respective countries, who in their turn were able to play the role of mentor for the participants. In addition to this workshop, a guide to the main facilitation and mentoring tools were shared with all national hubs.

The approach envisaged individual support for the participants to navigate the training and their experimental fieldwork. This would enable them to overcome difficulties and reflect on how the Connect experience was influencing their career path, guiding them to take full advantage of it.

Beyond the shared scheme, the implementation of mentoring (just like the training programme itself) in the different national hubs was subject to the constraints of the local context, both in terms of mentors' selection and of mandate, which was interpreted slightly differently in some countries.

- In Italy, mentors from outside the consortium were selected and took part in two days of training. Each of the mentors was assigned to a student and a practitioner (who were assigned to different action research projects).
- In Spain, mentors came from outside the consortium, participated in a training workshop and were individually assigned to students and practitioners (not to the action research couple). However, in parallel with the mentoring program, the university also activated a tutoring program aimed instead at the action research couples, making the roles sometimes confusing.
- In Poland, the University investigated the possibility of activating external mentors within the frame of the Connect Project but, as there were no funds to pay the external collaborators, the team responsible for the TTP implementation (in consultation with the project leaders and other international partners) decided to take another path. Respecting the agreed functions and duties of the mentors, the six TTP lecturers took on the role of mentor for the student-practitioner partnerships in the action research process. As the Polish TTP ended with the project presentation and the delivery of the final individual diploma papers (final written work) equipped with the appropriate grade number (ECTS) – the function of the mentor was integrated into the function of the paper-project tutor. The

pairs agreed a schedule for their individual meetings, and those meetings continued every second week of each month.

- In Denmark, mentors with a hybrid role of tutor were selected
- In the UK several mentors were involved starting from the network of professionals who regularly collaborate with the partners of the UK Hub. The main difference compared to other countries is that many of the English mentors had previous mentoring experience.

As mentioned above, the mentoring scheme played a central role in supporting entrepreneurship, but also other elements strongly contributed to that goal. Firstly, **two didactic modules** dedicated to:

- **Lead the change:** in which the participants were driven to reflect on the topic of change within organisations and on the role they could play in this regard. It was also an opportunity to discuss and understand the required soft skills, different leadership styles and management of relations with the work groups, to overcome the barriers of reticence and resistance to innovation and changes (one of the points of the Connect manifesto speaks of changes in small steps).
- **Embed the change:** in the last module of the programme, participants were led through an evaluation process of the experiences of the action research, enquiring about the learning and legacy within the organisations involved. By considering the action research as a way of testing a new way of working, participants were prompted to question how, in the light of many small steps, innovative methods connected to the experiment could be integrated into the practices of their organisations. Space was given to the topic of relations with colleagues, the dialogue between departments and between different decision-making levels of organisations.

As well as in the two learning modules, these approaches, methodologies and teaching tools were used throughout the course, balancing **formal and informal training and innovative facilitation tools**, often pushing the participants out of their comfort zone, slowly overcoming their risk aversion and making them experience the challenge to be influenced by heterogeneous perspectives in a safe space.

Lastly, especially for students, **the action research** itself played a fundamental role in enabling a more entrepreneurial approach. Through the complicity developed with the practitioners and the shared training, students played a proactive role in the development of the action research, supporting practitioners with competence, enthusiasm and effectiveness (even with a little “naiveté”), finishing the experience with a great deal of energy which in turn contributed greatly to self-awareness and self-confidence.

3.2 / Main findings

Although at the beginning of the project, entrepreneurship was intended to be tackled mainly through a mentoring scheme, by the end of the evaluation process it should be recognised that not just one but many different elements in the TTP structure contributed to the way entrepreneurial skills and attitude were enabled. Most notably, these elements cannot be isolated from others to distinguish the most effective ones, given that they were strongly intertwined throughout the process. These elements are the **mentoring scheme**, the **teaching modules to develop soft skills**, the **facilitation tools and methods** adopted in all modules, and **the action research** itself. Therefore, the Connect programme supported the development of new entrepreneurial attitudes.

Many participants declared that they felt **more self-aware and self-confident** about their role within the organisation and about their potential as cultural professionals. Some practitioners stated that they gained a better understanding of how their individual actions contribute to the strategies of their organisation and consequently they felt more confident in contributing proactively to future strategies. **Critical thinking and creativity** were also reported as a result of the process.

After this course I feel more aware and confident of my abilities and how to spend my skills in my work environment. I improved my critical judgment and environment evaluation skills and I feel I have deepened my creative abilities and thinking outside the box to find better solutions to different situations. (Italy)

The impact of Connect for me was explosive! I feel more confident in my role as I was allowed to carry on new surveys and pilot projects. Now I'm more proactive and it's working. (Italy)

This newly acquired confidence also encouraged **innovation and a risk-taking attitude**. Some of the participants, especially in Poland and Italy, took important decisions related to their professional career and found new jobs in institutions that were more willing to embrace their innovative attitudes towards audience engagement. Some of them even decided to go on as freelancers and a group of students in Italy started working together after meeting in the Connect program.

It is also useful in encouraging a way of working that can nurture innovation and risk. (UK)

3.2.1 The Mentoring scheme

A mentoring programme was set up to support the professional development of participants. Mentoring is not a well-known and common approach in most of the countries involved in Connect (especially South and Eastern Europe countries), and especially in the cultural sector; thus, many participants at the beginning didn't know exactly what to expect and how they could leverage this opportunity.

At first it was difficult for me to understand what mentoring was about, I did not know what it was or how to take advantage of it. (Italy)

In Spain, this sense of insecurity was intensified by the decision to have both a tutor (assigned to each action research pair) and a mentor (assigned individually to each participant). Those roles were often confused, especially at the beginning, and participants took a while to understand how to take advantage of them.

Only after a while I began to differentiate between the role of mentor and that of tutor or teacher, and I was able to share some concerns in a beneficial way. (Spain)

Since the figure of the tutor already existed, I did not know exactly what to expect from the figure of the mentor, since they could overlap their tasks in an imperceptible way. (Spain)

In the end the “tutor” was considered someone who could help specifically on the project goals and actions and as such was interpreted also in Poland and Denmark, where this kind of approach was appreciated. On the contrary, the “mentor” was a figure that helped more on a personal level, to support the mentee in his/her individual path within the Connect experience. In Italy, for instance, many participants were not used to such a figure and didn’t know how to approach the relationship. At the same time, those who found a way to interpret the mentor’s role, in all countries, discovered a great added value that they “*couldn’t even imagine at the beginning*”.

The figure of the mentor has been a support from a mental point of view. The mentor has been able to contribute ideas in moments of controversy of approaches, which have also helped in the approach of situation [...] while the figure of the tutor is a guide that helps you to grow and deepen in the specific learning of the subject you are developing. (Spain)

As stated above, the mentoring scheme was implemented in slightly different ways in each national hub, but in general it can be observed that there was a **polarisation of views about its value**. Most of the participants, both students and practitioners, appreciated the opportunity to share their doubts and ideas with a mentor/tutor, but some declared that either they didn’t take advantage of it or didn’t find much added value. This polarisation is particularly interesting because it doesn’t seem to relate to participants’ seniority nor to cultural context, but the feedback provides an understanding under which conditions mentoring can be an effective and powerful tool within this kind of training.

Timing was reported as a key factor for several reasons: sometimes the relationship takes time to really become effective, in some cases it didn’t match the timing set for the action research project and, finally, everybody struggled daily with increasingly busy agendas. Many participants also stated that they would have wished to meet their mentor sooner in the process, both to be able to get to know each other better and to arrange a **clearer meeting schedule**. Most agreed on the importance of meeting physically, at least for the very first time to start the relationship and some pointed out the importance of being able to choose one’s mentor, as the relationship functions on the basis of **trust and affinity**.

Better mentor is selected by personal profile than by institution profile: mentor is better for the student and not for the project. (Spain)

As stated above, it also seems to be essential for the promoter of the mentoring scheme to introduce it to all the participants involved, mentors and mentees, stating very clearly the **roles of each party**, what can be expected, how to start and nurture the relationship and the framework within which the programme is embedded (in this case the Connect Twin Track).

It can be said that an effective mentoring relationship is influenced by the conditions set by the promoters, but in the end, it also has to do with individual attitudes and a spark must out to exist to make it work well. In almost all countries there were participants unable to fully grasp the benefit of the mentoring programmes because they felt uncomfortable, didn't know how to interact or, in the end, didn't find the time to explore that opportunity.

This experience was nice in theory but needs a lot longer for the relevant relationships to develop. Also, perhaps the participants need greater encouragement to engage in the mentor process. With busy jobs and struggling to find the time to do the project, I think mentoring sometimes got a bit lost. (UK)

At the same time, those who appreciated mentoring the most pointed out **different kinds of benefits** that can be outlined in three different levels:

- A. Support for the actual implementation of the action research project, discussing tactics and tools;
- B. Support to face difficult moments and interpersonal challenges, to navigate the Connect experience and get the most from it;
- C. Support beyond the Connect experience, expanding the network of professional relationships and sharing reflections on jobs and careers.

The conversations with the mentors were a welcome space for reflection and supported the participants in developing personal confidence in both their capabilities and ideas; having an external perspective helped to put problems in perspective and relax the tension. Hierarchy in organisations, and sometimes even between the student/practitioner pair, can be difficult to manage, especially when you're trying to push the boundaries a little further. The participants were sometimes in a stressful situation and mentors helped them to be more realistic, adapting the scale of their project and accepting the outcomes: whatever the result, you can learn from it and that was a key point in being able to accept failure as well.

I have worked hard with expectations. No matter what organization you are in, you always have to adapt the expectations you have with what you will achieve. One thing is what you dream and another thing is what you do, but you have to dream, because if not, you don't do what you have to do. For me, this is what I have been able to contribute the most. (Spain)

Here are some examples of participants' feelings about the mentoring experience:

We mainly used our mentor for our student in connection to design the audience investigation to prepare her and give her the best tools e.g. facilitating a qualitative focus group session, what questions to ask and so on. (Denmark)

The mentor has been for me a tool of reflection with his experience and his complicity as added values. (Spain)

My mentor has a huge experience in my field, so the interchange of information, in a relation based on trust, has been remarkably inspiring — an added value to the training program as it is an empowering point of view about the project. (Spain)

Getting the chance to have feedback from a qualified mentor was very useful for us, and we think that this part of Connect is as important and relevant as the networking dimension among the participants in the project. Not least because the dialogue with a mentor from outside is a way to create links to someone from outside our normal circles and bring the knowledge gained within Connect as well as our practice further on. (Denmark)

Mentoring was a powerful tool for the participants to shift perspective when needed, to prevent them from getting stuck and to look at their **work more holistically**.

She helped me to understand also the power I had to change some situations, especially to understand that there is always an unknown point of view to better understand what we live. (Italy)

The mentor also helped some students to understand the organisations they were working with, the relationship dynamics with colleagues, hidden agendas and helping them to **adopt new perspectives and try out new strategies** (including soft skills).

According to me, the twin track program also helped the students to "humanize" the institutions, to understand that behind important museums or theatres there are people like us, with their fears, mistakes, and also uncertainties. I think that being aware of this, for a student is a great opportunity to nurture his self-esteem and develop a "can do" attitude. (Italy)

At the end of the programme, some participants declared that they kept in touch with their mentor and some practitioners said they felt more comfortable in the relationship as there are no more expectations regarding their respective roles as mentor and mentee. In general, most participants suggested that mentoring could be a useful tool for future programmes, but promoters could assess whether it should be mandatory or voluntary.

3.2.2 The mentors' perspective

One of the goals of the project was also to build an **international community of professionals** that could share their expertise and support each other. That is why most of the national hubs

tried to involve professionals beyond their own organisation to take part in the mentoring scheme. In general, the partners had a good response to their call and especially from the professionals that had been involved in previous European projects or training programmes and that wished to give something back. Mentoring was perceived by the professionals involved as a challenge and an opportunity for professional growth, acquiring new skills, broadening their network and being able to “*discover this project from an insider/outsider perspective*”.

At the beginning of the process the mentors took part in a **training session** during which the partners introduced the Connect program, the expectations related to the role of the mentors and shared the tools that composed the Mentoring Toolkit developed by Goldsmiths College and MeltingPro. Most of the mentors perceived the training as a useful moment to meet new colleagues and experiment with new tools and approaches. Some were actually used during the exchanges with participants, but most mentors declared that they relied mostly on their previous experience in the field.

The main difficulties that mentors reported at the end of the experience are related to the difficulties of getting in touch with their mentees (“agendas never seemed to match”, “they didn’t look much interested”, “we needed more time to start a meaningful relationship”, etc) and the misunderstanding about their roles, as indicated above, also from the mentees’ perspective.

The only difficulty for me as a mentor was that sometimes students were wrong in my role. Sometimes they expected me to be a project leader, which was against the previously accepted rules. I find this experience inspirational, useful and I would certainly take this role again. What was the most challenging and should be changed in the future was the lack of an imposed regular schedule and clearer roles (Poland)

In the end, the mentoring experience was positive for most of the professionals involved and these are the main benefits they related:

- **Networking:** both among the mentors themselves and with the students and practitioners, partaking in the TTP. They highlighted that personal contact is very important, because it allows you to contact people later and ask for professional advice.
- **Learning:** different voices explained that the mentoring process had been a learning opportunity for them, experiencing new tools and discovering new projects and ideas.
- **Discovery of new capabilities:** many declared to have discovered and developed new capabilities such as active listening, a stronger ability to assess people and situations, that helped them be more confident as cultural professionals.
- **Personal satisfaction:** some mentors declared that the experience was very satisfactory as an opportunity to support innovative projects and have a role in bringing change to their sector.

As mentor, I have learnt to find the words and the silences. I think it is about removing pressure from the mentee. I feel that mentoring is a very valuable tool for both mentors and mentees. (Spain)

*It was a challenge to find at all times the right words for what the other person needed...
Thinking about what I wanted to say, but saying it differently each time, because I didn't know if
the process had been understood... It was in the process itself, where I found those answers
(Spain)*

4 / Focus on the impact of Action Research (R7.5)

4.1 / The implementation of the action research in the different countries

One of the main innovative features of Connect is the implementation of the action research projects, carried out by the practitioner/student partnership as the final output of the capacity building programmes.

Action research was used to encourage participants to adopt a **lean approach** towards organisational change and to develop innovative audience-centric strategies by taking small incremental steps. In this framework, action research was meant as a **prototype**, testing innovative ways for cultural institutions to tackle their audience challenges and to build new meaningful relationships with their communities.

The action research was not just a pilot project developed by each participant. Firstly, students and practitioners had to work together to develop each phase of the “pilot” (from ideation to implementation and evaluation); working together allowed the couple to build a relationship of trust, to negotiate, and to exercise their leadership; they worked as a team with an equal approach to empathise and develop shared solutions. This approach maximised the exchanges and the mutual learning fostering a peer-to-peer learning approach.

Nonetheless the process to make this magic happen has been quite complex and, once again, partially different in the national hubs, mainly due to bureaucratic constraints.

The first step was the **matching process** to link each student to a cultural institution. With the exception of the Danish hub, where students could apply to work with a specific organisation at the beginning of the process, the matching was made during the TTP, generally after two or three training modules, to let people to become familiar with each other in the classroom and assess their potential situations.

Italy and Spain adopted a similar matchmaking process. During the first modules, all students had the chance to work with all the practitioners in different exercises, then both parties were asked what they would like to gain from the AR and what they would be able to give to the pair (considering previous experiences, specific skills, existing networks, etc). Afterwards both students and practitioners expressed their preferences to help the national hub in finalising the combination.

In Poland, trainers made interviews with the institutions regarding the profiles they were looking for and in the UK they closely observed and assessed classroom dynamics. At the end, a matching was proposed to all the participants and most of them felt satisfied. Setting the matchmaking in the middle of the TTP gave the opportunity for students and practitioners to know each other and to start to build a personal relation (driven not only by the working interest but also by personal inclination). On the other hand, some pairs stated they would have preferred the matching earlier in the process so as to have more time to ideate and develop their action research.

The matching process could thus be considered as a key success factor but also brought up many difficulties in the management of the action research by national hubs. Many variables had to be considered in the process: **geographical distances** for instance, since students and practitioners came from different regions and students were not always able to move to another city for the duration of the action research; **different time frameworks** governing the universities and hosting institutions; many **bureaucratic constraints** due to different internship regulations in each country (some were paid and some were not; different duration, etc). However, a common frame and a common ground were set up, respecting students' expectations and institutions needs and constraints, finding customised solutions adapted to specific needs.

4.2 / Main findings on action research

Despite the challenges of the matching process, the action research was one of the most powerful strategies implemented within the project. The following paragraphs report the main values reported by participants.

Matching process and timing as key factors and unavoidable enabling conditions

The matching process is key to developing the pilot project. A matchmaking that responds to the needs, expectations, skills and attitudes of students and practitioners is certainly not sufficient but necessary for an effective implementation of the prototype, because it sets different conditions to make the student/practitioner partnership work as one, in order to embed change inside the organisation. Indeed, both practitioners and students underlined how working together firstly in class gave a new meaning to the process, setting a peer relation: students became partners and allies and not simple interns. The preparatory work in class was extremely useful to build these horizontal and supportive relationship conditions.

In order to enhance this relationship of trust and mutual acquaintance, both at personal and professional level, many participants highlighted how this matchmaking could have taken place sooner. In some cases this would have made the process of mutual acquaintance more fluid and effective and some practitioners claimed that it would have allowed students to have more insight and knowledge of the organisation, of its routine operations, of the obstacles, of the timing, of the concrete way of working and of its long-term ambitions.

Having more time available to work together could have allowed the couple to strengthen their bonds and the students to have a better understanding of the organisational structure, but mainly it would have increased the time available for the design, implementation and development of the prototype.

Much more than an internship

As previously pointed out, the partnership between students and practitioners has become a much more cohesive and fruitful relationship than a simple internship. Students felt themselves to be at the same level as the practitioners and felt in a position to give their contribution actively

and concretely; they developed a new understanding of how cultural institutions and their audiences work “which I can use if I will work within this sector after finishing my master degree, or with just any kind of audience”.

The action research was a great challenge because from the very beginning it was conceived together by students and practitioners and the couple had been working through all the implementation phases: they were always together in delivering activities and trying to embed the meaning of the activities into the organisation. For practitioners, working side by side with a “buddy in crime” was helpful to enhance their self-confidence and foster their entrepreneurial attitude, feeling they were “fighting” together for a common purpose. Eventually, that gave more strength to their proposition inside the organisation and helped them in embedding the core values shared through the TTP.

Relationship between students and practitioners

The action research was perceived differently by students and practitioners. Students tended to be enthusiastic because their risk perception was low. On the other hand, some practitioners felt the risk of failure and the burden to make the case for the pilot activity in an organisation that had many other priorities.

Practitioners helped students to understand the way the organisation worked and to define and adapt the range of actions to be developed, being realistic and concrete. Feeling responsible for “their students” helped them to be more effective in their actions, and more motivated to stay safe and develop the pilots.

Students mainly felt part of the decision-making process, feeling a sense of responsibility and belonging which reinforced their self-confidence and made them more incisive and braver. They were supportive of the practitioners both in the implementation of the activities and on the psychological side, reinforcing practitioners’ confidence. They were also helpful in allowing a change of perspective, taking a fresh and sometimes disruptive point of view.

A wind of change and a fresh perspective for the institutions

The action research was a challenge to embed the audience-centric approach into the organisations and an opportunity to review through a new and fresh look the way of working of each organisation. The action research allowed the questioning of current practices as well as organisational habits and approaches that were sometimes hidden to the same professionals.

Putting theory into practice

The action research was a challenge for students to translate into practice what they learnt, and for practitioners to test and try a new approach and to embed a new perspective into their organisation.

It was especially in this part of the program (the research project) that I learned the most, where models made sense (in practice), where you get a sense of and get to practice time and timing,

qualities such as communication skills, collaboration with different agents along the way, overview for being prepared and ready when needed, flexibility, readiness for change and more necessary for the process. (Denmark)

The action research was a real test for the participants and a challenge to put into practice what they had learnt: frames, tools, new ways of working, but also applying new soft skills to drive change in the organisation.

According to many, more time was necessary for them to realise their pilot and to embed a more effective way of working.

Small but meaningful

Dealing with a concrete, time bound, well-defined and well-targeted activity was perceived as an added value for both practitioners and students: they could always have an overview of what's going on, what they could expect and what they could evaluate.

The key to the project was having a concrete action to carry out, to design. It was crucial understanding why I am designing it, for whom I am designing it, what I want to bring home. (Italy)

The design thinking approach appeared to be an appropriate approach and it was perceived as fruitful for participants. It gave them the opportunity to ideate, design, implement and evaluate their activities. Participants had control of all phases of the pilot project and that was helpful to cement the double loop process and the idea of incremental change as a never-ending activity which needs to be constantly tested and refined.

I think the idea of design thinking around testing and refining things for projects has stuck with me. I think I already had this a little in my head but I think the whole process really cemented for me the idea of incremental change which sort of never ends and is constantly being tested and refined on projects. (UK)

Even if the focus was very specific, in some cases, the initial idea was enlarged and gave life to new partnerships with relevant stakeholders from outside the organisation.

When our first proposal was refused, incredibly the solution was to put in place another strategy: bigger and riskier than the other. (Italy)

We were able to prepare a larger project and apply for the necessary funds and get organised within the organisation, join in a partnership with relevant stakeholders from outside the organisation, who are now also invested in the project. (Denmark)

All on board! The importance (and the difficulties) of involving staff members

Working on a specific project reinforced the idea that all staff need to be on board and to share the same values and ambitions. Building a relationship of trust with colleagues is the enabling condition to develop effectively new processes and to embed long-lasting change: it is vital not only to have their support, but also to share the ownership and a sense of belonging.

It was the first time I designed and coordinated a project like this and one of the most important things to me has been my colleagues' trust in what I was doing. (Italy)

During the implementation process, the involvement of the team in the strategy has been perceived as a key factor to reach the goal: all staff need to be aware and determined to put the audience at the centre of their everyday way of acting. Involving colleagues in some tasks related to the project is a way of embedding beacons of change in their way of thinking and acting and of fighting internal resistance.

In my office I have met people who have this prejudice, and it has been an important challenge to save that resistance, keep my discussion proposal on the table and convince myself that the obvious is not always the case. (Spain)

4.3 / Outcomes for the institutions involved (and practitioners and students)

The project had an impact on three different levels: Students, Practitioners and Organisations
The following paragraphs describe the main impacts for each of these levels.

4.3.1. Impacts on students and their career development

For students, Connect has been an opportunity not only to acquire precise knowledge, competences and skills about audience development, but also:

- to gain a deeper and more organic understanding of cultural organisations, their way of working, their priorities, the gap between the strategic vision and implementation, their workflow and implicit organisational cultures.

The pairing idea is great, particularly for students as it's a fast track into working with a professional institution and understanding the ways in which they operate (UK)

- to face for the first time a collaborative experience within a cultural organization, which has been more than a simple experience of internship (see below)

Professionally, it enriched my background, giving me more tools and ideas to look forward and challenge myself. (UK)

- to gain a deeper understanding of which areas of work they are interested in.

It offered an opportunity to meet professionals, in some cases verified my picture of how it is to work in certain institutions (positively and negatively) (Spain)

The whole TTP was a challenge, not only to acquire new expertise and to embody a new professional figure but also to gain self-confidence and envisage the challenges they can face in an organisation, the room for freedom and the need for negotiation.

Facing challenges and difficulties during the project had been very positive, a source of training and maturation: I've learnt how to create a project strongly modeled on the effective needs of a cultural institution, promoting little but effective steps towards change. (Italy)

Especially in Italy and Poland, students acquired a new sense of entrepreneurship and some decided to keep working together as consultants to support the audience development of cultural organisations. Some students were employed by the organisation they were working with and some became more confident freelancers in the field. Overall, Connect gave students the opportunity to work closely with professionals, to conceive, design and test their projects, to face the challenges of its implementation in the organisation and to remodel their ambitions in some cases. It has been a unique opportunity to learn and to outline in a more conscious way their journey into this sector.

4.3.2. Impacts on professionals and their job

For practitioners, Connect was an opportunity to challenge their role and the way they work, both as individuals and as members of a staff.

Rethinking their role in the organisation with new enthusiasm and proactivity

For practitioners, Connect was a challenge to acquire new knowledge, competences and skills to face their work and better define their professional career, but it was also an opportunity to rethink their role with new enthusiasm and proactivity. For many the experience was **a positive injection of enthusiasm.**

Acquiring a new perspective in audience development as a mindset and not only a set of tools, gave them new enthusiasm and meaning to face their everyday work, as well as more clarity about what they could do by themselves or with the staff in the organisation. Having the opportunity to run a pilot gave them more confidence in their ability and in their role in the organisation and for some it was an opportunity to define in a better way their position.

For many it was a challenge to acquire more self-confidence in their potential at professional and even personal level.

More confident in my role I was allowed to carry on new surveys and pilot projects

The impact of Connect for me was explosive.

In the last two months I have offered myself for two cultural museum actions / projects initially not entrusted to me. (Italy)

Rethinking how they work, independently and with colleagues

The experience of Connect offered a different perspective of audience development: it provided a clearer vision that needs to be an organic and holistic process embedded in the organisation and only feasible if all the organisation is involved.

I have discovered ways of working and analytical tools that will allow me to approach the experiences in a different way, I believe even more in line with the reality of the organization. (Spain)

From a new perspective, practitioners started understanding and adopting specific tools to make their work related to concrete and shareable data inside and outside the organisation.

It has been effective to have the data of the surveys to the public. This data has made it possible to open the discussion about a recurring theme in the organisation from a new point of view, to affirm specific problems on a topic that until now was presented in a diffuse, unbounded way. (Spain)

It means that it changed their way of planning, designing, implementing and evaluating their jobs (enriched by the new tools gained) and took them closer to all the staff of the organisation (dealing with the topic of leadership and negotiation). The action research, developed together with an external subject (the student), gave them a deeper sense of responsibility for its success and, at the same time, offered them the opportunity to have more visibility in the organisation itself. The experience had an impact especially in the way of working with colleagues: many practitioners have moved from a self-referential dimension to a much more relational logic and gradual implementation.

I have especially appreciated learning in group dynamics to make joint decisions. From now on, I will use what I have learned to continue involving agents of my organization in the development of common dynamics to place the public at the center of all the projects that make up the organization. (Spain)

The biggest challenge we had to come across was the initial wall from colleagues to the proposal of our project. We soon understood that we had to drive change more slowly, so we started to involve them in a less direct way, with small actions. The end result was amazing! I believe this is the real change that our action brought within the organization. (Italy)

4.3.3 Impacts at organisational level

When it comes to organisations, it's worth remembering that Connect wasn't targeted at organisations but at single professionals. This said, of course it aimed to equip single professionals to bring a different mindset back to their organisations. Although the project time span didn't allow the assessment of measurable impacts on organisations (which are by definition long term ones), it was considered important to assess at least qualitatively how organisations reacted to the innovations introduced by their employees. Some of these findings are reported here, with the corollary that they can't be generalised for all organisations.

Experiments still ongoing

The implementation of prototype actions has enabled some organisations to understand how change can be achieved by implementing incremental actions; above all by taking time and space to imagine, experiment and validate new approaches.

In some cases, it was an opportunity to understand the importance of having a data driven approach with a clear reference context and to develop measurable and valuable change actions and processes.

One of our challenges was to get the board to realize that they have to make many medium- and long-term changes. After this action, I think they are now more conscious about the actual situation and the need of an Audience Development plan, so I guess, it brought some small change to the organization. (Spain)

Many of the organisations decided to implement the prototype actions developed and make them an integral part of their programming.

The Action Research project trialled with the student this year will be used as a proof of concept, and be developed into a fully promoted pilot project in 2020. (UK)

Others used the opportunity to test something which would eventually be scaled up: in the case of a City Library with dozens of branches, the director encouraged an experimentation in a little branch, and this actually made the case for developing similar experimentations in all branches, which are now on the agenda.

For some, the action research gave the opportunity to work with different audiences and to build cooperative projects with external partners.

The project design has allowed me to discover a potential audience that until now we had not considered and that I think is an interesting group with which to continue developing actions. (Spain)

In some cases other co-workers from the institutions taking part in the project as well as other professionals from the city got hooked and interested in the concept and are willing to be part of the debate. (Denmark)

Finally, some organisations started looking for new funding and partnership to develop audience centred projects and programmes, having concretely experienced the potential of investing time and resources to this end.

I think it is remarkable the awareness that CONNECT has created in each of the organizations of the need of being audience-focus. (Spain)

Organisational charts: legitimization of professionals' role and students' recruitment

For many practitioners Connect has been an opportunity to legitimise their role within the organisation; this means that the organisation has recognised its role, importance and functions. In some cases, this was recognised as an explicit statement about their role, whilst in others this came as a stronger consideration by the board and with support from the directors. In some cases, paradoxically, it led to a change from the original organisation and a shift to another one, which appreciated their skills, approach and working methods.

Finally, some students became an integral part of the organisation's staff to support the practitioner. Lastly, some practitioners working as freelancers for the organisation saw in Connect an opportunity to sharpen awareness of their own abilities and to be able to experiment with a new strength.

A new concept of internships and student contribution

An important legacy of this experience for some organisations is the way they cooperate with students: similar programmes could be used in the future to work with trainees to ensure that students' theoretical knowledge is clarified and used as a real resource in the organisation.

5 / Conclusions: what worked, what to improve (R7.6)

As extensively reported above, the evaluation results were overall satisfactory, showing the effectiveness of the TTP structure, including the mentoring scheme and the action research, which were the distinctive innovative features introduced by Connect. The project outcomes went beyond expectations, not just for the direct and indirect target groups (students, professionals and cultural organisations), but also for the consortium itself.

Connect has also influenced the way partners tackle audience development training. Especially for some partners from the academic world, testing mixed formal and informal training introduced reflections and exercises on soft skills that had not been part of their teaching tools before, and this is a legacy for the development of future capacity building programs. The experimentation with the Action Research also had a positive impact on the way they design training courses, where theoretical approaches can be combined with practical ones. The sustainability of the introduced innovations is also underlined by the fact that some countries (notably Italy, Spain, Poland and UK) are further developing the training programme tested in Connect, with some changes and improvements.

All partners contributed to the common goal of experimenting innovative training formats to equip professionals in the arts with the essential competences, not just to enter the future labour market, but also to fulfill their potential to contribute to societal challenges. Learning to design with people and communities' needs and dreams in mind, is an increasingly relevant skill for the future of the cultural sector, its relevance and sustainability.

The main learning outcomes (strengths and weaknesses) are summarised emanating from the evaluation of the training and the tools to empower participants by enabling an entrepreneurial attitude (5.1 and 5.2) and the five strongest crosscutting features that the evaluation identified as the most important added values of Connect.

5.1 / Training

As reported in Chapter 2, the evaluation suggests that some key elements were effective in delivering Connect competence related goals.

- **The balance of theoretical framework and practice:** framing reflections especially thanks to the academic expertise, grounded the training on strong roots and pushed forward its understanding among present and future professionals in the arts, setting a standard for future education and training in the field of audience development as people centered design.
- **Hands-on approach:** practice and group exercises were dominant and helped participants to make sense of theory and to *experience* learning. This led to a strong consistency of contents delivered within the process itself and of *how* these were delivered. As well as practice internalising learning, the abundance of group work enhanced negotiation and reflective skills.

- The “**twin dimension**” of **working in pairs**: professionals and students equally and strongly appreciated both classroom exchange, to be matched and to design and develop together concrete projects rooted in real organisations’ needs; putting together such different targets was risky, but results were beyond expectations.
- **Action Research** as well as enabling theory to be put into practice this introduced concepts of prototyping, as well as a “learn-by-doing” incremental way of thinking, an innovation mindset.
- The use of **soft skills related training modules** as well as **organisational understanding** ones was a key success factor

On the other hand, aspects to be improved are:

- **Matchmaking** in pairs works better if it happens at an early **stage of the training**; the matching process itself was extremely time consuming and shown to be more effective when more time was allocated to this critical step of the process.
- **The international dimension** was strongly appreciated but limited to two learning mobilities and thus it should be reinforced.
- **Study visits** in participants’ organisations weren’t planned, but when they took place, this was extremely effective on many levels (bonding participants thus reinforcing their future network, gaining deeper understanding of organisations’ challenges, giving the opportunity to involve more of the staff of the hosting organisation)
- **Enrolling students was difficult** in all countries demanding a large amount of work. The post-graduate students who showed major interest had at least some previous experience working or volunteering for cultural organisations.
- **Time for change is needed** when training aims to change participants’ mindsets: as reported by a Polish participant: *“It takes time to change things and the only thing that you can do is to start from a little action. The most important learning was that learning takes time”*. In countries where for logistical reasons the training was more compressed, participants reported time as a critical point.

5.2 / Developing an entrepreneurial attitude

As reported in chapter 3, entrepreneurial skills and attitudes were enabled by different elements of the TTP (mentoring, action research, teaching methods and modules on leadership and changemaking). Recommendations to develop entrepreneurial approaches in the cultural sector are summarised below:

- **Mentoring can be a powerful tool**, but it’s essential to make clear the setting of the relationship (especially in those countries where mentoring isn’t an established practice), and matching should happen in presence to let people “choose” each other: mentoring is not just about the profile and attitude of mentors, but also an encounter of professionals.
- **Soft skills and leadership capacity are essential to develop entrepreneurial attitudes**. Tools and methods include implementing peer to peer learning, informal

education, teamwork etc., both at the personal level (self-confidence in social interactions), and at the professional one (self-awareness of one's own skills and competences in the professional environment).

- **A risk-taking attitude is key to developing an entrepreneurial approach.** Designing and implementing tools and processes that encourage risk-taking was extremely effective in creating the mental habit of ongoing innovation (and this is particularly evident in southern and eastern cultural contexts).
- **Mixing people with different backgrounds.** Diversity was key to the success of the programme, since it constantly pushed trainees to challenge their assumptions and reinforced self-confidence and soft skills like negotiation which are crucial to develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

5.3 / Looking forward

Finally, there was a great deal of learning from the process as a whole: learning that goes beyond the assessment of the outcomes of each element of the TTP and that suggests further tracks to be explored in the future.

- A. The importance of the adoption of a **lean approach** to innovation. **Prototyping** was a powerful tool to design better experiences for audiences and to test innovations within organisations. Taking little steps and experimenting in close connection with the bigger picture of cultural organisations' vision and strategies, was conclusive for the more successful action research projects.

Time is a challenge in developing the effectiveness of this approach **to foster lasting organisational outcomes**. Prototyping pushes organisations to act-fail-reflect fast, but this is true mainly for the single steps, while the change process that prototyping is aimed to ignite, is a medium-long term one: embedding change and a new way of working that affects practices needs time. As a Danish participant reported "*It was a process where a shift in focus was necessary for a full understanding, and it took time*".

- B. **Twinning participants was a key success factor**, but at the same time enrolling students was a demanding process. Nevertheless, questioning the very meaning and value of the twinning, outlined by participants' words are on the one hand **the value of diversity** (that introduces new mental frameworks, thus fostering deeper reflections as well as challenging established mindsets), and on the other **sharing the burden of innovation**, "not being alone" in developing activities that usually meet organisations' resistance to change. Those two elements suggest that the twin structure should be kept and pushed forward with different target groups (e.g. culture professionals and social sector ones, juniors and seniors, etc.).
- C. **Fostering Entrepreneurship** is more a matter of empowering than of teaching. In a largely publicly funded sector like culture, entrepreneurship is basically about adopting a

risk-taking attitude, self-confidence and motivation to lead change - and these are not usually transferable competences, but rather the result of innovation *as a method* (also in teaching approaches and tools), designing frames where people are pushed out of their comfort zone, creating safe spaces for unsafe ideas, fostering a trustful environment that allows participants to acknowledge complexity, and to dare tackling it step by step, unlocking their own creativity.

- D. Finally, collective challenges call for collective answers. **Networking** is an essential part of any innovation in the field of arts and culture, especially when it comes to approaches like audience development which requires collaborative practices. Moreover, the European dimension demonstrated its potential as participants had the chance to meet and work together during the two learning mobilities. This suggests two major challenges: to keep nurturing and enlarging the Connect learning community of senior and junior professionals across Europe, and to strengthen the **international dimension of learning** as a core innovation dimension itself for future initiatives.

Lastly, it's worth mentioning that consortium members strongly benefitted from the project too, also establishing or reinforcing a proper shared understanding of the challenges we are facing in Europe, and of the answers we are giving together (as exemplified by the Connect "Manifesto").

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The Knowledge Alliance is composed by:

University of Deusto (Spain)



Asimétrica (Spain)



The Audience Agency (UK)



Goldsmiths, University of London (UK)



CKI (Denmark)



Fondazione Fitzcarraldo (Italy)



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