

## Developing Vocational Skills in Wales with Erasmus+

### The importance of work placements

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Work experience and work placements as well as good qualifications are key to getting onto the career ladder.

Further education colleges regularly organise work tasters, experiences and placements with employers in their areas. They may also organise opportunities further afield.

### Erasmus+ funding 2011-16

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Erasmus+ is the name of the European Commission's education and lifelong learning funding stream.

Further education colleges as well as other providers of education and skills can bid for Erasmus+ funding in order to help fund work and study placements abroad for vocational learners and apprentices.

Erasmus+ funding received by Wales' further education sector				
Year	2016	2015	2014	2011-2013
Amount in €	1,138,137	1,270,291	820,569	2,200,000

### Collaboration results in more opportunities

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In addition to further education colleges making college-specific bids to the European Commission, Colegau Cymru has supported colleges and training providers through submitting consortium applications for Erasmus+ funding since 2011.

Four consortium applications, submitted between 2011 and 2015, will have enabled over 230 vocational learners and apprentices to undertake two to three week work placements in ten European countries by 2017<sup>1</sup>.

Having established a solid track record in project managing Erasmus+ funds and work placements to date, Colegau Cymru was successful in its most ambitious consortium

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<sup>1</sup> Funding is received for two-year periods. Funding received in 2015, for example, is for work placements that take place between 2015 and 2017.

application in April 2016, with the securing of over €500,000 of European funding for two ambitious projects.

Over the next two years, 2016 to 2018, the new project will support work placements in eight European countries for 215 vocational learners and apprentices from nine colleges and two work-based settings covering 13 industry areas from aerospace engineering to travel & tourism.

### The 2016-18 learner mobility consortium led by ColegauCymru will see work placements organised

#### in eight countries

- Spain
- France
- Norway
- Sweden
- Italy
- Germany
- Finland and
- the Netherlands

#### across 13 industry areas

- aerospace engineering
- business administration
- childcare
- creative arts
- hair & beauty
- health and care
- hospitality & catering
- leadership and management
- mechanical engineering
- outdoor education
- sport
- sports therapy and
- travel & tourism

#### from nine colleges and two work-based learning settings

- Bridgend College
- Cardiff and Vale College
- Coleg Cambria
- Coleg Gwent
- Coleg Sir Gâr
- Coleg y Cymoedd
- Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
- NPTC Group
- Pembrokeshire College
- ISA Training and
- TATA Steel.

The work placements will challenge learners to develop a whole range of skills, including cross-cultural communication, team working and self-management in addition to expanding their vocational skills. On their return to Wales, the learners will make presentations to their peers as well as their employers, college staff and leaders, with the aim of spreading the benefits of the experience more widely.

## Researching strategic level improvements for Wales

The further education college sector in Wales is a high performing sector. It is proud of its quality profile. As a result, many education professionals visit Wales to learn from our good practice.

Wales' colleges also recognise that good practice and new ideas exist elsewhere and they are keen to explore different approaches as well as establishing new partnerships with their counterparts in Europe.

Therefore, in addition to facilitating work placements for vocational learners, ColegauCymru is also gathering evidence to support strategic-level improvements to Wales' vocational education and training structures.

ColegauCymru has made three successful bids for Erasmus+ funding for senior level delegations of managers from the post-16 skills sector to visit Finland (2014), the Basque Country (2016) and Catalonia (2017), and supported Sgiliaith in a separate Erasmus+ funded visit to the Basque Country in 2015.

The participating organisations in these strategic level CPD opportunities have included member colleges as well as a private sector training provider and a higher education institution, the Welsh Government and Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Wales.

Key areas researched by the delegations have included:

- improving literacy and numeracy
- breaking the link between poverty and educational attainment
- innovation in the vocational education and skills sector
- working more closely with employers by developing skills that respond to the needs of the workplace
- supporting innovation by SMEs, and
- investigating the potential economic benefits of bilingualism or multilingualism.

### **Further Information**

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