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Implementing and Evaluating the 'space' of Participatory Radio as an Educational Intervention for Inclusion, Self-efficacy and Informal Learning

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RadioActive101 is an international internet radio hub that is an educational intervention which gives a voice to disenfranchised groups throughout Europe (funded by the Nominet Trust in the UK and EU Lifelong Learning Programme). Through using radio to give a voice to these groups, such as at-risk and unemployed young people, schoolchildren in low-income areas and older people who have various challenges, RadioActive stimulates and facilitates inclusion, greater self-efficacy and informal learning of citizens who would otherwise be 'left behind'.

RadioActive is a consortium of six partners in five countries (see radioactive101.eu), that have ongoing collaborations with eleven Associate Partner organisations who perform and deliver RadioActive 'on the ground'. The RadioActive model and national hubs are operational in four countries, proving its replicability and scalability across countries and contexts. Through RadioActive101 the target groups are developing digital competencies and employability skills 'in vivo'. These competencies and skills align with six of the EU Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning and we have developed a progression and accreditation model linking these key competencies to their recognition through a system of electronic 'badges'. These provide concrete recognition of informal learning and represent proficiencies that are relevant to further education or employment, in particular related to 21C skills for learning and working.

This paper and presentation will highlight the key findings of an evaluation covering the two years that RadioActive has been implemented throughout Europe. This evaluation followed an 'Appreciative Inquiry' methodology that was implemented through an online questionnaire that was made available to all RadioActive stakeholders, or 'radio-activists' as we call them. Eighty nine radio-activists completed the questionnaire, who were typically those who had been the most involved from an overall user population of approximately five hundred. Although the data presented a rich and complex profile of the perceived influence of RadioActive there were two striking categories of positive reportings. Firstly was improvements in self-efficacy, in the form of things like 'self confidence and motivation' (90.8%), 'self-perception of progress' (77.6%) and a 'sense of belonging' (50.75%). A second notable category was improvements in 21C skills that align with the EU key competencies for Lifelong Learning, such as 'creative skills and abilities' (88.2%), 'organisation, time management and problem solving' (85.5%) and 'communication skills' (85.5%).

Summarising, the unusually positive impact of RadioActive seems to rely on making psycho-social improvements before and alongside educational ones, where this interrelationship is crucial, yet arguably overlooked in 'traditional' education.