

Participants' Portraits & List of Appreciative Inquiry Practitioners Who Have Benefitted from the Grundtvig Partnership Sharing Strengths, Developing Communities – Promoting Strength-Based Learning across Societies for the Future

http://www.europeansharedtreasure.eu/detail.php?id_project_base=2013-1-CZ1-GRU06-14271

In the pages to come we let the individual participants of all the partnership exchanges between Prague, Liverpool and Turin share their impressions from the four visits that took place between October 2013 and May 2015. Welcome to a marvelous journey of focusing on strengths as travelled by the following 36 learners, practitioners and experts answering our three questions below...

Andrea Šváchová	Czech Republic	a.svachova@jus.cz
Angela Palladino	Italy	angela.palladino@ineoutformazione.it
Anna Rambousková	Czech Republic	anca.rambouskova@gmail.com
Daniel Jones	United Kingdom	deathraydan@gmail.com
David Grbavčić	Czech Republic	davidgrbavcic@gmail.com
Eva Mařasová	Czech Republic	marasova@seznam.cz
Eva Strachotová	Czech Republic	estrachotova@scio.cz
Francesca Oliva	Italy	oliva@activechange.it
Gabriela Ježková	Czech Republic	Jezkova.G@seznam.cz
Hana Růžicková	Czech Republic	hruzickova@scio.cz
Helen Bush	United Kingdom	helen@appreciatingpeople.co.uk
Chiara Marinelli	Italy	marinelli@progettomuret.org ritornelli@fastwebnet.it
Jakub Černý	Czech Republic	jakub.cerny@zoho.com
Jaroslava Simonová	Czech Republic	jaroslava.simon@gmail.com
Jiří Konečný	Czech Republic	j.g.konecny@email.cz
Leigh Ricketts	United Kingdom	leigh.ricketts@corganisers.org.uk
Lianne McGinnes	United Kingdom	liannemcginness@gmail.com
Lucia Čemová	Czech Republic	cemoval@gmail.com
Lucie Čížková	Czech Republic	vialuciz@gmail.com
Lucie Lukešová	Czech Republic	lucka.vysanska@gmail.com
Lucie Luňáčková	Czech Republic	lunackova.lucie@gmail.com
Lukáš Kučera	Czech Republic	kucera@velkyvuz.cz
Michaela Beitlová	Czech Republic	michaela.beitlova@gmail.com
Mike Taylor	United Kingdom	Mtaylor42@live.co.uk
Mike Hogan	United Kingdom	mike@mikehoganconsulting.com mikehoganliverpool@yahoo.com
Miloslav Hons	Czech Republic	miloslav.hons@3zscv.cz
Miroslava Vobecká	Czech Republic	mirka.vobecka@gmail.com
Nicky Williams	United Kingdom	mrsnwilliams@hotmail.com
Peter Lauritzen	Czech Republic	peter@petelau.cz
Petra Budniková	Czech Republic	pbudnikovova@scio.cz
Ruth Little	United Kingdom	abccpory@hotmai.com
Susan McGavin	United Kingdom	sue.mc@citizenengagement.org.uk
Suzanne Quinney	United Kingdom	suzanne@appreciatingpeople.co.uk
Štěpán Pudlák	Czech Republic	spudlak@scio.cz
Tim Slack	United Kingdom	tim@appreciatingpeople.co.uk
Tullio Bagnati	Italy	tullio.b@iol.it

1. Which memory or moment from the visit is inscribed the deepest in your memory?

A moment from the journaling activity when we talked about the nice moments we had experienced and had written about. The amazing thing was how during this conversation the mood in the whole room went noticeably up. I like to mention that example as a proof to the power of positive conversations.

Anča Rambousková >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>



Definitely the getting-to-know each other process within the whole group. The eagerness to take part, learn things about others and in this way find out more about oneself. The power of a group of (up until then) strangers.

Andrea Šváchová

In the first Prague visit how the AI workshop was working across three languages and cultures. Powerful examples finding common ground and shared futures. Also opportunity to launch one of our AP products Great Conversations which had been developed with the Liverpool visitors to Prague.

Tim Slack



The visit of the St. Andrew's Community Network's food bank.

Eva Strachotová >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

The meeting at the Anfield Breckside Community Corner in the space under the church. We were welcomed by their batucada and the walls there were decorated with vision posters for their community.

Lukáš Kučera

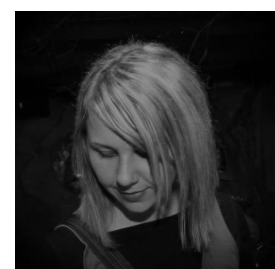
When Lianne took off her necklace, that I said I liked, and handed it over to me as a gift.

Dinner at Suzanne and Tim's in Liverpool.

All the long evenings in Turin when we talked and talked.

From the official part of the program it was meeting people from My Clubmoor initiative and meeting the locals.

Mirka Vobecká >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

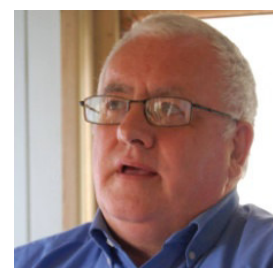


The openness of the people I met. Their willingness to share painful and happy times and how on reflection it has helped them to grow individually and impact their commitment to their communities. Recognising the profound awesomeness in ourselves and others.

Nicky Williams

It was the chance to enjoy my home city and for people to come to our home.

Tim Slack >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>



The fact that an about five minute brief meeting in Prague made a lasting impression of interest and goodwill between me, Lianne and Dan. This was then confirmed in Liverpool.

Peter Lauritzen

I like remembering the sharing in the circle, governed by appreciative inquiry principles. All the good things we can say about self and the others!

Hanka Růžičková >>>> >>>> >>>>

It was my first visit to Prague and Eastern Europe - for me a very new vernacular, culture, cuisine, history and atmosphere, fabulous! It was so rewarding was to share our learners experience of being immersed in a new and different culture where they could realise how much appreciative inquiry insight they had to offer.

Helen Bush



The bicycle workshop and the community space of Cecchi Point.

Jirka George Konečný

Preparation of the food bank three-day packages at St. Andrew's. The many talks with different people, always kind and inspiring.

Em Beitlová

The first thing that comes to mind are the great people – Lianne, Susanne with her husband, Peter. And our amazing and varied group of people who just „clicked“.

Lucie Lukešová >>>> >>>> >>>>



The possibility for me to experience appreciative inquiry in another place with new people and in this way to understand a little more about my personal work experience.

Chiara Marinelli

The fact that a couple of Czechs had the courage to go to Liverpool with a minimal knowledge of English and they managed wonderfully (on top if they speak Scouse there).

Peter Lauritzen

I particularly loved the visits to projects in Turin - the community centre with the vertical garden. The youth organisation with the performing arts theatre and the bike with a theatre in a box sitting on its front wheel! Seeing the city of Turin and all its historical gems on the tour was a real eyeopener as well. And meeting all the passionate people from Czech Republic, both in Prague and on their visits - it was lovely to connect with their dedication.

Suzanne Quinney >>>> >>>> >>>>



The visit to TA Kavárna. It provided excellent employment and social interaction opportunities for people with disabilities. It was well conceived and superbly managed with collaboration and inclusiveness at its heart.

Mike Taylor >>>> >>>> >>>>

During the last Prague visit it was the chance to reflect on our success and the positive relationships that have emerged.

Tim Slack



The first meeting of the group in Liverpool – I felt accepted and involved.

Tullio Bagnati >>>> >>>> >>>>



The afternoon session at VIA Foundation when I got a strong sense of how different culturally the Czech Republic is to Britain. I was inspired by their positive energy and sense of concern and connection with others in society and in neighbouring countries making the same journey. I envied the Czech people a little.

Mike Hogan

When you say Liverpool, I immediately think of the town, its atmosphere, nice weather, a completely new group of people. Regarding individual experiences then the presentation of community project management – until then I perceived appreciative inquiry as a method that helps individuals and I found inspiring to see it being used in a community setting. The visit of Anfield around the stadium, which I first thought of as a small “cultural pastime”, but which left me with a (surprisingly) strong impression.

Slávka Simonová >>>> >>>> >>>>



The sharing session in Prague is my most memorable moment. At the time it felt like a turning point in our partnership and relationship building, which became a strong starting point to a very successful visit.

Lianne McGinnes

I attended the meeting in Prague. The initial moment of first meeting each other was very addictive, as well as, on the second day, the activities that involved many people in exercises of appreciative inquiry.

Angela Palladino >>>> >>>> >>>>



Reflecting about my weaknesses and looking for my strengths.

Eva Mařasová

Our first meeting at SCIO – project kick off, a lot of emotion and curiosity.

Metaphorical walk in Prague – so effective and involving that we get lost in dialoguing and arrived one hour later to the appointment!

All the local encounters – so interesting to know about other’s experiences and see how much we have in common and how much we can learn from each other!

Francesca Oliva

There were so many! Maybe when Francesca cried at the end of the Turin visit. Once again I could see that “what you give is what you get” – it was a strong moment. And...maybe...whenever someone cried (which happened a couple of times) – connecting with something deep within ourselves.

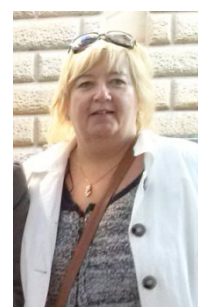
Lucie Čížková

We spent time in two’s traveling around the city, it enabled us to talk to each other, it was incredible how deep the conversations were.

Also the first training session when we arrived, everyone was so welcoming, I remember Tim asking who spoke English – I put my hand up and everyone laughed...

The cakes!

Ruth Little >>>> >>>> >>>>



2. Which (appreciative) question did you find the most interesting? Which question do you still ask yourself?

There isn't a particular question I use however, the use of affirmative language changes the way we think; and I try to use this every day.
Lianne McGinnes



What one small thing can I do to experience more joy? What can I be praised for today?
Eva Mařasová >>>> >>>> >>>>

The daily diary is still a big part of my life even now. I like reflecting weeks, even months back to see any improvement.
Daniel Jones



What are the things that I usually don't notice but when I give them time and space I really appreciate them in my life?
How can I keep alive the spirit of this project when it will be finished?
Francesca Oliva >>>> >>>> >>>>

When and where I see the strengths in the organization I lead?
Tullio Bagnati

I found all of the appreciative questions interesting and they set the tone for the visit. We challenged ourselves around a lot of viewpoints. I learnt a lot about community projects in Turin. The questions seemed to make the whole experience flow in an enquiring way so I wanted to experience more and understand more as we went along.
I can't choose a particular question – I think the experience has changed the nature of my questioning overall so that when I reach a challenge I approach it in an appreciative way.
Sue McGavin >>>> >>>> >>>>



Most interesting – the session at the Prague Impact HUB on the last day. What question do I still ask – too many to mention, but I love: "What surprised you?"
Helen Bush >>>> >>>> >>>>



What worked well in the past? How have I contributed to it? What in me made it possible? What would be the ideal case scenario? What smallest step can I make to get closer to it? How can I understand you even better? What can I do now? What makes me feel the way I do? And about a thousand other inspiring, thought-provoking and generative questions...
Lucie Čížková

What I enjoy the most is: "What were today's three successes?"

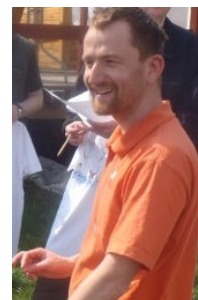
Jirka George Konečný >>>> >>>> >>>>

Reframing helps me a quite a bit.

Also, I often ask myself: „What one small change can I make right now so that..."

What keeps buzzing in my head is also: „What you focus on grows."

Gabriela Ježková

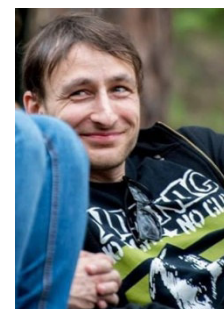


What's has been the best thing about today...how could I make it better?

Leigh Ricketts

A question for me: „What do you do well and really enjoy doing at the same time?" I try to apply that every day and also try not to diverge from this skill and necessity.

Andrea Šváchová

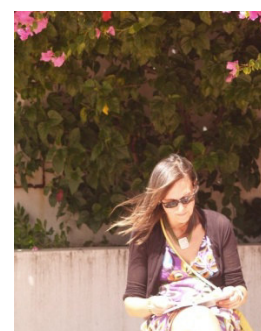


I don't remember one particular question but I was interested in the local economy plan and how people from the suburban communities really dream ahead a few years; it would be great to see that.

Jakub Černý >>>> >>>> >>>>

I am not sure as it was all interesting, however, I can be quite strong in my opinions and I was humbled during the group session with the realisation that different words translate different in other cultures. It's something I have been very conscious of ever since in all conversations with others.

Ruth Little



What is my dream?

Chiara Marinelli >>>> >>>> >>>>

Maybe the one I still don't know the answer to: "What have you enjoyed doing since childhood?"

Lucie Lukešová

To be honest, I don't remember the exact wording of the questions but I keep thinking about how important it is to be building up on what works – in myself, in relationships, at work. I think that thanks to appreciative inquiry I learnt to regard myself and things around me in a more meaningful way. Not to focus on what is not working but rather pay attention to what works and take that as a departure point.

Lucia Čemová >>>> >>>> >>>>



What made me smile?

Being more aware of our surroundings, not just taking them for granted and being, enjoying and registering the moment.

Nicky Williams

How can we share our strengths more? How can all of us work more from our strengths?

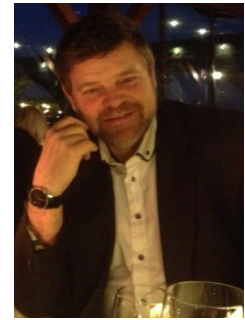
Suzanne Quinney

Hard to remember without notes, but I think that it would be something like:
How do people who do not have much to spare (but much to share) find so much energy to help and support each other? (On visiting St. Andrew's Community Network and Imagine Anfield)
When will I go back to Liverpool?

Peter Lauritzen >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

What do I like about this particular moment the most?

David Grbavčić



What did you learn from your experience and what are you going to do with it?
What good fortune of the mobile phone call that came from a recommendation of a US friend and that started of our international cooperation!

Tim Slack

I asked Lucie Č. what appreciative inquiry was (a task that was part of an icebreaker at the airport). She went on answering throughout the whole Liverpool visit and what it ended up being was the „Alcecream“ poster.

I often like to ask myself: „What am I grateful for?“

Em Beitlová



What can be done differently?

Lucie Luňáčková >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

When do you feel the happiest? What made you happy in the last two days?

Petra Budnikovová

What can I do to fully use my potential?

Lukáš Kučera



Where can we move together?

Štěpán Pudlák >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

“What is it that makes this successful?”

We saw many examples of where asking this simple question helps people to better understand what success really means and how powerful it is to share this throughout the organization.

Mike Taylor

I keep asking the question „What is this situation trying to tell me?“ especially in circumstances that catch me by surprise and that don't seem to have any meaning for me at that given moment. I'm not sure if I enjoy asking this question but I do ask it...

Slávka Simonová

What can I do so that we succeed? How can I contribute?

Mirka Vobecká



What can I do to make a difference/...this [day, task, group,...] different?

Mike Hogan >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

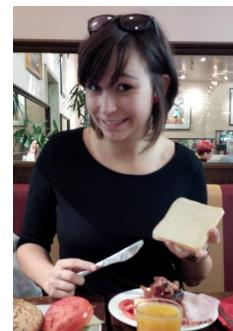
In the evening but also throughout the day I often tell myself: “I'm really grateful for this.” I am more aware of the present moment and all the good things that are happening to me.

Hanka Růžičková

3. What do you do differently since the visit, what lasting effect did the visit have on your life?

I have an appreciative journal, all the feedback forms that I send out to the groups that I work with I formulate positively, I included appreciative inquiry into evaluation interviews with the managers at work. My partner is getting a daily dose of appreciative approach too.

Em Beitlová >>>> >>>> >>>>



I'm more inclined to work with vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Lucka Luňáčková

I appreciate the work of other people more, especially the kind of work that's done outside of limelight and especially when it's clear that it's done with joy and passion.

Mirka Vobecká

I use collages at work, I look for small steps of change, I encourage people to build on their strengths, I am more aware of the difference between outer appearance and inner state of being of a community or a person. I realize how important it is to look for what connects people for them to work on it together.

Lukáš Kučera >>>> >>>> >>>>



Take in my surroundings, the people and situations I am in.

Ask myself more what can I learn from this, can I use this in my work/home etc. life.

Recognize how life experiences have impacted my life and how they impact others' lives.

Much more open minded.

Look at strengths rather than problems. I am now in a new job and that is how the whole organization works, feedback through strengths and praise! So empowering, looking for people's uniqueness.

Nicky Williams >>>> >>>> >>>>



I feel myself more connected to parts of Europe that I didn't know anything about.

And as I work with projects in the UK, I see now the similarities with Italian and Czech projects. I love the shared creativity & dedication we have seen demonstrated in all the partners.

I would like to make more links between such projects and to raise awareness of all that we have in common.

Suzanne Quinney

Appreciative inquiry has had a big impact on me and my personal life and my day to day work... I've really changed how I work and are now building from strengths rather than negatives. The 5 points of wellbeing are now at the core of everything I do.

Leigh Ricketts >>>> >>>> >>>>



I try to formulate sentences positively when I ask questions at school. This is important especially with kinds that have a mental handicap.

Eva Mařasová

When running a business/organization, focus on creating real value for customers and employees. Don't chase money that will follow if you create real social value. Collaboration is often seen to be difficult or even impossible to achieve in competitive environments but an appreciative approach can change perspectives and attitudes and open up real opportunities for collaboration in many forms which are mutually beneficial and value adding.

Mike Taylor

Other people's viewpoints can totally differ from mine. I learnt to accept some things about myself even if I doubt that they are "right".

Miloslav Hons >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>



I think that the trip reconfirmed my need to learn to accept events that I encounter and look for a source of further development in them. In this way it deepened my original understanding of appreciative inquiry that I got from our Prague course and showed me that AI works not only at the level of individuals but also in communities, which I see as a significant source of inspiration for my further work.

Slávka Simonová

I find myself taking the time to stop and actually see what is around me more, I have learnt to accept and appreciate my strengths and weakness, which has a lasting effect on my life as I feel I am well on my way to accepting who I am, where I want to be and how I work best.

Lianne McGinnes >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>



I have changed my approach to the leadership training I do with people in human services – it focuses much more on how to create generative relationships and the importance [and joy!] of keeping strengths and potential in the foreground.

Mike Hogan

I try to look at things from a more appreciative viewpoint and REFRAME the negative stuff.

David Grbavčič >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>



The experience that I had changed some of my approaches in working with groups, especially in business context and intergenerational settings.

Angela Palladino

I write a journal, I try to live in the present moment and above all I look for more and more opportunities that help me in my personal development and in feeling peaceful.

Gábina Ježková >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>



I'm more self confident and more aware of my strengths – and limits as well! I always try to be generative – see what can flourish even in tough times.

Francesca Oliva

Thanks to the visit and the project as a whole I got the courage to make big changes. First I identified my strengths, I started to appreciate myself more and then began a new career.

Hanka Růžičková

A lasting impact has been that I carry with me a tiny „suitcase“ that I sometimes open and find a message in it, which reminds me to develop the good things that are present rather than cry about the imaginary things that don't exist.

Lucia Čemová

I use appreciative inquiry in daily contact with people...when shopping, during phone calls, at meetings... It's a good icebreaker even with people who seem hard to approach...

Petra Budnikovová >>>> >>>> >>>>



Since the visit we continue to imbed AI in all our work, conversations within the community planning for the future. The most lasting is the need to spend more time with people, especially with like-minded people but those with different backgrounds.

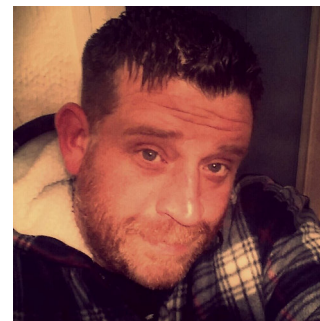
Ruth Little

I look for something good in everything...

Chiara Marinelli

Bring my own personal skills to my work, appreciate people and hopefully pass my knowledge of AI to others.

Daniel Jones >>>> >>>> >>>>



Firstly, promote the importance of cross-cultural and educational links and relationships. Secondly, the relationships have led to the emergence of sparks works – an international AI partnership between Italy, Spain, UK and Belgium.

Tim Slack

When talking to people, I try to ask more and focus on the positive things and to reframe the not so good ones in order to see some light even there.

Anča Rambousková

It is hard to say one specific thing that I do differently. The many great meetings, also with the Italians, helped shaping my perception of AI, and more important to keep me on my track of trying to keep the appreciative approach as my way. New friendships that have developed on Facebook, random meetings in Prague metro etc. Conversations in this connection being both jolly banter and more deep where-are-you-now-in-your-life talks.

Peter Lauritzen

I continue on the appreciative joy journey and I've realized that I want to run an independent AI-connected project of my own. On a more personal level, I have allowed much more light, joy and true appreciation into my everyday life – with my daughter, my partner, my parents, closest friends and relatives.

Lucie Čížková >>>> >>>> >>>>



On a personal level: overcoming difficulty in travelling.

Lasting effect: confidence to cross frontiers (language, culture context & setting) as an AI practitioner. The power of new and different in shifting thinking and possibility.

Helen Bush

I work on improving my English. I was charmed by the atmosphere in Italy – open, relaxed and enjoying free time. I try to spread this :-)

Andrea Šváchová >>>>> >>>>> >>>>>

I remember very well the discussion about the impact of Margaret Thatcher and the very different perceptions of her policies. This taught me very much about the ability to understand that different people have very different perceptions.

So since the visit I have found that I am much better able to appreciate that people have very different viewpoints and I do not get so cross with them when they don't see it the same as me.

The lasting effect that the project had on my life was that I met new people and made friends – I was then able to offer a place to stay and some volunteering opportunities for a student from Turin to help with his English. The result of this is that there will also be another return visit by young people from our area to learn about Italy.

Sue McGavin



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