

CREUS

Creative, non-formal learning in unconventional spaces

Description

CREUS offers a novel approach focusing on creative learning in 'unconventional spaces' to support the transversal skills of disadvantaged and unemployed young people (aged 16–24 years) and to maximise their potential in terms of fostering social, cultural and economic inclusion through access to initial VET and labour markets.

It supports mentors and peer mentors across Europe to develop their vocational skills for supporting young people in non-formal and unusual settings. These settings or spaces included, for example, creative industry workspaces in London; refugee centres in Cyprus; a market forum in Greece; a social housing project, a shopping centre and a theatre in Rome; disused warehouses, museums and galleries, a community music festival within a housing estate, an immersive theatre event in a shopping mall or within a young people's hostel, and an Academy for Community and Talent in the Netherlands that works with young people who have dropped out of conventional education.

The CREUS methodology mainly focuses on the development of peer mentors in motivating disaffected young people through creative, cultural and artistic activities and bringing them 'back' into learning. In the context of CREUS, peer mentoring is defined as learning from individuals with similar backgrounds, enhanced experiences, through cooperation and shared practices.

Beneficiaries

 **Discouraged and disengaged young people**

Young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) aged 16-24 are the end beneficiaries of CREUS.

Target group:

Schools and VET providers working to address 'drop out' and motivation / re-motivation of young people who are alienated by, or excluded by, traditional education and VET offers.

Countries

 Cyprus

 Greece

 Italy

 Netherlands

 United Kingdom

Education level and sector

Upper secondary vocational education and training (work-based learning)

CREUS aims at, first, young people aged 16-19 at risk of exclusion or having been excluded from school and statutory education and, second, those aged 18-24 who were not in conventional VET or education.

Level of implementation / Scope

 **Provider level**  **Local level**

Aims of policy/initiative

CREUS seeks to improve the personal development / life skills of young people (confidence, communication, team-working, presentation, problem-solving, time management, responsibility, attitude and motivation) to enable them to experience achievement and success through learning and expression in unconventional spaces utilising creative and artistic-based, non-formal learning.

Features and types of activities implemented

CREUS emerged from the need to explore and establish innovative ways to apply non-formal cultural and artistic learning in the enhancement of young people's (aged 16-24 years) employability.

CREUS significantly explored how space is important as a factor that enhances the interaction and exchange of knowledge between mentor and mentee, and between peers. The use of peer mentors relies on the idea that individual practitioners should be role models for excluded young people, and act as a 'bridge' to a future career by supporting them directly to develop transferable and transversal key competences (communication skills, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression, and social and civic competences).

The project prioritised and explored learning by peer mentoring in unconventional spaces, which young people do not traditionally associate with formal education. The key activities were carried out in non-formal learning spaces, such as music studios, shopping malls, a refugee camp in Cyprus, a housing estate on the periphery of Rome and a converted chocolate factory in London. These activities were described as work-based projects of creative work that mirrored what happens in the industry (e.g. pre-production activities for photography or videography). Thus, the young learners were given the opportunity to participate in a realistic non-educational and relevant context. This, in combination with the mentors, seen as role models with experience in the creative industries and providing inspiration contributed to the results: the young people were motivated and engaged in the project work and their learning started to accelerate. It addressed the development of relevant basic, transversal and soft skills needed to progress to relevant VET or employment in the labour market. It provided new methodologies for key competences in VET towards the social inclusion of youth who are disadvantaged and not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

Resources

The project budget, financed by KA2 in Erasmus+, was EUR 257 453. It was implemented by a transnational group of cultural trainers, youth workers and project managers, supporting

the 'older' young people to peer mentor the 'younger' young people.

Evaluation of the measure

The CREUS project was subject to an External Evaluation, conducted by Chrissie Tiller Associates (available at <https://www.creusproject.org/post/creus-final-evaluation>).

CREUS was also featured as a case study at European Vocational Skills Week in 2021.

CREUS was identified as one of 15 case studies, selected from 120 Erasmus+ projects labelled as 'good practice' in the Erasmus+ projects database, in a major EU good practice report in 2022 (see page 90) 'Data collection and analysis of Erasmus+ projects - Focus on Inclusion': <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/publications/inclusion-in-education.htm>

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

The conclusion of the external evaluation report highlighted that:

"What emerged... within the evaluation process, was that everyone involved had found the key to success lay at the intersection between peer-mentoring, informal learning and the use of unconventional spaces. Equally important was to have a diverse group of mentors, for the mentor/mentee relationship to have the potential to be bi-directional, and to have the real possibility for social impact as well as cultural and artistic expression within the projects undertaken.... The transnational mentor/mentee aspect of the programme has led to a climate of trust and intercultural dialogue which can now be built on and the learning which has emerged can now be used as a springboard for exploring ways in which many other topics, such as citizenship, could be addressed."

CREUS had generated several results, available as Open Educational Resources, from the project website and the Erasmus+ results portal. These include:

- Methodology concept – Creative Peer Mentoring in CREUS
- The CREUS Development Curriculum
- Mentees Visual Guide
- Mentors Visual Guide
- Recognition Tools for Peer Mentors – Learning Agreement & Peer Mentor Transcript Youth Pass
- Case studies and qualitative enquiry – Transnational Report
- E-manual – The CREUS e-learning guide for young peer mentors tutors and coaches

Success factors

The external evaluation report highlights the following:

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

For those young people who are already from disadvantaged communities, such as those engaged with the CREUS programme, taking up these roles, with little formal or non-formal

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

Having been created in direct response to the needs of those disadvantaged young people, many of whom are not in employment, education or training, the CREUS programme has been successful in implementing two innovative and successful approaches to learning. These have been a transnational peer mentoring scheme and the implementation of more experiential approaches to learning by situating the programme in unconventional spaces. These spaces were not only found to be more accessible and inclusive to this group of young people but, even more importantly, were places they did not associate with formal education. These unconventional spaces, especially when they were situated in more diverse parts of towns and cities, also offered the possibility for young people to think about the ways in which the 'creative activities' they are engaged with 'can also impact on social change'.

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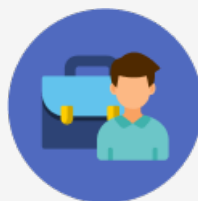
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