



a creative
momentum
project

CREATIVE HOTSPOTS:

A MODEL FOR BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS
THROUGH ESTABLISHED CREATIVE EVENTS

ICELANDIC CREATIVE HOTSPOT: VAKA FOLK ARTS FESTIVAL 2017

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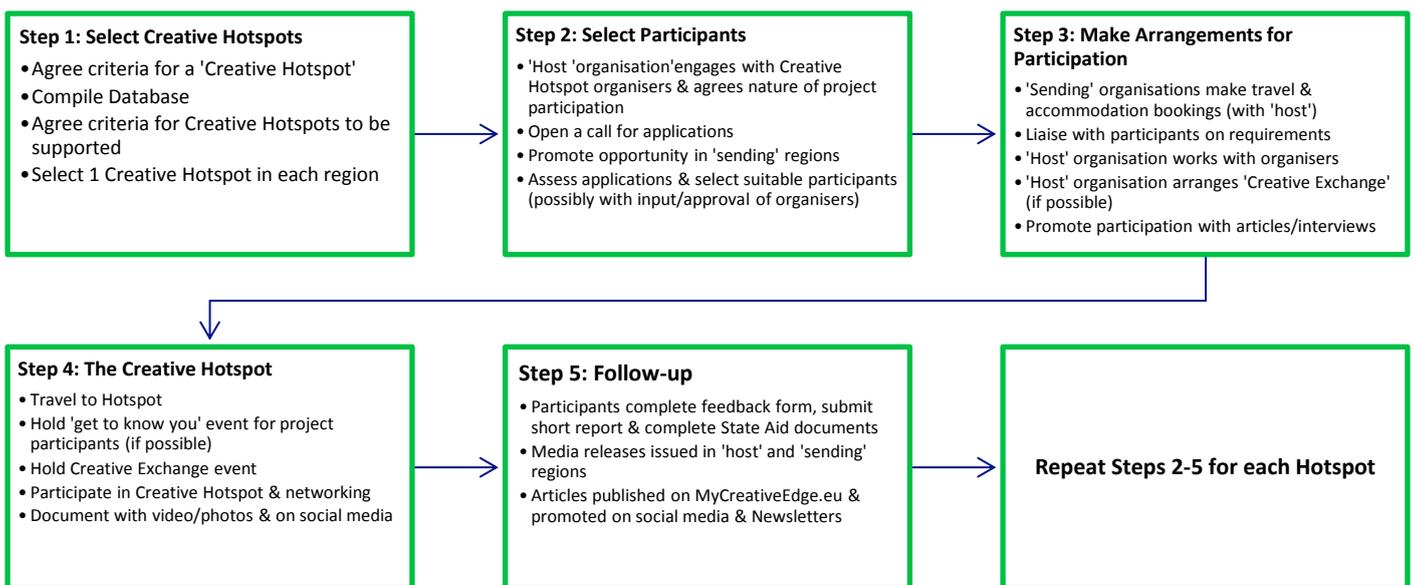
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SUMMARY: THE CREATIVE HOTSPOTS MODEL

The transnational, EU co-funded 'a creative momentum project' developed and implemented 'The Creative Hotspots Model' during 2015-2017. The aim was to facilitate face-to-face transnational networking and knowledge exchange among creative sector entrepreneurs, while strengthening the creative sector ecosystem across Europe's Northern Edge.

A 'Creative Hotspot' is a general term used by the project to describe an established creative or cultural industry event (conference, festival etc.) which takes place in one of the partner regions. The 'Creative Hotspots Model' selected one 'Creative Hotspot' in each of the five partner regions and then selected and financially supported a number of relevant creative professionals from the other partner regions to travel to, and participate in, each of these Creative Hotspots. The aim was to stimulate transnational networking, create opportunities for possible collaboration and bring an added international dimension to existing creative sector events in the partner regions. The diagram below illustrates the Model.

THE CREATIVE HOTSPOTS MODEL



The Model was implemented five times over the course of 'a creative momentum project' for Creative Hotspots in Mid-Sweden, South East of Northern Ireland, Northern Finland, North East of Iceland and the West of Ireland. In total 49 creative professionals from five regions were supported to participate in these five Creative Hotspots (the initial target was 37). Below is a summary of the main lessons learned from the experience of developing and implementing the Model. These may be useful for others considering implementing a similar approach.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **One Size Does Not Fit All:** A single 'Creative Hotspots Model' does not work for all creative sub-sectors, Events or organisations. The Model needs to be adapted and adjusted for each specific Creative Hotspot.
2. **Does 'Hotspot' have Meaning?** The term 'Creative Hotspot' was coined by the project and a set of criteria developed. However when compiling the database and trying to select the five Hotspots to support, the question arose if any of them truly met all the criteria for a 'Creative Hotspot'. Ultimately there were few options for events taking place in the partner regions that came close to meeting all the criteria for selection; the requirement for the event to mainly take place in English was a limiting factor in Nordic regions. One of the challenges of more remote and sparsely populated regions is the shortage of truly international 'Creative Hotspots'. The objective of the Model to help strengthen the international dimension of existing creative events in the partner regions should perhaps have received greater focus. One good example was Arctic Design Week which previously was held mainly in Finnish, but in 2017 took place mainly in English to attract a more international audience.
3. **Relationship with Creative Hotspot Organisers:** It takes considerable time and effort for the 'host' project organisation to engage with Hotspot organisers. It is important not to underestimate the commitment involved. The timescale required by the project (e.g. to promote opportunity, select enterprises, make bookings) means that event details are needed from organisers earlier than usual. If an event usually targets a local/national audience, the organisers may not be familiar with the needs of international participants. A previous relationship with organisers (e.g. Lapland UAS previously supported Arctic Design Week) can make it somewhat easier.
4. **Awareness of Event/Format:** If a small, unknown Hotspot is selected, this creates the double task of raising awareness of the Festival/Event, as well as promoting the opportunity to participate. Even if the event itself is not well-known internationally, if it has a well-known and established type of format (e.g. a Film Festival), this makes it easier for potential applicants to know what to expect and makes the appropriate target group very clear. Events with a higher international profile are easier to promote, but an aim of the project is to strengthen smaller events.
5. **Nature of Event:** Hotspots which are voluntary/community-driven and not run on a commercial basis can create some challenges in organising cooperation and participation. More input from the project partner organisations may be required. Such Festivals may operate with a limited budget and rely heavily on voluntary input which may lead to quite high expectations of participants. When working with event organisers with very specific ethos and values, it can be challenging to ensure that participation by the project meets these criteria (e.g. eco-friendly, sustainable, bottom-up ethos and values of the Urkult Festival, preservation of folk music ethos of Vaka Festival).
6. **Logistics:** Organising the logistics of participation takes considerable time and effort from both the 'host' and 'sending' project organisations. They need to have the human, organisational and financial capacity to liaise with event organisers, participants, service suppliers (e.g. freight company, hotels) and media. One of the most common problems was sourcing reasonably priced accommodation where all participants could stay in the same location. As many of the Hotspots took place during high tourist seasons this was very challenging and the groups had to be split, which reduced the chances for the transnational project group to connect. It is necessary to begin planning very early (a year in advance) to make provisional bookings before participants are even selected. Only for the Urkult Festival in Sweden could all participants stay together but

this was at a considerable distance from the Festival venue. A number of participants requested to bring family members, at their own cost, however this did create some additional logistical complications and may not always be appropriate.

7. **Suitability of Participants & Group Dynamics:** For some Hotspots it was difficult to judge who would be the most suitable participants. Sometimes participants who may not have been the best match for the event (e.g. stage of career, sector) were selected. It proved difficult to select the best matches, partly because of lack of information about the event and also because of low numbers of applications (e.g. for Digital DNA @ The Planetarium). As each partner organisation made their own selection from their region individually they were not aware of who was selected in other regions. Joint selection from across all regions might be useful to maximise the group dynamic and compatibility within the transnational group. It is also useful to select participants, not only for their own sake, but who have wider networks and influence across their sector in their home country/region.
8. **Clear Communication:** It is very important to maintain clear lines of communication between the Hotspot organisers, the 'host' country project organisation, the 'sending' country project organisations and the participants. It is easy for there to be miscommunication and lack of clarity if these lines of communication become confused.
9. **Networking & Creative Exchanges:** At most Creative Hotspots the majority of attendees are local and many already know each other and have existing relationships. It can be difficult for the international 'outsiders' to find opportunities to engage and network. Hotspots which include specific, structured networking opportunities as part of the programme (e.g. the Marketplace at Galway Film Fleadh, the Matchmaking at Arctic Design Week) are desirable. Organising a Creative Exchange event in advance of the Creative Hotspot, so that all the supported project participants can present their work and network with each other and the local industry, can be very beneficial and should be organised if possible. Promotion of the Creative Exchange locally in advance is important to attract attendees from local industry.
10. **Promotion:** Some participants reported a 'reputational bounce' for their business from having been selected to take part in a Creative Hotspot, they felt it gave them added credibility with clients in their home region. Promotion of selected participants in advance, during and after the Creative Hotspot is important to increase the profile of the participants, the Hotspot and the project.



ICELANDIC CREATIVE HOTSPOT: VAKA FOLK ARTS FESTIVAL 2017

VAKA FOLK ARTS FESTIVAL

The annual [Vaka Folk Arts Festival](#) presents a singular opportunity to enjoy the very best folk musicians, dancers and craftworkers, rooted in the traditional folk arts of Iceland, along with performers from Nordic and other countries of northern Europe. It is held in the vibrant small town of Akureyri, the capital of northern Iceland.

This small and friendly festival has a varied programme including:

- Concerts and dance displays, where you can listen to the ancient Icelandic rímur ballads and the old traditional instruments, langspil and fiðla, alongside performances carrying the old traditions into the future.
- Morning and afternoon singing and instrumental workshops for all ages and abilities.
- Informal song and tune sessions and social dancing.
- Exhibitions and workshops in traditional arts and crafts.

Events take place in intimate local settings with lots of opportunities to meet and chat with all the artists. In 2017 most events took place at the [Hof Cultural Centre](#) which is also home to the [Akureyri School of Music](#) which cooperated with [Vaka 2017](#).

HOW DID THE PROJECT ENGAGE WITH ORGANISERS?

The Icelandic partner organisation, the North East Iceland Cultural Council, had an established relationship with the organisers of the Vaka Festival. During the [fourth project partner meeting, which took place in Iceland in June 2016](#), one of the main Vaka organisers Guðrún Ingimundardóttir, made a short presentation about the event and answered questions. This was a good opportunity for all partners to learn more about the Hotspot. She noted that the Festival

promotes traditional / folk music. She said that it would take place in May/June of 2017 and that they would start inviting and selecting artists in September/October 2016.

The Festival organisers said they would like the partners to mainly select musicians, singers and dancers to participate, keeping in mind that the definition of 'folk' can be quite comprehensive. For example, in Sweden, Persian music is seen as folk – folk is not nationalistic. At times, 'folk' is seen as synonymous with 'traditional' – these are labels assuming different meanings, depending on who one talks to. She noted that they were also interested in researchers and festival organisers interested in building transnational networks. One of the festival events is a seminar – if selected, researchers and/or festival organisers could make a presentation. Also, any performers at Vaka Folk Festival would hold a teaching workshop. Guðrún indicated that it may also be possible to organise additional gigs in Reykjavik to make the visit more worthwhile for the performers.

Following this meeting, the Icelandic project partner engaged directly with the organisers on the details for participation. The 'sending' partners engaged directly with organisers on selection and logistics for participation. A decision was taken by the Northern Ireland project partner that they would not participate in this Creative Hotspot.

HOW WERE THE PARTICIPANTS SELECTED?

The call for applications for '[Support to participate in Vaka Folk Arts Festival, Iceland](#)' opened on 4 November 2016 on MyCreativeEdge.eu. The call was open to musicians, researchers and festival organisers and applications were submitted via an online Google Form. The call was to select creatives from the West of Ireland, Mid-Sweden and Northern Finland to participate in the Vaka Festival from 23-27 May 2017. How participants would take part depended

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on their areas of expertise (musicians, researchers or festival organisers) but could include: Performing; Participating in a discussion/performance event; Giving workshops to young music students; Leading or participating in lunchtime jam sessions; and/or Making a presentation during the Seminar 'Folk Art Festivals' on 25 May. The deadline for applications was 20 November 2016.

The call for applications was disseminated through an article on MyCreativeEdge.eu, Facebook, Twitter and a MyCreativeEdge.eu Newsletter. With the help of Associate Partners and other stakeholders the opportunity was promoted widely across the three regions, using both email and social media. Promotion and marketing of the opportunity in Northern Finland was mainly organised by individual contacts and through emails. At this time, Lapland UAS tried specifically to contact musicians from Northernmost Lapland, especially Sami musicians. It was found that personal contact was most successful.

When contacting potential applicants, it was noted that it might be difficult to find solo artists. Many musicians perform in a band and wanted the full band to participate. This however was not possible as the support was limited to one person per application, given the very high cost of travel and accommodation in Iceland for such a long period. Therefore if a group applied, only one person would be supported by the project with other members covering their own cost. This may not have been fully clear to all applicants.

During the promotion of this opportunity the question arose of what kind of music is 'folk' music. Did potential applicants

feel that their music is 'folk'? Is Sami music a folk music? In Ireland what is called 'folk' music in other countries is called 'traditional' music, whereas 'folk' is used differently. So there was a question of definition during the promotion.

By the deadline, four applications were received in Northern Finland but two were not eligible (one was located in Northern Norway and the other was based in the southern part of Finland, outside the NPA region). The two eligible applicants were therefore selected. In Sweden two applications were received and both were accepted.

A total of seven applications were received from the West of Ireland. The applications were assessed by project staff from the WDC and NUI Galway. They were also sent to the organisers of the Vaka Folk Arts Festival who made the final decision on the musicians they wished to participate.

As one of the Irish applicants, Dr. Verena Commins, was a researcher from the Centre of Irish Studies at NUI Galway, and the research work she proposed in her application was complementary to 'a creative momentum project' Intelligence & Influence research led by NUI Galway, they decided to support Verena Commins to participate in Vaka Folk Festival as a staff member (not as a supported enterprise). Her analysis of the impact of festivals has on local areas formed part of the [research outputs of the project](#).

Following assessment, the following applicants were selected:



THE SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

Northern Finland:

1. **Oula Guttorm** ([Ijahis idja](#)) is a 26-year-old Sámi man from Inari. Oula has been working with Sámi music since he was 15. He is currently involved in the [Sámi Music Centre](#) in Sajos and is the producer of Ijahis idja – a music festival celebrating indigenous people. He is also Artist Manager at [Tuupa Records Ltd.](#)
2. **Eetu Suominen** ([Northern Sound](#)) is a promoter delivering Finnish artists to festivals and venues around the Nordic countries, mostly above the Arctic Circle. He lives in Inari. Eetu's company Northern Sound provides sound, light, AV-rentals and services.

Mid-Sweden:

3. **Duo Systrami** ([Duo Systrami](#)) consists of twin sisters Fanny Källström, violin and Klara Källström, cello. With roots in Ångermanland in the north of Sweden, they create music inspired by the dramatic and mysterious landscape from their district and also their relation to each other as twin sisters.
4. **Kristina Sandberg** ([Kristina Sandberg](#)) is a singer and violin player living in Sundsvall. Kristina has been singing and playing at many different occasions, such as music festivals, church concerts, weddings, funerals etc. both in Sweden and abroad. Kristina is also a graphic designer and has made many folders and advertisements for music events.

West of Ireland:

5. **Mharhi Baird** ([Mharhi Baird](#)) is a Galway-based musician playing flute, tenor banjo and singing. Mharhi's passion lies with traditional music and song from various diaspora, particularly that of Scotland, Ireland and more recently Brittany. Her music has taken her across Europe and the USA to perform and teach at a number of festivals, summer schools and institutions. She is the recipient of two prestigious Dewar Arts Awards.
6. **Aisling Ní Churraighín** ([Aisling Ní Churraighín](#)) is a PhD researcher from Teelin, southwest Donegal. She is undertaking her research in the field of Folklore and Ethnography at NUI Galway on the National Folklore Collection undertaken by Seán Ó hEochaidh, also of Teelin. Along with her research interests, Aisling is a keen traditional musician, and plays the accordion, melodeon and tin whistle.
7. **Tiarnán O Duinnchinn** ([Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn](#)) is an award winning Uilleann Piper who, in January 2013, won the Seán O Riada Bonn Oir (Sean O Riada Gold Medal) competition. Tiarnán has been touring and performing professionally on a regular basis since 1995 both as a member of various bands and as a solo performer.

HOW WAS PARTICIPATION ORGANISED?

Project staff made the following arrangements:

- **Flights:** As the two Finnish participants were based in Inari in Northernmost Finland, flights were arranged and they met the project manager Saila Puukko at Helsinki airport to travel to Iceland. Flights for the Swedish participants were organised from Stockholm, they travelled to Iceland a few days early, as a concert was organised in Reykjavik in advance of the Festival. Flights for the Irish project staff, as well as Mharhi Baird and Aisling Ní Churraighín were organised from Dublin to Reykjavik on Monday 22 May, while Tiarnán O Duinnchinn

travelled separately on Wednesday 24 May. All participants flew home on Monday 29 May except Aisling Ní Churraighín who wished to undertake research in the national Icelandic archives on the folklore and musical links between Ireland and Iceland for her PhD research (at her own cost), her return flight was booked for a week later.

- **Internal Transport:** Internal return flights from Reykjavik to Akureyri were booked for the Finnish participants. In consultation with Festival organisers, it was arranged that Swedish and Irish project staff and participants, as well as the Northern Irish project staff, would travel by a hired mini bus from Reykjavik to



Akureyri on 22 May, a seven-hour journey. The cost of this would be shared between the Festival and the participating project partner organisations. As well as project supported participants, other musicians performing at the Festival would take the bus, giving an opportunity to meet in advance. An internal flight was booked for Tiarnán O Duinnchinn. All participants and project staff took an internal flight to return from Akureyri to Reykjavik.

- **Accommodation:** Accommodation in Akureyri at that time of year was very limited and expensive. The Icelandic project partner and the Festival organisers tried to source accommodation at a reasonable cost. All the Finnish, Swedish and Irish musicians were booked into the [Gula Villan](#) guesthouse along with all of the other Festival musicians. Project staff, as well as researchers, were booked in other guesthouses.
- **Event Tickets:** Event tickets for the Vaka Festival were booked in advance for project staff.
- **Seminar:** Four of the participants were to make presentations at the Seminar 'Folk Music Festivals', and arrangements for their presentations were made in advance.

Musicians and instructors selected to participate were also paid €300 by the organisers of the Festival for their performances and work at the Festival. The Festival organisers liaised directly with the performers about their schedule of performances and teaching.

As a project Operational Management Team meeting was

organised to coincide with the Hotspot, the following project staff attended:

- Saila Puukko, Project Manager, Lapland UAS
- Silvia Guglielmini, Project Administrator, WDC
- Pauline White, Project Co-ordinator, WDC
- Kristina Jeppson, Project Officer, Technichus Mid-Sweden
- Niall Drew, Project Co-ordinator, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
- Hulda Jónsdóttir, Project Officer, North East Iceland Cultural Council
- Aisling Murtagh, Post-Doctoral Researcher, NUI Galway
- Verena Commins, NUI Galway

To promote the project's participation in the event in advance, a number of articles were published on MyCreativeEdge.eu:

- [Sámi musician Oula Guttorm looks forward to Vaka Folk Festivals](#) 24 April
- [Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn to perform at VAKA Festival](#) 11 May
- [Swedish musicians ready for Vaka](#) 15 May
- [Eetu Suominen from Northern Sound will attend Vaka to find new contacts](#) 17 May

In addition, one of the Irish participants Aisling Ní Churraighín published her own Deep in Thought blog post about her research, the folklore links between her own area and Iceland and her interest in attending the Festival [From Teileann to Inis Tuile](#) 17 May.





Top Left: Kristina Sandberg (Sweden) and Fanny Källström (Sweden) during a lunchtime jam session. Bottom Left: Hof Cultural Centre. Right: Lunchtime Jam Session.

THE CREATIVE HOTSPOT

The musicians Klara and Fanny Källström from Duo Systrami held a concert at the [Nordic House](#) in Reykjavik before going to the Vaka Festival, 70 tickets and 12 CDs were sold at this concert. A short video of the performance was published on [Facebook](#) and received 124 views.

The Creative Hotspot was quite an intensive experience for some of the participants. The musicians Duo Systrami, Mharhi Baird and Aisling Ní Churraighín ran music workshops with young Icelandic musicians from the Akureyri Music School from Tuesday 23 May. They all felt this was a great experience to teach young musicians and meet their teachers. Teaching a group of Icelandic young people a tune from their home country was a special experience.

They were also involved in rehearsals for group and individual performances. A group dinner for all project

participants and project staff was organised by North East Iceland Cultural Council on the evening of 23 May.

The Festival programme began on Wednesday, 24 May and continued until Saturday, 27 May (see Box). All performers performed at the opening concert on Wednesday evening, at a 'Tunes & Chat' session, as well as an individual concert and the Grand Finale concert. Those who were teaching workshops also performed with their students at the Student Concert. The musicians also had an opportunity to sell CDs at their concerts. One of the Finnish participants "Northern Sound" was asked to help with sound engineering during the Festival though this had not been made clear previously. He provided his services to the organisers.

The information received from the festival was at the same time too much and too little. You had... pages of email and the vital information was very little, or unnoticeable (Vaka participant).

VAKA 2017 FESTIVAL PROGRAMME - TRADITION FOR TOMORROW

24 - 27 MAY 2017, HOF CULTURAL CENTRE, AKUREYRI

Wednesday 24th May

19:00-19:45 Folk dance from Iceland and Norway: Hildur Dance company from Norway and the Dance Group Vefarinn from Akureyri.

20:00-22:00 Sumer is icumen in (Summer is here): Spring Concert of the Akureyri-Geysir Male Choir and Vaka 2017 opening Concert.

Thursday 25th May

10:00-12:00 Workshop: Rímur song: Introducing Iceland's ancient, epic rímur ballads with Bára Grímsdóttir & Chris Foster.

12:30-13:30 Lunchtime jam session: Everyone welcome to come and play and sing with our festival artists.

13:30-16:30 Seminar: Folk music festivals: Their mission and influence on traditional music

Chairperson: Guðrún Ingimundardóttir; Presenters: Eetu Suominen and Oula Guttorm from Finland, Dr. Verena Commins and Aisling Ní Churraighín from Ireland.

14:00-16:30 Workshop: Icelandic dance tunes: Come and play Icelandic dance tunes from the 19th century and do the dances with Benjamin Bech, Wilma Young and Barnaby Walters.

17:00-18:30 Tunes and chat: Vaka festival artists sit together to play, sing and chat about their music and their instruments. Mhàiri Baird & Seán Earnest, Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn, Aisling Ní Churraighín, Gillibríde MacMillan.

20:00-22:30 Nordic and more: Music from Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, England and Estonia. Kvæðamenn, Duo Systrami, Benjamin Bech, Duo Jansen/Jüssi, Chris Foster.

Friday 26th May

12:30-13:30 Lunchtime jam session

13:30-16:30 Student Concert: Students and teachers of the Akureyri Music School together with Vaka musicians sing and play folk music from Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Scotland, England and Iceland. The concert is the finale of three days of workshops.

17:00-18:30 Tunes and chat: Festival artists sit together to play, sing and chat about their music and their instruments. Chris Foster, Benjamin Bech, Duo Systrami, Rósa Jóhannesdóttir and family.

20:00-23:00 Near Neighbours: Music and Gaelic songs from Ireland, Hebrides, Scotland and Shetland. Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn, Aisling Ní Churraighín, Gillibríde MacMillan, Mhàiri Baird & Seán Earnest, Wilma Young.

Saturday 27th May

10:00-12:00 Band workshop for acoustic instruments: Come and learn to play Icelandic dance tunes with Benjamin Bech and festival artists.

10:30-12:00 Family singing workshop for children, parents and grandparents: Come along and sing some old favourites and learn new ones with Bára Grímsdóttir and Rósa Jóhannesdóttir & family.

12:30-13:30 Lunchtime jam session

14:00-16:00 The rímur ballad of Walt Disney: Don't miss this performance of Disneyrímur by Þórarinn Eldjárn where traditional singers from different parts of Iceland come together to perform this humorous rímur ballad about the life story of Mickey Mouse's creator.

20:00-23:30 Grand Finale: Our artists come together for this final festival concert of Vaka 2017. Chris Foster, Bára Grímsdóttir, Kvæðasystur Anna og Stína, Benjamin Bech, Duo Systrami, Rósa Jóhannesdóttir og fjölskylda, Tvisöngsbæður, Duo Jansen/Jüssi, Aisling Ní Churraighín, Mhàiri Baird & Seán Earnest, Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn, Akureyri-Geysir Male Choir.



During the Festival a number of short social media videos were recorded by Silvia Guglielmini of the WDC and posted directly to Facebook, some of these proved very popular.

- [Akureyri-Geysir Male Choir, Vaka Folk Arts Festival 2017](#) (692 views)
- [Benjamin Bech @ Vaka 2017](#) (200 views)
- [Final tune @ Vaka 2017](#) (834 views)

At the 'Folk music festivals: Their mission and influence on traditional music' seminar on Thursday, 25 May, Eetu Suominen, Oula Guttorm, Verena Commins and Aisling Ní Churraighín presented on the topic of Festivals and their role (see Box). Oula presented about an indigenous people's music festival from a festival producers point of view. He gave information about the Inari region and a background to the Festival. Eetu presented on the folk music scene in Finland and how it affects his work as a music promoter. His biggest client is Varangerfestival in Vadsø, Norway.

Project staff held an [Operational Management Team meeting](#) on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday of the Festival week, and also attended the Seminar on Thursday and evening performances.

After the participants returned to Reykjavik on Sunday, the Irish musicians played a concert arranged at [Kex Hostel](#). A short video is [here](#).

As the two Finnish participants were not folk musicians, but

music producers and promoters, while other participants were mainly musicians with their own performance and clear role at the Festival, networking for the Finnish participants was not rated very successful. However they noted that it was a great experience to take part to this kind of opportunity.

I made a few contacts but the event didn't really have any relevance to my work. The festival was obviously targeted for folk musicians. (Eetu Suominen)

The Festival was small, but this gave a better chance to get to know people attending the Festival; other artists and companies. Kristina Sandberg from Sweden felt she got inspiration from the Festival lunchtime jam sessions and has since been inspired to become even more involved in local music activities in her home region.



All performers on stage for the final tune of the Grand Finale concert

PERIPHERAL FOLK MUSIC FESTIVALS EXCHANGE IDEAS FOR THEIR FUTURE

PRESERVATION

By Aisling Murtagh, NUI Galway (published on MyCreativeEdge.eu, 1 June 2017)

Based in Akureyri, North East Iceland, the five days of this year's Vaka Folk Arts Festival incorporated a series of concerts, workshops, sessions and a seminar. With the support of a creative momentum project a number of creative professionals from the music sector participated in Vaka. From Västernorrland in Mid-Sweden these were Duo Systrami and Kristina Sandberg. Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn, Mharhi Baird and Aisling Ní Churraighín attended from the west of Ireland and from Northern Finland Eetu Suominen and Oula Guttorm participated. This year's seminar assessed the role



of festivals in the preservation of folk music. Also from the west of Ireland, Dr. Verena Commins attended Vaka with National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway and discussed her research on the Willie Clancy Summer School.

Verena's work identified how the Willie Clancy Summer School has played a valuable role in the preservation and future practice of Irish traditional music. It also plays a strong part in the image associated with Miltown Malbay, the west Clare town where the summer school takes place each year since 1973. Tunes taught at the festival are carried forward and played elsewhere by the local and international participants. The summer school has a strong underlying ethos of volunteerism and is deeply embedded within the local community.

The approximately 20,000 visitors the summer school attracts each year should present an infrastructural challenge for the town. However instead the existing spaces of Miltown Malbay, its homes, pubs and schools, become places of teaching. The summer school has literally brought Irish traditional music back home. Verena explains: "Due to a shortage of space one year, people opened up their living rooms to hold uilleann pipe classes – and they've been happening ever since. So the summer school brings domestic music-making back into people's homes where it traditionally emerged from".

The Willie Clancy Summer School also brings wider benefits to the town. It has resulted in traditional music being strongly associated with it and this attracts visitors outside of the summer school's ten day duration. Miltown Malbay's location also adds to the sense of authenticity surrounding the event. Its peripheral geography on the west coast means it also becomes associated with the west of Ireland which can be constructed as a 'place apart'. According to Verena historically: "The west of Ireland has been imagined as an untainted cultural heartland of language, music and literature".

The Vaka seminar also featured other speakers who provided insights based on their experience and research. Aisling Ní Churraighín, also from NUI Galway, talked about folk music traditions and festivals in south-west Donegal assessing their influence on the communities in which they are held. It also featured presentations based on experiences from Northern Finland. Oula Guttorm producer of Ijahis idja, the Sámi music festival in Inari, discussed how this festival combines both traditional and contemporary Sámi music, as well as other events such as workshops and competitions to broaden the festival's appeal. Eetu Suominen from Northern Sound explained the challenges, but also the unique experience provided by a peripheral music scene.

Now in its fourth year, Vaka Folk Arts Festival focuses on music performance. However the seminar provides a valuable opportunity to combine practice with research and reflection.

FOLLOW UP TO THE CREATIVE HOTSPOT

Following the Festival all participants were requested to complete an online feedback survey, the results of which are given in Section 9. They were also asked to submit a short report on their experience and to sign official forms relating to State Aid requirements.

Participation in the event was documented through video. Following the Festival two videos were uploaded to YouTube:

- [Mharhi Baird and Seán Earnest, Green Grows the Laurel](#) (69 views)
- [Duo Systrami at Vaka Folk Arts Festival](#) (208 views)



Shorter versions were also uploaded directly to Facebook, as direct uploads to Facebook perform better than links to YouTube:

- [Mhàiri Baird @ Vaka 2017](#) (260 views)
- [Duo Systrami at Vaka Folk Arts Festival 2017](#) (222 views)



A story about Duo Systrami at Vaka appeared in the local Swedish newspaper [Allehanda](#) in Härnösand

Härnösandsysstrar spred influenser från Västernorrland på isländsk festival

159 images [Dela på Facebook](#) [Dela på Twitter](#)

Klara och Fanny Källström är sysstrarna från Håggstänger, Härnösand, som tillsammans ger folkmusiken ett lite yngre ansikte. I dagarna har de återvänt från en folkmusikfestival tvärs över Norska havet.

– På Island verkar det inte finnas någon folkmusikscen överhuvudtaget, de håller på att bygga upp någonting, säger Fanny Källström i ett pressmeddelande.

Med sitt band Duo Systrami har de nyligen gjort uppträdanden på den isländska festivalen Vaka Folk Art Festival och spridit traditioner från Västernorrlands musikhistoria – Schottis från Haverö som exempel. De snappades upp genom det EU-finansierade projektet Creative Momentum, tillsammans med sju andra musiker, forskare och arrangörer från både Finland, Sverige och Irland.

– Vi har spelat mycket, sålt många skivor och fått viktiga kontakter under resan. Det är bra att vara ute och spela och träffa mycket folk, säger de i ett pressmeddelande från Technicus, som är en av projektets samarbetspartners.



NORTH EAST ICELAND CREATIVE HOTSPOT – LESSONS LEARNED

Host Organisation

Accommodation: As this was the high tourist season and tourism activity in the area has increased substantially, it was difficult to source accommodation, especially at a reasonable cost. Participants and project staff had to be spread across a number of guesthouses. Also when the booking was made it was assumed that the rate included breakfast, however when they arrived it turned out it was a 'room only' rate. The project partner organisations had to arrange to cover breakfast costs for the participants.

Voluntary/community driven event: The Festival is largely a voluntary/community event. The organisers share a passion for the preservation of Folk Music and invite performers from other countries who share this passion. The Festival is not run on a commercial basis. Organisers had other work and responsibilities.

Limited budget: The organisers of this Festival operate with a limited budget and rely on voluntary input.

Communication: There was some confusion with communication taking place between organisers, the Icelandic project partner, other project partners and directly with participants.

Loss of project staff: As a key staff member of the Icelandic project partner, who had a close relationship with the Festival organisers, moved to a new position shortly before the Festival, the remaining staff member had to take on increased responsibility with short notice, including also organising the project meeting as well as Creative Hotspot participation.

Reykjavik: Some exposure for musicians in Reykjavik at concerts was organised by Festival organisers.

Sending Organisations

Heavy workload for musicians: The musicians attending the Festival contributed a considerable amount of time input. It did present a good performance opportunity but they had a heavy workload as a result.

Miscommunication: There was some miscommunication and lack of clarity in advance on the role and level of involvement expected of the musicians and attendees. Organisers expected one participant to provide sound engineering services for concerts but this had not been clear to him in advance. While musicians had a clear role at the Festival, it was a less clear for the event organisers and academics. They had a smaller role.

Timing of communication: It would have been good to have more information earlier. Some key information was not communicated until a late stage. When a lot of key information is communicated in one email, it can be missed.

Cost: Iceland is an expensive country, as this Creative Hotspot lasted for longer others, and the project only covered breakfast and one group meal, it was expensive for participants to cover all other food costs. There was a discount at the restaurant at the Hof Cultural Centre, but costs were high. Project partner organisations took a decision to cover some additional food costs.

Workshops very positive: The opportunity to give the workshops to the young students was a good professional and personal opportunity.

Stage of career: This Festival offered more benefit to performers at an earlier, less established stage of their career. More established performers would get less benefit.





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