



Pioneers

CÁSSIA AYRES

UK (2015)

Highlights - circular economy, cultural differences, network

Who are you? Cássia Ayres has worked within the sustainable development sector for many years. Following the completion of her studies for a Masters degree, she applied to the Pioneers programme based on the positive recommendations from both her lecturer at Aston University in the UK and from previous Pioneer participants.



What did you learn? For Cássia, the most significant aspect of her own personal development through the Programme has related to understanding different perceptions around cultural behaviour. The personal skills she developed, such as learning to observe, adapt and embrace cultural differences have all been of great assistance to her, leading to work with UNICEF in Asia immediately following her placement and also future career opportunities.

The networking opportunities and chance to experience placements within two small advisory organisations has also given her an insight into the realities of working within a small enterprise. In addition to her personal development, Cássia has also developed new skills in applying the systems innovation tools provided through the Pioneer workshops to her work on stakeholder engagement within her placements and future work.

What did you do? Cássia undertook desk-top research for her first placement at Sustainability West Midlands in the UK to support the development of a university network in sustainability issues. Her second placement was at Posintra, which is a Finnish development company set up to support and reinforce the competitiveness of south Finland and increase the wellbeing of the region. The work entailed gathering information on international examples of sustainable practices for the bio-tech industries, including examples from India, Brazil and China to build up a series of case studies.



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The research that Cássia completed for Posintra was used to inform the evolution of a project, funded by the EU, national and local government, to support the development of new innovative solutions for bio-industrial parks. Her published work was used to influence the long-term vision of the project, which included activities to promote and realise the recovery of resources, such as surplus industrial heat based on circular economy principles. One of the activities within the project included supporting a cluster of petro-chemical organisations to help support industrial symbiosis and develop sustainable practices, this included the reuse of water between businesses on an established industrial park in Porvoo.

What happens next? After completing her placement, Cássia went to work for UNICEF in Bangkok. Following UNICEF, she is now working for Green Innovations (sustainability research and development) in Portugal which is part of a holding company of funding organisations specialising in biotech, high-tech and the development sector in Europe, Africa and Middle East.

“ This proved to be a unique opportunity to develop competences in a different cultural context. This experience opened up opportunities for me to work in Asia. ”

Cássia Ayres



Cássia and her Posintra hosts.