

Cultural Exchange 2003: Netherlands / UK Evaluation Summary

Introduction

This report is the result of in-house evaluation for the AMA's *Cultural Exchange pilot* which took place with our sister organisation, GVR in the Netherlands. A pilot programme took place whereby a selection of AMA & GVR members were paired up and then spent time at their respective workplaces. The aim was to offer a 'cultural exchange', with participants gaining new perspectives from insights into how marketing the arts is carried out in each other's country. Looking to the future, this programme could be a starting point in fostering new links between International cultural organisations, and be extended over time to allow new relationships to develop between arts professionals worldwide.

A pilot of this programme has been undertaken on the basis that the methodology would need refining for future cohorts.

Research aims:

To provide information that will enable the AMA to make the following decisions:

1. Was the cultural exchange scheme beneficial to participants?
2. Should the AMA plan similar exchange schemes in the future?
3. What should the cultural exchange retain/change in order to make it more effective for participants?
4. Which other countries would participants be interested in participating in an exchange with?
5. Would participants be willing to pay to take part in a future scheme? If so, how much?

Methodology:

A self-completion questionnaire given to all UK participants, plus Databox profile of participants. The next step is to send the same questionnaire to the partners in the Netherlands - results will be updated on the website shortly.

SUMMARY:

1. Was the cultural exchange scheme beneficial to participants?

The evaluation shows that the pilot scheme was very successful.

- 100% of participants responding to the evaluation form said their overall impression of the exchange was either good or very good.
- 100% felt they had gained new perspectives on their work.
- 100% felt they had learnt something new.

One pairing have planned further collaborative work already, '*We both have similar roles in huge development projects and have worked on strategies together, planning for re-launching our museums. We have also swapped media lists and travelled to see the Imperial War Museum North and Urbis and met with the marketing teams there for research.*' This example is a good case study to demonstrate the potential of the scheme to other members.

89% expect to stay in touch with their cultural exchange partner in the future. The AMA should consider ways in which it can monitor the long-term impact of the scheme.

2. Should the AMA plan similar exchange schemes in the future?

Yes! Judging by the responses above and the fact that 89% of participants from the pilot scheme agreed that the AMA should continue to run cultural exchange schemes, the organisation should seriously consider offering this as a new service in the future.

3. What should the cultural exchange retain/change in order to make it more effective for participants?

RETAIN:

- Focus on professional development - in particular offering opportunities to gain new perspectives on your work and to learn something new.

CHANGE:

- Set a date for return visits - 100% agreed or strongly agreed that this should be the case. Several had problems arranging a return date and a couple still haven't made their return visit.
- Consider linking return visits to an event / meeting for all participants to get to know each other and discuss what they have got out of the scheme so far. Perhaps a debrief at the end of the return visit together with a social event?
- Re-think the introductory session slightly - introduce ideas behind the scheme, suggest things that participants might want to get out of it, discuss ongoing relationships etc. Include opportunities for all participants to gain valuable insights into the arts and cultural sector of the exchange country, including the role of arts marketing and audience development. Consider making this less formal, perhaps a facilitated discussion amongst participants (esp. if keeping numbers of participants small). 33% agreed that they would like more networking opportunities with other participants from the exchange country.

4. Which other countries would participants be interested in participating in an exchange with?

Participants commented that the exchange country should have a certain level of similarity to the UK in terms of arts and cultural sector and the role of arts marketing / audience development. This helps to identify compatible partnerships. However, they also commented that a certain level of difference provides more valuable learning opportunities. The pairing and selection of exchange country should therefore be focused on 'compatibility', which is not necessarily complete similarity.

No one particular country was highlighted as particularly popular for future exchanges. However, participants have offered a long list of ideas, highlighting opportunities for the scheme to grow as the AMA builds further international links. Country selection should therefore focus on partner organisations in other countries e.g. ACMASA (South Africa), CultuurNet Vlaanderen (Belgium), the Arts Council (Ireland) etc.

Pen pal schemes with those further away could also be considered e.g. establishing something in partnership with the Australian Council for the Arts.

There was also the suggestion of repeating the exchange with new participants in the Netherlands - does GVR have enough members to warrant this?

5. Would participants be willing to pay to take part in a future scheme? If so, how much?

There was no conclusive answer to this question. Responses ranged from organisations feeling that the cost of travel, accommodation etc. was already stretching their budget, to those who would be willing to pay over £100 for the cost of the scheme. This decision will therefore need to be taken considering costs involved for the AMA and the target group for the scheme i.e. to what extent do small-scale arts organisations want to be able to take part?

Evaluation Forms:

Number of people returning the form 9

1. Why did you decide to take part in the cultural exchange? (figures shown as a % of respondents)

	Main Reason
Professional development	56
Networking	0
Learn something new	11
Gain new perspectives on your work	27
Other	0

	Any other reason that applies
Professional development	45
Networking	33
Learn something new	67
Gain new perspectives on your work	78
Other:	22

- To visit Amsterdam!
- See how arts marketing works in other countries

2. Please rate the cultural exchange on each of the following

	Very Good	Good	Neither	Not Good	Not Good at all
Relevance of pairing	22	67	0	11	0
Learning something new	45	56	0	0	0
Networking opportunities	11	45	33	11	0
Gaining new perspectives on your work	45	67	0	0	0
Value of introductory session in Amsterdam	11	45	33	0	0
Overall impression of the scheme	45	56	0	0	0

If you marked 'not good' or 'not good at all' for any of these, please explain why:

- There was very little opportunity for networking because of limited amount of time spent in Amsterdam. I felt it was more important to spend the time getting to know my host and their organisation.
- As far as I can tell there aren't equivalent venues to the Royal and Derngate in Holland, so a 'good' pairing would have been difficult. The art presented at Schouwberg was very different to what we do here. However, I have no complaints.
- I marked 'neither' for the introductory session - didn't really get anything out of it and there was a lot of formality in it.

3. Did the cultural exchange deliver all that you were led to expect from the communication you received?

Yes 100
No 0

If 'no' why not?

4. How many times have you met with your exchange partner?

Once (in Netherlands) 33
Once (in UK) 0
Twice (in Netherlands and UK) 67

More than twice 0

If *'more than twice'* please state how many times

5. Do you plan to stay in touch with your cultural exchange partner?

Yes 89
No 11

- I suspect it will be infrequent
- He's very hard to get hold of

6. Have you planned any collaborative work with your cultural exchange partner?

Yes 22
No 78

If yes, please elaborate briefly:

- We both have similar roles in huge development projects and have worked on strategies together, planning for re-launching our museums. We have also swapped media lists and travelled to see the Imperial War Museum North and Urbis and met with the marketing teams there for research.
- We haven't yet, but we hope to discuss this further when he makes his return visit in October.
- We stay in touch regarding their event which BAM's ArtsFest is based.

7. The following are some statements about the cultural exchange. Please can you indicate how much you agree or disagree with them:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I was well matched with my Dutch partner	22	78	0	0	0
My Dutch partner and I were too similar for us to get much out of the scheme	0	0	11	78	11
My Dutch partner and I were too different for us to get much out of the scheme	0	0	22	45	33
I felt I learnt something that I can use in my job	22	56	11	0	0
I gained valuable insights into how my role is carried out in the Netherlands	22	33	33	11	0
I gained valuable insights into the arts and cultural sector in the Netherlands	11	78	0	11	0
The exchange was a good experience for me personally, but I didn't get anything out of it professionally	0	11	22	56	11
I would have preferred more networking opportunities with other Dutch participants	0	33	56	11	0
The AMA should run similar exchange schemes with other countries	22	67	11	0	0
There should be an arranged date for return visits to the UK with an event to kick-start discussion	22	78	0	0	0

8. Would you be willing to pay to take part in the cultural exchange in the future?

Yes 89
No 11

If yes, please indicate how much you would be willing to pay

Nothing	11
Up to £50	22
Up to £100	33
Over £100	45

- Willing to pay all accommodation costs, meal costs etc. + flights which is a lot. However, maybe a small administration fee for the AMA is appropriate. Both myself and my partner felt we were stretching our budgets.

9. Have you any suggestions regarding suitable countries for similar AMA exchange programmes?

- Germany x4
- Canada x2
- France x2
- Italy x3
- Scandinavia x2
- USA x2
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Japan
- New Zealand (in many ways most similar to the UK)
- South Africa
- Spain
- Within UK itself

10. Do you consider your job to be primarily about marketing and audience development?

Yes	100
No	0

11. If yes, for how many years have you been involved in arts marketing and audience development?

Less than 1 year	0
1 - 5 years	22
6 - 9 years	33
10 - 14 years	33
15 years or more	11

12. Do you have any further comments or suggestions about the cultural exchange that have not been covered in this questionnaire:

GENERAL FEEDBACK:

- It was fantastic!
- The exchange was most useful for personal development. It was very much the case that you got out of it what you wanted.

RETURN VISITS:

- Build a set date for return visits to the UK so that all participants can catch up / network and / or set a UK debrief session so participants can share experiences and learning.
- I think it would be useful in the future to make exchange visits a little more structured.
- There should be a set return date so that both partners are forced to commit as this has been difficult due to demanding work schedules on both sides.
- I am having difficulty trying to get my partner to come over here.

- It has been difficult for my Dutch partner to find time to come to London - and as it turned out it would have been difficult to physically accommodate him in our offices. We have twice rearranged his visit so far...

PAIRING:

- There is difficulty in matching UK-based audience development agencies with overseas organisations, as there are few direct comparisons.

SIMILARITIES:

- Just to reiterate that I found it a very useful experience. What was surprising was that there were far more similarities than differences. Anyone of Shouwburg's marketing department could walk into a UK theatre and would have no problems with doing the job (and vice-versa apart from the problem of speaking Dutch!).

LONG-TERM:

- Given it is down to participants individual efforts to keep relationships going, it will be interesting to see which ones do continue.
- Monitor long-term relationships.

NETWORKING:

- Offer more opportunity to exchange ideas with the wider group of exchange partners.

FUTURE LOCATIONS:

- Netherlands is highly compatible with UK (people, arts scene, marketing & audience development issues - and English language speakers!), but with enough differences to provide learning opportunities. Maybe best to invest in building the exchange scheme here first before rolling out elsewhere?
- I would gladly take part in trips to other countries - perhaps specifically ones that have different cultures and different approaches. Our discussions on cultural diversity demonstrated exactly the same experiences. A country such as South Africa would be useful to look at bridges rather than barriers.