

APPG Inquiry Schools - Education and Culture in the UK's Relationships with Europe

Evidence from Practical Action – April 2019

Practical Action is an international development group that inspires people to discover and adopt ingenious, practical ways to free themselves from poverty and disadvantage. Our international project work focuses on four main themes of *Sustainable energy access, Food and agriculture, Urban water and waste and Disaster risk reduction*, with crossing themes of *access to markets and climate change*. Further information can be found here <https://practicalaction.org/what-we-do>.

To complement our international programme work, Practical Action is inspiring the next generation of young people through its education work. Based in the UK the team supports educators in Europe to embed global issues into schools' policy and practice.

This is largely achieved by working in partnership with others to deliver an effective Science, Design and Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) focused education programme. This includes teacher training and the production of high quality resources. See the schools website <https://practicalaction.org/schools>.

Working across Europe

Over the past 15 years Practical Action's education unit has experience of both coordinating and being partners in European wide STEM projects. Based on the evaluation of these projects we welcome the opportunity both to put forward the case for 'STEM' as an integral part of culture and education and for projects that enable young people to benefit from a European and Global lens on the world.

We would like to share details two of our most recent experiences of our work on European projects. Both have and are contributing towards bilateral relationships between numerous partners in education with the ultimate target group being young people aged 7-18 years.

Make the Link

This project was a three year EC funded education that Practical Action led on that started in January 2013.

Carried out in four different EC countries (Cyprus, Poland, Sweden and the UK) the project aimed to raise young people's awareness and understanding of global issues and how their own behaviours impact the developing world.

Make the Link aimed to integrate global issues into the science and technology curricula policy and practice in the four countries. The ultimate goal was for young people to '*Make the Link*' between the role of science and technology to address issues of poverty reduction and their own behaviour as EU citizens and the impact on the developing world.

Across the four countries the main partner organisations facilitated the development of education material and training for teachers. Each country had working groups that included teachers, pupils, universities and development NGOs. During the partner exchange visits which included schools visits a good understanding of each other's country and cultural context were gained. This mutual understanding and respect for each partners work resulted in excellent education materials and in-country teacher training.

The final external evaluation report conducted by Dr Angela Day (2016) Liverpool Hope University provided insights as to the impact of the project.

'We keep on discovering places in the curriculum where we can implement a global perspective. And with every training with teachers we discover new areas and it's really interesting because we did curriculum mapping in the very beginning of the project and it's actually never stopped because it's growing. And I see the teachers who took part in our training in the first year, and I'm still in touch with them, and I see that they became maybe more mature in the sense of introducing global education into their teaching' (Partner Polish NGO)

Girls into Global STEM (GIGS)

GIGS is a three year EU Erasmus funded project led by Hull University that is currently in its final year. It is a partnership project between nine organisations including higher education, schools and development organisations across Cyprus, Poland, Sweden and the UK.

It aims to address a common problem across Europe of the shortage of skilled young people wanting to pursue careers STEM related professions. The drop off in girls taking STEM subject post 16 at school is a common issue for each country. GIGS therefore set out to address this problem with the aim of,

'To increase the employment potential of young Europeans, especially girls, by improving their interest and engagement in STEM linked with wider awareness of global issues and facilitated through digital skills.'

To gain a more thorough understanding of the main outputs of the project, please view the website <http://gigsproject.eu/>.

A significant part of the GIGS projects was the opportunity for a group of students, teachers and partners from each of the partner country to take part in a workshop event. For GIGS this proved to be an invaluable part of the project for partners and young people.

A five day event hosted by the Centre for Citizenship Education in Poland was held in June 2017. It brought together 30 students from partner schools. More detail of the project outputs and the student workshop can be found on the GIGS website. But in essence after the ice-breaker activities, the students worked collaboratively for 3 days to produce a range of e-books on Global STEM topics that then could be shared with other young people back in their schools as learning resources.



Part of the student's evaluation of the workshop was captured on video. View link here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FoXsRb_UE8.

'In the past 4 days I've made friends with people from the other countries. It's made our project work better' UK student

It would be fair to say that the opportunity to learn and to work together was a really 'rich experience' for those students. But it also reported by teachers that the experience of sharing their learning back in their own schools was a valuable for other students.

The external evaluation of the workshop in Poland provided valuable insights into what the teachers and students found most beneficial to them.

'It was really fun visiting the partner school in Poland. The energy lab was impressive, wish we could have had something like that at our school. ...I thought the school museum was nice as well.' UK student

'I think that we took the most pleasure in meeting new people from other countries.... because now we can see what things look like from their perspective, we can find out about their opinions, culture and what they struggle with in their countries.' Polish Student.



Please do contact us at Practical Action if you would like further information about any of experience of working on EU projects with young people.

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