

netbox news

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“Our intention is that the process of collecting data will in itself create new connections, build new friendships, and inspire new networks and projects within the community”.

From NetBox Audit Guide

WELCOME

Welcome to the second edition of NetBox News. In this newsletter, we will share our experience of the NetBox community audit process and highlight some of the key learning assets and learning needs that we unearthed across our six pilot communities. As a short reminder from Issue 1, *“NetBox is a community learning ICT project, funded by the European Union, which aims to support small rural communities to become more self-sufficient in how they engage with and access learning. The idea behind the project is to turn people from mere ‘consumers’ of knowledge into ‘producers’ of knowledge.”*

The purpose of the Community Audit was to get to know each community and to draw out a sense of the existing assets in the community. It was designed to identify and tap into the wealth of knowledge, skills and educational resources in the community that could be strengthened and shared through learning, using an Asset Based Community Development approach.

It also aimed to identify individual and community learning needs and look out for opportunities for new learning partnerships. The audit questionnaire, and other information gathering, focused on identifying and documenting local learning assets and needs, as well as more general questions about the community, levels and usage of information and communication technology (ICT), and existing learning activities. Data was gathered from the three groups of stakeholders in the community – businesses, service providers and residents.



From the start, a participatory approach was seen as key to the project, in alignment with the stated intentions of fostering local resilience and engagement. This informed the style and methodology of the audit phase, and also enabled the process to act as a key aspect of introducing the project to the community, finding potential champions and seeding interest in future users.

An Audit Guide, produced to support local teams, outlined in detail the philosophy behind the research, a range of research methods that could be used alongside questionnaires and tips on how to engage people in the process. An Induction Pack

was created, available as a Power Point presentation, to help train local teams and build their skills as peer researchers. Both resources are available on to use for free on www.netboxproject.eu

“There are people from the community, who have passion for their parish, that are quite dynamic and belong to local businesses and organizations.”

Portugal report on Local team

Methodologies and Data Collection

The process and choice of research methods used differed across the 6 pilot communities, influenced both by the skills and approach of acting partners and the context of each unique community. For example, in the UK there was an emphasis on creative engagement using displays in local windows; in Romania the main activity focused around written questionnaires.

What was common throughout was the combining of questionnaires and more creative or relational research, understanding how one in-depth conversation with an interested individual could offer as much value as 20 responses to a questionnaire. This combining of methodologies provided a rich source of collected data. This data enhanced the desk based research conducted by all partners earlier in the NetBox project.



Images taken from some of the activities undertaken by partners and the local teams to engage members of the communities



Information on all these methods can be found in the NetBox Audit Guide on www.netboxproject.eu

Assets, Knowledge and skills

All six rural communities found numerous skilled and talented individuals willing to share their knowledge with the wider community. People were invited to reflect on what they know in the realms of hobbies, technical skills, professional knowledge and other areas. Offers ranged from simple domestic skills (often underestimated until reflected back as valuable), to professional skills currently underused as the person was retired or in another role. From *“advanced English lessons and vegetable growing to organising the community to clean the streets and teaching people their rights”* Extract from the Romanian Report

The tables below give an overview of the kind of skills and assets that were identified through the audits across all 6 communities:

Table 1: Learning Needs

Ireland	United Kingdom	Portugal	Poland	Romania	Lithuania
Horticulture Childcare Parenting Healthcare Crafts Arts Communications Media Studies Business Administration ICT Team Building Group Dynamics Dancing	Motor engineering Stone carving Sound engineering Energy management Radio skills Buddhist meditation First aid Singing Instruments Woodcraft ICT	Lace Crochet Sports Fishing Cooking Agriculture Flower -arranging Gardening Cake-making DIY Electricity Dance Breadmaking ICT	Gardening Flower -arranging Childcare, Pastry -making Cooking Team building Event -organisation Table -arranging Arts First aid ICT	Sports Dancing Literacy Drawing Car -repairing, Vegetable growing Beekeeping Fishing Making goblins (craft) Cooking Table -decoration ICT	Arts Crafts Health care Sports; ICT Multi-media, Movie making Pedagogy Gardening Cooking

Table 2: Learning Assets

Ireland	United Kingdom	Portugal	Poland	Romania	Lithuania
Counseling Holistic -Therapies Tai Chi, Dancing, Parenting skills Drug awareness First Aid Genealogy Cooking Foraging Arts & crafts Online social networking Languages Photoshop Fundraising Marketing Leadership	Outdoors activities Web design, Excel ASP.net VB net, Facebook Online Shopping Basket making Teenage confidence Cooking Sugar craft Flower arranging Local archeology Dress making Languages	Languages Cooking Painting ICT Health & safety at work; Etiquette and manners HACCP Cooking -Traditional -confectionery Business skills Tourism	Choir singing Traditional folk songs Flower arranging Sewing Aerobics Dancing Table arranging Postcards -making DIY Nordic walking ICT Languages Pesticides Ecological -farming First aid Tax declarations	PC skills Hair dressing Construction Car repair, English Vegetables growing Organising community activities Teaching people their rights Land cultivation Artistic skills Metal manufacturing Bee-keeping	Accredited vocational and re-skilling courses Non-formal educational programmes

What the communities had to say:

“ We definitely need a space for advertising our services and production, as well as announcing about the activities and events around the community. ”

Lithuania

“ It (Netbox) would make an immense difference – but it must be central, fully accessible to all and not just web-based. There is a very sizeable sector of the community that has no computer skills. It would enable everyone to find out what is going on in the area and, thus, have the potential to increase membership and activity of the various groups and organisations. ”

Female (aged 40-49)

“ In our business we have very little knowledge of computers, we need to improve this to help our business with advertising etc. ”

Male (aged 40-49)

“ Through the Parish Council, groups could meet and try to figure out what kind of activities people want to participate in, and join them together for this exchange (practical and simple things). ”

Male, more than 60 years, retired, Portugal

“ Workshops and events to bring people with skills up here even once a month to learn new and different things, the space already exists, the Pastoral Center or even the garden of Tojosa! ”

Female, aged 30-39, Accountant, Portugal

“ The audit demonstrated the potential to engage and motivate residents to take action around recent community issues in partnership with the appropriate organisations. ”

Local team member, Lithuania

“ Community consultations should be taken more seriously and people should have a real input into local development. ”

Female (aged 40-49), Ireland

To access the complete NetBox Audit Summary report, please visit www.netboxproject.eu or contact Meath Partnership on info@meathpartnership.ie

