



Experiences from the Bi-Regional Youth Exchange

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The Bi-Regional Youth Exchange was coordinated by the Museums, Galleries and Collections Institute (MGCI) within the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews (Scotland), Museo Nacional de Costa Rica (Costa Rica), Red de Museos Comunitarios de América (Mexico), Universidade do Porto (Portugal) and Museu Nacional de Arqueologia (Portugal).

Contributors:

The quotes in this booklet were collected as part the Bi-Regional Youth Exchange reflection activities facilitated by the following EU-LAC-MUSEUMS researchers:

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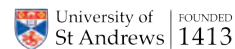
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Introduction

There is no time like the present to ensure young people have every opportunity to contribute to their communities, promote their heritage, participate in decision making and challenge the threats that they and their community may face.

The young people involved in this EU-LAC-MUSEUMS Bi-Regional Youth Exchange have demonstrated their capability of engaging in heritage, discussing the problems their communities face and finding solutions for the future. Through EU-LAC-MUSEUMS, each young person has recognised working within a bi-regional basis can be both be a transformative and valuable experience, discovering that although they are miles apart each individual and community faces similar issues but together they can find common answers through heritage-based activities.

This booklet shares a selection of the experiences from the Bi-Regional Youth Exchange between Europe and Latin America.



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"Museums are important because they serve to remind us of who we are and what our place is in the world. [...] Museum professionals, with reference to their visitors, frequently use the expression 'museum community', but can this be defined? We also need to discover how museums interact with their community, and the community with its museums, and place this in historical perspective."

Peter Davis, "Place Exploration: museums, identity, community", in Watson, S. ed., Museums and Their Communities. London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp.53-75; 53



Jamie Allan Brown

Project Youth Programme Worker
University of St Andrews, Scotland



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To promote the Horizon 2020 goal of “fostering inclusive, innovative and reflective societies” the EU-LAC-MUSEUMS project has sought to research state-of-the-art initiatives in museums and community empowerment, then move beyond these initiatives to create something truly unique for this bi-regional youth exchange between Europe and Latin America.

We aimed to both transform young people's lives within museum communities and to create a method of implementation and evaluation that will be applicable to wider regions. I am immensely proud of all the young people and their communities for taking part, they opened their doors and truly embraced one another to their respective way of life, leaving each young person more confident, empowered citizens of the world, and creating a lasting legacy and partnership between the communities and regions.

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The EU-LAC-MUSEUMS project was founded on the belief that change begins with individual lives. The experience of the youth exchange and the testimonials of the young people involved are evidence that this is so. We have had the privilege to journey alongside young people from Europe and Latin America as they made time to learn about and appreciate the natural and cultural heritage in the place they call home, and to share it with communities in rural and island communities in other countries.

I sincerely hope that the creativity, humour and passion of youth, and the value of intergenerational transmission of knowledge will continue to grow in these locales, and to drive future cultural heritage projects towards sustainable models of practice through equitable and shared learning between Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

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Dr Karen Brown
Project Coordinator
University of St Andrews, Scotland

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The Costa Rica exchange for me was an experience of a lifetime, and the memories made will stay with me forever. I don't think I would be where I am today if it wasn't for the EU-LAC-MUSEUMS project.

Going over to Costa Rica gave me the confidence to take every opportunity and to make new friends. I learned from the Costa Rican community to take pride in my identity and that I can connect with people across the world despite the language and culture barriers. It allowed me to appreciate the beauty of Skye and its culture that surrounds me and encourages me to go on and study social anthropology at university.

”

Mairead Pentland

Young Person, Scotland



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It's been a really great experience because I've met lots of people and I've made lots of friendships, and thanks to them I felt comfortable in an environment where I could express who I am; I'm an indigenous person, I like being who I am, and I'm very proud of it.

I'm proud to be indigenous and from Boruca. I'm always learning more about who I am and where the European young people are from.

We are not that different. I feel like I am part of a whole new community, sharing Boruca, Scotland and Portugal.

”

Gaudy Fernández
Young Person, Costa Rica

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Charlotte Beckey
Young Person, Scotland

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The community of Boruca will always be with me. There were so many warm-hearted people that welcomed us into their way of life, guiding us through their land, the chance to make traditional masks and learning about the Brunka language from elders.

I know I have come out of this exchange as a much stronger and more independent person, and understand how important it is to keep our culture, our Gaelic language alive!

I feel like now I can do anything!!

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The youth exchange has given me an opportunity to understand my community of Barcelos, where we have come from and where we are going as a community. I have met community leaders and got to understand why our community is so famous for pottery.

It was an honour to welcome the Costa Ricans to Portugal and to be in their community. We shared not just daily life together, but music, food, and language!

I even performed along with my music group to the Costa Ricans, I was nervous but this programme has given me the strength to be confident!

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Bruno Filipe Bento
Young Person, Portugal

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Ronald Martínez Villarreal

Project Principal Investigator for Costa Rica
Museo Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica



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The experience of the workshops and exchanges of the EU-LAC-MUSEUMS project has created a different space of participation for the communities, young people, where community museums acquired a central role in the strengthening of the traditional culture since an effort is made so that young people can know, continue, and strengthen certain traditions, besides being carriers of the community's historical memory. This is because communities are concerned that young people are not sure of their heritage and own culture due to globalisation.

On the other hand, this project has built and strengthened new management skills and training in facilitators of the same community, who can continue to develop this kind of workshops. We have achieved new levels of collaboration within the communities, specifically among community museums, schools, young people, and parents.

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For me, this has been a really wonderful experience. I've lived with young people on the other side of the world, they've taught me their dances, their culture, their craftwork...really, it's been wonderful. It's not every day you get to stay with people on the other side of the world, who show you that they're proud of their community, that they work as a team, and it moves you, because you start to understand that you can do the same in your own community - you can become more interested in your own culture, your own heritage and in your own language.

I've met young people who have different thinking, who express themselves in a very beautiful way in their community because they're proud of themselves, they're proud of their community life.

You have to take advantage of these opportunities because you never know when you'll get the chance again for both myself and my community.

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Yunieth Quirós
Young Person, Costa Rica

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Jonathan Smith

Young Person, Scotland

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Though many miles lie between them and us we all are brought together through our shared passion for music, dance, art and community spirit.

The exchange changed me as a person in so many ways. It made me proud of my island background, improved my confidence and gave me skills which will stay with me forever.

I want to stay in Skye, really make a difference to the island, challenge tourism and retain our way of life for both locals and visitors, like the way the Boruca community does.

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I am very grateful for the friendships that resulted through the exchange. Of the things I learned, I feel that the most important is to value and respect the different ways of life in all our communities.

Our history, our heritage is different but we are all the same, facing the same problems.

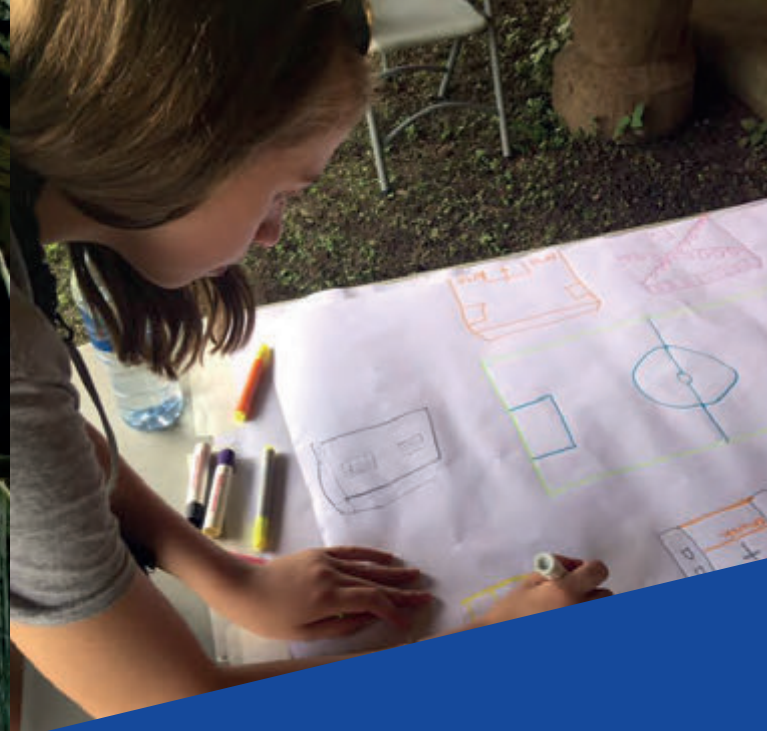
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Rita Leite
Young Person, Portugal

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Cirostan Towers

Young Person, Portugal

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I'm not quite sure how, to sum up, my experience in Costa Rica. It was amazing. Exhausting. Life changing. Exciting. Hot. Incredible. A great learning experience.

The trip changed me in many ways. Before I would have described myself as a relatively shy, quiet and introverted person and I'll be the first to admit that my communication skills and confidence are something I struggled with.

This exchange really brought me out my shell and exposed a fun side of my personality that some people don't see. I feel more confident about myself, my dreams and aspirations the future and understanding the ways in which we can sustain our community for the future.

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For me, and Boruca, this experience has been a dream because we've not only learnt about our indigenous history and culture, we have shared it with other young people from Scotland and Portugal, we've learnt to respect our culture, I feel more proud about Boruca, our people, our land and our language.

This exchange has given both me and Boruca to chance to go global, tell our stories, learn other stories and most importantly how to be respectful and value it. Otherwise one day we may lose our culture and our traditions, and as young people, we have to be responsible with the knowledge and memories of each our places.

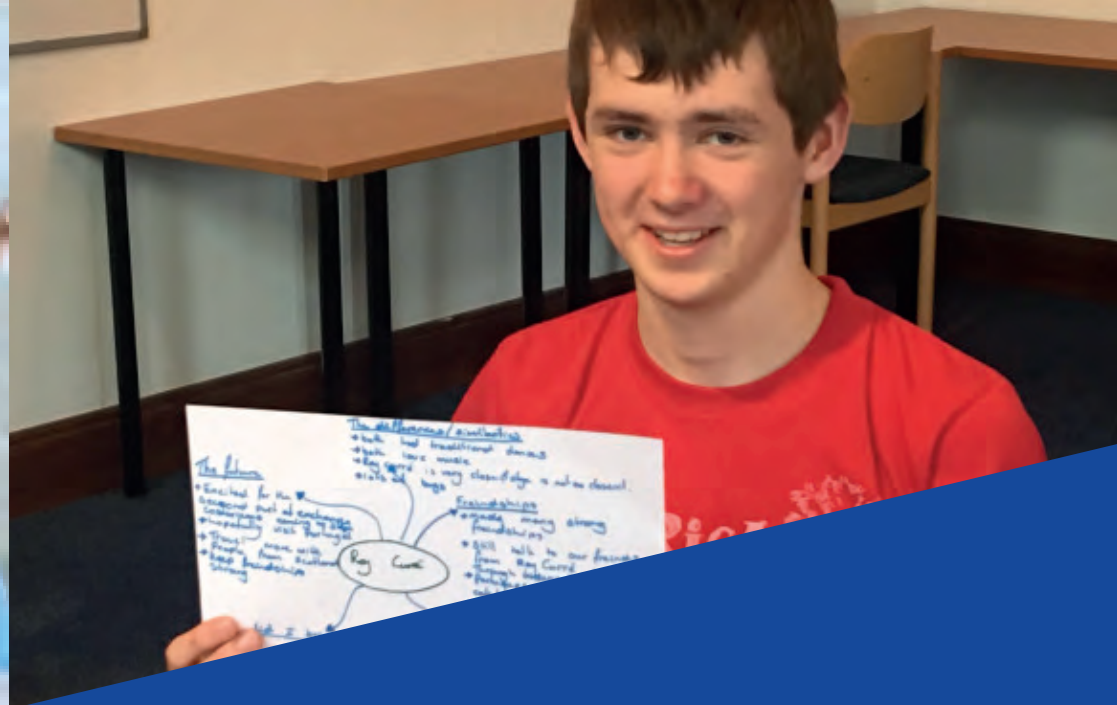
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Glen Morales
Young Person, Costa Rica

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Andrew Whitehead

Young Person, Scotland

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I feel this exchange has changed me in so many ways, these changes have all been good, it has made me more confident; before I wasn't really someone who liked to speak in front of an audience but now I can speak to my whole school and community.

The experience has also changed the way I look at things. Before the exchange I didn't really pay attention to my surroundings, our nature, our landscape the world challenges around me, now after being part of the programme it has made me think further about my community and our way of life. The young people and community of Rey Curre are the best people I have ever met.

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The youth exchange, built around the “Our Vision of Change” program, was an extremely rewarding experience for us, the team of the Union of Community Museum in Oaxaca, Mexico and many of the participants of the Community Museum Network of America.

During the project conference “Memory and Community Museums: the Right to Self-Determination and the Role of Youth”, in Costa Rica in March 2018, it was especially rewarding to witness the participation of the young students of Costa Rica. They shared their experiences of dialogue with elders and their heightened appreciation of community memory. Indirect and sincere individual testimonies, they recorded their hopes that other youths and community members continue this significant engagement with the practices and beliefs of their ancestors.

The testimonies of the young people who participated in this program are evidence that it is possible to share concepts, methods and experiences in Europe and Latin America, in ways that enrich the practices of community museums and Ecomuseums in both regions.

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Teresa Morales
Project Advisory Board Member

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Beatriz Papaléo
Young Person, Portugal

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Being able to share São João da Madeira's history with the Costa Ricans was an honour, and being welcomed into the homes of the Costa Ricans was a chance to really see we are all the same. I will always remember the fun we had sharing Portuguese dancing and music, helping everyone learn the moves. I loved it!

Throughout this exchange, I started building my experience by volunteering at the Museu de Chapelaria. The programme and facilitators helped me find the courage to gain skills needed for my future.

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