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Research Update

UCL's Centre for Applied Archaeology: the end of an era of Erasmus+ partnership projects

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Abstract

This news article summarises several projects that took place between 2010 and 2022, during which some members of the Institute of Archaeology's professional staff were able to take part in lifelong learning partnerships, working closely with a host of organisations from all over Europe on skills development and community heritage. These projects were funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

Keywords: Erasmus, European Union, lifelong learning, competence development, heritage interpretation, knowledge exchange, heritage community, Faro Convention

Heritage is a space for communities to develop and grow, where we can share our interests, be creative, tell stories and encourage participation in decision-making with the aim of making our places more sustainable. Since the early 2010s, UCL's Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA)¹ has been involved in a number of European Erasmus+ projects that integrate cultural heritage into lifelong learning and sustainable development. The Centre has worked with businesses, adult education providers, vocational education specialists, cultural associations and heritage

membership organisations, European professional bodies, universities, private sector training companies and a host of other European partners from across the EU. It recently completed its final Erasmus+ strategic partnership project People Places Stories (PPS)² and, following the UK's departure from the EU, this will be its last.

Many are familiar with the Erasmus programme in the context of the international exchange of university students, but fewer are aware that the wider funding stream was designed to aid professional mobility and strategic cooperation in the field of education and vocational training in Europe with a focus on social inclusion, green and digital transitions and the promotion of young people's participation in democratic life.

PPS (2020–22) was designed to build the capacity of facilitators working with heritage communities. It was inspired by the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005), but is not formally associated with that organisation, although consultation with members of the Faro Convention Network³ took place during its scoping stages. According to Article 2b of the Convention, 'a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations'.

CAA led on the scoping phase of the project, identifying training needs and examples of good practice. The Covid-19 pandemic hampered the start of the project in late 2020, but the team was already accustomed to meeting monthly on Zoom pre-pandemic. Highlights included a study visit to the University of Salento, Italy, in May 2022, where a facilitator training course was developed, and a final conference organised by French partners from the Association des Centres Culturels de Rencontre (ACCR) at the snowy Château de Goutelas in December 2022. This latter event facilitated a view of how French colleagues had applied our approach to their community, and it was there that we introduced a new website to ACCR's members.⁴ This website hosts a curriculum for a face-to-face training course and a toolkit that communities can use which covers the various stages of a project's development (Figure 1). It is a learning site packed with project examples, activity ideas and films, many of which feature our colleagues at Archaeology South-East. It is not an accredited course, but there are quizzes to check knowledge and a competence validation system linked to a Moodle site. Other outcomes of the overall

Heritage Community Development Toolkit

an interactive online platform with practical guideline and real-life examples to help you develop, grow and sustain your local heritage community.



Figure 1 The Heritage Community Development Toolkit (Source: <https://pps-eu.org/>; co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union Project Ref. no. 2020-DE-02-KA204-007698)

venture include a stocktaking report, guidelines on heritage community development and a continuing professional development curriculum. Typically, project results are built on subsequently and a genealogical tree of partnerships can be traced through many of these EU partnerships.

Indeed, such is the case with UCL's Erasmus+ projects. PPS's ancestor was called Delphi⁵ (an acronym for Development of Continuing Professional Development for Heritage Interpretation, which ran between 2018 and 2020). It facilitated lifelong learning for social inclusion and European cohesion via a blended learning course on conceptual planning of heritage interpretation with an emphasis on co-creation with local communities. CAA led on the dissemination work package as well as sending staff on the pilot course, producing a case study by ASE staff member Jelena Wehr on the conceptual planning of interpretation at the Mesolithic site of Vlasac, Serbia.

Two previous projects were more open in scope, focusing on the interface between business and universities. CAA was the lead partner for EDUCCKATE – Education Cultural & Creative Knowledge Alliance for Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs (2013–14). Collaborations with the smart-working organisation Impact Hub Kings Cross⁶ and UCL's Innovation and Enterprise⁷ led to 15 mentored internships in the cultural and creative sectors in the UK, helping our partners to run their schemes too, creating 77 internships in seven different countries, resulting in 20 offers of employment for mentored graduates.

A follow-up project PROMOTE – PROMoting and validating key competences in MObility and Traineeships in Europe (2014–16) developed and validated key social, personal and organisational competencies, such as entrepreneurship, civic skills and education. The PROMOTE consortium developed a holistic and rich open learning environment for teams of trainees and staff from a range of enterprises.

So what happened following Brexit? The final project outputs had been submitted prior to the UK's formal withdrawal to guarantee funding was granted, but time is now up. One of the three action areas of the Erasmus+ project, individual mobility, has been reinvented in the UK as the Turing Scheme,⁸ allowing British students to continue to travel abroad. The arrangement is, however, not reciprocal, with funding implications for those wishing to visit UK institutions in addition to the requirement to negotiate partnerships on an institution-by-institution basis. Further actions involving strategic partnerships are no longer open to the UK. As for CAA's heritage team, it will remain connected by friendship to our partners in Europe, but inevitably, the UK will not be sought out as future partners in view of the limited potential for participation in 'actions' and even then, only as third-country unfunded partners. While the partnership and funding focus of the CAA has become more British, its scope remains international.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this article. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

Notes

- 1 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/centre-applied-archaeology/centre-applied-archaeology>.
- 2 <https://www.pps-eu.org/>.
- 3 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-community>.
- 4 <https://www.pps-eu.org/>.
- 5 <https://delphi-eu.org/>.
- 6 <https://london.impacthub.net/>.
- 7 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise/>.
- 8 <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/>.

Reference

Faro. 2005. Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, adopted in Faro on 27 October 2005, ETS n. 199. Entry into force on 1 June

2011, in accordance with Article 18. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>.